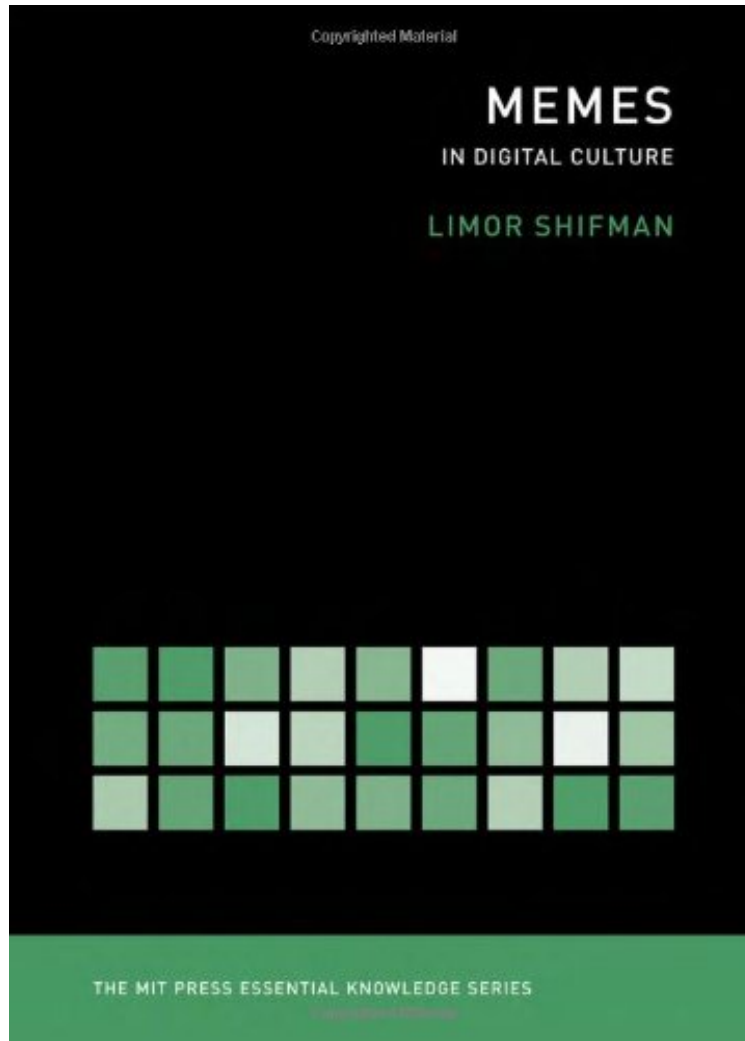


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Mememes in Digital Culture (The MIT Press Essential Knowledge series)

Limor Shifman

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Limor Shifman : Mememes in Digital Culture (The MIT Press Essential Knowledge series) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mememes in Digital Culture (The MIT Press Essential Knowledge series):

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. A brief primer on internet mememesBy Tim TylerThis is an academic book on internet mememes. Shifman argues that scientists should pay more attention to the enormous outpouring of mememes online - in the wake of the 2011 explosion of internet mememes. The author covers internet meme classification, why some internet mememes succeed and others fail, the political impact of internet mememes, and many other topics. Her

angle on the topic is mostly from cultural studies - readers interested in the evolutionary biology of culture should look elsewhere. Many internet memes are treated in some detail, with some emphasis on funny ones. Probably the most controversial part of the book is its definition of internet memes. There has always been some tension between usage of the term "internet meme" to refer to popular works, and classical memetics - which usually considers any socially transmitted piece of culture to be a meme. Richard Dawkins has referred to the internet's "hijacking" of the "meme" term. In classical memetics, "internet meme" would usually refer to a meme that is spread online. However, this book proposes that we take more seriously the idea that "Millhouse is not a meme" - by adopting a definition of "internet meme" that takes account of popularity. The author goes on to use the term "meme" as an abbreviation for her concept of "internet meme" for much of the book. Besides common usage of the "internet meme" term, there are some factors that suggest frequency is significant. For example, G.C. Williams once offered a frequency-dependent definition of a *gene* - saying: "In this book I use the term gene to mean 'that which segregates and recombines with appreciable frequency'". However, I can't say I'm convinced by Shifman's proposed terminology. I think that "internet meme" should refer to a meme that is transmitted over the internet. If people want to use the term as an abbreviation for "popular internet meme", then that's fine - but treating "internet meme" as a technical term that conflicts with most conventional definitions of the term "meme" seems to be an approach that fails to take proper account of other users of the term to me. Shifman takes a few other jabs at memetics, for instance claiming that by seeking cultural phenotypes and genotypes pushes the analogy with genetics too far. However, she offers no more specific criticism of *why* this is a mistake. I think that cultural phenotypes and genotypes are fine. Indeed, distinguishing between heritable information and its products is very helpful - and if your preferred theory of cultural evolution lacks basic concepts like "phenotypes" and "genotypes" then you are probably not taking your cultural Darwinism seriously enough. Alas, this book is really rather a brief primer on the topic of internet memes. The last chapter offers an overview of future directions in internet meme research.

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Very informative
By Gerard Navarro
Very informative
1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Well-Organized Reading of Memes
(Review by Ryan Mease)
By Ryan Mease
I was surprised how (effectively) formalized the author's approach to memes became. They take a very rigorous, biological approach to classifying different features of the meme ecosystem, thinking thoughtfully about the distinction between the boundaries of 'meme' and 'viral,' etc. Anyone who is familiar with memes and would enjoy thinking more intellectually about how they function within modern society would enjoy this book. It's a short read and doesn't require any advanced knowledge of an academic discipline. - Ryan Mease

Taking "Gangnam Style" seriously: what Internet memes can tell us about digital culture. In December 2012, the exuberant video "Gangnam Style" became the first YouTube clip to be viewed more than one billion times. Thousands of its viewers responded by creating and posting their own variations of the video-- "Mitt Romney Style," "NASA Johnson Style," "Egyptian Style," and many others. "Gangnam Style" (and its attendant parodies, imitations, and derivations) is one of the most famous examples of an Internet meme: a piece of digital content that spreads quickly around the web in various iterations and becomes a shared cultural experience. In this book, Limor Shifman investigates Internet memes and what they tell us about digital culture. Shifman discusses a series of well-known Internet memes -- including "Leave Britney Alone," the pepper-spraying cop, LOLCats, Scumbag Steve, and Occupy Wall Street's "We Are the 99 Percent." She offers a novel definition of Internet memes: digital content units with common characteristics, created with awareness of each other, and circulated, imitated, and transformed via the Internet by many users. She differentiates memes from virals; analyzes what makes memes and virals successful; describes popular meme genres; discusses memes as new modes of political participation in democratic and nondemocratic regimes; and examines memes as agents of globalization. Memes, Shifman argues, encapsulate some of the most fundamental aspects of the Internet in general and of the participatory Web 2.0 culture in particular. Internet memes may be entertaining, but in this book Limor Shifman makes a compelling argument for taking them seriously.

Memories in Digital Culture is a superb overview of the study, power and potential of memes. Shifman has done an exemplary job of balancing an analytical overview of her subject with forays into fascinating conceptual debates. The book is smart yet accessible, balanced yet provocative. For those seeking to take their engagement with digital culture to the next level -- or even just to understand what all those cat photos are about -- Memes in Digital Culture is a must-read. (Hans Rollman PopMatters) Memes in Digital Culture accomplishes a great deal in a very efficient package. (Patrick Sharbaugh Asiascape)

About the Author
Limor Shifman is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Communication and Journalism at Hebrew University of Jerusalem.