

BODY of KNOWLEDGE

‘Feeling at one’: Distribution of minds, bodies and beats in dance music

Maria Witek

Vibe is a well-known phenomenon in research on dance music, clubbing and rave culture. It is an affective atmosphere that is collectively shaped by the rhythmic interlocking of its different elements, such as the DJ, the music, the dancers, the space, the lights and the temperature. Ethnographic and phenomenological accounts of dance music consciousness are filled with subjective reports of feelings of oneness, unity, ego dissolution, ecstasy and oceanic experience. However, until now, such dissolving of subjectivity during clubbing and raving has been treated largely as metaphor. This paper advances the notion of affective distribution by suggesting how the cognitive processes of clubbing and raving literally extend across the beat and the body. I consider vibe from the phenomenological perspective of socio-affective Extended Mind and focus on its musical correlates. I illustrate how the temporal structure of syncopation opens up spaces or gaps in the rhythmic surface that invite the body to ‘fill in’ through synchronized body-movement, thus providing the body with opportunities to physically occupy the musical beat. The paper thus asserts that the breakdown of boundaries between body, brain, music and environment is not just metaphorical but also material and physiological, and in doing so argues for a non-anthropocentric view of music and affect.