Internet memes and a female "Arab Spring": mobilising online for the criminalisation of domestic abuse in Hungary in 2012-13

Gyorgyi Horvath

Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science, London UK

yossarianinpianosa@gmail.com

ABSTRACT
This paper analyses how social media and internet memes transformed public discourse on domestic abuse in Hungary during 2012–13, and how they have been used to mobilise protests and articulate a much wider social feeling against the issue than had previously been thought to exist. More closely, it discusses these anti-domestic abuse protests through Bennett and Segerberg's connective action analytical framework, and studies internet memes as acts of personalised bottom-up political opinion-expressing that enabled netizens to connect to a feminist movement goal, that of standing up to domestic abuse, in flexible ways, which was important in a country that had traditionally been seen as sharing strong negative sentiments about feminism. It also argues that feminist digital mobilisation and large-scale meme circulation, both articulated primarily through Facebook and against the existing governmental discourse on domestic abuse, worked in tandem as bottom-up pressure on the government to introduce a new policy tool, a law, against domestic abuse. The paper also discusses the contribution of these protests to rebooting various stages of the legislation process of Hungary's Law on Domestic Abuse, entering into force in July 2013.

KEYWORDS
Internet memes; digital feminist activism; connective action; domestic abuse; Hungary; social media

Introduction

This paper analyses how social media and internet memes transformed public discourse on domestic abuse in Hungary over 2012–2013, in the direct aftermath of which Hungary's Law on Domestic Abuse—a policy tool for which local feminist activists had already been fighting for a decade—was created. By providing a case study from Hungary —a Central-Eastern European country that joined the EU in 2004, had been a Soviet satellite state between 1949 and 1989, and therefore lacking a long-standing women's movement—it studies how the social media and internet memes have been used for mobilisation and for articulating a much wider social feeling against domestic abuse that had previously been thought to exist. The paper uses Lance W. Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg's (2012) connective action framework to analyse the protests and studies internet memes as acts of personalised bottom-up political opinion-expressing that enabled netizens to connect to a feminist movement goal, that of standing up to domestic abuse, in flexible ways, in a country that had traditionally shared strong negative sentiments about feminism, tended to ignore domestic abuse or perceived it in gender-neutral terms. It also argues that feminist digital mobilisation and large-scale meme circulation, both articulated primarily through Facebook and against the existing governmental discourse on domestic abuse, worked in tandem over 2012–2013 as bottom-up pressure on the government to introduce a new policy tool, a law, against domestic abuse.

In recent years there has been an explosion of research on how, since the early 2010s, the rise of social media has fundamentally transformed existing forms of mobilisation and taking collective action. The social media, scholars argued, enabled activists and ordinary people to "self-mediate", to connect their personal concerns to movement goals or frames in flexible ways, and to quickly and

widely distribute these personalised action frames across their personal digital networks, which allowed quick, large-scale mobilisations and also new possibilities for marginalised groups to bypass the gate-keeping by mainstream media (Lance W. Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg 2012; Manuel Castells 2015; Paolo Gerbaudo 2012; Olivia Guntarik and Victoria Grieve-Williams 2020; Zeynep Tufekci 2018). Bennett and Segerberg's (2012) article has particularly been influential in pointing out the differences between traditional, high-cost, collective identity-based, institutionally organised "collective action" and low-cost digitally networked "connective action", with the latter's focus being primarily on "mobilising the expression of large-scale personal concerns" of ordinary people in online networks (2012, 745). This latter typology, by locating political actions on the collective-connective spectrum according to the extent to which online communication networks become a prominent part of the organisational and coordination processes behind these actions, drew attention to a novel type of protest movement dynamics in which political action (irrespective of whether offline or online) emerges from digitally connected crowds, and less (or not at all) from established political organisations. This also transcends the traditional offline-online dichotomy that tended to regard social media-assisted online activism as a weak substitute of "real" activism with little lasting impact and offering only a false sense of participation (Evgeny Morozov 2011, 179–203; Bill Wasik 2009). Today there is academic consensus over the fact that offline political engagements—including "traditional" forms of collective protests, like demonstrations, sit-ins, strikes, collections of signatures, petitions, letter campaigns, or boycotts —and online political engagements do not necessarily exist in isolation of one another, but rather intersect in multiple ways (Meredith Conroy, Jessica T. Feezell and Mario Guerrero 2012; Jane-Marie Fatkin and Terry C. Lansdown 2015; Rasmus Kleis Nielsen 2013).

In line with the rise of social media (and their capacity to advance users' personalised online self-expressions and that these expressions become noticed by others) the concept of political participation, too, shifted, or rather expanded (Stuart Fox 2014; Yannis Theocharis 2015; Yannis Theocharis, Joost Moor and Jan W. Deth 2021; Ethan Zuckerman 2014). Seemingly nonpolitical digitally networked participatory acts—like tweeting, retweeting, thematic hashtags, uploading a video, sharing a post on Facebook —today often qualify for political participation, at least if they aim at "raising awareness or exerting any kind of political pressure for the solution of a social or political problem" (Yannis Theocharis 2015, 8). Internet memes—that is user-generated multimodal artifacts that usually come in groups, are remixed by countless participants and typically employ "satirical humour for public commentary"—, are similarly widely understood as bottom-up acts of public opinion-expressing, a kind of "lingua franca" of online political discourse (Ryan M. Milner 2013, 2359; An Xiao Mina 2014; Carrie A. Rentschler and Samantha C. Thrift 2015; Limor Shifman 2014). In today's complex media environments internet memes can be quickly produced, remixed, and shared on a large scale, move from one media platform to another, and even picked up by the mainstream media. Hence internet memes, similarly to other personalised political self-expressions mentioned earlier, are often far more impactful if they are commenting upon trending political or social issues, than those forms of political participation that we traditionally accept as "political" like for example attending demonstrations or joining boycotts.

Whereas the above-described shift to (digitally) networked protests and new forms of political participation is usually told through the examples of such social movements as the Occupy Wall Street, the Indignados, or the Arab Spring, the emergence of social media as central platforms for mobilisation and articulating bottom-up dissent has significantly transformed feminist protest culture, too. Although digital feminist activism has been with us since at least the early 2000s, feminism's growing reliance over the 2010 decade on new digital technologies and social media, in particular, was noted by many (Hester Baer 2016; Katherine W. Bogen, et al. 2019; Jonathan Dean and Kristin Aune 2015; Aristea Fotopoulou 2016; Kaitlynn Mendes 2015; Alison Phipps, et al. 2018; Jessica Ringrose, Jessalynn Keller and Kaitlynn Mendes 2019; Verity Trott 2020). The most spectacular example for the rise of these new, social media-based protests was probably the appearance of hashtag-based feminist

activisms, first of all, *#MeToo*, but *Slutwalk* is also notable from 2011 as the earliest social media-assisted global feminist movement. Internet memes similarly received considerable scholarly attention as new forms of digital feminist activism (Kelli S. Boling 2020; Jennifer O'Meara 2018; Teresa Pineiro-Otero and Xabier Martínez-Rolán 2016; Rentschler and Thrift 2015; Jessica Ringrose and Emilie Lawrence 2018). Some commentators even saw a new, fourth wave of feminism in this shift to (digitally) networked protests and new forms of online feminist political participation in the 2010s (Baer 2016; Kira Cochrane 2013; Ealasaid Munro 2013).

As the above examples demonstrate, the internet and especially the social media emerged as new platforms for feminist activism and protest culture on a global scale in the 2010s, extending well beyond the borders of highly developed English-speaking countries with long-standing and strong women's movements. As lately Carolina Carolina Matos (2017, 431) has pointed out, the role of these platforms in opening new, online spaces for women to voice dissent, change ideas, and organise may well have been particularly relevant in societies where promoting women's rights had traditionally encountered resistance off-line. Carolina Matos (2017) coined the term "female 'Arab Spring'" to denote and explore a ground-breaking point in local Brazilian history that consisted of women's sudden large-scale resort to online networks for political expression in the mid-2010s, and which brought a revival, at local level, of feminist movements and new, online ways of organising against gendered oppression. A similar place, I suggest, is Central-Eastern Europe (CEE) including Hungary, which has similarly experienced its local "female Arab Springs" over the last decade: as I discuss shortly, CEE women, too, started to resort, in increasing numbers, to online networks for political expression, which gave impetus, at local levels, to feminist movements.

In the following pages I first discuss Hungary's anti-domestic abuse protests of 2012–2013 in the contexts of 1) post-1989 CEE feminist activisms, and 2) Hungarian feminist activists' earlier struggles for the criminalisation of domestic abuse and the country-specific difficulties they faced in terms of disseminating and framing their movement goals. Here I also discuss 3) the role of Facebook in Hungary as an established platform for mobilisation among civil society groups from early 2011 onwards, although before September 2012 no feminist or women's rights group have used it for these purposes. Subsequently, I discuss the anti- domestic abuse protests of 2012–2013 in detail, using Bennett and Segerberg's (2012) notion of connective action as an analytical framework. The final section is dedicated to internet memes as personalised forms of bottom-up political expression and their role in enabling large-scale bottom-up political engagement with the issue of domestic abuse in the specific historical-social context of Hungary's anti-domestic abuse protests in 2012–2013.

Putting Hungary's anti-domestic abuse protests in context

Traditional and digitally networked feminist activism in CEE countries

Post-1989 Central-Eastern Europe (CEE) has traditionally been described as a region that was "lagging behind" the First World in terms of feminism, lacked a widespread women's movement, and where gaining public support for women's issues traditionally encountered massive resistance (Redi Koobak and Raili Marling 2014). This lack of feminist movements—rightly pointed out by observers after 1989—occurred despite the fact that earlier feminism had been present in the region. Regarding Hungary specifically, women's movements were at their peak between 1896 and 1914, with the *Hungarian Association of Feminists* founded in 1904, but between the two world wars Hungary experienced a conservative turn, and feminism, together with other democratic political forces, got marginalised (Judit Szapor 2004). In the aftermath of the Second World War, when the Soviets took control of Hungary as part of their political expansion into CEE, the feminist movement was systematically silenced (Andrea Pető 1998). In the subsequent decades feminism was proclaimed unnecessary, with the explanation that equality between the sexes would be achieved with the advent of communism (Lalith DeSilva 1993). Even when after the fall of the Berlin Wall gender equality issues, including that of domestic violence, could become subjects of public discussion for the first time since decades, the widespread disdain for feminism—endemic in the entire post-socialist region—subsisted

(Robert Brier 2019).

Scholars have repeatedly pointed out the lack of interest in, or even widespread hostility towards, feminism in post-1989 CEE societies and the fact that feminism was limited to pockets of highly educated, middle-class women and found little resonance among ordinary women (Brier 2019; Katja M. Guenther 2011). The general "weakness" of civil society in CEE was similarly often pointed out, and also the fact that feminist activist work was typically channelled through NGOs, the agenda of which, due to NGOs' dependence on external funding, tended to be co-opted by CEE states or foreign funding bodies. This made these organisations target single-issue short-term projects "at available money" rather than setting their own agendas (Guenther 2011; Bogumia Hall 2019; Amanda Sloat 2005). These developments, scholars argued, altogether resulted in these NGOs failing to have a significant impact on local civil societies or state politics.

Although in 2011 Guenther still relayed "low levels of feminist mobilization in the region" (863), in recent years research started to emerge that reported on the appearance of feminist activisms in CEE countries that typically used various social media platforms as facilitators, and were backed up by an unprecedentedly wide social support (Vanda Maufras Cernohorská 2019 on the Czech Republic; Hall 2019 and; Lidia Salvatori 2018 on Poland). The use of social media as a platform for mobilisation indicated, in Bogumia Hall's (2019, 1502) words, a "move away from the institutionalized feminism [of earlier times] toward more informal and participatory engagements". The most recent major example for this, even internationally covered by the media, was the 2020 *Strajk Kobiet* from Poland: a women's rights social movement organised against the Polish government's plan to further restrict abortion, resulting in an all-country protest in 2020, during which protesters took to the streets but also to Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram to voice their dissent, organise themselves and disseminate their action frames (Marta Lempart 2020).

Mobilizing for the criminalisation of domestic abuse in post-1989 Hungary

In post-1989 Hungary domestic abuse—like abortion rights in Poland—has become a flagship issue for local feminists, and they regularly attempted to raise their voice for its criminalisation. In contrast with English-speaking Western countries, in Hungary domestic abuse was mostly ignored by the broader public until recently and tended to be perceived in gender-blind terms. Specifically, in English-speaking Western countries discussions of domestic abuse as well as legislation against it often goes back to the mid-and late 19th century—in the UK for example the 1853 Criminal Procedure Act limited the level of punishment a man was entitled to give to his wife and children—, and the issue was powerfully brought to public attention in the 1970s again, this time by second-wave feminism, and accordingly was from the start constructed as a form of gender-based violence with the main group of victims being women (Dobash, R. Emerson and Russell P. Dobash 1979, Dobash, R. Emerson and Russell P. Dobash 1992; Jeff Hearn 1998; Michael P Johnson 1995; Del Martin 1976; Evan Stark 2007). In contrast, in Hungary research on the history of domestic abuse is mostly lacking, the issue was entirely "invisible" and "unheard of" under state socialism, only sporadically noted in the 1990s, and started to gather public visibility only in the early 2000s, due to a tragic case from 2002 that ended in the killing of a step-parent by a teenage girl. But even afterwards it quickly faded out of public concern and was mostly approached with a focus on children as victims, or, if adult victims, too, were occasionally considered, then with the claim that victims were men and women equally (Katalin Fabian 2010; Patrícia Margit 2002; Olga Toth and Katalin Robert 2010, 32–33).

Framing domestic abuse as a women's issue has been particularly difficult, due to the strong negative sentiments that any issue or political goal openly connected to the equality of sexes had for long provoked in Hungarian society, in line with the widespread negative perceptions of feminism endemic in the entire post-socialist CEE region (Brier 2019; Guenther 2011). In terms of newsworthiness, domestic abuse was not recognised as more significant than just a piece of crime news or a tabloid story until 2012–2013 when Facebook and internet memes revitalised and transformed public discourse on the issue in Hungary (for newsworthiness and crime news, see e.g. Yvonne Jewkes

2015, 35–62). Before 2012–2013, even if the media from time to time broke news about local or national politicians perpetrating domestic abuse, none of these stories could sustain interest for long, and even less provoke massive public reaction.

Since the early 2000s a tiny group of feminist activists had been repeatedly demonstrating and lobbying for the preparation of a Bill on Domestic Abuse, and using, again and again in vain, the institution of *citizens' initiative* to submit the issue on the parliamentary order of the day: the initiative was repeatedly put on hold in parliament. After 2010 when a right-wing, conservative-nationalist government came into power with the FIDESZ political party winning, in coalition with the Christian Democrats, the two-thirds of seats in parliament, the issue seemed to entirely disappear from the Hungarian political agenda. This government, in contrast to previous, centre-leftist ones, has been pushing a deeply conservative gender politics right from the start, including its refusal to ratify the Istanbul Convention—which understands domestic abuse as mostly violence against women—, its adherence to addressing female citizens mainly through their role as mothers, or its long-standing reluctance to acknowledge the family as a potential site of violence (Katalin Fabian 2014). The government's ignorance to domestic abuse started to change only in September 2012 when, after feminists once again submitted a *citizens' initiative* for their case, Hungarian citizens managed to put unprecedented pressure on decision-makers in parliament with the inclusion of Facebook as a new means of mobilisation for the case.

Facebook as an emerging platform for mobilisation

Facebook has been particularly important in the anti-domestic abuse protests of 2012– 2013 in Hungary, as this was the platform that—similarly to the role it played for example in *Slutwalk*—sparked the protests. In early 2012 Facebook had roughly 4 million users from Hungary, more than 40% of Hungary's population (Socialbakers 2012). In 2013, Facebook was already (and so it is today) the most popular social media platform among Hungarians: 91% of Hungarian social media users had a Facebook account, and 94–95% of them were active users (HVG 2013). Before September 2012 Facebook had already been established as a platform for mobilisation among Hungarian civil society groups, with the most notable case being that of *Milla*, which in January 2011, in response to the newly elected FIDESZ government and its media laws, attempted, initially with success, at generating social support for itself and in opposition to the government through Facebook (Peter Wilkin, Lina Dencik and Éva Bognár 2015). There is no public documentation of any kind, however, of any Hungarian feminist or women's rights activist group that would have resorted to Facebook for large-scale mobilisation purposes before September 2012. Similarly, although Hungarians had been familiar with internet memes since the 1990s, and the popularity of internet memes significantly increased with the rise of social media in Hungary, too, there is no documentation of any internet meme before September 2012 that would have circulated (or at least not on a significant scale) on Hungarian websites or among Hungarian social media users with the purpose of raising awareness or exerting any kind of political pressure for the solution of a women's rights issue, let alone domestic abuse, in Hungary. This is probably due to the fact that, as discussed earlier, Hungarians until recently had nurtured strong negative sentiments towards any issue or political goal openly connected to the equality of sexes. Before 2012–2013, even if the media from time to time broke news about local or national politicians perpetrating domestic abuse, none of these stories could sustain interest for long, and even less provoke massive public reaction.

My study connects to the above-described developments when it analyses an early example of digitally networked feminist activism in Hungary from 2012 to 2013, one which used Facebook as a facilitator and aimed at the criminalisation of domestic abuse. As I discuss shortly in more detail, through the combination of traditional off-line activist tools (submitting a citizens' initiative to the parliament, collecting supporting signatures, demonstrating) and new, online activist tools (announcing a demonstration on Facebook, using the Facebook page of the demonstration to spread movement goals) activists managed to mobilize much wider support for their cause than ever before. This support

was also articulated in the form of internet memes, shared and re-shared in large numbers by proponents, which managed to sustain the public visibility of this social support—and thereby exert pressure on the government to continue its freshly started work in preparing a Bill on Domestic Abuse—even after off-line political actions stopped. In the next section, I discuss the development of the anti-domestic abuse protests of 2012–2013 in more detail and also the change they generated in the national discourse on domestic abuse.

The anti-domestic abuse protests of 2012–2013 as "connective action", and their legacy for the public discourse on domestic abuse in Hungary

Hungary's anti-domestic abuse protests of 2012–2013 came in two waves, in September 2012 and in April–May 2013. The September 2012 protests were triggered by the fact that during the September 11 2012 parliamentary discussion of a *citizens' initiative* for the creation of a Law on Domestic Abuse (again submitted by feminist activists and supported by more than 100,000 signatures) István Varga, an MP of the ruling party FIDESZ, suggested, in line with the party's policy, rejecting the initiative and added that in his opinion domestic violence "would not even come up" if women gave birth to more children (Fidesz Macho in Parliament: Women's Calling is to Produce Babies 2012). Although sexist claims about domestic abuse in parliament have been heard before (for example Sándor Lezsák in 2004 spoke against anti-domestic abuse legislation as "anti-men propaganda"), Varga's insensitive words provoked a massive public reaction. Within hours, satirical internet memes mocking the MP's claim started to circulate, first on Facebook, then spilled over to other parts of the internet. A demonstration, too, dubbed the *Women's Uprising* ("Nők lázadása"), was announced on Facebook by a (spontaneously gathered) group of feminist activists, and quickly gathered mass support (Anna Orsolya Abonyi 2012). Within a few days, the quickly growing support for the demonstration and the intensive meme circulation were so powerfully articulating public discontent that even major national TV channels finally started to cover the issue. Varga made a public apology, and the FIDESZ government, too, quickly backed down (FIDESZ 2012). They announced the re-discussion of the initiative in parliament even before the demonstration actually took place in front of the houses of parliament in Budapest on September 16 2012, and within a week legislators indeed passed a resolution to elaborate the initiative into a bill. (The elaboration process, however, reached an impasse by January 2013).

The second wave was triggered by what was dubbed as the "komondor Balogh" scandal by the Hungarian media: on April 29 2013 a small online news magazine, *444. hu* broke the news that József Balogh, an MP of the ruling party FIDESZ had battered his cohabiting girlfriend so severely that the woman got hospitalised (Zsolt Kerner 2013). Propelled by the recently increased newsworthiness of domestic abuse, *TV2* and *RTL Klub*, the two major Hungarian commercial broadcasters, also picked up the story in their prime-time evening bulletins. On that evening millions of Hungarians watched Balogh on their TV screens with his injured fists and briefly explaining the battering incident, by blaming the family's blind komondor dog—the reason for Balogh's nickname—for his girlfriend's injuries. The MP's very apparent and ridiculous lies triggered a public outcry, which just grew further over the fact that Balogh's party, the FIDESZ failed to distance itself from the batterer until May 2—instead, it distanced itself, on a more abstract level, from violence against "the weak"—and even then refrained from expressing a clear message about Balogh's responsibility for the battering, and allowed him to keep his MP status. These acts altogether communicated a very clear message about the FIDESZ's reluctance to step up against domestic abuse perpetrators, to which the Hungarian public responded with an intense meme circulation, which quickly spilled over to other parts of the internet and put Balogh at public ridicule. (This time offline actions organised by feminists were only sporadic, took place only belatedly and did not involve any large-scale mobilisation).

As the above paragraphs demonstrate, both waves were triggered by news stories on domestic abuse, involving high-ranking politicians. However, I argue that the unprecedentedly massive public reaction these news stories triggered cannot be assigned to the sheer fact that these incidents got into the news (given that the Hungarian media had been for a while, as discussed earlier, reporting on

domestic abuse cases including cases with politicians as perpetrators), but rather the fact that, in contrast to earlier times and in addition to already-available offline activist tools, Facebook, too, was available as a platform for articulating and making publicly visible large-scale bottom-up dissatisfaction regarding domestic abuse and for exerting political pressure for the solution of the issue. This, I argue, has become a game-changer in the Hungarian public discourse on domestic abuse.

Facebook emerged as a platform for both feminist mobilisation and voicing bottom-up political opinion by ordinary netizens. As illustrated above, internet memes and feminist digital activism worked in tandem during the protests, as they both made visible, with the help of Facebook, something that was previously not thought to exist: a dissatisfaction with the existing governmental discourse on domestic abuse and the handling of the issue by the government. Although these two forms of bottom-up protests differed considerably—one of them was called into being due to a mobilisation by feminist activists, the other consisted of ordinary netizens' spontaneous (digitally networked) acts of political engagement, in the form of large-scale spread of internet memes on Facebook and their subsequent spilling over elsewhere—both voiced bottom-up dissatisfaction, and, as a whole, can be grasped in terms of Bennett and Segerberg's (2012, 756) "crowd-enabled" type of connective action. Specifically, in line with Bennett and Segerberg's concept, Facebook has become the primary organisational form of political action: political engagement occurred primarily through personal digital networks, and through ordinary netizens' spontaneous, personalised acts of public opinion-expressing that did not require adherence to established groups or ideologies (like feminism), neither an alignment with already established feminist or women's NGOs. Citizens were joining "women" in the uprising, and mocked the governmental discourse on domestic abuse when they shared internet memes, event invites to the demonstration, or slogans like "this is not our shame", "is the good woman the beaten woman?".

In September 2012 it also became evident that there was a significant difference in how the Hungarian government and activists saw the issue of domestic abuse, which, I argue, made it possible to grasp the protests of 2012–2013 as "feminist protests", despite the fact that joining them did not require any open alignment with feminism. Specifically, in September 2012 activists created the demonstration with strong gender connotations ("Women's Uprising"), described domestic abuse as primarily affecting female victims, and the majority of the internet memes, too, mocked the "woman as a child-bearing machine" element of Varga's claims, therefore the public outcry constructed domestic abuse overall as a women's issue. The government's standpoint, however, when it finally ceded to the pressure and agreed to elaborate the initiative into a bill, was based on a gender-blind notion of violence, in line with earlier popular understandings of the issue. It stressed in a public announcement that victims of domestic abuse could be not only women, but children and men, too (MTI 2012), and in general consistently rejected to acknowledge gender as a structural element of abuse. (Initial mainstream media coverage of the events also tended to relapse to gender-blind constructions of the issue, but it soon switched to coverage that acknowledged the gender aspect, and this was mostly sustained also during the second stage of the protests in April and May 2013). Given that earlier there was massive resistance in Hungarian society against acknowledging gender as a crucial aspect of abuse and that this understanding of the issue had been promoted only by feminists, it is not an overstatement to say that the protests of 2012 had a distinct feminist tint, even if the majority of protesters did not necessarily identify as feminists, or at least did not belong to any feminist NGO or activist group.

The year 2012 therefore, I argue, became a game-changer in the Hungarian public discourse on domestic abuse: the inclusion of feminist voices created a significant extension of the existing national discourse on the issue. The use of social media allowed these voices, which previously had been marginalised in the public sphere, to emerge at centre stage of national public discourses on domestic abuse, and to attract wider social support to their cause than was previously thought to exist. They also managed to gain social and mainstream media support for their claim that domestic abuse primarily affects women. Notably, feminist activists also proved capable to achieve a change to the initial neglect of domestic abuse by political decision- makers, and their taking action also created an expectation of

the government to bring into force new policy instruments against domestic abuse. Generally speaking, Hungary's anti-domestic abuse protests of 2012–2013 were strongly intertwined with the legislation process of Hungary's Bill on Domestic Abuse. They contributed, twice, to pushing this legislation process from one stage to the next: first in September 2012, when the government ceded to the protesters and agreed to elaborate the citizens' initiative into a bill; and, second, in May 2013 when the government responded to the second wave of protests by a quick rebooting of the preparation of the Bill (which by then had stalled for 4 months) and subsequently swiftly passed it in parliament on June 3 2013.

In the next section, I discuss how during the second wave, in the absence of demonstrations organised by feminist activists, internet memes took over the role of voicing large-scale bottom-up dissent and putting pressure on the government to step up against perpetrators of domestic abuse. I study internet memes as acts of personalised political opinion-expressing that allowed ordinary people to comment upon and voice personal concerns in the face of domestic abuse and its handling by the government without necessarily or openly associating themselves with a "badly reputed" feminism.

Internet memes

The "komondor Balogh" internet memes appeared within a short time on Facebook after *RTL Klub* and *TV2* exposed Balogh as a woman-batterer and a liar on April 29 2013 and subsequently spread swiftly across media platforms. As nearly all of these memes, except only four, contained a komondor dog—mostly a blind one, as either an image (with blindness evidenced by dark glasses), or a text, or both—, henceforth I refer to them as "komondor Balogh memes" as a group, whereas individual memes will be called "memetic variants", following Shifman's (2014, 8) terminology. On 30 April, the day after Balogh's exposure by television, *Index.hu* and *24.hu*, two online news magazines in Hungary, were already reporting an intensive meme circulation and published altogether 23 memetic variants from the series (see LB 2013; Panda a Parkban 2013). In the next couple of days, the "komondor Balogh" internet memes made their way into practically all major online (and some off-line) news media outlets, and some even reached mainstream television. On 2 May for example major commercial broadcaster *TV2* presented three of them on its prime- time evening news bulletin as an illustration of the "embarrassment" that "the politician's explanation provoked in many people". As of 2021 my collection, gathered from various sites on the Hungarian-language part of the internet, consists of altogether 40 "komondor Balogh" memetic variants (37 still images and three videos).[1]

As a group, internet memes can be considered a "polyvocal" discourse (Ryan M. Milner 2013), where each memetic variant presents a specific perspective or voice, but all are united together as one bottom-up public discourse that comments upon the same trending issue, in this case, the Balogh incident, and more broadly, the ongoing political discussion on domestic abuse and perpetrators. Memetic variants are also personalised forms of bottom-up public opinion-expressing in the online space (Bennett and Segerberg 2012): they can be produced, remixed, or selected from the available range of variants for further circulation according to netizens' own personal tastes and concerns and therefore they present multiple options through which netizens can connect to an ongoing online political discussion. This polyvocality and openness for personalisation are present in the komondor Balogh memes as well, first of all in their considerable variety regarding exactly which element of the Balogh story they mock. In the following paragraphs, I present four categories of the komondor Balogh memes to show how the relatively high variety of memetic variants allowed netizens to stand up to a high- profile perpetrator of domestic abuse and, more broadly, to comment upon the issue of domestic abuse, even without openly and necessarily aligning with feminism or feminist understandings of domestic abuse.

Based on the "object of mockery" criterion, the largest group (nine of the 40 variants) mocks the element of a shift of responsibility—that is lying—in Balogh's fabricated story where the blind komondor dog took over the role of the perpetrator of battering. These memetic variants come up with various satirical interpretations of what an abusive, constantly belligerent dog can look like or they

place the blind komondor dog in surprising contexts, thereby creating absurd "battering" situations. The second-largest group (eight variants) mocks Balogh as a perpetrator of domestic abuse. These variants portray bizarre episodes from the "idyllic" family life of perpetrators, as imagined based on Balogh's narrative, for example, what playing "mummies and daddies" may look like in such a family. Notably, if there is a victim portrayed in these memes, they are always women, whereas perpetrators are (almost) always male, which shows that netizens strongly relied on available feminist discourses on the issue (for a selection of memetic variants see Figure 1 below).

The third and fourth group criticize the Balogh incident on a more abstract level and put it in broader social-political contexts. Specifically, the third group targets governmental discourse and the questionable ways in which the government handled the case. For example, the remix of the "Keep Calm and Carry On" motivational poster, originally produced by the British government to raise the public morale of the British population in preparation for the Second World War, re-interprets the original [**Figure 1 here**] message of the poster as promoting the "morale" of FIDESZ and Balogh, encouraging them to "keep calm" and thereby sweep the matter under the carpet. Another variant that shows a panoramic view of one section of the Hungarian Parliament with MPs sitting in their seats and one of them, a male figure with a blind komondor dog's head in place of his own, mocks Hungarian political culture as a space that tolerates perpetrators and lets them stay in prominent positions. Yet another variant concretely references feminism and constructs domestic abuse as a feminist issue: it shows the image of a komondor dog with a caption that reads "I don't need feminism, only a good pair of glasses". Finally, the fourth group contains only images of komondor dogs, a clear reference to Balogh, with a less explicit object of criticism: these variants are sheer mementos of the embarrassing incident, capable of embracing a vast range of meanings. In 2015 József Nagy discussed the "komondor dog" as both a concrete reference to woman-battering and a national symbol of a declining public morality on a more abstract level that encompasses a range of negative sentiments about Hungarian political life, including anti-FIDESZ sentiments, dissatisfaction with the moral conduct of Hungarian politicians and disappointment at their corruptness, and his diagnosis is still valid today. As of 2021, the (blind) komondor dog is still vivid in the collective memory of Hungarians in the very same meaning structure Nagy unpacked.

The above brief catalogue gives a taste of the many ways in which the "komondor Balogh" internet memes allowed netizens to express critical voices on the Balogh story and the broader issue of domestic abuse and its handling by the government. Notably, many memetic variants targeted not only the MP's transgressions, but also the broader political-governmental discourse in which they were embedded, which may point in a direction similar to what Bogumia Hall (2019) described apropos of the women's rights protests in Poland in the late 2010s, namely that the Polish government's conservative gender politics allowed citizens to re-assess the struggle for women's rights as part of a struggle against the illiberal regime. This diagnosis is further confirmed by József Nagy's (2015) earlier discussed analysis, according to which the (blind) komondor dog is both a concrete reference to woman-battering and a symbol of declining morality in Hungarian political life under the FIDESZ regime. These memes, overall, served as a powerful satirical counter-discourse to the government's reluctance to prevent perpetrators of domestic abuse from getting away with their crimes, and they also created a largely homogeneous emotional regime around the incident. They constructed Balogh as an object of public ridicule, but also that of embarrassment, shame, and outcry, therefore they worked as a kind of networked bottom-up social pressure that was hard to ignore. As a response, the FIDESZ government quickly rebooted the preparation of a Bill on Domestic Abuse on May 10 2013 and the Bill finally passed in parliament on June 3 2013. The subsequent Act on Intimate Partner Violence came into force on July 1 2013 (albeit with a somehow different content for which feminist activists had been lobbying).

Conclusions

By providing a case study from a Central-Eastern European country, Hungary, this paper analysed how

the emergence of social media facilitated the transformation of public discourse on an important women's rights issue, domestic abuse, in a society where women had traditionally struggled to have a voice in the public sphere. It analysed the anti- domestic abuse protests of 2012–2013 through Bennett and Segerberg's (2012) connective action analytical framework. It studied how the inclusion of Facebook as a means of mobilisation and articulating bottom-up dissent worked as a game-changer in the existing national discourse on domestic abuse by giving space to and amplifying bottom-up dissident voices. The paper also studied internet memes as acts of personalised bottom- up political opinion-expressing that were capable to connect netizens' personal concerns to feminist movement goals in flexible ways. This made broad-base participation possible in a country that had shared strong negative sentiments about feminism.

Overall, this paper found that the social media, due to their openness to voices that had traditionally been marginalised or ignored elsewhere, allowed Hungarian feminists to emerge in September 2012 as powerful political actors in the ongoing Hungarian discussion on domestic abuse. Social media allowed feminists to attract wider social support to their cause, the criminalisation of domestic abuse. Feminist activists also managed to achieve mainstream media support for their claim that domestic abuse primarily affected women, a perspective that previously had been marginalised in Hungarian society and promoted only by feminists. This, the paper has argued, gave the protests a markedly feminist tint, irrespective of the fact that the majority of protesters did not necessarily identify as feminists, neither belonged to any feminist NGO or activist group. The events of September 2012 also created an expectation of the government to bring into force a new policy instrument, a separate Bill on Domestic Abuse. This, however, was not implemented until May 2013, when anti-domestic abuse protests were sparked again: as the government's ongoing reluctance to step up against perpetrators became evident, netizens once again responded with an intense meme circulation.

As we have seen, internet memes played a crucial role during the protests as both bottom-up pressure on the government and as a tool that allowed ordinary citizens to connect to movement goals in flexible ways. Given that the protests, in general, were strongly intertwined with the legislation process of Hungary's Bill on Domestic Abuse, and more than once exposed FIDESZ politicians' questionable conduct in relation to domestic abuse, many of the internet memes, instead of commenting directly or solely upon domestic abuse, targeted the government's reluctance to stand up to it. It is likely that this anti-governmental layer of meaning, by allowing netizens to re-assess the struggle for women's rights as part of a struggle against the illiberal FIDESZ regime, just further enhanced the social support for the protests. This latter aspect is worthy of future research, especially as in the meantime both CEE illiberal governments have further consolidated their powers and resorted to what scholars describe as *transnational anti-gender discourse*, which in these societies serves as a discursive underpinning for cutting back the social gains of many vulnerable social groups including women.

Note 1. Data collection originally took place in August 2017, through Google, with the following search terms: "Balogh + komondor", "Balogh József". "Balogh + családon belüli erőszak" [i.e. the Hungarian equivalent for "Balogh + domestic abuse"]. A repeated search in January 2020, with the same search terms, did not bring any new data.

Acknowledgments

I thank the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments on an earlier draft of this manuscript.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributor

Gyorgyi Horvath is a media, literature and gender scholar with a PhD in Media from the London School of Economics.

References

Abonyi, Anna Orsolya. 2012. “Lázadó női csoportok a Fidesz ellen” [Rebellious Women’s Groups against the FIDESZ]. *Hetek*, September 14. http://www.hetek.hu/belfold/201209/lazado_noi_csoportok_a_fidesz_ellen_0

Baer, Hester. 2016. “Redoing Feminism: digital activism, body politics, and neoliberalism.” *Feminist Media Studies* 16 (1): 17–34. doi:10.1080/14680777.2015.1093070.

Bennett, Lance W., and Alexandra Segerberg. 2012. “The Logic of Connective Action.” *Information, Communication & Society* 15 (5): 739–768. doi:10.1080/1369118X.2012.670661.

Bogen, Katherine W. Kaitlyn K. Bleiweiss, Nykia R. Leach, and Lindsay M. Orchowski. 2019. “Metoo: disclosure and response to sexual victimization on Twitter.” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 1–32. doi:10.1177/0886260519851211.

Boling, Kelli S. 2020. “#ShePersisted, Mitch: a memetic critical discourse analysis on an attempted instagram feminist revolution.” *Feminist Media Studies* 20 (7): 966–982. doi:10.1080/14680777.2019.1620821.

Brier, Robert. 2019. “Gendering Dissent: human rights, gender history and the road to 1989.” *Eurozine*, September 2. Accessed 18 January 2020. http://www.eurozine.com/gendering-dissent/

Castells, Manuel. 2015. *Networks of Outrage and Hope: social movements in the internet age*. Cambridge: Polity.

Cernohorská, Vanda Maufras. 2019. “Who’s Afraid of the Istanbul Convention? Resisting ‘Gender Ideology’ Narratives in the Age of Digital Feminism.” In *Feminist Circulations between East and West/Feministische Zirkulationen Zwischen Ost Und West*, edited by Annette Bühler-Dietrich, 91–107. Berlin: Frank & Timme.

Cochrane, Kira. 2013. *The Fourth-Wave of feminism: meet the rebel women*. *The Guardian*. December 10

Conroy, Meredith, Jessica T. Feezell, and Mario Guerrero. 2012. “Facebook and political engagement: a study of online political group membership and offline political engagement.” *Computers in Human Behavior* 28 (5): 1535–1546. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2012.03.012.

Dean, Jonathan, and Kristin Aune. 2015. “Feminism Resurgent? Mapping Contemporary Feminist Activisms in Europe.” *Social Movement Studies* 14 (4): 375–395. doi:10.1080/14742837.2015.1077112.

DeSilva, Lalith. 1993. “Women’s emancipation under communism: a re-evaluation.” *East European Quarterly* 27 (3): 301–315.

Emerson, Dobash, R., and Russell P. Dobash. 1979. *Violence against Wives*. New York: Free Press.

Emerson, Dobash, R., and Russell P. Dobash. 1992. *Women, Violence and Social Change*. London: Routledge.

Fabian, Katalin. 2010. “Mores and Gains: the EU’s influence on domestic violence policies among its new post-communist member states.” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 33 (1): 54–67. doi:10.1016/j.wsif.2009.11.006.

Fabian, Katalin. 2014. “Naming Rights: nation, family, and women’s rights in the debates on domestic violence in contemporary Hungary.” *Hungarian Studies Review* 41 (1–2): 153–182.

Fatkin, Jane-Marie, and Terry C. Lansdown. 2015. “Prosocial Media in Action.” *Computers in Human Behavior* 48: 581–586. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2015.01.060.

FIDESZ (Fiatal Demokraták Szövetsége/Alliance of Young Democrats). 2012. “Rogán: tisztelettel meghajlok a hölgyek akarata előtt” [Rogán: I respectfully bow to the ladies’ will]. fidesz.hu, September 14. Accessed 18 January 2020. http://www.fidesz.hu/hirek/2012-09-14/rogan- tisztelettel-meghajlok-a-holgyek-akarata-el337tt/

Fidesz Macho in Parliament: women’s calling is to produce babies. 2012. *The Hungarian Spectrum*, September 11. Accessed on 18 January 2020. http://hungarianspectrum.org/2012/09/11/fidesz- macho-in-parliament-womens-calling-is-to-produce-babies/

Fotopoulou, Aristea. 2016. *Feminist Activism and Digital Networks: between empowerment and vulnerability*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Fox, Stuart. 2014. “Is It Time to Update the Definition of Political Participation?” *Parliamentary Affairs* 67 (2): 495–505. doi:10.1093/pa/gss094.
Gerbaudo, Paolo. 2012. *Tweets and the streets: social media and contemporary activism*. London: Pluto Press.
Guenther, Katja M. 2011. “The possibilities and pitfalls of NGO feminism: insights from postsocialist Eastern Europe.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 36 (4): 863–887. doi:10.1086/ 658504.
Guntarik, Olivia, and Victoria Grieve-Williams. 2020. *From Sit-Ins to Media and the Changing Nature of Protests*. London: Bloomsbury.
Hall, Bogumia. 2019. “Gendering resistance to right-wing populism: black protest and a new wave of feminist activism in Poland?” *American Behavioral Scientist* 63 (10): 1497–1515. doi:10.1177/ 0002764219831731.
Hearn, Jeff. 1998. *The Violences of Men*. London: Sage.
HVG. 2013. “Megállt a Facebook növekedése” [Facebook Stops Growing]. August 6. Accessed 18 January 2020. https://hvg.hu/tudomany/20130806_megallt_a_facebook_novekedese
Jewkes, Yvonne. 2015. *Media and Crime*. London: Sage.
Johnson, Michael P. 1995. “Patriarchal terrorism and common couple violence: two forms of violence against women.” *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 57 (2): 283–294. doi:10.2307/ 353683.
Kerner, Zsolt. 2013. “A Fideszes képviselő eltörte barátnőjének orrát?” [Did the MP of FIDESZ Break His Girlfriend’s Nose?]. *444.hu*, April 29. Accessed 18 January 2020. https://444.hu/2013/04/29/ eltorte-a-felesege-orrat-a-fideszes-kepviselo/
Koobak, Redi, and Raili Marling. 2014. “The Decolonial Challenge: Framing Post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe within Transnational Feminist Studies.” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 21 (4): 330–343. doi:10.1177/1350506814542882.
LB. 2013. “Aki nem bírja a pálinkát, ne tartson vak komondort” [Who Has No Stomach for Palinka, Should Not Keep a Komondor Dog]. *Index.hu*, April 30. Accessed 18 January 2020. https://index.hu/tech/mem/2013/04/30/aki_nem_birja_a_palinkat_ne_tartson_vak_komondort/
Lempart, Marta. 2020. *On Leading Poland’s Abortion Rights Protests*. Financial Times. December 2. Accessed 18 January 2020.
Lezsák, Sándor. 2004. “Parlamenti Felszólalás a Családon Belüli Erőszak Miatt Alkalmazható Távoltartásról” [Parliamentary Speech on the Application of Restraining Orders in Cases of Domestic Abuse]. Speech no. 243. Day 146 of the parliamentary session. May 3. Accessed 21 June 2021. https://www.parlament.hu/naplo37/146/n146_243.htm
Margit, Patrícia. 2002. “A nők reprezentációja. férfiuralmi jelentések körforgása a napilapokban.” [The Representation of Women: the circulation of patriarchal meanings in daily newspapers.] *Médiakutató* 3 (3). Accessed 18 January 2020. https://mediakutato.hu/cikk/2002_03_osz/06_a_ nok_reprezentacioja
Martin, Del. 1976. *Battered Wives*. San Francisco: Glide Publications.
Matos, Carolina. 2017. “New Brazilian Feminisms and Online Networks: cyberfeminism, protest and the female ‘Arab Spring’.” *International Sociology* 32 (3): 417–434. doi:10.1177/ 0268580917694971.
Mendes, Kaitlynn. 2015. *SlutWalk Feminism, Activism and Media*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
Milner, Ryan M. 2013. “Pop Polyvocality: Internet Memes, Public Participation, and the Occupy Wall Street Movement.” *International Journal of Communication* 7: 2357–2390.
Mina, An Xiao. 2014. “Batman, Pandaman and the Blind Man: A Case Study in Social Change Memes and Internet Censorship in China.” *Journal of Visual Culture* 13 (3): 359–375. doi:10.1177/ 1470412914546576.
Morozov, Evgeny. 2011. *The Net Delusion. The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*. New York: Public Affairs.

MTI (Magyar Távirati Iroda/Hungarian News Agency). 2012. “Már Az Idén Önálló Kategória Lesz a Családon Belüli Erőszak” [Domestic Violence Becomes a Separate Criminal Entry This Year]. *Index.hu*, September 15. https://index.hu/belfold/2012/09/15/mar_az_iden_onallo_kategoria_lesz_a_csaladon_beluli_eroszak/
Munro, Ealasaid. 2013. “Feminism: A Fourth Wave?” *Political Insight* 4 (2): 22–25. doi:10.1111/2041-9066.12021.
Nagy, József. 2015. *A vak komondor országa [A Country of Blind Komondors]*. Budapest: Central Könyvek.
Nielsen, Rasmus Kleis. 2013. “Mundane Internet Tools, the Risk of Exclusion, and Reflexive Movements—Occupy Wall Street and Political Uses of Digital Networked Technologies.” *The Sociological Quarterly* 54 (2): 173–177. doi:10.1111/tsq.12015.
O’Meara, Jennifer. 2018. “Meme Girls versus Trump: Digitally Recycled Screen Dialogue as Political Discourse.” *The Velvet Light Trap* 82 (1): 28–42. doi:10.7560/VLT8204.
Panda a Parkban. 2013. “Mémáradat: röhög az internet a komondoros képviselőn” [Flow of Memes: Komondor MP Mocked on the Internet]. *24.hu*, April 30. Accessed 18 January 2020. https://24.hu/belfold/2013/04/30/komondormemek-rohog-az-internet-a-fideszes-balogh-jozsefen/
Pető, Andrea. 1998. *Nőhistóriák. A politizáló magyar nők Történetéből 1945-1951. [Herstories: From the History of Hungarian Women Doing Politics, 1945-1951]*. Seneca: Budapest.
Phipps, Alison, Jessica Ringrose, Emma Renold, and Carolyn Jackson. 2018. “Rape Culture, Lad Culture and Everyday Sexism: Researching, Conceptualizing and Politicizing New Mediations of Gender and Sexual Violence.” *Journal of Gender Studies* 27 (1): 1–8. doi:10.1080/09589236.2016.1266792.
Pineiro-Otero, Teresa, and Xabier Martínez-Rolán. 2016. “Memes in the Internet Feminist Activism.” *#ViajoSola as an Example of Transnational Mobilization.” Cuadernos.info* 39 (17–37). doi:10.7764/cdi.39.1040.
Rentschler, Carrie A., and Samantha C. Thrift. 2015. “Doing Feminism in the Network: Networked Laughter and the ‘Binders Full of Women’ Meme.” *Feminist Theory* 16 (3): 329–359. doi:10.1177/1464700115604136.
Ringrose, Jessica, and Emilie Lawrence. 2018. “Remixing Misandry, Manspreading, and Dick Pics: Networked Feminist Humour on Tumblr.” *Feminist Media Studies* 18 (4): 686–704. doi:10.1080/14680777.2018.1450351.
Ringrose, Jessica, Jessalynn Keller, and Kaitlynn Mendes. 2019. *Digital Feminist Activism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Salvatori, Lidia. 2018. “‘Lost between the Waves’ or Riding a New Tide? Drawing Connections between Italian and Polish Digitally Mediated Feminism.” *Studies in Russian, Eurasian and Central European New Media* 19: 73–91.
Shifman, Limor. 2014. *Memes in Digital Culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.Sloat, Amanda. 2005. “The Rebirth of Civil Society.” *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 12 (4): 437–452. doi:10.1177/1350506805057100.
Socialbakers. 2012. “Socialbakers Social Media Report of Facebook Pages in Hungary – February 2012.” Accessed 21 January 2021. https://www.socialbakers.com/blog/429-local-social- media-statistics-of-facebook-brands-in-Hungary-february-2012
Stark, Evan. 2007. *Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Personal Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Szapor, Judit. 2004. “Sisters or Foes: The Shifting Front Lines of the Hungarian Women’s Movements, 1896-1918.” In *Women’s Emancipation Movements in the Nineteenth Century: A European Perspective*, edited by Sylvia Paletschek and Bianka Pietrow-Ennker, 189–205. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
Theocharis, Yannis. 2015. “The Conceptualization of Digitally Networked Participation.” *Social Media*

+ *Society* 1 (2): 1–14. doi:10.1177/2056305115610140.
Theocharis, Yannis, Joost Moor, and Jan W. Deth. 2021. “Digitally Networked Participation and Lifestyle Politics as New Modes of Political Participation.” *Policy & Internet* 13 (1): 30–53. doi:10.1002/poi3.231.
Toth, Olga, and Katalin Robert. 2010. *Intimate partner violence against older women. National Report Hungary*. Accessed 21 January 2021. www.ipvow.org/images/ipvow/reports/IPVoW_Hungary_English_final.pdf European Council, Daphne III programme
Trott, Verity. 2020. “Networked Feminism: Counterpublics and the Intersectional Issues of #metoo.” *Feminist Media Studies Ahead-of-print* 1–18. doi:10.1080/14680777.2020.1718176.
Tufekci, Zeynep. 2018. *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
Wasik, Bill. 2009. *And Then There’s This: How Stories Live and Die in Viral Culture*. New York: Penguin.
Wilkin, Peter, Lina Dencik, and Éva. Bognár. 2015. “Digital Activism and Hungarian Media Reform: The Case of Milla.” *European Journal of Communication* 30 (6): 682–697. doi:10.1177/0267323115595528.
Zuckerman, Ethan. 2014. “New Media, New Civics?” *Policy and Internet* 6 (2): 151–168. doi:10.1002/1944-2866.POI360.

Figure 1.

”Komondor Balogh” internet memes