Kinesthetic Interventions: Choreographies And Sounds Of The 2022 Philippine Elections

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Abstract. Philippine dance abounds with political intention, transforming the family, region, and nation. As a response to sociopolitical events, I consider dances in campaign events leading up to the 2022 Philippine elections. What can dance tell us about the relationship between political leaders and those who are led? What historico-political insights come from the spontaneous and ephemeral quality of election performances? Using movement observation, I survey "election season dances" performed and circulated via Twitter (now X) and YouTube. I suggest that these are appeals to affect and to bodies' desires to move collectively—important components of Philippine performative traditions.

Movement Observation as Migrant Witnessing

Between March 15 and April 19, 2022, I was inspired, in my position as a migrant worker voting outside of the Philippines for the first time, to re-download and re-join the Twitter platform (renamed as 'X' in July 2023)[1] after a long time of sporadic use. This was spurred by a desire to witness—in as "real" time as possible—the various "offline" events taking place in preparation for the 2022 National elections in the Philippines. Snippets of these in-person gatherings, recorded and published on social media, came across as one way to sense and observe the concerns at 1 Amid preparing this paper for publication, Elon Musk bought Twitter, and rebranded and renamed the platform as "X." To me, and at this time of writing, the name "Twitter" still holds a certain recall; hence, I decided to retain the Twitter name in my paper, occasionally referring to the platform as "Twitter/X." 98 the forefront of the Filipino public's minds, in light of the repressive and debilitating lockdown measures imposed by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte's administration throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. Coming from ideas in dance, theater, and performance studies—where the body can be constructed as a vessel through which political yearnings are articulated (as seen, for example, in the subversive Philippine plays of the American colonial period)—I sought to observe and analyze a selection of dance texts circulated on Twitter/X and YouTube during the 2022 election campaign season. Having selected a number of dance performances,

1. Amid preparing this paper for publication, Elon Musk bought Twitter, and rebranded and renamed the platform as "X." To me, and at this time of writing, the name "Twitter" still holds a certain recall; hence, I decided to retain the Twitter name in my paper, occasionally referring to the platform as "Twitter/X."

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I employed movement observation and analysis—a method that is central to dance scholarship. In movement observation, I described the gestures, the qualities of movement, and the relationships between the bodies of Filipino constituents, as well as the candidates they support. In doing this, I also identified some emerging themes and preoccupations that may be sensed from these dances. Consequently, I read these dances against a selection of news items that garnered virality before and during the elections. On the cusp of a Marcos's return to power in 2022, the drive to sense—to listen, to see, to feel, and perhaps to articulate a collective sensibility—comes with the hope that embodied practices of solidarity between Filipinos across different geographies also be considered in the larger arch of Philippine election history.

While this research is concerned with election dance as an object of study, I simultaneously consider a number of possibilities that a focus on dance can lead to:

> (1) What can dance tell us about the relationship between political leaders and those who are led?
> (2) In the history of political movements in the Philippines, what insights can be drawn from the spontaneous and somewhat improvised quality of election performances?

I ask these questions—with a focus on relationality and spontaneity—not to frame performance as a remedy to the ills of Philippine democracy, but rather to consider the plurality of meanings and affective experiences that election season dances demonstrate. On one hand, I anticipate moments of collective uprising that appear to exist outside of the calculation and contrivance of dominant politicos in the election machinery. I consider these moments of spontaneous collective uprisings to be "kinesthetic interventions" in the face of precarious democratic institutions and processes like the Philippine electoral process—particularly when they emphasize agency, freedoms, and movement of the collective. On the other hand, I also recognize that some of these election dances are in themselves canned, calculated movements which gesture towards a particular candidate's brand or appeal—themselves a part of the electoral campaign machinery. Whether these choreographies are spontaneous, are led by constituents and supporters, and/ or are performed by candidates themselves, these often reference different aspects of Philippine culture and election history. While I mostly examine dance performances that have taken place in the Philippines during the 2022 election season, I also extend some of my observations to public gatherings that have taken place outside of the Philippines. Towards the end, I layer these observations from social media with an autoethnography of sound and movement of my own experiences of participation in movement (a walk) initiated by Filipinx-Canadians in the diaspora. This event was called "Walk for Leni-Kiko"—a gathering in support of Presidential candidate (then Vice-President) Leni Robredo and Vice-Presidential candidate Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan in Earl Bales Park and Little Manila in Toronto, Canada.

Staging Visibility: Constituents' Choreographies Amid Virus and Virality

In the time frame of my observations, the most visible Presidential candidates—Leodegario "Ka Leody" de Guzman, Francisco "Isko" Moreno Domagoso, Panfilo "Ping" Lacson, Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr. (BBM), Emmanuel "Manny" Pacquiao, and Maria Leonor "Leni" Robredo—had significantly intensified their tours around various regions in the Philippines. As part of their campaigns, volunteers came together to stage performances—of which dance was a part—primarily to proclaim their support for their respective candidates. Through social media, I caught glimpses of these performances—some of which had gone viral. Among those that caught the attention of significant international personalities was a crowd's reaction to the performance by a drag queen during the March 20, 2022, rally organized by the supporters of Presidential candidate Leni Robredo, the incumbent Vice-President at the time of the 2022 elections. Entitled "PasigLaban," a play on the Tagalog word pasiklaban or showdown, among the performances featured on stage was by drag queen and Ariana Grande impersonator Minty Fresh (Min Ortiz).

In a YouTube video uploaded by user sebastian, Minty Fresh can be seen in a baby pink frock with poufy sleeves, in thigh-high platform boots, and wearing a blonde wig that mimics pop singer Ariana Grande's signature high ponytail hairstyle.[2] As Minty holds a pink microphone on one hand, her movements are not quite as explosive as her attire; rather, one might describe her body as strutting across the stage, occasionally throwing her arm to one side. The "arm throw" at times works as a gesture reminiscent of divas attempting to reach high notes; other times, the arm throw appears to be a way of cueing the audience to join her in song. Minty is joined by an emcee, who twirls around the stage and hypes up the crowd screaming, "Sabay-sabay tayo!" ("All together now!") In the same video, members of the audience can be seen waving pink flags, the Philippine flag, and rainbow flags. This moment in the campaign signaled a large-scale collective solidarity between Robredo's supporters, led by several drag queens who danced onstage during this event. That it occurred so close to "home"—that is, about a kilometer walk from O Bar, where many of the Philippines' drag superstars perform—may also be of significance here. Not long after the event took place, a video taken from the upper floor of a building on F. Ortigas Avenue in Pasig City was shared by Ariana Grande in her Instagram stories. The video featured the crowd of approximately 130,000 "kakampinks" (after Robredo's campaign color) filling up the entire stretch of the avenue while singing, in tune, to Grande's musical hit, "Break Free," during Minty Fresh's performance.[3]

Following my encounter with this viral text, I actively sought to discover more dances that were performed during this election season. Using the search function on Twitter/X, I typed variations of the word, "dance," "dancing," "sayaw," along with the names (and variations of names) of Presidential candidates. I then clicked on the "videos" tab underneath the Twitter/X search bar to discover group dances put together by supporters of

2. sebastian, "Minty Fresh 'Break Free'-PasigLaban (Pasig City People's Rally) #dragracephilippines," YouTube, August 20, 2022, 2:27, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ug0BqDl5cQ.

3. Clevver News, "Ariana Grande REACTS To HUGE Crowd Singing 'Break Free,'" report by Carly Henderson, YouTube, March 22, 2022, 1:56, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kpox3lhop_w.

various Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates. Some texts I found were as follows:

- Members of an Aeta community performing a welcome dance for Manny Pacquiao (JMaurelioINQ).[4]
- Doctors performing onstage at a Pampanga rally 102 for Leni Robredo (wellverder).[5]
- A flash mob by members of the Philippine theater community during a house-to-house (H2H) event for Leni Robredo (floydtena).[6]
- A Zumba performance by BBM youth, in support of Bongbong Marcos (pjw_pwh)[7]
- Children with light sticks dancing in unison to the song, "Ang Bagong Lipunan" for Bongbong Marcos.[8]
- A group choreography by professional ballet, jazz, and ballroom dancers at the Quezon City headquarters of Leni Robredo and Vice-Presidential candidate Kiko Pangilinan (pjrebullida).[9]
- A group of Nueva Ecija-based dancers performing a "socially-distanced" dance in support of Ping Lacson (pinsannicardo) which was retweeted by user aika123 with the caption, "Tamang sayaw lang."[10]

The last on this list of social media posts, featuring Ping Lacson's supporters in the province of Nueva Ecija, is one that I find quite interesting for a number of reasons: The execution of choreography is a far cry from the showy, electrifying movements of drag queens, or even of Bongbong Marcos's supporters dancing Zumba. The dancers, dressed in clean white t-shirts and pants, mostly keep their movements close to their body—clapping their hands, crossing their arms on their chests, and moving their hips minimally. Social

4. Julie M. Aurelio (JMAurelioINQ), "Members of Aeta community perform a welcome dance for Sen. Pacquiao and his wife, Jinkee inquirerdotnet," Twitter, March 7, 2022, 9:32, accessed April 16, 2022, twitter.com/JMAurelioINQ/status/1501022935229685766?s=20&t=n6At-IfVyBXdsNP8TzmdUA.

5. Nikki Verder (welverder), "They have been our first line of defense for two years (& counting). It's so refreshing to see these doctors having fun and getting recognized. Thank you for your service & love for country, Doctors for Leni! For teamlenirobredo #PampangaIsPink #KabaLENIKIKO #LeniNaPampanga," Twitter, April 9, 2022, 1:30, accessed April 16, 2022, https://twitter.com/welverder/status/1512677509522870273.

6. Floyd Tena (floydtena), "Gusto niyo pa ng ganap? Here's Teatro_LeniKiko in krus na ligas kanina lang. i am just so proud to be part of this community. Considered as non-essentials this pandemic but making a big stand for truth and good governance. LOVE-AN! #ipanalona10to! May naghiwa nnman ng onion," Twitter, April 8, 2022, 1:56, accessed April 16, 2022, https://twitter.com/floydtena/status/1512374349734756363.

7. pjw_ljh, "taray ng beat pwede pang zumba pati bbm youth nakiki-sayaw," Twitter, January 24, 2022, 0:17, accessed April 16, 2022, https://twitter.com/pjw_lhj/status/1485830942224949249?s=20.

8. The original video was posted by the Twitter account votewiselypinoy, which no longer exists as of this writing. The same video can be found on YouTube, posted by account quilingbacucang. Quilingbacucang, "Kids do 'Ang Bagong Lipunan'..." (video by Herdy La. Yumul for the ilocotimes.net livestream), YouTube, September 8, 2012, 1:56, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MX_2hTGZCWw; votewiselypinoy. "Galit na galit sila ... while sa BBM KANTA SAYAW AT INDAK," Twitter, December 23, 2022, accessed April 16, 2022, https://twitter.com/votewiselypinoy/status/1473918739548893189?s=20&t=7TLtod-xpOLmjSKEkT7X7g.

9. PJ Rebullida (pjrebullida), "Eto ang Unity! Ballet Dancers with Jazz Dancers para kay Leni!!! #DancersforLeni #LeniKikoAllTheWay #KulayRosasAngBukas," Twitter, March 24, 2022, 0:32, accessed April 16, 2022, https://twitter.com/pjrebullida/status/1506989993079627780?s=20.

10. I translate "tamang sayaw lang" as either "just the right amount of dancing" or "right kind of dancing." aika12318, "Tamang sayaw lang Go team Ping lacson #Lacsonforapresident," Twitter, March 9, 2022, 1:49, accessed April 16, 2022, https://twitter.com/aika12318/status/1501477066155315202; pinsannicardo, "Makikisample din lang ako with matching social distancing. Nueva Ecija nagkaisa, si Ping Lacson ang panggiyera!" Twitter, March 7, 2022, 1:49, accessed April 16, 2022, https://twitter.com/PinsanniCardo/status/1500820410061197314; Ping Lacson, "Nueva Ecija para kay PING LACSON!" YouTube, uploaded by Ping Lacson, March 17, 2022, accessed April 16, 2022, https://youtube.com/watch?v=tMCm98hGDag.

distancing—that is, the pandemic-era practice of keeping a physical distance of roughly five feet between one mover and the next—is maintained throughout the choreography. Even when dancers extend their arms to the side, or walk a few steps to the side, gaps between the performers can be perceived in the camera angles from the front of the crowd and in the drone shots from above. The caption, "tamang sayaw lang" ("just the right amount of dancing") penned by Twitter/X username aika123, can be read alongside this choreography as an indication of the kind of dance that a supporter of candidate Lacson might consider "proper" during the elections and the pandemic: appropriately distanced, restrained, not too showy, neat, and organized.

Following this movement observation and analysis with some reference to recent political history, I read this choreography as a nod to Ping Lacson's roots—as a former chief of police whose ethos largely emphasized discipline and public order. During the administration of deposed President Joseph "Erap" Estrada, Ping Lacson in his capacity as Chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP) famously instituted a campaign against "beer bellies" in the police force. His attempts to mandate a maximum waist line of 34 inches for police officers made the news, as well as his encouragement of physical activities like push-ups and dancing as a way for the police to become more effective at catching criminals.[11] Lacson's references to exercise as a tool for police reform continued even after he was elected 11 Senator during the Duterte administration.[12] That ethos—of dance as a disciplinary practice, free of frills and "arte" (vanity)—has thus found resonance in the choreographies of his constituents in the 2022 Presidential elections.

While I have been able to compose reflections on these dances—informed in part by my knowledge of place, movement, and Philippine personality politics—writing from outside the Philippines has also meant that I was not in a position to ask specific groups of dancers why they would choose to organize in the ways that they did. My migrant body—an uninvited person settled in Indigenous land—could only look to my own memories of movement in the Philippines. At times, this movement has meant "dance," while other times I consider my own participation in political rallies as part of my movement vocabulary. In both Manila and Toronto, I have danced as a response to my personal experiences of labor, of life in fatiguing metropolises, and most recently, immobility brought about by the pandemic. I cannot assume that the Aeta, the medical doctors, the youth, and others, dance for the same reasons, but I can venture a guess: that in moments of group choreography, these dancers are able to imagine and embody something that they desire from (and not just for) their political leaders. One thing that can be observed in these choreographies in 2022 is where collective spontaneity and some degree of improvisation is concerned, crowds of constituents have found spaces of embodied solidarity—ways of intervening kinesthetically amid the constraints of election machinery and other tensions in class, gender, sense of place, or

11. "EDITORIAL- Slimming down," *The Philippine Star*, January 10, 2020, accessed December 12, 2023, https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2020/01/10/1983675/editorial-slimming-down; "Senator Panfilo "Ping" M. Lacson," Senate.gov.ph, accessed December 12, 2023, https://legacy.senate.gov.ph/senators/sen_bio/lacson_bio.asp.

12. "Lacson: PNP's Fitness Policy a Win-Win for All—Except the Criminals," PingLacson.net, January 7, 2020, accessed December 12, 2023, https://pinglacson.net/2020/01/07/lacson-pnps-fitness-policy-a-win-win-for-all-except-the-criminals.

relationship with the state.

These Philippine election dances, on one hand, have become a staple of campaigns throughout various election seasons—like a ritual that adds flavor to a party. On the other hand, I suggest that these bodies coming together, deciding that they would make themselves visible, can be read as more than mere flavor, not simply "entertainment." These bodies that come together demand the attention of their leaders. They demand response and conversation, as well as their own physical, embodied presence in place, and refuse (at least, in idea) various forms of erasure and forgetting by apparatuses of the state. Minty Fresh's performance was a reminder of these demands. It was one election performance that was led by LGBTQIA+ performers at a time when the community has struggled to pass a bill promoting gender equality under the Duterte administration.[13] The site of the PasigLaban rally was also about a kilometer distance from the avenue known as EDSA, where people once gathered to remove the dictator Ferdinand E. Marcos from the seat of power in 1986.

While election dance is but one way for Filipinos to take up space and insist on being heard and uplifted by the candidates who require their votes, it is certainly the case that such performances might be co-opted—that indeed they have been co-opted—by dictators, colonizers, and oppressive forces—as argued, for instance, by Anthony Shay in *Dance and Authoritarianism* (2021).[14] In particular, Shay cites the way that government support for folk dances have functioned hand-in-hand with the justification of nationalist views. Shay clarifies, though, that this can and has been the case in both explicitly authoritarian and democratic regimes. In the context of dances in Philippine elections, however, I put forward the argument that choreographies sometimes do more than forward some kind of nationalist agenda; popular choreographies also play upon Filipinos' desire to move amongst other bodies in their community. While on one hand this is a form of agency to be celebrated, the desire to move and to engage in another's election choreographies also carry the possibility that bodies end up promoting a politics or personalities that/who ultimately seek to curtail movement. Some of these choreographies could lead to ideas of movement that eventually yield or turn towards more neoliberal and disciplinary visions of government.

As early as the 2016 Philippine Presidential election, the group of variety show dancers known as the Mocha Girls were actively campaigning for then-Presidential candidate Rodrigo Duterte. The YouTube channel, HKPinoyTV, showcased a clip of the Mocha Girls performing for a Duterte rally in Hong Kong in April 2016.[15] Unlike their other performances where the girls dance in slightly more revealing attire, in this campaign rally, the Mocha Girls are dressed in basketball jerseys, green camouflage pants, and sneakers. Their choreographies—which feature a repertoire of rotating hips, splits, twerks,

13. Don Kevin Hapal, "Disinformation on SOGIE Bill Spreads As Filipino Queers Face Real-World Discrimination," Rappler and the Pulitzer Center, February 12, 2023, accessed December 12, 2023, https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/disinformation-sogie-bill-spreads-filipino-queers-face-real-world-discrimination.

14. Anthony Shay, *Dance and Authoritarianism: These Boots are Made for Dancing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

15. HKPinoyTV, "Mocha Girls campaign for Mayor Rodrigo Duterte in Hong Kong," YouTube, 6:48, uploaded April 4, 2016, accessed December 12, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FMXTupfmztk.

jerking movements, cartwheels and chest rotations—are quite in line with their identity as a girl group. At the beginning of the video clip, lead dancer Mocha Uson takes the microphone and speaks of Duterte's hopes that overseas Filipinos would return home and put up their own businesses instead of having to work abroad—a hope that one might phrase as a "balikbayan dream." While it is tempting to think of the Mocha Girls' choreography as another femininized, "sexy" appeal to machismo tendencies, I consider the girls' speech alongside glimpses of the audiences shown on camera—composed mostly of Filipina migrant workers. I propose that the Mocha Girls' choreography can be read more closely as gesturing towards the neoliberal expectations of the Filipina migrant body: flexible, capable of intense physical labor, outstretched, and somehow also hopeful of the opportunities that a return to the homeland might bring.

In ways that may at once be insidious, polyphonic, and wanting, dancing bodies can become channels by which nostalgia and mythmaking are enacted in order to downplay oppression, whitewash histories of violence, and create new sensory experiences that enable collective forgetting. While Uson neither directly referenced nor replicated the romance and sentimentality that characterized former First Lady Imelda Marcos's public performances, Uson's portrayal of femininity highlighted a certain brusqueness and bravado—which largely fed into the strong-arm Duterte personality and "brand." The irony in this staging is that, while Uson's persona somehow aligned with the character and machismo of Rodrigo Duterte (whose rise paved the way for a Marcos return), Uson's expressions failed to find a place within the Bongbong Marcos campaign narrative in 2022, which played off of the (false) grandeur of the earlier Marcos regime. Interestingly, in the 2022 elections, Uson threw her support for (and lent her dance moves) to Presidential candidate Isko Moreno.[16] In Moreno's campaign rallies, Uson could be seen on stage, microphone in hand, encouraging Moreno's supporters to come on stage and dance with Moreno. That choreographic quality of being in close physical proximity to the crowd is also one that comes to characterize Isko Moreno's choreographies, as I describe in greater detail later.

As for the choreographies and sounds in Bongbong Marcos's campaigns, the nostalgia and mythmaking encouraged by the previous Marcos generation continued in other ways—for instance, with musical revivals of the propaganda hymn of Marcos (Sr.) entitled, "Ang Bagong Lipunan." The revivals are certainly examples of what Paul Connerton calls, "forgetting that is constitutive in the formation of a new identity:" forgetting "becomes part of the process by which newly shared memories are constructed because a new set of memories are frequently accompanied by a set of tacitly shared silences."[17] New versions of "Ang Bagong Lipunan" abound, accompanied by commentaries that glorify the Marcos era on a variety of social media platforms. An April 2022 video

16. CNN Philippines (cnnphilippines), "WATCH: Mocha Uson and presidential candidate IskoMoreno dance to the tune of viral hit 'Paro-Paro-G.' Uson said she now supports Moreno, saying 'nag-switch to Isko na po ako.' Uson is also running for a house party list seat. #TheFilipinoVotes | pnbarcelonlive," Twitter, March 18, 2022, 0:21, accessed December 12, 2023, https://twitter.com/cnnphilippines/status/1504794925195358211?lang=en.

17. Paul Connerton, "Seven Types of Forgetting," *Memory Studies* 1, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 59–71, https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698007083889.

report from the Washington Post references various clips from Tiktok.[18] On Twitter/X, a group that identifies as "BBM Youth" dance to a revival of this song. On another video, children can be seen holding and swaying glow sticks as this song is being played on the birth anniversary of Ferdinand Marcos, Sr.[19] On YouTube, a rock band called Plethora also created a new version of this song; the video was uploaded in November 2021 and had about 3.5 million views as of December 2023.[20] In the United States, it was also announced in January 2023 that David Byrne and Fatboy Slim's Here Lies Love, a musical that disco-fies and romanticizes the grandiose aesthetics of Imelda Marcos, was set for revival in Broadway in July 2023.[21] While the play gained interest from followers of theater, *Here Lies Love* failed in terms of commercial success—hence the show's closing in November of 2023.[22] In reaction to its earlier run, Christi-Anne Castro described this play as "an aestheticization of biography and fantasy, combined to create a visceral and embodied spectacle (in which the audience dances alongside the action)."[23] While artists involved with the play in 2023 were quick to respond that the play was explicitly positioned to become critical of the Marcos regime, scholars of literature, drama, and performance, as well as Filipino/a/x audiences who had seen the play, insisted that its intentions be questioned, in light of the visceral reactions of grief by the Filipino/a/x populace in the aftermath of the 2022 elections.[24]

Spotlight on Three Dances: Harry Roque, Isko Moreno, and Leni Robredo

I return to the questions posed earlier:

- What can dance tell us about the relationship between political leaders and those who are led?
- And in the history of political movements in the Philippines, what insights can be drawn from the spontaneous, improvised quality of election performances?

In continuing to answer these questions, I proceed to examine how candidates move their bodies, how their bodies relate to other dancers or audiences, how candidates and audience members take up space, and what the quality of movement might communicate about the candidate as performer/

18. "'Bagong Lipunan' gets the TikTok treatment in a tribute to Ferdinand Marcos," *The Washington Post*, April 5, 2022, accessed February 14, 2023, https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/world/bagong-lipunan-gets-the-tiktok-treatment-in-a-tribute-to-ferdinand-marcos/2022/04/05/631a09af-dd21-4ab7-9239-edba2f8a6919_video.html.

19. Quilingbacucang, "Kids do 'Ang Bagong Lipunan'..."; votewiselypinoy, "Galit na galit sila... while sa BBM KANTA SAYAW AT INDAK..."

20. Plethora, "BBM - Bagong Lipunan (New Version)," YouTube, 3:04, November 7, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-8lbAbGGww.

21. Ella Feldman, "David Byrne's Disco Musical About Imelda Marcos Comes to Broadway," *The Smithsonian*, January 19, 2023, accessed February 14, 2023, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/david-byrnes-disco-musical-about-imelda-marcos-will-open-on-broadway-180981468.

22. Rebecca Rubin, "David Byrne's Broadway Musical 'Here Lies Love' to Close Due to Low Ticket Sales," *Variety*, November 7, 2023, accessed December 12, 2023, https://variety.com/2023/legit/news/david-byrne-broadway-musical-here-lies-love-closing-date-1235768275.

23. Christi-Anne Castro, "Aurality and Power: Western Art Music and the Marcos Regime," *Alon: Journal for Filipinx American and Diasporic Studies* 1, no. 3 (2021): 279–94, https://www.jstor.org/stable/48644345.

24. Here Lies Love Official Account (hereliveslovebway) "#hereliveslovebway," January 19, 2023, accessed December 12, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CnmoAuTO775/?img_index=1. Amanda L. Andrei, "The Complicated Triumph of 'Here Lies Love'," AmericanTheatre.org, August 1, 2023, accessed December 12, 2023, https://www.americantheatre.org/2023/08/01/the-complicated-triumph-of-here-lies-love/#:~:text=There%20have%20been%20persistent%20critiques,essentially%20glorifies%20tyranny%20and%20Imelda.

mover. To narrow down the selection of dances, I chose to focus on dances that:

a. candidates themselves have participated in;
b. that have been recorded and circulated on Twitter/ X;
c. that have at least 20 seconds of group movement that can be observed; and
d. that have engaged a relatively large number of people (also in the footage, which might include professional dancers, as well as the crowd).

These choreographies are of:

1. Senatorial candidate Herminio "Harry" Roque Jr. dancing to the theme of his campaign jingle, with two back-up dancers on stage at a UniTeam rally in the Philippine Arena in Bulacan province (admarDZAR). Roque teaches the same dance to supporters in a rally in Quezon City (Mike_Asoy), and in another in Pangasinan—with Presidential candidate Bongbong Marcos standing behind him, learning the song with other candidates (TpMjane).[25]

2. Isko Moreno, incumbent mayor of the City of Manila at the time of the election, dancing to Timmy Thomson's 1990 hit, "(Dying Inside) To Hold You," with dance group D'Force Unlmtd. in San Joaquin, Iloilo.[26] In another rally that took place in Pampanga on March 2, 2022—Ash Wednesday—Moreno dances the same dance, with ash on his forehead, surrounded by supporters. In its YouTube post, media outlet Rappler captions this dance: "a nod to his matinee idol roots."

3. Leni Robredo dancing on stage with a Mangyan dance group in Occidental Mindoro. According to a Tweet by journalist Jervis Manahan, this is the first time that Vice-President Robredo is seen dancing on stage.[27] However, in a previous rally in Zamboanga, Robredo is "caught" dancing behind dancers waving large pink flags as she is introduced to the crowd.

25. "UniTeam" is the name coined by supporters of the tandem of Presidential aspirant Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr., Vice-presidential aspirant Sara Duterte, and the candidates under their slate, including Senatorial aspirant and former Presidential spokesperson Harry Roque, Jr. Admar Vilando (@admarSZAR), "PANOORIN | Pagsayaw ni Atty. @attyharryroque sa proclamation rally ng BBM-Sara UniTeam sa PH Arena sa Bulacan," Twitter, February 8, 2022, 1:40, accessed April 16, 2022, https://twitter.com/AdmarDZAR/status/1491111704490512384?s=20&t=7TLtod-xpOLmjSKEkT7X7g; Jose Michael V. Asoy (mike_asoy), "HARRY ROQUE NAGTURO NG SAYAW SA HARAP NG MARAMING TAO SA QUEZON CITY #harryroque #BBM #saraduterte," Twitter, March 7, 2022, 0:58, accessed April 16, 2022, https://twitter.com/Mike_Asoy/status/1499925101189689350?s=20; @tpmjane, "Game na game si BBM na nakipag sabayan ng sayaw kay Harry Roque, sa proclamation rally kagabi sa Rosales, Pangsinan. Ctto #BBMForPresident" Twitter, February 27, 2022, 0:18, accessed April 16, 2023, https://twitter.com/TpMjane/status/1498094867221602307?s=20.

26. Jorge Cariño, (Jorge_Carino), "#mayoriskomoreno #dyinginside #sanjoaquin #iloilo #Halalan2022," Twitter, December 13, 2021, 0:27, accessed April 16, 2022, https://twitter.com/Jorge_Carino/status/1470594427286884352?s=20&t=n6At-IfVyBXdsNP8TzmdUA;D'Force Unlmtd, "Dying Inside," Facebook, December 14, 2021, 1:41, accessed April 19, 2022, https://facebook.com/dforceunlmtd/videos/309341104396605; dforcefam, "Collab with Yorme! iskomorenodomagoso #fyp #xyb #dforceunlmtd #dyinginsidetoholdyou San Joaquin, Iloilo," TikTok, December 14, 2021, accessed April 16, 2022, vm.tiktok.com/ZMLqvuYXu. Rappler, "Isko Moreno dancing to '90s hit 'Dying Inside.'" YouTube, March 2, 2022, 0:26, accessed April 19, 2022, https://youtube.com/watch?v=HPoDJbmyV3Y.

27. Jervis Manahan (JervisManahan), "LOOK: For the first time in the campaign season, VP lenirobredo dances as she was introduced by the Pink Tamaraw dance troupe in today's rally in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro. #Halalan2022," Twitter, April 6, 2022, 2:19, accessed April 16, 2022, twitter.com/JervisManahan/status/1511636168575578116?s=20&t=7TLtod-xpOLmjSKEkT7X7gaintktln, "zamboanga's version of an iconic entrance!! plus vp leni and her cute litol dance #ZamboangaIsPink #LayagLeniKiko," Twitter, March 17, 2022, 0:11, accessed April 16, 2022, https://twitter.com/aintktln/status/1504418195142475778.

The observation and analysis of bodies and movement are methods in dance studies—employed as ways of shedding light on dance as a process of signification. In reference to Philippine performative traditions, ethnographer Sally Ann Ness's movement analysis of the sinulog dances in Cebu City is one example of a scholarly text that presents this notion. Among Ness's movement observations was that the "limpness and looseness" of the tindera sinulog (sinulog performed by vendors outside of the Cebu Basilica) "seemed to provide a recuperative means of coping with the city's typically densely packed spaces.... The loose hold is a norm that gives collective action meaning."[28]
In the embodied practice of Authentic Movement developed by Mary Starks Whitehouse, the value of movement observation is also highlighted in the relationship between mover and witness. Tina Stromsted describes this succinctly:

> the mover listens inwardly and finds a movement arising from a hidden prompting, a cellular impulse. Gradually the invisible becomes visible, the inaudible becomes audible, and explicit form is given to the content of direct experience. The witness brings a receptive quality of clear attention to the mover. The witness is mindful of the inner world of sensation and meaning, judgment and criticism.[29]

I adopt aspects of these movement observation methods to a selection of 2022 election dances circulated on Twitter/X, which feature candidates dancing with/for their constituents. Occasionally repeating the movements I saw performed, I also try to imagine the ways in which Filipino leaders attempt to choreograph forms of *pakikipagkapwa* (fellowship) as they invite their constituents to engage in physical movement.

Senatorial Aspirant Harry Roque's Campaign Jingle Dance

I begin by looking at the dance performed by Senatorial candidate Harry Roque, who most notably served as Presidential Spokesperson for President Rodrigo Duterte and ran as part of the 2022 Senatorial slate (with the moniker, UniTeam) of Presidential candidate Bongbong Marcos, Jr., and Vice-Presidential candidate Sara Duterte. In a video posted by Admar R. Vilando of Sonshine Network Media International (SMNI), Roque is seen onstage, dancing in between two masculine-presenting back-up dancers in Roque's signature green attire, while a rapper raps to Roque's campaign jingle behind them.[30] The recorded sequence starts with Roque and the two dancers punching each arm in the air in front of them, with a slight bend in the knees. Keeping the wrists closed throughout most of the song, Roque mostly punches his arms to the front towards the audience, then in an outstretched manner to the

28. Sally Ann Ness, *Body, Movement, and Culture: Kinesthetic and Visual Symbolism in a Philippine Community* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 124, emphasis mine.

29. Tina Stromsted, "What is Authentic Movement?" 2017, The Authentic Movement Institute, https://www.authenticmovementinstitute.com/authenticmovement#:~:text=What%20is%20Authentic%20Movement%3F,witness%2C%20being%20seen%20and%20seeing.

30. Vilando (admarSZAR), "PANOORIN | Pagsayaw ni Atty. attyharryroque..."

side. Putting two closed fists together, with the arms loose and heavy, he then punches the air on each side of his hips. At the faster part of the rap, Roque crosses his arms in front of his chest and rotates the orientation of his torso from left to right, before returning to the repetitive arm-throwing movement. With one dancer in front and another behind him, he then walks in a half-circle onstage. He folds each arm alternately so that each wrist meets the same side shoulder. He eventually faces the audience. Throughout the sequence, these moves—the arm throw, the crossed arms, and the slight bend in the knee—are repeated as the song is performed.

How might such a movement be read? On one hand, the arm-throwing gestures suggest a loose, almost low-effort, easy-to-follow movement; on the other hand, movements throughout the entire song also suggest a commitment to repeatability, with the "rap" lyrics explicitly referencing an allegiance to President Duterte. Worth noting here is that Roque performs the same choreography to this jingle throughout several events in the electoral campaign. Roque, whose body is visibly bigger than the other bodies onstage, never hinges from the hip joint nor curves the chest. Punches and gentle knee bends are instead what stand out in this choreography—expressing a sense of accessibility. Roque says almost the same thing—"*Eto, madali lang*" ("Here, it's easy")—when, in another video, he teaches this dance to the crowd while the UniTeam candidates sit in a row behind him onstage.[31] Upon examining recordings of different events that feature this same dance, it would seem that the highlight of Harry Roque's dancing is the commitment to moves that are easiest to repeat (e.g., heavily thumping the air) and that are constructed through a jovial persona.

Isko Moreno: (Dying Inside) To Hold You

Isko Moreno Domagoso, nicknamed Yorme, began his political career as councilor of the city of Manila at the age of 23.[32] Before this, he was "discovered" by a talent manager at a funeral in his neighborhood of Tondo, Manila, and later took part in the popular variety show of the '80s & '90s entitled, That's Entertainment![33] This movement analysis looks at a 28-second clip posted by ABS-CBN journalist Jorge Cariño on his Twitter/X account. This recording features Moreno dancing to the 1990 hit song, "(Dying Inside) To Hold You," by Timmy Thomson.[34] Moreno can also be seen dancing to the same song in other occasions during his campaign.[35] In fact, a YouTube video posted as early as January 2020 also shows Moreno dancing to the same song with the same moves.[36]

The video begins with Moreno's weight on one side of his body, preparing to briskly lift his foot about one foot off the ground. As he alternates between kicking each foot behind him with bent knees, he sways his body from

31. Asoy (mike_asoy), "HARRY ROQUE NAGTURO NG SAYAW…"

32. Tagalog slang for "mayor."

33. Bam Abellon, "The humble beginnings and great ambition of Isko Moreno," *ABS-CBN News*, May 15, 2019, accessed April 19, 2022, news.abs-cbn.com/ancx/culture/spotlight/05/15/19/the-humble-beginnings-and-great-ambition-of-isko-moreno.

34. Cariño (Jorge_Carino), "#mayoriskomoreno #dyinginside…"

35. *Rappler*, "Isko Moreno dancing to '90s hit…"

36. Grace Lomboy Foronda, "Yorme Isko Moreno's Dying Inside Performance Live at ABS CBN Vertis Tent (90s Dance Concert Live)," YouTube, January 31, 2020, accessed April 22, 2022, https://youtu.be/QB3z3KivmMI.

side to side—bringing each shoulder towards the back, while the same side foot lifts off the ground. He does this in a brisk and bouncy manner—reminiscent of line dances that take place at Filipino social events. While swaying and kicking his feet, he keeps his arms folded slightly towards each side and his wrists in snapping form. The next moves, which continue at the song's chorus, have Moreno doing a slight body wave. With his right hand open—right leg stretched to one side—he slides his right hand from the middle of his chest down to his right thigh, then gestures with a "two" hand sign, then a finger pointing to the crowd when the song plays the lyrics, "to hold you." Moreno is dressed in a tucked-in blue button-down shirt, jeans, and sneakers. Behind him appear to be a group of youth dancers, dancing the same choreography as a crowd of reporters watch on.

Dancing with a visible spring in his step, Moreno's moves appear to be a calculated expression of youthful vigor. The choice of song, attire, and dance group also support this reading. At the end of the choreography, the something I saw on another video on Twitter/X, of Moreno dancing with a supporter onstage at a campaign sortie.[37] If Roque's moves are then characterized by throwing one's arms in the air with a slight up-and-down bounce, Moreno's moves favor swaying from side to side, waving the torso, with the hands gesturing towards the self and the crowd. The choreography exhibits a sense of youthfulness, a clear and constant shifting of weight, and gestures that establish an amorous relationship between candidate and crowd.

Leni Robredo and the Indigenous Mangyan Dancers

Finally, I read Leni Robredo's dance with the Mangyan dancers during a campaign sortie in Occidental Mindoro on April 6, 2022. I found several recordings of this dance [by LJ Abadinas (ljabadinas) and Emil (13thfool)].[38] For the purposes here, however, I read the recording posted by Twitter/X user 13thfool, which shows Robredo's full body as she dances with other dancers onstage.[39]

The video begins with Robredo's hands above her head—her palms facing each other, as though holding an invisible pot. As she lifts one foot and another off the floor to make slight repetitive jumps, she can suddenly be observed tilting her head towards one of the Mangyan dancers on stage, as if to check if she is moving rightly. From keeping her hands above her head, she moves her arms as if to form a rainbow—with each arm outstretched towards the sides of her body. Her palms face outward before moving them to her waist. All this time, her torso remains relaxed but upright. The movement of arms from crown to waist is repeated, as one heel after the other pushes against the floor in slight jumps. As I repeat these moves myself, I sense a

37. CNNPhilippines, "WATCH: Mocha Uson and presidential candidate IskoMoreno dance to the tune of viral hit 'Paro-Paro-G.' Uson said she now supports Moreno, saying 'nag-switch to Isko na po ako.' Uson is also running for a house party list seat. #TheFilipinoVotes | pnbarcelonlive," Twitter, March 18, 2022, 0:21, accessed April 16, 2022, https://twitter.com/cnnphilippines/status/1504794925195358211?s=20&t=2fkd3btcFaYu2UD2lqgviQ.

38. LJ Abadinas (ljabadinas), "This is too cute!!! Sumayaw si VP lenirobredo sa #MindoRosas entrance niya! #OccidentalMindoroIsPink," Twitter, April 4, 2022, accessed April 25, 2022, https://twitter.com/ljabadinas/status/1511604476020686848?s=20&t=WPSDfVTmmienwVmY_7LLDQ.

39. 13thfool, "'Dumako na tayo sa talent portion ng 2022 Presidential Elections. Candidate no. 10, Leni Robredo. Take it away!'" Twitter, April 6, 2022, 0:21, accessed April 16, 2022, https://twitter.com/13thFool/status/1511619545240596484?s=20.

mix of both cautiousness and composure, even though these moves appear repetitive. Because of the constant shifting of the heels against the ground, this dance move—when repeated several times—also appears to be more tiring for the dancer than the others. Yet for the audiences who chant in sync to the rhythm, the dance becomes energizing; it is an invitation to send energy to the bodies onstage, engaging in measured movement.

Election Dances as Kinesthetic Interventions and Extensions of the Folk

In observing, describing, and reading these dances, my goal is not to establish definitively whether or not electoral plans or agendas can be gleamed from group choreographies. Rather, my hope is that these observations on candidates' dancing would compel readers to consider the value—perhaps even the necessity—of physical movement when it comes to the Philippine tradition of election campaigning. There is more to election dances than their capacity to draw and entertain crowds. I argue that these dances offer glimpses in which candidates establish empathic and kinesthetic relationships with their supporters—responding to their needs and desires. This particular quality of election dances echoes what dance scholar Randy Martin has called, "social kinesthemes:"

> Like the idea of a structure of feeling, a prepolitical disposition, tacit or virtual socialities, it is possible to imagine the material surround of corporeal activity before it crystallizes as a specific practice expression.[40]

As a form of mobilizing a collective, election dances thus figure as strategic appeals to affect, to a disposition familiar to the body. The prevalence of dance in elections complements debate and discourse by engaging the physical presence of candidates, witnesses, and supporters—an act that arguably becomes more potent in the time of the pandemic. On the flip side, there are also audiences on the opposite side of party lines, who might not react favorably to such choreographies. In these cases, the performative expression of negative commentary on dancing might be another way to subvert the original intention of the performances— that is, another (opposing) way to appeal to affect.

Where social media is concerned, these dances also offer a space for others to transform into witnesses— into *saksi*—who, in their own ways, affirm the presence of movers as agents, aware of the gradual maneuvers that candidates make to reach potential supporters. To this, I add the idea that kinesthetic and civic movement that beckons to witnessing (*pagsaksi*) is not something unique to Western models of movement observation but is also a feature of many Philippine performative traditions. Religious festivals that invoke folk Catholicism, exhibitions of nationalist aesthetics like the State of the Nation Address (SONA), even the protests and anti-colonial theatrical productions—all beckon to the involvement of a politically- conscious witness.[41] Dance—and by

40 Randy Martin, "A Precarious Dance, a Derivative Sociality," *TDR: The Drama Review* 56, no. 4 (2012): 62–77, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23362772.

41. Doreen G. Fernandez, "From Ritual to Realism: A Brief Historical Survey of Philippine Theater," *Philippine Studies* 28, no. 4 (1980): 389–419, http://www.jstor.org/stable/42632553.

extension, other forms of collective physical movement—however repetitive or untrained, also responds to the bodily desire to move, to move with, and to be led by an empathic leader who is likewise called to play the role of saksi. The vital role of election dance can thus be read as a kinesthetic intervention that responds to a Filipino proclivity for what is at once physical, political, and collective fellowship.

Observing each candidate's dance and comparing it with another, a *saksi* or witness might also sense differences in the kinds of gestures that aim to complement the moving citizens' desires. With Harry Roque, one might sense ease and repetition; with Isko Moreno, a physical proximity between the karaniwang-tao (pedestrian) and one's leaders—as exemplified by Moreno's hugging, touching or physically holding his constituency's hands. With Leni Robredo, one might sense composure and measured movement. To add, many of the dances performed on stage during Robredo's campaign—whether from Mindoro, Masbate, or Pasig City—gesture towards locality, towards familiarity with the uniqueness and concerns of a place, as opposed to gesticulating towards unity. To analysts of politics and performance, I suggest that we consider how these desires embodied in election dances might convey something that is potentially missed by election-season surveys or commentaries. These choreographies—while produced and witnessed in the moment of national elections—can also stand as expressions that continue from folk traditions. Even though there might be some choreographer behind these dances, some media strategist involved in their circulation, or a logistics person involved in the staging of performance spaces, the election campaign as a people's performance also accommodates improvisational movement, an aura—or *awra*, to borrow from queer vernacular—of spontaneity performed by a collective. This *awra*, this quality of movement, might appeal to the affective experience of certain movers, in that it deviates from something so stringently codified, controlled, policed, or nationalized. One might even argue that such improvised movement is closer to the traditional meaning of *bayanihan*—as a grassroots-led civic and kinesthetic exercise that imagines community or fellowship (*pakikipagkapwa*), and that gestures towards neighbor, home, and future. In the time of the pandemic, the word "*bayanihan*" had already been co-opted to support the "reallocation" of power (that is, the reinforcement of power) held by one or a group of individuals—as was the case with the 2020 legislations known as "Bayanihan to Heal as One" and "Bayanihan to Recover as One," which extended President Duterte's powers. The choreographies produced during the 2022 elections and during the pandemic suggest that the knowledge of this term, *bayanihan*, also finds a different meaning when it is held by the Filipino body.

As an offshoot of folk practices, election performances circulated on social media also allow for archipelagic thinking—across the archipelago and stretching out to the diaspora. In the vein of Philippine epic traditions, election performances similarly accommodate a mix of festivity, regional pride, commemoration, some prayer or spiritual invocation, and sometimes,

even validation of magic realism or supernatural beliefs.[42] Damiana Eugenio's canonical text on the Philippine epics details these characteristics, which also includes the perseverance of an epic hero whose remarkable endurance allows them to travel across various terrain—not unlike the election candidates themselves.[43] Heroes must also prove themselves by "romancing" the people, who would later become integral to their success as leaders of the community. Such romancing might resemble the practice of repetition à la Harry Roque, physical intimacy à la Isko Moreno, or composure à la Leni Robredo. Yet unlike the epic tradition where the epic hero always wins, election candidates and their supporters do face defeat.

Diasporic Remembering: An Autoethnography of Sound and Movement From Toronto, Canada

To complement my observations of election dances recorded and circulated on social media, I end with my own kinesthetic intervention: an autoethnographic reflection of the sounds and movements that I encountered at a campaign rally in Toronto in April 2022. By a slight shift of focus from choreography to sound, I invoke Christine Bacareza Balance's theorization of "disobedient listening" and apply this to my own practice of listening and observing the sounds and movements I witnessed while attending an event called "Walk for Leni-Kiko" at Earl Bales Park and Little Manila in Toronto. I explain how this sonic and kinesthetic experience moved my own political expectations and provoked the imagination of connections between bodies who hold various hopes for governance—connections that I might not have thought as possible living in the Philippines.

One of the most common experiences I have had in the city of Toronto, and in the adjacent cities of North York and Mississauga, is hearing the sound of Tagalog on the Toronto Transit Commission—what is locally known as the TTC subway and bus lines. Sometimes, Tagalog is spoken by a mother to a small child. Once, the sound came from a group of teenage boys laughing at each other on the bus. Another time, it was spoken by a lady telling me that I did not need to tap my card again on the bus, since we had already come from the subway. I do not believe she heard me make a sound before then, but somehow, she sensed I would understand. Yet another time, the sound came from me—not assuming, but guessing that the lady at a bus stop might know where I could get an ID picture taken so that I could renew my passport. I later found out that the shop she directed me to also served as a place where people could remit money to their loved ones in the Philippines. I heard familiar words uttered: "GCash," "Palawan Express." Sounds, in Toronto, hardly appear to me as cacophonous (or as melodic) as those in the Metro Manila, where the atmosphere is hotter and sound seems to travel faster, but they are nonetheless striking. Many times, sounds have compelled me to stop and really listen, in a manner I am not accustomed to doing back home. On multiple occasions, I have listened to the sound of the rain in Toronto while inside the

42. Oscar Tantoco Serquiña, Jr., "The Living, the Virtual, and the Dead: Philippine Political Figures in Online Spaces," *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* 67, no. 1 (2019): 79, Project MUSE, https://doi.org/10.1353/phs.2019.0006.

43. Damiana Eugenio, *Philippine Folk Literature: The Epics* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2001).

bus. On one of those days, in late September 2022, some news on Twitter said that a typhoon had just struck Luzon; its name was Karding (International name: Typhoon Noru). I recorded those rain sounds I heard on the TTC, which had then become layered with my own sonic memories of tropical rain—and quite specifically, memories of the Marikina River about to reach its breaking point. About nine months later, I would come back to this vivid memory—when Pinoy pop band Lola Amour released their track, "Raining in Manila." The lyrics go: "It's been raining in Manila, hindi ka ba nilalamig?... Maulan ba sa inyo 'pag bumubuhos dito?"[44] I could only wonder if these words were meant to be sung for overseas Filipinos whose long-distance relationships might leave them with complex and overlapping experiences of (cold) climate and seasonal/temporal displacement.

Christine Bacareza Balance writes of a practice called "disobedient listening" as a way to "defamiliarize what is real and what is natural and instead render something anew... by listening against and beyond the dominant discourses that continuously constrain and narrow our understanding of the sonic and musical in Filipino America."[45] I consider how these might also apply to my own diasporic experiences in Toronto, and to the sounds and movements that I took part in during the 2022 Philippine National Elections.

On the morning of April 24, 2022, a number of Filipino/a/xs in Toronto gathered at Earl Bales Park to support the Presidential candidacy of then-incumbent Vice-President Leni Robredo. The event was promoted on Facebook; I came across it after actively searching for a gathering in Toronto that paralleled the one that took place in California in late 2021, and in Shibuya Crossing in Tokyo, Japan, earlier in March 2022.[46] I took the TTC bus to the park and quickly realized that what was not promoted—at least, on the post that I had seen—was the length and route of the walk. I assumed that the walking and gathering would only take place within the 51-hectare park. As it turned out, the plan would have participants walk to the intersection of Bathurst and Wilson—known as Little Manila, an area where many Filipino/a/x-owned businesses were located—and would then have people walk back to the park.

Several sounds stood out before the walk even took place: At the beginning, there were prayer and songs performed by young volunteers. *Kababayans* called out to participants to partake in the coffee and *pan de sal*, which volunteers brought to the picnic tables. There was laughter, reacting to and echoing the witty expressions on banners—similar to what Philippine-based supporters prepared and circulated on social media (for example, a banner read: "*Mga walang jowa para kay Leni Kiko*").[47] A set of sounds that was curious, to me, was the singing of the national anthems of both the Philippines and Canada. Much later, on a television screen, the voice of Leni Robredo could be heard thanking voters and volunteers in Canada for their

44. Lola Amour, "'It's been raining in Manila, do you not feel cold?... When it pours over here, does it get rainy there, too?'/*Raining in Manila*," June 4, 2023, Spotify, 4:51, https://open.spotify.com/track/0mtkRIAOueeXqHpyahIbt-J?si=K-menQ6QSaCN1Baspyd3fA.

45. Christine Bacareza Balance, *Tropical Renditions: Making Musical Scenes in Filipino America* (Durham: Duke University Press: 2016), 4.

46. Gabriel Pabico Lalu, "Japan's Shibuya crossing sees pink amid march of Robredo supporters," *Inquirer.net*, April 12, 2022, accessed February 16, 2022, https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1582162/japans-shibuya-crossing-sees-pink-amid-march-of-robredo-supporters#ixzz7tUmrPuc8.

47. Or "people without romantic partners for Leni and Kiko."

support in her campaign: "*Patunay po kayo na walang kinikilalang distansya ang pagmamahal, lalo na kung para ito sa ating bayan.*"[48] Shortly after the walk towards Little Manila began, an organizer had emphasized the following words: "Do not engage." These utterances signaled some expectation that participants would encounter hecklers—and indeed there were people in Marcos t-shirts watching from their balconies— who would challenge the movers in their show of support for Robredo. On the walk, I heard the words, "*Marcos kami*!" several times.

Somehow this sound did not seem that unfamiliar at all. Perhaps—in consideration for the dominant narrative that Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. "won big" in Canada—it would be the very presence, the visible and intentional kinesthetic intervention, of Robredo supporters that would come across as surprising.[49] To me, another surprising yet validating sound produced in this moment of diasporic listening was an audible applause made by the crowd in response to the calls, "no to red-tagging." These words were spoken by members of groups whose counterparts in the Philippines were typically known to critique Robredo's allies in the Liberal Party. In that same space, the people who applauded to these calls also engaged in a collective display of singing— of a song called "*Handog Ng Pilipino Sa Mundo*," (translated as, "'The Gift of the Filipinos to the World") which was recorded shortly after the 1986 People Power revolution that put President Corazon Aquino in power.

Why did these sounds appear to be familiar and unfamiliar at once? And what clues might one derive from these moments that disrupt or challenge dominant (sometimes essentialist) discourses that tended to underscore supposedly clear and enduring divisions between political lines, or between Filipino/a/xs in the diaspora and those in the Philippines? In these moments of listening, I echo the sentiments of Casey Mecija, who in her dissertation explains that:

> ...queer diasporic experience produces sounds (as well as their attendant silences) that do something, politically and materially. Posing inquiry into the structure of affective, libidinal, epistemological, and political attachments to aurality, this project listens to sounds in contemporary culture that might otherwise be rendered unintelligible or queer. In our contemporary moment, where borders structure diasporic conditions, this project imagines other ways and forms of belonging together, despite the state's foreclosures.[50]

This idea of the sonic, as being marked by an imagination of belonging, is one that potentially queers the polarizing discourses that surround the Philippine elections. In the face of disinformation, indeed, a question that might arise is:

48. "You are proof that love knows no distance, especially if it is for country."

49. Carlito Pablo, "Philippines president-elect Marcos Jr. wins big among Filipino voters in Canada," *The Georgia Straight*, May 17, 2022, accessed February 16, 2023, https://www.straight.com/news/philippines-president-elect-marcos-jr-wins-big-among-filipino-voters-in-canada.

50. Casey Mecija, "*The Sound of Queer Diaspora: Sonic Enactments of Filipinx Desire, Loss and Belonging*," PhD Diss, University of Toronto, 2020, https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/103430/3/Mecija_Casey_202011_PhD_thesis.pdf.

how could we possibly imagine allyship with fellow Filipinos who have placed their hopes—our hopes—on flawed personalities? Here, the acts of listening, moving, and remembering, present themselves not as cut-and-dried solutions to abuses of power, but as kinesthetic interventions that people turn to, to arrive at some point of understanding ourselves and our *kababayan*. In recalling where my own body had been, I remember that I, too, once walked and stood at the corner of EDSA and Ortigas Avenue. This was not during the People Power Revolution of 1986, but much later—when Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo took an oath to serve the interests of the Filipino people as the 14th President of the Philippines, after the ouster of Joseph Estrada. Although I was just a child during the event known as "EDSA II," Macapagal-Arroyo would hold on to that power well after she famously uttered the words, "I am sorry." The political divide between the two former presidents, it seems, no longer held true as of the 2022 elections, yet the physical movement I (regrettably) participated in paved way for an understanding of the complex nature of collective remembering and forgetting. My own embodied memories of movement—which had been replayed with the sounds I encountered on social media during the pandemic and the 2022 national elections—signaled the persistence of embodied ways of remembering injustice, as well as hope, and of empathizing with kababayans who must live through (and work through) all of it.

Although my primary aim was to highlight the visibility of dances—and by extension, sonic and kinesthetic practices—during the 2022 Philippine election campaigns, through this moment of autoethnography, disobedient listening, and active remembering, I also highlight the movement discourses that emerge amidst very polarizing conversations circulated on social media. To be clear, the discursive possibilities I speak of are not of unity nor of unified sound. Rather, through this autoethnography and disobedient listening practice, I emphasize the emergence and persistence of seemingly contrapuntal sounds and a variety of movement expressions—partially choreographed, partially improvised—which signal shared affinities in terms of affect as well as politics. Here I use the phrase "shared affinities" carefully and with certain intention; these are meant to echo the "affective…attachments to reality" that Mecija speaks of in the quote above. "Shared" connotes sensations that are experienced together without erasing differences in values. There are certainly other phrases, like kinship or membership, that denote connected experiences, yet they do not quite encapsulate the specificity of "shared affinities," or even Mecija's term, "affective attachments." A word such as "kinship" might connote a much closer connection between individuals, whereas "membership in a group" risks rehearsing the delineation of geographic and political lines. Instead, I try to find an appropriate phrase that describes affective experiences that provoke and expose shared hopes and desires for governance.

In this moment of disobedient listening, I also imagine that sound-making and movement (like walking with, holding onto, or carrying other bodies) can serve as present- and future-oriented kinesthetic interventions, which highlight in a more potent way the shared affinity for freedom (*kalayaan*), justice (*katarungan*), and hope (*pag-asa*) among Filipinos of different geographies. It was evident how some of these sounds made by Filpino/a/xs during the Walk for Leni-Kiko activated a range of meanings: a respect for ritual (e.g., prayer); an invitation for the body to engage in memory-making (i.e., in song, laughter); an empathic

concern for hungry bodies (as in offers to partake in food and drink); an empathic concern for silenced bodies in the era of Duterte (as in, calls to end red-tagging); an anticipation of opposition (by pro-Marcos supporters); and finally, the desire to perform obedience and compliance (as in calls to keep the park trash-free, or to sing both national anthems) in the land known as Canada. I close with the following intention: upon reflecting on the multiple meanings of movement practices like these, which are far from fixed and are even contradictory at times, I draw attention to the epistemologies that can emerge when research, pedagogy, performance, activism (and a confluence of these) become attuned to bodies in motion. In "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics, or the task of the dancer," performance studies scholar André Lepecki engages with philosopher Hannah Arendt when she mentions that "we have arrived in a situation where we do not know—at least not yet—how to move politically."[51] Lepecki sees, in this "not yet," a lack, a sense of urgency, and unique possibility all at once. In the "not yet," there arises a pressing need to understand movement—in both the kinesthetic and civic senses of the word—in order to orient oneself and one's community towards justice and freedom. In the context of Philippine democracy and electoral politics, the "not yet" often seems to gesture to an idea that spontaneous collective uprisings like the People Power revolution have not yet manifested in dismantling the neocolonial powers that plague supposedly democratic institutions. However, if one were to re-examine this through the lens of performance and memory, it would also appear that the collective uprisings— forms of choreographies in themselves—continue to have a hold across generations. These would, in themselves, indicate that Philippine traditions of performance and the long-held desires for hope and justice continue to find traces in the Filipino/a/x body, and that these political desires continue to be choreographed across archipelagoes and across political party lines.

Thus, to revise and recontextualize Arendt's statement: while the Filipino people might not yet know how to remove the restraints of neocolonial and oligarchic politics, or how to move the results of elections for lasting good, we can at least continue to move with each other—listening, walking, dancing, and engaging in collective forms of care— so that we might learn to re-choreograph the missteps of past and present. Instead of rehearsing classist or elitist divisions, and instead of confining bodies to disciplinal categories (here I speak of academic disciplines, as well as the disciplinal orientation of certain choreographic practices) we might consider more deeply the ways that paying attention to body, movement, and sense-oriented research methodologies can become relevant to various fields of study, as well as everyday life. Research and performance creations that appeal to the kinesthetic or the affective— to embodied forms of remembering, resisting, hoping, and loving—can work hand-in-hand with the rehabilitation of flawed democracies and the abolition of empires. An examination of choreographic endeavors, read against moments in Philippine political and electoral memory, can continue to foreground the ways in which we have struggled against injustice, the ways in which we have embodied sensations that provoke a collective spirit of hope.

51. André Lepecki, "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics: Or, the Task of the Dancer," *TDR: The Drama Review* 57, no. 4, (2013): 13–27.