Proof of Personhood

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Interludes

Gilbert Again

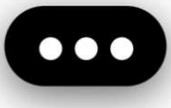


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Interludes

Gilbert Again



Gilbert Again is an *immediatist* graphic design commentator, Head of Derivatives at Tomb Series and CEO at Netmorf.

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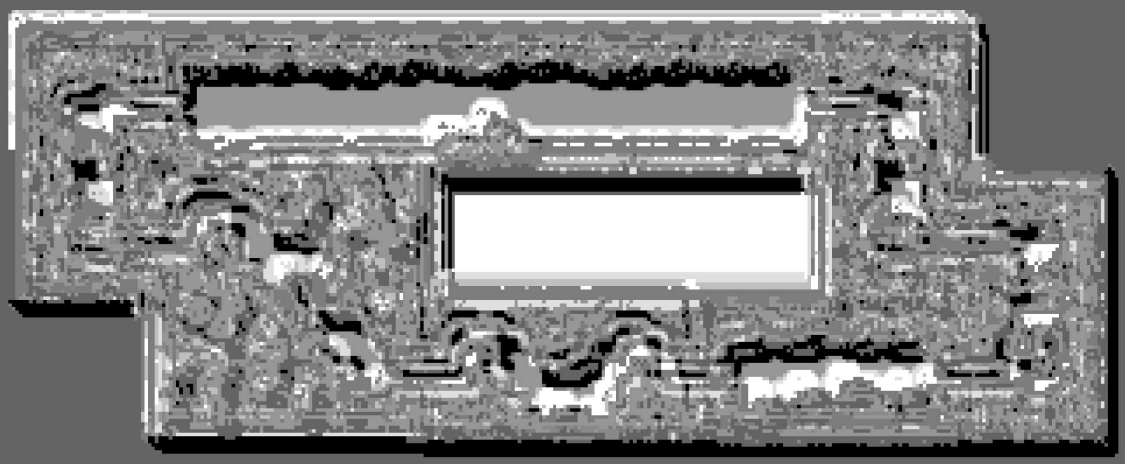


That's me, Gilbert. Summer 1985. As a boy I was trained on singular pieces of media. Read and read and read. Even now, decades on, a glimpse of this book's cover reminds me of how I longed to own and covet it. Its compositional data so exactly preserved by my mind's eye, base and unconscious. How I would have consumed it ...

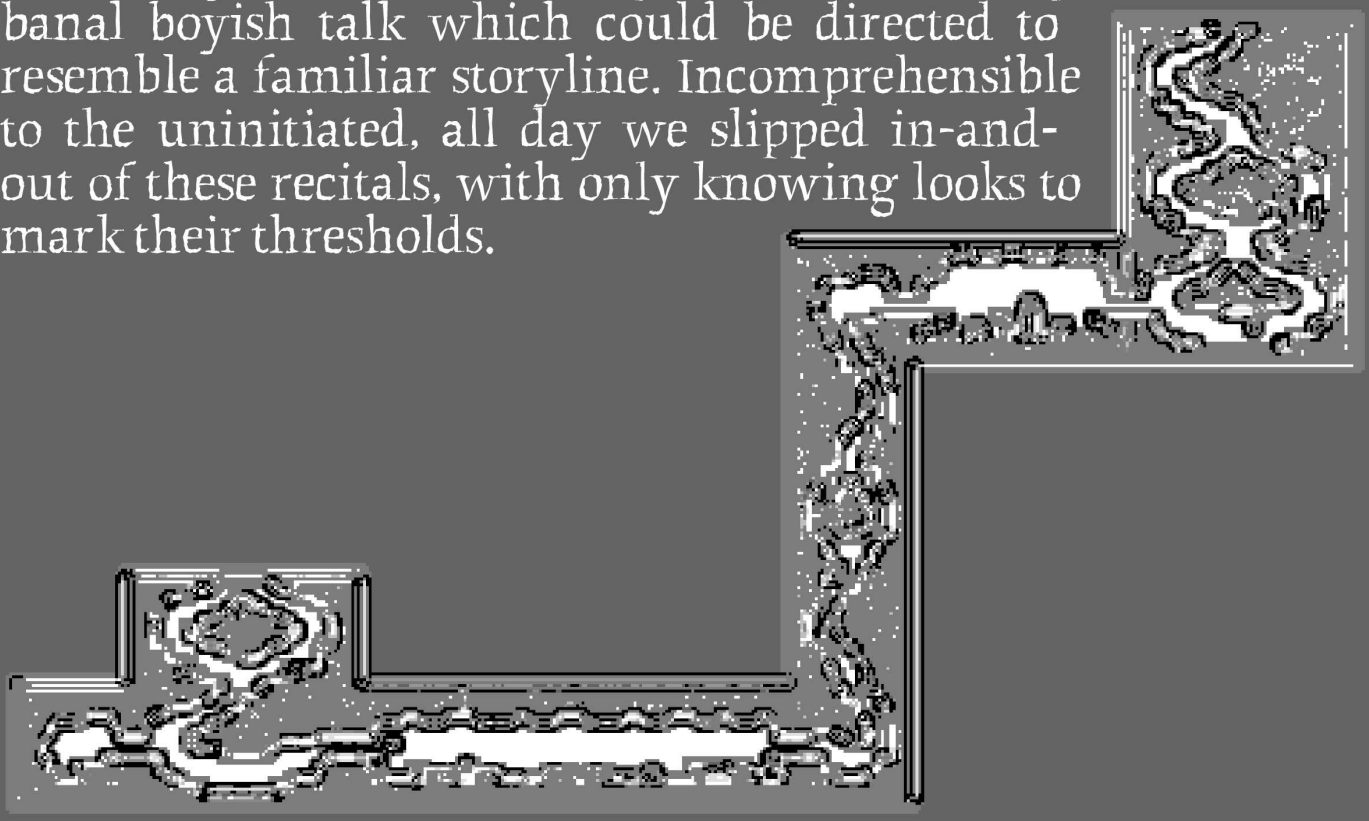
March 1994. Training intensified for my friends and I. Now we found our thrills transgressing the sacrosanct boundaries of franchises. We mixed IPs, lexicons, and lore, improvising the outcomes of unsanctioned interactions between unrelated protagonists, testing one another's cultural agility. It was our prerogative. We learned to accept our action figures prosaically decoupled from their proper universes. Who of us could expect our parents to buy the entire faction of red Zoids?



No, we took our characters as we found them, one-by-one they entered our collections: at birthdays, holidays, with visiting grandparents. We pretended, suspended our disbelief as we reconciled the realms of Optimus Prime and He-Man with the beige carpets, pine coffee tables, and patterned sofas amidst which our narratives had to play out. We intuited a fundamental interoperability of worlds.



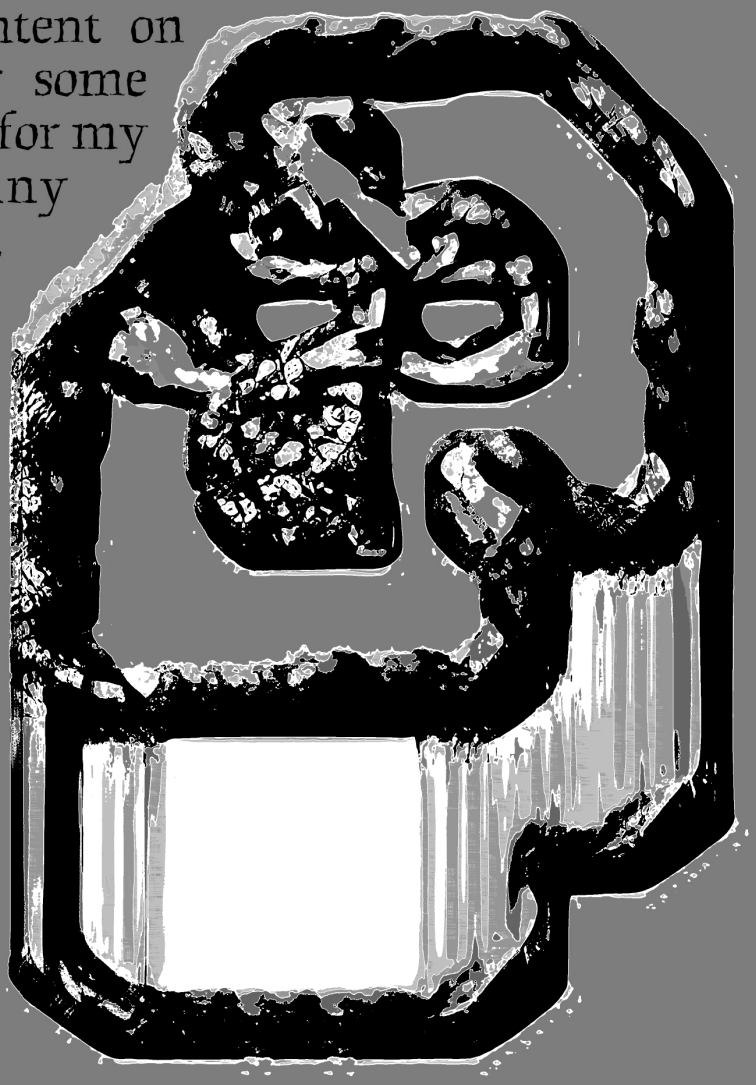
August 1997. A boy is for taking two fantastical cultural coordinates and building world to traverse between them. A boyish imaginary is to extrapolate. Craving, raving, ravenous, my friends and I, we carried on extended conversations in passages quoted rote across worlds. These role-plays were instantiated seamlessly and spontaneously, imposed onto any banal boyish talk which could be directed to resemble a familiar storyline. Incomprehensible to the uninitiated, all day we slipped in-and-out of these recitals, with only knowing looks to mark their thresholds.



January 2002. I took it further than the others. My friends disappointed me with their lame lines. If I would drop Cortana: "We're all equally edible," that pointed revelation from the original Halo's ending, they would respond predictably with: "That was too close ... You were almost a Gilbert sandwich," from the first Resident Evil, a line whose tactless humour I had long since tired of. Personally I could quite effortlessly have recalled any number of more apt retorts to my opener. Here, for example, this snippet from Samus, in Metroid Fusion: "The X hunger for form, knowledge, and power. They mimic these perfectly. But they cannot copy the soul." Fitting, given Cortana's implication that all we mortals are mere food for the Flood and to resist it we must sacrifice ourselves in order to deny it nourishment. No doubt mine were pedantic grievances but I had to insist on the distinction between a knowing mixing of discourses and simple mistakes: faulty recollections, non sequiturs, superficiality. I saw that their grasp on worlds was peaking, my friends.



July 2004. Naturally I grew apart from them, but for a time my extraordinary voracity-capacity kept me in social standing. A role could still be found for me at our teenage parties. They would ask me to recite that bit from that, or this in the style of that. They were so delighted with their imaginative leaps. Oh, oh, and what about A, but instead of B and C it's X and Y! Oh, no, no, what would X say to Y, after the scene in Z?! What would that be like, Gilbert, they'd ask, intent on taking some credit for my uncanny knack.



As if they, off the tops of their heads, were the creators of my renditions! As if just by triangulating among a shallow miscellany of cultural referents and calling forth a ridiculous predicament in which to set them, they were steering me — and not I them! — toward novel formulations. To them, I was just talking trivia and putting on funny voices. They thought me boorish. And a wicked bore I was. Quite peerless.