

Longpost® 3: Electric Squeedlee

Reductio ad absurdum in classic and
modern satirical prose

By Jonnson

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Mission Statement

In honour of this commitment

(https://www.reddit.com/r/storyandstyle/comments/k77blf/meta_is_it_me_or_is_a_lot_of_the_new_topics_here/geqzc1h/) I submit the below Longpost® for consideration.

I chose this prose style as a topic because I notice that most people have an instinctive sensibility for it, to the point where it is often much more of a 'first language', literarily speaking, than more classic literary prose.

For perhaps this reason, it appears extensively in both low- and high-effort user-generated content. You will be most familiar with it from meme content such as cypypasta and montage parodies, but its history is longer than that of the modern novel, and it appears abundantly in both classical and modern satirical prose.

In its lower forms, it can be very mean-spirited, and is prone to becoming, or being taken for a straw-man fallacy. This is because its essence consists in playing out the most ridiculous, and often most extreme, logical consequences of an argument. I will address a couple of examples which come across as disingenuous to all but an exceptionally charitable reading.

Some of the below texts follow the technique somewhat loosely, seeking less to disprove an argument than to follow a line of thinking to an extreme in order to

demonstrate that it leads somewhere insane. This is most obvious in texts owing stylistic debt to Jonathan Swift, and in 'Boléro-style' passages which accelerate to a catastrophic climax.

Another aim in choosing this topic is to introduce contemporary satirical writers to objects and styles of contemporary satire, having largely to do with the relationship between humans and technology. Identity politics is also a popular favourite, but produces some of the more dubious content, and to those who operate on the quite valid perception that party-political satire is impotent if not dead, I present the former avenue for consideration.

Introduction - Definitions

Reductio ad absurdum is a feature of Aristotelian logic, most commonly used in satire, rhetoric and debate.

According to Wikipedia:

(https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reductio_ad_absurdum)

'In logic, reductio ad absurdum (Latin for "reduction to absurdity")...is the form of argument that attempts to establish a claim by showing that the opposite scenario would lead to absurdity or contradiction.'

Classic rhetorical examples include:

'There is no smallest positive rational number because, if there were, then it could be divided by two to get a smaller one.'

The oldest known example is Xenophanes' satire of Homer attributing human characteristics to the Gods, on the bases that Ox could be expected to attribute Ox characteristics to the Gods

(http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1228&context=etd_theses)(Page 27).

A modern example:

'Olive oil on your salad is not going to make you fat, otherwise people on the Mediterranean would all be morbidly obese.'

In literature, this rhetorical technique commonly manifests itself in a writer adopting an absurd article of rhetoric or worldview, and playing it out over the course of a passage or text to its absurd logical conclusion.

In this essay we will refer to the following authors:

- Cervantes
- Jonathan Swift
- Voltaire
- Thomas Love Peacock
- William S. Burroughs
- Tom Sharpe
- J.G. Ballard
- Kathy Acker

I regret to note that these sources are mostly men, especially since I don't subscribe to the idea that women are somehow less funny. I attribute this to my own thin reading of farce and relevant genres.

I have not looked at dystopian novels like *The Machine Stops* and *Brave New World*, which perform *reductio ad absurdum* arguments on pre-Fordian and

Fordian ideals of utopia through efficiency, nor *1984*, *A Handmaid's Tale*, *Black Mirror*, nor other dystopian texts and works which operate on the playing-out of a concept to an absurd or desolate conclusion, since I prefer to limit the scope of this essay to comic texts - though comedy is present to some degree in most or all of the named Dystopian works.

We will also discuss the influence of this tradition on modern visual media and user-generated internet content, with regard to:

- Tim & Eric
- Copy-pasta

Finally, I include three examples of my own attempts to incorporate the above influences into contemporary satirical fiction:

- *Counter-Strike Nerf a Success*
- *This Now Thankfully*
- *The Merciless Current*

We will then conclude with some brief comments on the applicability of all this bullshit.

I thank you in advance for your endurance.

Cervantes - *Don Quixote* (1605)

One of the most famous early examples of modern literary satire is Miguel de Cervantes' **Don Quixote**. The text is essentially an exercise in sustained sympathetic embarrassment over a 16th-Century gentleman LARPing as a knight. It is explicitly stated to be an attack on the then-enormous influence of chivalric romances on the popular conscience.

An introduction to the novel quotes the perhaps hyperbolic...

'...words of one of his own countrymen, Don Felix Pacheco, as reported by Captain George Carleton, in his "Military Memoirs from 1672 to 1713." ... "it was next to an impossibility for a man to walk the streets with any delight or without danger. There were seen so many cavaliers prancing and curvetting before the windows of their mistresses, that a stranger would have imagined the whole nation to have been nothing less than a race of knight-errants"

Cervantes, like many in Spain with a family history in actual chivalry, found the influence of the derivative chivalric romance genre in the contemporary culture to be both laughable and somewhat sinister. An introductory note from one of his translators describes the satirical novel **Don Quixote** as:

'a tale setting forth the ludicrous results that might be expected to follow the attempt of a crazy gentleman to act the part of a knight-errant in modern life.'

An early example of such socially noxious conduct occurs when the then-aspiring knight, for the business of ceremonially 'watching' his armour - some part of the ritual of being knighted - chooses as a spot a trough which the inn's peasant guests require for the watering of their animals. When the peasants take exception to the obstruction of this essential utility, Don Quixote interprets this as a villainous attack on his armour, and behaves accordingly:

'Meanwhile one of the carriers who were in the inn thought fit to water his team, and it was necessary to remove Don Quixote's armour as it lay on the trough; but he seeing the other approach hailed him in a loud voice, "O thou, whoever thou art, rash knight that comest to lay hands on the armour of the most valorous errant that ever girt on sword, have a care what thou dost; touch it not unless thou wouldst lay down thy life as the penalty of thy rashness." The carrier gave no heed to these words (and he would have done better to heed them if he had been heedful of his health), but seizing it by the straps flung the armour some distance from him. Seeing this, Don

Quixote raised his eyes to heaven, and fixing his thoughts, apparently, upon his lady Dulcinea, exclaimed, "Aid me, lady mine, in this the first encounter that presents itself to this breast which thou holdest in subjection; let not thy favour and protection fail me in this first jeopardy;" and, with these words and others to the same purpose, dropping his buckler he lifted his lance with both hands and with it smote such a blow on the carrier's head that he stretched him on the ground, so stunned that had he followed it up with a second there would have been no need of a surgeon to cure him. This done, he picked up his armour and returned to his beat with the same serenity as before.'

The whole novel is essentially a longform satirical experiment in playing the above ludicrousness out, *ad absurdum*, and is well worth the attention of any aspiring satirist.

Jonathan Swift - *A Modest Proposal* (1729)

A Modest Proposal For preventing the Children of Poor People From being a Burthen to Their Parents or Country, and For making them Beneficial to the Publick is one of the most illustrious stylistic ancestors of the modern technical shitpost.

It was released as a rhetorical pamphlet during the Irish Potato Famine, and parodied the style of similar such pamphlets, in whose production it was then the fashion for any lettered and leisured individual to participate.

This tradition of social engineering is perhaps the same which gave birth to Marx and socialism. However, from the primordial sulphur column of undifferentiated social theory, grotesque and unviable mutant candidates for alternative life were extruding themselves, thrashing in deformed agony, and expiring to decompose on its slopes.

A note on the *Proposal's* relation to this tradition from Wikipedia

(https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Modest_Proposal)

(Under 'Population Solutions' heading):

'George Wittkowsky argued that Swift's main target in A Modest Proposal was not the conditions in Ireland, but rather the can-do spirit of the times that led people to devise a number of illogical schemes that

would purportedly solve social and economic ills. Swift was especially attacking projects that tried to fix population and labour issues with a simple cure-all solution. A memorable example of these sorts of schemes "involved the idea of running the poor through a joint-stock company". In response, Swift's *Modest Proposal* was "a burlesque of projects concerning the poor" that were in vogue during the early 18th century.'

*'A Modest Proposal also targets the calculating way people perceived the poor in designing their projects. The pamphlet targets reformers who "regard people as commodities". In the piece, Swift adopts the "technique of a political arithmetician" to show the utter ridiculousness of trying to prove any proposal with dispassionate statistics.'**

Some extracts which caricature the pompous, deadpan mathematical logic of contemporary rhetorical pamphleteering are as follows:

'As to my own part, having turned my thoughts for many years, upon this important subject, and maturely weighed the several schemes of our projectors, I have always found them grossly mistaken in their computation. It is true, a child just

dropt from its dam, may be supported by her milk, for a solar year, with little other nourishment: at most not above the value of two shillings, which the mother may certainly get, or the value in scraps, by her lawful occupation of begging; and it is exactly at one year old that I propose to provide for them in such a manner, as, instead of being a charge upon their parents, or the parish, or wanting food and raiment for the rest of their lives, they shall, on the contrary, contribute to the feeding, and partly to the cloathing of many thousands.'

...

*'I have reckoned upon a medium, that a child just born will weigh 12 pounds, and in a solar year, if tolerably nursed, increaseth to 28 pounds.**

'I grant this food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very proper for landlords, who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children.'

...

'I have already computed the charge of nursing a beggar's child (in which list I reckon all cottagers, labourers, and four-fifths of the farmers) to be about two shillings per annum, rags included; and

I believe no gentleman would repine to give ten shillings for the carcass of a good fat child, which, as I have said, will make four dishes of excellent nutritive meat, when he hath only some particular friend, or his own family to dine with him. Thus the squire will learn to be a good landlord, and grow popular among his tenants, the mother will have eight shillings neat profit, and be fit for work till she produces another child.'

Voltaire - *Candide* (1759)

Candide, ou l'Optimisme was a satirical text written in the buildup to the French Revolution, attacking the then-popular philosophical doctrine of Leibnizian Optimism. This doctrine was in essence an attempt to reconcile Catholic dogma with the logical reasoning of the Enlightenment.

Its most salient feature is its attempt to reconcile the existence of evil with the belief in an omnipotent, benevolent deity. It does this by claiming that, for reasons little understood, but understandable through logical reasoning, the present world is the best that God could possibly have chosen to create.

Candide performs a sustained *reductio ad absurdum* argument against Optimism by confronting a simple, unquestioning character with an onslaught of the world's atrocities and challenging him to accept the necessary conclusions that, among other things, natural disaster, mutilation and slavery are logically at home in the best of all possible worlds.

From Wikipedia

(<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Candide>):

'Optimism is founded on the theodicy of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and says all is for the best because God is a benevolent deity. This concept is often put

into the form, "all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds" (French: Tout est pour le mieux dans le meilleur des mondes possibles). Philosophers had trouble fitting the horrors of this earthquake into their optimistic world view.

'Voltaire actively rejected Leibnizian optimism after the natural disaster, convinced that if this were the best possible world, it should surely be better than it is. In both Candide and Poème sur le désastre de Lisbonne ("Poem on the Lisbon Disaster"), Voltaire attacks this optimist belief.[14] He makes use of the Lisbon earthquake in both Candide and his Poème to argue this point, sarcastically describing the catastrophe as one of the most horrible disasters "in the best of all possible worlds"

How Voltaire plays out the logic of Optimism *ad absurdum* is best illustrated by the various repetitions of the phrase 'all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds', confronting the reader with the insane prospect that such events be considered compatible with such a world:

'their lips met; their eyes sparkled; their knees trembled; their hands strayed. The Baron chanced to come by; he beheld the cause and effect, and, without hesitation, saluted Candide with some notable kicks

on the breach and drove him out of doors. The lovely Miss Cunegund fainted away, and, as soon as she came to herself, the Baroness boxed her ears.

'Thus a general consternation was spread over this most magnificent and most agreeable of all possible castles.'

...

'The entertainment began by a discharge of cannon, which, in the twinkling of an eye, laid flat about 6,000 men on each side. The musket bullets swept away, out of the best of all possible worlds, nine or ten thousand scoundrels that infested its surface. The bayonet was next the sufficient reason of the deaths of several thousands. The whole might amount to thirty thousand souls. Candide trembled like a philosopher, and concealed himself as well as he could during this heroic butchery.'

...

'In the meantime, Candide, who had been wounded by some pieces of stone that fell from the houses, lay stretched in the street, almost covered with rubbish.

"For God's sake," said he to Pangloss, "get me a little wine and oil! I am dying."

“This concussion of the earth is no new thing,” said Pangloss, “the city of Lima in South America experienced the same last year; the same cause, the same effects; there is certainly a train of sulphur all the way underground from Lima to Lisbon.””

“Nothing is more probable,” said Candide; “but for the love of God a little oil and wine.”

“Probable!” replied the philosopher, “I maintain that the thing is demonstrable.”

‘Candide fainted away, and Pangloss fetched him some water from a neighboring spring. The next day, in searching among the ruins, they found some eatables with which they repaired their exhausted strength. After this they assisted the inhabitants in relieving the distressed and wounded. Some, whom they had humanely assisted, gave them as good a dinner as could be expected under such terrible circumstances. The repast, indeed, was mournful, and the company moistened their bread with their tears; but Pangloss endeavored to comfort them under this affliction by affirming that things could not be otherwise that they were.

“For,” said he, “all this is for the very best end, for if there is a volcano at Lisbon it could be in no other spot; and it is impossible but things should be as they are, for everything is for the best.””

Thomas Love Peacock - *Headlong Hall* (1816)

In *Headlong Hall*, Peacock satirises various popular philosophical and pseudoscientific theories of the day, for which each of his characters functions as a stand-in.

Among these number Deteriorationism, Perfectionism, and Phrenology.

A technique used to caricature the insane lengths to which many proponents were prepared to follow their theories, Peacock commonly extrapolates the terms of an argument to a dubious scale.

Examples of this include the Deteriorationist, Mr. Escot, whose philosophy holds that all forms of technological progress produce deteriorations in the spirit and wellbeing of mankind, extending his argument to implausible claims about human physique:

'Mr Jenkison thought the scenery was just what it ought to be, and required no alteration.

'Mr Foster thought it could be improved, but doubted if that effect would be produced by the system of Mr Milestone.

'Mr Escot did not think that any human being could improve it, but had no doubt of its having changed very considerably for the worse, since

the days when the now barren rocks were covered with the immense forest of Snowdon, which must have contained a very fine race of wild men, not less than ten feet high.'

And the Phrenologist, Mr. Cranium, liberally estimating his field's predictive power to extend as far as implausibly specific prescriptions for one's vocational affinity:

"If his skull bear a marked resemblance to that of a magpie, it cannot be doubted that he will prove an admirable lawyer; and if with this advantageous conformation be combined any similitude to that of an owl, very confident hopes may be formed of his becoming a judge."

A minor example of a character making their own, perhaps accidental, *reductio ad absurdum* argument occurs in the novel's first chapter:

"Nothing can be more logical," said Mr Jenkison. "It has been said," continued he, "that the ox was expressly made to be eaten by man: it may be said, by a parity of reasoning, that man was expressly made to be eaten by the tiger: but as wild oxen exist where there are no men, and men where there are no tigers,

it would seem that in these instances they do not properly answer the ends of their creation."

In this case, the argument being made either unwittingly or sarcastically by the character Mr Jenkinson is that if one is to believe that God made all things to a purpose, one must also necessarily believe that he bungled somewhat in the execution.

A further example consists of an attack on permanent, destructive trends in modernisation according to at-best dubious tastes through a caricature of contemporary landscaping practices.

The character Mr. Milestone employs highly destructive techniques and designs, transparently motivated by the extra work, and therefore income, they generate:

'Mr Milestone had produced his portfolio for the edification and amusement of Miss Tenorina, Miss Graziosa, and Squire Headlong, to whom he was pointing out the various beauties of his plan for Lord Littlebrain's park.

'Mr Milestone: "This, you perceive, is the natural state of one part of the grounds.

"Here is a wood, never yet touched by the finger of taste; thick, intricate, and gloomy. Here is a little stream, dashing from stone to stone, and overshadowed with these untrimmed boughs."

'Miss Tenorina: "The sweet romantic spot! How beautifully the birds must sing there on a summer evening!"

'Miss Graziosa: "Dear sister! how can you endure the horrid thicket?"

'Mr Milestone: "You are right, Miss Graziosa: your taste is correct--perfectly en regle. Now, here is the same place corrected--trimmed--polished--decorated--adorned. Here sweeps a plantation, in that beautiful regular curve: there winds a gravel walk: here are parts of the old wood, left in these majestic circular clumps, disposed at equal distances with wonderful symmetry: there are some single shrubs scattered in elegant profusion: here a Portugal laurel, there a juniper; here a laurustinus, there a spruce fir; here a larch, there a lilac; here a rhododendron, there an arbutus. The stream, you see, is become a canal: the banks are perfectly smooth and green, sloping to the water's edge: and there is Lord Littlebrain, rowing in an elegant boat."

'Squire Headlong: "Magical, faith!"

'Mr Milestone: "Here is another part of the grounds in its natural state. Here is a large rock, with the mountain-ash rooted in its fissures, overgrown, as you see, with ivy and moss; and from this part of it bursts a little fountain, that runs bubbling down its rugged sides."

'Miss Tenorina: "O how beautiful! How I should love the melody of that miniature cascade!"

'Mr Milestone: "Beautiful, Miss Tenorina! Hideous. Base, common, and popular. Such a thing as you may see anywhere, in wild and mountainous districts. Now, observe the metamorphosis. Here is the same rock, cut into the shape of a giant. In one hand he holds a horn, through which that little fountain is thrown to a prodigious elevation. In the other is a ponderous stone, so exactly balanced as to be apparently ready to fall on the head of any person who may happen to be beneath[6.1]: and there is Lord Littlebrain walking under it."

'Squire Headlong: "Miraculous, by Mahomet!"

'Mr Milestone: "This is the summit of a hill, covered, as you perceive, with wood, and with those mossy stones scattered at random under the trees."

'Miss Tenorina: "What a delightful spot to read in, on a summer's day! The air must be so pure, and the wind must sound so divinely in the tops of those old pines!"

'Mr Milestone: "Bad taste, Miss Tenorina. Bad taste, I assure you. Here is the spot improved. The trees are cut down: the stones are cleared away: this is an octagonal pavilion, exactly on the centre of the summit: and there you see Lord Littlebrain, on

the top of the pavilion, enjoying the prospect with a telescope."

'Squire Headlong: "Glorious, egad!"

'Mr Milestone: "Here is a rugged mountainous road, leading through impervious shades:

"the ass and the four goats characterise a wild uncultured scene. Here, as you perceive, it is totally changed into a beautiful gravel-road, gracefully curving through a belt of limes: and there is Lord Littlebrain driving four-in-hand."

'Squire Headlong: "Egregious, by Jupiter!"

'Mr Milestone: "Here is Littlebrain Castle, a Gothic, moss-grown structure, half bosomed in trees. Near the casement of that turret is an owl peeping from the ivy."

'Squire Headlong: "And devilish wise he looks."

'Mr Milestone: "Here is the new house, without a tree near it, standing in the midst of an undulating lawn: a white, polished, angular building, reflected to a nicety in this waveless lake: and there you see Lord Littlebrain looking out of the window."

'Squire Headlong: "And devilish wise he looks too. You shall cut me a giant before you go."

'Mr Milestone: "Good. I'll order down my little corps of pioneers."

William S. Burroughs - *Naked Lunch* (1959)

William Burroughs employs *reductio ad absurdum* and similar satirical techniques so extensively in *Naked Lunch*, that reading it with this in mind goes a long way toward illuminating its more obscure passages.

One of its recurrent motifs - Lobotomy - was abundantly practiced at the time of *Naked Lunch's* writing.

Burroughs evidently finds the idea that the frontal cortex may be considered superfluous, and the apparent compulsion of many physicists to remedy this evolutionary extravagance, to be absurd and abhorrent.

He presents his physicians as motivated by an out-of-control fixation with efficiency, as well as a compulsive urge to practice their profession whether helpful to the patient or not; presents lobotomy as an extension of the removal of other arguably redundant organs, like the appendix.

"...and the German practitioner of Technological Medicine who removed his appendix with a rusty can opener and a pair of tin snips (he considered the germ theory "a nonsense"). Flushed with success he then began snipping and cutting out everything in sight: "The human body is filled up vit unnecessitated parts. You can get by vit vone kidney. Vy have two?"

Yes dot is a kidney ... The inside parts should not be so close in together crowded. They need Lebensraum like the Vaterland."

...

'Meeting of International Conference of
Technological Psychiatry

'Doctor "Fingers" Schafer, the Lobotomy Kid, rises and turns on the Conferents the cold blue blast of his gaze:

"Gentlemen, the human nervous system can be reduced to a compact and abbreviated spinal column. The brain, front, middle and rear must follow the adenoid, the wisdom tooth, the appendix ... I give you my master work: The Complete All American De anxietized Man ..."

'Blast of trumpets: The Man is carried in naked by two Negro Bearers who drop him on the platform with bestial, sneering brutality ... The Man wriggles ... His flesh turns to viscid, transparent jelly that drifts away in green mist, unveiling a monster black centipede. Waves of unknown stench fill the room, searing the lungs, grabbing the stomach...'

...

*'BENWAY: "Don't take it so hard, kid ...
Jedermann macht eine kleine Dummheit."
(Everyone makes a little dumbness.)*

*'SCHAFER: "I tell you I can't escape a
feeling ... well, of evil about this."*

*'BENWAY: "Balderdash, my boy ... We're
scientists ... Pure scientists. Disinterested research and
damned be him who cries 'Hold, too much!' Such
people are no better than party poops."*

*'SHAFFER: "Yes, yes, of course ... and yet ... I
can't get that stench out of my lungs ..."*

*'BENWAY (irritably): "None of us can ...
Never smelled anything remotely like it ... Where
was I? Oh yes, what would be result of administering
curare plus iron lung during acute mania? Possibly
the subject, unable to discharge his tensions in motor
activity, would succumb on the spot like a jungle rat.
Interesting cause of death, what?"*

*'Schafer is not listening. "You know," he says
impulsively, "I think I'll go back to plain
old-fashioned surgery. The human body is
scandalously inefficient. Instead of a mouth and an
anus to get out of order why not have one all-purpose
hole to eat and eliminate? We could seal up nose and
mouth, fill in the stomach, make an air hole direct
into the lungs where it should have been in the first
place ..."*

'BENWAY: "Why not one all-purpose blob? Did I ever tell you about the man who taught his asshole to talk?..."' [Full routine for the interested.](<https://realitystudio.org/texts/naked-lunch/talking-asshole/>)

In one of his many afterwords to *Naked Lunch*, Burroughs states the following:

'Certain passages in the book that have been called pornographic were written as a tract against Capital Punishment in the manner of Jonathan Swift's Modest Proposal. These sections are intended to reveal capital punishment as the obscene, barbaric and disgusting anachronism that it is. As always the lunch is naked. If civilized countries want to return to Druid Hanging Rites in the Sacred Grove or to drink blood with the Aztecs and feed their gods with the blood of human sacrifice, let them see what they actually eat and drink. Let them see what is on the end of that long newspaper spoon.'

The most salient relevant motif is that of snuff-show erotic hanging. Burroughs' intuition that Capital Punishment is motivated by base bloodthirst is played out by treating it as a high-society sexual practice and playing out the result.

'The Mugwump slips the noose over the boy's head and tightens the knot caressingly behind the left ear. The boy's penis is retracted, his balls tight. He looks straight ahead breathing deeply. The Mugwump sidles around the boy goosing him and caressing his genitals in heiroglyphs of mockery. He moves in behind the boy with a series of bumps and shoves his cock up the boy's ass. He stands there moving in circular gyrations.

'The guests shush each other, nudge and giggle.'

...

'Boys by the hundred plummet through the roof, quivering and kicking at the end of ropes. The boys hang at different levels, some near the ceiling and others a few inches off the floor. Exquisite Balinese and Malays, Mexican Indians with fierce innocent faces and bright red gums. Negroes (teeth, fingers, toe nails and public hair gilded), Japanese boys smooth and white as china, Titian-haired Venetian Lads, Americans with blond or black curls falling across the forehead (the guests tenderly shove it back), sulky blond Polacks with animal brown eyes, Arab and Spanish street boys, Austrian boys pink and delicate with a faint shadow of blond pubic hair,

*sneering German youths with bright blue eyes scream
"Heil Hitler!" As the trap falls under them...'*

...

*'Sharp protein odour of semen fills the air.
The guests run hands over twitching boys, suck their
cocks, hang on their backs like vampires.'*

As fitting as it would be to include here some extracts from the chapter: *Islam Inc. and the Parties of Interzone*, it has occurred to me after having already spent an obscene amount of time on this rightfully thankless endeavour of an essay.

Interested readers are referred to that chapter for thinly-veiled *reductii(?) and absurdum* of Capitalism, Imperialism, and Ethnic Supremacism.

We will shortly touch on a third Burroughs example, but must make a brief aside to introduce the concept of the 'Boléro structure'.

Boléro (<https://youtu.be/r30D3SW4OVw>), by Maurice Ravel, is a piece of music which begins at a low volume and builds in a continuous crescendo to arrive at an explosive climax.

A modern example of a similar track is that of Jefferson Airplane's *White Rabbit* (<https://youtu.be/EUY2kJE0AZE>).

Along with volume, other elements may be steadily increased, including tempo.

The use of this structure abounds in satirical user-generated internet content, such as the following Steve Harvey cospasta:

'Steve Harvey: "We asked 100 people, what is the male reproductive organ?" Contestant: "The penis" SH: "A WUH... HUH??" audience erupts into laughter Steve Harvey grabs onto podium to support himself laughter gets even louder SH: O lordy... one man goes into cardiac arrest and many others begin vomiting profusely from laughing too hard SH: YOU PEOPLE NEED HELP the Earth shatters and Satan rises from the underworld to claim unworthy souls the universe begins rapidly closing in on itself SH: (putting on a weary voice) Survey says... the board shows 100 for "penis" Harvey is able to get off one more shocked look before existence as we know it comes to an end.'

It is also abundant in skit comedy, including much of Tim & Eric's work, as we will see below.

Burroughs, in *Naked Lunch*, employs a similar structure gratuitously, and in a somewhat Swiftian manner. *Hassan's Rumpus Room*, the chapter from which we have drawn the quotations on erotic hanging, is one example. Another occurs in the chapter *Hospital*, in which an

impression is introduced in the opening lines of a paragraph, and riffed on in the course of a crescendo toward an insane climax:

'I am passing room 10 they moved me out of yesterday ... Maternity case I assume ... Bedpans full of blood and Kotex and nameless female substances, enough to pollute a continent ... If someone comes to visit me in my old room he will think I gave birth to a monster and the State Department is trying to hush it up ...

'Music from I Am an American ... An elderly man in the striped pants and cutaway of a diplomat stands on a platform draped with an American flag. A decayed, corseted tenor--bursting out of a Daniel Boone costume--is singing "The Star-Spangled Banner," accompanied by a full orchestra. He sings with a slight lisp ...

'THE DIPLOMAT (reading from a great scroll of ticker tape that keeps growing and tangling around his feet): "And we categorically deny that any male citizen of the United States of America ..."

'TENOR: "Oh thay can you thee ..." His voice breaks and shoots up to a high falsetto.

'In the control room the Technician mixes a bicarbonate of soda and belches into his hand: "God damned tenor's a brown artist!" he mutters sourly. "Mike! rumph," the shout ends in a belch. "Cut that

*swish fart off the air and give him his purple slip.
He's through as of right now ... Put in that
sex-changed Liz athlete ... She's a full-time tenor at
least ... Costume! How in the fuck should I know?
I'm no designer swish from the costume department!
What's that? The entire costume department
occluded as a security risk? What am I, an octopus?
Let's see ... How about an Indian routine?
Pocahontas or Hiawatha? ... No, that's not right.
Some citizen cracks wise about giving it back to the
Indians ... A Civil War uniform, the coat North and
the pants South like it show they got together again?
She can come on like Buffalo Bill or Paul Revere or
that citizen wouldn't give up the shit, I mean the ship,
or a GI or a Doughboy or the Unknown Soldier ...
That's the best deal ... Cover her with a monument,
that way nobody has to look at her ..."*

*'The Lesbian, concealed in a papier-mâché
Arc de Triomphe, fills her great lungs and looses a
tremendous bellow.*

*'Oh say do that Star-Spangled Banner yet
wave ..."*

*'A great rent rips the Arc de Triomphe from
top to bottom. The Diplomat puts a hand to his
forehead ...*

*'THE DIPLOMAT: "That any male
citizen of the United States has given birth in
Interzone or at any other place ..."*

"O'er the land of the FREEEEEEEEEEEE ..."

'The Diplomat's mouth is moving but no one can hear him. The Technician clasps his hand over his ears: "Mother of God!" he screams. His plate begins to vibrate like a Jew's harp, suddenly flies out of his mouth ... He snaps at it irritably, misses and covers his mouth with one hand.

'The Arc Dr Triomphe falls with a ripping, splintering crash, reveals the Lesbian standing on a pedestal clad only in a leopard-skin jockstrap with enormous falsie basket ... She stands there smiling stupidly and flexing her huge muscles ... The Technician is crawling around on the control room floor looking for his plate and shouting unintelligible orders: "Thess thupper thonic!! Thut ur oth thu thair!"

'THE DIPLOMAT (wiping sweat from his brow): "To any creature of any type or description ..."

"And the home of the brave."

'The Diplomat's face is grey. He staggers, trips in the scroll, sags against the rail, blood pouring from eyes, nose and mouth, dying of cerebral hemorrhage.

'THE DIPLOMAT (barely audible): "The Department denies ... un-American ... It's been destroyed ... I mean it never was ... Categor ..." Dies.

'In the Control Room instrument panels are blowing out ... Great streamers of electricity crackle

through the room ... The Technician, naked, his body burned black, staggers about like a figure in Götterdämmerung, screaming: "Thubber thonic!! Oth thu thair!!!" A final blast reduces the Technician to a cinder.'

This format runs parallel to *reductio ad absurdum*, but is distinct from it in that it does not necessarily seek to disprove an argument, merely to demonstrate the ridiculousness of its subject matter via hyperbole. In this case, Burroughs uses the initial impression of the State Department trying to hush up the fact of a male citizen having given birth as synecdoche for his contemporary America's desperate attempts to downplay its own ugly realities, and incorporates these realities - colonial history, homosexuality, and as is implicit in the final explosion - and clearer with reference to other passages featuring The Technician - the atomic bomb.

This parallel *ad absurdum*, not wanting to embarrass myself by attempting to christen it in Latin, I will refer to in English throughout the rest of this essay as *escalation to absurdity*.

Many of the later examples we will touch on employ this structure.

Tom Sharpe - *Indecent Exposure* (1973)

(Interested readers are referred to Sharpe's novel *Vintage Stuff* - a rewriting of *Don Quixote* satirising the Adventure Novel genre.)

Sharpe was deported from Apartheid-Era South Africa for sedition after publishing *Indecent Exposure*, his second weaponised farce against the Apartheid regime.

In *Indecent Exposure*, Sharpe examines the Apartheid-era social terror of racemixing. Similarly to Burroughs' views on death-penalty advocacy, Sharpe treats miscegenation phobia as reflecting an absurd sexual preoccupation bordering on fetishism.

"In my opinion," said the doctor, "Any white man having sexual intercourse with a black woman should be castrated. I feel so strongly about miscegenation that I would be quite prepared to carry out the operation myself."

'Lieutenant Verkramp suddenly turned very white. The idea of being castrated by the beautiful doctor corresponded so closely to his own masochistic fantasies that he felt quite overcome.'

And later a white civilian undergoing conditioning to remove her wholly endogenous phobia of being sexually attacked by a black man reveals herself subject to pure imaginative hysteria:

"They hang weights on the end to make them longer!"

In ridiculing the absurdity of expending public and scientific resources to eliminate interracial sex, Sharpe follows up the entire Piemburg police department being subjected to aversion therapy with a report to the Lieutenant that they are no longer interested in black women...

"They're queer, sir."

J.G. Ballard - *Crash* (1973)

Ballard Explains *Crash* as a Swiftian take on the popular late-'60s-early-'70s public enthrallment to violent imagery - the Kennedy assassination, the Vietnam and Biafran wars, car crash footage, etc:

"I thought, 'I've got to look at this. You know, This is a subject worth exploring,' and I thought, well, 'what I'll do is adopt the, you know, Jonathan Swift's approach in A Modest Proposal: I'll take for granted from the very first word of the novel that car crashes are sexually fulfilling and life-enhancing. I'll take that nightmare logic, a psychotic logic, and see where it leads me.'" Interview - extract begins ~9:00 (<https://youtu.be/ZMqzfugaRTc>)

The output consists of a gratuitous slew of permuted convergences and collisions between the human body and that of the automobile:

"Trying to exhaust himself, Vaughan devised an endless almanac of terrifying wounds and insane collisions: The lungs of elderly men punctured by door-handles; the chests of young women impaled on steering-columns; the cheeks of handsome youths torn on the chromium latches of quarter-lights. To Vaughan, these wounds formed the key to a new

sexuality, born from a perverse technology. The images of these wounds hung in the gallery of his mind, like exhibits in the museum of a slaughterhouse.'

...

'He dreamed of ambassadorial limousines crashing into jack-knifing butane tankers, of taxis filled with celebrating children colliding head-on below the bright display windows of deserted supermarkets. He dreamed of alienated brothers and sisters, by chance meeting each other on collision courses on the access roads of petrochemical plants, their unconscious incest made explicit in this colliding metal, in the beamorrhages of their brain tissue flowering beneath the aluminized compression chambers and reactions vessels.'

Rinse and repeat for sixty-or-so-thousand words.
Great book. Highly recommend.

Kathy Acker - *Blood and Guts in High School* (1984)

The following extract is an escalation sequence beginning with the premise that 'the customer is always right':

'I am nobody because I work. I have to pretend I like the customers and love giving them cookies no matter how they treat me:

(Inside a small East Village bakery.)

'Fat Lady: What's the ingredients in that cooky?

'Lousy Mindless Salesgirl: a bit of coconut and safflower oils, all hard-pressed, wheat flour, barley malt, water, and sesame seeds.

'Fat Lady: Is the wheat flour organic?

'Lousy Mindless Salesgirl: All the ingredients we use are organic.

*'Fat lady: What's barley malt?**

(Clammerings of ten customers in background. One grimy kid is feeling up the cookies.)

'Lousy Mindless Salesgirl (who never has any expression): It's a grain derivative.

'Fat lady: You don't use sugar or honey.

'Lousy Mindless Salesgirl: No.

(The grimy kid has grabbed two maple-hazelnut cookies and run.)

Fat Lady: What's in that cooky there?

Lousy Mindless Salesgirl: That's a sunflower-cranberry cooky.

Fat Lady: Is there wheat flour in that one?

(A thirty-year-old man is rummaging through the bialies. The salesgirl turns around and says, 'Excuse me, sir, I'll be with you in a second.')

Thirty-year-old Man: I want this bialy.

Lousy Mindless Salesgirl: I'll be able to help as soon as I finish with this lady.

Fat Lady: What's in this cooky? (She upsets the whole tray.)

Lousy Mindless Salesgirl (looking around quickly): *That's a maple-currant oatflour.* (To the thirty-year-old man) *I'll be with you in a second.*

Thirty-year-old Man (crying): *Every time I come to this bakery, nobody pays any attention to me. It isn't like it used to be in the old days when I could sit here and talk. People would take care of me.* (He walks out sobbing loudly.)

Fat Lady: And what's in this cooky? I have to be very careful. My doctor told me I'm not allowed to eat any sweets.

Lousy Mindless Salesgirl: That's a carob fudgie.

Fat Lady: That means it has sugar.

'A Rich Girl: I just want this cooky.
(Grabbing a peanut cooky and breaking the shelf.)
Here.

'Lousy Mindless Salesgirl (taking the change and returning 5c): *That'll be 40c. Thank you.* (To the Fat Lady) *We only use barley malt, and maple syrup in the cookies that have maple in their names.*

(The baker comes out of the kitchen and tells the salesgirl she's not working hard enough. Why are so many people still waiting to be served? He hired her to WORK. None of his other workers have these problems.)

'Fat Lady: Does it have any sugar in it?

'A Thin young Woman: I want ten loaves of rice bread, a dozen bialies, three dozen assorted cookies, two vegetable juices, and two sandwiches wrapped to go. I need it now.

'Lousy Mindless Salesgirl (To the Fat Lady): *Would you like a cooky, ma'am?*

(While five customers are grabbing cookies, a sixth customer climbs on their shoulders to get at the cookies. All the cookie shelves collapse.)

'Fat Lady: Miss? I want that cooky over there. (Points to a poppy-seed cooky lying under a dead - concussion due to falling shelf - body.)'

Acker writes explicitly in the tradition of Burroughs, and particular similarities can be noted in the use of stage directions, though these are by no means unique to these two writers.

This sequence is only one part of a very variable novel, and is not strictly typical of Acker's style, but she occasionally pulls out sequences in a similar vein.

Tim & Eric - *Tim and Eric Awesome Show, Great Job* (2007-10)

A large number of Tim and Eric's skits, most notably those involving adverts for unwanted products, suggest the output of a market-research team operating on a bafflingly one-dimensional concept of what consumers want, at the expense of any commonsense notion of the unpleasant.

A number of their fictional commodities bear conspicuous resemblances to real products - [B'Owl](<https://youtu.be/oxzfGMQBf3A>) reassembles Furby; - and the exaggerated design blunders built on in the skits reflect real design choices applied to those products.

iJammer

(<https://youtu.be/NTNXQH8SEMo>)

This skit overapplies a similar design philosophy to that satirised by the typical Montage Parody (https://youtu.be/u7CzGAj_gCw), or YouTube Poop (<https://youtu.be/HeIkk6Yo0s8>): that more stimulation is unconditionally better.

It features a product whose sole application is the production of a dubiously-calibrated audio-tactile reward cue, which are traditionally auxiliary to the user-experience

of a device. A parallel commodity is that of Jim & Derrick's Flavor Dust™ (<https://youtu.be/3SHSi6XNawz>).

The *escalation to absurdity* structure is followed to the point of equating the device's stimulation effect and addictive potential to that of cocaine:

"I just need one more bump!"

The skit anticipates the fixation with gambling-originated audio-visual reward cues in the development of tackier PC, console and mobile games, particularly those marketed to children.

Considering that the Montage Parody staple *airhorn.mpg* has gone sufficiently mainstream to be featured at a record-scratch rhythm as a recurring transition on my local radio station, what might seem like implausibly excessive satire has in-fact proven fairly prescient.

Discount Prices

(<https://youtu.be/hJ9yBgTp9UQ>)

This skit involves the idea that the price is replacing the commodity as the object of promotion, played out according to the structure of an ordinary advert.

Like the *i-Jammer* skit, this segment follows a *Boléro* structure, increasing in the extremity and pacing of the accusations exchanged by the competing businessmen. Escalation structures around the driving force of

one-upmanship are fairly common and intuitive to implement.

"Remove the Teeth"

A number of the advertisements feature highly intimate and crude integration of technology with the human body.

Products like the Cinco Food Tube (<https://youtu.be/R-o7YG3x0DI>), and Eye Tanning System (https://youtu.be/o8fpdnAhT_4), and the total-immersion Schlaaang Super Seat (<https://youtu.be/SdAy7GIMpTk>), all represent grossly distasteful examples of body-technology interaction in the service of absurd manufactured needs.

These products are all extreme hypothetical outcomes of the uncritical assumption that human integration with technology will necessarily be life-enhancing and comfortable.

This is a parallel strain of satire to that expressed in *Naked Lunch* on the subject of the modern American tendency towards being swaddled in appliances as a product of Fordian manufactured demand:

'AMERICAN HOUSEWIFE: (opening a box of Lux): "Why don't it have an electric eye the box open when it see me and hand itself to the Automat Handy Man he should put it in a water already ... The Handy Man is outa control since Thursday, he

been getting physical with me and I didn't put it in his combination at all ... And the Garbage Disposal Unit snapping at me, and the nasty old Mixmaster keep trying to get up under my dress ... I got the most awful cold, and my intestines is all constipated ... I'm gone put it in the Handy Man's combination he should administer me a high colonic awready.

'SALESMAN (he is something between an aggressive Latah and a timid Sender) "Recollect when I am traveling with K.E., hottest idea man in the gadget industry.

""Think of it!' he snaps, 'A cream separator in your own kitchen!'

""K.E., my brain reels at the thought.'

""It's five, maybe ten, yes, maybe twenty years away ... But it's coming.'

""I'll wait, K.E. No matter how long it is, I'll wait. When the priority numbers are called up yonder I'll be there.""

""It was K.E. put out the Octopus Kit for Massage Parlours, Barber Shops and Turkish Baths, with which you can administer a high colonic, an unethical massage, a shampoo, whilst cutting the client's toenails and removing his blackheads. And the M.D.'s Can Do Kit for busy practitioners will take out your appendix, tuck in a hernia, pull out a wisdom tooth, ectomize your piles and circumcise

you. Well, K.E. is such an atomic salesman if he runs out of Octopus Kits he is subject, by sheer charge, to sell an M.D. Can Do to a barber shop and some citizen wakes up with his piles cut out ...

""Jesus, Homer, what kinda creep joint you running here? I been gang fucked.'

""Well, landsake, Si, I was just aiming to administer our complimentary high colonic free and gratis on Thanksgiving Day. K.E. musta sold me the wrong kit again ...""

Of the three Cinco products, the Super Seat is perhaps the most recognisable as relating to a real product category, though it's worth noting that various highly dubious tanning 'solutions' do currently exist.

Another iteration on dubious ergonomics comes in the Cinco Privacy Helmet (<https://youtu.be/XlpnTMJrT5c>). This skit follows a similar line to the i-Jammer product and the Montage-Parody airhorn.mpg: the presentation of extreme auditory stimulation calibrated without regard for tolerability.

Copy pasta

"You see, I strongly suspect that when this revolution takes place, art will no longer be distinguished by its rarity, or its expense, or its inaccessibility, or the extraordinary way in which it is marketed, it will be the prerogative of all of us, and we will do it as those artists did whom Freud understood not at all, the artists who made the Cathedral of Chartres, or the mosaics of Byzantium, the artists who had no Ego, and no name." - Germaine Greer - Town Bloody Hall (<https://youtu.be/gGYmyou0sKM>).

I don't think that when Greer said this what she thought she meant was:

'Hey guys, did you know that in terms of male human and female Pokémon breeding, Vaporeon is the most compatible Pokémon for humans? Not only are they in the field egg group, which is mostly comprised of mammals, Vaporeon are an average of 3'03' tall and 63.9 pounds. this means they're large enough to be able to handle human dicks, and with their impressive Base Stats for HP and access to Acid Armor, you can be rough with one. Due to their mostly water based biology, there's no doubt in my mind that an aroused Vaporeon would be incredibly

wet, so wet that you could easily have sex with one for hours without getting sore. They can also learn the moves Attract, Baby-Doll Eyes, Captivate, Charm, and Tail Whip, along with not having fur to hide nipples, so it'd be incredibly easy for one to get you in the mood. With their abilities Water Absorb and Hydration, they can easily recover from fatigue with enough water. No other Pokémon comes close to this level of compatibility. Also, fun fact, if you pull out enough, you can make your Vaporeon turn white'

However, she appears to have been thoroughly prescient as regards the democratisation of certain varieties of art. Whether this has necessitated in a transformation of what 'art' is, and whether or not such a transformation represents a quantitative degeneration, or qualitative perversion, is outside the scope of this already inexcusably long essay.

Considering that as early as the 1700s, when *A Modest Proposal* was written, there already existed a laughable tradition of pseudoacademic rhetorical contribution among non-academic sectors of high society, this democratisation may be seen as a simple expansion of a process that has been ongoing since the Enlightenment.

"Coppypasta", as it is commonly understood, seems to consist generally of blocks of text that are copied and stereotyped throughout the internet for the sake of their

innate share-value, based not on the insight or inspirational value of their content, but because of the humour-value of the text-as-object. Whether 'found in the wild' or satirical, successful pasta is generally considered to be somehow typical of a category.

The above *Vaporeon* pasta, and the below *Thanos Dick Size* example, each form part of a tradition which owes a sizeable indirect debt to Jonathan Swift. Each addresses the same absurd subject - that of absurdly high-effort attempts to justify Rule-34 waifu culture with dubious linear and/or moral reasoning - in the same way Swift addressed flippant social engineering around the Irish Potato Famine: by adopting the voice of the person who '*did the math*'.

'I fucken did it. I have figured out how large Thanos's flaccid penis is. I know what you're thinking: How could I have done this? Well, allow me to explain. I started out with an image. The picture was of Thanos and Iron Man standing next to each other. This image was exactly what I needed. It came directly from Marvel, so we know for certain that the proportions are correct. Now that we have the two characters, how does one go about actually determining Thanos's length? That's easy. We only need the length of Robert Downey Jr.'s penis. Luckily, we have a vague idea of just how large that is. Back in 2014, Robert Downey Jr. was

quoted saying something along the lines of: “I have a massive dick, and feminism is a joke”. From this statement, we can determine one major thing: Robert Downey Jr. slays women with his massive peen.

‘But just how big is “massive?” to answer that, we need to do some research. Taking to the internet, I used pixel measurements, and calculated the length of many many penises, that belonged to various different porn stars. I averaged the results, and came up with about 3.8 inches flaccid, on average. If Robert Downey Jr. truly has a massive penis, than his must be slightly larger than this. Therefore, I elected to round up to 4 inches.

‘Next up, we need to do some more pixel measurements. Tony stark is 6’1” so in this image, we used that number to calculate how many pixels per inch this picture had. We came up with the number of 7 pixels per inch. Using this number, we were able to discover that thanos was 98 inches tall, or 8’2”. The same was done for horizontal width. After some quick calculations, we determined that Thanos was approximately 1.36 times larger than Robert Downey Jr. With this proportion in hand, we can now do the unthinkable. If we take Robert Downey Jr.’s length of 4” and multiply it by 1.35, we get 5.44”.

'Now I know what you're thinking. 5.44 inches? That's pathetic. But think of it this way: That's his flaccid length. Now, imagine Thanos when aroused. On average, the human penis generally doubles in length when going from flaccid to hard. This means that Thanos's kielbasa is likely almost 12 inches, when fully erect. If you still think that this is small, just try and imagine that absolute unit of a cock shoved into your tight little ass. His massive purple rod being passionately thrust back and forth, ripping your rectum to shreds. And don't even get me started on his cum. The thought of Thanos just unloading gallons and gallons of children into me just makes me rock hard. There is nothing that turns me on more than Thanos's massive 12 inch dick. I wish he would just shove it in every hole in my body. I want him to take his flaccid dick, and wrap it around my neck like a noose. That would just be pure ecstasy to me. Getting strangled to death by Thanos's bad boy would probably feel so amazing. The only thing that would make it better, would be if he wasn't circumcised. I'd be able to peel back his foreskin, like a big, purple, meaty banana. I'd peel it back, and I'd eat every last particle of dick cheese. I'd lick it all up, until his meat flute was all shiny and sticky. And once it's all lubed up, I'd let him put it in my butt again. He wouldn't hold back this time. He'd

fuck me so hard, that all my inside get jimmed around, and it would be amazing. Then he'd cum again, but this time there's so much that it fills up my entire body. Just imagine: Thanos has almost finished ravaging your asshole, when he unleashed a tsunami of hot, sticky semen into your body. It fills up your ass, but Thanos's sex pistol is so thick, that it won't leak out through my booty. But he keeps releasing more. Eventually, it starts filling up my intestines and stomach, before it eventually begins to quickly flow out from my mouth. At this point, I'm vomiting Thanos's cum everywhere, but I'm not doing it fast enough. The pressure builds, as the semen starts to slowly drip out of every hole in my body. My dick, my nose, my ears, and even my eyes. But it's just not enough. Thanos keeps ejaculating. He's like an infinite water source of daddy sauce. The pressure is too great! I explode in a glorious display of semen and viscera. My stomach bursts open, and I am now just a head and torso, but only the back half of my torso remains. Yet somehow, I survive. All my limbs are blown off, as well as my own dick. Thanos caresses what's left of my face, with his thick, purple hand.

"I want to keep going." Thanos says to me, gently, "Are you okay with that?"

Despite the fact that my windpipes are mostly exploded, I manage to say to him, "Yes."

'Thanos nods, and proceeds to kiss me passionately on the lips.

'He unsheaths his excalibur, and gently inserts into the new hole, where my dick used to be. He picks me up, now that I'm little more than a lump of flesh. He slowly pulls his dick in and out of me, in an attempt to make sure that my new pussy would be an adequate hole. Upon determining that it is, he begins to violently move me up and down, as if I was nothing more than just a fleshlight. But since I was with the love of my life, Thanos- I didn't even care. After a little while more, his sex pistol is cocked, and he fires one more last burst of cum. This shot was so intense, that I slide right out of him, and blast off into space. "Million Miles An Hour" by Nickelback begins to play, as I rocketed through the cosmos. The intense heat of Thanos's semen prevents me from freezing to death.

'Back on the planet where we fucked, Thanos quietly whispers to my quickly shrinking body, "No homo..."

'I traveled through the galaxy for what felt like days, before I became caught in the gravity of a black hole. Thanos's semen was still keeping me alive, but the propulsion wasn't strong enough to prevent me from getting sucked in. Upon reaching the black hole's event horizon, something incredible happened. Thanos's juice ignited, and

exploded. The explosion eventually resulted in the formation of a star. Upon the star's creation, I was launched out into the star's orbit, before my body was ripped apart by the immense gravity of the sun, and my various parts were cast to the void. But my soul remained attached to the star that had just formed. I watched for billions of years, as my pieces' own gravitational pulls slowly began to attract other particles, until they all eventually became planets. I continued to watch over this new solar system. Eventually, on the third planet out, I saw something amazing. I watched, as from the planet's primordial ooze, a small life form emerged. Through the ages, I watched as this life evolved, grew and took on a much more complex form. After some time, they became a species known as "human". These humans were intelligent. But not nearly intelligent enough for other beings to visit them. The Humans eventually named me. I was to be referred to as Sol. I continued to watch over these humans, as their culture developed further. Until one day, a film known as "Avengers: Infinity War" was released. It was a cultural phenomenon, although it wasn't very good from an objective standpoint. But the humans loved it. And one character, they love more than most. And his name was Thanos. When Thanos appeared as a character on Earth, I knew that my journey was complete. I

cannot explain how, but some way or another—some part of Thanos had stayed with the body part that eventually became Earth. And as a result, his influence could be seen all throughout history. This all came to a head, with Infinity War. Thanos's semen gave life to an entire planet of creature, and they repaid him in the ultimate way. Thanos has now been forever immortalized in their culture. As the most competently written characters, in one of the most mediocre movies of all time.'

The reader will note that this copypasta follows a similar *escalation to absurdity* progression to the Burroughs *Technician* extract and Steve Harvey pasta. It is common for this progression to manifest as the escalation of a sexual fantasy, as the narrator's confessional impulse becomes increasingly unbridled, following the progression of masturbation to orgasm.

Next we go back to some more traditional *reductio ad absurdum* arguments, which consist in playing out a dubious logical position and demonstrating that it is consistent with an absurd one.

A popular example is to caricature the precarious, tangentially linear argument style of Republican pundit Ben Shapiro, by demonstrating that it can be used to 'justify' absolutely anything. The same 'let's say, hypothetically...' structure is used in many different examples:

'Let's say, you've been a bad girl. Let's say, hypothetically, you've been a naughty girl even. Ok, and if you were a naughty girl you would also be my dirty little slut right? Then hypothetically speaking you would be my little cumslut. Now; let's say that you're also daddy's girl. Now that we've established you're both a bad girl and daddy's girl, then I believe you'd agree with me when I say you deserve a spanking. Am I not correct? A bad girl deserves a spanking, and as I am daddy; you are my girl, so I am the one who must provide punishment.'

...

'Let's say, hypothetically, you're on a farm. Okay and if you're on a farm they probably produce food, right? Then hypothetically speaking you might even see an animal being raised. Now let's say that that animal is a pig. Now that we've established they raise pigs on this farm, then I believe you'd agree with me when I say they also need to breed pigs. And the pigs used to breed must have their sexual organs intact, am I not correct? So is it not logical to conclude that this pig might have balls? Now let's say that this pig is a very good breeder. Well then I think we can agree that its balls are very large. And a pig's balls are located just underneath its anus, right? Well since we've

established that its balls are indeed very large, they would obviously protrude back past the anus. Okay now let's say, hypothetically, this pig took a shit. It's clear that we're forced to conclude, based on facts and logic, that this shit would fall on top of its large balls. And yet liberals would have you believe otherwise.'

...

'Now, lets say, hypothetically, that somebody once told me that the world would proceed to roll me, and made the claim that I was not, the smartest tool in the shed. Which would lead us to look at the facts and see that she was looking kind of dumb, due to the fact that she had placed her finger and her thumb, in the shape of the letter L, located on her forehead. This would mean that the years would start coming, and logically wont stop coming, that I was, hypothetically, fed to the rules, which would proceed with me hitting the ground running. Which didn't make sense, to live for fun, in a way that your brain gets smart, yet your head gets dumb, seeing as there's so much to do, and so much to see, so now I must pose the question, what is wrong with taking the backseat? This is due to the fact that you'll never know if you don't go, nor you will shine if you don't glow. For you see, you are, at this moment, an All-Star, so get your game on, and proceed to go play, indeed, you're an All-Star, get

the show on, which would entitled you to get paid. That would mean that all that glitters, is indeed gold, and that only shooting stars, can participate in the process of breaking the mold.'

Early examples of these pieces play around a demonstration that Shapiro's argument style is tenuous since it can be used to 'prove' absurd points with just as much soundness as believable ones - i.e. none. More recent examples, like the Smash Mouth *All Star* one, use these now familiar format as the backbone of a meme, parodying its tokenistic intellectual jargon by applying it to what is obviously not a logical argument.

Because *reductio ad absurdum* necessarily involves an exaggeration of the criticised argument, it can stray into strawman territory.

Now we will look at an example of a *reductio ad absurdum* argument that strays into strawman territory, as well as an example of metasatire designed at calling this out:

'I sexually Identify as an Attack Helicopter. Ever since I was a boy I dreamed of soaring over the oilfields dropping hot sticky loads on disgusting foreigners. People say to me that a person being a helicopter is Impossible and I'm fucking retarded but I don't care, I'm beautiful. I'm having a plastic surgeon install rotary blades, 30 mm cannons and

AMG-114 Hellfire missiles on my body. From now on I want you guys to call me "Apache" and respect my right to kill from above and kill needlessly. If you can't accept me you're a heliphobe and need to check your vehicle privilege. Thank you for being so understanding.'

The following response appeared some years later:

'I sexually Identify as the "I sexually identify as an attack helicopter" joke. Ever since I was a child, I've dreamed of flippantly dismissing any concepts or discussions regarding gender that don't fit in with what I learned in 8th grade bio. People say to me that this joke hasn't been funny since 2014 and please at least come up with a new one, but I don't care, I'm hilarious. I'm having a plastic surgeon install Ctrl, C, and V keys on my body. From now on I want you guys to call me "epic kek dank meme trannies owned with facts and logic" and respect my right to shit up social media. If you can't accept me you're a memeophobe and need to check your ability-to-critically-think privilege. Thank you for being so understanding.'

The original pasta is conducting a *reductio ad absurdum* based on a strawman, and the response pasta is a

metasatire calling out the hypocrisy involved in saying 'the sexual identification argument is what I 'identify' it to be.

This goes some way to highlighting a pitfall of satire in general: its perceived merits are generally proportionate to the degree that it "rings true". The parsing of pertinent satire from disingenuous, or out-of-touch, satire is mainly a matter of judgement. An enthusiast for the genre may frequently be confronted with examples like the *World Peace Prostitution* skit (https://youtu.be/EgniMzis_rs) which feels so out-of-touch that a generous viewer is left wishing there were more evidence of its being metasatire of its own apparent position.

I include the following example of a years-old 4Chan greentext, despite considering it to sit closer to strawman than sound satire, and suspecting the malicious aspects of its tone to be more original than borrowed for effect, because it constitutes a surprisingly coherent deployment of the *boléro* structure in the service of a (dubious) *reductio ad absurdum*:

>'riding in hot, crowded subway car
>'I get on at one of the early stops so I have a seat
>'2/10 landwhale gets on the train with her hotter
7/10 friend
>'smile at 7/10, landwhale scoffs and continues
talking 7/10's head off about "the patriarchy"

>'as we progress further and further into
Manhattan and the train becomes even more
crowded she becomes visibly more uncomfortable
>'her knees are quaking more and more with every
rock of the train
>'peels her shirt from her chest and flutters it to fan
her body
>'ask her if she'd like my seat
>'this catches the attention of several men on the
train who become visibly excited
>'a single bead of sweat streams from her hairline
down the length of her rounded face
>'she reluctantly stammers out a "y-yes"
>'"'yes please" I jokingly correct her
>'"'yes please" she whimpers as a year rolls down
from her eye
>'at this all the men in the car become fully erect
>'as she sits the men begin swaying back and forth
like apes, their eyes glued to the oppression they're
witnessing
>'"'now what do you say?"
>'she looks to her friend for help, but all is lost
>'"'t-thank you"
>'"'It was my privilege"
>'the car erupts with cheers as all the men get up
and being beating there chest and masturbating
furiously

>'even the young boys get involved, swinging from the railings like chimps, soiling themselves in the process
>' a Wilhelm scream is heard from somewhere far off in the car as a man's penis explodes
>'the train, which had been slowly gaining speed the entire time, derails as the conductor was too busy jerking off to the point of bleeding, thinking about how he makes 30c more per hour than his female counterparts
>'as the car goes up in flames the conductor busts the best nut of his life'

What fascinates me about this piece is that its author, distastefully derisive of obesity, too sloppy to spell-check, and apparently willfully ignoring the valid aspects of an item of popular discourse in order to ridicule a caricature of its presentation, has somehow managed to assimilate and deploy a very structured style of escalation-satire, whose imagery would not be entirely out of place in the work of a better grotesque satirist.

Note the manipulation of sentence length - short sentences around the buildup to the *denouement* leaving uncomfortable breathing space; the second half, in which the escalation proper begins, consisting of longer, but uniform sentences, aside from the double-length penultimate one, to create a repetitive rhythm at the same time as intensifying the sense of pace. Note also that this

repetitive pacing resonates with the pathetic fallacy of the accelerating train. On a second reading, you can almost hear the rattle of the car on its tracks, accelerating unnoticed but felt under the delivery of the narrative.

That said, the comments about strawmanning that I made on the previous example apply here in similar measure.

This sequence offers an implicit, fairly dubious *reductio ad absurdum* argument on the backbone of an escalatory format.

It responds to the author's perception that men are perceived as taking a vindictive, collective sexual pleasure in activities that subtly oppress women, by attributing predatorial satisfaction to its narrator, and an explosion of masturbatory excess to its observers, in the enactment and aftermath of a trivial 'chivalric' act.

This *reductio ad absurdum* argument verges on being a strawman in the following way:

Because it is obvious that men are not expected by anyone whatsoever to behave **quite** so extremely, the author is presumably drawing on the discourse about sexual microaggressions inherent in cultural hangovers from chivalry, exaggerating it in an attempt either to reveal its implausibility, or revel in the potential discomfort of anyone who finds it close to plausible.

The author evidently perceives men to be accused of consciously (or strongly unconsciously) exerting sexual

dominance in the performance of casual chivalry, takes exception to this idea, and carries it to an extreme to make their point.

However, in almost all debate and satire on this and similar subjects, everyone involved must parse a seizure of moderate arguments, strawman arguments, and real extreme arguments from all positions before they can decide what to argue against.

In this case, more moderate arguments could be made about chivalry which ignore men's motives and focus on the subtle effects on women as a basis for requesting their cessation. More complex, less prescriptive arguments could also be made regarding implicit attitudes from a psychological perspective.

Accordingly, any counterargument must be treated as conditional - applying only to the particular argument it opposes, and ignoring more or less extreme parallel arguments - and any counterargument which claims to be challenging a unified position must be considered guilty of strawmanning its opponent. The pasta in question may be taken as responding only to the most extreme positions on patriarchal subtext, or equating moderate positions with extreme ones through a slippery slope fallacy.

I suspect that an intuitive sense that the pasta treads a line between valid argument and strawman leaves many readers torn between finding it funny and abhorrent.

On the other hand, the general narrative tone, particularly as regards the derisive treatment of obesity, may

disincline readers from applying the generosity principle to the pasta's argument.

Another popular application of satirical pasta is to parse legitimate support for progressive policies from an intuitive sense that corporate support for the same policies is often disingenuous and condescending. The Steve Buscemi How do you do, fellow Kids (<https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/how-do-you-do-fellow-kids>) meme, often applied to dubious corporate attempts to appear relatable to a young demographic, has been adapted into a longer format for the purpose:

*'Hello, fellow homosexuals. It is us,
[MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR
CORPORATION]. Here to remind you that we
support your lifestyle now that it has been federally
legalised and it is completely socially safe, allowing
for us to capitalise on your existence now it's
mainstream. Look, we even changed the colours of
[LOGO]! Why did we wait this long to come out
and 'support' you? Haha, no more questions,
homosexual. Buy our product. Buy our product. BUY
OUR PRODUCT.'*

...

*'Hello, fellow Black People. It is us,
[MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR
CORPORATION]. Here to remind you that we
support your colour, now that it has made it into
international news and it is completely socially safe
to mention you, allowing for us to capitalise on your
existence now it's mainstream. Look, we even used the
hashtag of [event]! Why did we wait this long to
come out and 'support' you? Haha, no more questions,
Black People. Buy our product. Buy our product. BUY
OUR PRODUCT.'*

...

*'Hello, fellow Cannabis User. It is us,
[MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR
CORPORATION]. Here to remind you that we
support your lifestyle now that it may soon be
federally legalised and is completely socially safe,
allowing for us to capitalise on your existence now it's
mainstream. Look, we even used the hashtag of
[event]! Why did we wait this long to come out and
'support' you? Haha, no more questions, Cannabis
User. Buy our product. Buy our product. BUY OUR
PRODUCT.'*

This is the logical outcome of applying the
ingenuous tone of corporate support for progressive issues

with their conspicuous lack of support for the same issues when they were at a more vulnerable stage. The suggestion is that if one is to perceive corporate progressivism as sincere, one must accept that for unstated reasons, presumably cowardice, corporates choose not to adopt these practices until they become mainstream, this being of similar plausibility to the alternative hypothesis that progressivism simply now adds value to a brand.

Spontaneous Reinvention

As stated above, people seem to have a fair natural affinity for this brand of satire.

An Italian user now living in New Zealand made a recent post on the national subreddit praising the country's peaceful multiculturalism, apparently in the form of a 'poem':

*I love New Zealand, my work colleagues are Swedish,
Maori, kiwis, My employers are Kiwi and Chinese,
My friends are Chinese, Koreans, Italians, japanese,
kiwis, Scottish. Evryday walking around, going out I
can witness all those mix of cultures, Faith and
religious Believes living togheter happily and whitout
big problems, I LOVE IT.'*

New Zealanders are broadly proud of our peaceful multiculturalism (it's kind-of a non-issue - little-to-no drama, and we don't fetishise it that much, aside from that one time we fucking had to as a political gesture, but as a rule...), and the response was positive, however the OP then proceeded to misunderstand a comment agreeing with him and report the user "for racism, ignorance, hate speech", upon which this error had to be painfully explained to him.

I linked the thread to an Italian friend who has lived in NZ, thinking she'd find it funny, and she sent me back a variation on the post, summing up the logical attitude the poster must have had toward Italian workplace-multiculturalism in order to consider its New Zealand equivalent novel and inspiring by comparison:

'I hate Italy, my coworkers are Filipinos, Togolese and Albanian. We work and live together happily. It's culturally very mixed but not fancy because they come from 3rd world countries I HATE IT.'

The person who produced this is not familiar with copy-pasta specifically, but is somewhat familiar with Swift, and with parallel traditions of meme-based parody, as well as having a keen intuitive sense of satire.

Original Examples

These pieces all treat aspects of media design, which is only one facet of what I like to use the style for, but is probably the most relevant here given that this is A) Reddit and B) digital social media in general.

The first of them is a years-old rhetorical shitpost on a niche drama over a PC game's balance patch.

The latter two are auxiliary media sequences that form part of a novel.

Counter-Strike nerf a success

(https://www.reddit.com/r/GlobalOffensive/comments/3wdgcx/counterstrike_nerf_a_success_fps_scene_is_now/)

Counter-Strike nerf a success: FPS scene is now balanced.

'As of 12/12/2015 the game Counter-Strike: Global Offensive is considered balanced.

'The minor damage tweaks to the R8 revolver leave it balanced against rifles such as the AK47 and M4A4, removing the advantage previously held by rifle-choosing players over those who favour other weapon classes. Alongside the

increased kill reward of the game's submachine guns this is believed to leave CS:GO's weapon classes balanced against one another. Notably the R8 favours a tapping style with a higher skill ceiling.

'Beyond balancing different weapon categories, the R8 serves to balance rounds 2 and 3 of each half, which in the past favoured the side who won the pistol. The second round now has close to a 50% chance of being won by either team, alleviating the pressure formerly placed on the pistol round.

Furthermore, a greater balance has now been achieved between the matchmaking and competitive scenes within the game. The two game modes now share the same bomb and round timers - a balance change long-requested by the community - and recent weapon randomness tweaks offer tactical advantages and disadvantages to either scene, both of which are now considered viable.

In terms of popularity and skill ceiling, it is further believed that Counter-Strike will soon become balanced against competing FPS titles such as Rainbow Six: Siege and Call of Duty, in the spirit of fair competition.

'Of course, Counter-Strike remains somewhat overpowered and the remaining balance issues will be addressed with minor tweaks. Rumour has it: future changes will include pre-selection of either tapping or bursting style before joining a game.

These will not be changeable in-game, and will encourage greater strategy when choosing roles within the game.

'Further speculation considers the balance of FPS games against those of other genres, such as MOBAs. The community has long been calling for balance between CS:GO and DOTA2, which it is alleged will be achieved by nerfing the prizepools and development staff of the latter and removing its beta client.

'Future nerfs in a similar vein may target Valve's business model in an effort to balance it against those used by Ubisoft and EA. It's still too early to determine how many map packs per year we'll need to release to achieve this, but REVOLV⁰ is committed to monitoring the new meta and ensuring that as gaming continues to evolve, it remains fun, skillful, and balanced.'

This piece is now several years old, and deals with an extremely niche, petty subject, likely of no interest to anyone.

I include it because it was my first attempt at sustained satire and likely the most *zeitgeisty* and well-received piece I'll ever write. Since I had no knowledge of any of the influences numbered above, it also illustrates how a fair satirical sensibility can be acquired purely by reading shitposts.

The debate around this topic was also my introduction to less trivial concerns in User-Experience Design.

That very niche but surprisingly widespread debate concerned a balance patch for an eSport, and the piece's tone and structure more-or-less exactly follow those of a balance patch from that time. Its content was informed by about a week's passive assimilation of various threads pertaining to the drama, and many of its passing allusions and memes had significance only at that time.

Essentially changes were introduced to make the game more accessible to new players and introduce a sense of symmetry to its mechanics. The argument was that this would help 'balance' the game in the sense that each mechanic is balanced against each other (as opposed to the sense that of each team having an equal chance of winning). A collateral consequence was the ironing out the idiosyncrasies around which advantages could be seized and therefore strategy could be developed. I thought that the logical conclusion of this reasoning was to make the game more like other games, and therefore remove those aspects that distinguished it from them, i.e. trying to nerf the game relative to others.

The patch was uncharacteristically reverted following an onslaught of similar content from the community. I like to imagine my own ridiculous Longpost® played a part in the accomplishment of this trivial goal.

This Now Thankfully

'At once one side of the greyed street is thrown into wincing overbrightness, as by the glare of an overpowered cinema projector. Its pedestrians blink up at the facade of an apartment or office building, now washed with an eleven-storey pixelated billboard whose base nests atop the eaves over the ground-floor shopfront. Against its white backdrop, a schoolmatronly android stands one hand jealously cradling a tangle of hydraulic machinery, the other pointing accusingly down at the pedestrians craning up at her.

'Text above and below her reads:

'SHIT?

'TAKE THAT BACK.

'The paragraph of copy accessible via the billboard's marginal URL insists:

*You don't know how lucky you are to have **Hydroloin Systems**. Our founder, **Richard Keffle**, was martyred at the stake for what was charged a '**blasphemous**', '**criminal**' innovation. In a manifesto*

scrawled on a continuous scroll of toilet paper using his own bloody excrement, and secreted from his dungeon by a friend of **the Revolution**, he articulated his dying wish that **Hydroloin Systems** be developed and distributed to all four corners of the Earth using what shreds remained of his widow's **inherited capital**. Today, while all of us can enjoy the **convenient** and **fulfilling** use of **Dick Keffle's Hydroloin Systems**, there remain those who would sneer at the sacrifice made to propagate this now thankfully ubiquitous commodity. **SHAME! Dick Keffle** died bloodily so **YOU** could have **Hydroloin Systems**. Any insinuation against their **competition-surpassing quality** is a humid turd discharged upon his memory."

'The iMatron flickers in her accusing manifestation for about thirteen minutes - a presumably calculated duration; enough time for the pedestrians to lose conscious interest without yet returning to a state of relative psychological safety - then winks like an extinguished set - eyes last - out of existence.'

This might seem like totally impertinent satire, or seem not to refer to any real-world object at all, to anyone who is not familiar with internal and inter-company corporate propaganda. I'll enumerate some of its features, and hopefully draw the piece taught over the silhouette of its object of parody:

The product in question is obviously not a consumer commodity, so advertising it with an emotional appeal is kind-of weird.

It's well-discussed that advertising undermines competitive quality as the sole factor in consumer choice. Specifically within intra/intercorporate advertising, the narrative of the company's founding in the face of doubt in its founder's entrepreneurial vision often figures prominently. Consider these details jointly, and the founder-narrative is being substituted for competitive quality. This is taken a step further by the defensive attitude of the ad, as if it means to aggressively challenge an established bad reputation with the founder-narrative.

The commercial founder-narrative is exposed a bit more for what it is - a derivation of more inspiring Enlightenment and United-States founder-narratives - by preposterously relating its innovations to those like Gallileo's round-Earth theory, which were discounted and violently suppressed.

The piece also touches in passing, in its tone and final paragraph, on the psychologically hostile relationship between advertiser and audience.

The Merciless Current

'A procession of TV chefs await judgement on their food. The first of them takes two polite steps up onto a raised plateau before a panel of minor celebrities at a three-place dining table decked with chequered red bistro cloth. The ranking panelist has delivered their preliminary summary of the contestant's menu, as well as a narrative of their endeavours, and is preparing to pass sentence. We are anticipating two and a half minutes of cuts to faces, food and furniture before the score swells from a blend of NASA-pre-launch-countdown and sneak themes into despair or reconciliation harmony as the revelation is made.

'All these shots are indeed presented, but compressed into a single second's runtime, after which the judge delivers a concise and helpful assessment of the food.

"Thank you Chef." [Departs]

'The next contestant steps meekly up. As the judge begins to summarise, her monologue speeds up beyond comprehensibility, the cuts to faces, food and flashback are strobed through, the chef judged and dismissed in the course of a half-second - the audio slowing as she departs from the stand just enough to make audible her helium-pitched "Thank you Chef".

'White VHS fast-forward lines begin to tear across the shot as the queue of three remaining chefs are suctioned almost simultaneously up to the podium, their individual retrospectives coalescing into a single sequence of almost superimposed images, and drawn immediately off-set by the merciless current of accelerated time.

'The perspective cuts to that of a boom-mounted camera tracking backwards over the heads of the audience, whose babbling pitches up to a note of urgent complaint as they are magnetised out of the space like iron filings and replaced with an identical crowd and a cast of interchangeable chefs is processed in seconds, dismissed, and relieved by another. As the camera reaches the back corner of the seating area, the shot slips out the back of it through its workings and recedes up and away from the boom crane over the isometrically-oriented set.

'Chefs and audience are now arriving and departing in continuous flow, as the widening shot reveals a procession of 1940s German steam engines discharging batches of cast and crowd backstage-right. Backstage-left the retired cast are stripped and dismantled by multiarmed factory machines; incinerated in a conveyor-belt procession of coffins now resembling a time-lapse shot of a highway. Sound-effects of industrial chaos.

'Alternative sets are now visible in an animated polyptych of Inferno, booms windscreen-wiping over the sets, generations of cast and audience discharged by an elaborate network of heavy and light rail, busses, ferries, light aircraft, blimps and hot-air balloons; variations on cast disposal: full-body mincing like cattle, dissolution in cauldrons of acid - chorus of autotuned medieval agony; remains pumped, carted, airlifted back in the direction from which the vehicles come. Roar of engine-Doppler in all directions.

'A volcano booms over the spectacle, its flare illuminating the blackened steel rigging of a cavernous warehouse. A billion helium-pitched screams knit into a continuous, wavering ring.

'The warehouse spectacle fizzles grey-white and fades to a purple-and-white text banner:

'YOU ASKED FOR THIS

'DONATE NOW'

This is a piece of metaparody, attacking a trend in media design for defending psychologically hostile attention-holding tactics (mainly derived from gambling psychology, and which tend to monopolise attention either without maximising user-enjoyment, or by actively undermining it) by arguing that these tactics are cognitively

ergonomic. An existing version of this argument is that defending the incentivisation of very short video content, like that of Tik Tok, by claiming it corresponds to the natural human attention span - while what it in-fact does is to produce a repetitive pattern of content-consumption on a random-ratio reward schedule (some crap content, some good, in a way that the user can't anticipate whether the next item will be enjoyable or not - the same mechanic that causes your pet to piss you off constantly asking for food if you give them treats at unpredictable intervals; plays a role in Battered Person Syndrome; and a mechanic extensively employed in gambling UI design). The Cognitive Ergonomics argument is essentially the same fallacy as that of informed rational consumer choice, reincarnated in the fallacy that user engagement is a function of user fulfilment, which is in contradiction to decades of psychological study, notably on reward-scheduling.

The intent of the piece is to satirise the defence of hostile media design by demonstrating that a *reductio ad absurdum* argument would be a dubious method of mounting said defence.

The focus is on one aspect of attention-manipulation, already heavily parodied in Tim's Kitchen Tips: that of the laughably protracted moment of suspense before the verdict delivery on a Reality game show. The argument that this protraction is 'cognitively ergonomic' could be indirectly proven by demonstrating that a shorter wait, which most people if questioned would

presumably profess to want, would be cognitively un-ergonomic. Since a moderate wait is obviously preferable, the only way to make this argument is to employ a 'be careful what you wish for' slippery-slope fallacy, which plays out in the indefinite acceleration of the show's pacing. The oft-made and oft-un-supported "progress is regression" claim is made on absurd degree with backwards temporal progression through imagery from the Holocaust, the Industrial Revolution, and Heironymous Bosch's Tryptichs of Purgatory, culminating in a "chorus of autotuned medieval agony".

This piece may feel extreme, or clumsy, or simply petty, over a non-issue. However, as we incrementally approximate full-time 'integration' with the User Interface, the technology, philosophies, and fallacies informing and underlying UI design are of growing importance to all of us, and may one day come even more than they do now to define our experience of life. I suspect anyone who's had to use a shitty animation-encumbered UI 8+ hours daily at work will be sympathetic to this concern.

Conclusion - So How Can I Actually Benefit From This Shit?

The chill thing about this style is it seems to be very intuitive to assimilate.

It's also highly likely that you're familiar with examples of it already.

The most obvious barrier is that of considering a style often encountered as part of a 'trash medium' - i.e. meme culture, to be off-limits for the purpose of literary prose. This barrier is easily enough surmounted by exposure to established prose using similar styles.

Coppypasta as a style has one specific application I'd like to highlight, which applies as much to non-satirical prose as to satirical. This has to do with an alternative, but convergent definition of the word 'copy'.

'Copy', as in 'copywriting', refers often to non-literary body text suiting the demands of various industries, and informed by their best-practice guidelines. Legal copy, advertising copy, user-manual and hazard-warning copy, newsreel and documentary copy, academic and scientific writing, journalistic writing, political and economic commentary and rhetoric, jargon, vernacular, and so-on.

Where this converges with 'coppypasta' is that the latter has often to do with imitating and parodying 'typical' styles. Performing this as an exercise is an excellent way of gaining an intuitive familiarity with the style and standards of an alternative way of writing, which for someone somewhere is enough of a first language that they can produce it on-demand.

Almost all dialogue and a significant portion of prose-writing involve at least some degree of voice-borrowing. As with languages, learning to borrow a new voice is markedly easier after one becomes familiar with the acquisition process. Accordingly, flippant pastiches of advertising copy may form an accessible steppingstone for writers attempting to develop the versatility of their voice.

If you are anxious to eliminate borrowed voices from your prose in an effort to approach pure self-expression, I refer you to this quotation by Rudyard Kipling:

*> 'What should they know of England who only
England know?'*

The significance of this is that in stepping away from and back to your instinctive style, you may gain a crisper, more critical appreciation of what your habits actually are, and may return to their exercise with an improved sense of their strengths and avenues for expansion.

Acknowledgments

Promocode: BSJ