

---

# CRITICAL MEME READER

GLOBAL MUTATIONS OF  
THE VIRAL IMAGE

EDITED BY  
**CHLOË ARKENBOUT**  
**JACK WILSON**  
AND **DANIEL DE ZEEUW**

INC READER #15

---

## **INC Reader #15**

**Critical Meme Reader:** Global Mutations of the Viral Image

**Editors:** Chloë Arkenbout, Jack Wilson and Daniel de Zeeuw

**Copy editor:** Geoff Hondroudakis

**Cover design:** Marijn Brill

**Cover font** Terminal Grotesque Regular by Raphaël Bastide (Velvetyne)

**Design and EPUB development:** Chloë Arkenbout and Tommaso Campagna

**Printing and binding:** GPS Internationale Handels Holding GMBH

Published by the Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam 2021

ISBN print: 9789492302762

ISBN EPUB: 9789492302779

**Contact** Institute of Network Cultures

Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences

**Email:** [info@networkcultures.org](mailto:info@networkcultures.org) / [viralimageculture@networkcultures.org](mailto:viralimageculture@networkcultures.org)

**Web:** [www.networkcultures.org](http://www.networkcultures.org) / [www.networkcultures.org/viralimageculture](http://www.networkcultures.org/viralimageculture)

Order a copy or download this publication for free at: [www.networkcultures.org/publications](http://www.networkcultures.org/publications)

### **Subscribe to the INC newsletters:**

[www.networkcultures.org/newsletter](http://www.networkcultures.org/newsletter)

[www.networkcultures.org/viralimageculture](http://www.networkcultures.org/viralimageculture)

This publication is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial ShareAlike 4.0 Unported (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0). To view a copy of this license, visit [www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/](http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

**Institute of  
network cultures**

# AUDIO MEMES, EARWORMS, AND TEMPLATABILITY: THE 'AURAL TURN' OF MEMES ON TIKTOK

CRYSTAL ABIDIN AND DR. BONDY VALDOVINOS KAYE

'Audio memes' popularized by TikTok have become the next frontier of meme cultures on the internet, presenting an 'aural turn' in meme ecologies. On TikTok, 'audio memes' and the texture of sound take on an intimate disposition, requiring care, tact, and wit to situate and decipher: TikTokers often rely on the lyrics of specific songs to tell a story (e.g. when the lyrics are central to lip syncing, when the punchline of a video is a specific lyrical line in the song); consider the musical and rhythmic shape of a tune to advance the storyline of their video (e.g. when a beat 'drops', when a song transitions to 'bad recorder playing'); complement or juxtapose audio memes against video content and textual captions (e.g. song to provide ambience for the storytelling, song to change the tonality of storytelling to sarcasm or parody); or organize and streamline content into specific silos.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to reusing and remixing audio clips and music, TikTokers also engage with other original audio templates through duets and replies. In some instances, TikTokers have dedicated accounts to generate original audio clips with the intention of having others use them in their videos.<sup>2</sup> In other instances, TikTokers have circumvented being 'catalogued' or 'streamed' into the silos of 'audio meme' templates by strategizing around refusal, manipulation, soundjacking, and other practices. This has included competitive 'chart jacking' to register higher up in an 'audio meme' stream, conflict around impropriety and ownership of original audio memes, and specific platform norms around the attention economies of sound on TikTok.

Beyond its instantiations on its home platform, TikTok parlance has become integrated into everyday practices and become pervasive in social media pop cultures. Let us consider two case studies of 'audio memes': Absofacto's 'Dissolve' and Rocky Paterra's 'I'm An Accountant', to understand the role of memes in engaging in tone policing and performing with mediated identities.

- 
- 1 Crystal Abidin, "Mapping Internet Celebrity on TikTok: Exploring Attention Economies and Visibility Labours," *Cultural Science Journal* 12, no.1 (2021): 77-103.
  - 2 D. Bondy Valdovinos Kaye, Aleesha Rodriguez, Katrin Langton, and Patrik Wikström, "You Made This? I Made This: Practices of Authorship and Attribution on TikTok," *International Journal of Communication* In press (2020).

## Evaluating Earworms

Ever since we started researching TikTok and writing papers and books on the topic, a new routine that has emerged includes ‘TikTok Old’ friends coming up to us and going: ‘Hey! What is that TikTok song that goes *~~incoherent humming and tapping~~*? Please, I need to know the title or artist’. 50% of the time, we have literally just watched and studied 50 of those TikToks ‘For Science’ and can placate our friends’ raging earworms. The other 50% of the time, we stare blankly at our friends and channel the “\\_(ツ)\_/” vibe with our eyes.

Sound is unique as a memetic medium. Unlike other forms of media, sounds have ways of getting lodged in our brains as earworms, often holding us captive and looping on repeat as we go about our day. And then we unwittingly hum and tap tunes on a bus ride, in a lecture theatre, while doing the dishes, perhaps much to the disdain of the people around us! Sounds both fascinate and terrorize us as TikTok researchers with past lives as musicians—Crystal an orchestral percussionist, and Bondy a jazz drummer. On the one hand, we are constantly amazed by the talent and creativity of TikTokers who deploy sounds in the most creative of ways to convey a variety of messages and intentions. On the other hand, our friends have now assigned us as the default Human Jukeboxes™ of the group, all thanks to TikTok.

TikTok is a unique platform to explore how sounds turn into ear worms, and then into memes. The platform allows users to repurpose existing audio in new videos with a few taps of the finger<sup>3</sup>, and users can even search through archives of videos to see how others have creatively or subversively used and reappropriated specific audio clips. A sneak peek into the DM (direct message) history between the authors would reveal countless videos containing catchy songs, clips from popular media, and other forms of audio clips that have turned into memes on TikTok. Several of these were accompanied by off-the-cuff commentary that indicated serendipitous coincidences thanks to TikTok’s algorithmic recommendations on our FYP or ‘For You Page’ (*‘Homgh! I just saw this one too!’*), cross-platform flows which signposted that a TikTok meme was entering a bigger stage of virality (*‘This one is also on reddit now!’*), and our *~feelings~* towards such audio memes as trained musicians and TikTok enthusiasts (*‘This gave me a stroke...’*; *‘Idk why my ears are tinkling?’*; *‘I love TikTok 4eva <3’*). We became interested in understanding why audio was such a major element in these viral videos and how TikTok prioritizes audio over video.

## Templatability on TikTok

‘Templatability’ is a concept coined by visual social media studies scholars Leaver, Highfield, and Abidin<sup>4</sup> to describe how a combination of vernacular norms by elite users on a platform

3 Kaye et al., “You Made This? I Made This.”

4 Tama Leaver, Tim Highfield, and Crystal Abidin, *Instagram: Visual Social Media Cultures* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020).

(like Influencers) and algorithmic recommendation systems that value and promote these norms (by amplifying the content to appear in others' feeds) result in a wealth of content that ends up being aesthetically similar.<sup>5</sup> Interactions between users and platforms lead to specific aesthetic choices, ways of crafting content, and strategies of attention grabbing on social that then become 'templates'. In other words, both automated systems that recommend popular content to users, as well as users who then internalize recommendation logics and try to 'please the algorithm' by posting certain types of content lead to such templates. It is a complex dance to navigate for users to remain visible on the platform to fellow users via 'the human eye', and to the algorithm via 'the machine eye'. Monetization models also influence templates by pushing sponsored content to generate advertising revenues for platforms, or by users with promotional partnerships incorporating popular templates to make more money for themselves. Templates allow users a degree of agency to choose which kinds of scripts they wish to draw from or incorporate into their own content, while simultaneously limiting originality.

'Circumscribed creativity'—coined by digital media studies scholars Kaye, Chen, and Zeng<sup>6</sup>—builds on the concept of templatability by adding a 'call to action' from other users, or a 'nudge' to create from the platform itself. TikTokers can directly circumscribe creativity by asking viewers to create content based on a template they are trying to promote, such as by inviting others to participate in dance challenges. The TikTok platform also indirectly circumscribes creativity by suggesting ways to interact with existing content through a variety of 'platform features'<sup>7</sup>—these are the interfaces and protocols that facilitate interactions between people and platforms. There are several features on TikTok that circumscribe creativity passively, such as through the main viewing interface, the For You Page (FYP) and its underlying recommender algorithm. Actively, there are features like 'duet' which allows users to create a new video side-by-side the one they were just watching, 'stitch' which allows users to clip a portion of a previous video and add new content, and 'use this sound', which allows users to import the audio from a video into a new video.<sup>8</sup> These features may implicitly guide TikTokers towards certain kinds of creativity but can also work in concert with explicit calls to action from other TikTokers who invite audiences to 'duet this video' or 'use this sound'.

Memes on TikTok capitalize on elements of templatability and circumscribed creativity to guide TikTokers as they navigate trends and attempt to boost their visibility. Templates come in all shapes and sizes, and while they do not necessarily represent cultural norms

---

5 Leaver et al., *Instagram*.

6 D. Bondy Valdovinos Kaye, Xu Chen, and Jing Zeng, "The Co-Evolution of Two Chinese Mobile Short Video Apps: Parallel Platformization of Douyin and TikTok," *Mobile Media & Communication* Online first, (2020): 1-25.

7 Alexander R. Galloway, *Protocol: How Control Exists after Decentralization* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004).

8 Kaye et al., "You Made This? I Made This."

or hegemony, they are both easily memorable and highly replicable.<sup>9</sup> Popular video memes templates share common characteristics such as being humorous, simple, replicable, whimsical, and feature voices of ordinary users.<sup>10</sup> Circumscribed creativity takes meme templates a step further by directly or indirectly pushing TikTokers to create memes based on popular templates. This can be useful for TikTokers struggling to find new original ideas for a short video, or for TikTokers who would not normally post content but are encouraged to do so by platform features and or popular templates.<sup>11</sup> What makes TikTok's templatability and circumscribed creativity all the more curious is its adoption of sound or audio as the 'driving template' and 'organizing principle'<sup>12</sup> through which user actions are massaged and memes are born. As such, we consider the possibility of the 'aural turn' in meme ecologies in the next section.

## The 'Aural Turn' in Memes

Traditionally, scholars who have studied memes have seemed to generalize them as a visual format, usually delivered as a video, an image macro, an image, a pictogram, or text-based template exchange. The ways we locate memes have also been primarily visual: collated under a dedicated hashtag, congregated in a specific social media group/page or messaging group, or spreading on the temporally-contingent 'trending' lists of various platforms.

But in the spectacular space of TikTok, memes have taken an 'aural turn'. For one, memes are primarily sorted and organized into 'repositories' of audio clips available in the 'use this sound' feature, which enables TikTokers to reuse the template clip with a new visual performance, or 'embellish' their creative remix of the template clip through volume control, additional dialogue, and the like.<sup>13</sup> The meta-genres of meme challenges on TikTok also build upon established catchphrases, with posts beginning with a signature call-out originating from TikTok, like 'Put a finger down if you are X', 'Tell me you are X without telling me you are X', and 'Hey yo, X check'. In each meme trend, and indeed in each variation and mutation of the meme trend, the specific tonality and register of the voicing, and the ambience and mood of the accompanying music (if any) dictates the call to respond. In essence, audio memes on TikTok literally reflect the 'pop polyvocality', or the 'pop cultural *common tongue* that facilitate[s] the diverse engagement of many *voices*'.<sup>14</sup>

---

9 Leaver et al., *Instagram*.

10 Limor Shifman, "An Anatomy of a YouTube Meme," *New Media & Society* 14, no. 2(2012): 187–203.

11 Kaye et al., "You Made This? I Made This."

12 Abidin, "Mapping Internet Celebrity on TikTok," 80.

13 Abidin, "Mapping Internet Celebrity on TikTok," 80.

14 Ryan A. Milner, "Hacking the Social: Internet Memes, Identity Antagonism, and the Logic of lulz," *The Fibreculture Journal* 156 (2013). para. 9, emphasis ours.

In media studies and cultural studies, we often speak of a ‘turn’ in something when one of these occurs: a sharp pivot in the *focus* of something, a shift in the *emphasis* of something, the rapid increase in the *visibility* of something, or a growing *importance* in the impact of something. The centrality of the ‘audio’ on TikTok encapsulates exactly this. Trends do not just go viral, they become solidified as culture, whether ‘TikTok culture’, ‘Gen Z culture’, or ‘social media culture’. The template of catchphrases as an opening, a meme, or a call-to-respond has also propagated outside of TikTok, and taken root on other social media (especially on Instagram due to its TikTok-like Reels feature), on other digital media cultures at large (especially on the social media marketing content of various brands targeting young people), and in everyday vernacular (in our fieldwork and interviews, we encountered young people who frequently spoke in ‘TikTok codes’ in their everyday parlance). To be cheeky, this illustrates another meta-meme: the memefication of TikTok, establishing its native phatic communication templates, aesthetic preferences, and registers and tonalities as a new social practice on social media at large.

Audio memes that include words or lyrics are an opportunity for TikTokers to engage with, or reinterpret, the meaning of songs or audio clips. TikTokers can engage with the stated meaning of clips to form communities of practice among groups of people who relate to the message in the meme.<sup>15</sup> By reinterpreting or subverting meanings, TikTokers can use audio memes to expand the relatability of audio memes in unexpected directions.<sup>16</sup>

## Absofacto's ‘Dissolve’

Memes are ‘flexible’<sup>17</sup> objects that can be embedded with variants and remixes and layers of meaning. For audio memes, this is intensified given the extensive possibilities enabled by complementing or juxtaposing the aural against the visual. But what happens when memes take on fraught meanings and dark innuendos that are refused by the meme originator, the creator of the content being remixed, or by competing communities of meme connoisseurs?

Musician Absofacto’s (Jonathan Visger) 2019 song ‘Dissolve’ exhibits the tensions and complications that arise when meme creators and TikTokers wrestle over ‘ownership claim[s]’ and the ‘unwanted reuse’<sup>18</sup> of their content. ‘Dissolve’ was first uploaded onto TikTok in 2019 by another TikToker as the audio meme ‘original sound – SunriseMusic’,

---

15 Sangeet Kumar, “Contagious Memes, Viral Videos and Subversive Parody: The Grammar of Contention on the Indian Web,” *International Communication Gazette* 77, no. 3 (2015): 232–247.

16 Yuval Katz and Limor Shifman, “Making sense? The Structure and Meanings of Digital Memetic Nonsense,” *Information, Communication & Society* 20, no. 6 (2017): 825–842.

17 Shifman, “Memes in a Digital World.”

18 Abidin, “Mapping Internet Celebrity on TikTok,” 80.

without its creator Absofacto's knowledge. The song originally intended to reflect upon the relationship between a romantic couple, and featured a chorus with the lyrics:

I just wanted you to watch me dissolve/

Slowly/

In a pool full of your love/

However, by mid-2020, Absofacto reported receiving messages from TikTokers, concerned fans, and victims of sexual abuse informing him that the audio clip was being used to accompany 'daddy-daughter POV' (point of view) roleplaying, with innuendos of sexual violence and incest. Following this, Absofacto turned to TikTok to post videos using the audio meme to push back against this reuse. He tells followers that his song has been 'taken over by a gross daddy pov trend', and in his caption, pleads for fellow TikTokers to 'rescue it' by using it for 'something else'.

This tone policing demonstrated the unbridled 'networked publics'<sup>19</sup> of meme cultures, wherein originators have little to no control over how their content is propagated, adapted, or mutated. Absofacto's call for help received responses of various silos of TikTokers, as evidenced in a follow-up post where he thanks users such as "'alt tiktok", "lgbtq tiktok", "kpop stans", and "everyone who doesn't fit in any group"<sup>20</sup> for using the audio meme to 'take back' the narrative-making. This communal act underscores that meme publics are a 'social practice'<sup>21</sup> that relies on the collaboration of meme creators and audiences. In subsequent follow-up posts, Absofacto continued to appeal to various demographics, subcultures, and silos on TikTok to change the tonality of the audio meme. This resulted in 'competitive chart ranking',<sup>22</sup> where groups of TikTokers would conscientiously replay specific TikTok posts in the audio meme in order to raise their 'engagement rate', to allow these new remixes to chart higher in the audio meme stream, in the hopes of drowning out the 'daddy-daughter POV' ones.

While Absofacto's pleas to the TikTok Safety Team to intervene did not appear to be answered, the coordinated effort of hundreds of TikTokers eventually 'diluted' the meme stream sufficiently that the audio meme was no longer solely claimed by NSFW

19 danah boyd, "Social Network Sites as Networked Publics: Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications," in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, ed. Zizi Papacharissi (Routledge 2010), 39–58.

20 Abidin, "Mapping Internet Celebrity on TikTok," 86.

21 Kristine Ask and Crystal Abidin, "My life is a Mess: Self-Deprecating Relatability and Collective Identities in the Memification of Student Issues," *Information, Communication and Society* 21, no. 6 (2018): 834-850, 836.

22 Abidin, "Mapping Internet Celebrity on TikTok," 86.

content. While memes have previously been observed to be a ‘common instrument for establishing normativity’,<sup>23</sup> this case study is a masterclass on how the moralities and tonalities of this ‘normativity’ can be continuously challenged, reshaped, or corrupted.

## Rocky Paterra's ‘I’m An Accountant’

Rocky Paterra's 2020 song ‘I’m An Accountant’ demonstrates how TikTokers directly engaged with the lyrics at face value and re-contextualized the song into a performance of mediated identities. The lyrics of ‘I’m An Accountant’ are a simple and straightforward representation of Paterra's real life as an actor and musician in New York:

I'm a struggling actor but if I'm asked by a stranger what I do /

I usually end up telling a lie because there's just too much to get through /

I don't want to go through the motions of saying that auditioning is a full-time job /

I'd rather smile and simply state that I have a full-time job /

As an accountant /

The song is an elegy to Paterra's many long and frustrating conversations with friends and family members trying to understand why a Broadway actor and singer wasn't going in to an office every day at 9am. The lyrics also provide easy-to-follow instructions for any others in Paterra's position who were searching for an easy way out of the ‘What do you do for work?’ conversation. If someone asks, and you do not want to ‘get into it’, just say ‘I’m an accountant’ and problem solved! Surely no one is going to heap follow-up questions onto you with a job as mundane and straightforward as being ‘an accountant’.

Paterra's original audio and video work as a meme template by being funny, simple, and relatable.<sup>24</sup> The throbbing bass and minimal melody lines are catchy enough to satisfy the earworm requirement for an audio meme, but the template also includes choreographed line-reading. After the first verse, the song shifts into a back-and-forth conversation between the ‘Accountant’ and the person asking too many questions. This brief dialogic section allows any others using the meme to create various visual representations of what their ‘accounting job’ entails. The on-screen text and video caption directly call on ‘all struggling actors’ to adopt this strategy. Despite being originally being intended for musical theatre communities, the lyrics of ‘I’m an Accountant’ also tell a relatable story for those working in non-traditional lines of work that might be tricky to explain to others in a respectable manner. (Confession: as young millennials researching social media for a

23 Daniel Miller and Jolynna Sinanan, *Visualising Facebook* (London: UCL Press, 2017), 193.

24 Shifman, “An Anatomy of a YouTube Meme.”

living, telling elderly relatives at awkward family reunions that we are just ‘accountants’ in the University is way easier than explaining that we get paid to study TikTok memes...)

One community that quickly embraced the ‘I’m An Accountant’ audio meme was sex workers on TikTok. Sexually explicit content cannot be posted on TikTok<sup>25</sup> but many sex workers can use TikTok to boost their profiles. Creators have long used the short video format as calling cards to funnel their followings onto other platforms with more opportunities for growth and monetization.<sup>26</sup> In much the same vein, sex workers on TikTok are free to post SFW (Safe For Work) videos introducing themselves or previewing their type of content on other NSFW (Not Safe For Work) platforms, with links in their TikTok profile for any interested viewers. Representing sex work online can be a radical act, such as in contexts where it is prohibited by law. In contexts where sex work is less taboo, it can still evoke annoying questions from friends and family members who hold misinformed or stereotypical views. ‘I’m An Accountant’ thus allows sex workers to perform an aspect of their identity by lip-synching to the enigmatic lyrics paired with their own playful, creative, and ambiguous visual representations of their work.

In July 2020, the struggle of precarious online labor was very real, widely relatable, and amplified by a global pandemic. For those who decided to start an Only Fans page during the pandemic, feeling uncomfortable sharing can be stressful and anxiety-inducing, particularly when people start asking prying questions. With audio templates like ‘I’m An Accountant’ TikTokers can present their existing or newfound revenue stream on their own terms. The meme is obscure enough to create plausible deniability to take something that could otherwise be shameful, and turn it into something playful and silly. As an added bonus, the template is an effective self-promotional tool to grow followings on other NSFW platforms.<sup>27</sup>

## Conclusion

Much of the extant meme scholarship tends to focus on the visual elements of memes. Visual memes have been found to foster community,<sup>28</sup> construct identity<sup>29</sup> manage

25 “TikTok Community Guidelines,” TikTok, last modified December 2020, <https://www.tiktok.com/community-guidelines?lang=en>.

26 Smith Mehta and D. Bondy Valdovinos Kaye, “Pushing the Next Level: Investigating Digital Content Creation in India,” *Television & New Media* 22, no.4 (2019): 360–378.

27 Ade Onidaba, “How ‘I’m An Accountant’ Became A TikTok Anthem For Strippers, Sex Workers, And Creators On OnlyFans,” *BuzzFeed News*, September 4, 2020, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/adeonibada/accountant-tiktok-anthem-only-fans-sex-work>.

28 Kate Miltner, “‘There’s No Place for lulz on LOLCats’: The Role of Genre, Gender, and Group Identity in the Interpretation and Enjoyment of an Internet Meme,” *First Monday* 19, no.8 (2014).

29 Akane Kanai, “Sociality and Classification: Reading Gender, Race, and Class in a Humorous Meme,” *Social Media + Society* 2, no. 4 (2016): 1–12.; Milner, “Hacking the Social.”

visibility,<sup>30</sup> and contribute to social change.<sup>31</sup> The aural component of internet memes has received only tangential focus,<sup>32</sup> despite how heavily some of the most prominent meme trends of the past decade have relied on the viral potential of earworms and catchy tunes, such as the Harlem Shake<sup>33</sup> or the infamous Rickroll.<sup>34</sup>

The platform features and cultures of TikTok facilitate the use of sound in unexpected and effortless ways, especially when mobilised as a trend. Unexpected, because the primary mode of content consumption on TikTok is through the algorithmically curated FYP, and the sheer volume of content makes searching for specific sounds or videos difficult. As a result, new sounds, earworms, or audio memes are discovered spontaneously and benefit from being instantly appealing and widely recognizable. Effortless, because TikTok circumscribes creativity to users and places sound on the same pedestal as visual effects, filters, and hashtags, in addition to the 'Use This Sound' feature. As such, the platform strongly encourages users to creatively employ audio as they would any other type of effect or hashtag.

Like other forms of viral content, memes can become disconnected from their creators.<sup>35</sup> TikTokers increasingly wrestle over the ownership of memes and meme ideation, which is distinctive from the prior ethos of spreadability online, one of the essential components of successful memes.<sup>36</sup> TikTok meme creators join the growing ranks of other online creators seeking credit and acknowledgement for their ideas,<sup>37</sup> especially in instances where the sounds being used are more personal, such as a person's voice that is being reappropriated or separated from them in subsequent videos; a practice made possible through three taps of the finger on TikTok.

The aural turn in memes builds on a format that is still inherently multimodal. Short video memes on TikTok often feature audio interspersed with video plus text and create humorous effects that catch on through a combination of these three elements. It is the layering of audio or earworms that creates a unique legacy by making short video memes spreadable and legible. At the same time, it is important to consider what the harmful potentials

30 Ask and Abidin, "My life is a Mess."

31 An Xiao Mina, *Memes to Movements: How the World's Most Viral Media is Changing Social Protest and Power* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2019).

32 Shifman, "Memes in a Digital World."

33 Michael Soha & Zachary J McDowell, "Monetizing a Meme: YouTube, ContentID, and the Harlem Shake," *Social Media+Society*, 2, no. 1 (2016): 1-12.

34 Ryan A. Milner and Whitney Phillips, "Why We're Never Gonna Give up on the Rickroll," *The Conversation*, July 30, 2014, <https://theconversation.com/why-were-never-gonna-give-up-on-the-rickroll-29864>.

35 Soha & McDowell, "Monetizing a Meme."

36 Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, & Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York: NYU Press, 2013).

37 James Meese and Jennifer Hagedorn, "Mundane Content on Social Media: Creation, Circulation, and the Copyright Problem." *Social Media + Society* 5, no.2 (2019): 1–9.

of such audio memes are, such as audio clips that go viral without proper credits to the original creators, or the use of others' voices to bully or harass others. Still, audio memes may also offer bright prospects to aspiring musical artists on TikTok who can leverage audio memes to initiate new collaborations or professional opportunities in the music industry.

Should you have a TikTok earworm lodged in your head, we welcome friendly correspondence to share in your burden, For Science.

## References

- Abidin, Crystal. "Mapping Internet Celebrity on TikTok: Exploring Attention Economies and Visibility Labours." *Cultural Science Journal* 12, no.1 (2021): 77-103.
- Ask, Kristine and Crystal Abidin. "My life is a Mess: Self-Deprecating Relatability and Collective Identities in the Memification of Student Issues," *Information, Communication and Society* 21, no. 6 (2018): 834-850.
- boyd, danah. "Social Network Sites as Networked Publics: Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications." In *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, edited by Zizi Papacharissi, 39–58. Routledge, 2010.
- Galloway, Alexander R. *Protocol: How Control Exists after Decentralization*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004.
- Jenkins, Henry, Sam Ford, & Joshua Green. *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*. New York: NYU Press, 2013.
- Kanai, Akane. "Sociality and Classification: Reading Gender, Race, and Class in a Humorous Meme." *Social Media + Society* 2, no. 4 (2016): 1–12.
- Katz, Yuval and Limor Shifman, "Making Sense? The Structure and Meanings of Digital Memetic Nonsense." *Information, Communication & Society* 20, no. 6 (2017): 825–842.
- Kaye, D. Bondy Valdovinos, Xu Chen, and Jing Zeng. "The Co-evolution of Two Chinese Mobile Short Video Apps: Parallel Platformization of Douyin and TikTok." *Mobile Media & Communication*, Online first, (2020): 1-25.
- Kaye, D. Bondy Valdovinos, Aleesha Rodriguez, Katrin Langton, and Patrik Wikström. "You made this? I Made This: Practices of Authorship and Attribution on TikTok." *International Journal of Communication* In press (2020).
- Kumar, Sangeet. "Contagious Memes, Viral Videos and Subversive Parody: The Grammar of Contention on the Indian Web." *International Communication Gazette* 77, no. 3 (2015): 232–247.
- Leaver, Tama, Tim Highfield, and Crystal Abidin. *Instagram: Visual Social Media Cultures*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020.
- Meese, James and Jennifer Hagedorn. "Mundane Content on Social Media: Creation, Circulation, and the Copyright Problem." *Social Media + Society*, 5, no. 2 (2019): 1–9.
- Mehta, Smith and D. Bondy Valdovinos Kaye. "Pushing the Next Level: Investigating Digital Content Creation in India." *Television & New Media* 22, no. 4 (2019): 360–378.

Miller, Daniel and Jolynna Sinanan. *Visualising Facebook*, London: UCL Press, 2017.

Milner, Ryan A.. "Hacking the Social: Internet Memes, Identity Antagonism, and the Logic of lulz." *The Fibreculture Journal* 156 (2013).

Miltner, Kate. "'There's No Place for lulz on LOLCats': The Role of Genre, Gender, and Group Identity in the Interpretation and Enjoyment of an Internet Meme." *First Monday* 19, no. 8 (2014).

Ryan A. Milner and Whitney Phillips. "Why We're Never Gonna Give up on the Rickroll." *The Conversation*, July 30, 2014. <https://theconversation.com/why-were-never-gonna-give-up-on-the-rickroll-29864>.

Mina, An Xiao. *Memes to Movements: How the World's Most Viral Media is Changing Social Protest and Power*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2019.

Onidaba, Ade. "How 'I'm An Accountant' Became A TikTok Anthem For Strippers, Sex Workers, And Creators On OnlyFans." *BuzzFeed News*, September 4, 2020. <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/adeonibada/accountant-tiktok-anthem-only-fans-sex-work>.

Shifman, Limor. "An Anatomy of a YouTube Meme." *New Media & Society*, 14, no. 2 (2012): 187–203.

Shifman, Limor. "Memes in a Digital World: Reconciling with a Conceptual Troublemaker." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 18 (2013): 362–377.

Soha, Michael & Zachary J McDowell. "Monetizing a Meme: YouTube, ContentID, and the Harlem Shake." *Social Media + Society*, 2, no. 1 (2016): 1-12.

TikTok. "TikTok Community Guidelines." Last modified December, 2021. <https://www.tiktok.com/community-guidelines?lang=en>.