

"The Risk I Took Was Calculated But Man, Am I Bad At Maths"

The Reflection Statement

As an Extension 2 English student it may be expected that I am not necessarily numerically skilled, not smitten by sequences nor infatuated with integers. However it may be more relevant and astute for me to point out that I am anti-pathetic towards inspirational quotes and sayings. After all, it's better to be apathetic than pathetic.

Indeed this apathy has spurred my major work *Don't Quote Me on That*. A set of three comedic 'reverse motivational' speeches, linked in that their content reflects Place, Movement and Art - three defining forces of the individual experience. Each promotes the concept that one should act independently and remain unmoved by the unrealistic expectations set by "a motivational" society which under-appreciates apathetic intent. I wanted to amuse to alleviate both boredom and guilt in relation to my intended audience, an apathetic, yet intellectual, collection of bored high-school students which could be delivered in a small room to a scattered audience who are

perhaps in the frame of mind where they may be seeking guidance from the empty style of quotes which I examine. It would be preferable and convenient if they were easily amused with a sense of the absurd.

Now, given the purpose of my major work and my extremely specific audience you might be asking, why speeches? Surely this message would be equally received scrawled on the walls of public bathrooms, written in the clouds, chanted in song by a nihilist cult? Whilst I would find all of these options amusing, they don't offer the satirical edge I can create through mocking the form. A form which has not only been used to serious and profound effect but has been co-opted by the unscrupulous and mercenary. Additionally, the audience doesn't have to make much effort because a speech is direct, personal and ultimately easy to engage with. The speaker's voice modulates, conveys tone, and generates irony. To hear something sharpens its meaning.

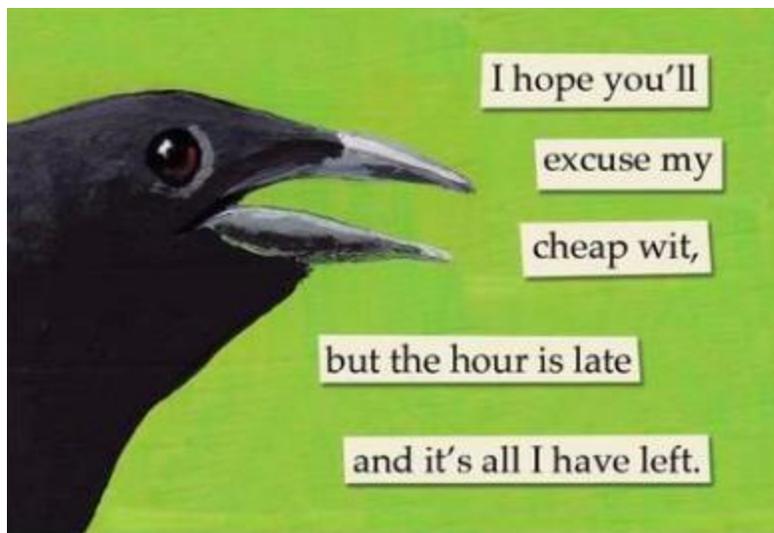
I have attempted to create context for these speeches where they can "over-take" or "hijack" a familiar kind of broadcast speech. So that despite the limited intended audience they are freely available and unleashed in a natural setting free for "playback" to my ideal audience. The first speech presented 'When in...' aims to undermine political speeches of our time, cutting off an opposition leader making claims of "when in office" and ultimately examining the two terms as they are relevant to the everyday. 'Make Every Step Count' pokes fun at the fast-paced world of race calling and but embraces its style of delivery. And my third speech satirises the preferred presentation of the pretentious: the TED Talk. Exploring what classifies as Art and what goes unnoticed yet holds understated brilliance. Consideration of the rhetorical situation for each, provided a deeper appreciation of "Text and Context" in Modules A and C. I explored a move away from tradition in order to subvert the meaning of a text through a change in context. This

allows for the work to comply with essential elements of traditional form while still holding an individualistic quality, toying with traditional matter and subverting the expected. For me that is embodied by something which is non-conformist and satirical. Al-Pacino, challenges the traditional form of documentary-making through pastiche in *Looking for Richard* and this freed me to experiment with embedding satirical ideals into the speech form. As such his influence and specifically promotion of experimental flair has been of great help in licensing my work.

While “reverse motivational speaking” is not widely produced nor yet a genre, its function is to poke fun and provide an entertaining way of highlighting dissent. A technique employed by the master of mockery, John Cleese, where he shows that ‘brave’ and ‘stupid’ are not mutually exclusive. In my work, the mockery lies in the use of something’s own qualities to exacerbate its flaws. I employ the speech to destroy the speech and ultimately and ironically promote my professed apathetic ideals. My concept was sharpened by “The Mincing Mockingbird”: a nihilistic perspective on the lives and actions of both humans and birds presented in the form of a profusely illustrated nifty little coffee table book.*see figs 1-3* It inspired me to consider the absurd in the form of the everyday and shaped the questioning nature I hope to bring forth in my speech. The confessional style of Plath and her dark humour combined with Becket’s absurdism familiarised me with the available tools for expressing discontent with a contemporary human existence in addition to personal discontents. Alas, nuclear annihilation is not my concern, societal expectation is. Without these influences my speeches would lack a certain absurdism within their apathy.

After this general understanding, I decided to trade in my reading glasses for a more targeted telescope of textual understanding. Further in my investigation I came across satirical works, varying from the traditional speech form, which had extreme impacts on my writing. Rob Sitch

shares the purpose of my major work (amusement with bite) hence I can draw upon his use of exaggeration to capture the conceptual significance of the meaningless, through the use of the iconic “Australian image” to create something simultaneously relatable and ridiculous e.g. the un-enthusiastic Australian reporter. The significance of ridiculousness in my work has also been heavily impacted by John Cleese whose feeling of “duty to cheer you up” teamed with lack of political correctness has inspired me to exploit the mundane and typical (for the purpose of humour), as he posed the question “why shouldn’t we make funny jokes?” I am yet to find an answer!



Alongside this, as a satirist one must understand that which they plan to defame so I have explored the work of the greats. Keating’s political passion and brutality with the truth has had a great impact on my writing. When Paul Keating states, "Soon we will be at the stage where he

will be offering us a free set of steak knives," he encapsulates the absurdist dramatisation my work thrives off. I investigated speakers who're supported by their historical and content based significance and while their matter was relevant their method was different as its purpose was to inform and recount. Despite Churchill's vigorous stride for speech giving, I do not call my audience to 'fight them on the beaches' nor have I enough moral high ground to beseech the audience 'fight them on the hills'. The traditional concept thus needs adaptation for my purpose. I used theories of speech writing to allow me to expand my knowledge of form before I began to apply 'apathetic intention' to it. Aristotle's work on logos, pathos and ethos was particularly relevant as my work is far from logical and ethical but ultimately still hopes to elicit an emotional response hence its adaption occurred from the base form.

Armed with this metaphorical artillery of research, my work made significant advances, with inspirations becoming more driven and more judgemental as my work progressed. "Make every step count" ended up being harsh, with "fit-bit fanatics", "deceased distance runner Jim Fixx" and myself, facing ridicule.

Many of my self-professed "best bits" are cynical. I claim quite heartily that "the fit-bit is no more than a glorified ankle-monitor" and make similes connecting unsuspecting members of the public to 'gazelles on Ritalin" and whilst I am correct in asserting that "Italy is the home of the Mafia." I only have common sense and opinion to suggest "It's probably not a smart idea to randomly follow Romans."

By now, you may have noticed, "don't quote me on that" is a rather captious piece which stands to reason as I am a highly captious individual. Indeed, I appear highly opinionated on the concept

of being un-opinionated. These speeches relate to Rhetoric as explored through the Critical Study, Speeches module. My work aims to *produce* an integrated whole in terms of meaning and value, through the use of a consistent narrative voice. The voice of my work draws comparison with “the greats”, makes use of allusion much like Atwood, (who uses literary allusion so recklessly, one might claim “in the mode of the policeman making the arrest, ‘Aha! You can’t get away with that!’”). Yet it holds true in its tact and perspective maintaining an absurd nihilism and a humorous edge. Whilst the contemporary references in my work may challenge its enduring value, it does not aim to last forever. Its death is inevitable, it simply aims to amuse before its death and as such holds a human mortality. Despite the way this contradicts the Advanced Course’s focus on texts with a legacy, I feel that an essential element of that which I have aimed to create. After all, my work itself professes “In one hundred years, Rodney will be long dead and completely forgotten.” And yet his artistry still stands at present despite the fact he is merely a symbolic fictional being. It need not last, only be - and be appreciated.

