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Book of Abstracts

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Writing (in) the dark

opacity, autoethnography and the limits of academic knowledge at the queer rave

sér vales

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Abstract

How to convey the ethnographic reality of an underground queer techno-space without betraying, at the same time, the political struggle for opacity and the scientific demands for (at least some) degree of objectivity? This paper interrogates the possibilities of an autoethnographic writing that is able to faithfully represent and obfuscate the nightlife experiences of marginalized communities without compromising the survival of their already precarious ways of organizing and resisting economic and state-sanctioned violence. I argue that the social reproduction of the queer EDM scene depends upon its capacity to build a safer space for the blossoming of politically oriented pleasures and caring practices. In this context, opacity may be understood as a series of techniques directed to protect the autonomy of the precarious subjects and collectives that make up the scene—against increasing dynamics of exclusion from public and commercial nightlife spaces. Thus, the queer 'I'/eye is presented as a method that may unsettle established forms of ethnographic description, engaging at the same time with a longstanding tradition of queer poetics and theorizing. Somewhat paradoxically, this practice also intends to privilege other sensorial perspectives away from the hegemony of visibility, in line with a critique of transparency as a device for truth production that has its roots in decolonial thinking—incorporating, as well, the theoretical and methodological perspectives of queer phenomenology and sensory ethnography. Nonetheless, the ethical concerns and the political shortcomings of an opaquely queer autoethnography need also be considered, inasmuch as they can end up working against the aims of critical research—ultimately betraying the purposes of both ethnographers and participants.

Keywords

Queer Methodology; Epistemology; Representation; Techno-Musicking; Community-Organizing