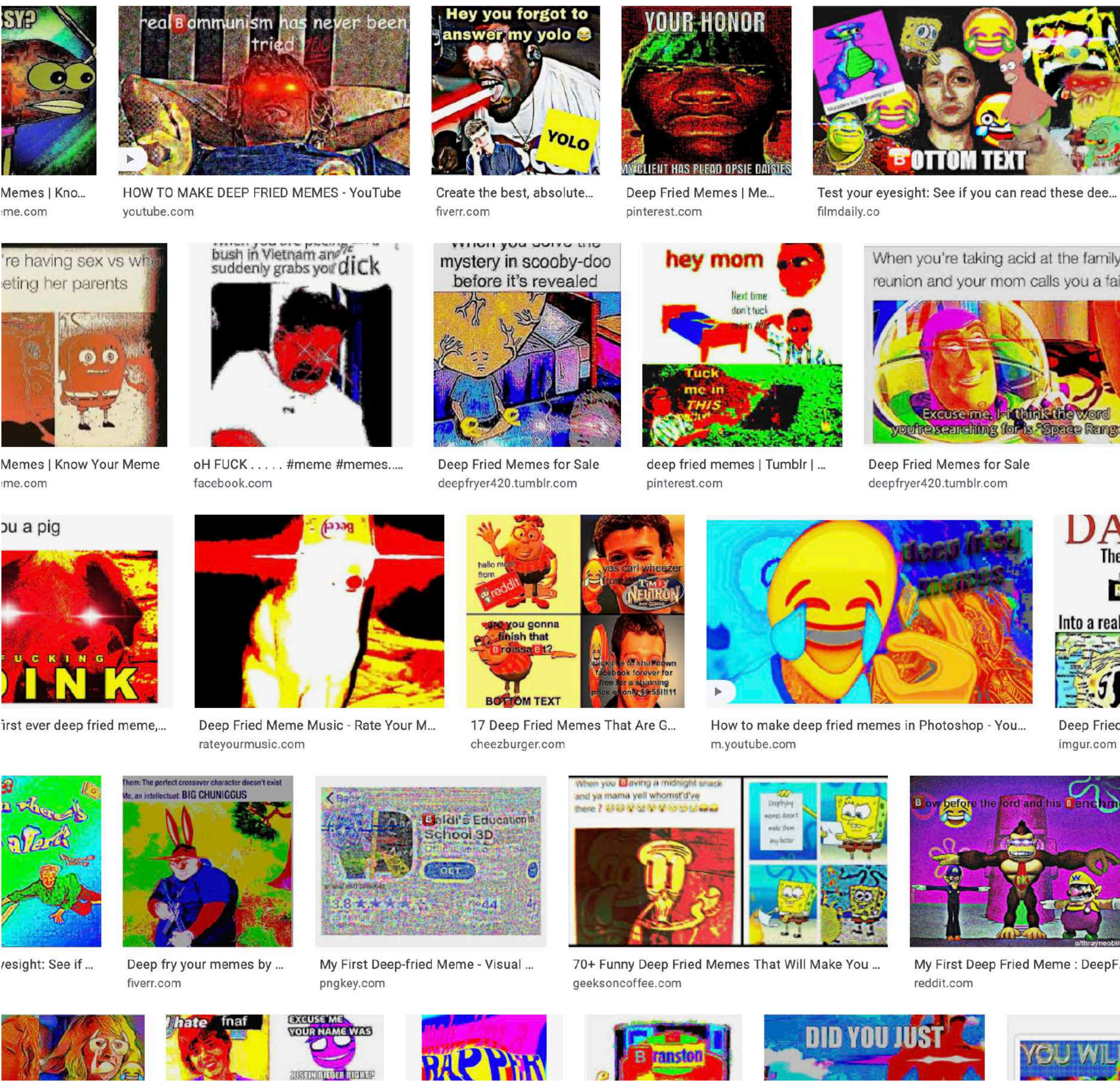




Tassy Fanni
DEEP FRIED MEMES

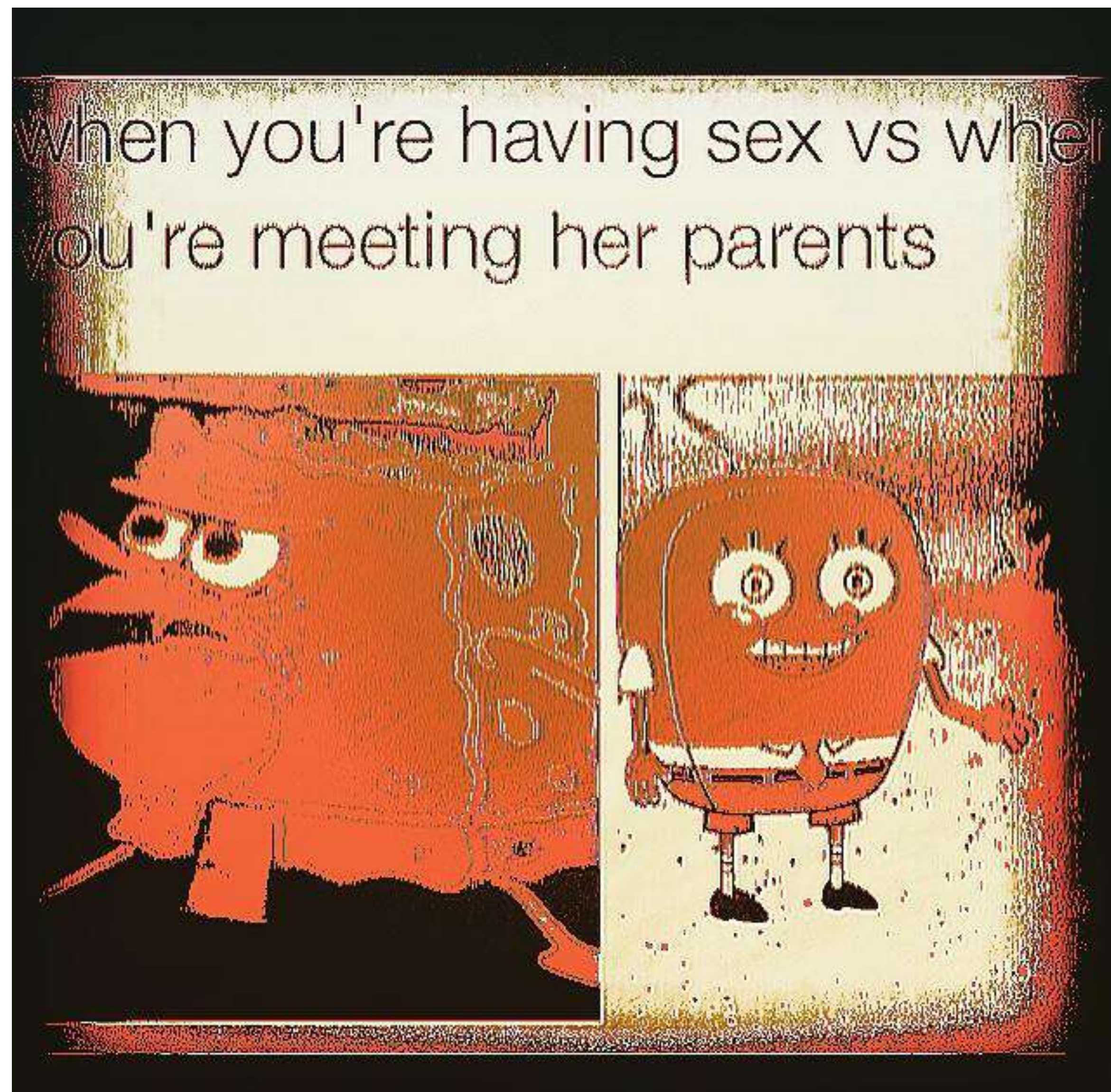
ABOUT

A deep fried képek, olyan memek, ahol az alapanyag, kép és szöveg együttesen, átmegy rengeteg filteren, olyannyira, hogy már sokszor értelmezhetetlen, felismerhetetlen végeredményt kapunk. Nagyon zajosak, szemcsések, “kimosottak”, és furcsán színezettek, túlszaturáltak. A következő oldalakon lettek népszerűek: Black Twitter, Real Nigga Hours és Spell ICUP Nigga.



ORIGIN

A deep fried memek eredete ismeretlen, a legelső köztudott, ismert kép, amit posztoltak és a deep fried nevet kapta már az 2015 márciusában lett posztolva Tumblr-re.



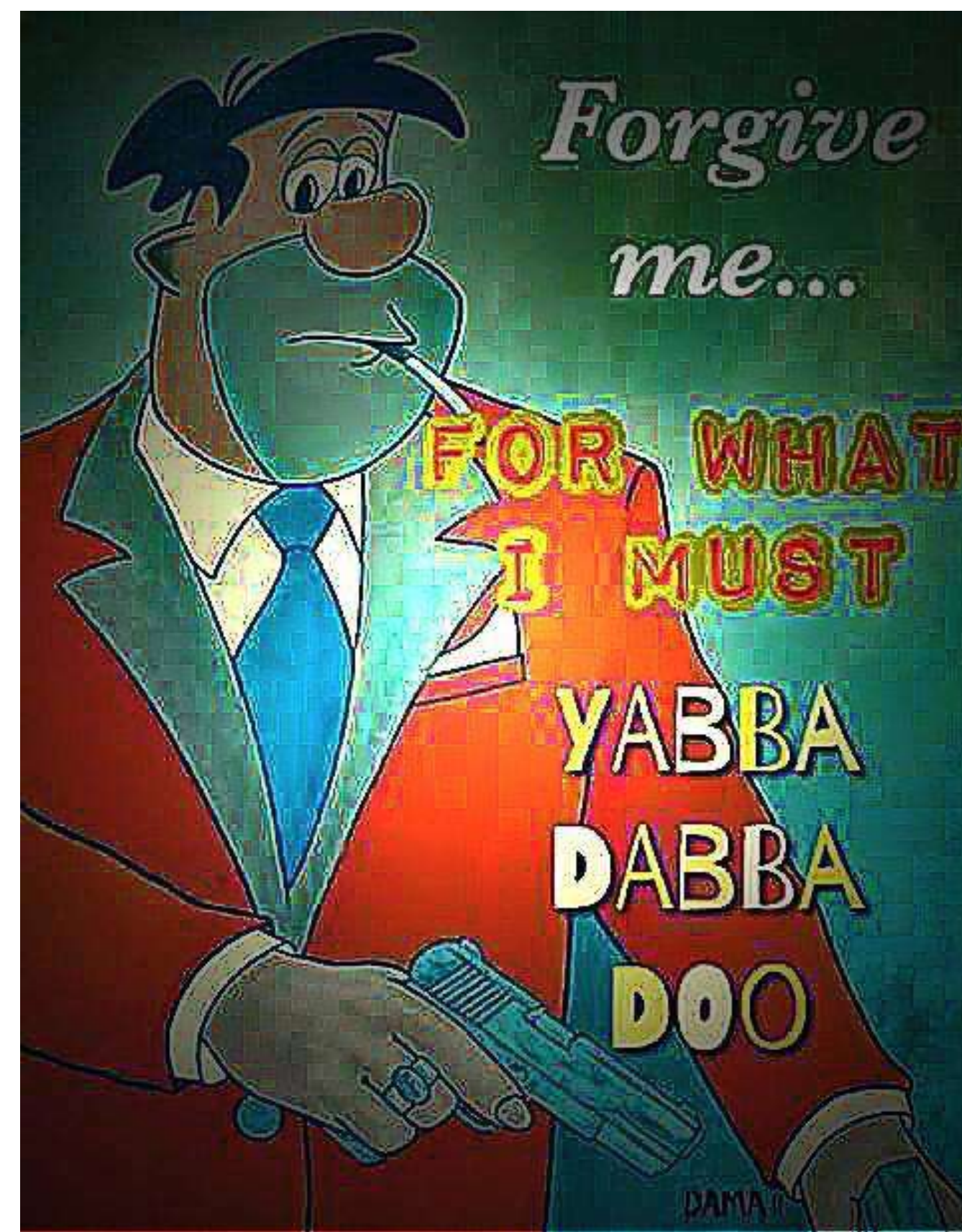
SPREAD

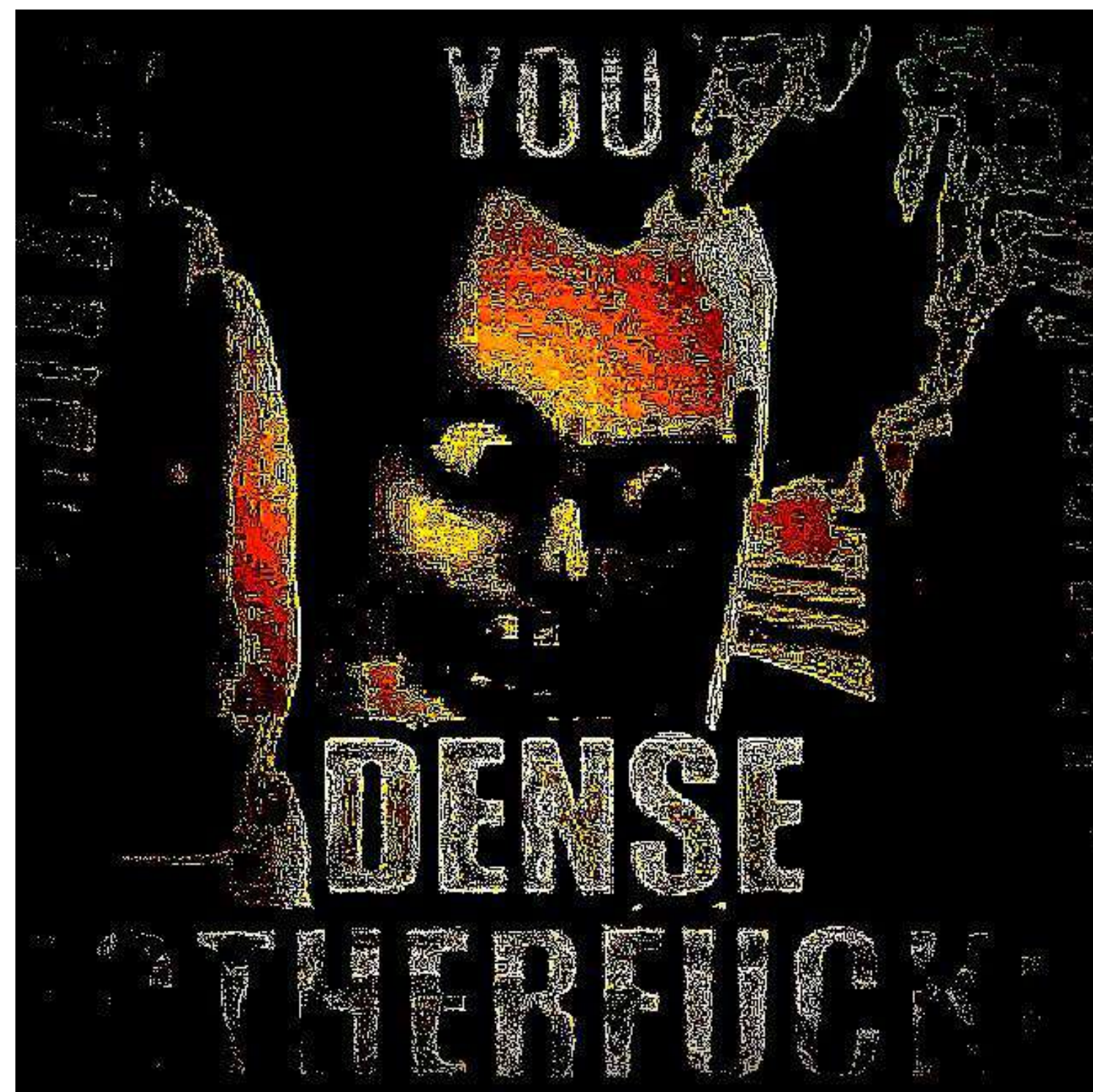
2015 augusztusában jött létre egy kifejezetten Deep Fried Memek-nek dedikált Tumblr oldal. Ezzel egyre jobban nőtt a népszerűségük, és más oldalak is repostolták a tartalmaikat. (Mint az előbb említett Real Nigga Hours vagy a Smash Like tumblr). Ezek az oldalak ekkor posztoltak először Facebookra ilyen fajta meme-t.

2015 októberében a JesusHChristOnABike oldalt hozta létre szintén a Deep Fried Memek-nek szentelt subredditet, így ezzel ott is megjelent a népes követő tábor, több mint 9000-en kezdték el követni őket, pár hét alatt. 2017-ben került be az Urban Dictionary gyűjteményébe, ezzel megfogalmazódott a deep fried meme kultúra.



WHEN YOUR DAD IS BEATING YOU FOR EATING
HIS PAIN PILLS BUT YOU CAN'T FEEL THE BELT



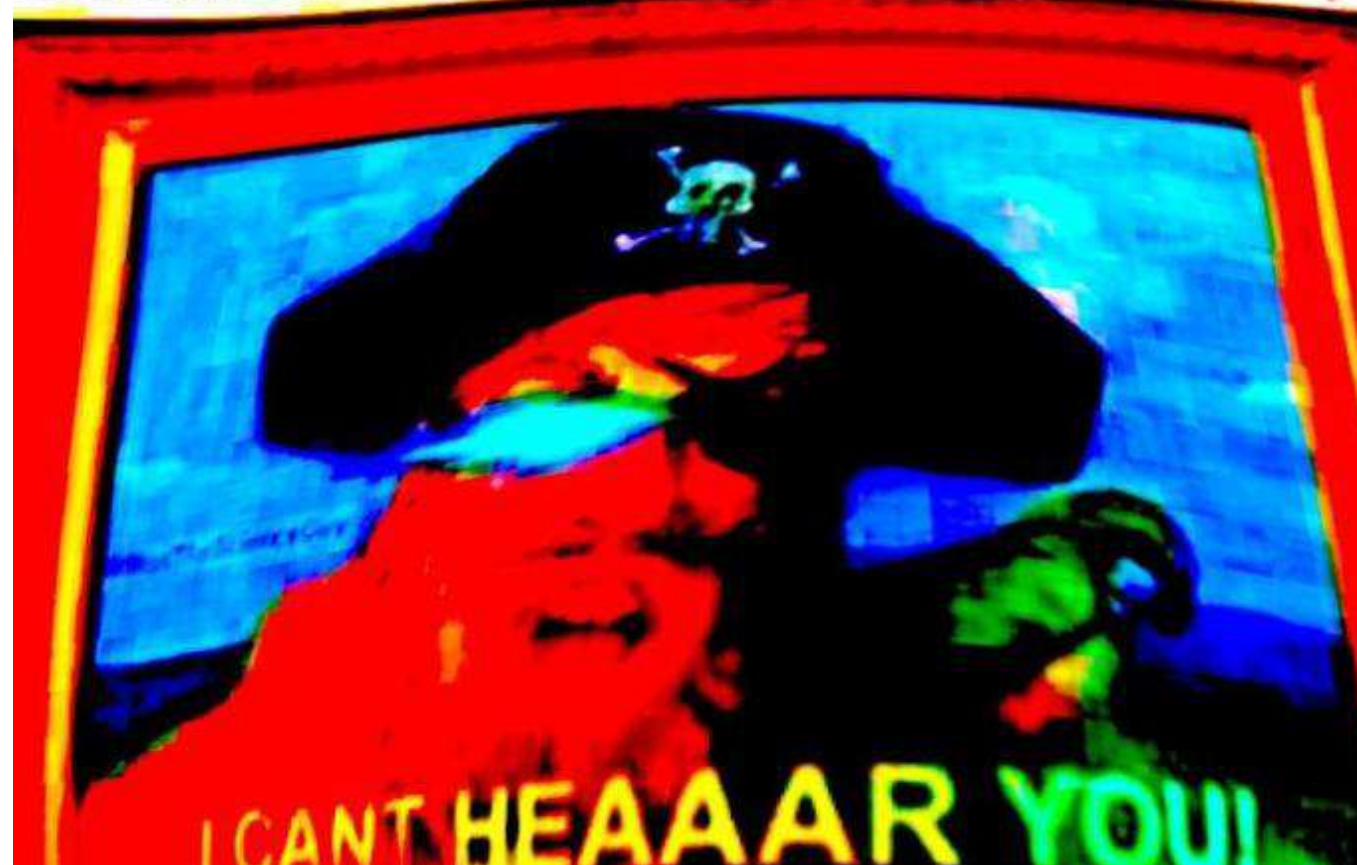








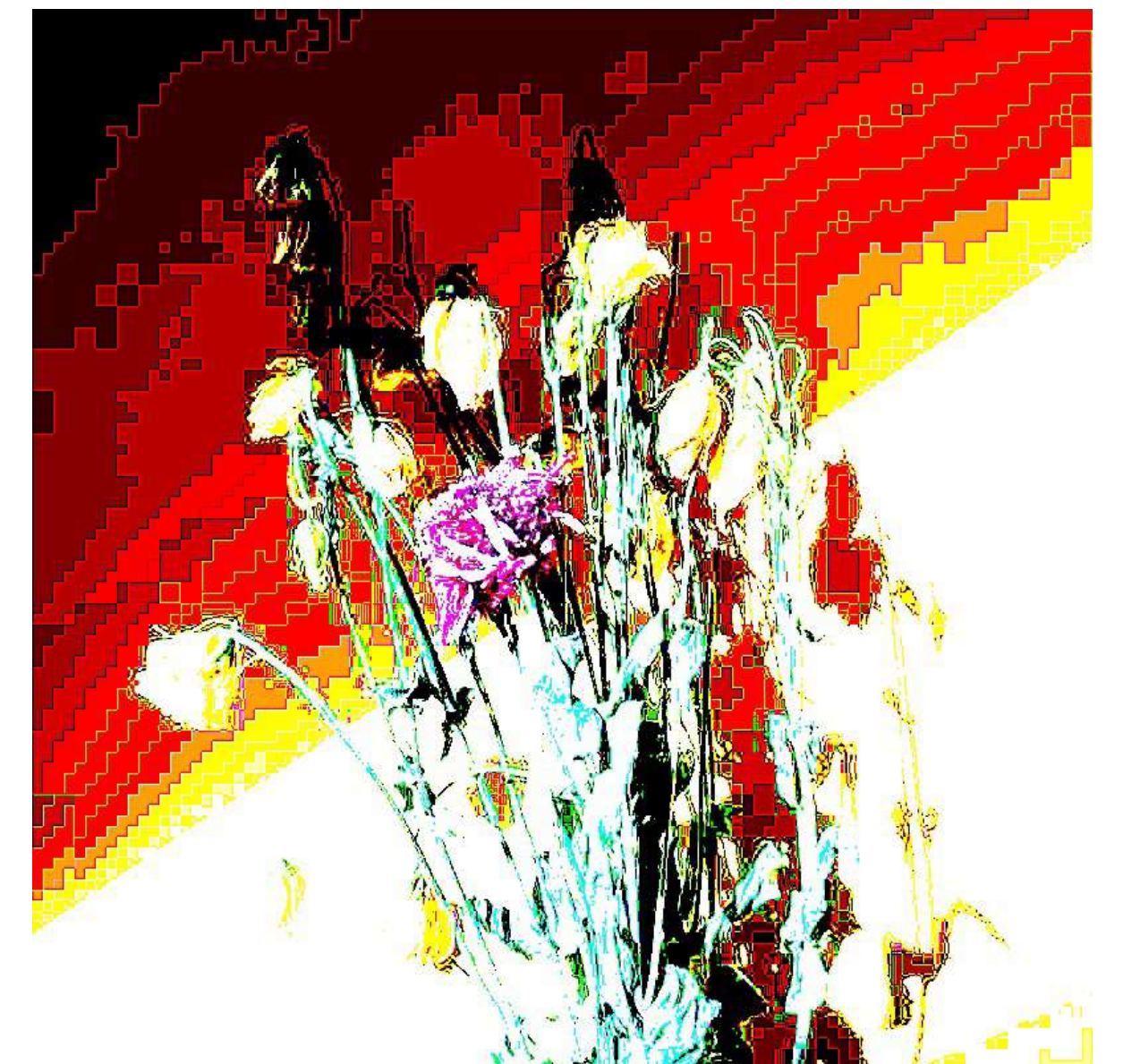
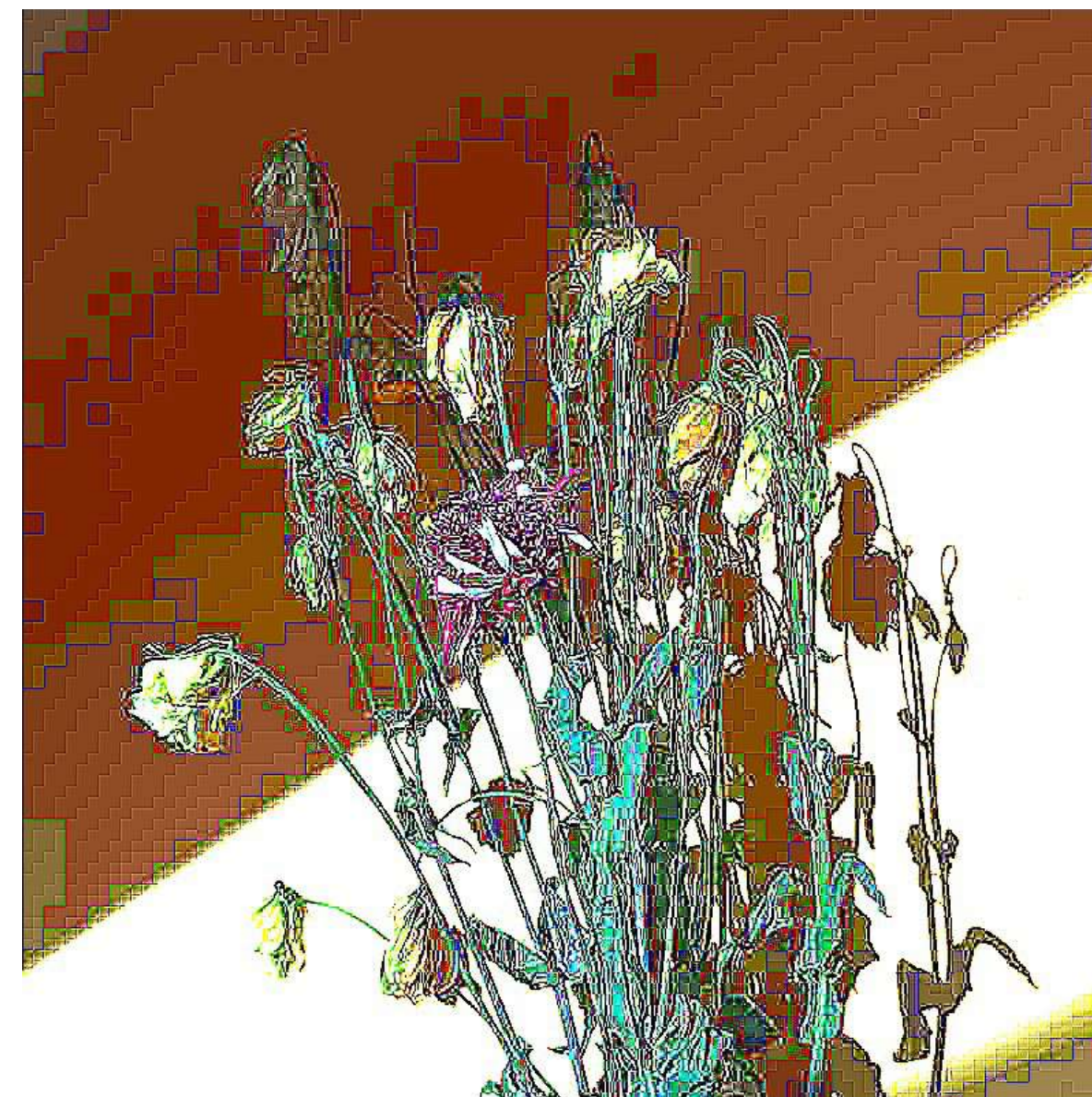
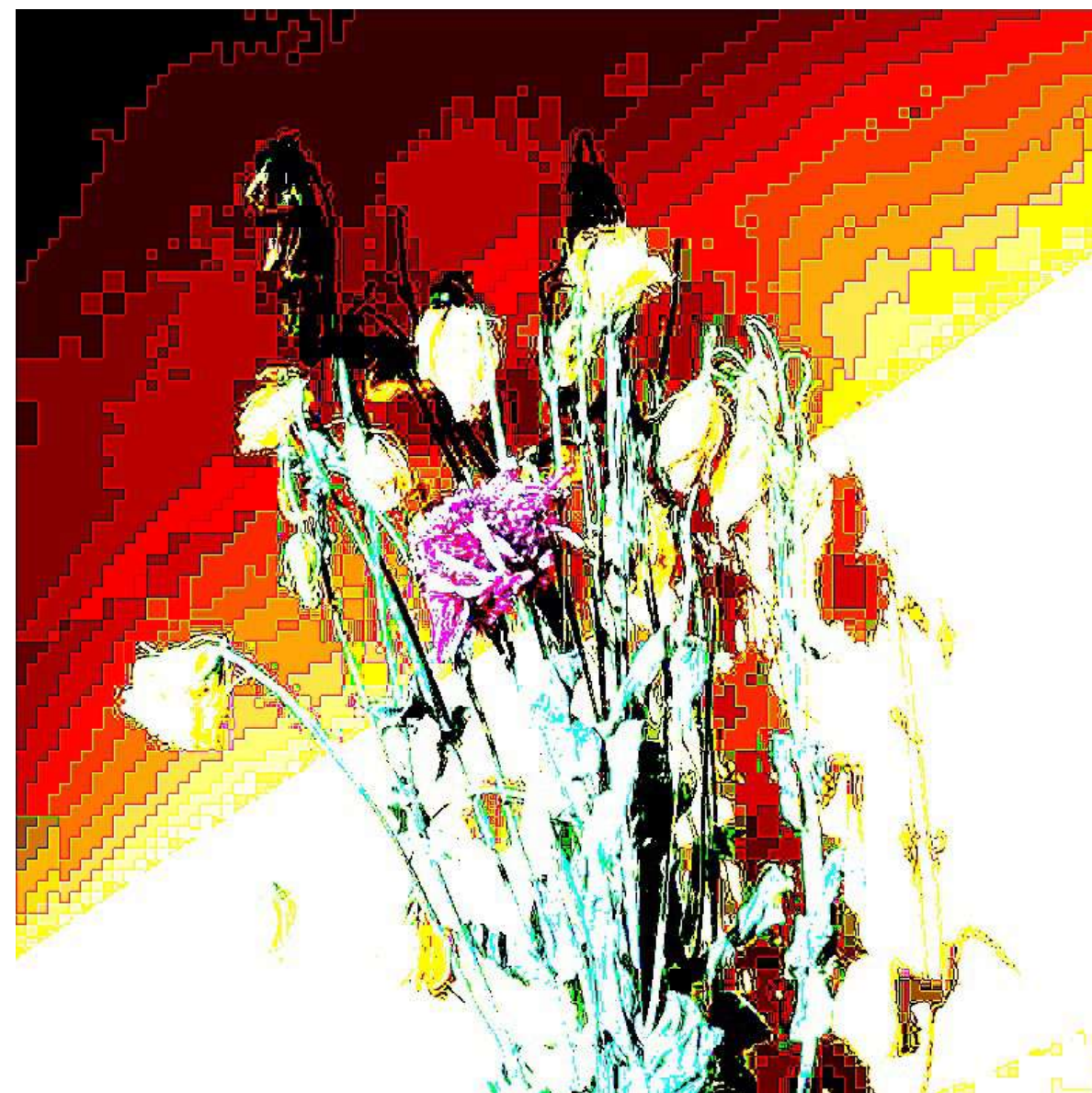
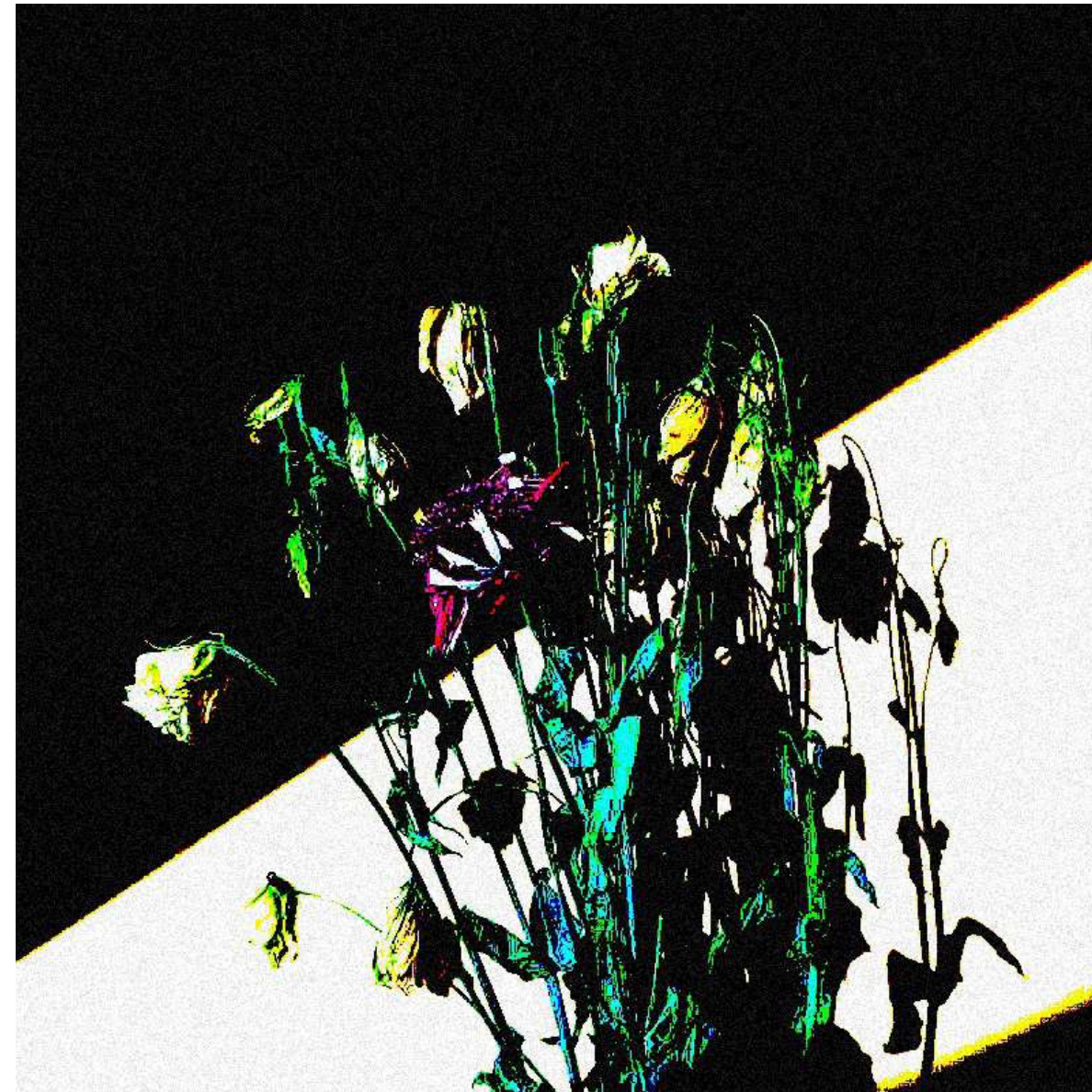
When the kids in your basement are screaming for help



<p>pointless nature. The very definition of <i>absurd</i> implies a sense of illogicality and senselessness, and this is the spirit of the fried aesthetics these community members seek to live up to and mimic. This, of course, does not imply a complete and utter lack of any meaning/absurdity, as Camus would have agreed, is far from nihilism. But internet memes are not alien to such further removals. Ironic memes mock their referents; absurd memes tear and scatter those referents, as in playful pastiche. If, however, the referential is lost or pulled outside of the referential circle far enough that it can no longer be said to have any callback whatsoever, the meme enters an entirely new playground-like void: the world of the surreal.</p>	<p>cinema: “Viewers expecting a ‘real movie’ typically respond to its mediative ethos with impatience, frustration, and antagonism, whereas those who catch on to its methodology and goals may feel the kind of pleasure they would receive from an inspired joke or an ingenious play on words” (99). There is a language that the memers speak, a classifiable dialect, and when that dialect is noticeably altered in a meme post, community members’ expectations are violated.</p> <p>By exploring <i>/r/DankMemes</i>, one can see a level at which the participants of the digital landscape take meaning and make it their own, turning it on its head and hiding their own secret</p>	<p>something to be laughed at, that it is not normal and therefore laughable. This gives humor an equal function in creating social exclusion. With the Tobey Maguire meme, the original creator was chastised for the poor attempt at creating a deep fried meme. In one exchange, a user, Chiquita_Bananza, shows disdain with a, “No,” to which the creator of the meme, DabUti, explains that it’s “ironically bad.” Chiquita_Bananza’s advice, however, gives us insight into what the community finds acceptable: “Make it unreadable put a [B] emoji in poppy do [laser] eyes [in] the Guys face don’t use impact fonts and put some ironic memes in there like [distorted] [crying and laughing emoji]” (Fig. 18). Absurd cinema, too, operates upon this “oscillation between breakthrough and breakdown,” an apt description of absurdist memes such as those found on the Deep Fried Memes subreddit (Sterrirt 93). The outsiders that, uninvited, choose to engage with the absurd memes of these communities often find themselves confounded for these reasons—that they don’t “get it.” But it’s precisely this which allows the in-group members to reinforce their own community borders. Like the ironic dank memes of Chapter One, part of what allows an anonymous internet user to call himself a member of the group is to perform an awareness of the nonsensicality, of the absurdity that he is interacting with or partaking in. Sterrirt notes similar feelings of frustration from the viewers of avant-garde cinema: “Viewers expecting a ‘real movie’ typically respond to its mediative ethos with</p>	<p>helped individuals share experiences, create group solidarity, and form a unique group identity (365). This was in “egalitarian, disorganized” structures, as opposed to stratified, hierarchical social structures of the hospital, wherein jokes help build community identity. This seems closest to the structure of the digital landscape, a place of anonymity and ambivalence, unrestricted for better or worse.</p> <p>Yet humor, as much as it can socially connect and bond a community of people, can also act as a social-corrective. By laughing at something we are reinforcing the idea that it is</p>	<p>The absurdity the community practices is all in service of the overarching goal of</p>	<p>question isn’t the main purpose of this joke. No such Facebook account exists (at least not anymore), and this post is nowhere to be found. What we’re left with is the face of oddity, confusion, and ambiguity is absurdity. Implying that an obscure inanimate object from a game system over a decade old would be posting an update on a social media site is absurd. The obvious fallacy of the question in the post itself is absurd. The fact that the creator chose to leave the comment at the bottom of the image, essentially breaking the fourth wall, is absurd.</p> <p>At first glance, one might lump the memes together, reading this image text as ironic:</p>
<p>image began making its rounds across the digital landscape shortly after the film was released, especially in Rage Comics (“Tobey Maguire Face”). Yet something about this particular deep fried version of the meme didn’t land right with its audience, and I feel there are a few potentialities to consider. Firstly, the meme’s aesthetic was not “fried” enough; although it is artificially pixelated and run through one or two filters, it’s possible there is a level of ugly missing—perhaps the creator should have distorted the middle, as in Figure 13’s absurd DabUtiShock controller meme, or maybe cut out a section in the middle in order to blatantly blotch the expression. If not that, secondly, the meme might be too straight forward in its humor, lacking in the subtle, unsettling tones found in the more popular deep fried memes. Here, the creator chose a caption that actually seems appropriate for the expression it’s paired with, and such sensible logic is not welcome on this subreddit. This leads me to the third, and I think most likely possibility: the meme is simply not absurd enough for its audience. As noted already, the expression and caption do have a logical link; there is the placement of “bottom text” where normally bottom text would go, which, again, makes too much sense. There is a lack of nonsense, a lack of absurdity here. And that lack elicited rejection from the <i>/r/DeepFriedMemes</i> community.</p>	<p>pick up a verbal language. Distinctive qualities of this dialect have probably already been noted by the reader: the “burnt” or “cooked” aesthetic, glowing effects, and a humor (if any is detectable) that relies heavily on a punchline-less, dry, dark irony. Although the recurrence of these themes is enough to classify them, it can also be noted through observing failed attempts</p>	<p>unclear. In the Michelin Man meme (Fig. 12), the foregrounded figure can’t possibly be the real tire company mascot (strike-through icon), he doesn’t seem himself to be a figure that points to another inside joke or referent (strike-through index), and it’s impossible to guess what abstract concept he might be representative of, if anything at all (strike-through symbol). Semiotics is predicated on the idea that signs, relational units of communication, carry bits and pieces of meaning; the understanding that communication is made up of correlative elements is likened to coins by Barthes, “each one of which,” he says, “is at the same time the equivalent of a given quantity of things and a term of a larger function, in which are found, in a differential order, other correlative values” (<i>Elements of Semiology</i> 14). This currency is what makes up language; these coins, of course, only have value in relation to other coins, as suggested by Barthes above. The different types of coinage are dialects; as a penny will not work in a vending machine that only takes quarters, so too do the dialects of communities have their exhaustible limits. The meaning-making found in <i>/r/DankMemes</i> is not the same meaning-making that occurs in the mainstream meme market, and it is not the same meaning-making that occurs in <i>/r/DeepFriedMemes</i>, which has its own currency.</p> <p>This “deep fried dialect” can be picked up with a little study in the same way that one can pick up a verbal language. Distinctive qualities of this dialect have probably already been noted</p>	<p>else it could be nothing of importance whatsoever (Kott and Czerwinski 21). In absurdist plays, we see an ambiguity about, or even an ambivalence towards, the structures of icon, index, and symbol; within these performances, there could be any mixture of the three, and it’s often unclear which is which.</p> <p>The same confusion occurs within an absurd meme. Whether the representations pictured actually represent real world items is vague at best. In ironic memes, figures and situations are two-faced icons: the FBI in Figure 13 represents the FBI, placed here so that we can give them</p>	<p>at center stage could very well be an icon, that is, a physical representation of the idea of a chair—it’s just a chair, meant to be sat in. Meanwhile, the printed image of a tree at the back of the stage, meant for background, could be an index, or a mimetic representation of a tree—that is, it’s not a real tree, but represents one. Finally, a portrait of a storm hanging above a fireplace could be more than just a portrait—it can be a symbol that signifies anything from the tense interactions of the plot to the tempestuous relationships portrayed in the acting. Likewise, the gesturing of the actors, too, can be signs; in minimalist theatre, an actress may mimic the pouring of tea when no liquid is present, might even mimic the action of holding a tea cup with nothing in her hands at all (Kott and Czerwinski 19). Yet the audience is ready to interpret these actions, to immerse themselves into the story so far as to willingly take part in the pantomime. The interpretation of these signs seems to an audience a normal part of theatre-going. The theatre of the absurd, then, plays with the standard interaction of the audience, instead plays with the very notion of theatrical signs altogether. For the absurdist playwright, such as Beckett, Ionesco, and Genet, the chair at center stage could represent humanity’s empty existence, our longing for purpose, or even nothing at all; the “tree” at the back may be nothing more than a twig stuck in a pot of dry cement; the portrait of a storm could be a symbol of relationships present on stage, or else it could be nothing of importance whatsoever (Kott and Czerwinski 21). In absurdist plays,</p>	<p>Figure 12: Left, an ironic meme featuring absurd elements; right, an absurd meme; both taken from <i>/r/DeepFriedMemes</i></p>
<p>Roland Barthes studied such mechanisms in his image-text collection of essays <i>Image, Music, Text</i>. In this sense, and more generally in a semiotic sense altogether, there are two messages being sent. When he studied the rhetoric of the image, he chose to study an advertisement for pasta; he chose an advertisement because he could reasonably assume the creators of the image chose their signifiers with a specific intention towards the message signified (33). For example, the creators of the message would have wanted to signal the pasta’s authenticity “Italianicity” to their audience—thus, the brand’s name, Pampini, traditionally Italian flavors, such as the parmesan and tomato, as well as the Italian flag’s colors of red and green, are all pictured (33–34). Memes are no different, being images that are made with specific intentions set into them by their creators. In the case of <i>/r/DankMemes</i>, that purpose was mockery, subversion, and community engagement. For <i>/r/DeepFriedMemes</i>, community engagement means something that the memers seek, yet what is being subverted and mocked, besides the very act of irony itself, remains a mystery.</p> <p>Kott and Czerwinski bring semiotics to the absurd in their analysis of the theatre of the 1950s and 60s, the height of Eslin’s Theatre of the Absurd. Theatrical productions as a whole, they say, are a collection of signs, some literal, some mimetic, and some symbolic, each which correspond to the similar semiotic terms of icon, index, and symbol (18–19). For example, a chair</p>	<p>Act III, or Semiotics Enters the Picture</p> <p>Ironic memes intentionally twist a joke to make fun of the original message, this is easy enough to understand; absurd memes, I argue, retain some level of irony, but twist it so as to pull the new creation far enough outside its circle of reference that the nonsensicality separates it</p>	<p>pick up a verbal language. Distinctive qualities of this dialect have probably already been noted by the reader: the “burnt” or “cooked” aesthetic, glowing effects, and a humor (if any is detectable) that relies heavily on a punchline-less, dry, dark irony. Although the recurrence of these themes is enough to classify them, it can also be noted through observing failed attempts</p>	<p>be forming their identity “<i>via negative</i>”—that is, the individual discovers who she is by discovering who she’s not (Phillips & Milner 65). In the digital landscape, the creators of these avant garde memes are staking out a territory for themselves by creating <i>via negative</i>—that is, the absurd meme becomes an icon of the memers’ community by being unlike the memes of the normies. Or, think back to Chapter One and the community of <i>/r/DankMemes</i>: we can with some accuracy assume the community members here are college-age white American men of a solidly middle class background by the fact that they mock that which they are not: whether the target belongs to outsider age groups (the elderly or young), racial or ethnic groups (basically, anything non-white), nationalities (with special appeal to stereotypes, like the beэт-wearing, cigarette-smoking Frenchman), genders (that which is not the cis-gendered, masculine-performing male), or sexualities (the strictly heterosexual excluded). The dank memers’ ability to form his identity within this community relies on his ability to recognize that which is not part of the Dank Meme cultural identity. But <i>absurd</i> memers are doing more than just establishing the boundaries of identity—rather, they are engaging in identity play. When we reach the absurd meme, we are taken out of the ironic play and identity formation we see in ironic memes; instead, memers are given a space in which they, essentially, mock no one in particular but rather an entire <i>structure</i>. The absurdist plays with expectations, plays with the boundaries of mockery, and thereby plays with the structure of meaning upon which “normie” communities form, against which ironic memes rebel.</p> <p>Act III, or Semiotics Enters the Picture</p> <p>Ironic memes intentionally twist a joke to make fun of the original message, this is easy enough to understand; absurd memes, I argue, retain some level of irony, but twist it so as to pull the new creation far enough outside its circle of reference that the nonsensicality separates it</p>	<p>In October, 2015 (about a year after the creation of <i>/r/DankMemes</i>), Reddit user JesusHChrisOnAikike started <i>/r/DeepFriedMemes</i>, “[for] memes that have been filtered and compressed so much that they’re barely legible” (<i>/r/DeepFriedMemes</i>). Such memes existed before the subreddit was created to catalogue them—the first instance to be found is from Tumblr user poparachocamp3 (Fig. 14)—but the creation of a subreddit marks the official public recognition of a new, documentable category. Before the creation of its own unique subreddit, deep fried memes were almost exclusively featured on <i>/r/DankMemes</i>. That connection remains today. According to Reddit Metrics, <i>/r/DeepFriedMemes</i> stayed static for</p>	<p>Figure 13: Left, an ironic meme featuring absurd elements; right, an absurd meme; both taken from <i>/r/DeepFriedMemes</i></p>
<p>by dank memers (or the presence of sincerity is mocked and ridiculed), the performance of the absurd is what the community members of <i>/r/DeepFriedMemes</i> seem to be relying on.</p> <p>The border between intentionally ironic, intentionally absurd, and ironically absurd can be a difficult one to navigate. It’s inaccurate to say that the task is simply difficult—in actuality, it’s impossible. That is to say, it is impossible to achieve 100% confirmation of whatever conclusion the analysis of a text online draws. Whitney Phillips and Ryan Milner (previously cited for their individual work on memes) team up in order to point to, and in fact make an entire book about, this problem. In <i>The Ambivalent Internet: Mischief, Oddity, and Antagonism Online</i>, they problematize ambivalence (which they describe as “fragnet tension... between opposites” [10]), ambiguity, and anonymity, the characteristics of the internet that make the internet so uniquely internet-y. Milner ties this ambiguity to what is known as “Poe’s Law,” which is, simply put, the inability to know whether a member of the digital landscape is being sincere or ironic. But it’s exactly this ambivalence that drives the stretch into absurdity, that encourages the creators of the deep fried meme community to alter their creations such that they may have a distinct flavor, a unique community identity (Phillips & Milner 119). <i>/r/DeepFriedMemes</i> may</p>	<p>while still maintaining a base layer of rationality. (The next chapter will deal with what happens when that base layer is removed.) To explain the breakdown of meaning in these images, I’ll return to the denotative/connotative system set up in Chapter One. The images of Chapter One had sometimes multiple layers of references to peel through, but regardless each image had the message of sincerity foregrounded (the denotative) and a message of sarcasm backgrounded (the connotative.) Yet this not only applies to ironic texts, but can also apply to images in general.</p>	<p>deep fried memes; the line-toeing of irony punctures nearly every meme of this site, and seems to be a requirement of any meme that seeks community affirmation in the form of upvotes.</p> <p>The most popular memes on <i>/r/DeepFriedMemes</i> show a tendency to be ambiguous about their ironic undertone, suggesting that it is indeed this ambiguity the deep fried meme genre asks for of its members. One such meme seems to capture the reaction of a memers who has received a “like” (similar to an upvote) on his creation, using a distorted rendering of popular meme figure Spongebob Squarepants, main protagonist of an eponymous animated TV show which was incredibly popular in the aughts (Fig. 16). There is certainly a hint of irony in this image: to only get one like on a meme is nothing to celebrate, and so the creation of a reaction image is out of place. That irony aside, how is one supposed to read the bizarre expression of this cartoon character? His eyes are turned downward, his mouth hangs open, and his arms are pulled to the right at an awkward angle; if we look at the unaltered image, a still from the episode “Pizza Delivery,” we see that the deep fried version has not only been dramatically altered in color but that a middle section of Spongebob’s face has been removed in order to distort his expression. Unaltered, this still was used in a meme popular around 2014, called “Spoons Ratting” for the sound effect that accompanies the scene within the episode and used primarily for trolling</p>	<p>ated for their individual work on memes) team up in order to point to, and in fact make an entire book about, this problem. In <i>The Ambivalent Internet: Mischief, Oddity, and Antagonism Online</i>, they problematize ambivalence (which they describe as “fragnet tension... between opposites” [10]), ambiguity, and anonymity, the characteristics of the internet that make the internet so uniquely internet-y. Milner ties this ambiguity to what is known as “Poe’s Law,” which is, simply put, the inability to know whether a member of the digital landscape is being sincere or ironic. But it’s exactly this ambivalence that drives the stretch into absurdity, that encourages the creators of the deep fried meme community to alter their creations such that they may have a distinct flavor, a unique community identity (Phillips & Milner 119). <i>/r/DeepFriedMemes</i> may</p>	<p>nearly two years after its creation, drawing no new users until just after October, 2016. In November, 2016, it began to experience a small growth in subscribers, potentially from its connection to <i>/r/DankMemes</i>, which had itself begun to gather a crowd following the 2016 election. These numbers steadily grew in number until a dramatic spike in March, 2017 (“<i>/r/DeepFriedMemes</i> metrics”). This spike is most likely due to the “Understandable, Have a Nice Day” meme, which first appeared on Twitter and was itself a response to the then-recent “Whoppy Machine Broke” meme (Fig. 14). The former meme was not directly connected to the Deep Fried Memes subreddit, yet by this time the aesthetic was already recognized and named—in late 2016, Urban Dictionary had created an entry explaining that a deep fried meme was any meme that, through filtering and distortion, had something of a “cooked” quality, resembling deep fried foods (“deep fried meme”); thus, a popular meme such as “Understandable, Have a Nice Day” that exhibited such qualities would eventually lead a crowd to the subreddit where similar memes would be housed. Since then, the subreddit has remained something of an</p>	<p>Figure 14: Left, the original “deep fried” meme; right, the deep fried meme that brought the genre to the popular; center, the “Whoppy Machine Broke” meme; all taken from Know Your Meme.</p>
<p>Act II, or How Would You Like Your Memes Cooked?</p> <p>The first meme of Figure 13 was found on <i>/r/DankMemes</i>. In it, we have a heavily filtered, distorted, grainy screenshot of a text message exchange. The Sender (the white speech bubbles) has asked the Receiver (the blue speech bubbles, who ostensibly owns the phone to which this screenshot belongs) what he/she is planning on doing later that night; the Receiver replies, “Working again.” The message is not delivered to the Sender, however, which leads him/her to interpret the following conversational return, “You?” as a sexual suggestion; the Sender responds to this suggestion positively, with a winking emoticon. So far, it’s just a case of humorous misunderstanding. Of course, at the same time as this message has been received, we see at the top of the screenshot another message, purportedly from “FBI,” saying, “You’re welcome bro, don’t screw this up.” The meme’s joke lies in the idea that the Federal Bureau of Investigation, who has been spying on the Receiver’s phone activity, has decided to help out by influencing the messages being sent. Playing with the idea of being surveilled through our electronic devices, the irony comes through in the same spirit as the Illuminati references seen in Chapter One; additionally, irony is signaled through the image’s ugly aesthetic. As we’ve already discussed, the intentionally ugly attributes memers give their creations are directly linked to the ironic message the memes are supposed to deliver. Now look at the second meme in</p>	<p>to the ironic message the memers are supposed to deliver. Now look at the second meme in Figure 13. This is a screenshot of a Facebook message, which seems to have the same visual aesthetic of Figure 11: grainy, run through multiple filters, and distorted so that it seems to have</p>	<p>and indeed the point and purpose of this subreddit may at its core remain ironic (“Deep Fried Memes”). However, the key to the aesthetic and the choices the Deep Fried memers make crosses over the line of irony, where the intention is no longer to subtly subvert cultural norms but rather an intention of <i>absurdity</i> for the sake of absurdity. This isn’t just one or two cases of</p>	<p>underground community, with its just-over 207,500 subscribers (as of February 2018); for a comparison, recall <i>/r/DankMeme</i>’s 888,500, and for an even bigger contrast, compare to Reddit’s #1 subreddit, <i>/r/announcements</i>, with more than ten times as many as Deep Fried Memes at 21,350,000.</p> <p>When one enters the homepage of <i>/r/DeepFriedMemes</i>, one is confronted by a page that reflects the memes of its collection: the banner at the top revolves, showing a moving sampling of grungy, deformed images; the text of the forum’s name mimics the texture and feel of a burnt Twinkie; should one choose to click a hidden button at the right of the page, one’s mouse cursor transforms into a yellow-skinned “OK” hand emoji, which, when hovered over the memes of the page, begins to glow in the space between the curved forefinger and thumb.* The page, and many of these memes once enlarged, seems highly reminiscent of the Dank Meme page (seen in Chapter One) in that it is a hyperbolic representation of the aesthetic it mocks. In fact, one can actually think of Deep Fried Memes itself as a spin-off of Dank Memes, considering so much of their material is shared; the difference is simply the unique kind of filtered, distorted aesthetic required in labeling any image “deep fried.” The meme analysis site Know Your Meme actually goes one step further and categorizes Deep Fried Memes as a part of a series on Ironic Memes, and indeed the point and purpose of this subreddit may at its core remain ironic (“Deep Fried</p>	<p>Figure 14: Left, the original “deep fried” meme; right, the deep fried meme that brought the genre to the popular; center, the “Whoppy Machine Broke” meme; all taken from Know Your Meme.</p>	<p>Figure 14: Left, the original “deep fried” meme; right, the deep fried meme that brought the genre to the popular; center, the “Whoppy Machine Broke” meme; all taken from Know Your Meme.</p>

EXPERIMENTS

Koncepcióm, hogy saját képek felhasználásával, kísérletezzek a deep fried technikával, és szerkesztéssel. A brightness, sharpness, noise, contrast, saturation értékek mozgatásával különböző minőségű torzításokat kapunk.



PROJEKT

A projektem egy brand létrehozása volt, ami a Deeply Fried nevet kapta. Az előzőekben már említett meme stílus számomra összeköttetésben áll az ilyen retro, hibás, trash korszakkal és megjelenésekkel, így a zenével is. Így különböző felhasználási módjait mutatom, színkombinációkkal, logoval, feliratokkal. Célom az volt, hogy a deep fried memeket hogyan is emelhetjük esztétikus, használható, szép szintre és kerülhet a “klasszikus” grafikai elemek közé.



