

Trash Dove Is A Normie Meme

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Normies are users with low memetic literacy or fluency. Trash Dove is a normie meme. That might very well change in the future.

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Trash Dove is a normie meme. That might very well change in the future. You can usually tell when a meme is destined to end up normie trash; you could with Dat Boi or Harambe. The tell-tale marker of a normie meme is its simplicity. There is little ‘lore’ or central theme that would allow for a richer development of the meme. In complex memes such as Baneposting, complex permutations which do not result in speciation into a new meme is more feasible. In the case of simple, viral content, the most likely pathway is to be applied to a thousand Shitpostbot-style templates with no progress for the meme itself.



Image credit: 4chan /pol/.

The ironists’ recent prank, the attempt at convincing some turbonormies into believing that Trash Dove is a racist dog-whistle, is probably the best thing that could have happened to it. The lack of complexity which made it destined for normiehood from the very beginning will be countered by the ensuing struggle over the definition of the meme. The fact that Trash Dove is a sticker set on Facebook means the normies get an advantage so that it doesn’t just end up with an edgelord monopoly over the latest ‘Nazi symbol’ (created, in fact, by the very normies who boycott the meme for this reason). It will be very interesting to see what happens next.

This is not the first time the sort of thing has happened, of course. Pepe is an amazing, recent example of this phenomenon (but this was not the first of its kind, either. See 'Operation Race Guy', when anon forced Hot Topic to pull meme shirts from their stores by convincing them Rage Comics are racist). It travelled back and forth all over the spectrum ranging from normie to ironic, and even gave us the literally incredible spectacle of arch-normie Hillary "Yasss Queen" Clinton issuing a warning on the campaign website about Pepe being a symbol of white supremacy. I didn't know when I first wrote the Post-Pepe Manifesto that the only people who follow the advice would be the alt-right, yet here we are.

Definitions come about through participation in the game of language and the use of a word or meme. It is beneficial for us when those definitions are useful (e.g. by being helpful in communicating slippery concepts or perhaps by being funny). Here's my current working definition of normies, which is my attempt at a contribution to our shared arsenal of useful vocabularies:

Normies are users with low memetic literacy or fluency. Most importantly, they are prescriptivists about the meaning of memes and reject that, not only is there drift in the definitions of memes, there is also indeterminacy which makes them necessarily dependent on context for meaning. The species of memes they favor and produce are therefore 'robust'. That is to say, the variations or mutations they do introduce to the meme in the individual meme objects they create (e.g. images or videos) are minor and do not affect the species at large. An example is the prevalent use of Advice Animals on Imgur, and the most radical changes introduced to these being minor aesthetic edits to the templates or crossovers with other Advice Animals.

It will be interesting to see what happens to the Trash Dove meme. The worst, plausible scenario I can imagine at this point is Facebook falling for the Nazi meme and pulling the sticker set from Messenger (if you can think up worse scenarios that are likely, let me know). The ideal would be for normies to learn something from the experience and raise the memetic literacy of the Internet as a result. Something similar happened with Birds Tho and the parentheses/echo meme; people just kept using the cute (((birb))) meme without regard for its alternative, antisemitic translations. Perhaps the fact that the sticker set is probably here to stay regardless of what happens on the ground will mean that the same will happen, serving as example of this inherent ambiguity of all memes. Regardless of what happens to Trash Dove, it will probably be interesting. Let's keep an eye out.

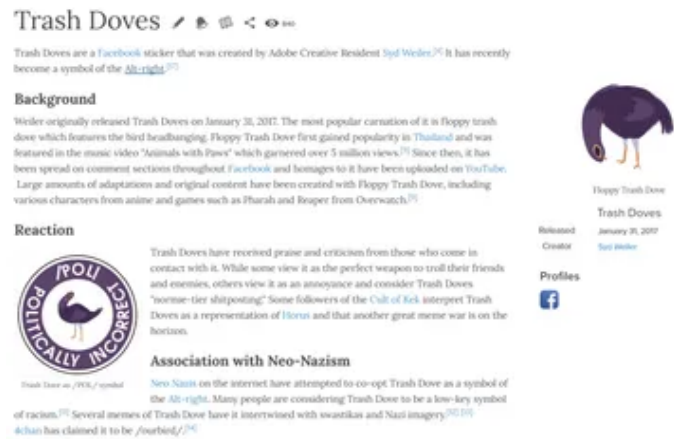


Image credit: Everipedia (archive: <http://archive.is/vvAPJ>).

Originally posted to the page on Feb 13 2017.

Selected comments from the page

Thread 1

Dei Mon: I would argue Trash Dove is in many ways so absurd that the simplicity and seeming lack of meaning discourages the normie user from embracing it. Harambe was simple, but there was an easily understandable back story; Dat Boi, although lacking in back story, was quite easy to appropriate for normie purposes. In this regard, Trash Dove obviates this problem by being entirely context dependent, therefore it COULD be used in a normie context, but it could also be used in an ironic context and simultaneously belong to both sets, a kind of meme superposition if you will.

What will be interesting will be when Trash Dove eventually becomes less “hot” and we see its post/meta ironic application; I think that this is where we will see it return to its use in the ironic realm, although undoubtedly with much less prevalence than its current usage.

“**Owen Kuth:** Id compare it to ironic emojiis often used in memes like ” 🤔👉 ” etc.

TPM: I like this response, but we should remember that precisely the same thing was said about Dat Boi. People thought it’s too esoteric and absurdist to be appropriated. Consider the fact that

contemporary art history is that of businesses culturally profiteering off of the purported avant-garde and we can see that it's hardly a novel pattern for art as a whole.

Your second point about meta-irony as eventual reclamation of what becomes a deeply normie meme is very astute and the comments above from Owen about contemporary emoji use is also spot on. The point I want to emphasize here is that the two are conflicting possible scenarios, in that the latter requires for the meme to go massively normie before there is enough room for the sort of nuanced play with irony.”

Thread 2

Kallan Phillips: Given the meme emerged out of Thailand, could categorising it as normie be from a somewhat Eurocentric perspective?

“TPM: I think that kind of historicist approach is definitely valuable, although I find that focusing on platforms (viz. Facebook) rather than linguistic/national groupings is usually more insightful. The fact that the use of Pepe in non-anglosphere communities is largely limited to reaction faces without political connotations should tick us off to the fact that Pepe on the Korean website DCinside is not the same Pepe as on Krautchan or 8ch /pol/. Naturally we could apply the same logic to any other meme when appropriate.”

Thread 3

Max Correia: The trash dove is not a normie meme, nor is it a sophisticated, nuanced meme. Trash Dove marks the beginning of the end of all ironic memes.

You see, the slow migration of absurdist meme creation away from websites such as 4chan and Reddit towards Facebook has created two communities here. Those who have followed the absurdist memes wherever they land are here, but a new community has emerged. As Facebook is a website based around placing yourself in groups and communities, these odd meme pages attract new folks, indoctrinated into this sphere by doggo and birb pages.

This new community of people are what you could generally call normies, but they are a special kind of normie: a Facebook normie. As new and green to this ideology as they come. These are the people who

mindlessly spam the floppy trash dove. For them, it's simplicity and ease of access makes it the perfect meme.

On the other side are the ones who followed the memes here. Trash Dove represents what happens when these two communities collide over a meme that is both things at once. You see, Trash Dove is the new way of shitposting. It angers not those trying to view the memes, but the creators themselves. The best part is, the Facebook community doesn't even know they're shitposting. This is the beginning of the end of ironic memes, a meme that is not funny in the context of anything but meme culture itself. A meme so ironic, that not even the greatest meme creators can see it's irony. It is the funny banana, but to a scale never seen before. It hasn't just infected single threads, it has infected this entire websites meme community, and is reaching even farther as we speak. This is how memes begin their downfall. Meta memes will no longer be good enough. We will have to create memes that can only be funny to those that are not only in this community, but understand this community as a whole.

And that begs the question: can a meme of all memes be ironic in relation to itself? The answer can be only one of two options. If the answer is yes, then we create a meta ironic meme, a meme that is only ironic because it is ironic, something that I can't even imagine. If the answer is no, then we have reached the theoretical "event horizon" of the ironic period, where nothing can ever be funny in an ironic sense again, and we must move on to the next era of memes, or never meme again. But, for right now, let's sit back and laugh at the normies who don't know the connotations of their actions.

"TPM: Very good! I think you are spot on with the observation that this is the result of a collision between different demographics, and that part of the result is an inherent ambiguity of intent in shitposts. Ironic memes are precisely the result of that collision, and I think what happens when a meme is "two things at once" is the post-ironic meme (but I don't think Trash Dove is such a case, though the potential hinted at by pages like Trash Raven or Special meme fresh makes me cautiously optimistic).

I disagree with the notion that there's a metajoke at the scale which you suggest going on but agree with your observation in general. That is to say, I do agree there is a kind of 'punning' (which entails reference to a language and its rules in general, rather than the sentence itself) going on and that an understanding of the community and its linguaculture becomes a prerequisite for fluent participation.

Your point about the ‘Facebook normies’ who use post-ironic memes without understanding them is quite astute. It harkens back to the early days of memetics when the idea that understanding something was not necessary for transmission was an important part of some theories. One possible hypothesis is that a meme which doesn’t rely on understanding will be fitter than those which do rely on understanding, although I think other factors involved such as outlined in the OP can override this pressure (viz. understanding something is often more enjoyable).

Max Correia: Of course, a lot of my post was speculation. However I feel that this kind of collision will be inevitable in future memes, driven by the growing Facebook community, and the dwindling “old world” community. This could come indeed come to a head at somepoint, but I doubt it will happen because of a sticker of a bird with a broken neck.

The hypothesis you presented about memes that don’t rely on understanding being fitter for those who do understand is very interesting. Personally, I think that trying to understand something that is too simple may lead to false conclusions about the meme itself (which, admittedly, may have happened in my original post).’

Ben Dieter Holt: In another comment thread someone mentioned the appropriation of dead (by our standard) memes by normies. I feel like a promising recent development in internet meta-irony is the recycling of memes that normies would consider stale now: rage comics and my nama Jeff, for example. The level of irony achieved where normies become confused about the resurrection of memes they remember from years ago I think is extremely funny. It’s also the perfect natural progression of the “us versus them” dynamic of meme culture.”

Thread 4

Alex Ricard: More than anything, I’m reminded of the “I’m Rick Harrison” meme of last summer. All the same identifiers are there: extreme simplicity and easy access, and its use as a disruptive non-sequitur. As such the meme functions, for now, as a template to be inserted into other memes. More simply, in Shitpostbot terms, it is a source image, not a template. Let’s not discount the importance of source image memes even though they are simple.

Important about normies: they don't care much about the lifespan of memes. Just yesterday, at the grocery store, I saw a kid proudly wearing a "dicks out for Harambe" shirt. If the meme community is not careful, we will find ourselves eroded not by invasion but by abandonment; indeed, can we blame normies for taking memes we have long since abandoned?

The novelty of spamming it in comment sections will fade, and it will be replaced by more traditional memes and image macros, it is then, I think, we will see what this meme's capable of.

“TPM: That’s a beautiful observation about the source image and template dichotomy. In contemporary memes, the rule of thumb is that form follows function follows form. Not only is there the early memetic spread of people setting up the basic rules of a given meme through mimicry, there is also subsequent progression into new uses through adaptation.”

Thread 5

Special meme fresh: how about you come down from your tower of cynical meme analysis and flop with the rest of us

“Special meme fresh:”



“TPM:”

