
DO YOU REMEMBER HOUSE? CHICAGO'S QUEER OF COLOUR UNDERGROUNDS

MICAH E. SALKIND

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018
ISBN: 9780190698416 (hardcover)
RRP: £79 (hardcover)

FABULOUS: THE RISE OF THE BEAUTIFUL ECCENTRIC

MADDISON MOORE

Yale: Yale University Press, 2018
ISBN: 9780300204704 (hardcover)
RRP: US\$19.95 (hardcover)

<<https://dx.doi.org/10.12801/1947-5403.2022.14.01.11>>

JACOB MALLINSON BIRD
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD (UK)

In *Do You Remember House? Chicago's Queer of Colour Undergrounds* and *Fabulous: The Rise of the Beautiful Eccentric*, Micah Salkind and Madison Moore each outline a sensitive history of what it means to carve one's own place in the world. Whether embodying a fabulousness to counteract both the mundanity of everyday life and also systems of white supremacy and queerphobia, or creating a musical movement to empower queers of colour in a vast matrix of intergenerational connection, these authors chart historical and contemporaneous examples of queer tenacity, creativity and vibrancy. Moore offers a history of "fabulousness", from effete, flâneur dandies to voguing superstars, with constant recourse to the fashion, music, dance and performance cultures that make up a fabulous ideal; and Salkind offers a history of Chicago's house scene, from its disco origins to present day, always shedding light on the ways in which queers of colour propelled this now global music. Centring on mutual themes of race, queerness, temporality, glamour/fabulousness, space and, importantly, work/werk, Moore and Salkind depict the bittersweet utopia that fabulous embodiment can bring.

Both authors employ a poignant methodology, weaving at times complex theorising with oral histories, interviews, historical writing and autoethnographic vignettes. Where Moore's theory of fabulousness emerges consistently across *Fabulous*, dipping in and out

of historical context, contemporary interview and personal reverie, Salkind's text more forcefully demarcates its theoretical drive, and moves from a linear history of house music in its first part to contemporary autoethnographic work in the second. What is most impressive in Salkind's text are the ways in which they allow the music to begin their theorisations: whether the participatory discrepancies of the groove of house music leading to a theorisation of delayed pleasure, the non-teleological drive of the music reflecting intergenerational memory, or the remixed and sampled tracks offering a repertoire in motion being emblematic of shifting histories, Salkind's musico-social theory is enlightening throughout. The joy in both Moore and Salkind, though, is that the subject matter is clearly inextricably personal: Salkind's opening excitement of sneaking out as a 16-year-old to go to Deep Fix's "Where the Wild Things Are" rave continues throughout the book, and reading Moore's work clearly signals an inalienable intimacy with the subject matter: the places, the people, the music, the dance, the clothing, namely the sheer fabulousness of queer, eccentric life.

The temporality of such experiences is vitally important throughout each text and sits interestingly alongside current queer approaches. In conversation with queer theorists like Jack Halberstam (2005) and José Esteban Muñoz (2009), whose theories of queer time are well known — as sitting outside of a heteronormative system, and of existing in an over-the-rainbow "not yet here" — Moore and Salkind add interesting new dimensions. For Moore, while clearly agreeing that queer utopia is not yet here, as Muñoz would have it, they also remind us of the intensely present aspect of queerness, and of fabulousness. They write: "fabulous queer utopia is about living in the present but carrying an alternative possibility, a certain future, and yanking it into the here and now" (71), elsewhere stating that "fierceness, fabulousness, and all other visions of spectacular appearance are about imagining space and carving it out for yourself in the here and now, not waiting for the right time to do so" (109). While Muñoz and Halberstam certainly argue for the making-present of queer utopia, notable in the liminal space of the nightclub, Moore's more quotidian fabulousness — dressing iconically down the street etc. — makes liminal *de facto* heteronormative space, affecting straight time and space, and rightly so. Moore is also attendant to, following Carolyn Dinshaw's work, the importance of "queer histories" and how they create "affective relations" between past and present (71).

This is a key point for Salkind, who consistently makes reference to the intergenerational power and impetus of house music. Writing of "ancestral affiliations" (135) and the "intergenerational, cross-cultural mentorship" (176) that is so vital to house music's growth, Salkind spends considerable time on a crucial concept: neostalgia. Neostalgia, the desire for a connection to the past that one may never have had personally to begin with, resonates beyond house music and to all queer experience. Those of us who never lived through, say, the genesis of house, the ballroom scene, the AIDS pandemic, or the like, still feel that connection, a connection that is made manifest every time, for Moore, we dress fabulously, or, for Salkind, we lose ourselves in the music.¹ Salkind writes beautifully of the heady mixture of past and present in these experiences: the unctuous affectivity of bodies, sound, time and place is felt throughout their work.

The joys that come with fabulousness and house music aren't without their struggles, though, and the labour of queer people and queers of colour is foregrounded throughout. Moore's analysis playfully riffs off a ludic linguistics of "work" versus "werk", where "werk!", the queer affirmation yelled at balls and drag bars (and sometimes even street corners), "is a type of aesthetic labour actually seen on the body, and it highlights the effort that goes into making memorable aesthetic moments that happen" (27). Creating a look is work, and that work, to extend Carol Hanisch (1969), is always political. Alok Vaid-Menon, trans non-binary activist and social media star, says in interview with Moore: "What keeps me going is there's a long tradition of people doing this work, and it is *work*. It's not just getting ready. It's actual, political work. It's strategy, it's planning, it's PR, it's how we talk about it. Every walk I make is already a [protest] march" (51). And they are certainly right: to live fabulously is political, and to sashay down the street is a political act. This work, Salkind contends, is as much political as it is academic, writing that "queer people of colour are always already theorising, even before a scholar enters the club" (16). This is politics, *theoria* and *praxis*, in action, a symbiotically lived politic that effuses these texts. What is most bittersweet, and expressed by both authors, is how often this work goes unnoticed or, worse, stolen.

Here the double-turn of queer fabulousness, in all its forms, emerges. "You can't understand fabulousness unless you get that it emerges from trauma, duress, exclusion, exhaustion and depression, and that in some ways being fabulous is the only thing that can get us out of bed in the morning", Moore writes (21). It isn't a halcyon, rose-tinted *joie de vivre*, but the only possible way of living. Add to this Salkind's poignant discussions of "generational dissonance" and the decimation of queer communities through HIV and AIDS, and queer joy is soon seen to be wrapped, knotted even, with queer pain. This idea resonates with other queer theories, notably and touchingly Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (2003) notion of queer shame. For Sedgwick, queer shame is not a by-product of being queer, but rather it is structurally integral to queerness: we are queer *because* of queer shame (see also Halperin and Traub 2009). In a similar vein, Moore and Salkind don't offer pain and trauma as contrasting elements of queer, fabulous joy— they see them as mutually constitutive.

The points the authors raise above are significantly informed by, and indeed are only intelligible in their fullness by attention to, race and racism. While queer temporality, for example, may be one thing, Moore reminds their reader that "brown people have to wait for things in a way that white folks don't necessarily have to" (164), a poignant insertion of waiting into the radical nowness-cum-futurity of queer joy. Salkind, similarly, writes extensively of the erasure of queers of colour who worked/werked the cultural labour of house music, and their exclusion from the spaces that were once made for them. Clubs that purported inclusivity became "profoundly discouraging for Black gay men in particular" (43), an example of exclusionary door policies that are still hideously contemporary. Salkind offers a measured response to such issues; speaking of clubs that actively seek to promote inclusivity of all kinds, Salkind offers the term "safer", rather than safe, spaces, foregrounding the fact that "the work of creating a safety is never done" (186). Throughout

both texts, the doubly marginalised position of queers and women of colour is brought to the fore, and adds critical dimension to the work undertaken.

Subtle moves like the above perhaps render Salkind's text more acutely critical than Moore's. Throughout, Salkind has a measured idea of utopia, one that is constantly in progress, and one that is malleable, multifarious. While Moore argues, after Muñoz, for a "critical idealism ... a way of living that privileges hope and possibility instead of the suffocating anti-utopian negativism that is often de rigueur (186)", sometimes this hope can be for a potentially untenable or uncritical utopia. I am thinking, for example, of the various calls to end gender that reappear throughout the book. At first reading, these desires to end gender seem justified, an end, surely, to the gender-based violence that befalls queer people on a daily basis. Considering the call further, I begin to think of certain trans friends, and the conversations we have about their gender: about how they are fighting *for* their gender and their right to express their gender, a gender that is so deeply important to them. For many, gender is joyful — "gender euphoria", as it's often called — and while gender must be opened up, its negative effects dismantled, its violence pacified, to end gender altogether would deny many people an important structuring point of their identity: certainly, people must be safe *not* to have a gender, and we must work to make this a reality, but we must also be attentive to those for whom gender is critical. Moore shows elsewhere that they are seemingly aware of this when they state for example that "not every queer person is a fabulous eccentric, not every queer person should be" (85). Here the difficulties of utopian thinking arise; if queerness is undefinable multiplicity, surely utopia is also.

Importantly, Moore consciously and effectively dismisses what one could imagine being a prevalent conservative or normative critique (and one that gets woefully bandied around the British press...): that fabulousness and the like is somehow frivolous, unimportant, or even selfishly narcissistic. To this Moore argues that, rather than flippant dressing, "our real selves [are] the ones wearing make-up and high heels" (45), an aesthetics of self that echoes my favourite Foucault quotation: "From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think that there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art" (Foucault 1991: 351). Parrying superficiality—in its negative affect—Moore adds that "we care about surfaces" (45) and the body, reminiscent of important aspects of Butlerian gender theory and spectrally unpicking a Cartesian dualism. In other words, embodied, performative identity isn't an afterthought, it's the real deal. This is certainly present in Salkind's work also: for the DJs and performers at Queen!, dressing and makeup aren't optional, but utterly integral.

What is perhaps most special about these texts, and what captivates so much, is a kind of queer reading that they encourage, and how their subject matters, historical and contemporary, reverberate with their readers. Reading both of these works, I felt—as I am sure many queer people will—the neostalgia of so many culture-shifting moments, the empathy and kinship of the joys and traumas of queer life, and my own memories of losing myself and finding myself in the sweaty underbellies of queer nightclubs. The texts mutually create a living archive of queer fabulousness; one that is very much needed, and one that sheds a light on the creative labour of communities too often overlooked.

NOTES

- ¹ For interesting discussions of a different sort of neostalgia and desire for connection with queer past, see Halperin 2007.

REFERENCES

- Foucault, Michel. 1991. "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress". In *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, 343-364. London: Penguin Books.
- Halberstam, Jack. 2005. *In A Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York University Press.
- Halperin, David. 2007. *What Do Gay Men Want? An Essay on Sex, Risk, and Subjectivity*. Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.
- Halperin, David and Valerie Traub, ed. 2009. *Gay Shame*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hanisch, Carol. "The Personal is Political". February 1969.
<<https://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html>>, (accessed 8.10.22).
- Muñoz, José Esteban. 2009. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: New York University Press.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. 2003. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Durham: Duke University Press.

THE BOY FROM MEDELLÍN

DIR. MATTHEW HEINEMAN

USA: Amazon Original, 2020

<<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt13009186/>>

<<https://dx.doi.org/10.12801/1947-5403.2022.14.01.12>>

ANA MARÍA DÍAZ PINTO

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS (US)

JUAN DIEGO DÍAZ

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS (US)

Directed by Academy Award-nominated and Emmy Award-winning filmmaker Matthew Heineman, *The Boy from Medellín* (2020), portrays a week in the life of Colombian reggaetón artist José Osorio Balvin—better known by his stage name J Balvin—in advance of the culminating concert of his Colores 2019 tour in his hometown of Medellín. Although this is Heineman’s first music-themed documentary, it is not his first biographical film tackling complex social issues in Latin America, as *Cartel Land* (2015) attests. *The Boy from Medellín*, joins a catalogue of biographical documentary films portraying the tensions between public and private life of popular musicians such as Jay-Z (*Fade to the Back*, 2004), George Harrison (*Living in the Material World*, 2011), Residente (*Residente*, 2017), Anitta (*Vai Anitta*, 2018), Taylor Swift (*Miss Americana*, 2020), and Billie Eilish (*Billie Eilish: The World’s a Little Blurry*, 2021). As is often the case in these documentaries, Heineman engages many complex aspects of J Balvin’s life and work, of which we will focus on two: The development of the reggaetón scene in Medellín, centering Balvin’s position within it; and the negotiation between Balvin’s public and private personas. From this second topic, we will elaborate on the artist’s engagement with the political realities he encountered in Colombia, the role of social media in shaping relationships between artists and audiences, mental health issues, and the “return to the hood” and overcoming topoi.

As in other Latin American countries, reggaetón arrived in Colombia through piracy and the exchange of cassettes and discs within the rap and dembow community in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Navarro 2019). Programming mostly Puerto Rican reggaetón at the beginning, radio stations and figures such as El Gurú del Sabor (Fernando Londoño) were crucial in disseminating and popularizing the genre within the country, paving the way for the emergence a local scene in Medellín, which is now recognized as a reggaetón powerhouse (García 2013). It is within this scene that José, as J Balvin chose to call himself in this initial period, and other youths from Medellín began to incursion into reggaetón composition and singing. With José and groups such as 3 Pesos and Golpe a Golpe, the Medellín scene gradually grew, reaching international visibility for its high professional productions when a group of artists created the recording label Palma Productions in the

early 2000s. One of the first goals of these artists was creating a sound and aesthetics distinct from its Caribbean counterpart. They accomplished that by using romantic lyrics, melodic lyricism with influences from Anglo-American pop, and chord progressions with inversions and extensions emulating the harmonic colors of jazz (Franco 2018). If the Puerto Rican reggaetón of the first wave (i.e., from the early 2000s until 2010) was characterized by a robust percussive texture similar to that of dancehall, in combination with synthesizers playing the harmonic sequence $i-VI-V$, the Colombian reggaetón of those days used more chordal variety, as we can hear in “Obra de Arte” an iconic reggaetón by Fainal & Shako, famously performed by Balvin, that features the harmonic progression $i^7-iv^7-VI^7-V^7$.

The first part of the documentary features a young J Balvin consolidating his career as a reggaetón artist in Medellín through dogged work. This narrative of struggle and self-improvement is consistent with a hip-hop street aesthetics that centers and idealizes the artist’s humble origins. Although reggaetón lyrics in the early stages in Colombia featured the typical Puerto Rican *malianteo* and *fronteo* (i.e., texts based on crudeness, confrontation and hyper-masculinity), artists such as J Balvin and later Maluma, contributed to develop a distinct Colombian approach called *romantiqueo*, or use of romantic lyrics. The documentary features various pieces in this tradition such as “Ay Vamos,” “En mi,” and “Obra de Arte,” which can be contrasted with the confrontational style that characterized early Colombian productions such as “Tiradera Pa’l Guru,” a piece first performed in 2003 by a collective of reggaetón artists called Colombian Flow.¹

The main theme and source of tension in the film is Balvin’s dilemma: one the one hand he has come to his home city to reconnect with his family, friends and fans, to visit the neighborhood where he grew up, and to perform what he called “the most important concert of his career” in Medellín’s largest venue (a local football stadium). On the other, the volatile social situation in Colombia, perceived by many as the result of President Iván Duque’s neoliberal policies, created the expectation among many of his fans that J Balvin and other high-profile artists should intervene either by voicing criticism against the government or calling for the end to violence in the streets. Initially Balvin resists getting involved because he believes that artists are not to engage in politics, but through multiple interactions with producers, family members and fellow artists, he changes his mind. Yet many thought his intervention (a call to the government to listen to the youth and to end violence in the streets during his final concert) was both late and lukewarm. While dealing with this conflict, various contradictions are revealed. Balvin, who is shown arriving in Medellín in his private jet, driving luxurious cars and living in a mansion with an army of servers (practically all women in the film are either Balvin’s fans or part of his supporting team), tries to connect with people from poor neighborhoods by walking down the streets, shaking hands and taking selfies with them. It is no wonder that he struggled to connect with “the hood.” The neighborhood where he grew up, the humble origins that lend him authenticity within reggaetón discourse, is only visited, not inhabited. Colombian society seems incomprehensible for him.

Balvin's reluctance to speak up in the middle of Colombia's political upheaval is, nonetheless, atypical among fellow Latin American reggaetón artists who are known for their ongoing political engagement within their communities. During the wave of youth-led political and social revolts that swept Colombia and other Latin American countries at the end of 2019, many reggaetón musicians responded to their fans' call for action. In Puerto Rico, for instance, the demands were directed against Governor Ricardo Rosselló (incidentally, son of former Governor Pedro Rosselló, who persecuted and banned the underground musicians who eventually developed reggaetón on the island during the mid-1990s), accused of corruption and homophobia. Reggaetón artists such as Bad Bunny, Ñengo Flow, Daddy Yankee and Residente marched in the streets along with thousands of protestors. Likewise, in Chile, the revolt against President Sebastián Piñera's neoliberal agenda was supported by Chilean and Puerto Rican reggaetón artists such as Pablo Chill-e, Lizz, Don Omar, Zion, Nicky Jam and others. Surely Balvin's inaction in the context of this tradition of reggaetón political activism in Latin America confused his Colombian audiences and intensified their criticism of his silence.

Of course, Balvin and other reggaetón artists are not the first popular musicians to have experienced pressure from their audiences to take political stances at critical junctures. Ingrid Monson (2007), for instance, documented the case of many Black jazz musicians during the African American Civil Rights and Black Power Movements in the US in the 1960s and 1970s, who felt morally pressured to take political action. Philip Auslander's (2004 and 2006) tri-partite concept of *musical personae*, which includes the real person, the musical person, and the character (in songs, for example), is useful to understand the complex interaction of public and private aspects of the life these performers. In Heineman's documentary, Balvin appears as a professional and well-established musician (J Balvin) with a fragile real human behind the scenes (José). His *musical personae* is that of a dreamer *cangri* (influential person in reggaetón slang), enriched by the nuances from the fictional characters described or alluded to in his songs. For instance, in introspective scenes, we hear songs like "7 de Mayo" whose lyrics reinforce the image of a sensitive man who acknowledges his humble origins and is committed to supporting up and coming artists. Other characters in Balvin's songs, not shown in the documentary, include the promiscuous macho, explicit in "Si tu Novio te Deja Sola" and "Mojaita." Heineman addresses the artist's inner complexity by including extended sections of J Balvin's concerts, images of José with his spiritual guide and medical team, and scenes of Balvin incarnating the *cangri* character, for example when he receives phone messages from artists such as will.i.am prior to his concert. While these three aspects of his *musical personae* are identifiable at different points of the film, it is difficult to draw clean boundaries among them. At the climax of the final concert and its aftermath, the narrative of the sensitive, crisis-ridden, conflicted artist gives way to a larger story of overcoming.

One prominent aspect that amplifies Balvin's conflict is social media communication. With the advent of social media platforms such as Twitter, TikTok and Instagram, many fans have now the opportunity to interact with their favorite musicians and with fellow

fans. With artists constantly posting both professional and personal information, these platforms have created a sense of closeness between musicians and audiences that did not exist before when interactions were limited to live concerts or reading/watching the news and thus more purely parasocial. Artists have recognized that this virtual closeness is beneficial to promote their careers and to understand their fans' desires. One aspect of this perceived closeness is that many audiences feel that artists are part of their communities and thus should be sensitive and committed to their causes and tribulations. This issue is explicitly portrayed in the documentary. It is through social media that J Balvin learns about the reactions of his fans to the strikes in Medellín and to the assassination of young student Dylan Cruz by the Colombian police. More importantly, he reads and hears their louder and louder calls for him to intervene through these platforms. At a dramatic point he takes the bold decision of meeting one of his critics (local rapper Mañas Ru-Fino), all arranged through social media. We'll let readers watch the documentary to learn how two contemporary musicians from the same city negotiate their opposing views on the artist's commitment to social justice. In a vivid manner, *The Boy from Medellín*, thus engages the real challenges that artists face now that social media functions as a public forum.

The narrative of J Balvin's "return to the hood" proposed in this documentary is therefore problematic but should not be judged as insensitive or trivializing. The complex political situation that J Balvin encountered in Colombia, intensified by social media activity, and expectations of political involvement on his part, had a real toll on José's mental health. The efforts that he and his team made to deal with the conflict and to put on a successful performance were enormous. His intentions to connect with the people he grew up with seem genuine on the screen despite his understandable distance from their daily experience and his detached attitude. The "return to the hood" and overcoming narratives served Heineman to weave these threads of Balvin's experience into the fabric of his *musical personae*. At the same time, the two narratives cemented Balvin's position as a politically outspoken Latin American reggaetón artist: at the concert, which represents the overcoming, Balvin joins fellow reggaetón musicians from the region in voicing his concern for social justice. In the end, the relationship between Balvin and his audience is simultaneously strained and reinforced. The singer uses the streets of Medellín as an extension of the scenic space, but those streets are no longer known in depth; the city may have been his place of humble origins but is now only partially accessible from his position of fame.

The Boy from Medellín is therefore an obligatory watch for those interested in reggaetón culture, its aesthetics, politics, narratives, dynamics of local production and popularization, the struggles of the real person behind the artist, the blurred boundaries that social media creates between audiences and artists, and the development of reggaetón scenes in Latin American cities in general, and in Medellín in particular. The five-episode TV documentary series *Flow Importado, Ritmo Pegado* (2018), which documents the rise to fame of key reggaetón figures from Medellín, including J Balvin himself, offers important historical context to Heineman's film. Although *The Boy from Medellín* stands on its own, readers will gain a deeper understanding of the stories of J Balvin and the other reggaetón artists

shown in the film as well as their audiences' passion for the genre, from watching the TV series beforehand. *The Boy from Medellín* will not disappoint even those purely interested in reggaetón aesthetics; the director devoted about ten minutes to the final concert, a fortunate decision that allows us to appreciate Balvin's artistic craft in all its splendor.

NOTES

¹ This performance of "Tiradera Pa'l Gurú" can be watched here:
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yoTGSfIFQO0>>.

REFERENCES

- Auslander, Philip. 2004. "Performance Analysis and Popular Music: a Manifesto". *Contemporary Theater Review* 14(1): 1-13.
- Auslander, Philip. 2006. "Musical Personae". *The Drama Review* 50(1): 100-119.
- García, Julio. 2013. "Del Tango al Reggaetón: Medellín, Capital de los Contrastes Musicales." *BBC News Mundo*, 17 October. <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2013/11/131017_cultura_medellin_capital_musical_colombia_jgc>.
- Monson, Ingrid. 2007. *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call out to Jazz and Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Navarro, Fernando. 2019. "Medellín, la Fábrica del Reggaetón". *El País*, 30 November. <https://elpais.com/elpais/2019/11/26/eps/1574784498_877729.html>.

FILMOGRAPHY

Franco, Andrés. 2018. *Flow Importado, Ritmo Pegado*. Medellín: TeleMedellín.

EXPLOSIONS IN THE MIND: COMPOSING PSYCHEDELIC SOUNDS AND VISUALISATIONS

JONATHAN WEINEL

Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021

ISBN: 9789811640544 (hardcover), 9789811640551 (eBook)

RRP: £89.99 (hardcover), £71.50 (eBook)

<<https://dx.doi.org/10.12801/1947-5403.2022.14.01.13>>

DAVE PAYLING

STAFFORDSHIRE UNIVERSITY (UK)

Explosions in the Mind (EITM) is part of the Palgrave Studies in Sound series, exploring sonic and audio-visual themes. It is Weinel's second book, and can be read as a companion to his earlier *Inner Sound: Altered States of Consciousness in Electronic Music and Audio-Visual Media* (Weinel, 2018). *Inner Sound* explores altered states of consciousness (ASCs) in audio-visual media from a theoretical perspective, and contextualises it with related work, whereas *EITM* focusses squarely on Weinel's own praxis, originating from his PhD studies and extended to the present day. The book is richly illustrated with many full colour images and includes supplementary materials hosted online by the publisher, comprising audio and video samples and working software apps for experimenting with the techniques discussed in the book. Weinel frames his work around altered states of consciousness, specifically psychedelic experiences and how they can be interpreted in sound and vision. Psychedelic theories such as Leary's "seven levels of energy consciousness" (1998), are introduced, in this case explaining how it has influenced the design of *Surfer Stem* (2010); Weinel's audio composition discussed in Chapter 2.

With topics ranging from digital performance through to painting and direct animation techniques, an extensive range of artistic disciplines are represented. Each chapter commences with personal anecdotes revealing the nature of the content ahead and are then interwoven with informative references to popular culture and recollections of Weinel's experiences. After these introductory notes there follows a detailed examination of the individual artworks themselves. As an example, *Cenote Sagrado* (2014), is one of Weinel's audio-visual compositions inspired by his visit to a ritualistic sacrifice centre, the Sacred Cenote in Mexico. After discussing its historical significance the technical realisation of the composition itself is detailed: in this case direct animation on film stock and rhythmic hardware sound synthesis. A recurring compositional technique is also included here: the piece is structured to emulate the onset, plateau and termination phases that one might experience in a psychedelic trip, and this determines the audio-visual qualities in each section.

From a dance music perspective, *EITM* explores some of the more niche, and often more sonically "harder", EDM genres including flashcore—a form of speedcore techno with elements of electroacoustic music—hard trance, acid techno and hardcore rave music. Weinel incorporates some of these EDM styles into his electroacoustic compositions, *Surfer*

Stem using elements from Dubstep for example. Vaporwave is another genre Weinel uses, taking a plunderphonics approach to 1980s and 1990s audio trivia sample loops to create an immersive nostalgia trip in his *Cyberdream* (2019) virtual reality experience. These genres are generally touched on quite briefly but there is a lot of material to cover, and sound is only one component of the many multimedia productions on show here.

EITM introduces Weinel's creative works chronologically with respect to their date of creation, and is sequenced to cover the categories of electroacoustic composition, real-time performance, audio-visual composition, interactive projects, VJ performance and virtual reality experiences, mirroring Weinel's artistic journey. Overall, it is an engaging read and will be of interest to artists, practitioners and academics from the disciplines of electronic music, creative coding, DJing and VJing, composition, performance and related fields. It is highly relevant to those utilising a practise-based approach to research where this can lead to insights into methods for expanding an artist's creative repertoire. A practise-based approach to research is continually rising in popularity across a range of creative disciplines and this volume will provide a useful reference for others to follow. The frameworks provided in the concluding Chapter 8 are particularly indicative and useful in this respect. Introduced here are three design frameworks, specifically: psychedelic journeys in sound, ASC simulations and synaesthetic visualisations of sound, which have been formulated through practise and can be implemented by others desiring to create ASC inspired artworks. The conclusion also discusses how the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced the development of virtual clubs and dance events incentivising the shift to digital and online experiences, providing motivation and increased relevance for continued study.

REFERENCES

- Leary, Timothy. 1998. *The Politics of Ecstasy*. Berkeley, California: Ronin.
- Weinel, Jonathan. 2018. *Inner Sound: Altered States of Consciousness in Electronic Music and Audio-Visual Media*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Weinel, Jonathan. 2019. "Cyberdream VR: Visualizing Rave Music and Vaporwave in Virtual Reality". In *Proceedings of the 14th International Audio Mostly Conference: A Journey in Sound*, 277–81. New York, USA: Association for Computing Machinery. <<https://doi.org/10.1145/3356590.3356637>>.

DISCOGRAPHY

- Weinel, Jonathan. 2010. *Entoptic Phenomena EP*. 2010. (MP3): Entopic. <<https://www.discogs.com/release/2332275-Jon-Weinel-Entoptic-Phenomena-EP>>.

FILMOGRAPHY

- Weinel, Jonathan. 2014. *Cenote Sagrado*. UK. <<https://vimeo.com/107164661>>.

THE DISCOURSE COMMUNITY OF ELECTRONIC DANCE MUSIC

ANITA JÓRI

Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2022
ISBN: 9783837657586 (paperback)
RRP: \$45.90 (paperback)

<<https://dx.doi.org/10.12801/1947-5403.2022.14.01.14>>

ANDREW WHELAN

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG (AUSTRALIA)

The Discourse Community of Electronic Dance Music is a book about how people communicate about electronic dance music online. It is an important contribution to EDMC and online interaction research for two reasons. Firstly, it develops a methodological framework for engaging with how people talk about musical phenomena online, how to evaluate these “discourse communities” and what coheres them. Secondly, the book therefore poses crucial, albeit largely tacit questions to the field of popular music studies broadly, and the field of EDMC research in particular: how do people talk about music and what should researchers *do* about that, which is to say, what is their method of analysis? How is that method justified and what is scalable or portable about it?

Jóri’s framework is operationalised across three language domains. Respectively, these are structure and meaning (e.g. insider terminology, compensatory strategies such as “likes” and emojis and identity markers such as “I” and “we”); interaction management (e.g. hierarchical dynamics in terms of frequency of contributions and extent of interaction in terms of response rates); and social phenomena (linguistic expressions of friendship and community, tokens of mutual interest etc.). As chapter one elucidates, Jóri’s framework draws on Susan Herring’s canonical work on computer-mediated discourse analysis (2004). She directs this in pursuit of what, following John Swales, she calls “discourse communities”, a heuristic analogous to “virtual scenes” (38-9), intended to capture the interpersonal networks and exchanges occurring at the research sites. These sites are: the web forums We are the Music Makers and Gearspace (devoted to Aphex Twin and music production technology respectively); the Facebook groups TB-303 Owners Club and ITALO DISCO MANIACS; the “classic” websites, Vintage Synth Explorer and Resident Advisor; and the blogs Matrixsynth, female:pressure Tumblr and Little White Earbuds.

The second chapter contains a thorough discussion of discourse-related research methods, including corpus-based and multimodal discourse analyses and cognate approaches.

Linguistic anthropology does not get a mention, although conversation analysis and membership categorization analysis—two closely linked sociological approaches—are both discussed and incorporated. The book also draws on research on youth culture, popular music and EDMC in English, German and Hungarian, and is thus valuable as an interdisciplinary (and even intercultural) dialogue and a gateway to further research. Although some of the discourse and method material can be technical—and here an index would have been helpful—Jóri does not presuppose technical knowledge on the reader's part, and most technical matters are explained in accessible prose. One consequential term that is not defined at the point of its introduction though is "genre". First appearing in the literature review, and germane to the discussion of "community" as a discursive phenomenon, "genre" can be confusing to those unfamiliar with its application in linguistics (perhaps especially for readers anticipating the musical use of that term). Genre is formulated here as an event e.g., a news report, or a presidential press conference (75).

Another term, upon which the project is predicated, is "community" (71-73). The book raises important questions about what an online social group is and how to measure it through its language use, not all of which it sets out to address. The term "community" is not problematised. This isn't necessarily a shortcoming: "community" sometimes functions as a sort of placeholder, indexing empirically observable phenomena. The book is agnostic on the content of "community" or what it might entail politically (with the important caveat that Jóri is direct about the gendered language use in her data, and about the broader exclusionary patterns in EDMC). But Jóri still has to develop tools to assess the extent and content, as it were, of group cohesion. One way of doing this is by reference to the use of "we" as an indicator of community (119, 125, 137, 147).

The assumptions underlying the idea that "we" would stand in this way are not explicated. One can imagine situations where there is community sentiment, but people do not use "we", and the converse, where "we" is abused by powerful figures seeking to impose the appearance of consensus. Ultimately (and going by her account of the data, rightly), Jóri determines "we" is of limited efficacy as an indicator and suggests it be abandoned (174). What are the implications of this? Is it telling us something about collective identity, or is it telling us something about communication? If the latter, is it about mediation, or is it about communicative strategy? Jóri does not speculate on these questions, but they help to show how, by engaging so thoroughly with online data, she pushes the parameters of CMDA and similar corpus-oriented approaches as far as they will go.

One important aspect of the book is how it works across different online platforms: forums, blogs and so on, each with distinct affordances. As Jóri acknowledges, there is a relationship between platform design and community structure. For example, some of the limited interaction on the Matrixsynth blog, despite its popularity, may be attributable to the Matrixsynth closed Facebook group (164). "Community", such as could be discerned by use of "we", might therefore not map neatly onto a corpus assembled at a single site, because Gertrude Stein's adage, "there is no there there" (1937: 17), still applies to the internet.

Those who are present are always also in at least one other place. This does not undermine the analysis, but it does invite methodological reflection about scope, site and corpus. Any analysis will have self-defined limits. As Jóri shows, the strength of a corpus approach itself requires sensitivity in a context of platform porosity.

The classification scheme Jóri applies provides a picture of the shape of the relationships inside the group and how they are conducted. It can be used to measure the scale, frequency and intensity (the “temperature”) of social interaction. This enables comparative work, but it also means that the local ethnographic flavour comes from (naturally occurring) terminology, rather than multi-turn sequences evidencing how participants negotiate meaning and their respective positions. For example, in the analysis of the italo disco Facebook group, Jóri lists some of the adjectives used to describe italo tracks, including “Bomb, very hot, very sophisticated, Obscure girl of Italo, superfluous, cheap, wonderful, great, hot girl of italo, such a beauty, bumped up, awesome crasher, nice, lovely, extremely rare, beautiful” (154). The lingua franca is presumably English, though Jóri points out that familiarity with the Italian language is regarded positively within the group. The gender politics of these adjectives are evident. Jóri suggests that “bomb” is so gendered, and though we know (from Tom Jones) that there can be a “sexbomb”, I am not sure about this: *bomba* in Italian seems more along the lines of “sensational”. Local context matters. The same connotation to “bomb” would not extend—to me at least—to say, Rage Against the Machine’s “Bombtrack”, or the Radio Bomb drum ‘n’ bass project, where we might instead say “bomb” signifies fantasies of hypermasculinity. Jóri attributes this gendered use of language to the historical conjuncture in which italo disco rose to prominence, along with the majority male participants in the group.

This book—and the forms of analysis which Jóri conducts so adroitly in it—is most compelling where it touches on much bigger and broader preoccupations in contemporary sociocultural research. The historical backdrop of italo and contemporary language use around it are one example of this; that is, that the milieu in which italo disco emerged continues to influence how italo is described. Another important context, raised several times in the book, is that of nostalgia (131, 152, 156). Articulating local language practices to much broader cultural concerns both validates the methodology and serves to pinpoint the cultural phenomena so identified. This becomes riveting at the points where music appears to shape language use, as when Jóri observes regarding italo disco that

[t]he characteristics of the music genre—expresses romanticism, emotions, affections, and sexuality—highly influenced the characteristics of the discourse ... the group’s language use ... showed an interesting tendency of ‘emotionally driven’ discourse (161).

We cannot know from the data, and Jóri does not conjecture on what mechanisms might “shift” emotional registers from music to discourse about it. Nonetheless, this discussion of the interplay between language use and music—or the nature of multimodal interaction—is

deeply significant, and resonates with a lot of preoccupations in the literature about popular music, and perhaps especially about EDMC given its sometimes tangential orientation to lyrical meaning. Similarly, the perennial questions about method and how to access, or how people report on, musical experiences are cast in fresh light by the work Jóri conducts here. Jóri's book commands attention because of how it generates these kinds of insights, especially relative to more established music research methods (music criticism, interviews, fieldwork etc.). *The Discourse Community of Electronic Dance Music* is methodologically rigorous, rich in empirical detail and speaks to much bigger debates in the scholarship on popular music and EDMC.

REFERENCES

- Herring, Susan C. 2004. "Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis: An Approach to Researching Online Behavior." In *Designing for virtual communities in the service of learning*, ed. Sasha Barab, Rob Kling and James H. Gray, 338–376. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511805080.016>>.
- Stein, Gertrude. 1937. *Everybody's Autobiography*. New York, Random House.

DANCEFLOOR-DRIVEN LITERATURE: THE RAVE SCENE IN FICTION

SIMON A. MORRISON

London: Bloomsbury, 2021

ISBN: 9781501389924 (paperback)

RRP: £28.99 (paperback)

<<https://dx.doi.org/10.12801/1947-5403.2022.14.01.15>>

TOBY YOUNG

GUILDHALL SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND DRAMA (UK)

As reviews editor of *Dancecult*, one of the delights of my role has been discovering the wealth of ways that filmmakers around the world depict, interpret and critique electronic dance music culture through an artistic lens. Until encountering Simon Morrison's excellent book on *Dancefloor-Driven Literature* I perhaps had not given the same credence to novelists for going beyond simple descriptions of club cultures, but as this delightful foray into the entangled world of prose and beats demonstrates clearly and effectively, fiction has produced as much considered and vibrant commentary on EDMC as film, if not more.

In his book, Morrison sets out to explore this entanglement by mobilising sociocultural knowledge around the UK rave scene in the 1990s as a lens through which to analyse literary texts. He draws on three central uses of EDM in fiction—figurative, mechanical and diegetic—as “ways in” to the texts, unpicking the multiple ways that authors choose to (re) present the sonic and haptic world of rave both in and through text. At its heart there are some central questions (or even tensions) which need resolving: “How might authors write about something so otherworldly as a nightclub scene? How might they write lucidly and fluidly about the rigid metronomic beat of electronic music? ... [And how] might they accurately recount in fixed symbols the drifting, hallucinatory effects of a drug experience?” (61).

Morrison chooses to answer these rigorously and strategically by moving from the broad to the specific. Beginning with the broad, the first half of the book (chapters 1-5) employs sub/club-cultural theories as points of disciplinary grounding to help define the terms and contexts at play. Whilst a lot of this material is well-trodden in EDMC scholarship, Morrison presents it with an admirable deftness, and as he starts to introduce elements of literary theory in chapter 5, the more unique and interesting qualities of this work begins to reveal itself. For me though, it is in the second half of the book (chapters 6-9)—the literary case studies—that the book really comes into its own. Beginning with Irvine Welsh's seminal *Ecstasy* (1996), a vivid picture emerges of authors not so much compelled to recreate or even aesthetically elevate the subterranean deviance of clubspace, as to revel in the messiness of it; to wallow in the rich, sticky potential of all those chaotic signifiers of excess and abandon and use this potential to radically redefine the literary canon.

What comes across clearly from Morrison's writing is the richness and playfulness with which his case study authors both guide us, and are themselves guide by, the visceral

expressionism of rave and club spaces; intertwining vivid descriptions of these hedonistic spaces with nuanced and layered narrative approaches that capture or even mimic the non-hierarchical and anti-teleological anarchy of repetitive beats. One beautiful example Morrison shares is of Jeff Noon's *Needle in the Groove* (1999) and the way his prose style allows the complexity and repetition of the music to almost infect his language, creating textures of language—a liquid dub poetics, if you will—that cleverly reflects the repeating, layering, sampling and splicing of sonic material.

Another interesting theme that emerges is the complex dependency on drug-taking imagery as a shorthand for depictions of power, hedonism and release. It is interesting how many of the novels that Morrison discusses employ the postmodern storytelling strategies of “classic” partying writers (think the hazy multiplicities of William Burroughs or the brutal clash between fact and fiction in Hunter S. Thompson) to invoke the paradoxical vigour and fragility of drug-taking. We see this tendency particularly clearly in Morrison's third case study on Nicholas Blincoe, whose chaotic fictional ethnography portray the acid delirium admirably. There's something more general about technology and control in dance spaces that is strongly hinted at here, but perhaps not fully unpacked. I was reminded of the wonderful moment in China Miéville's bizarre urban fantasy *King Rat* (1998)—a reimagination of the Pied Piper fairytale set in London's breakbeat and DnB scene, not included by Morrison—where the protagonist discovers that instead of merely spinning records, a DAT with multiple layered flute samples loaded onto it is much more effective for controlling everyone in the club.

Omissions aside—I'd also want to include Rainald Goetz's stunning avant garde novella *Rave* (1998) here—*Dancefloor-Driven Literature* is wonderful book, filled with both academic richness and personal joy. A particular strength of this book is Morrison's ability to dance between literary theory, thick description, journalistic interviews and unabashed connoisseurship with elegance and ease. Intermediality, rather than translation, is at the heart of Morrison's approach, and where a lesser writer might have tried to pin the literature down into rigid theoretical frameworks and taxonomies, we are left with a beautiful sense of aesthetic awe and openness that has more than inspired me to go and read more fiction. Highly recommended.