

VISUAL FRICTIONS

CHILDHOOD RE-EDITS: CHALLENGING NORMS AND FORMING LAY PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE ON YOUTUBE

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the initial findings of research into how YouTube culture can become an arena for young YouTube videographers to remodel mainstream, sub-cultural, and media content (YouTube clips, music, film content, and viral memes). We juxtapose analyses from both media and child studies to look at the ways in which preferred images and notions of the “good” and idyllic childhood are re-edited into a possible critique of the prescribed Swedish childhood. Also, we look at ways in which these media-literate actors use YouTube to display their skills in both media editing and social media “savvy.” We discuss how “lay” professional competence in digital culture can be inherent in a friction between popular (children’s) culture and social media production, where simultaneous prowess in both is important for how a mediatised social and cultural critique can emerge.



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Keywords: *child studies; media and communication studies; visuality; childhood innocence; children's culture; participatory culture*

Citation: Journal of Aesthetics & Culture, Vol. 7, 2015

<http://dx.doi.org/10.3402/jac.v7.28953>

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Published: 8 December 2015

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This paper is part of the Special Issue: Visual Frictions. More papers from this issue can be found at www.aestheticsandculture.net

This article addresses YouTube culture as an arena for its members to use mainstream and sub-cultural media content to create new meanings and narratives. Our interdisciplinary approach is to juxtapose analyses from the perspectives of both media and child studies to understand how content is derived from social and cultural commentary. We present and analyse ways in which images of childhood or preferred notions of the good childhood in idyllic rural or historic settings are re-edited by YouTube video makers into a possible critique of the perceived prescribed childhood. More specifically, we focus on storytelling through visual and auditory means, where content can range from compilations and mash-ups of different images from films, TV, and a wide variety of internet content, to more complex forms where content is elaborately re-edited into a new “film” with, in addition to the original story, a coherent counter narrative, and elaborate special effects (visual and auditory). We also discuss how the producers can display “lay professional” competence in participatory media culture, pointing towards how young social media producers display competence that used to belong to an advanced professional skill set.¹ It is a position that combines knowledge of popular (children’s) culture with professional media production, where prowess in both is important for how social and cultural critiques surface. We are using re-makes of children’s cultural material, deeply embedded in Swedish culture, to address broader cultural issues regarding how visual frictions can be used as a means of communication, both of content production and of young producers developing competence. Although Swedish in language and content, the frictions they create also rely on hegemonic notions of childhood as idyllic state that are easily recognised and acknowledged elsewhere.

In this initial survey, we analyse the form and content of a strategic sample of videos uploaded onto YouTube. It is a case study carving out directions for further research rather than coming up with final conclusions. All the videos are re-models of the famous Swedish author Astrid Lindgren’s novels and their film adaptations. Lindgren is an acknowledged author and regarded as good culture and good children’s literature in (adult) society.² Her work is heavily invested with notions of proper and romanticised childhoods in historical time with active, competent, and protected children at the centre.³ It is in accordance with a traditional Western childhood, where children are dependent on adults who know and translate what children’s best interest are. Adults are, as Karen Smith has argued, the providers of children’s worlds and perspectives.⁴ Children need protection in order to be or become innocent—to experience a “romantic

childhood,” the most valued childhood in Western societies, where children are innocent, angelic, and free to play and learn, as several Child Studies scholars have pointed out.⁵

The YouTube videos we analyse in this article, however, challenge these notions of good childhoods. They *produce friction* with established norms about a good childhood by including the *not idyllic* in the videos, that is, sexuality, drugs, violence, desire, and evil, thus making visible a normalised (and thus usually invisible) adult–child divide.

TOWARDS ANALYSING YOUTUBE’S VISUAL FRICTIONS

The analysis is based on a virtual ethnography approach, which is limited to YouTube and online practices.⁶ Our interest in these particular videos was triggered while we were exploring theme and amusement park websites as part of a larger ethnographic study of child culture.⁷ In Lindgren’s hometown of Vimmerby, there is a theme park dedicated to her characters that is one of the largest tourist destinations in Sweden. This theme park also reproduces idyllic notions of the secure and free child, at the same time as it contains a particular imperative for users; visitors and their children have to subscribe to reproducing this image by, literally, playing along.⁸ It is also a place of media use and production. Parents upload their own versions of Astrid Lindgren’s childhoods as YouTube videos and blogs, casting their own children in the roles of the famous story book characters. New personalised versions of the stories become created and published on the internet.⁹ However, videos on YouTube produced by young people (approximately 12–20 years of age), stand out in stark contrast to how adults blog about visits to theme and amusement parks. Adults’ blogs are heavily invested with romanticised notions of protected and competent children with adults as creators of good, middle-class, ethnically homogeneous (western) childhoods, both when performing actual visits to parks and when creating the blogs afterwards. We found it interesting to further study the meanings that young people produce and communicate when they relate to a particular sphere of Swedish children’s culture: Astrid Lindgren’s work.

Limor Shifman calls YouTube an “emblem of participatory culture” and uses the term memes to denote “popular clips that generate extensive user engagement by way of creative derivatives,” where one clip generates commentary clips and new re-edits.¹⁰ We have identified the same kind of user-generated content in our material. Shifman identifies six common traits of these memes: a “focus on ordinary people, flawed masculinity, humour, simplicity, repetitiveness, and whimsical content,” and she goes on to argue that the clips are inherently “incomplete or flawed, thereby invoking further creative dialogue.”¹¹ Shifman’s study is commendable for its attempt to list clips in a more quantifiable content analysis, and we find some of the broader categories that she suggests useful in this article. Our approach, though, is to focus on the frictions that become visible when cultural content—created by destabilising memetic elements—is used as a tool for social communication and commentary. We want, as Shifman also suggests for further research, to: “highlight the ways in which practices of re-creating videos blur the lines between private and public, professional and amateur, market and non-market driven activities”¹² and, following Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, to see “YouTube as a multifaceted cultural system.”¹³

Thus, we are interested in the use of memes as a form of participatory digital culture, described by Bradley E. Wiggins and G. Bret Bowers as important parts of activities “that guide and alter the dynamics of human culture.”¹⁴ In addition, we add a generational perspective, that is, theories of childhood, to the use of memes as participatory culture.

We understand the memes to be part of an initiative within user-driven content sharing and production to challenge and change dominant generational power relations in society. The memes are used as a structure in a digital community, aiming to change a system that lies outside the digital logic, namely, societal notions or norms of childhood and, consequently, adulthood. We interpret these memes as having been identified by the video producers as a new way to “challenge all forms of outspoken paternalism” using YouTube as their forum.¹⁵ We study how YouTube videos challenge, or rehash, visual storytelling, and traditional formats via new combinations of memes from child culture and other popular culture contexts; and how YouTube production fractures media content, thus working in conjunction with social commentary and social media production.

The actual memes we have identified include different visual and textual elements and strategies, what Shifman refers to as “dynamic entities,”¹⁶ which can be described as the result of a process of re-editing, rather than re-making. By re-editing we mean that a more profound artistic process has been invested in the editing process than in uploading a traditional viral meme. We analyse the entities that are put into use in memes picked up from child and popular culture; what happens when they are combined and how do the new, unexpected compositions produce frictions? In this sense, we like to describe memes as cultural signifiers and building blocks in a contextualised visual discourse on childhood and everyday media production, following what some other authors are arguing (e.g. Shifman) in their attempt to study the multitude and multiplicity of YouTube content; the attempt to make theoretical and methodological sense of the constantly and quickly growing content and form developed by users. We study how memes are used by young YouTube videographers as building blocks in complex forms of narrative communication as well as in the creation of knowledge and social perspective. This means that we interpret memes as something beyond the notion of a mere unit of sharing; we regard them as aspects of the production of ideology and critique, and emphasise the relation between a user’s creation of content and form, outside of institutional control, regardless of whether the controlling agents are parents, child-culture institutions or professional media producers—thus becoming an important arena for visual frictions.

YouTube as participatory (child) culture

YouTube has become part of everyday digital and social media life; it is used for education, information, entertainment, and production. YouTube also provides children and young people with a new forum for consumption and production that is out of reach of traditional “media panics,” in which adults’ anxieties about children’s upbringing are key features.¹⁷ These panics reflect adults’ concerns about children’s vulnerability to moral corruption and their interest in forming children’s characters for the future. In an interview study with 158 children and young people (aged 6–17 years) in Portugal, de Almeida and colleagues conclude that 98.1% of the children have an internet connection at home and 65.2% claim that they use YouTube.¹⁸ In 2012, the European average for households with children having access to the internet at home was 89%.¹⁹ The researchers claim that this hitherto unparalleled internet access—in which YouTube plays a significant role—and its potential for interactivity transforms adult–child relations in terms of parental control and authority. They suggest that “the erosion of generational territory markers is underway through children’s intense and ubiquitous use of the Internet” and that assumptions about childhood characteristics are being undermined.²⁰ In addition to highlighting how use of the internet creates new understandings of adult versus childhood characteristics, we will investigate some examples of young people’s productions published on YouTube, and how they can be part of these transformations.

Children and young people can thus be seen as forerunners of the formation of the next media culture, where one important factor may be the merging of everyday, lay and subcultural practices with professional and even industrial ones.

Selection of YouTube videos for the analysis: The adult–child divide

A search on YouTube using the fictional characters from Astrid Lindgren’s novels results in thousands of hits. A search on the two main characters chosen for this article, Emil i Lönneberga and Lotta på Bråkmakargatan, get over 19,000 hits and over 2,800 hits, respectively. If “re-make” is added to the search, the results reduce to 495 and 2,720 hits, respectively. Hence, there seem to be more re-makes of the character Lotta than Emil in this forum. Among the results there are some very different videos; scenes from the original movies, videos with young people performing as the characters in the original movies, videos from visits to Astrid Lindgren’s World, videos from people’s homes with children acting as the fictional character, and also the ironic and critical videos we selected to analyse in this article. We made a strategic selection among the ironic and critical videos for the analysis, to search for overtly visible tensions and frictions depicting the adult–child divide. Since we are interested in performing a detailed analysis of the specific use of memes in the re-editing of the videos, we choose to focus on five videos made by three male creators with a particular focus on the fictive characters Emil and Lotta. We refer to the makers and users of the videos as young people and this is based on their own self-presentations. In fact, we cannot know for certain that the makers and users are young people, only that they present themselves as such.

The videos selected for analysis are, according to Shifman’s definition, “memetic videos,” in which the user engagement is triggered by parody, pastiche, and mash-ups.²¹ In addition, these memetic videos derive user engagement by taking children’s culture as a starting point. Hence, it is not only what Wiggins and Bowers describe as the “spreading media” per se that is of importance.²² In addition, the specific children’s culture content is of major importance. One of the videos chosen for analysis makes this particularly obvious. It is a video that starts with a meta-comment that signals a manifest awareness of what kind of genre (child culture) these memetic videos are playing with. The meta-comment, in the form of an image macro of big white letters on a black screen, is formulated as an explicit warning usually associated with 18-rated films (see [Illustration 1](#)), “Warning: this video may contain scenes some people may feel abused by. If you are sensitive, DO NOT WATCH!”²³ These image macro meta-comments are also edited into the actual videos, for example, “Censored for your own good ... <3.”²⁴



Illustration 1. Meta-comment in the form of a warning text or disclaimer being used ironically in the video “Emil i Lönnmördarberga” (Snedvriden [n.d]). (Accessed 15 May 2014).

To put an 18-rated warning on a video supposedly produced in the genre of children’s culture and, additionally, to censor scenes with reference to what is in someone else’s best interests, mimics how adult culture treats children’s culture, and how adults engage with children. These text-based visuals—the image macros combining text and other visual elements like smileys—make the frictions between children’s culture and adults’ culture observable. For an adult watching the video, the message is that they should be aware of children’s awareness of adult protective strategies that, according to childhood theories, also produce dependence.²⁵ In addition, adults watching such videos may experience how it feels to be in the position of being protected. Children, or followers of the clip producers, on the other hand, can shake off the feeling of exclusion from “adult content” they might be accustomed to having imposed on them, and note the reversal of that message.

ANALYSIS: RE-EDITS PRODUCING VISUAL FRICTIONS

The empirical investigation in this article concerns YouTube re-edits of two well-known fictional characters created by Astrid Lindgren: Emil i Lönneberga [*Emil of Lönneberga*], adapted for film in 1971²⁶ and *Lotta på Bråkmakargatan* [*Lotta on Trouble-Maker Street*], adapted for film in 1992.²⁷ Emil is an 8-year-old boy who, because of his curiosity and urge to take his own actions, runs into problems evoking his father’s anger. Emil is allied with a farm-worker employed by his father. Lotta is a 3 to 5-year-old girl who, because of her stubbornness and specific child perspective on what she experiences, gets into conflicts, mainly with the adult world. Her ally is an elderly woman living next door. Lindgren thus created fiction featuring agentive child characters involved in transgenerational relations with persons not belonging to their biological family. In the fictive worlds, these relations—or any other adult–child relations—never posed a threat to adult power or the adult–child divide.²⁸

There is an abundance of adaptations for television, film, games, and gadgets about Lindgren’s fictional characters. Here Wiggins and Bowers’ understanding of the “progression of meme as a genre,” where a meme is a starting point in “spreadable media,” is productive. In the present article, spreadable media are the novels of Astrid

Lindgren plus the child-culture films and television series based on them. The “emergent memes” that we study are characterised by a desire to challenge notions of a romantic childhood—of children and adults as always being good.²⁹ Spreadable media mediate a popular imagery of children’s culture produced by adults for children. Even though the main characters are active children, these children never challenge the adult–child divide or the adult norm.

We will now present two examples of how the young videographers use memes to challenge the childhood innocence that permeates Lindgren’s work, that is, the invocation of a romantic childhood. These examples highlight how the re-edits mingle 1) the romantic angelic child with the evil/horrific and 2) a “good” child with violence and abusiveness. We will now move on with the empirical analysis of how these re-edits work, starting with the angel-like girl child.

The romantic, angel-like girl child mingles with the horrific/evil

Our first example is drawn from the YouTube video “Lotta på Bråkmakargatan—Horror Parody Trailer” by raeven2, published in 2008. The video is based on the novel *Lotta på Bråkmakargatan*, first published in 1961. The video has received 152,450 views and a long list of cheerful supporting comments. The producer explains that the video is “homemade” and that he is “quite happy with it.” Elements from the original film have been re-made, new music has been added and text-filled image macros create the counter narrative.

The visuals—texts and film clips—blend with the music to create a counter-narrative to the original idyllic narrative of *Lotta på Bråkmakargatan*. This is signalled in the opening when an image macro says, “They were the perfect family ...” (our emphasis) followed by short clips of the parents happy and laughing in the sunshine, Lotta’s brother and sister laughing, and Lotta laughing outdoors in the sunshine.³⁰ The memes are here film clips portraying supposedly happy and idyllic family moments according to a hegemonic image-culture about children.³¹ In the re-edit, these original, supposedly idyllic, images become part of a counter narrative about betrayal, poisoning, threat, and monsters. By the end, an image macro explicitly states that this is “a story for children ... gone bad!”³² As this summary highlights, this YouTube video uses the common feature defined by Shifman as humour, combined with the horrific to create a narrative of a kind of anti-child culture. The humorous effect—and affect³³—is produced by challenging notions of a good romantic childhood and the idea that children—and adults—are always good.

Another video based on the same spreadable media film as the example above is the video “Lotta på Bråkmakargatan Parodi” made by zzMangoZz’s Channel, which has been viewed almost 188,000 times. The video uses recurring cuts from the films *The Exorcist*³⁴ and *Silence of the Lambs*³⁵ inserted into a Lotta movie. The character Lotta, with attributes like blonde hair, blue eyes, and red dress signalling her angel-like status ([Illustration 2](#)), is positioned next to the haunted girl-child Regan from *The Exorcist* ([Illustration 3](#)). Lotta’s visualised angelic appearance is juxtaposed with a dark-haired, dark-eyed girl with twisted limbs dressed in a nightgown. This girl epitomises the evil child of horror movies³⁶; a direct contrast to the angel-like girl in children’s culture.



Illustration 2. Lotta the angel-like child in *Lotta på Bråkmakargatan* (Hald 1992) (zZMangoZz's Channel, 2008) (Accessed 15 May 2014).



Illustration 3. Regan the horrific girl in *The Exorcist* (Friedkin 1973) (zZMangoZz's Channel, 2008) (Accessed 15 May 2014).

The video starts with an image of Regan when she is not possessed. The next scene positions the action inside Lotta's home, with her mother on her way to Lotta's room. She enters the room and says "What is it Lotta, how are you, what's happened?" This is said with the mother's voice from the original film. As she is speaking, a scene from *The Exorcist* in which the main character, the girl Regan, is possessed is edited into the video. Although the mother is addressing Lotta verbally, the possessed girl is inserted instead of Lotta. This evokes no reaction from the mother, implying that she is innocent and naïve, a representation attributed to Lotta in the original films. Moreover, in the YouTube video the mother becomes an adult embedded in cultural norms about romantic childhoods peopled with innocent adults and children, who refuses to see, or admit, that children (and adults) can be evil, behave incorrectly and not according to established norms.

This re-edit mingles visual images and voices with different origins—a children's culture film and a horror movie—making them converge into one video with a divergent message. A story about the idyllic, angelic child, common in commercials,³⁷ becomes a

narrative about an evil child. The producer uses memes that are all recognisable—but they are from different genres: the gothic tradition³⁸ and mainstream children’s culture. The re-editing causes these different recognisable memes to converge, producing a different meaning than the original one within children’s culture.

The video obviously requires further cultural and production knowledge to make it successful extending the video to encompass both particular Swedish as well as broader transnational popular culture. Cultural knowledge of the emblematic, almost iconic status of the two horror movies used is required, as well as the technical ability to find the images and edit them into the new narrative. Also, it is well worth noting that this clip retains its dramaturgical flow in the editing, so that the inserted images can at the same time be part of the storyline and stand out as free units or cuts that emphasise its quality of making a strong visual statement about the angel child turned evil. As the soundtrack continues with the mother “unaware” in the original film, it underscores the difference between the preferred, idyllic image, and the critical position that can be created by the inserts. The knowledge of film outtakes made into memes is thus combined with the technical and dramaturgical ability to make new meaning in the video, displaying a particular competence, maybe even a kind of “director’s gaze.”

Furthermore, the critique produced in and by the re-edits uses and produces visual frictions to critique the adult–child divide in complex ways by playing with the expected and unexpected. Images of “evil” children are a recurring feature in popular media. They are, as Patricia Holland claims, produced by adults and they reflect adults’ anxieties about children’s “potential for uncontrolled viciousness.”³⁹ The videos we analyse in this article play with these adult fears—and hence challenge them. The re-edits explore a critique of the adult–child divide and simultaneously express young people’s anxieties about adults’ potential—and actual—evilness, which is also demonstrated in the following examples.

The good-hearted boy child becomes violent

Although the videos analysed so far garnered a lot of appreciation from commenting viewers, we will now analyse the work of one particular producer who received an overwhelming number of comments about his quality and professionalism in editing videos. The producer Snedvriden (Snedvriden means Twisted, in the sense of having a twisted mind) has made more than 10 re-edits of most of Astrid Lindgren’s films, starting with short clips and re-edits and leading up to a coherent, scripted 12-minute “movie” that becomes more of a held-together work. We focus on two of the more lengthy “movies”: “Emil i Lönnmördarberga” and “Vi på Saltgurkan.”

When we found “Emil i Lönnmördarberga” by Snedvriden in May 2014, it had more than 157,000 viewings. Now, it has been taken down by YouTube, who cited copyright issues. Whether this is the only argument is disputable. It could also be that the content is regarded as too challenging, producing too many frictions between adults’ “pure” versions of child culture and the “dangerous” versions produced by Snedvriden. It could also be that the quality of the videos triggered copyright concerns—perhaps they become seen as threats rather than pranks? In any case, Snedvriden’s YouTube videos seem to have become more and more closely monitored by the industry. The video “Emil i Lönnmördarberga” re-emerged, however. Someone who had obviously saved and stored the video uploaded it again on 24 January 2015. His argument for doing this is that it is so “enjoyable and wonderful” that it deserves to be available to others. Three days later, 68 people had viewed the video and one commenter thanked the person who re-loaded it.

The title “Emil i Lönnmördarberga” is a wordplay in which the idyllic village of “Lönneberga” from the book about Emil and the film based on the novel, is renamed as “Lönnmördarberga”—“Assassinville” would be a fair translation. In the video, we see Emil climbing fences, playing and aiming his toy gun around ([Illustration 4](#)), images from the original film but with inserted gunshot sound effects, gun-flash visual effects ([Illustration 5](#)), and inserted images from other movies of people being hit, falling off roofs, and heads being blown off.



Illustration 4. The blond and blue-eyed goodhearted boy Emil is playing with his toy rifle made of wood (Hellbom 1971). “Emil i Lönnmördarberga” (Snedvriden [n.d.]) (Accessed 15 May 2014).



Illustration 5. The imaginative play results in gunfire “Emil i Lönnmördarberga” (Snedvriden [n.d.]) (Accessed 15 May 2014).

[Illustration 4](#) shows the blond blue-eyed boy, Emil, with the two material objects signifying his identity in the context of Swedish child culture, his cap (Sw. “Mysse”) and his homemade toy rifle (Sw. “Bysse”). Emil has performed one of his (innocent) pranks and locked himself into a small shed to keep himself away from his father’s tantrum (this is a recurring theme in the stories about Emil). In [illustration 5](#), Snedvriden has added memes in the shape of a gun, visual effects, and also sound effects to create a counter narrative in which the imagined innocent child play turns into something less innocent. Through these overlaid visual and audio memes, Emil’s original innocent play becomes

real with real negative effects. In the video this is elaborated upon several times; clips from the original film of Emil aiming his gun are combined with edited memes in which adults' heads are hit and the whole scene (EV: image) becomes covered in blood. Snedvriden here merges memes into the original storyline to create a new coherent narrative that becomes "twisted" by these inserts.

Hence, the "good" boy from the original books and films is made to shoot and kill other protagonists, mainly adults, in the videos. The image of a child actually shooting, blowing up or burning other people is a particularly strong statement, even more so since the cultural understanding of the Lindgren stories is centred around the innocent and good-hearted child. The innocent homemade toy turns into a real deadly weapon and when this is used by the child it becomes an instant friction when you see it on screen, showing how the selection of memetic content can make a strong, instant statement by being immediate and short. Snedvriden puts this format to use in many videos featuring the gun-toting, murderous child. To see an image of a child shooting and killing, and furthermore, to immediately recognise it as an Astrid Lindgren character, can be a powerful instance of media exposure.

The notion of Emil's innocence is also challenged in several instances where the homosocial male adult-child relationship is questioned. Scenes from the original film, located in pristine nature in summertime, are mashed-up with elements such as snuff, hashish (leaves and cigarettes), mobile phones, and sexual references. The narrative of sexuality is invoked by combining image macros of happy smileys, dialogues from the original films, music and sound effects of huffing and breathing. Most striking and challenging is that Emil is not made a victim or shown as wanting to avoid the adult male sexuality. On the contrary, he seems to take part of his own free will. Thus, Snedvriden uses several memes to re-edit the original story of a good-hearted boy who is active, but in ways prescribed by adults and hence reinforcing his child-like status, into a counter narrative where the child is sexually active, that is, engaging in an activity that generates other reactions among adults than innocence and proper childishness. It becomes an "in your face" inversion of the preferred image of childhood that many (adults) take for granted. This is not, however, the only possible interpretation of child activity in Snedvriden's videos.

Emil's shooting and killing might also be interpreted as a way to get back at an adult society where children's needs are not met. Another example, "Vi på Saltgurkan", plays with another classic Lindgren story about an idyllic Swedish summer vacation in the archipelago. In this example, various narrative strands are laid out at the beginning, particularly where the children are treated as less knowledgeable, as being in the way, or treated as objects of sexual intercourse and victims of rape and incest. The "good" father, supposedly meeting the children's interests and needs in the original child culture discourses, is re-edited into a father who scorns his children. Two scenes in particular are constructed through elaborate editing of the soundtrack from the original film set to images that are made up of texts and subtitles insinuating an act of sexual intercourse between adults and children. This counter narrative is juxtaposed with sections where the children get back at the adults, often by shooting or burning them. The counter stories of children's actions, in addition to being just a general critique aimed at adults, may also be interpreted as a form of rebellious child behaviour. This is similar to Kirsten Drotner's analysis of how young people used aesthetics to transform and comment upon established genres during the early 1990s.⁴⁰ What is new here is that children's culture is used both as source and end product in the videos, obviously attracting people to participate as audience and in making engaged user comments. In relation to Drotner's work, the memes in these re-edits may be regarded as advanced digital developments

of young people's non-digital video practices in earlier decades. In this article we emphasise the importance of paying attention not only to the technical competence displayed in the use of memes, but also to the ideological implications the frictions put in motion by visual and audio cues.

CONCLUSION: CULTURAL CRITIQUE AS SOCIO-TECHNICAL PRACTICE

The YouTube videos we have analysed in this article begin with the classic Swedish film adaptations of original novels and add memes in the form of textual comments, clips from other films, pictures from the internet, visual effects, image macros, audio effects and music to create friction between what is preferred child culture and a new form of challenging child culture. YouTube videos can be seen as works, or even "movies" of considerable length, with very complex and dramaturgically coherent counter narratives that retain the memes and put them together in technically accomplished ways, where high levels of skill in editing, special effects and narrative are displayed, as well as knowledge of other visual media formats, such as, for example, music and music videos, which are commonly used. There are many examples of similar memes in YouTube re-edits of Astrid Lindgren films; images that are used by many producers in making their own versions, thus using the viral meme as a template but creating an original version rather than sharing the exact same clip. Furthermore, although originating in a Swedish cultural context, the videos create frictions that can be similarly identified and recognised in the eyes of a larger (western) notion of the idyllic state of childhood, that thus becomes more widely challenged.

The videos stand out due to the quality of their editing and effects and because of a level of production professionalism that is also commented on by viewers, who want to know "how it could be done so professionally." We see here a mingling of cultural critique and expert production that has thus far not been acknowledged in the (adult) cultural or academic sphere. The critique is multi-layered; it produces counter images of, and narratives about, notions of childhood and adulthood, about what is and is not accepted as mainstream culture, and what and who decides what a good production is. The re-edits point to how cultural productions targeting children—Lindgren's novels and film adaptations—use and re-inscribe idyllic, nostalgic and traditional Western notions of childhood innocence. The effect of the mingling of memes from popular culture and contemporary image cultures with the canonised children's culture becomes a critique of the adult-child divide in which childhood signifies an underdog position.

In several ways, the re-edits are more complex and multifaceted than the "original" films in terms of both form and content and these producers display a more professional and contemporary media prowess, bringing together a rich and complex array of content. As we would like to conclude, this is a form of cultural and socio-technical performance in which the visual and aesthetic production and the internet's viral and global properties work simultaneously with the social and cultural commentary. We have emphasised how singular elements of memes generate culturally situated and contextual content in the videos, rather than the merely viral. The memes are used as building blocks in more coherent narratives to convey a cultural and social commentary that can represent a statement on contemporary culture. Here, it is the Swedish childhood story that is turned upside down by the contemporary image-editing and mash-up production skills that are put together to create this particular viewpoint. Young YouTube video makers have, here, used a re-editing strategy based on mingling incongruent elements to re-model the

original message about childhood innocence and naïveté. Simultaneously this becomes a critique of how adults abuse and misuse their position as adults.

These productions use more knowledge than that provided by visuality, but at the same time the visual is essential. As shown in this article, YouTube “memetic videos” are being used in new ways that have so far not been acknowledged for the way in which they enter into dialogue with the content of children’s culture (films and novels) as a remediating process of cultural re-editing. In this process, children’s culture and other (adult) cultural genres merge in new ways. Memes can thus be used as an intricate part of re-editing, using and reworking individual snippets and bringing them into a more complex whole. This can be seen as the creation of a counter narrative that functions referentially and, thus, works to remake the original story, making it more multi-vocal, working in a more non-linear way, in a form of simultaneity, bringing forward several more narratives at once—as well as invoking and displaying the producers’ multiple skills and knowledge. Thus, a video clip can be understood variously as a re-edit, satire and comeback on the idyllic Swedish image of childhood, a wannabe show reel directed towards obtaining a position in the media or special-effects industry, as well as a way of becoming a cool guy with a YouTube channel following. Here, to return to a core Erving Goffman notion,⁴¹ the backstage properties of being part of a viral subculture of reusing internet memes at home on one’s personal computer work simultaneously with the frontstage properties of making a public visual statement for an audience of thousands.

If we widen our gaze to encompass the much broader development across the whole of popular culture for at least 20 years, we can see that the refashioning of old content into new has become commonplace and, obviously, creating content from varied sources is the format young people grow up with, at least those who have access to modern media equipment. Furthermore, the culture of mixing and mash-ups can now move across genres and formats,⁴² so it can be said to be convergent in a developed sense: as the starting point of production, rather than a convergence between new media forms and old, going beyond the metaphors of convergence and suggesting a way of understanding them as simultaneous.

There is, thus, another kind of friction involved here, of how young people can be forerunners in media development; of how knowledge is gained by self-organised cultural producers, lay professionals, or lay directors even, who draw on professional production forms, styles, and techniques. But, seemingly, they are daring to break taboos in their choice of content. Their skills can be used in the professional media production system, even though they have been gained outside of media education and surpass those gained in vocational or academic institutions—just like the music scene or the hacker culture purported to do before, as cultural studies researchers have observed for decades. In order to also study the inherent friction in this article, between young social media users’ cultural critique and their possible move into jobs in professional media production, we will need further analysis and examples. An analytical point here, though, is that there would be no point in separating out which of these traits might be the right one. Instead, this kind of intersectional understanding is a form of simultaneity, a concept that effectively describes this perspective.

NOTES

1. Anne-Li Lindgren, *Från små människor till lärande individer. Föreställningar om barn och barndom i förskoleprogram 1970–2000* [From little people to learning individuals:

Notions of children and childhood in preschool programs 1970–2000] (Lund: Arkiv Förlag, 2006), Stiftelsen Etermedierna i Sverige Nr 16.

2. As one of six prominent Swedish cultural notorieties, Astrid Lindgren has this year replaced the Nobel laureate Selma Lagerlöf on the new 20 kronor bill, having received the most popular votes among them. Lindgren is presented as an author whose work supports children's rights and gender crossing (Astrid Lindgren Archive, UNESCO). In research, her work also holds a privileged position and is seldom criticised. Author Lindgren bears no relation to Astrid Lindgren.

3. Anne-Li Lindgren, "Barnkultur och natur i Astrid Lindgrens Värld. Gamla och nya barndomsideal" [Child culture and nature in Astrid Lindgren's World. Old and new notions of childhood], in *Nu vill jag prata! Barns röster i barnkulturen* [Now I Want to Talk! Children's Voices in Children's Culture], ed. Karin Helander (Stockholm: Stockholms Universitet, 2013), 99–115; Anne-Li Lindgren et al., "Enacting (Real) Fiction: Materializing Childhoods in a Theme Park," *Childhood* 22, no. 2 (2015): 171–86.

4. Karen Smith, "Producing Governable Subjects: Images of Childhood Old and New," *Childhood* 19, no. 1 (2012): 24–37.

5. Gaile S. Cannella and Radhika Viruru, *Childhood and Postcolonialization: Power, Education and Contemporary Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998); Patricia Holland, *Picturing Childhood: The Myth of the Child in Popular Imagery* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004); and Smith, "Producing Governable Subjects."

6. Christine Hine, *Virtual Ethnography* (London: Sage, 2001/2003).

7. The project title is Culture for and by Children: A Visual Ethnographic Study of Children's Museums, Theme Parks, Amusement Parks and Science Centers, Swedish Research Council, grant registration number 2009–2384.

8. Konstantin Economou and Rakel Hergli, "Samtidigt i Vimmerby [Simultaneously in Vimmerby], in: *Astrid Lindgrens världar i Vimmerby: En studie om kulturarv och samhällsutveckling* [Astrid Lindgren's Worlds in Vimmerby: A Study about Cultural Heritage and Societal Development], ed. Leif Johnsson (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2010), 56–77; and Lindgren et al., "Enacting (Real) Fiction".

9. Lindgren, "Barnkultur och natur i Astrid Lindgrens"; Anne-Li Lindgren and Anna Sparrman, " Blogging Family-Like Relations when Visiting Theme and Amusement Parks: The Use of Children in Displays Online", *Culture Unbound* 6 (2014): 997–1013.

10. Limor Shifman, "An Anatomy of a YouTube Meme," *New Media & Society* 14, no. 2 (2011): 187.

11. Ibid., 187.

12. Ibid., 200.

13. Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, "The Entrepreneurial Vlogger: Participatory Culture beyond the Professional-Amateur Divide," in *The YouTube Reader*, eds. Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau (Stockholm: Mediehistoriskt arkiv 12, 2009), 89.

14. Bradley E. Wiggins and G. Bret Bowers, "Memes as Genre: A Structural Analysis of the Memescape," *New Media & Society* (2014). doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1461444814535194>
15. Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau, eds., "Introduction," in *The YouTube Reader*, (Stockholm: Mediehistoriskt arkiv 12, 2009), 11.
16. Shifman, "An Anatomy of a YouTube," 190.
17. Kirsten Drotner, "Dangerous Media? Panic Discourses and Dilemmas of Modernity," *Paedagogica Historica* 35, no. 3 (1999): 597.
18. Ana Nunes de Almeida et al., "Internet, Children and Space: Revisiting Generational Attributes and Boundaries," *New Media & Society* (2014). doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1461444814528293>
19. Ibid., 2.
20. Ibid., 14.
21. Shifman, "An Anatomy of a YouTube," 190.
22. Wiggins and Bowers, "Memes as Genre," 15.
23. Snedvriden [n.d.].
24. Snedvriden [n.d.].
25. Cannella and Viruru, *Childhood and Postcolonialization*; Holland, *Picturing Childhood*; and Smith, "Producing Governable Subjects."
26. Astrid Lindgren, *Emil i Lönneberga* [Emil of Lönneberga] (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, 1963); *Emil i Lönneberga* [Emil of Lönneberga] Olle Hellbom, (Director) (Stockholm: S-F Produktion and München: Stella Film GmbH, 1971).
27. Astrid Lindgren, *Lotta på Bråkmakargatan* [Lotta on Trouble-Maker Street] (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, 1963); *Lotta på Bråkmakargatan* [Lotta on Trouble-Maker Street] Johanna Hald, (Director) (Stockholm: S-F Produktion, 1992).
28. This analysis of child culture is based on Patricia Holland, "The Child in the Picture," in *The International Handbook on Children, Media and Culture*, eds. Kirsten Drotner and Sonja Livingstone (London: Sage, 2008), 36–55.
29. Wiggins and Bowers, "Memes as Genre."
30. *Lotta på Bråkmakargatan—Horror Parody Trailer*. raeven2, 2008.
31. Holland, "The Child in the Picture," 36–55.
32. *Lotta på Bråkmakargatan*.
33. Richard Grusin, "YouTube at the End of New Media," in *The YouTube Reader*, eds. Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau (Stockholm: Mediehistoriskt arkiv 12, 2009), 60.

34. *The Exorcist*. Directed by William Friedkin. Burbank, CA: Warner Bros, 1973.
35. *The Silence of the Lambs*. Directed by Jonathan Demme. Los Angeles, CA: Orion Pictures, 1991.
36. Holland, "The Child in the Picture," 45.
37. Johanna Sjöberg, *I marknadens öga; barn och visuell konsumtion* [In the eye of the market. Children and visual consumption] (Diss. Linköping: Linköpings universitet, 2013).
38. Holland, "The Child in the Picture," 39–40.
39. *Ibid.*, 46.
40. Kirsten Drotner, *Unge, medier og modernitet: pejlinger I ett föränderligt landskap* [Young people, media and modernity: interest in a changing landscape] (Köpenhamn: Borgen/Medier, 1999).
41. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959).
42. Some examples from the vast array of YouTube formats that could be analysed in a similar manner are, for example, Mashups (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZBuYbKgvQI>) (accessed Jan 31, 2015); Literal videos (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HE9OQ4FnkQ>) (accessed Jan 31, 2015); and Shreds (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w-0CS-T1HUQ>), (Jan 31, 2015).

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