

ABSTRACT

Spitting and kissing

Transforming emotions in a meme during the so-called Refugee Crises in 2015

As Clément Chéroux has stated technical changes have always spurred developments in the remaking of photographs from photomechanical printing processes and the illustrated press in the 1910s and 1920s which led to the invention of photomontage to the emergence of television in the 1950s and the Internet today (Chéroux 2013, 104). That said everything about the way remades are made: 1) in which way in respect of both form and content 2) by whom and 3) how they are circulated have changed fundamentally in the course of time. In this paper I discuss Danish press photographer Sigrid Nygaard's 2015 photograph of a man on a bridge who was spitting down on refugees walking on the E47 motorway and the memes made on the basis of it. I describe the way the photograph was remade and shared by different people in what Andrew Chadwick has called "a hybrid media society" (Chadwick 2013).

Following Zizi Papacharissi who in her *Affective Publics* argues that we should study the affective processes in digital political environments instead of approaching them as a forum of rational exchange in a Habermasian sense (Papacharissi 2015, 26), I trace the emotions connected to the photograph. I am specifically interested in how the serious emotional landscape of conflict photography is distorted when humorous elements are added in meme culture. I argue that classical grotesque elements are activated, but that meme culture also differs radically from for instance the photomontages of the avant-garde.

Chadwick, Andrew: *The Hybrid Media System, Politics and Power*. New York 2013.

Chéroux, Fontcuberta et al. (ed.): *From here on, D'ara endavant, la postfotografia en l'era d'internet i la telefonia mòbil, a partir de ahora la postfotografía en la era de internet y la telefonía móvil, postphotography in the age of internet and the mobile phone*. Barcelona 2013.

Papacharissi, Zizi: *Affective Publics, Sentiment, Technology, and Politics*. Oxford 2015.