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AND INTIMACY ON THE
DANCEFLOOR
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LUIS MANUEL GARCIA-MISPIRETA



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*To my sister Carla, and to dining above our station.*
*And to friendly strangers: you know who you are.*

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# PREFACE

When did this book really start? I am not sure I can pinpoint an exact moment. Maybe it started when I began going to raves in the 1990s as a Latino, queer, postmigrant boy in a conservative, midsized university town in Ontario. As I went to local raves, took long-distance buses, and carpooled with local friends to attend larger ones in Toronto and Windsor/Detroit, I was constantly having surprisingly intimate encounters with friendly strangers at parties, all the while sharing in exhilarating experiences of the latest house music, minimal techno, hardcore, and jungle. Maybe this book really started in 2004, as I was completing my MA in musicology and transitioning from being a historical musicologist (of thirteenth-century French polyphony—with a weakness for the French-Cypriot repertoire of Torino J.II.9) to an ethnomusicologist of popular music. I took an introductory ethnomusicology class, submitted an ethnographic essay profiling some of Toronto's post-rave nightclubs, and received encouragement to pursue the study of popular electronic dance music—despite this discipline's tendency to focus primarily on traditional/folkloric musics of exotic and colonized places. Perhaps most decisively, this book started when I was a PhD student and took a seminar with Lauren Berlant titled "The Intimate Public Sphere." I had already spent more than a year embedding myself into Chicago's house and techno scenes, and I was especially attuned to the ambivalent play of intimacy and distance that comes with being the new stranger in an established subcultural scene. As a young, queer, and brown raver and budding scholar, I was constantly navigating spaces and institutions that were not meant for me but perhaps could be.

The journey to getting published was not a simple or easy one, and I wish I had heard more of these difficult stories before working on this book, instead of the smooth and frictionless narratives that were fed to me

in graduate school. As a multiply marginalized scholar working on an unconventional and low-prestige research project, I am committed to telling the kind of ambivalent, messy story that could have helped me. I started my PhD program a few years before the 2008 financial crash that crushed the academic job market, and I went on that job market only three years afterward, when the impact of the crash was still reverberating. We were in a bewildering "new normal" for academia, and most of the advice our mentors could give was woefully obsolete. Drawing on their own experience from the 1980s and 1990s, our mentors expected us to land a tenure-track job at a "modest" university directly after completing our PhD, with the presumption that our first monograph would provide the necessary leverage to move up to a suitably elite institution. And so, most of the career advice we got was about how to quickly turn a dissertation into a monograph while working as a new tenure-track faculty member, with all of the institutional supports that (used to) come with such a position. At *worst*, we might instead take a postdoctoral position somewhere (ideally an Ivy League "society of fellows"), where we could focus more intently on book production and spin-off articles, with the hopes of moving directly into a tenure-track position at an elite R1 institution (that is, a doctorate-granting university with the highest rank of research activity). Already in the years immediately after the 2008 recession the straight-to-tenure-track pipeline was collapsing, and graduates from my doctoral program were struggling to find postdoctoral positions of any sort, let alone tenure-track ones. Our supervisors and administrators simply stopped talking about the ones who "didn't make it," and that form of *damnatio memoriae* told us everything we needed to know about the perceived stakes of the career path they expected of us.

It was into this morass of attrition and toxic "survival of the fittest" ideology that I was launched into the academic job market with a research focus ill suited to the expectations of my discipline. Most ethnomusicology job postings were looking for specialists in specific world areas (such as "an Africanist"—yes, anywhere on that vast continent will do—or "a specialist in classical South Asian musics"); candidates would be expected to teach a highly problematic "Introduction to World Music" course and run a number of "world music ensembles," usually based on whatever non-Western musical instruments the university had already bought. And so, I found myself unable to get any traction with my focus on the popular electronic musics of Chicago, Paris, and Berlin—even less so with my interests in affect theory, queer studies, and urban locales.

I managed, very much at the last minute, to land a short postdoctoral position at the Freie Universität's Berlin Program for German and European Studies, leveraging the fact that I already had an ethnographic network built in that city. However, this program only ran for one year and, more problematically for this book, the program explicitly forbade postdoctoral scholars from "writing up" their doctoral thesis into a book. Instead, I was required to launch an entirely new research project, which is how I came to publish articles on techno-tourism and musical migration in Berlin during my first few years after receiving my doctorate. I managed to secure a few months of an extension to my fellowship while I desperately applied to academic jobs. At the same time, I began applying for a freelancer visa to stay in Berlin, with the plan of transitioning to full-time translation work. I was preparing to leave the field entirely.

By pure coincidence, I heard about a research group at a local Max Planck Institute that was focusing on emotions and music in Europe. Although the framing was primarily that of historical musicology, I hoped that my expertise in affect theory as well as my focus on Berlin would garner some attention. Although my application was ultimately successful, the research group leader's skepticism of my research topic, theoretical framework, and ethnographic methods resulted in a two-year (extensible to three) postdoctoral position being reduced to six months, with the potential for small extensions if I pleased the people in power. As a result, I spent the next two and a half years in constant, simmering precarity, begging for six-month extensions to my funding. For those readers who are familiar with the German immigration system, you can imagine having to return to the Ausländerbehörde (immigration authority) every five to six months—and this was back when there were no booked appointments: you showed up at 5:00 A.M. to queue for offices that would open two or three hours later.

In 2014, I landed my first teaching-focused job at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen (Netherlands), on a two-year contract. I struggled to find time to work on this book as I adjusted to a workplace with far fewer support structures compared to the North American university system for which I had been trained. In the winter of 2016, I started a permanent appointment at the University of Birmingham, although this came with a precarious three-year probation period. In the United Kingdom, I struggled to adjust to a higher education system with notoriously high workloads and a class-striated division of labor and reward, to which I was alternately illegible, abject, or a tokenistic "clever pet" to be tolerated with bemusement. Progress on the book was slow and agonizing, with repeated interruptions.

Along with this came a cascade of personal, regional, and global events that buffeted this book project. For example, the Brexit vote in 2016 made my ongoing research in Berlin more difficult as well as less likely to attract funding. That same year, events such as the Orlando Pulse massacre, the US elections, and the European xenophobic backlash to the "refugee crisis" provided troubling indicators of the return of fascist and nationalist ideology. In 2018, a major health diagnosis emerged in my family, which required me to devote the usual academic "research summer" to caregiving; at the same time, my three-year probation period was soon coming to an end, and this book was explicitly tied to whether I would be retained as a lecturer. In 2020, with my probation already precariously extended as I nervously awaited a decision on my book manuscript from Duke University Press, the pandemic hit, and we went into lockdown. The massive disruption to work and the isolation of lockdown combined with the helpless uncertainty regarding my book and my probation to snowball into a crushing burnout. After more than two years of anxious alarm bells going off continuously in my head, my body decided to shut everything down and slide into catatonia: medically mandated leave, debilitating anxiety and depression, and a slow recovery while global events continued to worsen. And here I am now, in the summer of 2022, with a book that will finally be published, a promotion to associate professor that is barely two weeks fresh, and a world that still continues to fall apart.

For those early career scholars looking for an alternate roadmap to book completion in an era of upheaval, here is my retrospective timeline: I first pitched this book verbally to Duke in 2012, on the sidelines of a popular music conference (IASPM/EMP) in New York City. I am forever grateful to Ken Wissoker for taking the time to meet with me and hear me out, in my ill-fitting suit and beaded sheen of nervous sweat. I submitted a book prospectus and roughly half of this manuscript in 2014 (the introduction and chapters 1–4), after much struggle to find time to write and edit while precariously employed in Berlin. I received the first round of reader reports later that same year, after which I was asked to submit a complete and revised manuscript before being considered for a contract. After changing jobs (and immigrating yet again to new countries) twice, I submitted the full manuscript in 2019. Updated reader reports came in the autumn of 2020—along with a publishing contract—while I was slowly recovering from my burnout and teaching remotely from Toronto in order to support my family there. That bit of good news was a godsend, but I was also too depressed to rejoice in the accomplishment. I wish I could have savored

that moment; I wish I could even remember what I did to mark the occasion, if anything. I hope I was kind to myself. In the summer of 2021, I finally submitted a fully revised manuscript, with final approval coming from the Duke advisory board in April 2022. I made final revisions, proofreading, and formatting during the summer of 2022, as I recovered from the COVID-19 coronavirus. The fact that this book exists at all is a bruised, aching triumph for me.

While writing this book was often a solitary experience, it would not have been even remotely possible without the support of friends, families, networks, and institutions. As this preface transitions into acknowledgments, I begin by thanking my closest and less formal support networks and work toward the institutional ones—with a last-minute swerve.

First and foremost, my thanks go to the Garcia-Mispireta family, including my parents, my siblings, my in-laws, and my four irrepressible nieces. I am especially grateful to my sister, Carla, who provided more emotional support and reality checks than any sibling should have to. Despite being bereft of feline companionship due to my move-to-a-new-country-every-few-years postdoctoral life, I am immensely thankful for the fuzzy, purring support of Carla's two cats, Petrarch and Gabriela, during my visits to Toronto (may their memories be a blessing).

Equally important to me—especially as a queer person—is my chosen family, that is, the pulsing and ever-blossoming networks of friends that I cultivated in every place where I have lived. Most of these networks have grown out of my involvement in local rave and club scenes, and I am especially indebted to the Berlin-based queer, feminist, and intersectional rave collective Room 4 Resistance. We began organizing parties as my employment took me further and further from Berlin, and returning to the city for the next R4R party served as a critical lifeline. My warmest, sweatiest, neon-splattered, tie-dyed, unicorn-ballooned thanks go to the whole R4R crew, who supported me through the toughest years between my PhD and this book. As we pivot toward community-building, mutual care, and interdependence, I look forward to the worlds we can create in this new decade. We are (mostly) still here, somehow!

I struggle to imagine what this project would have been without the generous support and guidance of my doctoral supervision committee, including Kaley Mason and Steven Rings. Special and tearful thanks go to the memory of Lauren Berlant, who took my ideas seriously and saw me in ways nobody else could or would. In addition to intellectual engagement, Lauren provided empathetic support through several institutional

struggles, carrying my outrage and frustration so that I could continue to be the polite, nonthreatening brown boy I needed to be in order to survive in a predominantly white, ruthlessly classist and ableist institution. Lauren, you will never get to see this book, and I will never not be sad about it.

In a similar vein, my thanks go out to the mentors who held me up through various phases of my career, such as Celia Cain, Kristin McGee, Kyra Gaunt, and Maureen Mahon, to name but a few. Nearly all of these mentors have been women and nonbinary folks, and I am very cognizant of the gendered distribution of labor, when it comes to the work of mentorship. I am grateful, in turn, to my own supervisees and mentees, as brilliant as they were patient while I worked to finish this book; helping them grow as researchers and writers has had an immeasurable impact on my own writing.

Nor can I truly measure the impact of my network of intellectual accomplices, the former classmates, coeditors, contributors, conference buddies, and extremely online Twitter nerds who gave me advice, feedback, readings, and the occasional very necessary warning as I navigated academia without a map. There are too many to name—and I offer my apologies now to those who go unmentioned—but a selection of accomplices would include Robin James, my publisher-sibling Rumya Putcha (we did it!), Kaleb Goldschmitt, Michael Meeuwis, Christopher Haworth, Byron Dueck, Mark J. Butler, Maria Witek, Imani Mosley, and so, so many more of you. Thanks for sticking with me.

Of course, an ethnographic project on urban subcultural music scenes would have been entirely impossible without the support and engagement of the scenes themselves. First of all, my thanks go to my interviewees as well as those partygoers who spoke with me in more informal ways on the dancefloors of raves and clubs wherever I went. Furthermore, I am grateful to all of those who work tirelessly to keep the dance music scenes of Berlin, Paris, and Chicago thriving. From my time in Chicago, I am glad to have been welcomed into the Naughty Bad Fun Collective and the Souvenir crew, as well as SmartBar's extended family. We had no name for our crew of *fêtards* in Paris, but my love and all the *bises* in the world go out to those who gathered and danced at On Cherche Encore, La Mona, and Maria Peligro (*que descanses, Carlito*). In addition to Room 4 Resistance and the extended network of queer rave collectives that make up Berlin Collective Action and Whole Festival, I give eternal thanks to the crew of friends and lovers who gathered in the "music nerd zone" in Pannebar, that is, the space

between the column and the left side of the DJ booth. Our love language was YouTube links to whatever tracks we could identify at the rave. And, finally, my warmest, cheesiest thanks go to my local Brum techno-nerd crew, especially Doris, Tony, Franklynne, and Mrs. Tibbs—at least 50 percent of which are cats.

I am particularly grateful to the institutions that provided logistical, material, or financial support during the various phases of this project. For example, the University of Chicago's Paris Center and its Assistanceship in Learning Technologies program provided an academic home as well as employment while I undertook fieldwork there. In Berlin, I am grateful for the informal support and community I found on the BerlinScholars mailing list, which helped me find temporary housing and navigate Berliner bureaucracy during my first visits to the city. Back in Chicago, the University of Chicago's Center for Gender & Sexuality Studies truly saved me with its Hormel Fellowship, in that final year when my scholarship was running out and I was facing barriers in my home department. Finally, I extend my thanks to the Freie Universität's Berlin European Studies Program as well as the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, both of which provided funding during my postdoctoral years in Berlin.

As a first-generation, postmigrant, queer, and Latino scholar who has worked on disciplinarily unconventional and low-prestige topics, I am committed to improving the representation of marginalized experiences in academia—and this must also include acknowledging the negative impacts that people have had on myself and my career. These disacknowledgments begin with the disciplinary patriarch in my graduate school program (and his enablers), who blocked my access to internal and external research funding as part of a broader pattern of bullying—of which I was not the sole recipient. I also recall the unnamed dissertation supervisor who quietly "forgot" to write recommendation letters for a whole year's worth of job applications. Special disacknowledgments go to the research group leader who turned a two-to-three-year postdoctoral position into five months on the basis of his disrespect for my research topic, parceling out additional months of funding in exchange for unpaid labor and favors. I cannot forget all the conference-goers who, upon seeing my name and my appearance, asked me what part of Latin America I researched, even though I was presenting and publishing research on North American and European electronic music scenes. Nor can I forget those colleagues and peers who could not conceal their contempt for popular music studies, electronic

dance music, and queer/trans life-worlds. I write these disacknowledgments in solidarity with those who have experienced and will experience similar obstacles to their flourishing. This book is for you, specifically.

And, to finish on a more uplifting note, I give my messiest, spiciest thanks to the grassroots support networks that have sprung up in the backchannels of music academia in recent years. I am not too humble to start by thanking my own groups, including The Scare Quotes and The Society for Exhausted Ethnomusicologists, all of whom carried me through some of the toughest times in these past few years. I also have endless warmth and solidarity for student-led initiatives such as Project Spectrum and the growing number of graduate student unions. Similarly, *solidarité* to the University and College Union (United Kingdom) and the DUP (Duke) Workers Union. Unionize *everything*, kittens.

# INTRODUCTION

The tricky thing about dancefloors is that they are places where both inclusion and exclusion happen. Whether subtle or conspicuous, club cultures always find ways to signal who is welcome to join in the dance. Electronic dance music scenes tend to emphasize their inclusivity while downplaying their exclusions, and this tendency can be traced back to their subcultural origins: from the clandestine, queer-of-color dance parties of early disco to the mass gatherings of suburban youth in the 1990s rave era, these scenes share a history of utopian longing for radically open inclusivity—especially for those who experience exclusion everywhere else in society. As a result, these music scenes avoid focused talk about who belongs and how, instead relying on vague references to shared musical tastes, open-mindedness, and "good vibes." This strategic vagueness is both a help and a hindrance, enabling dancers to temporarily enjoy a moment of belonging unburdened by the difficult work of "identity politics," while at the same time enabling them to ignore the exclusions and injustices taking place on those same dancefloors. Such vagueness helps to sustain social worlds that can feel exhilaratingly expansive and yet also precarious, liable to disintegrate as soon as their underlying tensions are exposed. How do dancers get along in these fluid social contexts, where learning the details of other dancers' identities, values, and political affinities risks undermining their utopian fantasy of universal

togetherness? This book takes dancefloor utopianism seriously and, in so doing, works to push electronic dance music scenes in the direction of those dreams.

*Together, Somehow* sets out to explain this getting-along in terms of stranger-intimacy—that is, the gestures of social warmth, sharing, and vulnerability between strangers that occur with surprising frequency and intensity at electronic dance music events ("parties" hereafter). It draws on ethnographic fieldwork that I conducted in the "minimal techno" and "house music" subscenes of three cities (Chicago, Paris, Berlin) as the first decade of the new millennium came to a close (2006–2010). Using stranger-intimacy as a point of departure, I consider the roles that tactility, gender, sexuality, music/sound, affect, intense experiences, and subcultural knowledge play in lubricating social interactions with fellow partygoers. In the process, I work to rethink intimacy through the diffuse, light-touch sociability of festive crowds.

What do I mean by "light-touch sociability"? Consider a common colloquial German phrase, drawn from my fieldwork in Berlin: "Alles klar?" When phrased as a question, this translates idiomatically to something like "You alright?" or "Everything fine?" You can use it to "check in" with someone, to briefly inquire after their condition without inviting the more detailed report prompted by "Wie geht's dir?" (How are you?). In this sense, the phrase is an instance of light-touch intimacy, a gesture of stranger-sociability that is both warm and impersonal. By casually expressing interest and care, it can imbue an encounter with a sense of closeness and connection. It is well suited to contexts of loose and informal socializing, where strangers mingle in familiar-feeling environments. It is, in fact, just the sort of thing you hear often on the dancefloors of Berlin's nightclubs.

**BERGHAIN / PANORAMA BAR, BERLIN; SUNDAY, JULY 26, 2008; 4:00 A.M.**

I was dancing in the middle of Panorama Bar, part of the Berghain nightclub complex. Located in a former power plant dating from the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), the club's raw industrial interiors would later become a principal site for my research as well as this book. I was there to "see"—that is, dance and listen to—Heartthrob (Jesse Siminski), a recording artist signed to the high-profile minimal-techno music label M_nus. He had been booked at Panorama Bar as part of a tour showcasing his most recent album-length release, *Dear Painter, Paint Me* (M_nus, 2008), and so his performance that night featured the sonic materials of his album while also reproducing its overall style: long, sustained, atmospheric

washes across the high-frequency range, grounded by relatively slow, resonant, and yet punctuating bass kicks. Like many artists signed to this label, Heartthrob's interpretation of minimal techno emphasized sparse textures and gradual change, unfolding at a pace that was slow even by the conventions of a musical genre that primarily develops in cycles of thirty-two and sixty-four beats. The sonic atmosphere bore a semblance to other sensory aspects of the dancefloor, too: shimmering washes of sound hung in the air like the omnipresent haze emanating from the smoke machines, while the loud bass-drum kicks thudded against my flesh like the crush of bodies on the dancefloor.

Typical of a summer Saturday night (or Sunday morning) at Berghain / Panorama Bar in 2008, the crowd had yet to hit its peak—as packed as it was. I was about halfway back on the dancefloor, near the two-story windows that looked out over the Berlin skyline and the entry queue below, but I could barely see beyond my arm's reach. And so, when a young man approached me, it seemed as if he had stepped out of a wall of shoulders. He had shoulder-length blond hair, light skin, patches of glitter on his high cheekbones, a slim frame, and an outfit that combined an oversized white T-shirt with shiny Adidas athletic shorts and running shoes. He could not have been more than twenty-five years old.

He had been in the process of pushing past me toward the bar, but he stopped to look me in the eyes, a smile on his lips. After a brief pause, he asked, "Alles klar?" And I, not entirely sure what he meant in this context but reluctant to impede the smoothness of our interaction, smiled and nodded, "Ja, alles klar." His smile broadened, as if that was all he wanted to hear, and then he caressed my face along my jawline from ear to chin and continued pushing his way through the crowd. I never saw him again.

In that moment, "Alles klar?" functioned as an opening to an exchange of surprising warmth between strangers, providing the setting for a tactile gesture that would have been entirely out of place "out on the street," in everyday urban life. What transpired then was a moment of intimacy that was improvised on the basis of corporeal copresence, a shared sensorium, and apparent aesthetic affinities; in other words, we were there in the flesh, sharing space, atmosphere, and sensuous enjoyment. This improvised intimacy succeeded in bringing about a fleeting connection, despite the anonymity of the crowd—or, as I will argue later, *because of it*. But this encounter was also risky, starting from an utterance only half understood and followed by a series of unscripted transgressions of polite decorum;

things could have unfolded quite differently, for example, if I had recoiled at his touch. And yet, for all the potential for awkwardness and rejection, something brought us together, somehow.

This book is devoted to making sense of moments like this one, to searching for the "something" and the "somehow" of intimacy on the dancefloor.[1] Part of what is remarkable about this story is how unremarkable it is for this subcultural context; countless similar exchanges fill my fieldwork notes as well as my years of personal involvement in electronic dance music scenes since the mid-1990s.[2] On and around the dancefloors of nightclubs, loft parties, and raves, partygoers engage in forms of stranger-intimacy that short-circuit the conventional narratives of intimacy and make a mess of everyday decorum.[3] This stranger-intimacy taps into the sort of bonds between strangers that are often imagined as binding mass society, where anonymity and foreignness sometimes elicit moments of surprising closeness. And yet, the face-to-face and erotic aspects of the dancefloor encounter alter the strangeness of strangerhood, too, adding layers of meaning to the stranger's fluid position between distance and proximity, anonymity and candor. How does such intense stranger-intimacy arise and endure? In what registers is it felt and articulated?

In the pages that follow, I grapple with these questions by braiding threads of ethnography, analysis, and theory. Working from an archive of interviews with partygoers, fieldwork observations, and analyses of cultural artifacts (e.g., music recordings, film, print, and online media), I track the intensification of social warmth across the loose bonds of a dancing crowd, with special attention paid to the role of music in engendering this sense of intimacy. I explore a range of phenomena that have been studied elsewhere under the rubrics of stranger sociability, collective musicking, affect, intimacy, crowd psychology, and political solidarity. To these fields of study, *Together, Somehow* offers insights into a subcultural nexus of feeling, sound, and belonging. My approach is also informed by the "affective turn" in the humanities and social sciences while adding to a similar turn in ethnomusicology, suggesting some inroads into an affect theory that is grounded in music and ethnographic fieldwork.[4] To affect theory and the ethnomusicological study of feeling and emotion, I offer an account of *how* affect articulates between music and belonging, by way of sonic experience, touch, and collective dancing. Inspired by ethnomusicology's abiding concern for musical collectivity, I rethink intimacy and solidarity in the context of dancing crowds, engaging with the study of crowd dynamics as

well as queer theory's exploration of affective relations beyond the romantic couple form.

I aim not only to describe dancefloor intimacy but also to question its easy fluidity, to ask at what cost and at *whose* cost such seemingly frictionless interactions are made possible. Most partygoers (and party organizers) seem to wish for fluid, unconstrained, and capacious forms of belonging, usually imagined to be dancing crowds that are loosely held together by shared musical affinities and sensory intensities. In other words, they hope that enjoying music together is enough to make their social worlds work. And yet, they must contend with the contradictions that arise from embedding such utopian worlds of inclusion within a "real" world that is already striated with exclusions. In a sense, partygoers want distinction without discrimination, to belong to an intimate world unburdened by the baggage of identity. Despite the underlying frictions, they strive to sustain this fragile sense of fluid belonging by maintaining a sort of lubricating vagueness about what binds them, invoking affinities that pass through aesthetics and affect—"the music" and "the vibe"—rather than identity. Beneath these utopian fantasies of easy belonging, however, the testimony of less privileged partygoers (as well as my own observations) reveal inequities and exclusions that often go unexamined. And so, my analysis of festive intimacy includes an exploration of how electronic dance music scenes support these ephemeral-but-real, utopian world-building projects by striking an ambivalent bargain with vagueness, one that both makes these worlds feel possible and provides cover for their failures.

In fact, "vague belonging" is a key concept for this project, an ostinato that runs throughout this book's analysis of dancefloor intimacy. A central argument in this book is that these surprisingly intimate encounters are enabled rather than hindered by anonymity, crowds, and a persistent vagueness about who belongs and how. Music plays an important role here, providing a shared point of reference that enables partygoers to anchor their sense of belonging: *we're here, feeling and enjoying this music together, and maybe that's enough*. This sense of togetherness emerges out of crowds that are mostly heterogeneous and anonymous, composed of partygoers who seem to share little more than a dancefloor, a passion for a particular style of music, and a distinctive way of having fun.

On these dancefloors, vague belonging is supported by face-to-face encounters with strangers. Such stranger-sociability lends a sense of openness to these parties, making nightlife scenes feel like something more

expansive than a closed community: an intimate public or "counterpublic," perhaps.[5] But such fluidity and anonymity also make these scenes extremely fragile; all of this vagueness can lead just as easily to feelings of disappointment, betrayal, and exclusion. Being a stranger can be strangely liberating, engendering a feeling of freedom from the constraints of social norms, identities, and relationships, but it can also be risky, unpredictable, and alienating.[6] And yet, despite these risks, countless partygoers go out every weekend and find intimacy among strangers. Thriving and perishing in the urban interstices, these fleeting nocturnal worlds take on a glowing utopian halo for many of their participants, providing a "somewhere else" where different ways of being together can be rehearsed, enacted, demanded, and enjoyed.

## Feeling Utopian on the Dancefloor

*Together, Somehow* focuses primarily on *how* stranger-intimacy occurs on the dancefloor, but we should also consider *why* it does. How are such encounters valuable to those who engage in them? Each chapter in this book adds to a patchwork of answers, but in this introductory chapter I provide a condensed overview of dancefloor utopianism as historical and cultural context for the rest of the book. To put it simply, stranger-intimacy is a utopian practice of post-disco dance music scenes; it serves as a meaningful way through which partygoers can enact and experience the world they want to live in—one characterized by openness and warmth. Along with subcultural practices that enact sexual freedom, self-transformation, sensory amplification, and the oceanic bliss of self-dissolution, stranger-intimacy enables partygoers to briefly live in a world better than this one.

Utopian themes pervaded my fieldwork, both in the interviews I conducted and in the way that parties were planned, performed, and remembered in the "minimal" electronic music subscenes of Chicago, Paris, and Berlin. These themes often featured prominently at the beginning of interviews with partygoers, in response to my opening question: "Why do you party?" Teresa, for example, a Chicago-based DJ, party organizer, and flight attendant, began by describing techno parties as a way of escaping everyday struggles; but, as she went on to tell the story of how she discovered and joined the local techno scene, she reframed it as a burgeoning alternative community.

> **TERESA:** I always looked at it as more of an escapist kind of activity that is just part of dealing with . . . a lot of what we have to deal with in our daily lives, the reality of what things are in our society. . . . After spending enough time, you realize that it's not just a way of escaping, but it's a community that you look forward to. . . .
>
> I really enjoyed being able to go to this sort of underground thing. Most of the people in my high school had no idea that [*sarcastically*] "a local rave scene" was going on—didn't know about it, didn't care about it, whichever it was. And, all of a sudden, I'd find myself amongst another forty, fifty people who felt the same way that I did about the music, and I just loved that sort of small community. (Chicago, 2010)

Teresa's account of an underground, subcultural world serving as a vibrant alternative to "the reality of what things are in our society" highlights the utopianism so central to her experience of electronic dance music culture, while also keeping sight of the everyday struggles that make such utopianism meaningful. In doing so, she invokes a subcultural heritage that extends back to disco's emergence in the 1970s.

The dancefloor has long served to symbolize a world better than this one. Thriving at both the physical and imaginative center of electronic dance music events, dancefloors are celebrated as places of self-invention, experimentation, escape, comfort, refuge, transformation, connection, and communion. For the marginalized, they can be a place where the injustices and indignities of everyday life are not only temporarily relieved but to some extent redressed. Inasmuch as dancefloors can serve as spaces for experimentation with ways of living together that are better, more just, more caring, more fulfilling, or simply less harmful, they also function as sites of utopianism. This is not to suggest that nightclubs are fully realized utopias—far from it—but rather that their dancefloors are utopian in spirit: they provide concrete sites for the collective envisioning of a different kind of "good life."

Starting from disco's twilight years, one can follow a thread of writers reflecting on the utopian aspects of dancefloors and the music that animates them. Appearing in print after the mainstream success of the disco-themed film *Saturday Night Fever* and at a time when disco had saturated national and international media, Richard Dyer's essay for the *Gay Left*, "In Defense of Disco," argued for the political relevance of this new genre—despite the misgivings of critics on the political left.[7] He did so by pointing

to disco's nearly successful mainstreaming of nonheteronormative eroticism, its subversion of rock/folk ideologies of naturalness and authenticity, its valorization of worldly pleasure without shame, its vision of a utopian "flight from banality" through romantic extremes of emotion, and its role as a utopian refuge for sexual minorities. David Diebold, a singer and producer of "Hi-NRG" disco, gave a similar account of gay dance clubs as utopian safe havens in his memoirs of San Francisco's club scenes, *Tribal Rites*. Since then, a growing archive of memoirs, journalism, and scholarship continues to expand and nuance these utopian accounts of dancefloors as sites of refuge and self-fashioning, often noting that these spaces are still striated by harshly enforced hierarchies of beauty, coolness, fabulousness, masculinity, and wealth.[8] Notably, most of these analyses focused on the nightlife scenes of marginalized groups—especially where such marginalities intersect, such as the predominantly queer Black and Latinx crowds of the early New York disco scene.

The downtown Manhattan disco scene of the 1970s has often served as a utopian point of reference for subsequent generations of dance music.[9] Vince Aletti, who penned the first report on New York's budding disco clubs for *Rolling Stone*, was struck by the social mixing at early disco parties, describing them as "completely mixed, racially and sexually, where there wasn't any sense of someone being more important than someone else."[10] At the height of disco's popularity in 1978, New York mayor Ed Koch marked "Disco Week" by giving a speech in which he described disco as symbolizing "a more harmonious fellowship towards all creeds and races."[11] Diversity and integration were indeed important utopian themes for disco, surfacing in the lyrics of gospel-inflected hits like the O'Jays' "Love Train" and Sister Sledge's "We Are Family"—both of which invited dancers to join a community that was bound together by shared feeling and music rather than by existing social structures.[12] Despite these utopian visions of open and equal belonging, however, systems of exclusion were part of the disco scene from the very beginning. For example, members-only policies were initially justified as self-protective and legally necessary—especially for unlicensed venues such as The Loft, David Mancuso's residence on the Lower East Side—but this evolved into a system of elitist social curatorship at clubs like Studio 54, selecting and excluding people on the basis of beauty, celebrity, glamour, and social connections.

These utopian imaginaries continued into the era of house music, which emerged out of the disco and post-disco scene in Chicago.[13] Frankie Knuckles, Ron Hardy, and other local DJs played an eclectic mix of disco,

Italo-disco, funk, gospel, hip-hop, and European electro-pop; but it was the practice of looping the instrumental breaks of their favorite tracks on reel-to-reel tapes and bolstering the percussion with drum machines that solidified the "house music" aesthetic, eventually leading to the production of original tracks by local producers. As with disco, utopianism is easiest to find in the titles and lyrics of house tracks, such as Joe Smooth Inc.'s "Promised Land," featuring a vocal performance by Anthony Thomas: atop bright, high-tempo conga drums and lush, sustained synthesizer chords, Thomas sings lyrics with clear political and utopian themes, addressing the audience as "brothers" and "sisters" and invoking Christian tropes of "the promised land" as a collective goal and destination.[14] Perhaps the most well-known example of house music's utopianism is Larry Heard's 1988 anthem-cum-manifesto "Can You Feel It?," released under the moniker Fingers Inc.[15] The track features a spoken-word performance by Robert Owens, who uses a declamatory style reminiscent of a Black charismatic preacher to recount a musical creation-narrative that riffs on several biblical creation myths: "In the beginning, there was Jack / And Jack had a groove." Alluding to the book of Genesis in particular, this musician-creator brings house music into being by proclaiming, "Let there be house," and dubbing himself "the creator"; but this is soon followed by the declaration that this newly created house is a collective space, in which gaining membership is as easy as stepping onto the dancefloor:

> *But I am not so selfish, because once you enter my house*
> *It then becomes our house and our house music*
> *And, you see, no one man owns house*
> *Because house music is a universal language*
> *Spoken and understood by all*
> *You see, house is a feeling that no one can understand, really*
> *Unless you're deep into the vibe of House*
> *House is an uncontrollable desire to jack your body*
> *And, as I told you before, this is our house and our house music.*[16]

In these few lines, house music becomes a shared utopian world: a common point of understanding but also an ineffable affective experience; a festive public sphere with open membership but requiring deep immersion and bodily surrender. At several points in the track, this sermon is interpolated with sonic indexes of affective intensity, including the sound of cheering crowds responding to a shouted call: "Can you feel it?" In proximity

to Owens's euphoric sermonizing, the "it" of this vocal sample remains unspecified but nonetheless resonant with potential meanings.[17]

Utopianism is not difficult to find in the United Kingdom's acid house scenes as well as the subsequent regional rave scenes, influenced as they were by post-hippie culture from the Balearic.[18] Indeed, the 1988–1989 boom in acid house was dubbed the "Second Summer of Love," a direct reference to the first Summer of Love in 1967, when the hippie movement became both a cultural revolution and a mass-cultural phenomenon.[19] Along with tie-dyed patterns, psychedelic graphic design, fluorescent color palettes, and smiley-face icons, the United Kingdom's early rave scenes adopted a great deal of hippie-era utopian rhetoric, including visions of universal inclusivity and a surging sense of revolutionary possibility through euphoric communion. Unlike the hippie movement, however, ravers did not seem to share an explicit political agenda—aside from getting along and having fun. Nonetheless, the euphoric sense of community cultivated at UK rave events seemed to remedy a certain sense of stuckness that middle- and working-class youth felt in the face of Thatcherite austerity, especially as the technological and economic utopias promised by the postwar state failed to materialize.[20]

The post-hippie utopianism of the rave era found another incarnation across the Atlantic as raves became a mass cultural phenomenon in North America, beginning in New York (Storm Rave, 1990) and Toronto (Exodus, 1991). From the outset, these North American rave events tended to attract young, white, middle-class, suburban, and predominantly heterosexual partygoers.[21] This is not to say that these scenes represented hegemonic culture; North American ravers, much like their UK and European peers, self-identified as eccentric outsiders and differentiated themselves from a perceived cultural "mainstream" through a range of aesthetic, discursive, and behavioral means. Ravers were largely part of the "Generation X" cohort, but whereas grunge and alternative rock seemed to channel the malaise of Gen-X directionlessness, raves sought to counter despondency with euphoria.[22] Much like in the United Kingdom, rave events addressed recession-era angst and alienation by offering refuge in collective effervescence.

The acid house / rave narrative may seem to suggest that electronic dance music left North America and returned later in the guise of rave culture, but it never disappeared from the queer nightlife scenes that had served as its crucible. In New York, prominent gay nightclubs such as the Paradise Garage (1976–1987) and The Saint (1980–1988) survived the disco

era, serving as incubators for new styles of dance music throughout the 1980s, while newer clubs such as Sound Factory (1989–1995) and Twilo (1995–2001) continued this scene into the next decade and dovetailed with the city's rave scene. Paradise Garage was especially significant as a major "underground" dance music institution, catering to a gay crowd that was predominantly Black and Latinx.[23] Under the musical direction of the resident DJ Larry Levan, the club developed a particular sound—later dubbed "garage" or "garage house"—which rerouted the percussive drive of early Chicago house music back into classic disco, funk, and soul. Instead of the high-tempo, raw, "jackin'" sound of Chicago house, New York garage featured moderate tempos, glossy production, soulful vocal performances, and keyboard riffs reminiscent of gospel and soul. In New York garage music, utopian affect remained closely tied to disco's dancefloor euphoria, to which it added hypnotic grooves such as those in Serious Intention's "You Don't Know (Special Remix)," conveying an ecstatic, expansive, and kaleidoscopic experience.[24] Perhaps more intensely and insistently than disco, garage seemed to imagine the feeling of utopia as musical abandon, "getting lost" in endless dancing.

I end this brief historical sketch of dancefloor utopianism here, conscious of the terrain left uncovered. Much could be said about the utopianism of drag balls and "ballroom culture," for example, which have continued to flourish as an international phenomenon long after *Paris Is Burning*, Judith Butler, and Madonna had their turn.[25] "Trance" could also figure as another thread in this historical account, especially the overlapping substyles of Goa trance and psytrance, with their post-hippie/"freak" inheritance from psychedelic subcultures and "new age" movements, featuring utopian themes that are more introspective, esoteric, and spiritual. Similarly, the dark, machinic but funky techno that was emerging from Detroit during the late 1980s and 1990s is pertinent here, with its paradoxical mixing of dystopian futurescapes and utopian Afrofuturism.[26] In particular, the militant leftist, critically utopian Afrofuturism of the artist collective Underground Resistance (UR) provides a contrast to the more euphoric modes of utopianism that are at the center of this book; I return to UR in the epilogue, where I consider some of its musical output in relation to contemporary experiences of struggle and crisis.

This historical sketch could also jump forward to the events that have unfolded in North America since the end of fieldwork for this book in 2010, when dubstep (a UK substyle of breakbeat, 2-step garage, and "illbient") suddenly exploded in popularity, accompanied by a rapid mainstreaming

of EDM in general (as well as the term "EDM" itself, much to the surprise of electronic dance music scholars). The "EDM boom" of the 2010s attracted a new generation of young dance music fans, although they were initially drawn to large-scale festivals rather than urban nightclubs or underground raves.[27] In the wake of the 2008 global recession, it seems that this newer, massive, highly commercialized EDM played a role in North America similar to what acid house played in Margaret Thatcher's United Kingdom: it provided a means of experiencing a sense of collective utopian future at a time when individual life narratives of upward mobility no longer seemed certain.

While it is clear that utopianism runs deep under electronic dance music cultures, the political ramifications of such utopianism is less clear. As illustrated in Dyer's article in defense of disco for the *Gay Left*, criticism of dancefloor utopianism—as naïve, ineffective, or insincere—is nearly as old as disco itself.[28] In fact, this ambivalence toward utopianism has a much longer history, lying at the heart of one of the earliest divisions in socialist political theory: between utopian socialism and revolutionary socialism. Utopian socialists such as Henri de Saint-Simon and Charles Fourier devoted their intellectual efforts to imagining how a perfect socialist society would work in the future, while Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels called for a revolutionary socialism that engaged directly with the actually existing struggles of their time.[29] Marx's refutation of utopian socialism made anti-utopianism the norm within Marxism until nearly a century later, when Ernst Bloch wrote *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (*The Principle of Hope*), a three-volume treatise on the political importance of hope, daydreaming, and utopia.[30] Writing in the socialist German Democratic Republic (East Germany), Bloch argued that hope contains a "utopian function," playing a critical role within emergent political movements: to dream of utopia is to ascertain what is wrong with the present, actually existing world and to imagine a better one.

In this sense, utopianism can amplify revolutionary politics by creating an imaginative space where the injustices of the here and now can be called out, where a demand for a better world can be articulated. Bloch addresses Marxist misgivings about wasted political energies by drawing a sharp distinction between "abstract utopias" and "concrete utopias," the former referring to escapist, distracting utopias and the latter to utopias that are grounded in real-world, actually occurring struggles.[31] Following these definitions, Teresa's comments at the opening of this section could be understood as imagining a concrete utopia, where the community built

through raving served to question the status quo of her everyday American life. Part of utopia's revolutionary relevance is its revelatory access to the Not-Yet-Conscious, Bloch's future-facing alternative to the psychoanalytic unconscious (which he renames the No-Longer-Conscious); the Not-Yet-Conscious represents the impending, soon-to-be-realized worlds arriving at the horizon of consciousness, rather than that which has passed into memory. Bloch thus locates political power in these concrete utopias, doubly grounded in present conditions as well as the near future of the Not-Yet-Conscious.

Bloch's treatise is particularly useful for this book in that he compiled something like an affective-aesthetic catalogue of utopianism. He characterizes hope as the utopian emotion par excellence, a forward-dawning "expectant emotion" that "refers to the furthest and brightest horizon"; in turn, the "wishful images" that arise from hopeful daydreaming take external form "in a better planned world or even an *aesthetically heightened* world, one without disappointment."[32] Bloch's repeated use of dawn as a metaphor for hope and the Not-Yet-Conscious generates a particular affective-aesthetic palette that resurfaces throughout all three volumes: outpouring light, glowing horizons, emerging patterns, approaching figures, swelling feelings, upward and expanding motion. He describes a sense of latency, of something swelling under the surface of the present. Since music unfolds in time and can play with expectation, anticipation, and synchronicity, it seems especially well suited to convey the expectant qualities Bloch associates with hope and utopia. Electronic dance music can project long-spanning structures of expectation through repetition and multimeasure patterning, thus dramatizing movement toward the dawning horizon of utopian yearning.[33] All night long—from track to track, peak moment to peak moment—electronic dance music stages the dawning of a better tomorrow.[34]

Also relevant to this book's understanding of utopian feeling is José Esteban Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, which combines Bloch's critical utopianism with Jill Dolan's notion of utopian performance to describe how queers make livable worlds for themselves amid suffocating circumstances.[35] For Muñoz, to engage in utopianism is to turn collective longing and shared dissatisfaction with the "quagmire of the present" into something that can put pressure on the real world. I hesitate, however, to follow his rejection of the (purportedly heteronormative) present for a purely queer elsewhere and else-when. His positioning seems to stem from an opposition to a strain of "antisocial"/"antirelational" queer theory that is wary of the violence done to queers in the name of a sanitized

collective future ("Think of the children!"). I would rather eschew this temporal binary altogether and focus instead on a horizon that extends spatially, temporally, and socially outward from the dancefloor.[36] Electronic dance music scenes—especially disco, house, and their inheritors—are relentlessly focused on an eroticized nowness that hovers near the dawning horizon: spanning present and future, neither tomorrow nor today but *tonight*.[37]

Utopian dance parties, in any case, are not only dress rehearsals for better days to come; they can also create small, temporary pockets of living utopia—a throbbing future in the visceral present. These fleeting utopian enactments, however, gloss over the pragmatic details of how an ideal society should work, focusing instead on how utopia should *feel*. This focus on the sensory and affective aspects of better living is characteristic of popular culture and leisure. Richard Dyer has argued that much of popular American entertainment is pointedly utopian in its outlook—but rather than presenting a realistic model of how utopia would function, it conveys something about how utopia would *feel*.[38] Surveying mid-twentieth-century American movie-musicals, Dyer compiles a catalogue of the feelings that these films highlight (such as energy, abundance, intensity, transparency, and community), suggesting that these constitute the affective imaginary of utopia for midcentury movie-musical audiences. He also links these feelings to a corresponding set of opposite, negative feelings (such as scarcity, exhaustion, dreariness, manipulation, and fragmentation), which he traces to several widespread, simmering crises in the postwar United States. In this sense, American movie-musicals were not merely escapist, "abstract" utopian films; rather, they gave shape to American worries and dissatisfactions in inverted form.

The same could also be said of post-disco dance music, with its tropes of emancipation, hope, respect, kinship, love, pleasure, fun, ecstasy, and euphoria. In Dyer's attempts to defend disco from leftist critics, he highlights the genre's utopian romanticism as one of its redeeming qualities. He locates the "surging, outpouring emotions" of romantic aesthetics in disco's soaring melodic lines, "heavenly" choirs, sweeping unison violins, and emotive voices, all of which dramatize the "intensity of fleeting emotional contacts."[39] Combined with Bloch's utopian affective-aesthetic vocabulary of dawning, yearning, and intensity, this already provides the beginnings of a hermeneutic lens for reading utopianism in disco's musical legacy. Dyer stresses the political relevance of disco's affective excesses, arguing that:

> Its passion and intensity embody or create an experience that negates the dreariness of the mundane and everyday. It gives us a glimpse of what it means to live at the height of our emotional and experiential capacities—not dragged down by the banality of organized routine life. Given that everyday banality, work, domesticity, ordinary sexism and racism, are rooted in the structures of class and gender of this society, the flight from that banality can be seen as—is—a flight from capitalism and patriarchy themselves as lived experiences. . . .
>
> I don't say that the passion and intensity of romanticism is a political ideal we could strive for—I doubt that it is humanly possible to live permanently at that pitch. What I do believe is that the movement between banality and something "other" than banality is an essential dialectic of society, a constant keeping open of a gap between what is and what could or should be.[40]

In conjuring up an alternate world of emotional plenitude, then, disco's romanticism can hold open "the gap between what is and what could or should be"—in other words, a utopian space.

Dyer speaks of disco's romanticism holding open a gap between the lived world and an imagined one, but in this book it may be more fitting to speak of closing the gap. Indeed, one of its key themes is how feelings of vague belonging (awkwardly, tenuously) bridge the gap between utopian aspirations and the not-so-utopian realities of nightlife. At electronic dance music parties, music and dance provide sensory-affective relays between the activity of partying together and the sense of belonging to something larger than oneself, however incoherent or vague that "something" may be. This raises the question of how this sense of belonging can arise from such anonymous, heterogeneous, and yet socially striated environments. This book highlights the important role that stranger-intimacy plays in supporting a vague sense of belonging in volatile and uncertain circumstances.

## "In the Field" in Chicago, Paris, and Berlin

Here is an awkward secret: most ethnography is opportunistic. Few (predominantly white, predominantly middle- to upper-class) anthropologists voluntarily disclose whether they "discovered" their fieldwork sites as tourists, missionaries, nongovernmental organization / charity workers, or that special blend of all three often dubbed "voluntourism." For those

without the familial wealth, the "good" passports, or the colonially powered expectation of a grudging-but-nonviolent welcome everywhere, ethnographic sites are more likely to be local, familiar, and low budget. Like most ethnographers, my fieldwork story was very much the latter: I did fieldwork where I *could*, not where I wished. I was continually retrofitting my "research design" to my narrowing opportunities. As a foreign grad student studying in the United States, I was disqualified from both kinds of Fulbright fellowships: the ones that send US citizens abroad for a year of fieldwork and the ones that bring foreigners to study in the United States. There was a palpable absence of funding—both external and internal—for extended ethnographic research in domestic locales.

As a result, this research project started as a local, single-site study and only expanded when I succeeded in creating unconventional funding opportunities. I began preliminary fieldwork in Chicago's minimal techno and house scenes because I was already living there as a PhD student. This became a two-city project when I discovered that my institution was taking applications from graduate students for "assistanceships" at a satellite campus / semester-abroad center in Paris, where the successful applicant would provide technical support and receive a monthly stipend (instead of a salary), along with one day off per week to conduct their own research. Finally, I added Berlin to my project by self-funding short weekend visits while I was working in Paris as well as cobbling together small parcels of internal funding from my home department, which I combined with my own savings to append a pair of two-month visits to my stays in France. Although I never experienced the full-year, full-time fieldwork stay that was expected of my cohort at the University of Chicago, the fragmentary funding I collected ultimately enabled me to expand my project across three research sites.

From Chicago through Paris to Berlin, this book is thus a "multi-sited ethnography"; this differs from conventional ethnographic fieldwork by focusing neither on a single site nor on a global system of political and cultural flows but instead on the circulation of people, ideas, or things from place to place.[41] This book's multi-sited approach is also *translocal*, based on the view that Paris, Berlin, and Chicago are not three isolated music scenes with comparable parameters but linked nodes in a larger network of circulating media and people.[42] There is a great deal of movement and exchange between these scenes as well as significant shared cultural references and practices, all of which contribute to the sense that local techno-scenesters also partake in a transnational electronic dance music scene. Indeed, these

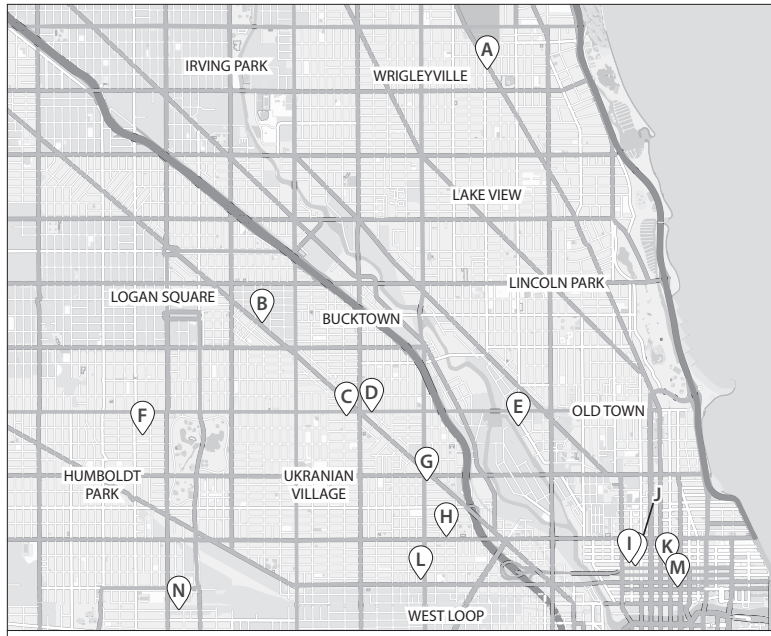
shared social and cultural resources support "techno tourism" and "techno migration,"[43] enabling travelers to find their way into the electronic dance music scenes of a new city by drawing on the scene-specific knowledge and social networks they developed in other cities—much as I did during the course of fieldwork for this book.[44] Notably, most of my fieldwork contacts had some experience with this techno-mobility, especially via Berlin: all of my Parisian contacts and roughly half of those based in Chicago had visited Berlin as techno-tourists, and a handful from each city went on to relocate there after I completed my research. Remarkably, none of those who relocated there did so to pursue a career in electronic music, even though they all acknowledged that their previous visits as techno-tourists inspired their migration.

Most cities do not have just one electronic dance music scene; they have many, reflecting the diversity of styles and substyles that developed out of the post-disco era.[45] The internal hierarchies of these scenes do not produce a unified "club culture" in a given city but instead several fragmented clusters that share the same label but maintain distinctive musical genres, styles of dancing, and behavioral norms.[46] Sean Nye, for example, identified four significant electronic music scenes in Berlin during the early twenty-first century: pop techno, techno-house, minimal-electro, and hardcore-noise.[47] Nye provides a useful vocabulary for making sense of similar scenes in other cities; although the clubbing landscapes in Paris and Chicago were not identical, they did tend to group into similar poles. The minimal scenes of each city served as my initial point of entry for fieldwork, although this shifted over time. First, the boundaries between scenes in each city were quite porous; in Chicago, for example, "minimal" tended to be treated as a substyle of techno and house (i.e., minimal techno and minimal house), while in Paris, the subscene boundaries at the time were marked by *minimale* versus *éléctro* (electroclash). Second, the style-specific boundaries of each city's music scenes changed over time; by 2010, when I was completing fieldwork for this book, interest in minimal styles was beginning to wane, with most of my fieldwork contacts shifting their focus toward harder techno on the one hand and "classic" downtempo house and disco on the other. Throughout this book, I treat these scenes as *exemplary*; that is, they serve as a more manageable set of case studies for a broader field of cultural activity. And so, the observations, analyses, and claims I make in this book should be understood to pertain primarily to the continuum of house and techno styles found in each city, with the minimal subscenes of 2006–2010 as the descriptive center of gravity.

## Chicago

Active fieldwork in Chicago consisted of two one-year, part-time research phases (2007–2008, 2009–2010), although I had been studying there since 2004. Despite Chicago's pivotal role in the early development of house music as well as its transatlantic exportation to the United Kingdom's acid house and rave scenes, the definitive history of post-disco dance music in Chicago has yet to be written.[48] Nonetheless, most of the local partygoers interviewed for this book were acutely aware of the city's rich musical history, readily naming legendary venues such as The Warehouse and The Music Box as well as DJ/producers such as Frankie Knuckles, Ron Hardy, and Steve "Silk" Hurley as forebears of the city's present-day dance scenes. That said, when the UK rave phenomenon came to the United States with a transformed version of house music, it came to a primarily white, middle-class, heterosexual audience, rather than to the predominantly queer, working-class, Black and Latinx one in which it had originally developed.[49] This racial, sexual, and class divide was still apparent when I was conducting fieldwork in Chicago; upon first arriving to the city, I found a multiethnic but predominantly white and straight techno-house scene (including tech-house, deep house, and minimal), and it was only later that I became aware of a vibrant but less visible Black house and techno scene. Chicago's scenes also reflected the city's history of immigration, and so my immediate network of fieldwork contacts included people of Armenian, Indian, Russian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Japanese, Polish, Belarusian, Greek, Hungarian, Chilean, Lithuanian, and Pakistani origins.

Chicago is a particularly decentralized city, with a great deal of its cultural and commercial activity spread throughout the city's numerous neighborhoods. Each neighborhood has a name and a distinctive history, which usually involves several waves of immigration and gentrification.[50] The city is also known for its pattern of racial "hypersegregation," where decades of racist housing policies and urban planning have resulted in the city's Black residents being concentrated in the city's "South Side" and the near-west industrial corridor.[51] Similarly, processes of gentrification continue to push the city's Latinxs out of neighborhoods such as Wicker Park, Logan Square, and Pilsen and toward the southwest quadrant of the city. Many of Chicago's nightlife venues are located in these gentrification hot spots in the city's northwest as well as certain postindustrial zones near the city center (see map 1). The notable exception to this is SmartBar, the city's longest-running dance club, which is located in the northern neigh-




MAP 1 Fieldwork venues in Chicago, 2006–2010. Map by C. Riggio.

borhood of Wrigleyville. Many clubs closed after the financial crash of 2008, although the nightlife industry began to rebound during the rapid popularization of "EDM" in the United States after 2010. During this post-crash fallow period, however, the number of illicit "underground" parties increased, taking place in unlicensed venues and running well beyond the usual hours of operation for nightlife; these locations are scattered around Chicago and include warehouses, artists' studios/lofts, art galleries, and domestic spaces. Many of the ethnographic scenes recounted in this book took place in these informal underground spaces.

## Paris

Research in Paris also consisted of two one-year phases, trimmed to the academic years 2006–2007 and 2008–2009 by my service as technical support for the University of Chicago Center in Paris. Discothèque culture in

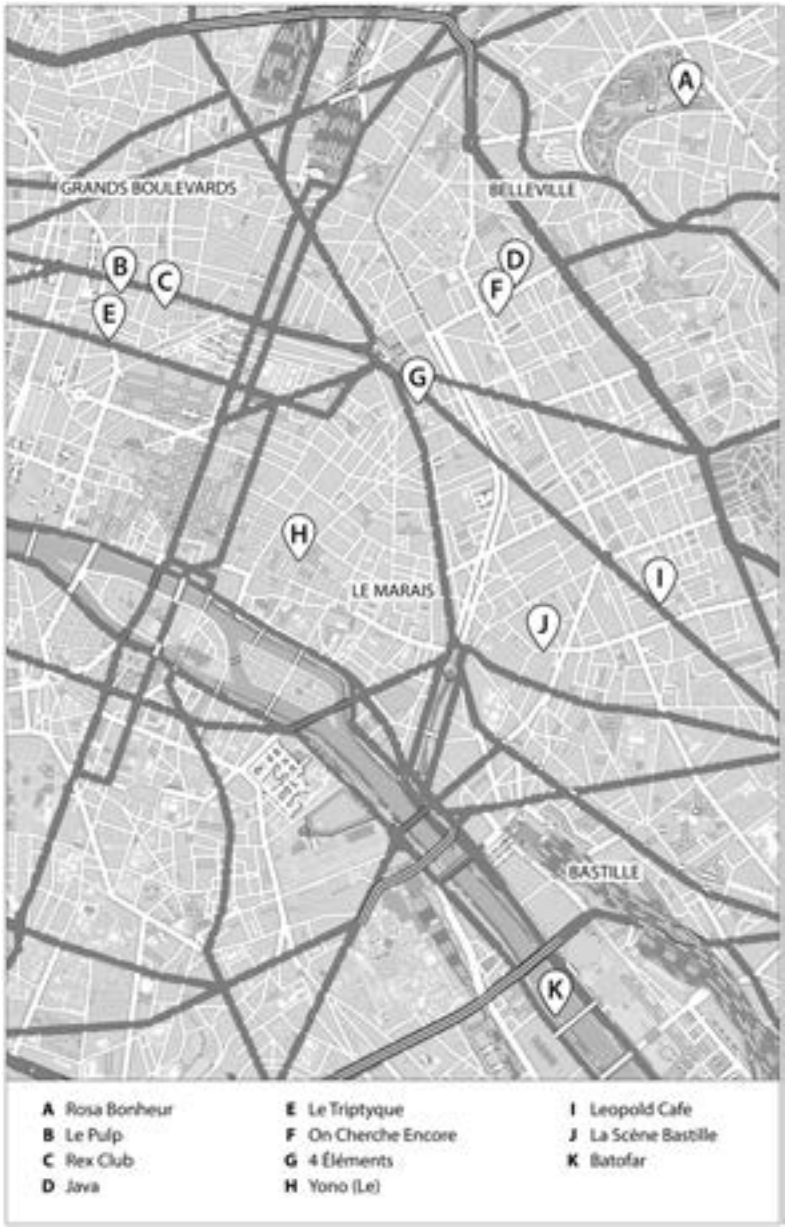

FIGURE I.1 Entrance to SmartBar (Chicago). Photograph courtesy of Erielle Bakkum (2016) and SmartBar Chicago.

Paris was not subject to the sudden collapse in popularity that occurred in North America in the early 1980s; most discothèques continued to operate throughout that decade, shifting their programming to include rock, Top 40 chart pop, New Wave synthpop, or *variété*.[52] The acid house of the United Kingdom's early rave scenes nonetheless took root in Paris, especially through the influence of Laurent Garnier, who held a DJ residency at the legendary Manchester club Haçienda [*sic*] in 1987. A year later, he brought this sound with him to his residency at Le Rex in Paris, making it the *haut lieu* of French *techno* as well as one of the principal sites for my Parisian fieldwork.[53] Notably, many of the other Parisian discothèques that began to pick up the new *techno* sound were queer clubs, and one of the most prominent radio stations promoting *la techno* was Radio Fréquence Gay. Additionally, many of this burgeoning scene's record stores were located in the queer areas of the Marais and Bastille districts. While the first wave of activity was primarily focused in queer urban nightlife venues, this changed in the mid-1990s with the arrival of English "sound system" collectives such

as Spiral Tribe, which were fleeing legislative changes in the United Kingdom that rendered nearly any size of rave party illegal.[54] They organized outdoor/warehouse "free parties" that did not charge admission and espoused a more radically antiestablishment, collectivist, and anticapitalist politics. Primarily held in rural locations in Brittany and the areas surrounding Lyon, Paris, Marseille, and Montpelier, *les free partys*—French open-air raves modeled on British "free parties"—featured harder styles of electronic dance music (such as hardcore, jungle, drum'n'bass) and distinguished themselves sharply from the queerer, urban, house-oriented club scenes.

Giving primacy to rhythm and percussion over melody and lyrics, this cluster of sample-based dance styles ran counter to the aesthetics of middle-class French rock and *chanson* audiences, whom Philippe Birgy describes as prizing "political awareness and a more or less desperate form of gravity"—seriousness and weighty themes, in other words.[55] *La techno* lacked the explicit political lyrics typical of *chanson*, and it was attacked by cultural critics as apolitical—even reactionary—which gave rise to a remarkably strong backlash in public media, law enforcement, and legislative initiatives.[56] But in 1997, the Parti Socialiste (PS, Socialist Party) returned to power in France and saw an opportunity to harness another youth movement for party recruitment, as it did to great success in the early 1980s with the Fête de la Musique.[57] The Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Youth and Sport all worked under PS direction to reverse the policies that had been targeting raves while also financially supporting the Techno Parade, modeled after Berlin's Love Parade. The Ministry of Culture also sought to sanitize techno's transgressive image through programs of professionalization, both for artists and for event organizers.[58] This strategy has had a lasting impact on Paris's electronic dance music scenes, which became highly professionalized and deeply integrated into the French entertainment industry.[59]

But as *la techno* became a larger and more profitable business sector, nightclubs and promoters felt more pressure to follow market logics and avoid taking risks on less popular styles. As a result, during my fieldwork visits, only a few venues in Paris regularly featured *minimale*-related programming (including minimal house, minimal techno, microhouse, dub house, tech-house), such as Le Rex, Batofar, and La Scène Bastille (see map 2). Smaller-scale *minimale* events tended to take place in bars and cafés with small dancefloors or basements. Geographically, the oldest and largest clubs in Paris were located on the Champs-Elysées and the Grands




MAP 2 Fieldwork venues in Paris, 2006–2010. Map by C. Riggio.

Boulevards areas, including Le Queen, Le Rex, Man Ray, Le Milliardaire, and Club 79; but, with the exception of Le Rex, my fieldwork contacts dismissed the Grands Boulevards clubs as "mainstream" and "commercial" venues. The smaller, more "underground" venues were located in the northeastern sectors of Paris (such as Le Marais, Bastille, and Belleville). The crowds at these venues were predominantly white and middle class but with a more balanced mix of sexualities than I saw in Chicago; indeed, many of the venues that hosted *minimale* events at the time were located in historically gay districts and catered to queer crowds. Queer women were especially visible in the *minimale* scene as artists, promoters, and venue managers—much of which can be attributed to the legacy of the legendary lesbian club Le Pulp. Its Thursday *éléctro* nights attracted a crowd of mixed genders, and when it closed in 2007, many former employees and patrons went on to organize their own events.[60]

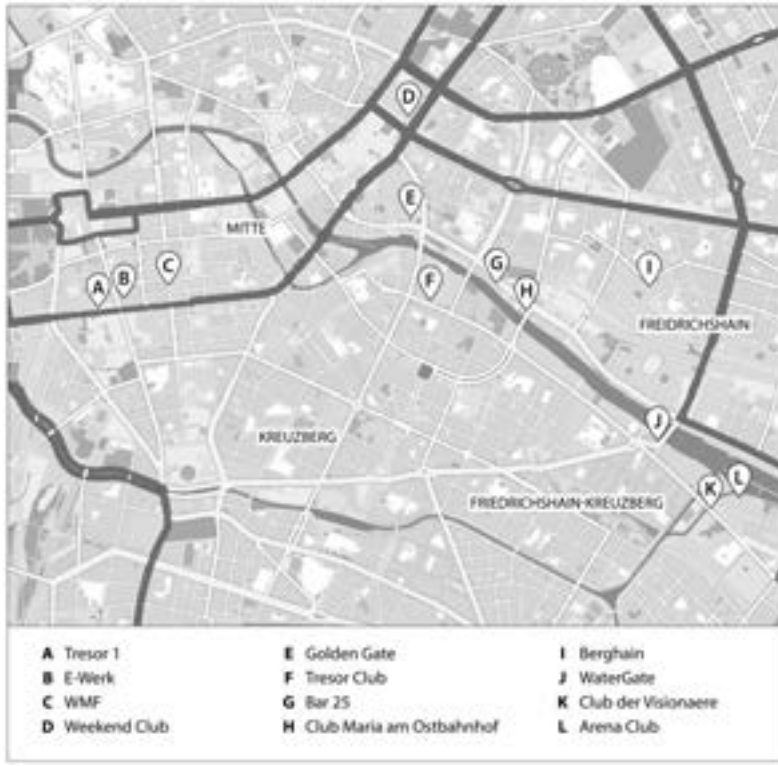
## Berlin

Berlin was added to this project later, near the end of my first year in Paris. As a result, most of the fieldwork was conducted very intensively over the summers of 2008 and 2010. I also made frequent visits to Berlin while living in Paris, and since then I have alternated between living in Berlin full-time and visiting frequently while working elsewhere in Europe. In contrast to Paris, Berlin took to electronic dance music quickly and enthusiastically. In many ways, similar musical styles had been developing in Berlin well before acid house arrived via England in the late 1980s; the city already hosted vibrant scenes for industrial music (especially the Electronic Body Music substyle), Neue Deutsche Welle, experimental rock, synthpop, and noise music.[61] In other words, electronic sounds were already a familiar element in popular music by the time house and techno began appearing in clubs. These experimental and technophilic scenes provided fertile ground for the first generation of clubs in Berlin, which clustered into a sort of *Clubmeile* (club mile) centered on Leipziger Platz in the former East Berlin district of Mitte. Venues such as Tresor, WMF, and E-Werk were located immediately east of where the Berlin Wall once stood, mostly occupying abandoned buildings that were located near the Wall's "death strip" (*Todesstreife*). By the end of the 1990s, these clubs found themselves directly in the path of Berlin's plans for urban renewal; property leases were terminated, tenants were evicted, and the buildings were sold and then either demolished or converted into new commercial spaces (offices, hotels, shops). In the


FIGURE 1.2 Entrance to Le Rex Club (Paris). Alain Jocard / AFP via Getty Images.

following decade, a second generation of techno clubs developed in what Tobias Rapp calls "the new club mile" along the eastern banks of the river Spree, stretching along five kilometers between Alexanderplatz and the Oberbaumbrücke.[62] Although numerous clubs opened and closed in this area during the period of fieldwork for this book, the most prominent ones at the time were Berghain / Panorama Bar, Watergate, Bar 25, Golden Gate, the new Tresor (on Köpenicker Straße), and Club der Visionäre (see map 3).

The emergence of these second-generation clubs coincided with Berlin's reemergence as the productive center for minimal styles of electronic dance music, prompted by exceptionally low operating costs and liberal nightlife regulation; this spurred an upsurge in nightlife tourism as well as the relocation of numerous DJs and specialist record labels to the city. Berlin took on a significance for electronic music similar to Nashville's for country music, serving as a center for production, networking, distribution, trade, and career building. This geographic concentration of labor, capital, and bodies could be considered a "creative cluster," although non-nightlife facilities (such as record labels, studios, residences, and the bars and cafés where partygoers gather when they are not partying) are not so tightly clustered as the nightclubs are.[63] Unlike in Paris and Chicago, where minimal subscenes were on the margins of the nightlife landscape, in Berlin it was




MAP 3 Fieldwork venues in Berlin, 2006–2010. Map by C. Riggio.

the omnipresent soundtrack to not just nightclubs but cafés, bars, restaurants, galleries, and even supermarkets.

By 2008, Berlin's minimal subscene had become remarkably international, with expatriates and tourists making up nearly half of the crowd at many events that I attended. Rapp corroborates this observation, arguing that, although the "three pillars" of the 1990s Berlin techno scene were *Ossis* (from former East Germany), gays, and creative industry workers, the *Touris* (tourists) became crucial to the post-2000 scene.[64] That said, the scene's demographic profile was more complex than these three or four categories: a substantial portion of the "creative classes" in Berlin consisted of expatriates or domestic migrants, and many travelers to the city would visit regularly and/or stay for longer periods (e.g., one to several months), thus occupying a gray zone between migrant and tourist. Compared to similar events in other subscenes, minimal parties tended to

FIGURE 1.3 Exterior of Berghain nightclub (Berlin). Ullstein bild / ullstein bild via Getty Images.

attract a crowd that was evenly mixed by gender and sexuality. The exception to this pattern was Berghain / Panorama Bar, which served a core audience of gay men, although the room that more often featured minimal dance music (Panorama Bar) attracted a straighter crowd than the hard techno downstairs in Berghain. Crowds at most Berliner venues at the time were predominantly middle class and/or white German, with an overlay of cosmopolitan foreigners—whether tourists or relatively privileged migrants ("expats")—while local Berliner minority communities (especially Anatolian, North African, and sub-Saharan African ones) were less visible, although not entirely absent.

## Fieldwork Methods and Demographics

My fieldwork moved irregularly among three cities over several years, following the availability of research funding and employment, and so I had to take a flexible and dynamic approach to my methods. In addition to the variable duration, intensity, and regularity of fieldwork visits to each city, their electronic music scenes posed challenges to the ethnomusicological methods in which I had been trained. As a result, I conducted fieldwork as a constant cycle of improvisation, trial and error, and adaptation.[65] In all

three cities, fieldwork involved at least two essential activities: participant-observation and one-on-one interviews. Most of the narrative examples (or ethnographic "scenes") recounted in this book are based on field notes from participant-observation, while one-on-one interviews with individual partygoers served as the source for the lengthier direct quotations and dialogues that are woven through each chapter. These two core fieldwork activities fed into ethnography, turning field notes and interviews into an analysis of the lifeways of a group of people; for this third activity, I relied on one additional resource: well over twenty years of personal involvement in electronic dance music as a raver, a dancer, a writer, a DJ, and a promoter. These two decades of knowledge, experience, and relationships informed every aspect of my methods, such as whom I spoke to, what questions I asked, what events I attended, how I behaved, what anecdotes and quotations I chose to highlight as exemplary of broader cultural patterns, and what concepts I used to make sense of my ethnographic data.

Although the dancefloor is at the heart of this research project, it also posed some of the greatest methodological challenges. Admittedly, I conducted interviews well away from the dancefloor (usually at my home, the interviewee's residence, or a quiet café), and the scope of my participant-observation often spilled over to its liminal spaces (the bar, the toilets, a stairway, the entrance). Nonetheless, the dancefloor always remained the primary point of reference for myself and my interlocutors. In common parlance in post-disco dance music scenes, "the dancefloor" frequently serves as a metonym for the audience, the venue, and even the community that animates it; indeed, for those who are immersed in these music scenes, the dancefloor is not just a space but a whole world.

And yet, the dancefloor posed some challenges for these methods, most notably for their documentation. Ethnomusicology imbues photos, audio recordings, and videos with a near-talismanic value, proof that what we are doing is "serious" and "scientific" research. There are, however, factors both practical and cultural that make conventional media capture and note-taking methods inappropriate for documenting electronic dance music events. From a practical standpoint, data collection at a party is awkward for all involved: the crush of bodies and open beverages make it difficult to hold a recording device or take notes; the loud, bass-heavy music drowns out conversation and overloads microphones. From a cultural standpoint, conspicuously taking audiovisual recordings or initiating formal interviews on the dancefloor violates important scene-specific norms regarding privacy, consent, conviviality, and protecting that space as a refuge from "real

world" struggles. Furthermore, my object of study, stranger-intimacy, required a light touch when it came to observation and documentation; many factors needed to be in just the right place in order for someone to reach out and open up to a stranger—and my pulling out a notepad or video camera on the dancefloor certainly would not help. Nightlife worlds are meaningful to many partygoers as a "third sphere" separate from work and domestic life, where they strive to create a playful flow of enjoyment in which everyday life seems to recede from view.[66] Deployed at the wrong moment or in the wrong context, recording devices on the dancefloor can be intrusive and disrespectful. Moreover, these modes of documentary capture can easily activate partygoers' anxieties about surveillance—particularly with regard to sexuality, drug use, and political expression. In light of these challenges, I employed a form of "memory work" when I was attending events: I would arrive at the venue, dance, listen, and interact with other event participants, and then write down detailed narrative field notes from memory immediately after returning home.[67]

These same concerns for privacy also prompted me to use a modified "snowball sampling" method for recruiting interviewees. I initially solicited interviews from my network of fieldwork contacts within the local scene, asking afterward for referrals to other potential interviewees.[68] This entailed developing a sort of trust network, cultivated over several months of repeated face-to-face contact at parties. I assigned pseudonyms to all interviewees as a default, although some later requested to use personal names or artist monikers. Admittedly, this method of recruitment does not produce a representative "random sample" of a particular population but rather a portion of an interconnected social web; in this sense, the interviews conducted for this book constitute a window into the music scene rather than a bird's-eye view.[69]

It bears noting that my research contacts were predominantly white, although many of them were also ethnically marked as immigrants (especially in Chicago), and the distribution of gender and sexuality was roughly even. To some degree, this reflects the demographics of the scenes I studied, but I do not wish to erase the contributions of people of color to electronic music—especially Black and Latinx contributions—nor the existence of vibrant dance music communities centered around people of color. The whiteness of my ethnographic archive has much to do with how my own ethnicity intersected with the racial segregation found in all three cities. As a relatively fair-skinned Latino man of mixed ancestry, I was rarely invited to events devoted to dancers of color, and I had trouble

finding them on my own. Indeed, in/visibility was a decisive factor here; as I have argued elsewhere, invisibility is an important survival strategy for people of color (especially QTPOC, queer and trans people of color), and party organizers in these communities had several good reasons to restrict their visibility: to avoid the attention of law enforcement (considering the higher likelihood of a violent outcome from a visit from the fire marshal or the police); to filter out "cultural tourists" and other privileged interlopers (who pose a risk of cultural appropriation, violation of local subcultural norms, and oblivious microaggressions); and to avoid overexposure by mainstream media.[70] Although QTPOC electronic music events have become more visible in response to increasing mainstream interest since the mid-2010s, during the time of my primary fieldwork (2006–2010) these minority dance music scenes maintained a lower public profile.[71] In any case, I had more success working my way into white-dominated spaces, where I could inhabit a nonthreatening "vaguely brown" role that I often shared with partygoers of South Asian, Middle Eastern, and North African ancestry. If I conducted my fieldwork now, with the networks I have developed over the years, it would have incorporated more Black and brown perspectives; but since I was new to each city as I began my research for this book, my ethnographic archive reflects the spaces and communities to which I had access at the time.

Also noteworthy is the age of my interviewees, who could be considered either "rather young" or "not that young, actually," depending on how we historicize electronic dance music. If we start with disco, this lineage of dance music has always been supported by multigenerational communities of dancers, with twenty- and thirty-somethings as the "center of gravity." In queer communities, nightclubs were invaluable spaces for intergenerational cultural transmission, the value of which became apparent in absentia, when the HIV/AIDS crisis decimated a whole generation of queer elders and emaciated the clubs, bathhouses, and bars they used to enliven. Queers of all ages are still traumatized by that stigmatized, hidden pandemic; we are still dancing with and for the ghosts of our elders. If, by contrast, we start our history with the rave era of the late 1980s to 1990s, we find contemporary accounts of a youth movement driven by teenaged crowds, which were echoed and amplified by sensationalist press coverage as well as the field of subcultural studies, both of which were focused on revealing youthful deviance and resistance. A similar narrative surfaced during the "EDM boom" of the 2010s, as newer styles of electronic music at large-scale festivals brought in a new generation of teenaged dancers. It is this fascination

with youth that prevails in contemporary popular representations of electronic dance music, both in the press and social media. However, viewed from a broader historical perspective—one that connects the moments of mass popularity with periods of "underground" percolation in queer and queer-of-color communities—electronic dance music has been primarily cultivated by young-to-middle-aged adults, while going through periodic cycles of "massification" that have entailed "youthification" as well.

Although the age range of partygoers with whom I regularly engaged during fieldwork was much wider, those who sat down with me for extended interviews and conversations were mostly between twenty-five and thirty-five years old at the time—on the cusp between "Generation X" and "elder millennials" in popular parlance. With regard to life stages, some were still completing postsecondary training, some were beginning to establish themselves in their professions, and others were on the verge of starting families and grappling with how to reconcile those new responsibilities with a life as a devoted raver. Nobody I knew had any plans to retire from these electronic music scenes; some of my contacts took long-term breaks from partying due to health crises or problematic drug use (alcohol included), but almost none of these young adults "grew up and settled down" while I knew them.

It was with this group of dancers that I conducted semistructured interviews (that is, following an outline of discussion topics rather than a rigid set of questions), although these encounters were also decidedly dialogic in style. During interviews, I would solicit narratives relating to specific themes (such as "How did you get into electronic music?" "Tell me about a party where something went wrong"), which were then used as a basis to ask more probing follow-up questions. Since I had already accumulated substantial experience in the field through participant-observation before I began conducting formal field interviews, I often offered my own reflections as prompts for discussion. These reflections included early versions of some of the ideas that run through this book; in fact, well before these formal interviews, I had already begun to discuss these ideas with fellow partygoers in informal conversations during and after music events. Since such dialogue had already been going on informally beforehand, my aim in the interviews was not to collect insider perspectives untouched by ethnographic analysis but rather to engage in a sincere dialogue and collaboration with experts whose feedback I found immensely valuable. This dialogic style of interviewing also served to encourage partygoers to engage in their

own analysis and theorization, activities that are all too often reserved as the privileged domain of ethnographers.

## Ethnography as Magical Realism

In addition to combining multiple research sites and methods, *Together, Somehow* combines ways of writing at the intersection of music, dance, and nightlife. It blends ethnography, cultural theory, and affect studies, whereas most scholarly monographs on dance music have emphasized either historiography or musical analysis.[72] Throughout the following pages, I draw on a broad range of writing on affect (feelings, emotions, atmospheres), especially from the domains of queer theory, gender studies, urban studies, and anthropology.[73] This book also joins a small but growing cluster of ethnographies that attend to the sensory, emotional, and erotic aspects of dancefloor encounters, each of which approaches its object of study from a different disciplinary perspective.[74] Themes such as stranger-intimacy, texture, fluid belonging, and utopianism are perhaps unusual for music studies, but since strange and unexpected connections are at the heart of this research project, it seems only fitting that this book stages such queer encounters at the conceptual and disciplinary level as well.[75]

Such queer encounters go against the grain of conventional ethnography and its investment in realism; if ethnography is supposed to be a realist genre of writing, this book instead offers ethnography as magical realism. Much like the twentieth-century narrative genre that flourished especially in Latin American literature, *Together, Somehow* palpates the contours of the "real" world, searching for cracks it can pry open to release the strange and wondrous. In *Ugly Feelings*, Sianne Ngai explains how her book is not a history of feelings—despite being historical and focusing on feelings in literature and media—due to her use of "disjunctive alignment" as a method of analysis and theorization.[76] Disjunctive alignment uses juxtaposition instead of relation to find insight, pushing seemingly disparate ideas and objects together and looking for similarities that unlock new, unforeseen ways of understanding them. In a similar vein, much queer theory and queer culture finds perverse pleasure in juxtapositions that violate the "proper" order of things; indeed, nothing is quite so queer as putting things where they do not belong, pressing together things that should stay apart.

This book deliberately and joyfully applies concepts where they do not belong, looking for felicitous alignments and sympathetic resonances. It does so partly in order to unsettle the givenness of the unmagical real in which we toil but also to conjure new and strange things into being—things that might, for once, come from somewhere outside of what Muñoz terms "the quagmire of the present," holding the promise of real change by yanking the real outside the bounds of the normal.[77] This is, for me, the form that Bloch's utopia-without-escapism ("concrete utopias") takes: a spray of deliriously productive joy that spurts forth out of the tectonic pressures of very real suffering.[78] If I am not satisfied with reality as it is—and who is, anyway?—I cannot be satisfied with merely realist ethnographic description, no matter how "thick" (interpretive) it may be.[79]

## In This Book

Using ethnographic narratives as well as interviews with partygoers, this book follows three main lines of analysis, which coalesce in the first four chapters and interweave throughout the rest of the book. I first describe a mode of intensified social warmth that can be found on the dancefloors of house, techno, and minimal events in Chicago, Paris, and Berlin; this sociability manifests itself in interactions between strangers that would be unexpected and even inappropriate in "daytime" public life. These intimate encounters with strangers constitute a distinctive mode of togetherness that is vague and underdefined, engendering a feeling of intimacy that supports a sense of cohesion with others, in spite of their strangerhood. The term I propose for this state of affairs is *liquidarity*, a form of fluid solidarity in which vagueness is a crucial condition of its emergence.

The second, sensory claim advanced in this book is that music, dance, and touch are primary vectors for affect at electronic dance music events. Since affect sustains and lubricates liquidarity, the intensified sensory experience of listening and dancing to music on the dancefloor is crucial for maintaining this fluid sense of collective intimacy. This line of argumentation leads to a supporting claim about bodily co-presence: by sharing the dancefloor, partygoers accumulate a shared set of intense experiences—dancing to the same music, exulting at the same musical climaxes, getting into similar states of exhaustion and/or intoxication, witnessing the same moments of surprise and excess—which elicit moments of felt synchrony and convergence.

Finally, this book follows a more explicitly political line of analysis about "the struggle for fun"—the ambivalent bargains we strike with subcultural worlds in order to enjoy them. It argues that this vague feeling of intimacy not only binds a crowd across social differences but also serves as cover for inequity, exclusion, and even forms of violence. The vagueness of liquidarity enables partygoers to bracket out contradictions and power asymmetries by avoiding explicit discussion of topics that would draw attention to such problems. The political implications are thus ambiguous at best: liquidarity risks obfuscating the ongoing reproduction of power and privilege, but it also enables the emergence of collective cohesion in fluid and volatile contexts. In other words, liquidarity makes utopian dancefloor experiences possible by lubricating social frictions, rather than resolving them; furthermore, it may numb us to the damage that these frictions continue to make. This critical angle has long been part of my research project, but since 2016 (in the Global North, at least) the rise of right-wing extremism, populist fascism, and predatory capitalism—all accelerated by a global pandemic—has cast my reflections on the messy utopianism of the dancefloor in a new, pulsating light.

The chapters that follow are organized along these lines of analysis, rather than being sorted by geography, institutions, time periods, or people. The analytic scope also broadens from chapter to chapter, beginning with tactility between dancing bodies (chapter 1) as well as in the sound of electronic dance music (chapter 2), expanding to the dancefloor and its peripheries (chapters 3 and 4), to the narrative arc of "a night out" (chapter 5), and finally to the door of nightlife venues and their patterns of inclusion and exclusion (chapter 6).

Chapter 1 explores the relationship between tactility and intimacy between dancers. It asks how and why tactility intensifies on the dancefloor, turning to interviews with partygoers. On the one hand, many of them valued dancefloor tactility as an embodied expression of intimacy and an antidote to prevailing norms of bodily decorum; on the other hand, they acknowledged that dancefloors can also be spaces of heightened risk for sexual harassment and assault—a risk that women, trans folk, and people of color feel especially keenly. Nonetheless, several women interviewees stressed how beneficial tactile stranger-intimacy could be to their enjoyment, expressing a utopian desire for a world where encounters with strangers could be open to sensual pleasure without being fraught with danger. This spectrum of experience highlights the pleasures, risks, and affective binding potentials of tactility, all of which point toward the ways in which

tactility between strangers can offer alternative modes of togetherness and conviviality. In chapter 2, I argue that the tactility of the dancefloor is also evoked in electronic dance music, both thematically and texturally. In particular, this cluster of interrelated musical styles engages tactility through beats, flesh, and grain; that is, it (1) emphasizes percussion (especially at low frequencies and high volume), (2) features sound samples that index fleshy bodies, and (3) highlights sounds that are rich in texture. I support this analysis with close readings of house and techno tracks as well as through a close engagement with the pioneering work of Pierre Schaeffer on "sonic grain." This chapter places sound, vibration, and texture in the interstices of the senses and at the thresholds of perception.

Returning to interviews and fieldwork observations, chapter 3 considers how social warmth arises and endures in contexts of casual contact and anonymity. Although partygoers express desires for belonging to be simple, open, and easy, they nonetheless avoid explicit discussion of who belongs and how they do. I describe this slippery solidarity as a sort of *liquidarity*, a blend of loose stranger-sociability and vague belonging. Under conditions of liquidarity, participants sustain a vague sense of social belonging, recognition, and intimacy while also enjoying the advantages of anonymity, fluidity, and familiar-but-light social contact. I turn to the nexus of sound, feeling, and togetherness in chapter 4, investigating how collective listening and dancing can give rise to a sense of inchoate sociality—that is, something like a "we" coalescing under the surface of shared musical experience. While the idea that "music brings people together" is a common cultural trope that is especially pervasive in electronic dance music scenes, accounts vary as to how music exerts such socially binding force. Partygoers often use the term "vibe" to describe how they understand music to work in these contexts, bringing fellow partygoers into a sort of synchronicity of feeling. This chapter also explores how partygoers' theorizations of the "vibe" and music-driven emotional convergence intersect with scholarship on musical entrainment, emotional contagion, ritual practices, and resonance.

When partygoers recount, plan, remember, imagine, idealize, and nostalgically recall a night out partying, they often articulate a desire for "something" to happen, a yearning for moments of intensity and rupture that make a night out feel special. In chapter 5, I investigate how "rough" experience forms part of nightlife cultures, as well as how partygoers manage its pains and pleasures. A dualism emerges between smooth flow and rough thrills, one that can be found not only in interviews with partygoers but

also in the music reviews, sounds, and popular discourses of the minimal-house-techno spectrum. In contrast to psychoanalytic accounts of ecstatic self-shattering and radical transformation (such as *jouissance* and limit-experience), partygoers seeking rough experiences strive for the more modest pleasures of "coming undone": stretching, unspooling, and snapping back together again.

Thinking about belonging means also thinking about exclusion, and although some of the more fluid and implicit modes of exclusion are covered in chapter 3, we should also consider how such exclusions are institutionalized. Chapter 6 profiles the practices of the door staff at Berliner nightclubs, examining how these local leisure institutions may be informed by their broader political contexts. In particular, I examine the ways in which certain aspects of "selection" at these nightclubs bear an uncanny resemblance to national and European debates regarding immigration and cultural policy. Drawing on examples of exclusion at nightclubs in Berlin, I suggest that these nightclubs cultivate *embedded diversity*, that is, a kind of curated diversity that problematically excludes certain "unintegrated" forms of difference, thus presenting a happier and more harmonious image of diversity. The scope of this chapter goes well beyond the "on the dancefloor" focus of this book, but it traces important links between the dancefloor and its wider contexts; furthermore, exclusive door policies are an ongoing concern for partygoers and professionals in these scenes, one that has become even more intense since I first conducted fieldwork for this project.

This book closes with a final ethnographic scene in the form of an epilogue—a brief encounter in the toilets of Berghain—which condenses and illustrates the insights of the previous chapters. This is followed by a more explicit synthesis of the primary arguments of the book, paying special attention to how certain key concepts (touch, affect, texture, intimacy, liquidarity) weave and transform from chapter to chapter. Finally, this book closes with some reflections on the Orlando Pulse massacre of 2016, in which a lone gunman murdered forty-nine people—primarily trans, Latinx, and queer—at a gay nightclub. The online response to this tragedy produced a moment of queer public intimacy, one that was built on sharing memories of queer nightlife spaces as utopian sites of refuge and community. The aftermath of the Pulse massacre suggests how the insights of this book might apply to contexts of overt political struggle, where the "somehow" of togetherness is shaped by oppression and violence.

# NOTES

## Introduction

1. My use of the term "the dancefloor" throughout this book reflects its doubled meaning in electronic dance music scenes, where it designates the physical space where dancing occurs *and* serves as a metonym for "the party" as a whole. In interviews and conversations with partygoers, actual dancefloors always remained the central point of reference for discussing parties and music scenes. Similarly, most of the ethnographic fieldwork I conducted took place on or near dancefloors, while the resulting book shuttles constantly between the narrower and broader meanings of the term.
2. "Electronic dance music" (EDM) is a broad term originally developed in academic and journalistic contexts to refer to any style of post-disco, sample-based dance music without reducing it to its venues (e.g., "club music," "rave music"), prioritizing one style over others (e.g., "techno music"), or conflating it with different musical fields that have already laid claim to "electronic music" (e.g., "electroacoustic music"). However, a recent popularization of the term—particularly its acronym—in mainstream media has accrued a new meaning, such that "EDM" can also refer to a narrower range of dance music genres that gained global mainstream popularity during the 2010s (e.g., dubstep, trap; for an overview of the "EDM boom," see Matos, *Underground Is Massive*). Since this newer usage has mostly involved the acronym "EDM," I avoid the acronym in this book and instead employ the full phrase "electronic dance music" (or "post-disco dance music") to invoke the term's initial meaning as a metacategory of popular dance music genres that make prominent use of sound samples and share a common origin in disco. When discussing concrete cases, I employ specific terms such as "deep house" or "minimal techno." In any case, the scholarly use of the term continues still with *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* (since 2009). For

examples of this scholarly usage, see Fikentscher, *"You Better Work!"*; Hesmondhalgh, "International Times"; Loza, "Sampling (Hetero)sexuality"; McLeod, "Genres, Subgenres, Sub-Subgenres, and More"; Fink, *Repeating Ourselves*; Garcia, "On and On"; M. Butler, *Unlocking the Groove*; Farrugia, *Beyond the Dance Floor*; Fraser, "Spaces, Politics, and Cultural Economies"; Matos, *Underground Is Massive*.

3. For ease of reading, I mostly use the term "partygoers" to refer to the people involved in the electronic dance music scenes where I conducted fieldwork. Although a more technical term like "scene participants" might be more precise, its repeated use soon becomes cumbersome, while "partygoers" is more contextually valid and intuitive for a broader readership—including readers who are themselves partygoers. For similar reasons, the terms "party" and "dance party" often stand in for "electronic dance music event."
4. See also Ana Hofman's critical review of the affective turn in ethnomusicology as well as special issues on this topic in *Ethnomusicology Forum* and *Culture, Theory and Critique*: Desai-Stephens and Reisnour, "Musical Feelings and Affective Politics"; Graber and Sumera, "Interpretation, Resonance, Embodiment"; Hofman, "Affective Turn in Ethnomusicology."
5. See the introduction to Lauren Berlant's *Female Complaint* for a definition of "intimate publics" as porous structures of belonging, where membership is based on feeling and shared affective experience. Also of relevance here is Michael Warner's account of "counterpublics," alternative public spheres that are characterized by embodied copresence flouting hegemonic norms of decorum. On a related point, Keira Kosnick notes how face-to-face encounters with strangers at a queer "Oriental" (Anatolian, Levantine) dance party in Berlin helped to mitigate concerns about self-imposed ghettoization. Berlant, *Female Complaint*; Kosnick, "Out on the Scene"; Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*.
6. Georg Simmel makes a similar reflection in his essay on "the stranger," noting how the stranger's position outside of local social webs sometimes prompts their interlocutors to divulge information they would normally withhold from their social peers. Simmel, "Stranger."
7. In addition to Dyer's original article, see also several articles reflecting on its historical circumstances and impact, in volume 58 of *New Formations*: Dyer, "In Defense of Disco"; Lawrence, "In Defence of Disco (Again)." In addition to *Saturday Night Fever*, see also *Thank God It's Friday*, a disco-themed comedy film that featured a soundtrack by the famed disco producer Giorgio Moroder as well as the legendary vocalist Donna Summer appearing in a supporting (and singing) role. Badham, *Saturday Night Fever*; Klane, *Thank God It's Friday*.
8. The first decade of the twenty-first century saw several significant publications on the utopian promise of dancefloors (especially queer

ones), such as Amico, "I Want Muscles"; Amico, "Su casa es mi casa"; Bollen, "Queer Kinesthesia"; Buckland, *Impossible Dance*; Echols, *Hot Stuff*; Hutton, *Risky Pleasures?*; Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*; Race, "Death of the Dance Party"; Rivera-Servera, "Choreographies of Resistance."

9. Scholarship and journalism on disco have gone through cycles of "revival" over the past two decades, generating a growing archive of histories and memoirs. Haden-Guest, *Last Party*; Reynolds, *Energy Flash*; Brewster and Broughton, *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life*; Lawrence, *Love Saves the Day*; Shapiro, *Turn the Beat Around*; Echols, *Hot Stuff*.
10. Aletti, "Vince Aletti Interviewed," 455. See also Aletti's landmark report on New York's nascent disco scene, "Discotheque Rock '72."
11. "The disco and its lifestyle has helped to contribute to a more harmonious fellowship towards all creeds and races." New York mayor Edward Koch, quoted in Lawrence, *Love Saves the Day*, 308.
12. The O'Jays, "Love Train," Philadelphia International Records ZS8-3754, vinyl, 7″, 1972; Sister Sledge, "We Are Family," Cotillion 44251, vinyl, 7″, 1979.
13. Oddly enough, a complete history of Chicago's post-disco dance music scenes has yet to be written, although Salkind's recent monograph provides substantial coverage for the city's queer-of-color scenes: Salkind, *Do You Remember House?* Nonetheless, the city appears prominently in nearly every historical account of house music, such as Brewster and Broughton, *Last Night a DJ Saved My Life*; Collin and Godfrey, *Altered State*; Feige and Müller, *Deep in Techno*; Gilbert and Pearson, *Discographies*; Kyrou, *Techno rebelle*; Reynolds, *Energy Flash*; Silcott, *Rave America*; Thornton, *Club Cultures*.
14. Joe Smooth Inc. featuring Anthony Thomas, "Promised Land," D.J. International Records DJ-905, vinyl EP, 12″, 1987. Notably, much of house music's utopianism draws on Christian tropes of salvation and paradise, particularly from Black gospel traditions; in fact, one would be hard-pressed to find house vocalists active in the 1980s who did not begin their singing career in church. Many thanks to Michael Castelle for pointing this out to me during a conversation on this topic.
15. Fingers Inc., "Can You Feel It?," Jack Trax JTX-20, vinyl EP, 12″, 1988.
16. Robert Owens in Fingers Inc., "Can You Feel It?"
17. Not coincidentally, this track also exists in a reedited "Spoken Word MLK" version, where Owens's sermon is replaced with a recording of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech.
18. For accounts of the early acid house scene in the United Kingdom and its connections to the club cultures of the Balearic, see Collin and Godfrey, *Altered State*; Halfacree and Kitchin, "Madchester Rave On"; Reynolds, *Energy Flash*; Thornton, *Club Cultures*.
19. This comparison between the acid house boom of 1989 and the Summer of Love was first made in the pages of the subcultural magazine *i-D*: Heley and Collin, "Summer of Love 1989."

20. Langlois, "Can You Feel It?"
21. For a detailed account of rave's arrival to North America, see Silcott, *Rave America*.
22. "Generation X" refers to the generation born between the early 1960s and the late 1970s, following the postwar "baby boom." Members of this cohort were in their teens and twenties during the 1990s, grappling with a job market already saturated with baby boomers and the global economy sliding into recession. Henseler, *Generation X Goes Global*.
23. For an account of New York's dance music scenes in the 1980s and early 1990s, see Fikentscher, "Popular Music and Age Stratification"; Fikentscher, *"You Better Work!"*; Lawrence, *Love Saves the Day*. Although the musical curatorship of Larry Levan has been largely credited with shaping the New York house music sound during the 1980s, Tim Lawrence has argued for the importance of The Saint's roster of DJs for developing a "gay white aesthetic" that tended more toward Eurodisco, New Wave, and Hi-NRG dance music. He also argues that The Saint's DJs developed a smooth and seamless mixing technique that supplanted Levan's rough-cut style by the end of the decade. Lawrence, "Forging of a White Gay Aesthetic."
24. Serious Intention, "You Don't Know (Special Remix)," Easy Street Records EZS-7512, vinyl EP, 12″, 1984.
25. Around 1990, New York's ballroom culture gained rapid visibility due to the release of the documentary film *Paris Is Burning*, Judith Butler's landmark book on gender performativity, and Madonna's hit music video "Vogue" (1990). Livingston, *Paris Is Burning*; J. Butler, *Gender Trouble*. For more recent critical work on ballroom culture, see Bailey, *Butch Queens Up in Pumps*; Jackson, "Improvisation in African-American Vernacular Dancing"; Jackson, "Social World of Voguing"; moore, *Fabulous*; Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*.
26. For some preliminary reading on the intersection of techno and Afrofuturism, see Eshun, *More Brilliant than the Sun*; McCutcheon, "Techno, Frankenstein, and Copyright"; Schaub, "Beyond the Hood?"
27. For a detailed account of the first years of the "EDM boom" in North America, see Matos, *Underground Is Massive*.
28. Dyer, "In Defense of Disco."
29. For an analysis of Marx and Engels's critique of utopian socialism (including a bibliography of relevant texts from both revolutionary and utopian socialists), see Paden, "Marx's Critique of the Utopian Socialists."
30. Bloch, *Principle of Hope*.
31. On concrete utopias, see Bloch, *Principle of Hope*, 1:146.
32. Bloch, *Principle of Hope*, 1:75, 94 (emphasis added).
33. For repetition as structures of expectation in electronic dance music, see M. Butler, *Unlocking the Groove*; Garcia, "On and On."

34. In a similar vein of limited-scope utopianism, Hutton argues that "clubbing is not about apathy, it is a rejection of a world that has failed clubbers and a move towards creating a new worldview—if only for the weekend." Hutton, *Risky Pleasures?*, 12.
35. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*; Dolan, "Performance, Utopia."
36. Two key texts on queer antirelationality and the danger of heteroreproductive futurity are Bersani, *Homos*; Edelman, *No Future*.
37. Many thanks, again, to Michael Castelle for this turn of phrase.
38. Dyer, "Entertainment and Utopia."
39. "The use of massed violins takes us straight back, via Hollywood, to Tchaikovsky, to surging, outpouring emotions. . . . [Diana Ross's "Ain't No Mountain High Enough"] with its lyrics of total surrender to love, its heavenly choir and sweeping violins, is perhaps one of the most extravagant reaches of disco's romanticism. . . . [Ross's records] express the intensity of fleeting emotional contacts." Dyer, "In Defense of Disco," 22.
40. Dyer, "In Defense of Disco," 23.
41. George E. Marcus has been the most prominent advocate of this methodological approach, while a more recent multiauthor volume, *Mobile Methods*, provides an update through the framework of mobility studies. Marcus, "Ethnography in/of the World System"; Marcus, "What Is at Stake"; Marcus, "Beyond Malinowski"; Büscher, Urry, and Witchger, *Mobile Methods*.
42. Will Straw's foundational essay on music scenes defines them as "systems of articulation" that link the local to the global (or at least the extralocal). Andy Bennett and Richard A. Peterson's edited volume on music scenes extends this definition to include translocal scenes, which span multiple locales, and virtual scenes, which exist primarily online. Bennett and Peterson, *Music Scenes*; Straw, "Systems of Articulation."
43. The impact of increasing mobility on Berlin's electronic music scenes is the focus of a still-ongoing research project of mine, which has thus far resulted in a few publications: Garcia, "At Home, I'm a Tourist"; Garcia, "Techno-tourism"; Garcia, "With Every Inconceivable Finesse."
44. At the beginning of fieldwork (2006), I would orient myself in any city by visiting specialist vinyl record shops and perusing the flyers left by the door. By 2008, party promoters in all three cities were using social media platforms (primarily Facebook), and by 2011, the online media platform *Resident Advisor* had effectively monopolized event listings and ticketing globally.
45. Since all three fieldwork sites are large cities, this book focuses mainly on minimal electronic dance music events at nightclubs as well as in the ephemeral, clandestine spaces of raves. For the study of electronic dance music in festival settings, see the edited volume *Weekend Societies*, among others: F. Holt, "Music Festival Video"; Motl, "Dashiki Chic";

O'Grady, "Interrupting Flow"; Park, "Searching for a Cultural Home"; Partridge, "Spiritual and the Revolutionary"; Ruane, "Harm Reduction or Psychedelic Support?"; St. John, *Technomad*; St. John, "Neotrance and the Psychedelic Festival"; St. John, *Local Scenes*; St. John, *Weekend Societies*; Wergin, "Destination 'Three Days Awake.'"

46. "Club cultures contain hierarchies within themselves, which result not in a unified culture but fragmented clusters which share the term 'club culture,' that maintain their own dance styles, music genres and behaviours." Hutton, *Risky Pleasures*, 11.
47. Nye, "Love Parade, Please Not Again."
48. Despite the lack of print historiography, two documentary films on Chicago's early house scene have been released, both of which feature interviews and oral histories: Eberhart, *UnUsual Suspects*; Ramos, *Maestro*. In addition to these films, Salkind's recent monograph combines archival research, oral histories, and performance ethnography to narrate the first decade of house music in Chicago: Salkind, *Do You Remember House?*
49. Silcott, *Rave America*, 103.
50. Lloyd, "Neo-Bohemia"; Wilson and Taub, *There Goes the Neighborhood*.
51. Although Doreen Massey was the first to identify "hypersegregation," many other scholars have since continued this line of investigation: Massey and Denton, "Hypersegregation"; Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*; Wilkes and Iceland, "Hypersegregation in the Twenty-First Century"; Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts*.
52. Although there is yet no monograph that focuses on Paris's post-disco scenes exclusively, nearly every French-language work on *la techno* provides a historical sketch of electronic dance music in France that centers primarily on Paris. Gaillot, *Multiple Meaning*; Kyrou, *Techno rebelle*; Racine, *Le phénomène techno*; Hampartzoumian, *Effervescence techno*; Mabilon-Bonfils, *La fête techno*; Vaudrin, *La musique techno*.
53. The term "techno" is already confusing enough in English, since it can be used to refer to all of electronic dance music as a metastyle or to a particular style associated with Detroit and Berlin. In France, *la techno* can be used even more broadly to speak of virtually any kind of electronic music, including music that is not dancefloor oriented. Throughout this book, the term *la techno* will appear in italics when referring to this broader French genre category. In all other cases, the term refers to the musical style.
54. See Entertainments (Increased Penalties) Act, 1990, c. 20 (England, Wales, Scotland); and Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, 1994, c. 33 (England, Wales, Scotland, N. Ireland).
55. Birgy, "French Electronic Music," 226.
56. For several extensive quotations of especially vitriolic condemnation of *la techno* in French public discourse, see Racine, *Le phénomène techno*, 112–14.

57. Looseley, *Popular Music in Contemporary France*.
58. Looseley, *Popular Music in Contemporary France*, 187.
59. Racine, *Le phénomène techno*, 135.
60. For a historical sketch of Le Pulp and its legacy, including some interviews with participants, see Garcia, "Alternate History of Sexuality."
61. See Uwe Schütte's introduction to *German Pop Music*, which provides a broader timeline of popular music in Germany, from the postwar era to the early twenty-first century.
62. Rapp, *Lost and Sound*, 30–34.
63. For the debate around "creative clusters" and their impact on cities, see Florida, *Rise of the Creative Class*; Florida, *Flight of the Creative Class*; Cooke and Lazzeretti, *Creative Cities, Cultural Clusters*; Heebels and van Aalst, "Creative Clusters in Berlin." The initially celebratory account of the "creative classes" has come under criticism for the accuracy of its analysis of statistical data sets, for failing to account for its negative impact on the freelancing creative classes themselves (i.e., the "flexibilization" of labor markets that create job volatility), and for the gentrification of urban space that their "clusters" tend to exacerbate. Sassen, "Global Cities and Survival Circuits"; Hoyman and Faricy, "It Takes a Village"; Shatkin, "Geography of Insecurity." This latter issue has been a point of great tension since the beginning of Berlin's push for postreunification urban redevelopment, which has only been intensified by the recent influx of "new tourism" that fixates on these gentrifying, "neo-bohemian" neighborhoods. Bernt and Holm, "Exploring the Substance and Style of Gentrification"; Bader and Bialluch, "Gentrification and the Creative Class"; Novy and Huning, "New Tourism (Areas) in the 'New Berlin.'"
64. Rapp, *Lost and Sound*, 105.
65. For a more detailed reflection on the methods used for this project, see Garcia, "Editor's Introduction"; Garcia, "Feeling the Vibe."
66. O'Grady, "Interrupting Flow."
67. This method is modeled after Fiona Buckland's pioneering work in the queer nightclub scenes of Manhattan, where she had to adapt her fieldwork methods to similar circumstances. Buckland, *Impossible Dance*.
68. Here and throughout the book, I use the term "fieldwork contact" instead of the more conventional "informant" or "consultant," as I believe that "contact" better conveys the social realities of my relationship with these people, many of whom were (or came to be) acquaintances and friends.
69. Other scholars of popular music have also used snowball sampling to study music scenes where participants are wary of outside scrutiny, such as Death Metal (Purcell), hip-hop (Jeffries), and popular musicians (primarily rock and pop) who license their work for television advertising (Klein): Jeffries, *Thug Life*; Klein, *As Heard on TV*; Purcell, *Death Metal Music*.

70. In other publications, I have reflected more extensively on invisibility as survival in queer-of-color nightlife, although this theme returns in the epilogue of this book, where I discuss the aftermath of the Orlando massacre of 2016: Garcia, "Whose Refuge, This House?"; Garcia, "Editor's Introduction"; Garcia, "Feeling the Vibe."
71. This shift can be tracked across two feature articles for *Resident Advisor*, published two years apart: Garcia, "Alternate History of Sexuality"; Ryce, "America's Gay Techno Underground."
72. An example of historiographic work would be Tim Lawrence's histories of dance music in New York in the 1970s and 1980s, while Mark Butler's books on composition and performance in techno provide an emblematic example of research based in musical analysis. Lawrence, *Love Saves the Day*; Lawrence, *Life and Death on the New York Dance Floor*; M. Butler, *Unlocking the Groove*; M. Butler, *Playing with Something That Runs*. There are nonetheless some notable exceptions to this pattern, including Jeremy Gilbert and Ewan Pearson's cultural-critical *Discographies* as well as a body of ethnographic research embedded in the substyles of psychedelic trance (especially "Goa trance" and "psytrance"): Gilbert and Pearson, *Discographies*; D'Andrea, *Global Nomads*; Saldanha, *Psychedelic White*; St. John, *Technomad*; St. John, *Global Tribe*.
73. Particularly influential for my approach to affect is the work of Lauren Berlant, Sianne Ngai, Eve K. Sedgwick, Kathleen Stewart, and Nigel Thrift, all of whose work spans several disciplines and areas of study: Berlant, *Female Complaint*; Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*; Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*; Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*; Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*; Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory*. For an overview of affect theory and the "affective turn," see Clough and Halley, *Affective Turn*; Gregg and Seigworth, *Affect Theory Reader*.
74. Fiona Buckland's study of queer nightlife in New York is based in dance ethnography and performance studies, while Alejandro Madrid writes about "nor-tec" (electronic *norteño* music from Tijuana) through the lens of ethnomusicology and Latin American studies, and Ben Malbon engages in a critical geography of British urban clubbing. Buckland, *Impossible Dance*; Madrid, *Nor-Tec Rifa*; Malbon, *Clubbing*. Although not as tightly focused on dancefloor encounters, both Rebekah Farrugia and Fiona Hutton provide important accounts of how women experience and navigate club spaces: Farrugia, *Beyond the Dance Floor*; Hutton, *Risky Pleasures?*
75. This book's focus on slippery and vague belonging resonates with Kiri Miller's *Traveling Home*, which examines how a radically diverse group of singers can share a sense of belonging through collective music making; although we examine contrasting sites and scenes, we find similar forms of strategic avoidance being used to lubricate encounters with difference.

76. Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 7–8.
77. See the introductory chapter of Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia* for an elucidation of how Bloch's utopianism can inform queer politics.
78. For Bloch's concrete utopias, see Bloch, *Principle of Hope*, 1:146.
79. For an introduction to thick description as ethnographic method, see Geertz, "Thick Description."

## 1. Touch and Intimacy on the Dancefloor

1. For a more detailed recounting of this event, see the corresponding field note posted to my fieldwork blog: Garcia, "Souvenir 03."
2. For this conceptualization of cultural intimacy through shared embarrassment, see Herzfeld, *Cultural Intimacy*, 1–6; and for an ethnomusicological application of this idea to the role of sentimentality in Turkish popular musics, see Stokes, *Republic of Love*, 32–34.
3. "Vibe" as a vernacular Anglophone term for diffuse and contagious affect has an especially long history of use in electronic dance music scenes. See chapter 4 for more discussion of this term in relation to affect theory, and for a review of scholarly literature on the topic, see Garcia, "Feeling the Vibe."
4. Unwelcome touch also impacts people of color as well as trans and queer folks differently and disproportionately. Since my interviewees were mostly white and cisgendered, the ethnographic data I collected on this issue focused mainly on (mostly white) cis women's experiences.
5. Some scholars of Japanese corporeal culture have also worked to counter stereotypes of Japanese intimate relations (as nonverbal, nontactile, indirect, and unemotional) by focusing on practices of cosleeping (Tahhan, "Depth and Space in Sleep"), bathing rituals (Clark, *Japan, a View from the Bath*), and parent-child or teacher-child tactility (Ben-Ari, *Body Projects in Japanese Childcare*; Tahhan, "Blurring the Boundaries between Bodies").
6. Although a more recent review article on empirical studies of interpersonal touch research does not seem to have been published yet, see nonetheless Gallace and Spence, "Science of Interpersonal Touch."
7. Henley, "Status and Sex"; Henley, *Body Politics*. For an example of the warmth/nurturing approach to touch research, see Mehrabian, *Nonverbal Communication*. For an approach centered on sexual interest, see Jourard and Rubin, "Self-Disclosure and Touching."
8. Henley, "Status and Sex," 91. Following this hypothesis, see also Goffman, "Nature of Deference and Demeanor"; Major, Schmidlin, and Williams, "Gender Patterns in Social Touch," 634.
9. Major, Schmidlin, and Williams, "Gender Patterns in Social Touch," 640.