

Establishing Literary Merit in *Metal Gear Solid*

A close critical reading

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Outline

- Why Metal Gear Solid?
 - Acclaimed for its depth of narrative quality
- Mission:
 - Explicate the Literary Merit of Metal Gear Solid
- How can we analyze “Literary Merit?”
 - Critical discussions of the following points:

1. Cinematic
Cutscenes

2. Suspension
of Disbelief

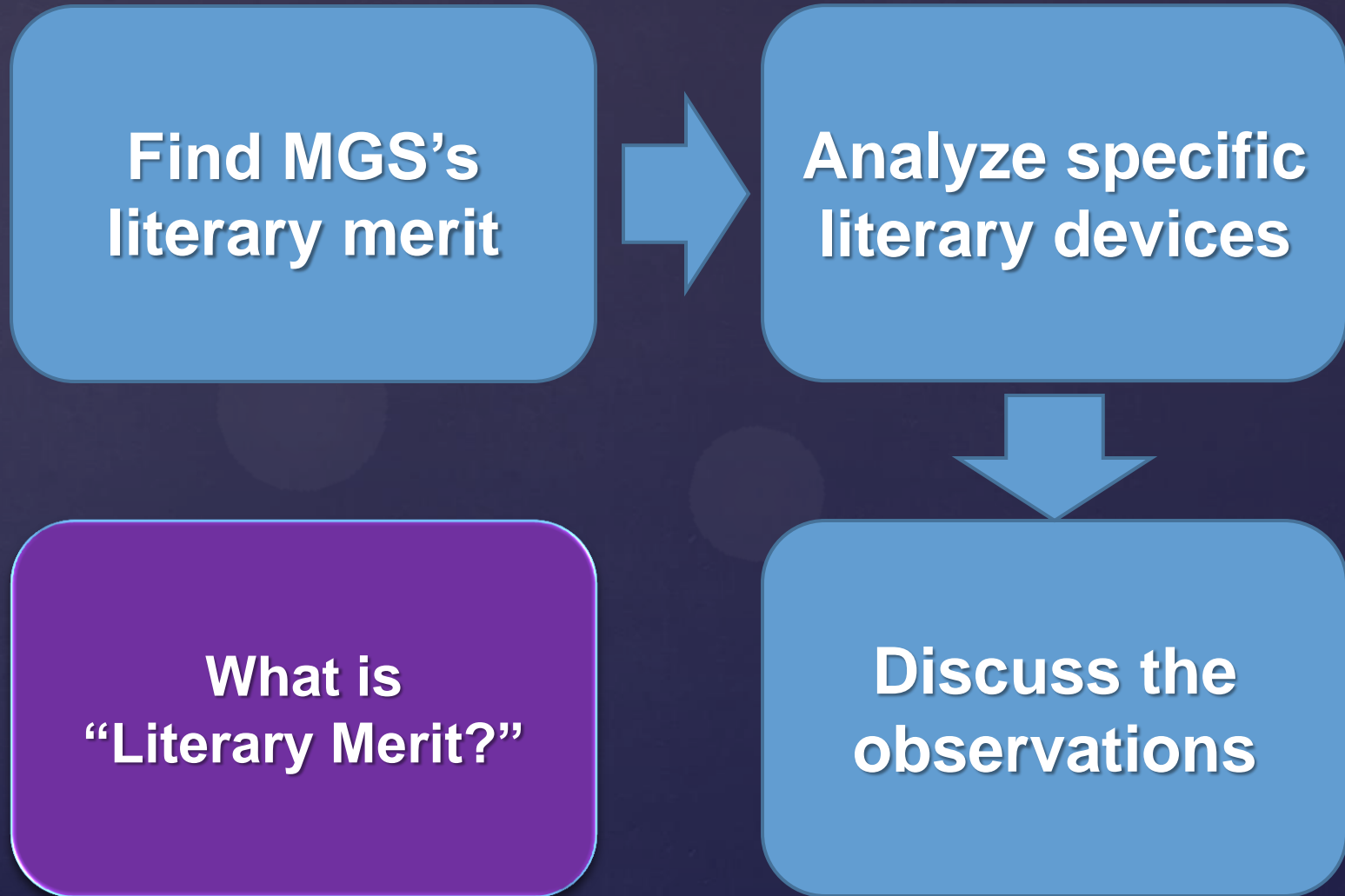
3. Nature
vs. Nurture

Background of *MGS*

- ❑ Released by Konami in 1998
- ❑ 3rd installment
- ❑ Sony Playstation
- ❑ Protagonist: “Solid Snake”
- ❑ Mission: Prevent deployment of super weapon “Metal Gear”
- ❑ 14-year legacy evidenced by continuation of franchise and related media



Purpose



Definition: “Literary Merit”

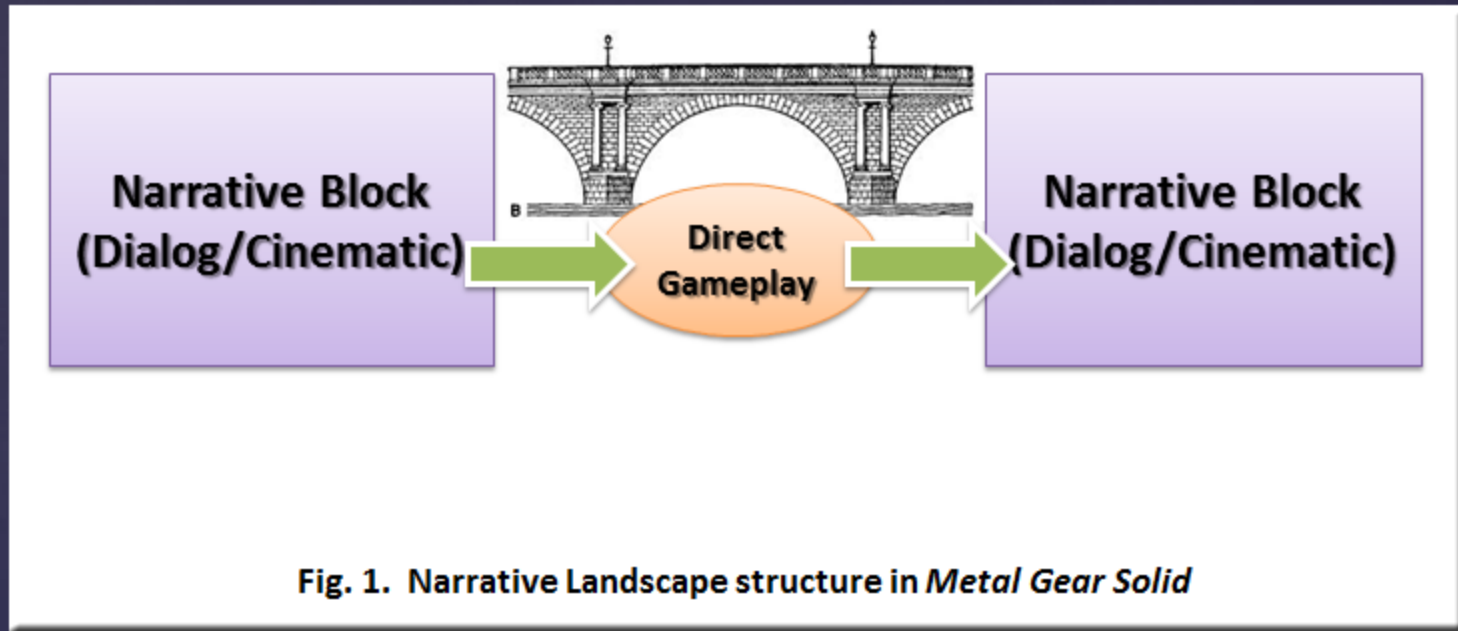
The presence
of deeper
meaning



If deeper
meanings
elevate the work
to a more
meaningful level

Are there any deeper meanings in *MGS*? If so, do these meanings constitute the synergistic effect of raising *MGS* to being more than just a game?

1. Prose and Cinema of *MGS* (1)



- ❑ *MGS* Narrative Landscape is characterized by very long cutscenes.
- ❑ Common criticism: more time spent watching instead of playing

1. Prose and Cinema of *MGS* (2)

Skipping a Cutscene

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graph TD; A[Skipping a Cutscene] --> B[Erases narrative context]; A --> C[Potentially prevents advancement];
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**Erases
narrative
context**

**Potentially
prevents
advancement**

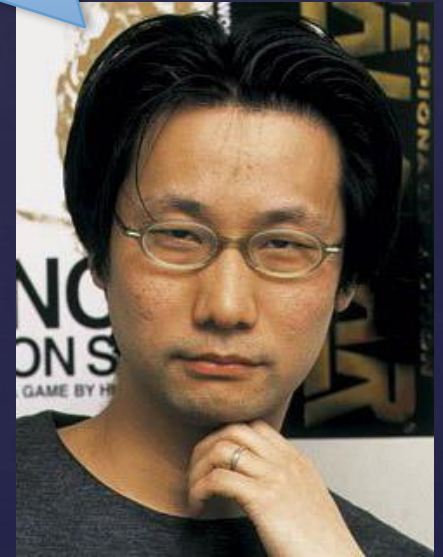
**Use of the Cutscenes emphasizes the
thematic elements of the game narrative**

2. Suspension of Disbelief (1)



Necessary for preventing the reader from potentially questioning and thereby doubting fantastic occurrences within any given story (Coleridge, 1817)

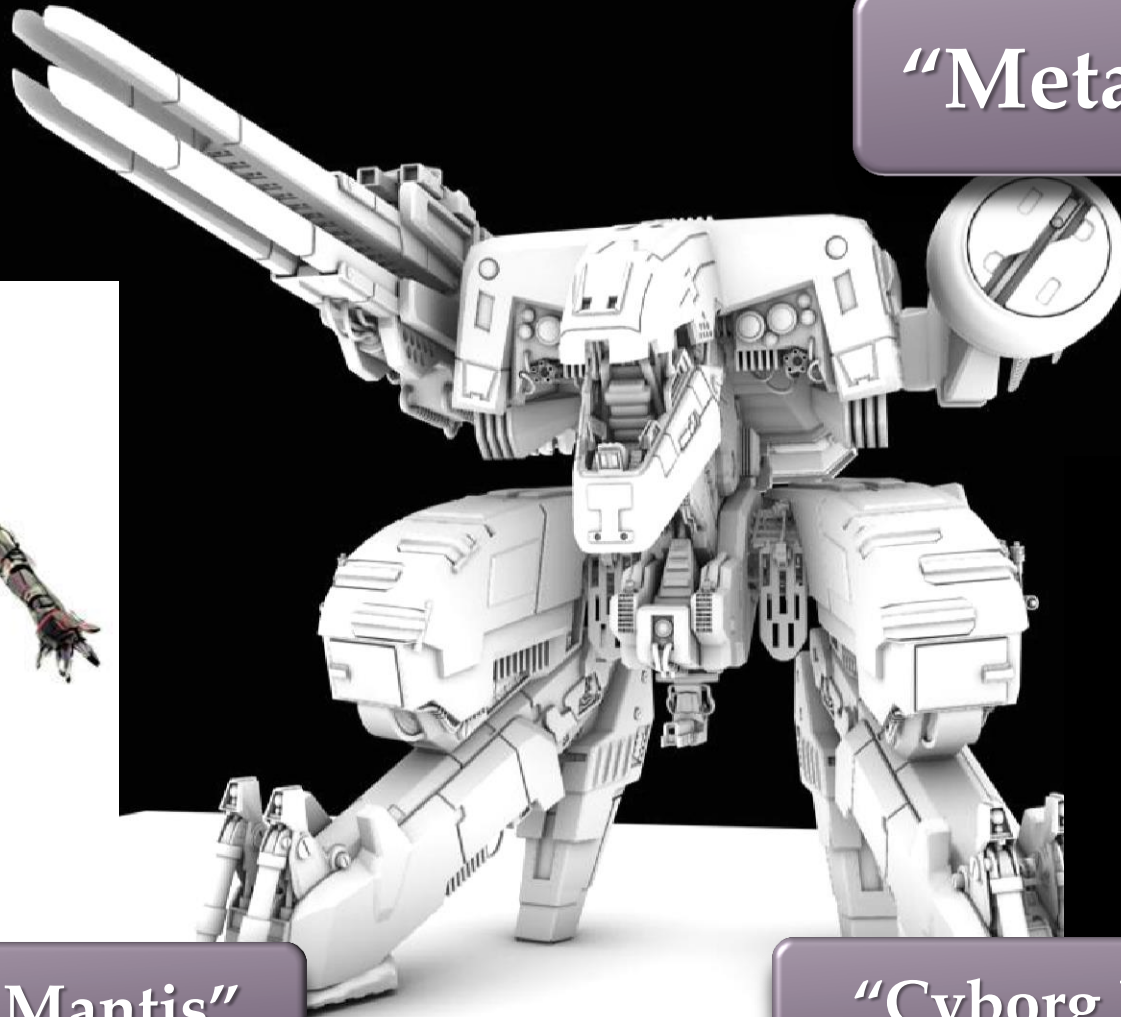
Hideo Kojima: “If the player isn’t tricked into believing that the world is real, then there’s no point in making the game.”
(IGN, 1998)



2. Suspension of Disbelief (2)



“Psycho Mantis”

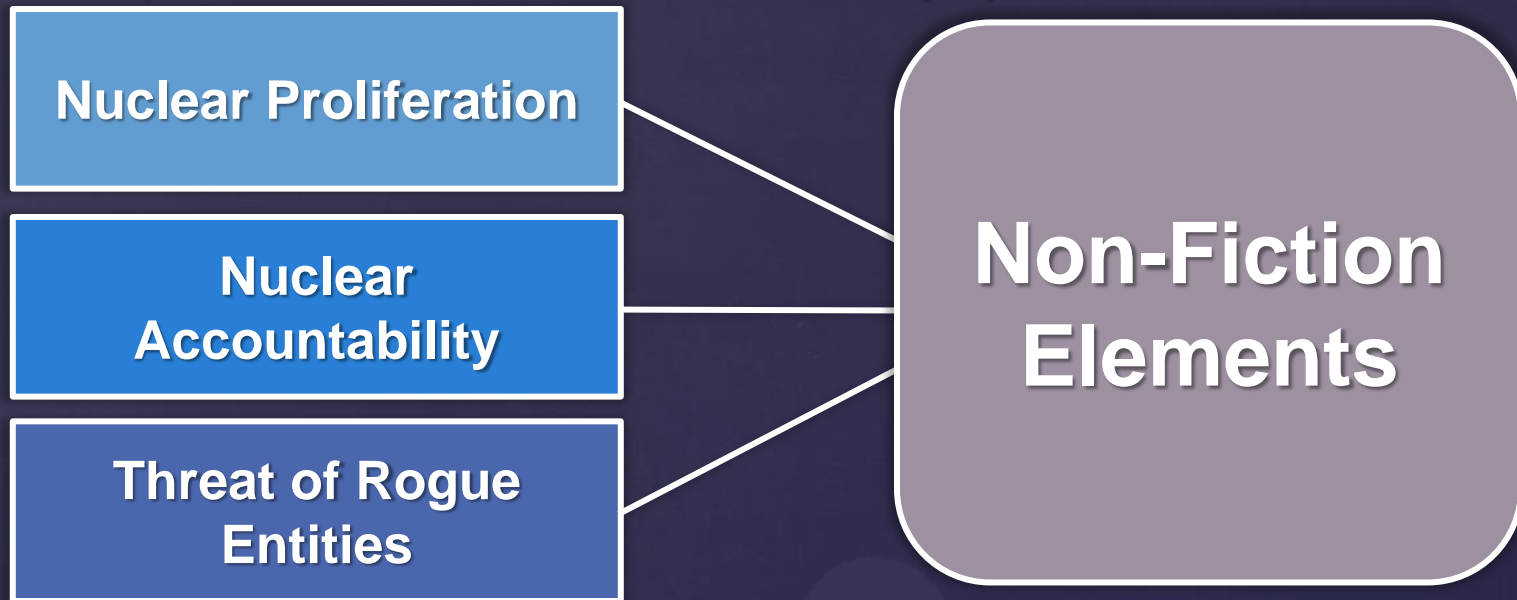


“Metal Gear”



“Cyborg Ninja”

2. Suspension of Disbelief (3)



START TREATIES

Started
1991
(Russia/USA)

Re-ratified
2010

Significant
reduction
of Nuclear
weapons

2. Suspension of Disbelief (4)

Using a START as an example, the game has the potential to conjecture:

How effective is START in the first place?

Is there a loophole in START that can be taken advantage of?

Is there anything better than START?

3. Nature vs. Nurture (1)

- The *MGS* narrative emphasizes dichotomies



- Liquid Snake & Solid Snake are manifestations of the debate

3. Nature vs. Nurture (2)

□ “The FoxDie conundrum”:

FoxDie: genetically-engineered retrovirus
which selectively kills according to a
programmable target list

FoxDie will
kill Liquid
Snake.

Liquid
Snake and
Solid
Snake are
twins.

FoxDie will
kill Solid
Snake.

3. Nature vs. Nurture (3)

- Ultimately, Solid Snake does NOT succumb to FoxDie

**DNA governs a person's
potential
strengths/destinies.**

- Game's Conclusion: BOTH Nature and Nurture have influence, but ultimately it's up to the individual



Conclusion

- Metal Gear Solid does a fine job at
 - Prioritizing its story elements (Cinematic Cutscenes)
 - Presenting its fiction in an effectively plausible way (Suspension of Disbelief in Historical Fiction)
 - Serving as an impetus for further discussion even after gameplay has concluded (Inclusion of complex themes)
- ❖ Where do we go from here?
 - ❖ Apply such analyses and practices to other games
 - ❖ Work towards the creation of a “Canon of Classic Video Games”