

ANDY POST

ESSAY ON THE NEW MEDIA (SORT OF)

I want a lyric—not just any kind
Of bullshit, but with warm misanthropy;
A lyric in a voice loose and reclined,
But free to study the technology
Of those who, when they, at day’s end, unwind
And set themselves in glowing effigy
They use to chat, play games, to congregate,
To shop, to argue, or to masturbate.

I think I’ll write about the internet
To see if I can’t pick the modern brain
By looking at the ways in which we’re set,
And asking if we must like this remain;
If this was the best future we could net,
Or whether I but vent my ticks in vain:
For instance, if you think my verse too bitter,
I challenge you, produce its like¹—on Twitter!

Yeah, let’s begin with Twitter—where the brain starts
To unravel. And however Stephen Fry
Defends the realm² where Sarah Palin’s brain farts
And toaster status updates³ tease the eye—
One hundred forty characters? Here, my brain parts
Ways with writers when good language goes to die

¹ Cf. Qur’an 52:33–34.

² The actor Stephen Fry is a well-known enthusiast and advocate for almost any new sort of popular technology, and has been informally dubbed “the King of Twitter.”

³ There is actually a man whose Twitter feed is entirely dedicated to the activity of his toaster. Examples of such riveting updates include “Toast is in” and “Toast is done.”

A sickly death of infantile, short digress
Immortalised in the Library of Congress.⁴

Yes, Congress—that same bastard Parliament,
Complete all its famous checks and balances;⁵
That same exalted living monument
To rubber-stamping what our nation’s balance is
According to the President’s intent
Of re-election; that white marble palace is
Now the symbol of all knowledge men did seek,
And some they didn’t—thanks to your new tweak.

And Canada, don’t think I’ll let you off
Just ’cause you add “Americans” to “North.”⁶
However much you and the Brits will scoff
At our fat asses, hiding your self-worth,
Look in the mirror—you’ve a feeding trough
As wide as ours. Don’t act like you go forth
To play outside just like you used to. Why?
Thank good ol’ Yankee ingenuity!

Look to the laptop screen’s entrancing glow!
Mac, P.C., or Linux—it doesn’t matter
Which brand you have. All that you need to know
Is when the bells and whistles raise their clatter,
Your brain’s defenses all will start to go
At things you don’t need! Food that makes you fatter!
“Think” now!—Shall you befriend this Internet ...?
Yes! Now say hi to the friends you’ve never met!

Oh yeah, that shit is ours, we’ll proudly say,
And so what if it’s not? You dropped the ball,

⁴ As of March 2006, every single tweet ever made has been entered into the Library of Congress.

⁵ The framers of the American Constitution took the idea of the three branches of government (executive, legislative, and judicial) from the Baron de Montesquieu’s political treatise, *The Spirit of Laws*. However, Montesquieu’s celebration of this so-called “separation of powers” was based on his misunderstanding of what he observed in the proceedings of the British Parliament.

⁶ I find few Americans outside academic circles make any reference to “North Americans” when discussing what is essentially a shared culture between the USA and Canada.

My friends. Marketing! (That's ours, too, by the way ...)
 And now we've got a strangle-hold on all
 You guys. Oh please, don't argue—"dot-C-A"?
 Good, now we know who we can safely call
 In case we need to store and aim our bombs
 'Gainst *other* lands that can't afford dot-COMs.⁷

I jest, I jest, and I hope that you know it—
 I love this northern weather, and then some.
 I'm Yankee-born, it's true, but if I show it,
 Don't think that I'm about this country dumb;
 I'm practicing my "Zeds," and so I'll throw it
 In for camouflage. But how far have I come?
 Well let's just say, to make short a long story,
 I know "Confederation," "Keith's," and "sorry."

To make the story longer—well it's true,
 I'd started out to write a poem pedantic,
 But I'll not try to save face or save glue
 To cover up my bumbling fingers antic—
 To make the story longer, long did I view
 This country from afar with eyes romantic;
 And thought that I might seek this land's protection
 Around the time of Bush's re-election.

Illegal empire for a legal crown
 Is a fair trade, I think, and thought so then.
 But how did I know that when I got round
 To crossing o'er the border; how thus I kened,
 Without Canadian books in libraries found
 (At least in Jersey), that here I'd seek my end?
 Well let's just say I had the company
 Of Wikipedia and the CBC.
 Well, not the CBC—YouTube for sure.
 The news is all you'll *legally* export

⁷ Aside from the fact that the Canadian Shield was a thing very handy in terms of Cold War geopolitics, I would remind any perturbed Canadian readers that very few American websites use the domain name of ".us".

To liberal Yanks you otherwise would lure
 Into this friendliest, healthcare-covered fort.
 And so it was that I had to endure
 Each episode of *Little Mosque* in short,
 Ten-minute clips.⁸ A nuisance, I assure ya—
 But guess how we get our revenge? Pandora!

Pandora, Hulu, Spotify, Netflix, (shipping
 Fees not charged with Amazon Prime!), and neither
 Do we let you off with TV—there, a whipping
 You can get from us each time. For either
 The “actual” U.S. sites are Canada skipping
 Over on their bouncers’ lists, or, see, they’re
 Screwing over Canadians’ innocent pleasure
 To watch poor Kenny meet death at *their* leisure.⁹

You think I’m but a larger theme o’er-glossing?
 (Damn right!—Double *our* tax on each transaction paid?
 We’ll raise you passports at the border-crossing!)
 We flaunt our strength and numbers, I’m afraid;
 The internet’s just one more way of bossing
 Those around who aren’t us—well then, enough said.
 So, fuck this—I think I’ll to my theme return
 And you can joints, while I shall idols, burn.

O yet once more, my Muse! Sing—oh, goddammit,
 My Google Notifier’s rung its bell again.
 Let’s see ... bills, hate mail, bigger dick (... I’ll spam it
This time), and uh-oh, e-Bay wants to sell again.
 Well, what do you expect when *moderns* ham it
 Up, or try to, when that pesky shell again
 Of our attention span defeats our aim
 Of epic grandeur, in this age of AIM?
 Oh, AIM, iChat, Skype, Facebook, Twitter—all

⁸ “Ten minute clips”—i.e., on YouTube; I refer to programming which every Canadian takes for granted, but which for some stupid reason is blocked to internet users in the United States.

⁹ In case there’s any confusion, I here refer to those websites which every American takes for granted, but which for some stupid reason are blocked to internet users in Canada.

These social media have their use, you'll say.
 And I agree! If it's friends you want to call
 Or say hello, then throw your phone away!
 In fact, why bother to go out at all?
 Cut off your legs, too! For on your throne you'll stay
 And talk to all your friends! And talk with pride—
 And marvel that you never go outside!

And, once you actually do log on to chat
 (*Before* your breakfast), you'll never've been so
 Free from all the rules of sentence structure—That
 Shit, once online, will go right out the window.
 For anything the ruling proletariat
 Thinks is elitist, typing mobs have deemed so.
 Such is the trade-off, friends, when we live at the Dawns
 Of Information's Age, and the Emoticons.

For now the happy- and the frowny-face
 League with "ROFL"s and "TMI"
 In order to full sentences erase,
 And stunt complete thought. Still, a throwback, I
 Just give the middle finger to the pace
 My peers have set for language's decline;
 In which all comment on just how well you speak
 The latest version of George Orwell's Newspeak.

So much for that idea. Except, of course,
 That old-school media's still got to have a show, man!
 Now, CNN and YouTube *both* will force
 Our candidates for President to have a snowman
 Ask them questions.¹⁰ And these *tours-de-force*
 Of advertising clusterfucks now will leave no man
 With peace of mind to cry out "Hold!" or "Mercy!"
 Because at least they'll teach the controversy!

¹⁰ This actually happened during the CNN/YouTube debate held during the Republican Party primaries of 2008. Mitt Romney then proceeded to make an ass of himself, declaring it was beneath the dignity of a candidate for president to have to answer a question asked by a snowman, even if the question was one about global warming.

What, you want fresh supplies of cold, hard *fact*
 In Information's Age? To Wikipedia!
 And see there all the knowledge that you've lacked—
 Absorb it quick! And forget it even speedier ...
 Unless you quickly edit!—*Then* an impact
 You'll have made on this new, open media!
 For there shall rest your crown of laurels. Pluck it,
 Thou worthy scribe, and thou drop in the bucket!

It's true that social revolution now
 Is more enabled than it was before
 By Twitter and whichever gold cash cow
 Will move us faster from the sloth of yore—
 But when the Spring is over, then what? How
 Can tweets stop when today it is a chore
 To write a letter? Isn't typing cleaner
 Than inking out "I Love Y..."—Look, Anthony's wiener!

Well, tempting as it is, let's leave aside
 The Congressman's Grade-A, American man-meat,¹¹
 And let's just see if we can't all decide
 If other websites serving all-that-you-can-eat
 Skating cats, bad singers, people who confide
 Unto a webcam ... oh and somebody's pants-seat
 Ripped at their wedding ... Let's all see if "You"-Tube
 Is worth ... wait, "Coke & Mentos Bombs with Lube"...?

Oh dear, I spoke too soon. I guess I would've
 Done this sooner or else later. Although
 It's true that cameras have their use—I could've
 Written all about my webcam interview
 For university. But then, maybe "should've"
 Is unheard of when *Time's* Man-of-the-Year is "You."¹²

¹¹ Google "Congressman Anthony Wiener Twitter." Go ahead, I'll wait.

¹² In case we have all forgotten (*why* we would have forgotten is beyond me), "You" were *Time Magazine's* "Person of the Year" in 2007. Readers may also remember that this was a last-ditch replacement to cover up the fact that the magazine was originally planning to give the award to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmedinejad, based on his influence on world affairs.

Well, let's just hope no one's enough a sucker
 To make TV based on YouTu ...¹³—*MOTHERFUCKER!!!*

I'm sensing that my song now nears its end,
 So I'll leave you with these words inspiration:
 On Facebook, just how much do you pretend
 To intimately know folks in every nation?
 Among your thousands, is there not one friend
 With whom you actually have real conversation?
 But, before I leave, from *Avenue Q*
 I'll take my last theme, porn,¹⁴ then bid adieu.

And not just any porn—no low themes I—
 Not with this golden opportunity
 To shit on what so many brains does fry,
 Thanks to Japan's state of futurity;
 Of *anime* I sing not, but *hentai*—
 And not just any of that variety,
 But epic sci-fi shit, with demon pentacles!
 With laboratories! Lotharios! and tentacles!

For there, blonde, wide-eyed, buxom-bosomed mistresses
 Of martial arts will somehow always find
 Themselves in situations where distresses is
 A thing long-planned by men of monstrous minds,
 With monstrous frames to boot, and monstrous penises;
 Who, of torture known to man, have every kind
 For use on women¹⁵—And you ask why today
 We sell both women's lib, and pepper spray?

So go forth, "friends"; eat, drink, and be ye merry,
 Though you might suffer cardiac arrest.
 Not right away of course—after that *very*

¹³ I direct your attention to *Tosh.O*, a show with no redeeming cultural value whatsoever.

¹⁴ I refer my readers to the hit song from *Avenue Q*, "The Internet Is For Porn," a number with which I think my entire generation is intimately familiar.

¹⁵ If you have any friends whom you have to ask whether or not they've seen this shit, I guarantee you the answer is "yes."

Important entry for that essay contest
You heard about online—once all the hairy
Bits are gone—*then* keel before your screen, and rest.
But know, you'll live! (when from this life you're freed)
Through friends, through family, and your Twitter feed.

Now, if my words offend your taste so fine
With my profanity (my “fucks” and “shits”),
I challenge you, go look this up online;
See for yourself how fucking easy it's
Become to earn fame from *far* worse art than mine.
Reality's been my theme—*that* I insist.
So now, you—“*You*”—decide if what I've writ
A piece of art is, or a piece of shit.