



Social and Political Criticism in Hungarian Parodistic Videos on YouTube

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Abstract. According to common sense, youngsters are more likely to turn their backs on politics. However, in my paper, I would like to throw some light on the subject by introducing a new form of mediated political reflexivity on various social and cultural issues. The phenomenon works through humorous and parodistic videos which are based on remixes of popular movies, songs, talk shows and news items and are circulating on social websites. Quite often the “actors” of these videos are “everyday celebrities” such as the homeless, the poor and the socially deprived. By using parody and hyperbola, the videos mock contemporary social setting that is based on entertainment and consumption, but in reality is cruel, violent, addictive and segregating. My hypothesis is that ridicule is a symbolic act through which youngsters distance themselves from social injustices while *order* is re-established. In conclusion, youngsters who tend to reject taking part in serious political acts can still make their voice heard in these videos.

Keywords: Internet, social media, YouTube, meme video, tabloidization, political deliverance, parody

Youth, Public Affairs and Media

Both our everyday experience and the empirical research of the topic¹ reveal that today’s generation of young people and young adults are either indifferent or negative towards the issues of politics and public life. Most of them do not trust the political institutions and activities, and stay away from political participation². At the same time, using social media, they produce and consume a

1 For example, the Hungarian module of the international EU KIDS research (Ithaka n.d.) or the Hungarian Election Studies (www.valasztaskutatas.hu) and the other representative research on young people (Szabó and Kern, 2011).

2 This is clearly reflected in the in-depth interviews carried out to reveal the media habits of young people in the framework of the research called TÁMOP-4.2.3.-12/1/KONV-2012-0016 *Science Communication for Generation Z*. (Guld and Maksa, 2013; Glózer, 2013).

great variety of humorous and parodistic content that reflect upon various social and cultural topics. From the point of view of late-modern media theories, this multimedia content introduces brand new forms of freedom of expression in the fields of politics and public life.

Research Consideration and Methodology

Young generations are very responsive to the audio-visual contents and they consume these less and less on television, but rather on the Internet (Guld and Maksa, 2013). The new trends of the convergence television (Csigó, 2009) appeal the media consumers (particularly the young ones) into the online video market, where they can both consume and produce (Turner, 2010) different types of multimedia contents. The most popular kind of the user-generated multimedia content in the social media by the youth is the online video. On YouTube, the most favoured video sharing site in Hungary, the first young “producers”³ (Bruns, 2008) appeared and began to publish user-generated videos around 2007. Thence, this online video scene has significantly evolved: many (young) “producers”,⁴ different genres⁵ (Glózer, 2014), a major and enthusiastic audience has expanded. The schemas were taken from the English-speaking amateur videos which the early Hungarian adopters have seen and followed, but the specific cultural milieu, common social and cultural experiences gave a unique profile to the Hungarian-speaking online video scenes.

The social criticism reflecting on the public and political affairs appears primarily in the parodistic videos. In this case study, I investigate the creations of Pempi, the most reputed early adopter in this genre. He is one of the first Hungarian amateur online video producers, focusing on the political and cultural reflexions in these. The nickname Pempi belongs to a student who has produced and published online videos since 2007. Actually he is one of the “oldest” and most beloved⁶ producers in the scene of parodistic videos. Another reason to analyse these creations is the unique visual style and artistic quality of elaboration in his short films. He makes redubbed video-remixes with subtitles, and the “masking” (changing the face of the character with other characters’ faces from different films or videos) has become his brand. His works convincingly demonstrate the most important characteristics of the user-generated video contents: the parodistic and humorous style (Shifman, 2012), remix and montage as techniques (Manovich,

3 An amateur user who participates in the production or generation of media contents.

4 Their channels are followed by tens of thousands of users and the videos are liked by several hundred thousand people.

5 For example, the beauty videos, tag, haul and challenge videos, game plays and parodistic videos.

6 According to the statistics of YouTube.

2007), reflexions on the social situation and popular culture, conscious building of the audience and the community of fans (Csigó, 2009).

In pursuance of the research, I have made interviews with Pempi twice (on 18th October 2013 and on 10th August 2014), analysed his videos and followed the statistical data of these, the fans' comments and activities between September 2013 and September 2014.

The Pempi Phenomenon

According to recent statistics, more than 60,000 people follow the different channels (Pempi, PempiHD, Pempi Classics, Steptronic87)⁷ of the user called Pempi. There are 16,753 fans of the official Facebook site of Pempi,⁸ most of them are aged between 18 and 24, says the Facebook statistics. The author of these videos remixes the characters and scenes of popular movies, recent and former pop hits, TV shows, soap operas and reality shows, computer games and well-known amateur Internet and viral videos so that he can compose short videos with a unique (and recognizable) style. His compositions, as he calls them, are primarily „funny videos, remixes and parodies” where the characters are pop musicians, media and Internet celebrities. The final results are absurd, funny and grotesque videos which are tragic and comic at the same time; they commonly use foul language and eventually make us laugh. These videos show scenes from popular Hollywood movies where, instead of the original actors, we can see the face and hear the voice of celebrities and participants of various reality shows and listen to remixed pop songs. The channels also show scenes (gameplays) from popular video games (Slender Man, Half Life) commented by the author.

The subject and source of humour is mostly connected to various social deviances (alcoholism, homelessness), to the different forms of otherness (e.g. ethnic otherness), to astounding and shocking behaviour, to foul language, to unreflected stupidity, to unscrupulousness and anti-social behaviour. Pempi takes the everyday characters of these videos from their original context and places them into the world of movies, videogames and stars. Using this strong

7 Javraj87, 2007. *Pempi* [YouTube channel] Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/user/javraj87>> [Accessed on: 10 February 2014].

PempiHD, 2012. *PempiHD* [YouTube channel] Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/user/PempiHD>> [Accessed on: 10 February 2014].

Pempi87, 2012. *Thug Life* [YouTube channel] Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/user/Pempi87>> [Accessed on: 10 February 2014].

Steptronic87, 2012. *Steptronic. Automotive channel* [YouTube channel] Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/user/Steptronic87>> [Accessed on: 10 February 2014].

8 Jenő Ph, 2007. *Hivatalos Pempi Facebook Oldal*, [Facebook] Available at: <<https://www.facebook.com/javraj87?fref=ts>> [Accessed on: 10 February 2014].

contrast, he can annul and ridicule the virtual world of the media and the phenomena appearing at the periphery of society and culture.

The overall picture is definitely a grotesque one: at first, the viewer may not even know what to think of these short films which ignore taboos and ridicule these untidy, toothless, seemingly intoxicated or homeless, Roma or coloured (African-American, Jamaican), extremely obese or shock-headed characters who are either completely mad or uproarious. Naturally, in the name of political correctness, we can condemn the parody of these people living at the periphery of society, but if we divert the focus of our investigations away from the concrete characters, we can get closer to the understanding of this phenomenon and decoding the causes of its popularity.

The Late Modern, Tabloid Hypermedia

We are encouraged to create such an interpretation by those processes and developments that have taken place in the world of the media, in public life and in the scientific interpretation of these areas in the past decades. The ideal of a media that serves “public” interest represents important issues and provides information, while education has culminated in the concept of public service media. However, this ideal has become rather problematic. The concept of normative publicity by Habermas (1993) – including the judgement on the role of the media –, which is probably the most important starting point of the ideal, has become outdated. The use of television and, subsequently, the Internet brought changes that had an effect on the use and consumption of the media as a result of which a new and more democratic, “plebeian” publicity has developed (Császi, 2011).

The most important characteristic feature of this new, popular and plural publicity is ordinariness regarding the topics, the participants and the language. Through tabloidization, intimacy, scandal, rumour and, generally speaking, entertainment, have gained ground in order to satisfy the heightened demand for reality, which – according to Császi – is one of the important characteristic features of our late modern societies. Through introducing ordinariness, tabloids intend to captivate and engage the audience by showing themselves to them. The new media genres that combine the provision of information with entertainment are successful because they are close to the spontaneity and informality of everyday life.

The novelty in soap operas as well as in talk shows and reality shows is the application of a subjective viewpoint, the intention to affect the emotions and not the intellect, the scandalous presentation of the deviant, the other and the grotesque and the representation of the violation of the norms and morals of everyday life (Császi, 2011: 26). Therefore, this discourse does not represent high culture and the norm to be followed, but, on the contrary, it “puts the average into

the centre of attention through some shocking deviance” (Császi, 2011: 17). The representation of deviance does not serve as a deterrent, its aim is not to show the moral norms with the purpose of education or to rebel against the existing conditions, but – as it is put in an enjoyable form – to entertain the audience. Tabloid does not have any revolutionary ideology, it is not connected to politics, but instead it is embedded in commerce, entertainment and everyday life.

Technological development has brought about a unique mixture of the various media (music, film, television, radio, Internet) and genres (online television, radio and newspapers, reality shows). The boundaries of media have become interoperable; convergence and hybridity have become the most apparent features of the so-called “hypermedia”. The special features of hypertelelevision include, for example, the acceleration of the video’s rhythm, its extensive intertextuality,⁹ the break of linearity or the content-providing activities of amateurs.

As a result of this, according to Scolari, hypertelelevision has produced a new cultural competence because while traditional television was created for people living after the war (who learnt to use the media through radio, movies and printed press), neo-television addressed a new generation who grew up watching TV (having higher-level skills at audiovisual interpretation), hypertelelevision “addresses viewers who are experts in interpreting fragmented texts and competent to navigate in an interactive environment” (Scolari, 2009: 411 cited in Császi, 2011: 42). It is therefore the youngest generations, born and bred to use the Internet and socialized by it, who possess such competence and it is the Internet that occupies their attention, not the TV.

Mediatized Folklore and Social Participation in Hungary

Many would say that the tabloids of hypermedia are part of a new mediatized folklore (Blank, 2009; Bronner, 2009), “which is the public dramatization of those events, facts, emotions and fantasies that the members of the society all know, but judge differently” (Császi, 2011: 43).

One of the favourite targets of this modern, mediatized folklore is public life and politics. In Hungary, this popular, public and political way of reflection began in the form of election poems and songs in the 19th century (Balázs, 2004). After the eventful period of the 1830s and 1840s, this genre was reborn in 1945 and 1956, while during the time of the first free elections after the political changes (1989) poems and songs having similar style and structure were also produced. After that, the humorous and colloquial style of election folklore disappeared from public life for a long time (Balázs, 2004) to return during the 2002 election campaign. However, this time it was not so much in the field of

9 A constant reference to other media, genres and actors.

verbalism but through the text messages private people sent to one another (Balázs, 2004; Sükösd–Dányi, 2002). The traditional form of folklore was placed onto another media platform and, at the same time, became the instrument of a completely novel voter behaviour and discourse. During the 2006 elections, the voters sent far fewer political text messages to one another, however, the funny conversion and parodies of the political parties' election posters began to gain ground on the Internet. Bodoky (2005) explains the appearance of such pictures, named by the literature simply as Photoshop,¹⁰ with the rapid growth of PCs and Internet providers and the expansion of other online services during the four years preceding the election. Besides politicians, the emblematic figures (popular domestic and foreign celebrities, actors of soap operas and reality shows, sportsmen and businessmen) and topics of contemporary mass culture also appear in such parodies (Bodoky, 2006: 17) together with the current issues of the given period: the panic caused by bird flu, the flood of the Danube, the forthcoming football world cup and even the 2003 catastrophe of Columbia.¹¹

After the 2006 elections, a shift of emphasis took place in Hungarian political folklore again: following foreign tendencies, the first political video parodies appeared on YouTube. Considering their elaboration, there are two basic types: a series of pictures connected as a slide show with some music in the background (mostly popular Hungarian pop songs);¹² or writing subtitles for popular or cult movies¹³ that carry some current political contents or dubbing films in an ironic way. The application of masking technology can be seen in the best short films¹⁴ of this latter type. Besides popular movie films, animated movies, TV (news, soap opera, advertisement) and music (rap, ballad, communist song, folksong) genres also provided the playful film producers with raw materials.

In the past 2-3 years, however, a decreasing number of films containing direct political reflection were uploaded onto the video sharing sites. At the same time, memes, originating from various meme generators, flooded the different social networking sites. These funny works that combine a single picture with one or two lines of text and look like a photo, a caricature or a cartoon make it possible to voice a relatively simple message in a highly effective way. Because

10 The label comes from the programme called Photoshop which makes the transformation of pictures possible and which became widespread in the middle of the first decade of the 21st century in Hungary.

11 Bodoky mentions the space shuttle Discovery in his study by mistake.

12 Éva Dombóvári, 2010. *Padődő: - Orbán - "azt csinállok amit én akarok"* [video online] Available at: < <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqjl6u0JD1U&feature=related> > [Accessed on: 08 December 2013].

13 Starwars, Der Untergang; Any Given Sunday (2evmulva, 2011. *Orbán – Al Pacin paródia by kslc.* [video online] Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ps1CoQFhGDs>> [Accessed on: 12 August 2013].

14 Jocking3, 2009. *Star Wars Paródia (enyhén politikai jellegű...:D)* [video online] Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cnVRIz8rL3g>> [Accessed on: 12 August 2013].

of their simplicity, memes are not suitable to draw up an elaborate opinion, instead, they can be used to make a joke or send a short, witty and relevant message. The topics emerging are the most up-to-date ones, frequently reflecting on public and domestic political news. Scandals, involving politicians,¹⁵ sayings by celebrities,¹⁶ events producing a general laugh,¹⁷ deeds or sayings that shocked the general public,¹⁸ and even the slow reaction of the authorities to difficulties caused by unusual weather¹⁹ have become memes among the Hungarian Internet users with lightning speed. As the significance of these events is often momentary and fainting, the public-political meme is an ephemeral genre, the funny pictures lose their timeliness rapidly. The fact that the use of social networking sites has gone beyond a critical threshold in Hungary has also contributed to the sudden increase in the popularity of these works. Facebook, the most popular social networking site, has become the primary instrument of spreading and sharing memes with funny political content.

This short review reveals how the development in the use of media has brought about newer and newer technologies (SMS, freeze-frame, moving picture) and ways of sharing information (sending, static publication, dynamic social network share). It can also be seen how the genres guaranteeing the political reflections of lay people have become increasingly rapid and short-lived. This acceleration necessarily reduces content complexity since the timelier and simpler the content is, as we can see in the case of the memes, the less suitable it is to reflect upon various social, cultural and political phenomena in a delicate way. It is also clear that the distrust and disappointment of the younger generations regarding institutional politics turns the delivery of public opinion away from direct political issues towards the general problems of society and culture. This may explain the emergence and popularity of the work of authors²⁰ like Pempi who do not make fun of concrete politicians and cases, but instead target the confusing social phenomena of everyday life (poverty, deviances, alienation). Regarding both the speakers and the subjects of their works, the publicity of popular media is a plebeian one which denies the rules of elite culture even in this way. Denial, protest and resistance, in their trivial way (Dessewffy, 1996), all characterize these contents as well as the Internet community that produces

15 For example, the plagiarism scandal of President Pál Schmitt.

16 You can live on 47,000 forints. Keep goats. etc.

17 For example, the Hummer-owners, whose cars fell through the ice of Lake Balaton. To reflect on this event, a separate blog was created: *Balatonhummer.blog.hu* [blog] Available at: <<http://balatonhummer.blog.hu/>> [Accessed on: 14 August 2013].

18 The reasoning of the politician who beat his wife saying that it was the blind dog who made his wife fall and that was how she got hurt.

19 The great amount of snow that fell around March 15, 2013, causing danger and emergency situations.

20 For example, HErBY, Bartos and Pamkutya and other authors of YouTube having similar profile and popularity.

and consumes them. This connection is not completely unknown by sociologists who research the phenomena of late modernity. Decades ago, Beck and Giddens considered the public discourse of intimacy as “the new and non-political form of publicity, which also meant the considerable reinterpretation and expansion of the Habermasian concept of political publicity” (Beck–Giddens–Lash, 1994; Giddens 1991, 1992, 1994)” (Császi, 2011: 54). While people all around the world tend to turn away from politics and the traditional political institutions, and practices become meaningless, through the intimacy and ordinariness of the tabloid, a new forum is developing on the new surfaces of popular publicity and hypermedia that can be used to discuss various public issues.

Pempi and the Hypermedia

The actors in the Pempi videos are, on the one hand, TV and movie stars: local celebrities (unforgettable people from Mónika Show, Győzike, Fekete Pákó, Stohl András, Mucsi Zoltán, Nemcsák Károly, Gálvölgyi János, Szellő István, Erős Antónia etc.) and film stars from Hollywood. On the other hand, his videos also include “ordinary stars” who have become famous as a result of their “performance” recorded and uploaded onto the Internet. Among them, we can find self-appointed performers singing popular songs (e.g. *Cotton Eyed Joe* or *Nyár van [It's Summer]*), users who appear with their own songs and viral videos (e.g. the authors and actors of the music video titled *Mit mond a róka [What does the fox say?]*), drunken people who find themselves in funny situations and homeless people sitting on the stairs of underpasses or having a row in the street. Besides the media icons, we can see anonymous and average, flesh-and-blood human beings whose ordinariness represents a sort of deviance and who are nevertheless, part of our life.

Thus the participants of these videos mix characters who would never have appeared and indeed never appeared together on the surfaces of paleomedia in real life. Here, however, by eliminating the social differences and distances, the performers appear as equal partners in the democratic hyperreality of these videos and interact with one another, while the “plot” of such videos unfolds through this interaction. Their joint actions are permeated by happiness and laughter, which is enhanced by the joyful and dynamic music in the background.

Picture 1. András Stohl and a participant from a reality show in the parody titled *Penge Pákó*; **Picture 2.** Mónika Erdélyi, the host of a talk show masked as Zoltán Mucsi²¹



Pictures 3-4. „Bartos” and a nameless Internet “celebrity” in the parody titled *Cotton Eyed Joe*²²



The reality presented by these videos is ordinary, personal, plebeian and democratic at the same time. In this environment, the actions and gestures of the actors are frequently accompanied by foul language. Such regularly occurring motives include the naming or visual representation of female and male sexual organs,²³ the vulgar or obscene representation of sexuality, the emphasis on the human body (excessive skinniness or obesity, muscles) and the visual representation of violence (fight, murder).

A unique way of placing the concept of boundaries into the centre of discussion is the introduction of visible ethnic otherness. A great portion of the actors in these parodies are Roma or coloured people (with African, African-American,

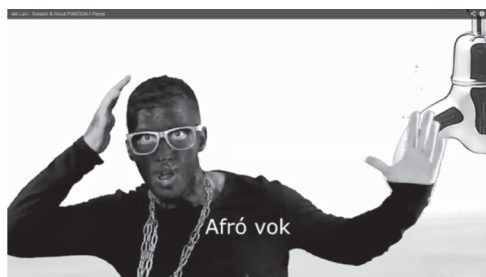
21 kriszdi1, 2010. *YouTube – Gollam Show.mp4* [video online] Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqevYOWwiF4&spfreload=10>> [Accessed on: 12 January 2015].

22 PempIH, 2014. *Cotton Eyed Joe Paródia – Pempi* [video online] Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=995AAcf4Dv0&spfreload=10>> [Accessed on: 12 January 2015].

23 The references to the male sexual organs almost always vary a meme (“chocolate penis”) originating in one of the media appearances of Fekete Pákó. The references to the female sexual organs in the Pempi videos are made possible by quoting a video where a man sings a song called “The Cunt Doesn’t Eat Lentils” (Paródiák Pempi, 2013. *Falusi Gangnam Style (Psy – Gangnam Style parody)* [video online] Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEw5YpqFli4&spfreload=10>> [Accessed on: 12 January 2015].

Caribbean or Asian appearance). The obvious difference in skin colour or outlook is itself a source of humour in these videos as is indicated by the pictures taken from the parody titled *will.i.am – Scream & Shout*.

Picture 5. *will.i.am – Scream & Shout* parody;²⁴ **Picture 6.** *Cotton Eyed Joe* parody²⁵



These forceful reflections on the extremities, taboos, deviances and violations of everyday life make certain social norms visible, which indicates that the young generation who consumes these videos does, in its own way, perceive the expectations that implicitly regulate the life of the society and does, in its own way – or using and transforming the patterns of the late modern tabloid media –, treat these issues, too. It portrays and discusses those issues whose debatability in the field of domestic publicity was first proven, in a groundbreaking way, by the talk shows of hypertelevision (Császi, 2011).

At the same time, the videos heavily rely and reflect upon our motion-picture-dominated contemporary media by citing famous TV and movie stars and using other means such as the imitation of and playing with the various media genres. Among the videos of Pempi, we can see parodies of TV advertisements, newsreels, talk shows, soap operas, video games and quiz shows. The use of these genres in a playful and humorous way indicates both an intimate and close relationship with them and shows the young generation's retrospection from the world of Internet to these genres that determined the age of NeoMedia. This way of reflection represents an initial separation from the television-centred NeoMedia and an attitude of media consumption which is characteristic of Internet publicity and which also makes interactivity possible.

24 Pempi, n.d. *will.i.am – Scream & Shout* parody [video online] Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yi132xqTqcg>> [Accessed on: 10 February 2014].

25 PempiHD 2014. *Cotton Eyed Joe Paródia – Pempi* [video online] Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=995AAcf4Dv0&spfreload=10>> [Accessed on: 12 January 2015].

Picture 7. Sinter Koton (+16) parody of an advertisement, music background: Fekete Pákó “chocolate penis”²⁶; **Picture 8.** Reference to the quiz show “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire” in the video called “Pempi gives answers”²⁷



Placing, for example, the characters of popular culture and everyday life into the world of video games and movies relativizes and ridicules the experience we have when watching a film or playing a game. Parodies make possible something that the traditional consumption of games and films did not allow: we can playfully reflect upon the excessiveness of the dramaturgy and visualization of popular films and video games as well as on the representation of violence and death and the unreality of their characters. This unmasked and upturned citation also ridicules the action movies we watched with excitement and anxiety, and questions the effect and influencing power of the media industry, too. The cult films that generally have great popularity among the members of his generation play a crucial role in Pempi's work. Some of them – e.g. *Matrix*, *Blade*, *Der Untergang*, *Mortal Combat*, *Alien*, *Skyfall* or *Lord of the Rings* – appear in several of his parodistic videos.

Video games, such as *Dead Island* or *Half Life*, played with humorous commentaries give us an insight into the different experiences of the young generation. Such video games which have high popularity among young people are originally connected to a private and not public situation and activity, where the player, the computer and possibly an online partner are present. The fundamental aim of demonstrating how to play the game and using humorous commentaries at the same time is to assist those who get stuck at certain points of the game. This support against the obstacles and difficulties created by the medium and the genre means that the media's power is called into question, that there is an alliance against and victory over the power of media, but it also represents a unique reflection on the medium and media consumption. On the other hand, however, it opens the personal and private use of media for the widest possible

26 Pempi, n.d., *Sinter Koton* [video online] Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Crpgob9FaBE&list=RD399CSOdWUPrJ0>> [Accessed on: 10 February 2014].

27 Pempi, n.d., *Pempi válaszol 4.* [video online] Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-V-rN9vub4> [Accessed on: 10 February 2014].

publicity of hypermedia. The inclusion of television, film or video game into the platform of the Internet and the elaboration of a special version (e.g. Internet television) of them as well as the various forms of imitation and interpretation are regarded as the special manifestations of the ordinary experience of media convergence at the same time.

Curiously, it is not only the characteristic products of NeoMedia, which can also be regarded as direct antecedents, that appear in these parodies, but also some of the domestic hits of the folklorized paleomedia, for example the first Hungarian soap opera called “Neighbours” (“telenovela”), the Hungarian cult movie “Indul a bakterház” (The Rascal of the Railroad Shack) or the major hit “Nyár van” (It’s Summer) of the 1980s from the group called Neoton.

Picture 9. Feri Vágási, a popular character from the soap opera “Neighbours” in the film titled “Gabi, the Alien”;²⁸ **Picture 10.** Scene from the film “Indul a bakterház” (The Rascal of the Railroad Shack) in the Pempi video titled “Hungarian Skyfall”²⁹



Citing and portraying the “hits” of online media including memes, stories and celebrities naturally expresses something about the relation their creators and consumers have towards the Internet. Those sentences that later became proverbs, like „bikicsunáj” (the Hungarian version of the Alphaville song “Big in Japan”), „mi folyik itt Gyöngyösön” (What’s going on in Gyöngyös), „Ízirájder, öcsém, ízirájder” (Easy rider, my friend, easy rider), „Ne fürgyé le”, (Don’t take a bath) „Gyúrunk, vazze” (Workin’ out, dammit), have become widely known partly through television and radio, however their folklorization became fully fledged via the Internet. They have been ripped from their original story and incorporating the joke and the context as a reference they developed a life of their own on YouTube. The modus vivendi of these contents is therefore intertextuality: if the appropriate environment is given, they trigger a reference to a well known joke

28 Pempi, n.d., *Nyolcadik utas a Gabi* [video online] Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hcaxfq_2bGY> [Accessed on: 10 February 2014].

29 Pempi, n.d. *Magyar Skyfall* [video online] Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsyLyQ-wCRQ>> [Accessed on: 10 February 2014].

that enriches the original meaning by playing it in a new context. Naturally, only those enjoy such humours who know the original joke, video and character. That is, such jokes that are based on exchanging laughs, on “savouring repetition”, have a community building and empowering character: only those can be part of the discourse who are able to recognize and enjoy humour, those who know the given segment of media culture. This can also explain the generation-related consumption of the contents in question (though in the case of the Internet we cannot really talk about a generation gap as the different age-groups using the World Wide Web began their activities around the same time).

Picture 11. “It’s Summer” parody (I get the chills mix);³⁰ **Picture 12.** Part of the Internet meme called „What’s going on in Gyöngyös?” in the parody titled Hungarian Skyfall³¹

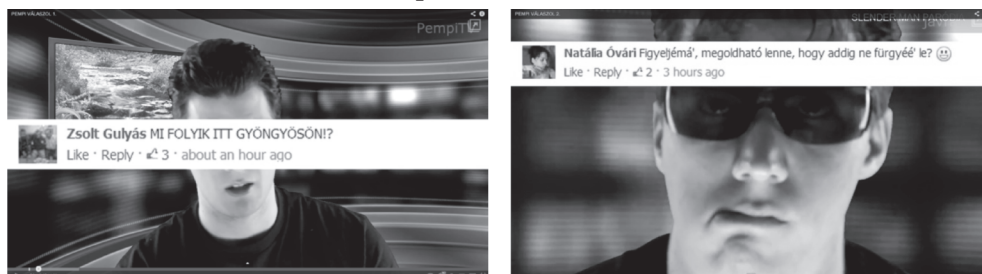


The scene of “calling” and reiterating these jokes as well as of collective laughter in relation to the Pempi videos is, on the one hand, the comments attached to films, and, on the other hand, a series called *Pempi Gives Answers* (Pempi TV) created especially to serve this function. Pempi uses this latter site to comply with the requests sent by fans via Facebook, e-mail or Skype and answer their questions in his unique and humorous style applying music, pictures or gestures performed parodistically by himself. Pempi TV is a sort of online request show where questions are also articulated as references whose subjects are mostly some sort of Internet folklore motifs and, less frequently, a piece of information connected to Pempi himself and his works.

30 Pempi, n.d., *Nyár van – paródia* [video online] Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OuZDW1bcaCw>> [Accessed on: 10 February 2014].

31 Pempi, n.d., *Magyar Skyfall* [video online] Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsyLyQ-wCRQ>> [Accessed on: 10 February 2014].

Pictures 13-14. Parts from Pempí Gives Answers 1 video³²



The Cultural Importance of Parody Videos on the Internet

Courtesy of the commercial TV companies, the defining genres – talk show, reality show – of tabloid hypermedia appeared in Hungary at the beginning of the 2000s. Their approach and imagery exerted great influence on the opinion of people concerning publicity (and its players, style and topics), but their judgement by the public was far from uniform. Various groups of viewers and intellectuals who shape public opinion and the institutional players of media regulation judged these new programme types differently. It was especially the normative and elitist conviction of the latter two groups and, eventually, the sanctions of the ORTT³³ (National Radio and Television Authority) that led to the end of the two most popular Hungarian talk shows (Mónika Show of RTL Club and the rival TV2's Joshi Barat, both having begun in 2001) in the spring of 2010. Mónika Show, nevertheless, has crossed a boundary: it became possible to show the problems, conflicts and deviances of our intimate, private and everyday life in public.

Watching the Pempí parodies, we can see the unique continuation, the players and, eventually, the spirit and style and, to a certain extent, the function of the episodes of these talk shows. The actors, scenes and style of tabloid TV programmes live on in a folklorized form on the Internet (at the same time, however, new programme types of reality television also appear on commercial channels). The young adult generation, whose primary medium is the Internet and not the television, begins to satisfy their curiosity towards reality, everyday life and intimacy through such folkloristic, tabloid and hybrid multimedia contents (Shifman, 2012).

The heightened curiosity of young generations is partly an age-related peculiarity; however, it is more than that. One of the traditional frameworks

32 Pempí, n.d., *Pempí válaszol 1.*, [video online] Available at: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TF-sV-ufwAc>> [Accessed on: 10 February 2014].

33 The National Radio and Television Authority was established by the Hungarian Parliament to supervise the media – it functioned between 1996 and 2010.

of public discourse on social issues (on concrete and ideal reality) legally accessible for people is politics. However, in the Western world, politics interests citizens and especially young people less and less. The unprocessed plurality of everyday life, its disturbing ambivalence and unpredictability calls for reflection. The popular and tabloid contents – using the words of Császi – “prepare us to survive our everyday life, to prevent and encounter emptiness and inhibition. From a sociological perspective, the growing significance of the tabloid approach in popular media can be interpreted as a phenomenon that warns of the unexpectedness, extremities and reality of our risk society as opposed to the melodramatic and sentimental experience that is becoming lost in our late modernity” (Császi, 2011: 30). For strategic reasons, politics is either not or is only one-sidedly willing to discuss these phenomena widely and the scientific discourse of the intelligentsia is not popular (understandable, acceptable) enough, while television, influenced by cultural policy, is not given the opportunity to do that. The common enjoyment of folkloristic tabloid contents on the Internet can therefore be regarded as therapeutic (Császi, 2002). Experiencing and resolving the frustrations of everyday life through carnivalistic laughter and by twisting them may be one of the important benefits why young people sit down in front of the computer every day. Instead of being involved in “serious” opinion formation regarding politics, they treat the norms they know and sense very well in a “light-minded” (cf. Prensky, 2001) way, parodying, mocking and ridiculing them, because these issues do interest them apparently.

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