

THE GIRLS THAT GET IT, GET IT

On Critical Dance Memes

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Abstract

A gap within the current artistic ecology in the Philippines is the lack of platforms that engage with critical discourses in dance. *Run Thru Magazine*, which used to publish articles on dance criticism was discontinued a few years ago. While the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) *Encyclopedia of Philippine Art* has a wide range of writings on dance in the Philippines, its essays fail to confront current discourses in dance practice and dance making.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on the arts has brought in waves of reflections and realizations towards the present and future of ‘production and consumption’ of dancing. Zoom talks, virtual webinars, and social media have become available platforms for dance artists to engage with such discourses.

An often disregarded but important component of virtual spaces are internet memes. Internet memes may take the form of images with superimposed texts, graphic interchange format (gif), videos, and soundbites. The creation of and consumption of memes requires an understanding of how meanings are layered through multiple references in images, text, and content. Often shared in anonymity, memes offer a democratized means of communication, dialogue and criticism.

This manifesto is a critical and creative exercise that outlines my rationale and intentions towards making dance memes. I find this important at this time when artists question existing power structures, reflect on the economics

Keywords

contemporary dance, dance criticism, dance memes, internet memes

About the Author

Jared Jonathan Luna (he/ they/ *siya* | *mamsir*) is a dance artist and aspiring memelord based in Manila, Philippines. They have a BA in Anthropology from the University of the Philippines Diliman and an MA in Dance Anthropology and Ethnochoreology from Choreomundus: International Master in Dance Knowledge Practice and Heritage. Their individual practice is interested in vernacular movement systems in urban spaces. In their works, Jared tries to make sense of the role that the body and its movements take in the meaning making process. In doing so, they toy around with diverse movement vocabularies from streetdance and contemporary dance. Their most recent project studies the ‘production of dancing’ in social media. Jared is a part-time lecturer in the Department of Anthropology in the University of the Philippines, Diliman, and in the Performing Arts Department of Guang Ming College. They were also a visiting faculty member at the Philippine High School for the Arts. Outside of their endeavors, Jared likes playing with action figures. They see playing with action figures as a part of their creative process.

INTRODUCTION

Today, we choose violence.

As Graham, grounded the verticality of the body

As Cunningham played with chance

As the Judson Church preached what is “dance” and what it can be

As Ailey empowered us to embrace our own skins

While the structures of the concert dance tradition continue to perpetuate long outdated ideals intricately woven in performative gestures,

We choose violence.

As Philippine dance has found its own shapes, forms, and movements

As we have found and continue to find our own paths in the dance of history

While dance remains a mask, lazily rested on eyes that do not wish to see beyond the beautiful

While dance makers shy themselves from seeing the bigger picture— the web of connections that choreograph movements by and through our bodies

While institutions convince themselves that tradition is without fault and that half-hearted steps are leaps of progress,

We will choose violence.

The internet is a beautiful place. It is also messy.

Yet in this mess, we found a medium with which we can challenge the pillars that shaped our dance.

With such bleakness of a future that beholds us, we take space using humour that they could never.

It is a code of our present to subvert the remnants of the past that have kept dance inside gates.

We will take new platforms and new media.

We will comment, and share among ourselves.

We will laugh as we have cried.

In this way, we will choose more violence

And the girls that get it, get it.

The following is a collection of critical dance memes that I created as part of my process. The memes were created using the website: <https://imgflip.com/memegenerator>. The website has a library of templates which are images or memes that circulate various platforms in the world wide web. The website layered my text input on the images, following the typical formats image-text memes. I also included captions as though I posted these memes on social media platforms using the username: @body_bourree. The captions hope to add to the intertextuality of the created memes.



@body_bouree: if it tingles, it's for you

Fig. 1. A Blue Car Swerves on the Highway. meme template. IMGFLIP, imgflip.com/memegenerator. Accessed 18 Feb. 2022.



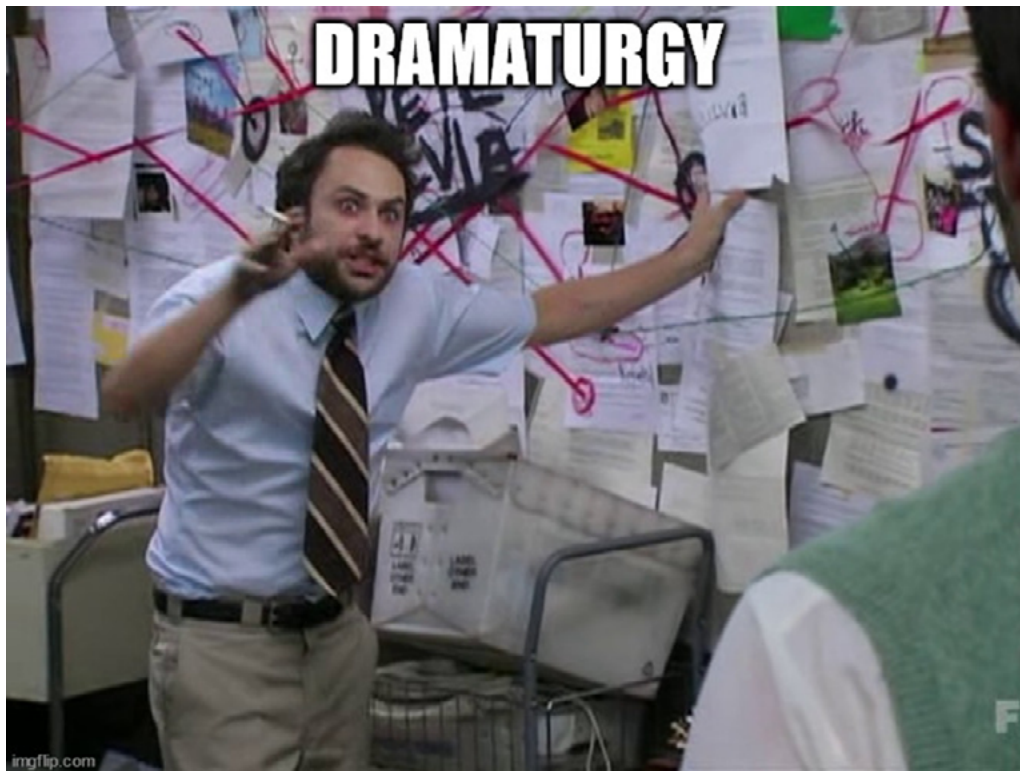
[@body_bouree](#): choreographers, dancers, audience, writers... everyone really

Fig. 2. Two panels vertically arranged, both featuring the *Sesame Street* character Elmo. The top image shows Elmo seated behind a table with fruits on one side and a white powdery substance on another. Elmo looks towards the white substance. The bottom image shows Elmo's face on the substance. meme template. IMGFLIP, imgflip.com/memegenerator. Accessed 18 Feb. 2022.



[@body_bouree](#): I have read too much tbh

Fig. 3. Two panels vertically arranged featuring bodies of water. The top image shows three individuals in a swimming pool. An adult spends time with a child as another child seems to drown. The bottom image shows a skeleton sitting on a chair at the bottom of the ocean meme template. IMGFLIP, imgflip.com/memegenerator. Accessed 20 Feb. 2022.



@body_bourree: this energy

Fig. 4. Still of Charlie Day as Charlie Kelly from the show *It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia*. In the photo, the character explains frantically while referring to a board with documents and strings.”
meme template. IMGFLIP, imgflip.com/memegenerator. Accessed 16 Feb. 2022.



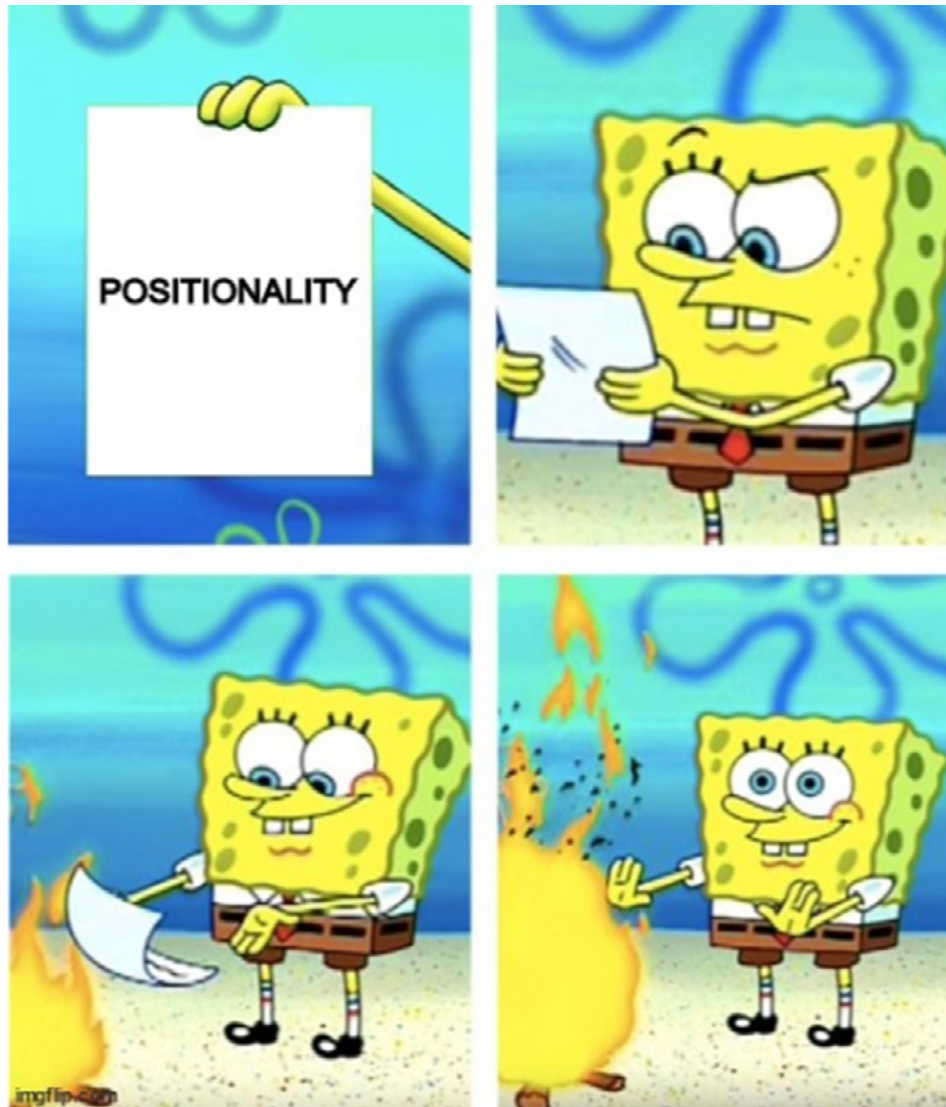
@body_bourre: haven't they found the answer yet?

Fig. 5. Three photo stills from the show *The Simpsons* vertically arranged. The top image shows students in a classroom where Millhouse says “Say the line Bart.” Everyone looks expectantly at Bart Simpson. The middle image shows Bart responding exhaustedly and exasperatedly. The bottom image shows the class celebrating Bart’s response. meme template. IMGFLIP, imgflip.com/memegenerator. Accessed 20 Feb. 2022.



[@body_bourree](#): predicament

Fig. 6. Two panels horizontally arranged. The left image is a still from the show *The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills*: Taylor Armstrong angrily pointing and being held back by Kyle Richards. The right image is a white cat in front of a salad with a responding irate look. meme template. IMGFLIP, imgflip.com/memegenerator. Accessed 19 Feb. 2022.



body_bouree: too many forget. too many.

Fig. 7. Four image panels, each image a still from the show *Spongebob Squarepants*: two images on top and two images on the bottom. The top left shows a piece of paper with text. The top right image shows the character *Spongebob* reading the paper. The bottom left photo shows *Spongebob* throwing the paper into a bonfire. The bottom right shows the paper burning with *Spongebob* happily looking on and warming his hands with the fire. meme template. IMGFLIP, imgflip.com/memegenerator. Accessed 19 Feb. 2022.

new movement
language



mixtures of coded
western theatre dance
technique and appropriated
movement systems from
indigenous/ marginalised people

imgflip.com



[@body_bourree: i have seen much](#)

Fig. 8. Four panels: two white panels with text on the left and two stills of a man's reaction on the right. The format indicates that the man is reacting to the text on the left. The top right image shows a positive reaction while the bottom right image shows the man's confusion and disappointment. meme template. IMGFLIP, imgflip.com/memegenerator. Accessed 20 Feb. 2022.



improvisation

process-based

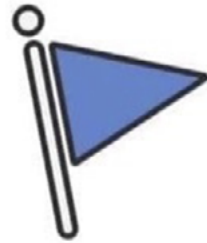
@body bourree: even i am guilty of this

Fig.9. Four panels: two white panels with text on the right and two stills of Pooh from the cartoon *Winnie the Pooh* on the left. The format indicates that Pooh is reacting to the text on the right. The top left image shows a seemingly bored Pooh wearing his red shirt, while the bottom left image shows Pooh with the same reaction, edited with more prominent eyebrows and a tuxedo. meme template. IMGFLIP, imgflip.com/memegenerator. Accessed 21 Feb. 2022.



[@body_bourree](#): ngl. this has always been so painful to see. Except when they tackle the exotic gaze

Fig. 10. Six panels: three white panels with text on the left and three images of an anthropomorphic rendering of a head on the right. The format indicates that the head is reacting to the text on the left. The top right image shows a panicked reaction, the middle right shows a calm reaction, and the bottom right shows an amplified panic meme template. IMGFLIP, imgflip.com/memegenerator. Accessed 21 Feb. 2022.



**Marked Safe From
nelken line imitation
Today**

@body_bourree: we love pina. but maybe hold back next

Fig. 11. Screenshot of the “Marked Safe” *Facebook* post meme template. IMGFLIP, imgflip.com/memegenerator. Accessed 22 Feb. 2022.



@body_bourree: you're done. you're done

Fig. 12. Five panels arranged vertically: each one a still from the show *American Chopper*. The images show an escalating argument between Paul Sr. and Paul Jr., wherein Paul Jr. throws an office chair across the room in the fourth panel but Paul Sr. in the fifth panel has the final word meme template. IMGFLIP, imgflip.com/memegenerator. Accessed 17 Feb. 2022.



**CRITICAL
DANCE
WRITING**

MEMES

@body_bourree: yes

Fig. 13. Four panels: two white panels with text on the right and two stills of Drake from the music video "Hotline Bling" on the left. The format indicates that Drake is reacting to the text on the right. The top left image shows Drake rejecting the text while the bottom left image shows Drake approving the text meme template. IMGFLIP, imgflip.com/memegenerator. Accessed 22 Feb. 2022.