

METROID II AND METROID FUSION



— AN ANALYSIS

METROID II RETURN OF SAMUS

**— REVISITING AN
OVERSHADOWED
MASTERPIECE**

Released in 1991-1992 and despite the good contemporary reviews, Metroid 2 is largely overshadowed today by many fans of the Metroid franchise. And perhaps for a good reason : its successor Super Metroid. The third installment of the franchise is well remembered and still played today for its incredible story-telling, action, bosses, music, atmosphere... despite Super Metroid inception being directly linked to the end of Metroid 2 ! The latter is largely considered outdated by some players because of its black-and-white palette, atmosphere, and also because it was released on Game Boy (a very old handheld console barely used by modern players). Apart from the Metroid 2 remake for 3DS, the banned AM2R and some colorization efforts like with the EJRTQ mod, the game has received very little attention. So let's investigate why this game is far more important than we think.

My “first encounter” and rediscovery

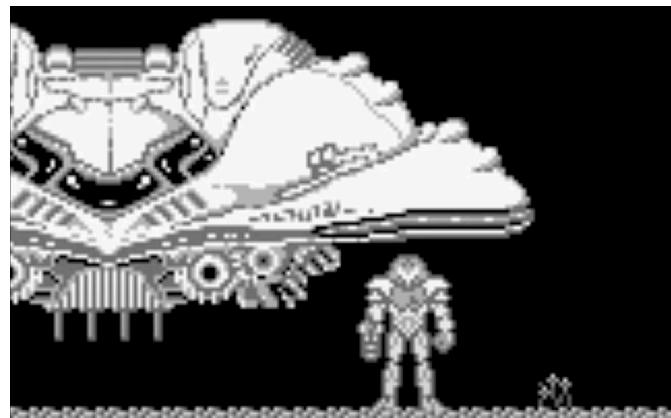
When I was in my 10s, I was terrified by Metroid 2 : the weird atmosphere, the panic sound when you encountered a Metroid, the “alierness” of the universe, the long and empty corridors, the insectoid aspects of Metroids... Not a very fun time when I was younger, while being somewhat attracted by the mystery of the drawing on the cartridge : Samus in her armor on a deserted planet. The storyline is relatively simple, in appearance : exploring the tunnels and caves of SR388 and destroying the home-planet of the Metroids. I largely preferred playing with Mario, Wario or Zelda. It took nearly a decade for me to rediscover Metroid 2 through an unexpected way. I got a Game Boy Advance SP which came with a cartridge of Metroid Fusion. I really appreciated the game's dark and mysterious atmosphere, and it led me to rediscover some of my old Game Boy cartridges. Metroid 2 was one of them, and I decided to give it a try.

Powering the GameBoy

The first thing the player notices is the coldness of the title screen : the title of the game, a small menu to load/start a game and the Nintendo copyright notice. And what appears to be a galactic void filled with stars in the background. That's where the most interesting, and perhaps dark, aspect of the game begins : a cold menu with an 8-bit music mimicking someone breathing through a space suit. A dark melody evolving with more soft sound effects later, but that's all. Something very unusual for a Game Boy game, where producers were generally using more “attractive” music.

The adventure begins

Once you start the game, the universe is quite different. You begin near the iconic Samus spaceship (the first it was ever represented in a Metroid game). You also notice several things that will become hallmarks of the series : the great details of Samus armors and appearance, and also the small menu above the screen with missile reserves and energy tanks. The music at the beginning, known under the title “Surface of SR388” and composed by Ryoji Yoshitomi, is very engaging and gives the feeling of starting a great adventure on a somewhat mysterious planet.



The player will notice several improvements over the original Metroid : more firing options (you can shoot up and down, while walking or jumping), better controls (better jump physics, you can kneel...), impressive sprites for a GameBoy, great variety of structures and enemies... This is clearly, on the technical part, a great sequel and improvement from the first Metroid, where Samus was some sort of an “alien” sprite, with clunky physics and few movement options.

You will notice quickly the existence of save stations, a hallmark of the franchise too, where you can save your progression. Something that was made possible by the inclusion of a small battery within the GameBoy cartridge. A great improvement over the “code-saving” system.

And then comes the first battle with a Metroid after walking across several corridors. People who have played the first game will be familiar with the shape of the creature : a small jellyfish creature. But once you start to walk near the creature the game freezes, an eerily music starts to play and the creature leaves its shell to become some sort of a small insect with some sort of antenna, legs and shell below. A nightmarish vision when I was a child. These are the first forms of Metroids you will encounter on the planet. Then you have the Alpha, Gamma, Zeta, Omega and the Queen in the final battle. They require a different number of missiles to destroy them, between 5 (Alpha) and 40 (Omega). Like the other elements in the game, the Metroids sprites are well detailed. Regarding the “quality” of Metroid battles, I have to say that there are not “boss-level” ones. The fact is that you have 38 of them to kill across the planets. While the original creators have never expressed their choices, I do believe it was better to have “simpler” battles, than 38 “boss-like” battles : a pitfall that the remake released on the 3DS followed. The battles are too numerous, difficult and complex.



The first battle, set apart to the surprise of players of the original Metroid, is also useful to understand the mechanisms of battle with Metroids. Hence the first Metroid dies, the planet is shaken by an earthquake. This mechanic of the game is that once you kill all the Metroids in a given zone, the blocking lava disappears to allow the player to progress. Many have criticized this mechanism because it is not explained and feels arbitrary : why and how ? The Metroid 2 remake for the 3DS introduces a nice addition on this topic : the idea that the Chozo (the iconic bird-like creatures of the Metroid franchise) who are believed to have created the Metroids, sealed several parts of the planet when they decided to leave it after their creation became out of control.

While the idea here is not to debate ethics/morals in video games : we can ask ourselves about what we do in this video game. The fact is that we are wiping out an entire species in their own homeworld. More puzzling is the fact that these creatures are never attacking us randomly : this is always the player which is hunting them and entering their small nests. While these creatures are far from being “humanistic” (they have successfully emptied an entire planet and destroyed all developed forms of all life on SR388 by themselves like the Aliens), the fact is that they were not really going to leave by themselves this planet to exterminate the universe. This fact combined with the atmosphere of isolation, dread and silence, make the game even more eerier.

The topic on the moral/ethic questions surrounding the game is illustrated in depth by the section of this article (<https://www.gamedeveloper.com/audio/a-maze-of-murderscapes-metroid-ii>) : *“The mention of genocide brings us to one of Metroid II’s themes. Playing as a cold, lonely figure, you comb through the ruins of a long-dead avian species and kill in ecoscapes evoking claustrophobia and agoraphobia. It would be dishonest to overlook that Metroid II is about the genocide of the metroids, an extraterrestrial species that is already nearly extinct. The game’s premise of systematic extermination cannot be denied, yet Metroid II turns out to be an anti-genocide game where the initial goal is to commit fantasy genocide against goofy-cute science-fiction creatures.”*

The alien world

While the early parts of the game were “lighter”, the next parts are more dark and mysterious. Many of them are in fact past complex and great caves probably constructed by the Chozo : abandoned buildings, tunnels, pits, statues... With no life in sight set apart the very small creatures wandering across these sections, and the Metroids. And more importantly : only subtle sounds mimicking waterdrop or insect noise in deserted environments. From my perspective, this is very great storytelling : when the lack of sounds tells more than the abundance of it. Like I said earlier, this is surprising that the game was intended for children, because the atmosphere in many caves is eerie. While the game is not violent, this is far less comforting/funny than Tetris, Mario, Donkey Kong or even Mystic Quest. You are alone for a long time, with nearly no sounds or enemies and only the Samus footsteps sound. The “alieness” of the game I was speaking of earlier.

The player can perfectly understand that something serious occurs for such a planet with so many complex structures to be abandoned and only populated with tiny creatures. This makes the Metroid threat even more tangible : they are so powerful that what remains are only harmless creatures. Because the game is reputed to have been inspired by the Alien franchise, I can say that when you wander alone in this huge complex and caves, you feel the loneliness of the Marines entering the Hadley Hope complex. Devastation and emptiness everywhere, with no sights of survivors. And more importantly : no clues about what causes that. Because Samus sprites are quite large, the environment feels “zoomed-in” with few immediate sight. It creates a claustrophobic atmosphere. For example,

when you “free-fall” along the long shaft of the Chozo ruins, you always wonder what you are going to find below. This effect is used in several zones where some Metroids are hiding deep inside pits, surprising you during your freefall.

AM2R, while “brighter” with colors, is relatively faithful to the original game atmosphere; even we added some boss battles for modern players. The 3DS remake totally misses the point on this topic : no isolation, too many battles and enemies (was the planet ever abandoned ?) and worst of all : a nonsensical battle with Ridley at the end.

These SR388 sections are also important because this is where you find several powerups : Spider Ball to walk along the walls, High Jump boots, Space Jump, Jump ball, energy tanks, missiles reserves... and a hallmark of the franchise : the Varia suit. Because GameBoy doesn’t have a color palette, the designers had to draw a large armor for Samus with the iconic shoulders. Set apart from the Spider Ball, nearly all of these upgrades were included in following games.



While you will find no in-game explanations of what was the use of these complexes and caves, you will notice that each of them has its distinctive straits. Some of them are just small temples built by the mysterious Chozo with the iconic statues inside. One of them seems to be some sort of an old hydro-power station with water zones and several tubes the player can go through to explore the ruins. The last complex is a gigantic tower containing several weapons. You also have a whole area looking like a deep underground forest where many Metroids are hiding. In several caves, sand was added to create a feeling of abandonment with old complexes buried in the sands. While it’s a Game Boy game, the environment and buildings give an impression of something that was working in the past.

The “Secret worlds”

Unknown to many players : the Chozo ruins are the best place to enter what is called “Secret Worlds” in Metroid 2. Because of the way the game was encoded within the cartridge, the map is somewhat compressed into several tiny rooms and used according to player position. While you are moving normally within the game, it means that in memory you near other locations within the game.

The following article (<https://tasvideos.org/GameResources/GB/Metroid2>) explains the point clearly : *“The ROM has the game map stored in a series of 7 grids, each being a 16x16 grid of rooms (a room being a 16x16 grid of tiles, a tile being a 16x16 grid of pixels). The various sections of the game are stored in these grids mostly independent of each other, hooked up mainly by a series of “warp rooms” (see Warping). This means that locations that are far apart on the game map can be sitting right next to each other on the storage grids! Unless you are in a warp room, using the select glitch will take you to the room bordering the one you are in, whether it be another part of the game map or one of*

the many secret worlds. Side note: Generally, each grid follows a theme of sorts; for example, grid 1 contains the exteriors for the first four ruins while grids 5 and 6 contain the interiors of said ruins.” To exploit this possibility, some players have discovered the “Select Glitch”.

The way blocks are displayed in the game means that if you overflow the memory of the cartridge, by pressing the select button, some blocks won’t appear at all or not in the right place, creating holes. And if you take those passages, you can enter totally disconnected areas in the game : like moving from a Chozo statue room to the Queen nest. Because the rooms are not properly loaded, the sprites are totally random, leading to some “artistic” environments. But unfortunately for speed-runners, the developers have hard-coded all rules to end the game or kill the Metroids, meaning that you can be stuck in a “soft-lock” : either not being able to end the game even if the Metroid-counter is at zero or not able to move to previous areas to kill the remaining Metroids.

The fact is that it was probably difficult for the programmers to make sure that the players never skip an area or a Metroid fight. You will notice several things across the game to make sure the player is never missing the script. The entrance of the planet (where you started the game) is closed after the final boss fight. You can’t access the last area even if you have enough energy to go through the lava because the developers have put artificial spikes to block any progression. The shaft in the final boss room to escape if you run low on energy is closed once the battle ends.

The tension building-up

With the metroid-counter dwindling, you walk through emptier and emptier corridors/caves until entering the latter section. At this point, the music tone is extremely dark and creates a sense of dread. All the small creatures have vanished. You are alone exploring a creepy zone with no small enemies and barely one save station. The texture is quite weird, reminding the “bubble and sticky like” texture of the Alien nests in the eponymous franchise with some watery matters : something impressive for a GameBoy game. No energy/missiles re-filling balls too like in previous. The area is in fact only populated with the most dangerous Metroids : Omega ones. You have 3 of them. Once you have killed them, you can progress toward the end section of the game. This is a long section with no enemies and only sticky watery matter in some parts. After this long walk, you finally enter a gigantic empty cave filled with weird and harmless insectoid-like creatures. While climbing the gigantic cave, you find several textures reminiscent of the previous complex structures left by the Chozo earlier in the game. You have three shafts. The first one gives you access to both missiles and energy refilling stations. The third one allows you to pursue the final part. The second one, in between the two others, is perhaps the most chilling : you find a broken Chozo statue with the head decapitated and an arm on the ground holding a power-up ball. This is also a great example of story-telling : whatever is ahead, it was enough (and willing) to tear off this statue.

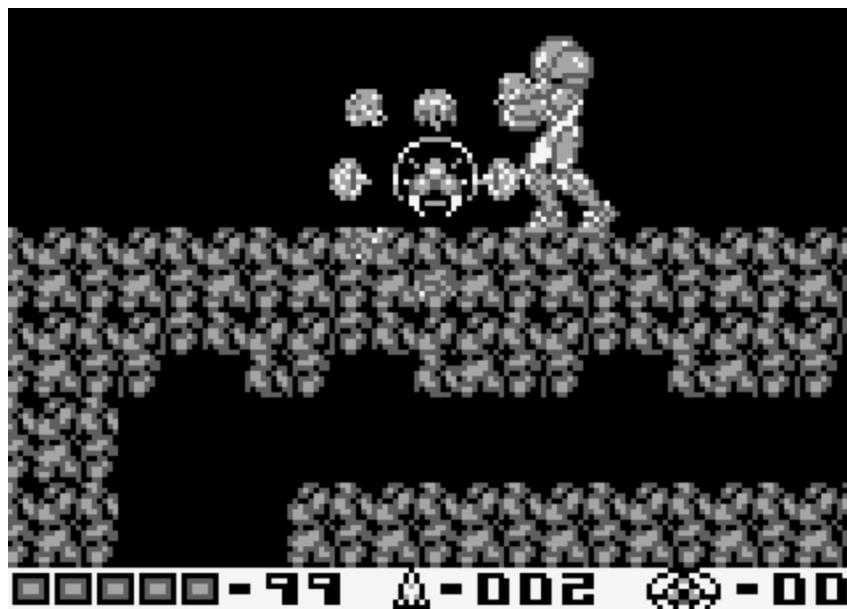


The famous broken Chozo statue

The shaft leading to the final part of the game is perhaps the most cinematic one, with an eerie music. You enter a very small shaft and discover an egg above you. While rolling below the egg, the game suddenly freezes and the metroid-counter is incremented by multiple other Metroids ! The next Metroids are flying jellyfish in the first game. They are easy to kill but are quick enough to grab you and drain your energy. While not explicit, the whole area really looks like a laboratory with tubes and weird objects used to build the place. Could it be where the Metroids were created ? Once you have killed all the remaining Metroids in the area, you can finally move to the next and final fight : the Queen metroid.



The monster is gigantic, requiring nearly 100 missiles to kill it. This is the only and true boss in the whole game, with a complex pattern of movement and attack. You can either battle her with a war of attrition, or also use the morph ball to drop bombs within her body. A small hole allows for the player to leave if the battle is too difficult. Once she dies, this hole is closed and you can only move to the next room. The famous egg you have spotted earlier hatches and you have this tiny Metroid circling around you :



This single moment is probably the most important in the whole Metroid franchise : this is the moment when Samus refused to fulfill her mission on SR388 and spare the life of this metroid. If the baby Metroid was not there, and if he was not killed, you won't have all the subsequent Metroid games. And certainly not Super Metroid in the first place. Because many of the subsequent plots are linked to this event.

Once the Metroid egg hatches, the music playing is extremely peaceful and you go through the last corridors with the baby helping you by eating some sort of small blocks blocking the way to your ship. For some players, this was probably some sort of “meditating” time. After spending the whole game hunting and killing Metroids, we finally leave the planet while taking care of the last one. The developers probably didn’t expect this kind of philosophical statement, but the fact is that it probably emerged in the head of many players.

AM2R and Metroid 2 remake for the 3DS do a nice job by revisiting the end of the game. In Metroid Fusion, the game begins with Samus assisting scientists on SR388 years after her mission to destroy the Metroids, where she is attacked by a mysterious parasite trying to mimic her : the X parasite. Later in the game, we learned that the X natural habitat was SR388 and that the Metroids were probably engineered to destroy them. In the AM2R and Metroid 2 remake for the 3DS, once the game ends, a small scene is added where we first see a small creature walking on the ground of SR388. Then, the crystal-like structures eaten by the baby Metroid at the end of Metroid 2 on GameBoy in the final corridor starts to transform into a small flying and yellowish creature that merges with the small creature and starts to mimic it.

METROID FUSION

— A DARK AND MYSTERIOUS ADVENTURE

After my previous Medium post “Metroid 2 Return of Samus : revisiting an overshadowed masterpiece”, I will now discuss Metroid Fusion released in 2002–2003. As I explained in my previous post about Metroid 2, I got a Game Boy Advance SP which came with a cartridge of Metroid Fusion. This is the game that made me rediscover Metroid 2 years after trying to play it as a child. Metroid Fusion, contrary to Metroid 2, was largely well-received and praised for its gameplay, atmosphere, story-telling... I’m not going to rehabilitate this game like I did for Metroid 2 in my previous post. Instead, I want to explore how interconnected these two games are.

Samus going back to “roots”

Metroid Fusion begins with a long cutscene. Samus is back with scientists on SR388 (the homeworld of Metroids) to capture some wild creatures on the planet. Astonished by a small and strange flying creature, she decided to move on and tried to shoot it. Unharmed, the mysterious creature suddenly merged with Samus. Without suspicion, Samus took her spaceship to escort the scientists to the space station where several specimens were to be examined. Unexpectedly, she fell into a coma, and her ship crashed in an asteroid field. Rescued, Samus is taken to a hospital where the medical staff tried desperately to remove her armor. Only a small fragment of it is successfully removed for analysis. The solution to save Samus came finally in the form of a small vaccine made from a Metroid culture. This is the second time the Metroids are saving Samus : the first time in Super Metroid, now in Metroid Fusion. Something that should raise questions for the player : the baby Metroid was taken to a space station at the beginning of Super Metroid after the events of Metroid 2, stolen and brought to a planet named Zebes and finally killed in the final battle with Mother Brain. How could some DNA still be available ?



The Metroid-DNA sequence during the cutscene where many questions arise

Metroids were also considered so dangerous that the Space Federation asked Samus to destroy them on SR388 in Metroid 2. Something that leaves open many questions. With the help of the Metroid vaccine, Samus healed quickly, but is now completely transformed : the Metroids DNA having merged with her own DNA. That’s really an interesting point of this game : Samus is not anymore a special space bounty hunter, she has merged with her very own enemy and one of the most dangerous creatures of the universe. Given a new spaceship, Samus is quickly asked to go to the B.S.L. (Biological Space Laboratories) orbiting SR388 : an explosion was recorded on the space station. In exchange for a new spaceship, Samus is now required to obey some kind of an AI, something unusual in the franchise : Samus being the perfect example of the woman receiving no orders. While she meditates on her situation, the spaceship is now approaching from the space station.



The Samus' spaceship enters the B.S.L. space station

A transformed Samus

Once we arrive on the space station, we are told our first orders by the AI. Contrary to other Metroid games, Metroid Fusion is extremely linear (perhaps as much as Metroid 2) : you receive orders and you should progress through the game to reach the target. Doing speed-running with Metroid Fusion (contrary to Super Metroid) is impossible because many paths are hard-locked. Like all other Metroid games (except the original NES Metroid and Metroid 2) an in-map is included. Regarding what I was saying earlier (“Samus is not anymore a special space bounty hunter, she has merged with her very own enemy and the most dangerous creature of the universe”), the appearance of Samus is telling : the developers have represented her with small body movements (like if she was breathing) rather than through a more static appearance in past games. She nearly got, given her tiny armor appearance to represent her fusion with Metroid’s DNA, a look that is nearly “organic”.



Samus first encounter with a creature in the room where the fragments of her armor were stored, you can notice the detailed light/shadow effects and impressive tiles

The game background and tiles are impressive. The atmosphere is vivid and realistic. For those accustomed to Metroid games, the emptiness (lack of survivors in our case) is not really a surprise. We already understood that something happens, while being puzzled by the atmosphere. The whole station is very clean and even “dreamy” in some parts, especially the submarine one. It has nothing to do with the mysterious, eerie and empty caves in Metroid 2. Something eerie too in the meantime : something inevitably occurred here but left little damage. Compared to Metroid 2, and because of Game Advance hardware capabilities, the whole ambience is far more engaging even for fans of Metroid 2 like me : colors, music, tiles, light effects, cutscenes, dialogues... You have several dramatic tracks for narrative purposes, but also a lot of ambient sounds : computer noises, submarine

ambience, machinery... The threat is more subtle in Metroid fusion than in any other game of the franchise, and linked to an interesting narrative choice : Samus is extremely weak at the beginning.



Samus exploring a section of the “desert” environment, the background is moving to mimic the heat in the area

Contrary to other Metroid games, where Samus starts in a relatively “good shape”, the whole plot in Metroid Fusion revolves about what Samus Aran has lost and needs to recover. During the whole game and nearly till the conclusion, the AI guiding Samus across the space station always reminds her of the weakness : you don't have the missiles, you are too weak against this type of X-Parasite, you can be frozen by this weapon, you can't access this part, you need my authorization... Something you never heard in previous games where Samus is expected to be an extremely apt problem solver, despite the need to acquire power ups during the game. Perhaps even more interesting than these constraints : the worst threat is Samus herself, or more exactly, a copycat produced by the very X-Parasite having infected her on SR388 with all Samus past powers. The few encounters in the game with X-Samus (called in the game SA-X) are telling from a physiological perspective : SA-X walking menacingly with a large armor, weapons and massive shoulders, against the relatively weak Samus having more the appearance of a normal person. A large part of the narrative revolved around this situation : Samus being diminished and having to relearn progressively all her capabilities in face of an existential threat.



Nearly all upgrades are obtained through these kinds of stations, given by the AI and only after the agreement of the Space Federation

The problem with B.S.L.

The space station B.S.L. is intended to study different species according to their environments. The AI explains to the player that each section of the space laboratory was created to reproduce the natural environment of the studied creatures : desert, deep sea, jungle, icy world... and surprisingly a copycat of the SR388 environment. The latter is easy to understand when you see that the environment is the same as those depicted in the long cutscene at the beginning of the game, and because the station is orbiting SR388. The realism is so high that the architects even add the presence of a Chozo statue inside it. Walking across the station and different parts of the station to catch/stop the SA-X create several questions : what could push the SA-X to be so willing to destroy the space station ? The X-Parasite has no known predator in this space station, because the only one are the Metroids. During the game, the SA-X will attempt successively to : flood some parts of the station, copycat massive creatures, cut the power generator, obstruct air vents in several areas... And perhaps the most puzzling and self-destructive action : attempt to overheat the space station to destroy it; and everyone onboard including the SA-X.



The first battle with the security robot whose presence clearly signals another threat

I was discussing earlier the fact that “the whole station is very clean”. When the game progresses, the player can feel that there is something definitely wrong with the station. Something potentially hiding behind the wall. We got a few hints during the game. At one point, when the player leaves one of the control rooms to reach the next target, the game is interrupted by a small cutscene where the AI discusses with a mysterious man about the fact that Samus has possibly unveiled a secret regarding the space station purpose.

We can wonder too why so big and dangerous creatures are stored inside the space station. The player will also notice that the AI, especially when Samus has regained a large part of her power later in the game, is extremely cautious about any engagement with the SA-X despite clear possibilities to fight him. The AI seems surprised and annoyed when Samus is able to regain alone some of her capabilities without relying on updates provided by upgrade stations (all of them being vetoed by the Space Federation). The biggest disagreement between Samus and the AI emerges when Samus had to deactivate the last security door control given access to the most sensitive section of the space station, because she was stuck. The tone is severe : this is like if Samus has seriously disobeyed orders despite having no other choices to progress.



The multiple boss battles during the whole game are telling. The premise is that B.S.L. space station exists for peaceful research. The very fact is that dangerous monsters with potential military applications live within it. It should make us wonder : why does such a peaceful research station need to keep such dangerous and big creatures ? Of course, fighting bosses is part of any Metroid game. But from my perspective, it's also part of a bigger story-telling : there is something definitely more dangerous hiding somewhere in the depths of the space station. The recurrent threat of security robots heavily armed also leaves many questions. There is obviously something that needs to be contained within the station. At one point, we even encounter at one point what seems to be a creature looking like Ridley, the iconic Samus enemy, frozen in a special room. B.S.L. space station is far from innocence.



The “Nightmare”, a dangerous flying creature mastering gravity, the typical creature that shouldn’t be inside a space station

You will also notice that for a long time during the game, you are always forced to move from one area to another by reaching the main floor where all of them are accessible. But later in the game, you

discover something puzzling : small secret tunnels exist in fact between each area. Why be forced to always choose the hardest solution ?



One of the several secret tunnels

All these elements put together are very efficient in terms of story-telling and narrative, even if it was not necessarily fully articulated by the developers. They contribute to creating a weird, mysterious and eerie atmosphere in a physical environment that seems totally clean; but obviously is not.

The true threat revealed ?

The last real mission of Samus is to track down the security robot encountered several times in the game. The AI clearly warns Samus about the danger of the SA-X tracking her, and asks her to leave the area once the robot is defeated. Once Samus has defeated the security robots, and because of the fact the shaft to access this area was only one-way, she has no choice but to go deeper in the area. She unexpectedly unveils a mysterious, restricted and deeply hidden laboratory within the space station : a Metroid breeding laboratory.



Samus running with the “speedbooster” into the secret laboratory

Finally, we got our answers regarding our previous suspicions : something was hidden for good reasons. Samus, having been tasked to eradicate the species in Metroid 2, discovers that the Space Federation is in fact trying to produce them in large quantities. While being in the secret laboratory, the SA-X suddenly enters the area. And surprise, the main target is not Samus, but the Metroids themselves. The X-Parasite, shortly after entering the space station inside a container, was probably perfectly able to feel the obvious presence of its most feared threat. Having gained access to a human

body, the X-Parasite feels able to finally compete and eradicate its very own predator. Even it was at the expense of the entire space station. As usual, the SA-X is willing to destroy the entire area, forcing Samus to escape; while the laboratory is expelled from the space station and explodes in space.

While extremely short, this moment is very important from my perspective. Finally, what if we were totally wrong in pursuing the destruction of the X-Parasite ? A bit like Samus could have been wrong at the end of Metroid 2 by saving the baby Metroid. The X-Parasite is obviously a threat whose main goal is to reproduce, expand, kill and clone its victims. But isn't it a problem that scientists and the authorities are finally doing something extremely dangerous and unethical : preserving and developing the most dangerous species of the universe ? Something that mirrors the first Alien movie, when we discover that the ship landed on the mysterious planet not because it was puzzling and mysterious, but because the Weyland corporation responsible for the travel has already decoded the radio message, and knows there was something invaluable to get there. Even at the expense of the entire crew. This topic is not articulated in the game, but I found it fascinating : the worst threat is sometimes not an obscure alien creature but the very people willing to exploit it at the expense of everything else.



Samus last mission on B.S.L before the final climax

The fact that the AI was probably monitoring the entire space station and the SA-X progression adds another troubling level of interpretation. The Space Federation, like Ash in the Alien movie, probably "fell in love" with the very own creature they should have eliminated. To quote Ash in Alien : "I admire its purity. A survivor... unclouded by conscience, remorse, or delusions of morality.". Something very close to a strong attraction/rejection, where the danger is both threatening and extremely appealing. The probable rationale behind the AI to monitor Samus so closely and avoid all fights with the specimen. On her path to her ship for further orders, Samus encounters the clone of Ridley : her iconic enemy in the game franchise. Not my preferred part to be transparent. When Samus finally enters a control room, she is suddenly locked inside. The AI tells her that the mission is finished, and that the Space Federation is going to take over to collect the SA-X. Perfectly understanding the obvious threat, Samus attempts to resonate with the AI. She explains that one of her previous officers would have perfectly understood the need for this sacrifice mission : destroying the space station to save humanity. It turns out that the spirit of this officer, Adam, was in fact uploaded into the AI. Having "revived" Adam, the latter finally asks Samus to not only destroy the space station, but to modify its orbit to blow away SR388 : the homeworld of both Metroids and X-Parasite.



SA-X fighting with the Omega Metroid, with Samus lying on the ground on the left

After the battle against a mutated SA-X and activation of the orbital update sequence, Samus runs to her ship. Like in Aliens when Ripley emerges from the elevator, the ship is gone. Suddenly, an Omega Metroid emerges from a wall and tries to kill Samus. Nearly killed, Samus is finally saved by the SA-X, who is killed by the Omega Metroid. This moment allows Samus to absorb SA-X power, and finally destroy the Omega Metroid. Samus was probably never the true target of the SA-X. It has been the Metroids since the very beginning. In a rush, the spaceship (piloted by the AI) finally arrives and saves Samus, before the space station collides with SR388.

Final

Metroid Fusion closes what could have been an endless loop in the most brilliant manner : the disappearance of the threat when Samus merged with it. That's why I really appreciate both of these games (Metroid Fusion and Metroid 2). They are obviously interconnected : same planet, threat, eeriness, ethical questions too... Metroid 2 was the game required to understand what follows next. But Metroid Fusion pushed many of the initial ideas existing in Metroid 2 into something extremely powerful given the hardware possibilities : music, ambience, tiles, story-telling... Finally, Metroid Fusion closes this narrative arc with the elimination of the very own meaning of the franchise. Except if we account for Samus of course : being now a mix between the Metroids and X-Parasite.