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IT'S ALWAYS BEEN THERE

Online memes as a current variation of traditional editorial satire

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ESMAD, P. Porto, Portugal

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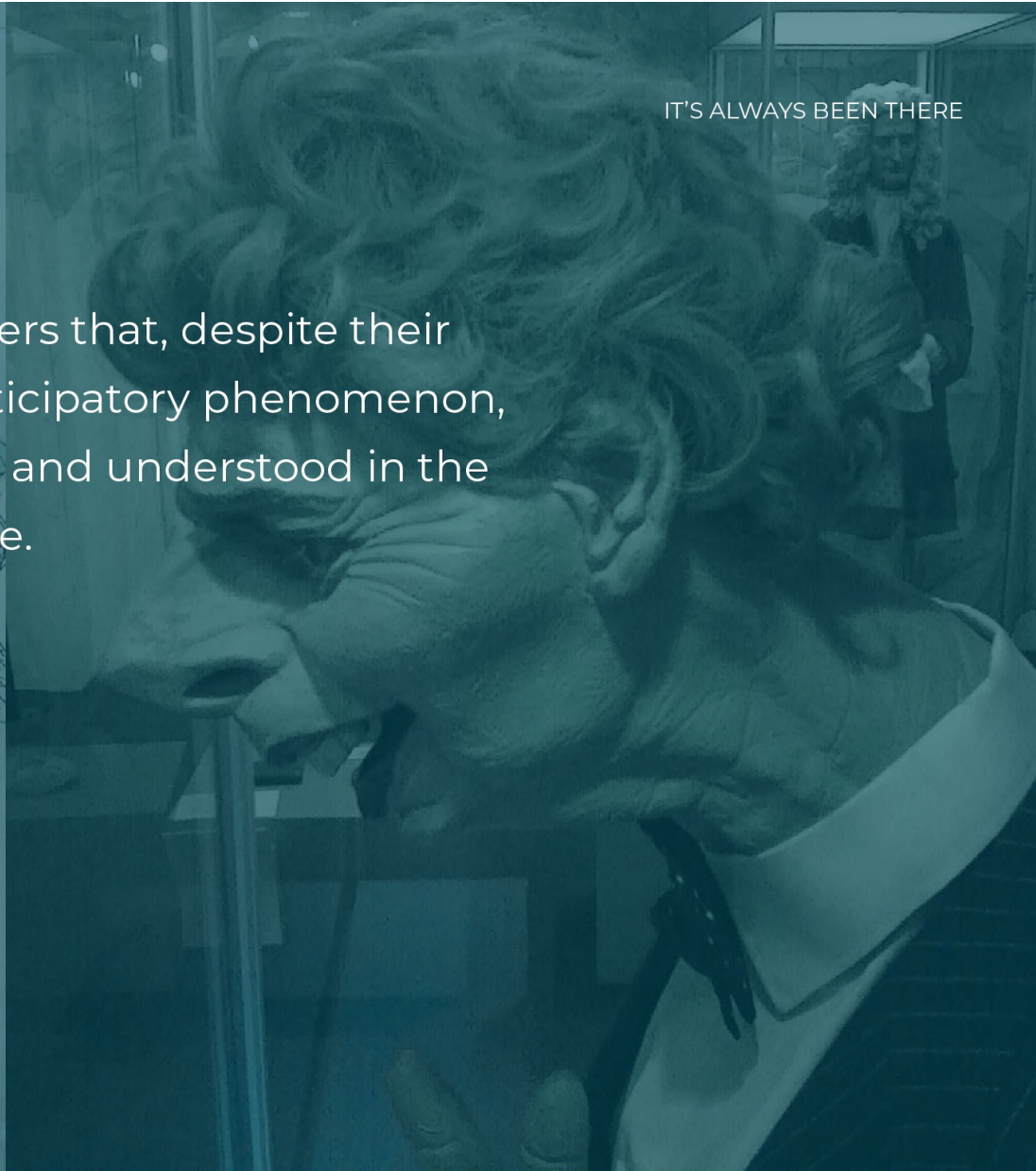
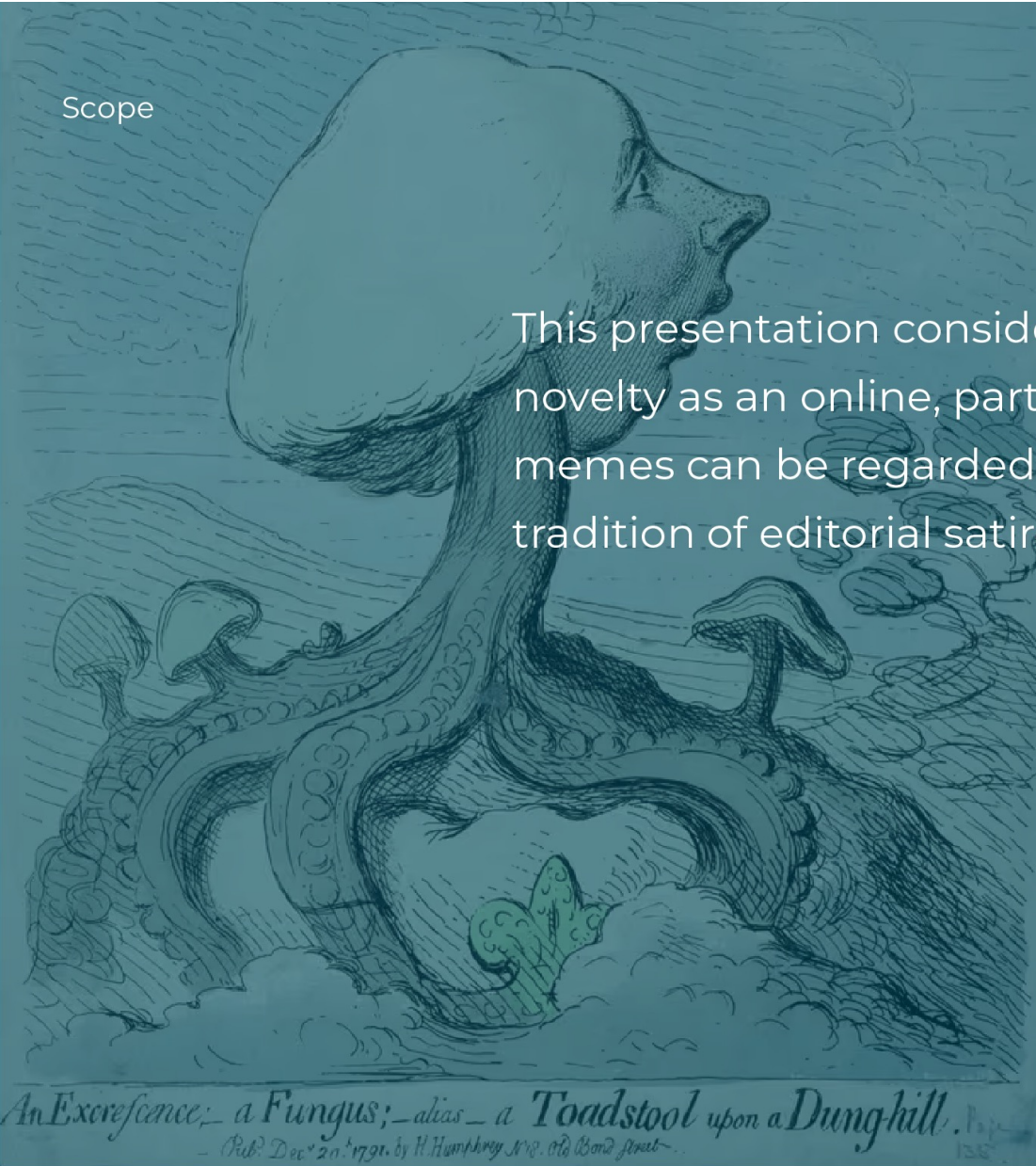
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Scope

This presentation considers that, despite their novelty as an online, participatory phenomenon, memes can be regarded and understood in the tradition of editorial satire.

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While acknowledging the unprecedented speed of circulation and omnipresence of memes, we argue that their semiotic premises reveal a continuity, rather than a contrast, with prior editorial content.



Methodology

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- . Literature review;
- . Components of satire (printed media);
- . Comparison of specimens;

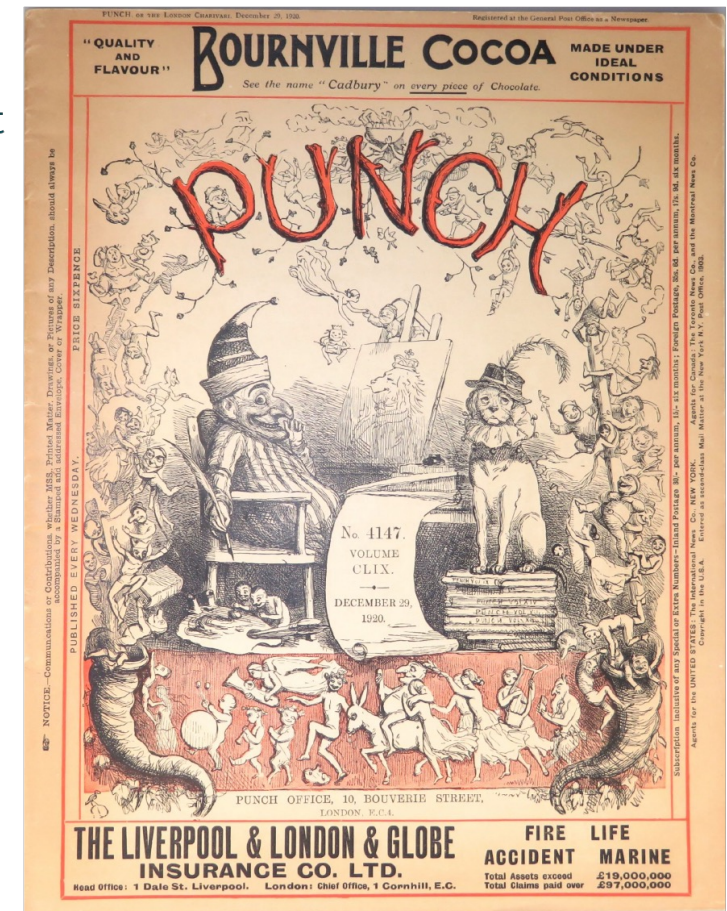
Background

The latin term 'satura', from which the word satire derives, was first defined by the ancient Romans as a literary genre, although there were previous references of satirical work in ancient Greece.

These literary formats were different from what we describe today as satire.

PUNCH
Cover of british weekly
magazine of humour
and satire, n° 4147, 1920

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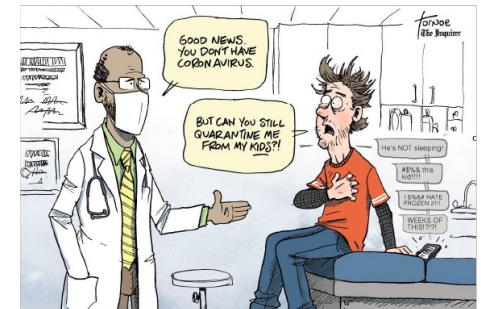


Definition

In its practical sense, satire constitutes a way of criticizing a person, an idea, or an institution humorously (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023).

Therefore, it is a type of humour typically employed for mocking and criticizing a satirical target. A pervasive form and subtle method of social and political critique that purposively materializes in various phenomena (Hoey, 2005).

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The inquirer, by Rob Tornado, 2020

Laughing at corona memes like



Corona Meme, unknown autor, n.d.

The forms of satire - verbal and visual - have endured as a cultural tradition and diversified, from stage to print, image to animated film (Horrocks, 2014).

Thus, revealing satire is a powerful art form, “which has the ability to point out the deficiencies in certain human behaviours and the social issues which result from them, in such a way that they become absurd, or hilarious” (LeBoeuf, 2007)

The London bathing season,
by John Tenniel, in Punch
magazine, 1859



THE LONDON BATHING SEASON.
“COME, MY DEAR!—COME TO ITS OLD THAMES, AND HAVE A NICE BATH!”

From its meaning and evolved presence, we have gathered certain components in its discourse, that are stated here and conversely shown in cultural outlets.

One of main ones is **dependence**.



The blind leading the blind
Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1568

Satire's components

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Conceptually, satire can use a multitude of forms, since it is reliantly bound upon other forms to express its ideas.

Its meaning is typically dependent on the relation with context, satirical subject, public culture (Knight, 2004), by the appropriation of imagery.

DEPENDENCE
(Apropration of imagery)



The blind leading the blind (After Bruegel)
Peter Brooks, 2021



Dancing Pallbearers
Unknown Author, n.d.

Satire's components

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Under the rubric of **irony**, comments are idealized for proving or disapproving persons, patterns, notions, with an argumentative ironic mode.

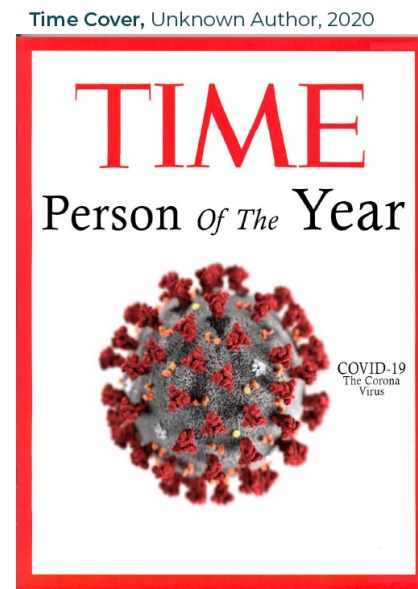
This, by extent, renders visible the use of realistic simulations, in which **humour** and the idea of **reform** are contrived, even though the latter is not self-evident throughout all satirical prompts.

DEPENDENCE

(Apropriation of imagery)

IRONY

(Humour and Reform)



Satire's components

Satire is always, in some form, a **critique** of human behaviour, vice or folly, proposing the audience to view it with some degree of disdain (Leboeuf, 2007).

By allowing the imagery to combine itself with an opposite and/or questioning text - through implicit exaggeration and opinions - other views, out of the initial context, can be formed.

IT'S ALWAYS BEEN THERE

DEPENDENCE
(Apropiation of imagery)

IRONY
(Humour and Reform)

CRITIQUE
(Decontextualization and Implicitness)

Breviary of Renaud and Marguerite de Bar (marginalia), 1302-1305



MAD, magazine cover, August 2017



Dave Whamond, Editorial Cartoons, August 7, 2022



Satire's components

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Lastly, satire is intended to declare what is being stated to achieve assertive performance (Currie, 1996). It is not necessarily designed to get the viewer to believe on what is being satirically stated, but to grasp attention to it.

DEPENDENCE
(Apropriation of imagery)

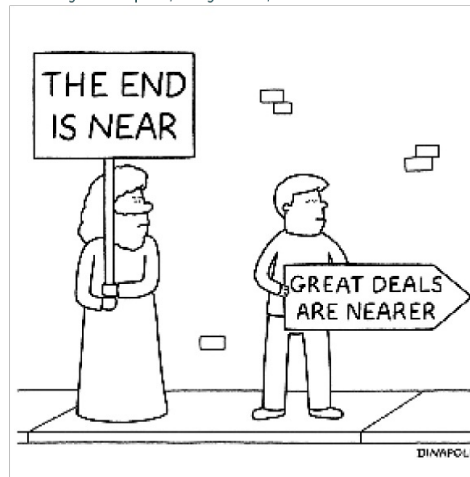
IRONY
(Humour and Reform)

CRITIQUE
(Decontextualization and Implicitness)

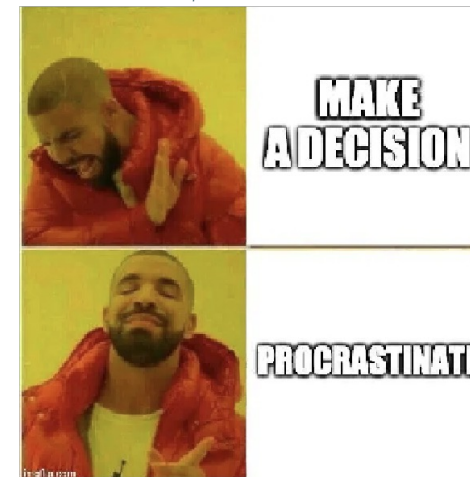
"The Plumb-pudding in danger, _ or _ State Epicures taking un
Petit Souper", James Gillray, 1805



The New York Times Daily Cartoon,
Johnny DiNapoli, May 25th, 2020



Decision Meme,
Unknown Author, n.d.



ASSERTIVE
(Ambivalent)

Comparison

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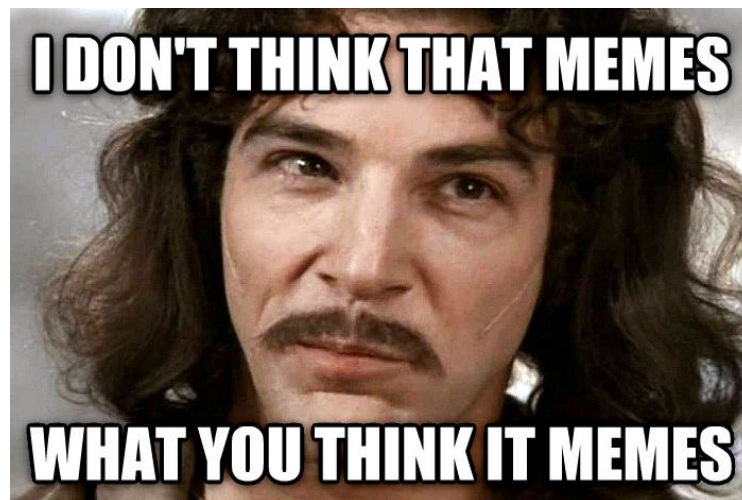
Although presented with specific focus, most images have cumulative components. They were organized considering the main components and how were presented regardless of the time they were made.

DEPENDENCE
(Apropiation of imagery)

IRONY
(Humour and Reform)

CRITIQUE
(Decontextualization and Implicitness)

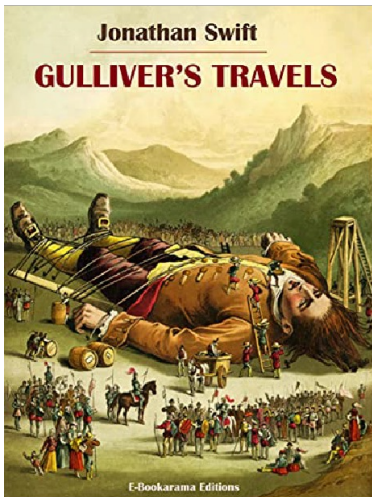
ASSERTIVE
(Ambivalent)



Comparison

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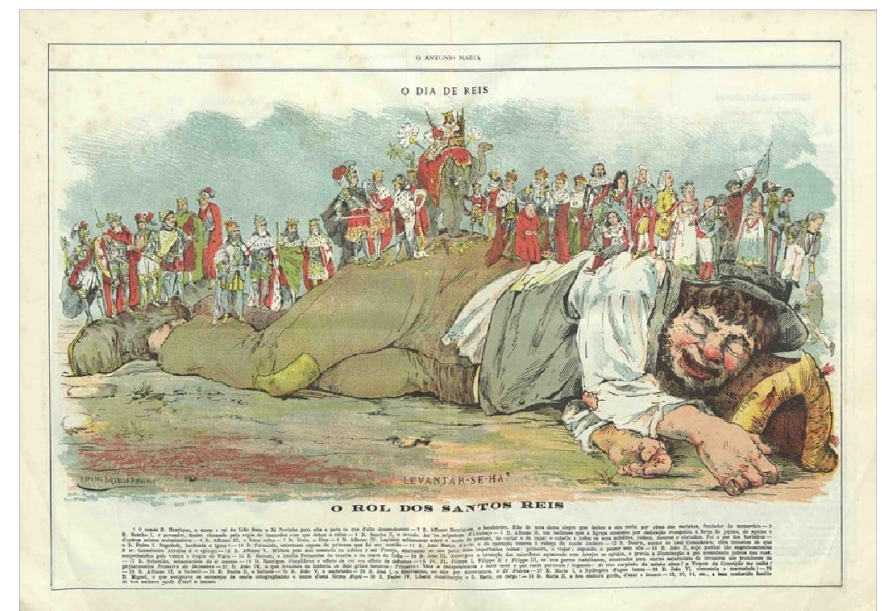
Taking into account the present discussion, it is visible how visual and contextual appropriation is key. It confirms and evolves with predominant contemporary culture, opening and allowing the resurgence of similar messages, with similar composition. It also enables concepts to be comprehended by “emotions elicited by different products on different people across languages and cultures” (Norman, 2003, p.60).



Gulliver's Travels (1860's ed.),
Book cover of 1860's painting for
Jonathan Swift book.

“The Gulliver of Press”
Caricature of the attack on
freedom of the press.
Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, in A
Paródia, satirical newspaper,
n.º 1, January 14, 1903.

“Kings' day”
Rafael Bordalo Pinheiro, in O
António Maria newspaper, 1881

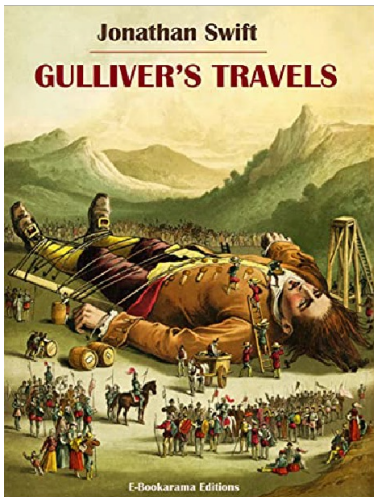


Comparison

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Having such a long existence and abundance of outlets, it seemed self-evident that satire would take advantage from the emergence of the Internet.

"The editorial aspect has become more democratic, meaning that everybody can express their views in a satirical way, not just political cartoonists and satirists. In a way memes have become an alternative to the political humour of the traditional media" (Bulatovic, 2019).



Gulliver's Travels (1860's ed.),
Book cover of 1860's painting for
Jonathan Swift book.



Gulliver's Travels (detail),
Unknown author, n.d.



Comparison

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The Onion, November 4, 2008



The Guardian, August 29, 2013



The Colbert Report, 2014

Comparison

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Mr. Lisa Goes to Washington, The Simpsons,
Matt Groening, Season 3; Episode 2, 1991

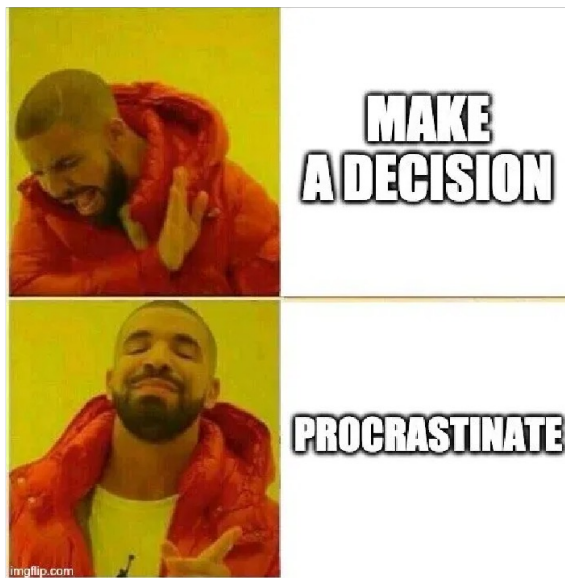
Meme,
Unknown Author, n.d.



Comparison

IT'S ALWAYS BEEN THERE

Decision Meme,
Unknown Author, n.d.



Meme,
Unknown Author, n.d.



Meme,
Unknown Author, n.d.



Conclusion

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Thank you!

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