

**MI**

# Meme Insider



## Emperor Lemon

*Exclusive Interview featuring  
YouTube Pooper gone Social Analyst!*

*A Closer Look  
at Webcomics*

*Twitter Doubles the Characters,  
Doubles the Memes*

*Postmodernist  
Culture*

# WELCOME BACK!

Welcome back everyone! So glad to see that you either survived the Halloween season or are now a skeleton and are reading this while waiting to be drafted into the Skeleton War. We've got some ghastly articles in store, however none of them are quite as frightening as the fact that the holiday season is soon upon us. Read up on the meme trends now, invest wisely, and you'll be able to afford those great black friday deals that you literally fought for the right to buy. As always. thank you for being such devoted fans and please do enjoy this issue

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Thanks again,  
The Meme Insider Team

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Double the memes

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It's retail

# DOUBLE THE CHARACTERS, DOUBLE THE MEMES

TWITTER'S EXPERIMENT WITH A 280-CHARACTER LIMIT

**@JStemp. October 2017.**

Since the dawn of Twitter, users have been limited to the arbitrary 140-character limit. This has limited some in terms of memes; meme makers may find themselves deleting or abbreviating words just to fit their genius in. But on September 26th, 2017 Twitter announced on their blog they had plans to experiment with a 280-character limit—but only with a small select group of users chosen at random.

Before when a meme maker would go about getting around the 140-character limit, one would simply just rearrange their memes and post the screenshot. In a way, the 140-character limit birthed the Twitter meme market—the Twitter format has spiked in popularity in the past few years. But with the possibility of a 280-character limit, memes could become longer and even fit into Twitter itself instead of just being screenshots.

This expands the many memes we already see on Twitter (and the various places those tweets are then posted). One of the first uses of the 280-character limit I saw was an ASCII rendition of the famous Twitter meme You know I had to do it to em.

The increase in characters would benefit the many “areas” of Twitter like Black people Twitter or Weird Twitter whose loosely connected group

of users experiment with different formats of memes and generally produce original content. Other uses tend to be longer dialogue driven memes—me: posts—and cospypasta. Ironically, many who went the cospypasta route used quotes that were longer than 280-characters—showing 280-characters can be just as limiting as 140.

An example of a cospypasta used is the famous Rick and Morty meme:

“To be fair, you have to have a very high IQ to understand Rick and Morty. The humour is extremely subtle, and without a solid grasp of theoretical physics most of the jokes will go over a typical viewer’s head. There’s also Rick’s nihilistic outlook, which is deftly woven into hi”

As you can see, the copy cuts off mid sentence. However, using copy longer than 280-characters has been short lived and died down soon after the first randomly selected users tweeted their first 280-character tweet. But the possibility of cospypasta being born from twitter still remains; the increase in characters would allow more longer forms of memes to be posted.

These longer memes would most definitely lead to an increase in production on



Figure 1: An example of a deep fried meme.

Twitter due to more room for experimentation with format. Twitter's format of memes have on Twitter due to more room for experimentation with format. Twitter's format of memes have become increasingly popular in the economy and has been slowly climbing to the top of mass meme producing websites.

This shift in the mass production of memes has been apparent in recent years; 4chan used to reign supreme by popularizing memes like Pepe the frog and Doge, but in recent years Twitter has been slowly taking the mantle of meme mass producer. The increase to 280-characters might be enough to push Twitter to the very top of the food chain.

In any case, 280-characters would force a new model of innovation, a new paradigm for meme producers to follow. Many new memes may appear in the wake of the possible change and those who make memes will reap the benefits.

I thought not.

It's not a story the Jedi would tell you. It's a Sith legend.

Darth Plagueis was a Dark Lord of the Sith, so powerful and so wise he could use the Force to influence the midichlorians to create life... He had such a knowledge of the dark side that he could even keep the ones he cared about from dying.

The dark side of the Force is a pathway to many abilities some consider to be unnatural. He became so powerful... the only thing he was afraid of was losing his power, which eventually, of course, he did. Unfortunately, he taught his apprentice everything he knew, then his apprentice killed him in his sleep.

Ironic, he could save others from death, but not himself.

>[https://blog.twitter.com/official/en\\_us/topics/product/2017/Giving-you-more-characters-to-express-yourself.html](https://blog.twitter.com/official/en_us/topics/product/2017/Giving-you-more-characters-to-express-yourself.html)

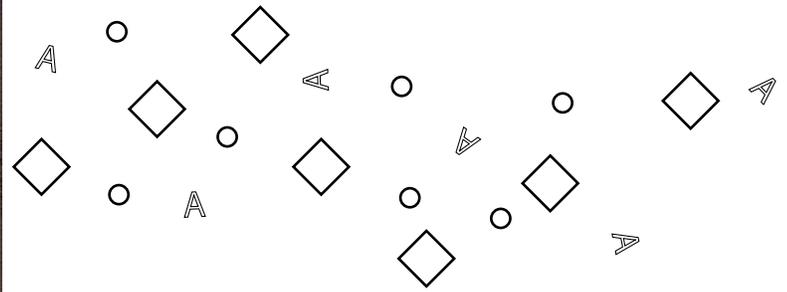
>[https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/26/technology/twitter-280-characters.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/26/technology/twitter-280-characters.html?_r=0)

><http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/you-know-i-had-to-do-it-to-em>

><http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/to-be-fair-you-have-to-have-a-very-high-iq-to-understand-rick-and-morty>



Surreal memes may be intimidating for the average investor, but with only a little bit of basic knowledge and a hint of consumer savvy, these wacky memes can become a cornerstone in anyone's healthy meme portfolio.



## Surreal Memes. The Strange Key to Diversifying Your Meme Portfolio?

u/MasinNancy

“What the hell am I looking at?”

This is often the response I receive whenever I start trying to trade my surreal memes in a predominantly “traditional” meme market. It’s hard not to interpret this recurring anecdotal phenomenon as a more widespread, systemic problem within the meme economy itself. Surreal memes—for the casual trader—often feature visuals that are hard to parse paired with text that is only tangentially related to the image. (Sometimes the text may not be related at all!). Such deviations from the format of traditional memes negatively affect the dankness of surreal memes within the Nominal Dankness Index (NDI). However, the NDI fails to fully account for the real dankness of a meme, and is instead constructed in such a way that perceived

dankness becomes the only metric that matters when assessing the overall nominal dankness of a meme. This perceived dankness bias artificially favors traditional memes over surreal memes, misleading even the most experienced meme investors into misvaluing surreal memes entirely. I intend to help correct the flaws of the NDI by briefly explaining three ideas which might contribute to a healthier valuing of surreal memes.

## Wun:

As stated in Rule 7 on r/surrealmemes, surreal memes must be surreal “in the traditional 20th-century artistic sort of sense.” It is from the rich surrealism of the 20th-century that the world was introduced to the genius of people like Dalí and Buñuel. Names as prominent as these lend a lot of historical weight to the dankness of surreal memes. This type of historicity is an important factor in the dankness of contemporary memes (see r/trippingthroughtime or the various crusade meme subreddits which saw a huge upswing earlier this year) and should not be undervalued when assessing the dankness of a surreal meme.

Comprehending a meme is not always necessary for it to be dank. R/me\_irl was able to produce various dank memes which were reported to have come from the future. In the present, however, the meme was incomprehensible. Even so, every trader could see that the meme was dank in spite of its incomprehensibility, and traders invested heavily for massive profit. Surreal memes, too, can be invested in profitably despite their confusing structure, much like these memes from the future.

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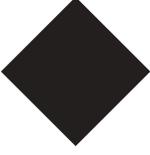
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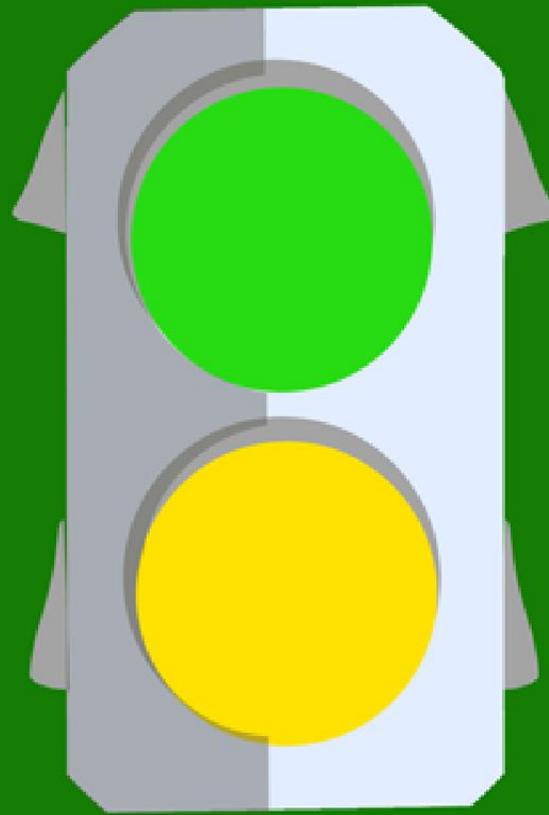
Finally, perceived dankness fluctuates immensely from day to day. One day, Spongebob memes are seen as dank; the next day, they are called childish prattle. The Wednesday frog seems to be dank only on Wednesdays. Every other day of the week, the frog appears worthless. Extrapolating from this, if one were to trade memes based only on perceived dankness, then one's meme portfolio would be in a constant state of chaotic flux. Except for those few high-octane, adrenaline junkie memers, a meme portfolio that maintains a constant dankness along with a steady growth in trade value is more ideal. Emphasis on real dankness can create this stable portfolio, a portfolio where surreal memes have a healthy place alongside traditional meme varieties.



Surreal memes are not everyone's cup of tea, but in the meme economy, they are an important diversifying force. When traditional meme formats decline in dankness (and they will, just as they will inevitably grow in dankness once more as the economy ebbs and flows) surreal memes can help keep an investor's portfolio vibrant and viable.

So, instead of saying  
“What the hell am I  
looking at?”, I hope the  
reader of this article,  
when confronted with an  
opportunity to invest in  
surreal memes, will be  
able to say, confident in  
his or her informed and  
well-reasoned opinion,  
“**That is pretty dank.**”





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# *INTERVIEW WITH EMPEROR LEMON*

SITTING DOWN WITH THE POOPER BEHIND THE UNCREDBLES AND OTHER CLASSICS.

Spooktober 2017.

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You might know EmpLemon as the man behind such classic YouTube Poops such as The Uncredibles or Frying Dory. Or maybe you know him from videos such as “Enough is Enough! How Behind the Meme is ruining the Memescape as We Know It”, or “The Downward Spiral”. These are surely two very different types of content, but to the staff at Meme Insider, we consider them both to be of equal quality and importance. As longtime fans of EmpLemon, it was out pleasure to sit down with him to pick his brain.

**MI:** What/Who is your main inspirations behind your Youtube Poop series?

**EL:** Initially, my biggest inspiration was a poop-er by the name of SantaWithTeeth (a.k.a kor-tez). He has been retired for years now, but his Spongebob YTPs from 2009-2010 have stood the test of time. They are some of the funniest poops you will see, yet the editing is relatively simple. I had seen YTPs before but SWT's were something else. He was the first pooper I saw use the technique of sentence mixing. I was in elementary school at the time and witnessing Spongebob cursing with his own voice completely blew my mind. I just had to try it myself. So in 2010, I opened my YouTube channel and started editing cartoons and commercials in my free time.

Over time I started exploring new techniques

and new poopers. I never really tried to craft a distinct style, rather I incorporated elements from some of my favorite poopers over the years: AbsoluteBillion, Imaperson, chemistryguy, BarneyIsPerverted, LinkOnDrugs, Awful Fawful, MoBrosStudios and cartoonlover98 to name a few. Most of these guys are retired now, but you can still find their stuff somewhere on YouTube.

**MI:** Watching your Youtube Has been on a Downward Spiral, you demonstrated that you have a passion about youtube. It had a punk flair, was well written, and you ended it well too. However, do you think youtube culture can change from the ground up given the overarching corporate influence that creators have no control over?

**EL:** I am actually somewhat optimistic for the future of YouTube despite much of what I said in that video. While the top ranks of YouTube are saturated with God-awful content, many of the newer emerging channels are actually quite good. Channels rising to popularity today must produce high quality content in order to compete with the big-name guys. The system is somewhat self-correcting in this fashion. I think 5-10 years from now, the top channels on this site will become much more diverse, and good content will be much more accessible.

With that being said, the biggest problem YouTubers face today is financial instability. The ad-pocalypse reminds me a lot of the widespread

lawsuit). Both situations are similar, with YouTube reacting to pressure from big corporations at the expense of creators. YouTubers adapted back then, and they will adapt now. The paradigm of success on YouTube is always changing; that's part of the game, and we all have to accept it. However, despite recent setbacks, YouTube is undoubtedly the entertainment platform of the future. The generation of kids growing up today are watching YouTube, not television. I don't see this trend changing anytime soon. They will come, and so will the cash, eventually.

**MI:** As a follow up, do you think the current audience can fix the culture once they become participants instead of purely consumers?

**EL:** That's tough to say. The kids watching YouTube today are unlike any other generation in history. We give them a lot of flak, but at the same time it's important to understand where they're coming from. 12-year-olds this year were born in 2005. They are the first generation of heavy internet users over the majority of their childhoods. It's easy to ridicule them for enjoying stuff like the Paul Brothers, Ricegum, and other obnoxious YouTubers, but we have to understand that they're kids. They're impressionable, and they're still developing their tastes. I certainly watched my fair share of poor content at that age (RayWilliamJohnson, Annoying Orange). I turned it around, and I have faith that the next generation can too. Either that, or we have inadvertently created a generation of tasteless zombies.

**MI:** What initially got you making YTPs?

**EL:** I really liked watching them, and they seemed pretty easy to make. I just followed a few YouTube tutorials and I was on my way. Later I would learn that while it's easy to make a YTP, it's surprisingly difficult to make a good one. 7 years later I'm still trying to improve.

**MI:** In your opinion, do meme sources ever lose their dankness? Toy Story and CDI Zelda memes seem to be dormant now- but are they still funny? Is that "in the eye of the beholder"?

**EL:** As memes age, we start to perceive them differently. Fresh memes have a high level of dank because you see/hear them for the first time. They have an element of surprise and novelty. The more you see it, the more stale it becomes. At this point, the meme could meet one of several fates.

Some memes just fade away and retain some level of dankness. Some memes become intertwined with the culture of a certain website or community (i.e. Pepe on 4chan and Kappa on Twitch).

Some memes spread to the mainstream, and they get completely run into the ground by normies. When you start to see

the meme covered on online articles (The Internet is Crazy about this New Meme!) then you can pretty much put it in a coffin. Once it's been tainted with corporate marketing, it has gone irredeemably normie and will never be dank again; unless you repackage it with some ironic filters.

The way I see it, a meme is more dank the more it distances itself from becoming a brand. Super Mario Bros is a brand. There's nothing funny

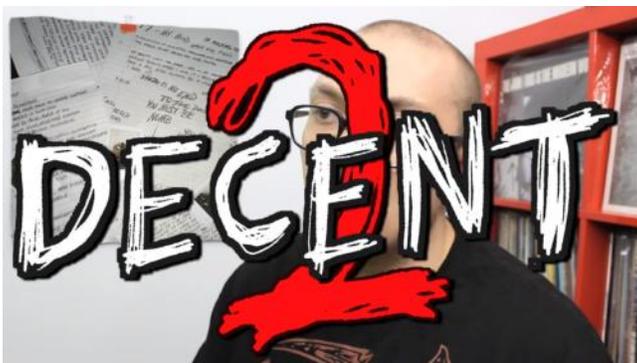


about it. It's a product that people purchase and consume. Hotel Mario, on the other hand, is a failed brand - and it makes a great meme. Nobody sees Hotel Mario as a product. Big YouTubers don't do let's-plays of Hotel Mario. There isn't a cancerous Hotel Mario fandom. Hotel Mario is just a thing that exists as an element of internet culture, which makes it pretty dang dank.

**MI:** The Uncredibles is your most popular upload- where do you see the Incredibles as a meme source? Is it an untapped goldmine or has it already lived out its short spotlight?

**EL:** I see major meme potential here. We have already seen prolific meme production from other Pixar films like Toy Story, Monsters Inc, and Cars. I don't see why The Incredibles can't join them. Everybody already knows the Incredibles, and there are simply too many memorable scenes and characters for it to remain dormant for much longer.

**MI:** On a scale of 1-10 how dank is Harry Connick Jr?



**MI:** What was it like to switch your style of content so dramatically? What was the fan reaction then, and what is it now that the dust has settled?



**EL:** I made a big gamble, for sure. After five years of making only YTP-related videos, I was fed up. So starting in 2016, I began experimenting with new video formats. I tried my hand in meme videos with my ASCENDED series, since dank memes were booming at the time. I also started doing commentary videos with YTP-style editing. Naturally, a lot of old fans were turned off by the change. You can't drastically alter a five-year-old formula without getting some backlash. I had a period of about nine months when I would lose subscribers with each upload. It was demoralizing, but I didn't let it deter me. I kept trying and eventually it paid off. In about a year, I gained more subscribers than I had in all of my first five years combined.

Due to my more controversial videos, I have developed somewhat of a cult following. While I appreciate whatever support I can get, I have made it perfectly clear that I am loyal to no one. I will make what I make; and whether or not you like it is your problem. I've lost fans before, and it hasn't made one bit of difference. It only takes one click to unsubscribe.

**MI:** Recently you made a popular video addressing Behind the Meme. If you knew that Behind the Meme was reading this interview- what would you say to him?

**EL:** Don't hate the player - hate the game.

**MI:** Do you have any ideas do you have laying around that you just don't have time to get to?

**EL:** Tons. I have a Google doc with literally dozens of topics for future commentaries. Time has always been an issue for me. I could never be one of those YouTubers who uploads every day. I only like to upload videos I'm personally satisfied with, and that takes a while. It doesn't help that I'm a full time college student either. Or that I'm a procrastinator. Fortunately for me, my audience is used to infrequent uploads since I have never had a regular schedule. In the words of Mr. Incredible, We'll get there when we get there!

**MI:** Who is your favorite Youtuber?

**EL:** Michael from Vsauce. In an age of clickbait, drama, pandering, and rampant douchebaggery among the top YouTubers, it's good to see that there's at least one channel that remains tried-and-true to the method of simply making engaging, quality content. Dunkey is a close second.

**MI:** What is your dream collab on Youtube?

**EL:** If I ever get the chance, I would like to work with the Melon Lord himself, Anthony Fantano. I know he's a fan of memes and remix culture, and at the very least we could have a few interesting conversations.

**MI:** Finally, what is the biggest change you have witnessed in the style of YouTube Poops?

**EL:** Since I first started, poops have become bigger, longer and more complex. Most internet users only remember the simplistic din-

ner-spaghetti poops of 2008, which is when they stopped watching. However, those that stuck around witnessed an incredible evolution. More genres, more effects, more memes; poopers constantly trying to outdo each other with more and more grandiose projects. Editing techniques have become much more advanced. Back in the 2000s most poopers used Windows Movie Maker. Now it's not uncommon to see After Effects and 3D modelling software just for a dumb little joke. It amazes me how much effort some people put into these nonsensical videos.

If I could mention a single big change, it would be the overall style of humor. Poops back in the day relied on remixing a single source. The humor came from the editing itself, along with the disruption of the original source's quality. Nowadays, YTP humor has transitioned to a much more referential style. It's common for poops today to pull clips from dozens of sources, concocting a mad symphony of obscure references and connections. I find a lot of humor in modern YTP from the pure absurdity of the composition (the why does this exist? feeling). The rise in popularity of internet meme culture has certainly contributed to this transition. Dank memes and YTP have converged to an extent in recent times. As time goes on, it becomes more and more difficult to differentiate between YTPs and meme remixes.

**Patreon:** Have you considered transitioning away from YouTube poops to a more contemporary form of memes?

**EL:** I have toyed with this idea through my ASCENDED series (along with other shitposts), however I don't think I'll ever truly stop making YTPs. Memes come and go, but YTPs have a certain charm that make them sort of timeless. If I

do much more meme stuff in the future, it will probably be more analytical and research-based. So stay tuned for more MEME THEORY !!!

**P:** What are you studying?

**EL:** I was originally trying to become an engineer, but I found it boring as all heck, so I transferred to video production. Might as well play to my strengths, right? Maybe when I graduate, I can start making documentary films about memes.

**P:** When are you going to make frying Dory?

**EL:** All you ever do is complain.

**P:** Do you think YouTube poops are dying?

**EL:** Quite the contrary, actually. YouTube Poops are better today than ever before. If you don't believe me, go check out guys like Jimmy Davis, Schaffrillas Productions, and Pie Pivotmon-tier-O. All of these guys are new poopers with unique styles, and they do great work.

The misconception that YouTube Poops are dead comes from the malaise of former fans whose favorite poopers have long since retired. YTP is an adaptive medium; and if you wish to become a disciple of it, you must be willing to adapt your own tastes. Poopers come and poopers go. No pooper sticks around forever, and it's up to the viewers to find new ones. A simple YouTube search will likely reveal some new contenders you have probably never seen before. YouTube Poops may be ridiculous videos, but it's even more ridiculous to declare an artform DEAD just because it no longer adheres to your fickle preferences.

**P:** Why do you hate normies so much?

**EL:** I don't hate normies per se; I just hate the mentality associated with their behavior. This is a complicated issue that requires more than an interview response to truly explore, but I will try to summarize my thoughts here.

Let me first say that I define a normie as somebody who follows trends simply because they're popular. If you look at pop music today, you will notice that almost all of it is dull, repetitive and formulaic. This has nothing to do with my special snowflake elitist hipster tastes. Most pop music today is objectively stale and simplistic; this has been demonstrated through comprehensive mathematical research. Most songs that top the charts are just not good, yet they are the most popular. How can this be? It's because normies lack individual ambition, and they will unquestionably consume anything as long as it's within the status quo. They judge things based on how much other people like it, rather than by truth or merit. I'm not against people enjoying popular things. The Bohemian Rhapsody is one of the most overplayed songs of all time, and it's one of my favorites. Don't Stop Believing is in a similarly overplayed, and I can't stand it. It's a subjective decision, sure, but it's one that I made on my own.

Sadly, the majority of people succumb to this fate. They sacrifice their individuality, creativity and imagination just to gain the approval of others. They are so terrified of being labeled "weird", that they just fade into the mob.

Neil Armstrong walked on the fucking moon. That's pretty weird, yet it makes him one of the the greatest men who ever lived. Weirdness is good, and we should embrace it whenever we can (That's part of the reason I like YouTube Poop so much). Normies fear being weird, when they should fear being ordinary.

***Meme Insider.  
It's Pretty Good.***



# Building Structural Frameworks to Contextually Examine Postmodernist Meme Culture

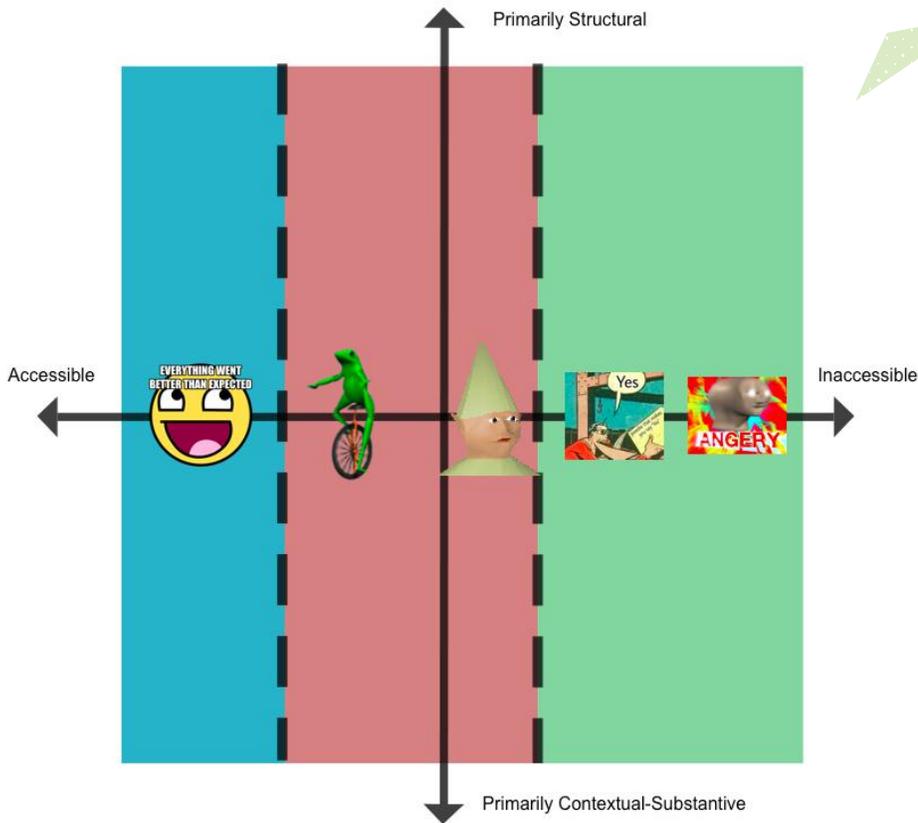
A Memetonormative Analysis Pt. 2

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*/u/MajorMushroom42*

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The zone beneath the axis in the memeticist segment of the curve has been marked the “meme zone.” This is simply a representation of the general reason why memeticist memes have been so successful, and continue to enjoy not only strong popularity but substantial meme creation within memeticist communities (factors which can be seen to feed each other in the maintenance of a strong audience and an evolving dynamic); the general memeticist meme has an excellent balance between content and structure, with enough content for the meme itself to be unique and amusing even to viewers who have seen similar memes and enough structure that the meme is not just an amusing image but also has enough scope to allow both change and interrelation with other memes. Contrastingly, as seen, both pre and postmemeticist memes have a substantially greater relative structuralist focus - the former because of its primitive nature, and the latter because of its derivation of humour from the systematic disruption of content in more traditional memes. This crucial realisation leads us to our last important spectrum diagram, depicted in Fig. 10.

## Bilateral Analysis

Naturally content can be seen in the vast majority of memes - new content is viewed as fundamental to meme creation, and content that is seen to have become stale or overused becomes unpopular in favour of new content, a primary factor and driving force in the continuous, spontaneous development of memes. Even memes with no links to existing structures or formats can still be successful, provided they contain humorous content (as appropriate for the memeto-temporal sphere they inhabit). Additionally, content can allow memes to engage with contemporary and socially relevant issues, making contextually relevant content a key factor in many memes. The ability to see content and

structure as factors that are present in almost all memes, in varying relative proportion, is key to full appreciation of the factors that make successful memes successful and a comprehensive relative analysis of meme communities and periods. Consider Fig. 9.

On this spectrum has been graphed a memetonormative structural-substantive relativity curve, representing what I believe is the approximate relative frequency, in the general case, that structural elements appear in memetic images, versus substantive elements. Many of these factors have already been considered, so the logic behind this decision is surely clear, but a few facts remain to be noted.

*Fig. 9(top left) - A fully marked meme spectrum, showing the structural-substantive relativity curve.*



This cylindrical mapping of the curve makes clear the key similarity of of prememeticist and postmemeticist memes; a heavy reliance on structure. With the place of postmemeticism in the memetic spectrum, and the reasons for that placement, having been deobfuscated, a rigorous treatment of postmodernist themes in late-stage memetic content can now begin.

Postmodernism is a 20th century cultural movement which is typically associated with distrust of traditional ideas such as

traditional objective notions of morality, ethics and religion. In his 1917 book "The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge," the Postmodern thinker Jean-François Lyotard argues that Postmodernism is typified by "an incredulity toward metanarratives;" that is to say, the cultural values and mores which were built upon culturally relevant narratives (such as the broad scope of the Western canon). Postmodernist philosophers saw these metanarratives to embody an oppressive totalization through their reliance on what Lyotard referred to as some kind of "transcendent and universal truth." Following on from Modernist philosophies in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which were overtly critical of societal change which was highly relevant in that social context, Postmodernism has a more laissez-faire moral attitude, and more greatly acknowledges the sovereignty of the self.

Fig. 10(top left) - By wrapping the spectrum around a cylinder we can see the relationship between pre- and postmemeticism.

"Postmodernism has a more laissez-faire moral attitude, and more greatly acknowledges the sovereignty

Memetic growth as shown on the meme spectrum above can be seen to have a similar teleological metanarrative to that of Western culture, in a broad sense; the growth of a dense creative canon in the Western world was naturally followed by cultural movements seeking to question the value and usefulness of such constructs, and offering new perspectives. Postmodernist texts question traditionally held views of the manner in which a text should be structured, deliberately rejecting conventions such as

objectivity of narration and linear construction. They are often deeply fragmented and may be self-referential. New art forms such as performance art were introduced in the 20th century with the breakdown in the boundaries between high and low culture postmodernism introduced, and as such postmemetic content may be viewed not only as an evolution from earlier, more objective meme formats but also as a form of postmodernist artwork. Postmodernism has, to some degree, removed pretensions about artistic merit, placing the tools to create meaningful artwork into the hands of the masses, by legitimising memes as a form of art.

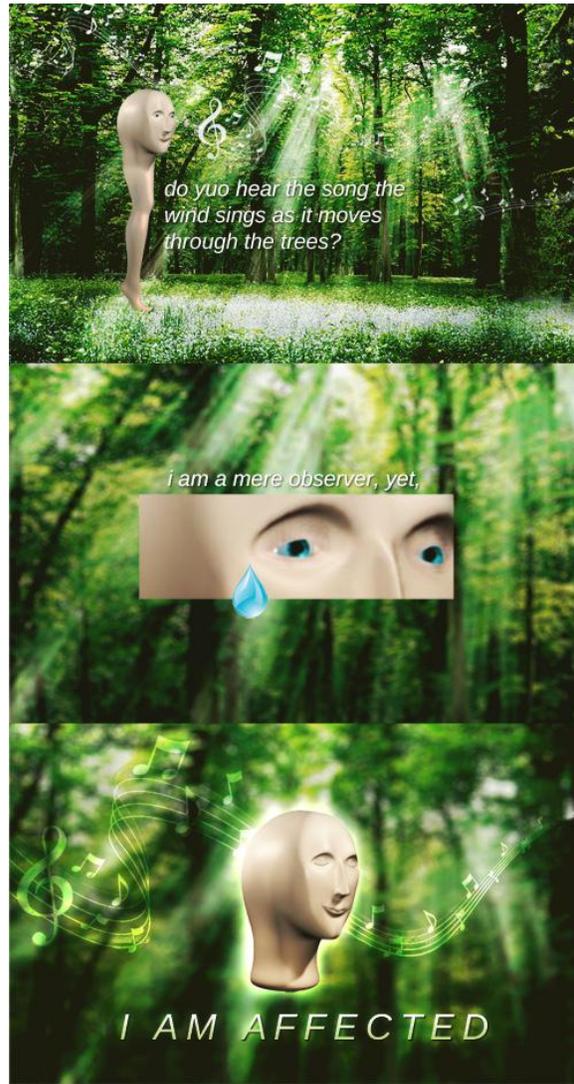


Fig. 11 - A surrealist meme. The character of "meme man" is clearly visible in the last frame.

## Mememes as an Art-

An important concept to consider which is deeply meaningful for analysis of progressive memetic culture is that of "post-irony." The twin concepts of postmodernist irony, in which content is portrayed under the viewer's assumption that it is to be considered a farce, and the reactionary movement of New Sincerity, in which excessive irony and hollow self-reflection are countered with genuinity, are fused; the result is post-irony, a state in which the boundary between irony and sincerity

is blurred. Post-ironic ideas can be seen in surreal memes, which continually redefine themselves and their nature, subverting easy identification and deciphering. On the one hand, surrealist memes are absurd in nature. The memes have no clear meaning, and range from ridiculous scenarios to memes which are themselves indecipherable enigmas. However, these memes clearly incorporate elements of modern society, repurposing images and ideas which are most definitely real (hence the use of the term surrealism)

and adapting them, often in surprising and unexpected ways. The status quo is redefined constantly, and the few common factors which can be identified between memes (factors which are constantly being repressed by surreal meme communities such that they do not override surrealist content, merely supplement it) are incredibly generic, simply warped representations of emotions or concepts used in these memes to replace their real-world counterparts (for instance "meme man" (a poorly rendered 3D model

of a disembodied human head - (see Fig. 11)) is used to represent a generic character and a wanderer through time and space, whose nature changes to fit any scene and plot which may be called for). To those accustomed to memes which make clear statements (return to Fig. 3) these memes may be uncomfortable; the surrealist nature of the memes make it difficult to tell where legitimate suggestions begin and concepts twisted to remove all prior meaning end. Ultimately, nothing approaching certitude can be gathered from these memes; as shown on the cylindrical meme spectrum they are more similar to prememeticist memes, in that what meaning they do provide they provide not through directly discursive statements but through blurred ideas, which are strong in terms of their impact in that particular area (for instance a surreal meme which discusses love, which would probably use highly stereotypical love related imagery to emphasize that) but which cannot move beyond that, restricted by the strong surrealist structure upon which all surreal memes are based. This memetic imprisonment can be compared directly to primitive, unevolved prememeticist memes, unable to make social critique beyond broad statements. Surreal memes are a failed attempt to analyse culture - while they seek to engage in satire and irony with the intent of highlighting core failures of modern culture, they descend too deep into self-referential

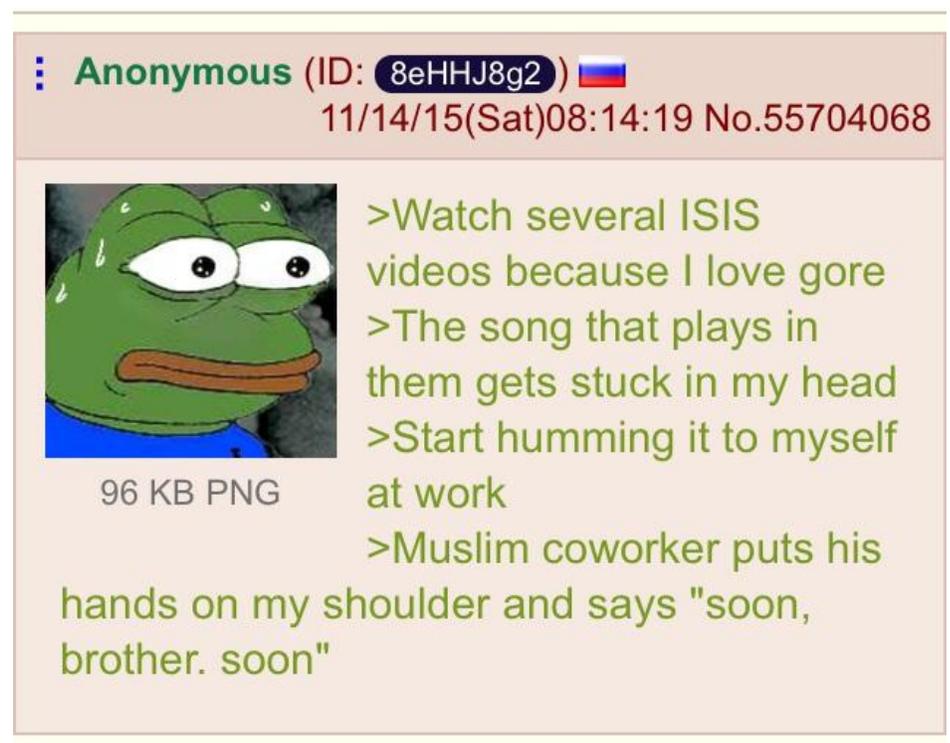


Fig. 12 - A short greentext story.

parody - their post-ironic tendencies make it impossible to tell where parody ends and ideas begin. Surreal memes are a reflection of a reflection, losing what made memetic content meaningful in the first place - while they seek to abstract themselves to a distant point of reference, in order to look down and comment upon culture as a whole, as opposed to specific issues, they have removed themselves so far from the very culture they seek to critique that their commentary is farcical and any meaning they may once have had is lost.

While discussing post-irony it is worth referring, however tangentially, to the flourishing online communities of 4chan

and its diaspora (e.g. 8chan - a host of similar imageboard type sites exist). Here, the fact that users can remain anonymous at will, and in fact (without posting personal details) will have no way to verify their identity, means that all content is viewed through a post-ironic frame of reference; it is often unclear as to whether given stories are true or false, and absurdity is a common feature of "greentext" stories commonly posted on the forum. The profligate content, often describing sex and masturbation scenes (often homosexual and/or scenes of sexual discovery) and scenes of violence, are often outlandish and may be clearly untrue, and the boundaries between reality and absurdity are blurred.

## Artistic Expression

In Fig. 13 a “naked meme” is shown, another facet of postmemeticism, in which bright, strong colours and simple motifs lifted from other meme content are placed together with no sense of relative meaning (a further distortion of the genre of deep fried memes - this meme might be better considered as a more extreme deep fried meme) - the letter emoji symbols fail to make meaningful words and the words that are present lack any context. The meme is a pastiche of aspects of memeticist culture (visible through the emoji usage) and prememeticist culture (the salient point of the minion as subject). This meme can be seen to reflect the ultimate triumph of structure over content - it is only necessary to view a single naked meme to understand the concept which they are trying to suggest (degeneration of meme images into near-illegible collages of found parts), although naked memes possess the self-referentiality, in this regard, that is common to postmodernist works - without the existence of a body of work of naked meme content, a framework within which to understand the memes, the humour would not be possible. While this naked meme (and others) can be examined to understand the nature of naked memes, the true nature of

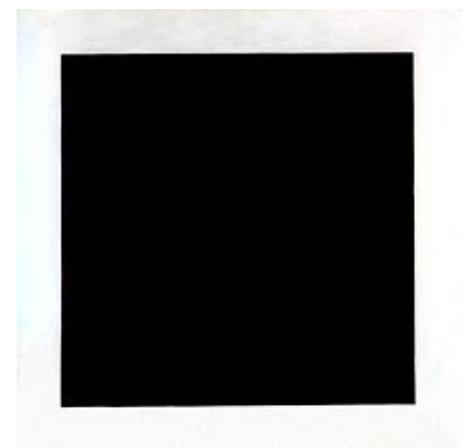


the meme is that the humour derived from them is not derived from the observance of a single, illogical image but through the viewing of the whole body of work as a single unified object working towards presenting a single idea. This can be compared to minimalist art, such as Kazimir Malevich’s “Black Square” (Fig. 14). The artist considered the work as “pure feeling” - a consideration of what the essence of art was - although another minimalist artist, Alexander Rodchenko, considered his minimalist works to be a disassembly of the principles of prior art. In the same way, these two divergent but grand creative visions are expressed through a body of different pieces which speak as a unified whole through their shared

characteristics - it is often the case, as here, that the artist himself will provide further commentary to enlighten observers as to their creative goal. Naked memes could be attempting to do either of the above; either crystallising disconnected memetic concepts into a sort of collage or criticising the absurdity of common memetic structures (such as the ubiquitous B emoji). Given the group mentality and the distributed creation process common to all memes, the latter is more likely.

*Fig. 13(top) - This is a naked meme, an extreme in the transformation of traditional meme culture. Courtesy of /u/ArmenianPepsi*

*Fig. 14(bottom right) - “Black Square” - Kazimir Malevich, oil on canvas. Here structure predominates, and what speaks is not the content but the conspicuous lack thereof.*



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## “freed from the chains of excessive ironic & self reflective content”

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Just as in art, where each progressive artistic movement is not only spurred by the perceived mistakes of the previous generation but inspires the next generation through its own perceived mistakes, it is only natural that memes that seek to react to this sort of memetic content will be created, a trend which can be seen in wholesome memes, another offshoot from memeticist tradition but surely spurred to action by the creation of postmodernist meme content (while individual memes which could be referred

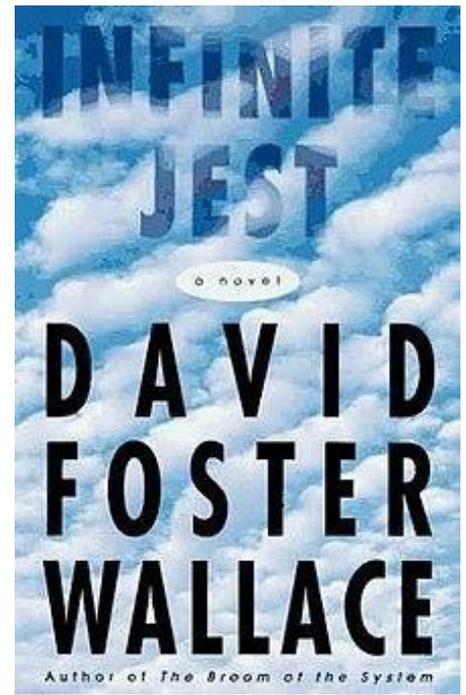
When bae says we need to work on our relationship



Fig. 15(above) - A typical wholesome meme. It is based off and subverts more traditional memes by editing the Pepe head.

Fig. 16(top right) - Although New Sincerity eschews irony, it is still able to engage in sophisticated social commentary, as shown in the inimitable *Infinite Jest* by David Foster Wallace.

to as “wholesome” have existed since the prememeticist Advice Animal format “Actual Advice Mallard,” the new wave of wholesome meme content started as recently as late 2015 (Fig. 15). It is analogous to the reactive movement of New Sincerity, responding to the excessively ironic and self-reflective content created by postmodernist thinkers by creating legitimate content which is freed from the chains of excessive irony and cynicism and can be taken at face value - as put by author and social critic David Foster Wallace in his 1993 essay “E Pluribus Unam - Television and U.S. Fiction” “the next real literary ‘rebels’ in this country might well emerge as some weird bunch of anti-rebels, born oglers who dare somehow to back away from ironic watching, who have the childish gall actually to endorse and instantiate single-entendre principles... real rebels, as far as I can see, risk disapproval.” Given the strong tradition in memetic culture, from prememeticism to the present day, of memes which view the meme-maker as an emotionally flawed and damaged object, incapable of being repaired (consider the community of r/me\_irl, where memeticist categories such as text message edit memes and stock photo edit memes strongly represent a disconnect between the unnamed meme-maker and the rest of society due to their

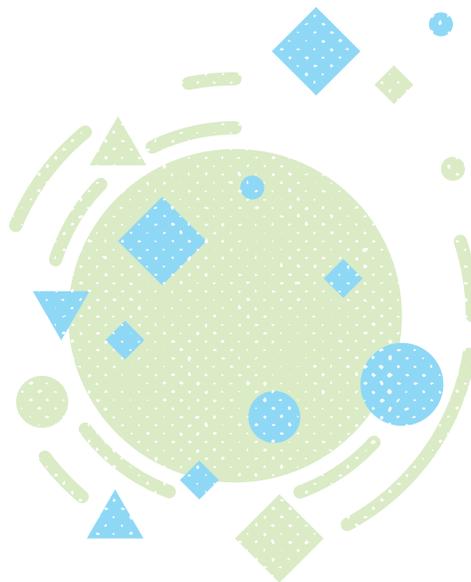


perceived anti-social nature), perhaps wholesome memes go further in subverting not only the new generation of absurdist ironic memes but the backbone of memetic culture, following what radio host Jesse Thorn described as the maxim of New Sincerity - “Be More Awesome,” and what he described as a lifestyle of “Maximum Fun.” While the critical might consider wholesome memes to be a naïve memetic construct, viewing traditional meme content as more applicable to the real world (arguably the reason memes were created in the first place - as a reaction to, and a content type appropriate in the age of, the creation of the Internet), there can be no surprise that meme content as radical as that visible in postmemeticism would attract a vigorous countermovement.

## Conclusion

It is only appropriate to refer once again to the title of this work, and the fact that it claims to be a “memetonormative analysis;” it is my belief that it is impossible for any work analysing the cultural phenomenon that is memeticism to go beyond this remit in its critique, and that any work claiming to do so is either examining individual pieces so closely that no broad statements about meme culture can be made, or attempting to examine so many pieces of culture that the focus becomes the listing of individual memes and not the establishment of their common themes and structural similarities. Any discussion of meme categories or movements must be seen to be considering the general case, as has been done here. The meme spectrum, while a primitive tool, still serves to effectively elucidate some of the complex relationships between the multitudinous meme categories by categorising them, and thus allows for an escalation in the sophistication of analysis that can be carried out. I would invite others, mindful of these principles, to attempt their

own analysis of contemporary meme culture through the posit of a counter-critique. A single further fact remains to be considered. Is an essay whose primary subject matter is memes also, by definition, a meme? Is it possible to write about memes in a purely serious sense? If memeticist content is ironic, is this essay, as an examination of memes, postmemetic, & therefore postironic? If so, is it possible to distinguish legitimate intellectual criticism from a sophisticated, intellectually advanced postmodernist meme structure, to tell where one ends & the other begins? Such consideration shall be left as an exercise for the reader ■



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**“The meme spectrum, while a primitive tool, still serves to effectively elucidate some of the complex relationships between the multitudinous meme categories by categorising them”**

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# GRABBING A WEBCOMIC TO MAKE IT A MEME NEEDS A KEEN EYE

**WHILE WEBCOMICS HAVE HAD SUCCESS IN THE MARKET, IT IS A BAD IDEA TO HEAVILY INVEST BLINDLY**

**@Deros94. October 2017.**

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The meme economy often churns out formats with little payoff because of how fast memes fail to become viral. However there is an easy format that can co-opt another type of viral popularity. These are the webcomic memes. These particular webcomics refer to those that have little recurring characters just simple designs the creator repurposes. These daily webcomics are a favorite of many people for their easy to digest humor, relatability, and occasional use of absurd humor. This should not sound surprising to meme traders as it's similar to why individuals like memes and thus the audience tends to overlap with webcomics. Yet, it is a bad idea to force every popular webcomic on /r/comics into memes even if there have been previous examples that suggest it would be easy.

There was a prototype for this viral content which focuses on the modification of a short comic into a meme vehicle. This was the comic titled 'Oh Bother' in the webtoon 'Safely Endangered' created by Chris McCoy. This comic's strength lie in that the comic had potential for every type of meme. It was so versatile it was

able to be modified for edgy, deepfried, and even surrealist memes. This spiked before meme trading became renowned but it laid the groundwork for new webcomics to come.

It is so common to see popular webcomics appear in the meme economy because of an earlier successful meme comic. The most famous example comes from 'The Perry Bible Fellowship' (TPBF) created by Nicholas Gurewitch; the comic 'Quiz Kid' shows one student asking a nerd for an answer to a test question. It was so versatile it was seen on me\_irl, dankmemes, and even a small sighting on wholesomememes. This was the golden goose of webcomics that had viral memetry baked into it's art. Thus it is why new investors, knowing the success of 'Quiz Kid', look to turn hot new comics into popular memes.

To turn a profit on a webcomic meme it's important to identify which comics have potential to go memetically viral. Using the examples of 'Oh Bother' and 'Quiz Kid' the key features of a viral comic are: simple yet identifiable art, easily modifiable setup and punchline, and strong versatility. The list is or-



Figure 1: Web Comic.

dered by such that meme traders can move through it consecutively to evaluate the memetic potential of a webcomic. Simple yet identifiable art is key for grabbing the eyes of the internet. Individuals must be able to quickly grasp what the image is before clicking onto it. In the sea of memes and information individuals will pass it on their feeds unless they can get a solid grasp of the meme at a glance. Oh Bother accomplishes this through nostalgia. Pooh and Tigger are recognizable characters from many people's childhoods. Meanwhile 'Quiz Kid' utilizes TPBF's simplistic style so that the nerd and student creates an immediate understanding of their relationship. Overly complicated art or confusing thumbnails will prevent people from buying into the comic as a meme. If the art is good and eye catching the next thing to evaluate is the ability for modification. Before the comic itself is examined the order of readability must be tight to ensure the meme is not lost in the comic's flow. Both examples have easy readability

and so then it is important to look at the joke that will be replaced itself. In both examples the setup and punchline can be replaced without a need to modify the feeling of the comic. In 'Oh Bother' Pooh will always react with the thousand yard stare to Tigger's set-up and the student will always react angrily to the note passed by the nerd. The punch-line bit that is replaced by the meme must be able to fulfill the feeling leftover from the webcomic. Otherwise the new punchline inserted by the meme will not hit as hard and the value ultimately goes down.

The last part is the final piece of that lucrative meme pie. If the meme is versatile enough it will garner a huge payoff. Since memes can take many forms and most investors look to diversify across markets a webcomic should be able to exist in multiple markets. 'Oh Bother' showed that good meme comics are versatile and can exist in many markets at once. Additionally 'Quiz Kid' had enough relatability that it was constantly reappearing in me\_irl and dankmemes toting both simple angry reactions and edgy memes alike. If all three conditions exist in a comic investors should swing at the chance to grab a home run comic.

# MEMES & ELECTION YEARS

WHEN IS A GOOD TIME TO INVEST?

**/u/papasoflobradberry. September 2017.**

The “Dancing Baby,” a flash animation that went viral on the early Internet in 1996 through chain emails, is what many would consider to be one of the first “proto-memes.” This meme, along with The Hamster Dance, would reign as some of the most popular and discussed proto-memes during the meme economy of the Clinton Administration. Although the amount of memes during this era in time was sparse, the stream of proto-memes, particularly in the form of chain emails, like “Dancing Baby,” was relatively steady until a small peak in 2000 with the creation of “All your base are belong to us,” “ROFLCOPTER,” and the popularization of the ever-relevant “derp.” Predictably, the quantity of me-

mes continued to climb throughout the coming years.

Interestingly, however, the graph that measures how many new meme formats were created in recent history (of notable popularity) did not see a stable incline in production number. To be clear, the number of memes throughout the years has been increasing with the popularization of the Internet, and rapidly-- however, the meme economy (speaking purely in the measure of relative quantity rather than dankness) has seen dips and valleys just as frequently as economies across the world.

After collecting all the memes I could possibly find (through copious research on numerous sites, a thor-



ough search through my email's garbage folder with such enticing titles as "FWD:FWD:FWD:SNEEZING PANDA," and a visit to the ancient forums of yore where young memes were born), I began to look for trends in the amounts of viral memes to see if there was any indicator of a type of "meme movement" in the general economy.

The journey was very much a perilous one. The sheer volume of Internet memes was at first overwhelming, but I slowly began to categorize and date my excess of content.

What I found can be seen below:

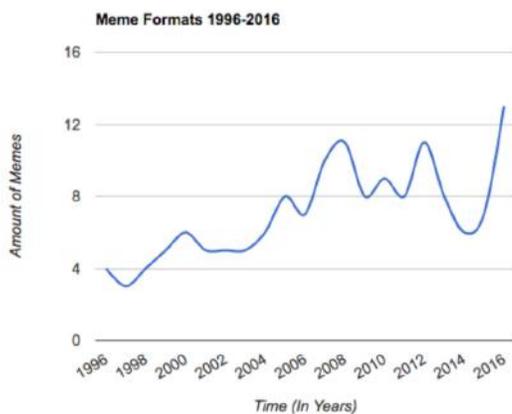


Figure 1: A grid showing an approximation of Meme Diversity over time

The trend I found most fascinating was the drastic peaks of viral memes created during (and six months prior to) election years.

There was an already-discussed meme-peak after the 2000 Election, but after Bush came into office, memes saw a brief decline before rising again in 2005, when we saw such classics as the Chuck Norris meme, "Lazy Sunday," and early Lolcats (which would

later blow up even more in 2006). A stronger peak is seen in 2007, when "Chocolate Rain," "Rickrolling," "Keyboard Cat," "Dramatic Chipmunk," "Sneezing Baby Panda," and "Don't Tase Me, Bro" were created. This massive boom in meme formats was an anomaly in the election-year theory, as it was created two years after the 2004 reelection of Bush, and one with an explanation: Youtube, the medium through which all these memes were pushed, was created in 2005, and only saw its popularity really begin to rise in 2007, according to Google Analytics. The next election year, 2008, saw a huge birth in memes, particularly in those that would remain pragmatic in the economy up until even last year: the "Fred" channel was officially created on Youtube, "Garfield without Garfield" began to gain traction, and, most notably, Pepe the Frog picked up and went viral.

In the two most recent election years especially, however, the memes, particularly those with lasting power, have exploded. In 2012 we saw Sweet Brown's "Ain't nobody got time for that" video take off, and were also given the gifts I know we all think on so fondly of "Gangam Style," "Y U NO," "Cereal Guy," "Grumpy Cat," "OMG Rage face," "Unimpressed McKayla," and "Kony 2012," for starters. And though many consider 2016 to be a crash in the dankness market, the production of new meme topics/formats themselves was at the highest it had ever been, with "Dat Boi," "Harambe,"

“Caveman Spongebob,” “Arthur’s Fist,”



Figure 2: Seemingly Unrelated Memes May Be Indirectly Bolstered by Election Seasons.

“Evil Kermit,” “If Dogs Wore Pants,” “Pen Pineapple Apple Pen,” and “Confused Mr. Krabbs” dominating every corner of the Internet, ironically or otherwise.

There are plenty of potential theories on why it would be that more memes would be created during election-- through much discussion with my peers (consisting of memers on the danker side of the spectrum along with more casual memers, edgy memers, and wholesome memers alike) I’ve come up with a few theories.

The first, and simplest, of the possible explanations for these spikes is the fact that the Internet is more in use during election years because of the public’s quadrennially renewed interest in politics. This interest has grown with the Internet (and, arguably, Donald Trump has strategically capitalized off of it), but despite the ever-increasing nature of Internet usage and, with it, number of memes, the steepest inclines seem to occur during election years. As the “Internet generation” emerges as a strong force in political decisions, so too do memes begin to become more important to In-

ternet users. In the past decade, memes have become a standard in all fanbases and interest groups-- with a simple search, fishing memes, Catholic memes, marching band memes, and tennis memes can be found in the thousands, just as an example. One thing that holds a widespread public interest, however, is politics, and thus meme production is increased during years of spiked political interest not only due to the specific



Figure 3: A standard 2016 era Election Meme

political memes being created but also because of a general increased Internet use. As a long-time meme investor told me, “It’s... just because it’s a popular topic that everyone knows about. It’s like how there’s going to be an, albeit smaller, spike when Eurovision or Halloween happens. More people are online, so more content is produced, simple as that.”

When speaking with other fellow memers on this issue, however, I found that some believe there are other reasons for these spikes. One self-appointed “edgelord” told me that he believed that all memes are derived from controversy, just as all humor is derived from misery. He went on to clarify that memes thrive in a black-and-white en-

vironment, particularly when it has reached the extremes that the current political spectrum has reached (and tends to do with every presidential election season).

“There’s a concerted and documented movement in the alt-right to popularize their candidates through the use of memes,” he told me. “Left-wing candidates tend to generate their own memes, like Sanders and Corbyn. Memes help people normalize their position in a social media environment.”

But with the rise of ironic memes in recent years, we’ve also seen a crossover in the young left, making memes supporting exaggeratedly immoral beliefs (edgy memes).

“But that’s just the same as something like Colbert,” said the source. “Making fun of something by straw-manning it to a point of hilarity.”

This explains the rise in political memes during these years, but what about, I asked him, nonpolitical memes that rose during these years?

“Like I said,” he explained, “it’s the controversy. At a time of such high stakes people need relief. Whether that comes in the form of ‘that feeling when you...’ or ‘tr-o-l-o-l-o,’ memes are always going to be more popular in years of controversy when people need something either to relate to or to take their mind off all the bulls\*\*t.”

There were yet other theories as to why memes would become popular during these times. When speaking with an old friend of mine who considered himself a “casual memer,” (in his words) one who “finds and appreciates memes, like on Facebook and all, but doesn’t actively seek them out” on the issue, he seemed unconvinced with both my data and theories.

“Yeah, I mean, I’d have to look at it because I don’t really consider stuff like ‘David After Dentist’ to be memes, just viral videos,” he said, “but, if I were to guess, I would say that the reason why memes are more numerous some years is just coincidence. People upload videos and new meme formats all the time, and it’s a bit random what sticks. It just depends on how many things there are to make fun of that year, and I honestly don’t think there are any fewer memes this year than there were last year [during the presidential election].”

This, I concede, is a valid point; because the year is not yet over, I didn’t include the data from 2017 in my findings and thus cannot speak as to whether there are indeed more new meme formats this year than last-- it should also be noted that all this comes from my own collected data, and may not include all memes in that year because I just happened to accidentally pass them by. But from the data I have collected, this trend does seem fairly consistent throughout the past twenty years-- the modern era may change this as the Internet becomes more of a staple in life, but as for predictions go, meme investments will likely reap a large reward during or directly preceding presidential election years. My findings, it should be noted, are not a measure of dankness in any way, and in that respect, investors should look to other studies for indicators of meme shelf-life. However, election years are an excellent time to diversify portfolios, because they are most likely to have the largest amount of new formats from which buyers can benefit.

**Succumb**

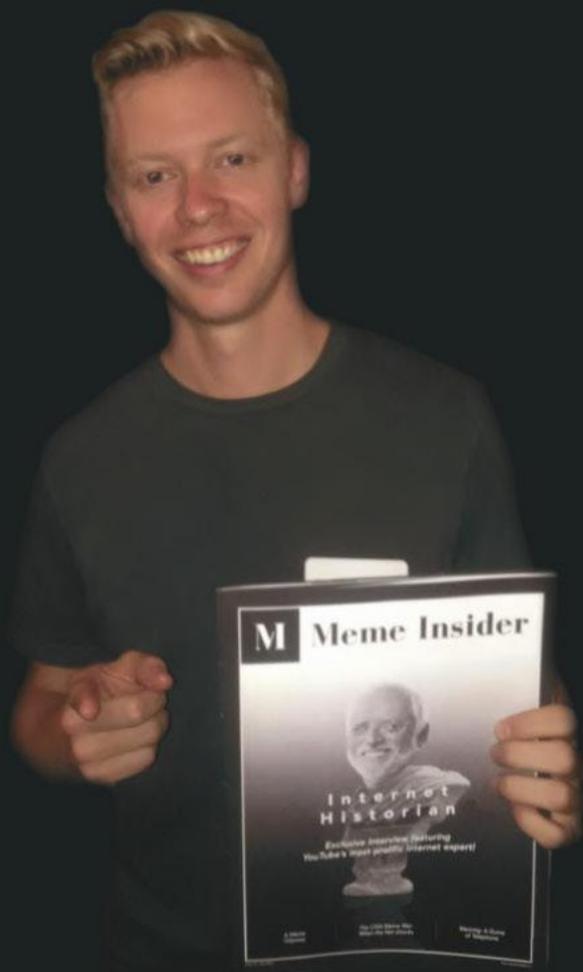
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