Death Sentence

650 Words
When I Googled “run-on sentence,” I was surprised to discover that, contrary to the impression I got from teachers and peers throughout my schooling, the designation has absolutely nothing to do with a sentence’s length, and in fact a sentence can have any number of words or clauses without being run-on, you can keep sticking in more and more, more and more, you can use conjunctions to graft on as many pieces as you want, and the sentence will only become a run-on once it contains a grammatical error like a comma splice, the reason I was thinking about run-on sentences, or rather I guess I was thinking about long sentences but thought I was thinking about run-on sentences, was that I’d recently noticed a couple different authors’ Wikipedia pages, David Foster Wallace’s and Jose Saramago’s I think, mention a propensity for long sentences, and it occurred to me that maybe there was a connection between mastery of prose and the ability to wield enormous sentences, like maybe long sentences demonstrate an author’s advanced capacity for compound ideas and compound grammatical structures, and, since I’m always on the lookout for a foolproof formula for good writing, I thought maybe I should try out some long sentences, really long sentences, epic sentences, though of course with a few provisos on cheaty ways of turning multiple sentences into a single sentences that I’m sure were beneath literary giants such as the late misters Foster Wallace and Saramago; semicolons fall into this category, because they’re essentially interchangeable with periods (parenthesis are to be avoided for similar reasons since you can combine two sentences by nesting the second inside the first (you can even, if you don’t mind the unsightly effect, nest an entire series of sentences inside each other (like this))), and ellipses... the thing about ellipses is that there are no rules governing what you can and can’t do after them, so authors can just throw down the ellipses and then effectively start a new sentence—authors do the same thing with dashes, so they’re banned too, and maybe colons should be as well, though colons are an
interesting case, because they play specific non-terminal roles in sentences, namely to introduce: lists, lists, lists, lists, and lists, but they’re also often used in more dubious places: places where the author might use a period to similar effect, which is the very sort of cheatiness we’re trying to avoid, so colons should either be disallowed or restricted to a specific function, but I suppose these rules don’t really count for anything anyway since none of these marks technically end sentences, avoiding them is just a point of style really, and if you look up records for longest sentences on Wipecipa, which incidentally I did because I wanted to see what I was up against in my quest for greatness, you won’t find any restrictions on such weasly punctuation use, which might explain why Jonathan Coe’s 13,955-word sentence in The Rotters’ Club makes the list even though Coe he isn’t considered to be of the same literary stature as Saramago or William Faulkner, whose Guinness World Record-holding 1,287-word sentence in Absalom, Absalom! probably does follow the aforementioned rules of finesse, because Faulkner won prizes and still gets talked about today a lot more than Coe does even though Faulkner’s been dead for fifty years and Coe’s still alive, but regardless of who follows what rules, at least I know what I’m competing with, and since writing long sentences really isn’t as hard as it looks, maybe I’ll shoot for the stars someday, but not today, because I’m running out of things to say, and I’ve already sacrificed my finesse by using a semicolon, three sets of parenthesis, ellipses, a dash, and colons both good and evil, not to mention the comma splice, which probably disqualifies me altogether, so today I’ll call it quits with my word count a pedestrian 656.