

Back for Good

Heterotopic Memory in Melbourne's Queer Nightlives

Regan Michael Lynch

Since the latter half of 2017, I have conducted a performance ethnography of Melbourne's queer nightlife. Following the methodological footsteps of Marlon Bailey (2013) and Dwight D. Conquergood (2002), this project arose from an intimate embeddedness within local nightlife communities and has pulled me along a myriad of unpredictable riptides as I hosted club nights, performed burlesque, conducted interviews, and danced an uncountable number of hours on dimly lit dancefloors. In this interrogation of the heterotopic nature of local nightlife, I've grappled with the fault lines, fractures, and ideologies that define the fraught territorialities of queer nightlife spaces in Melbourne. However, as Covid-19 shuttered venues, what began as the exploration of a thriving scene shifted into an altogether different mode: a live documentation of crisis as queer participants grappled with nightlife's sudden disappearance. I was thus prompted to follow queer nightlife into unstable terrain, conducting interviews remotely through glitchy wifi connections and attending events, through Zoom, from home.

As an array of scholarship has proposed, the temporality of queerness is perhaps already out of joint, stymieing neoliberal notions of progress and complicating the position of before and after (Castiglia and Reed 2011; Cvetkovich 2003; Drysdale 2019; Foucault 1986; Freeman 2010; Halberstam 2005; Love 2007; moore 2018; Muñoz 2009; Nyong'o 2019).¹ In this vein, I approach the pre- and post- of pandemic time—the shift from presence to absence—not as discrete entities, but rather as mutually constitutive modes. Despite the evident differences occasioned by the onset of pandemic life, the ensuing community focus on cultural memory, collective pleasure, trauma, and the virtual has further highlighted the ways in which queer nightlife already operated across these arenas, both complexifying and reifying the stakes of return to the city's venues. Approached heterotopically, the destabilizing temporalities of queer nightlife can be seen as a cultivated element of its appeal, and integral to its operation as a cultural site—particularly for marginalized people.

Nightlife is a privileged site of queer theorizing, a necessarily interdisciplinary field that, despite its diffuse origins in aesthetics, affect, architecture, cultural studies, ethnography, geography, performance studies, and queer studies, has increasingly accrued the distinction of its own discipline. With subjects including but not at all limited to Black ballroom culture in Detroit (Bailey 2013), the lesbian drag king scene in Sydney (Drysdale 2019), the burgeoning gay rave scene of 1990s New

Regan Michael Lynch is completing a PhD in Theatre at the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne. He splits his time between research, creating queer community spaces, and working as a DJ. regan.m.lynch@gmail.com

1. Temporality is a core preoccupation of queer scholarship, much of which has sought to account for the ways that queer subjectivity is experienced outside of what Elizabeth Freeman terms “chrononormativity” (2010:xxiii). Broadly speaking, queer temporality is theorized as bucking the strictures of capitalist production and the normative milestones of a human life, attending to the modes of being that linger in the past, that yearn for an alternative future, or that collapse the boundaries between past, present, and future altogether.

York (Buckland 2002), a memorialization of North American and London gay bars (Atherton Lin 2021), the worldmaking aesthetics of club fashion (moore 2018), queer-of-color house music culture in Chicago (Salkind 2019), and a collection of essays on *Queer Nightlife* (Adeyemi et al. 2021), the attentive criticality of a thriving global scholarship reflects the centrifugal cultural force of nightlife throughout the queer imaginary, as well as within queer people's everyday lives. These clandestine locales are characterized ambivalently, functioning as spaces of "foundational vitality [...] of creativity, diverse expressive cultures and counter-cultural transgression of established societal norms" (Hae 2012:3), while also acting as "sites of alienation that are circumscribed by normative modes of exclusion" (Adeyemi et al. 2021:2).

The queer revelry of the night is experienced and theorized not only as a temporally truncated space within which to live in the moment, forget all your troubles, and not think about tomorrow; but also as a site that invites introspection, memorialization, and altered perspectives on the history of culture and urban development, while fostering strange hopes for a different kind of future. Nightlife scholarship itself is approached as excavatory and revelatory—unearthing subjugated archives or contributing to their accumulation through the act of documentation. Frankie Decaiza Hutchinson writes that the club can "help foster imaginations: imaginings of a world where we can exist without having to fight but instead exist with compassion and support. We dive into these clubs hoping to get a taste of another way of existing" (2021:57). Within this notion of the nightlife space, the dance floor can be a site of commercialism and conformity, as well as "a laboratory for emancipation and connection" (Szymanówka 2021:91). The contested and political nature of nightlife, its ambivalent allure, and its alchemical potential to unleash new knowledges reflect its heterotopic nature (Dehaene and De Cauter 2008; Foucault 1986; Genocchio 1995; Hetherington 1997; Johnson 2013; Tompkins 2014). Further, it highlights that the near-constant combat of the nightlife arena—be it for a more equitable distribution of opportunities and resources among participants, or against the forces of state violence and gentrification that routinely violate and destroy nightlife communities and venues—are ideological struggles over the parameters of our political and cultural imaginations.

Memory, like nightlife, is political—and heterotopian. It evades its definitional confines and can reach out to harm us, while offering us, in other cases, the resources to work towards justice. The brutal separation of queers from nightlife spaces because of the pandemic placed this relationship with the past into stark relief. Through the formal mode of the ethnographic interview, the chimeric powers of remembrance—as well as memory's heterotopic capacity to reforge and rupture the present—became evident, as nightlife artists reflected, from lockdown, on their bygone nightlives, and staged virtual livestream performances.

Cultural Memory I

What Did We Forget?

Nefertiti LaNegra, despite many years of listening to or engaging with house music,² tells me that they did not learn anything about its historical context—and how it related so personally to their own—until they moved from the US and started attending queer clubs in Melbourne. Throughout the years prior, they felt a resonance with the music as they encountered it first in high school, and then again in college for a house-dance class, and then again in a different form in commercial gay clubs in Washington, DC. Throughout these engagements, however, Nefertiti lacked context: "the Black queer history part of it isn't really discussed" (LaNegra 2020). When they moved to Melbourne and started attending queer nightlife spaces, this changed: the people they met during

2. "House music" refers to one of the first forms of electronic dance music that rose to prominence in the 1980s and 1990s. Named after Frankie Knuckles's Chicago venue, The Warehouse, its thumping, hypnotic beats and cut-up vocals were born of experimentation among many different genres and music forms, including disco, R&B, jazz, and krautrock. The musicians who developed house, and their audiences, were primarily queer people and women from Black and Latinx communities (Salkind 2019).

club excursions—DJs and dancers intimately involved with the production of nightlife throughout the city—provided them with pieces of crucial information:

The minute I come to Melbourne, Melbourne is all about some house music, and I love it because of the club spaces, and it sort of all of a sudden re-engaged me. It's impacted my everyday life 'cause one: house is something I've found myself listening to all the time, like when I work out, when I'm in my house. And two: it's just become this other point that's sort of like a proud moment for me as a Black queer man. That it's like, oh this, this music to some degree is my birthright. It's like, you're a part of this community, and this community made it, so you totally have a right to be a part of it. (LaNegra 2020)

Delivered through the unassuming medium of casual conversation, Nefertiti's new acquaintances on the dance floor filled what had been, until then, a lack that they did not fully understand. Despite an attraction to house music from adolescence, and their repeated movement through gay club spaces within the country of house's origin, they had not come across this knowledge that was integral to their sense of self. Their use of the term *birthright*, laden as it is with the force of cultural legacy, reveals the profound importance of encountering this historical framework that finally explained the way they already *felt* about queer clubs. This sensation of an unknown cultural wound and the subsequent joy and relief of its suturing illuminates a key element of nightlife's appeal: the recuperation of memory.

Nefertiti's description of their shifting relationship to house reveals a culture that has been dislocated from its origins, the sociopolitical context of its emergence obscured. However, although Nefertiti's personal rediscovery of house's Blackness and queerness occurred as part of their interaction with nightlife, it may not only be a product of changing place but also a reflection of political developments over time. Coinciding with Nefertiti's relocation to another continent in the 2010s, a tectonic shift was reverberating through nightlife scenes internationally. In short, criticisms of electronic dance music's appropriation by "white extractive capitalism" (Brown 2019), and the concomitant erasure of the art form's history and importance in relation to race, began to gain traction (Brown 2019; Collin 2021; Ghanny 2016; Grant 2020; Wei 2020). Questions surrounding the supremacy of white people in art forms (such as house and techno) that were pioneered by Black and Latinx artists were successfully pushed into wider circulation, the consequences of which are still evolving. The ripple effect of these discussions is perhaps best emblemized by the wave of nightlife collectives around the globe—from Melbourne, to Tbilisi, to New York City, to Warszawa—that have sought to leverage club spaces "as direct social or political interventions to empower specific marginalized groups" (Collin 2021:45). In Melbourne these conversations have taken root in a prolific number of events that prioritize, or exclusively book, marginalized artists, and are reflected in the increasingly mainstream acceptance (or remembrance) that nightlife, and specifically club music, is part of a radical culture with intrinsic ties to race, especially Blackness.

Fiona Buckland, in her work on New York City's gay dance scene of the 1990s, concludes that the embodied memory passed between bodies on the dance floor resists capture by the homogenizing forces of gentrification due to the ephemerality of its form (2002:21). However, the history of club culture, while a history of resistance, is also a history of the culture's capture and resale as commodity. The displacing effects of gentrification do penetrate into realms of the abstract, not only forcing the closure of buildings and the eviction of dwellers, but also cleaving symbols and actions from meaning, serving the double purpose of allowing culture to be appropriated for profit, while removing its political context to facilitate more compliant communities (Schulman 2012).

In Hassan Ghanny's essay on house music, they identify its long-standing universal ideals of harmony among peoples as a core justification for its appropriation (2016). Ghanny argues that the mythos of house, that house is a "feeling" rather than a mode of cultural production born of specific subjectivities, is taken as implicit permission for white artists to build lucrative careers on sampling and mimicking its pioneers (2016). Capitalists with no cultural ties to the music's origins successfully remade the form, at least in its mainstream iterations, into their image. In doing so, they promoted a neater and far more digestible message of harmony and peace—a message

that also justified their perceived right to appropriate the artform—instead of articulating the convoluted ancestral lines that also link techno, house, and other forms of electronic music production to the horrors of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the cultural forms that were harbored therein (Brown 2019; Jiménez 2021:28).

The erasure of house's origins can be ascribed to the cathexis of race, queerness, and place from which it emerged. Developed in the 1980s by artists and communities burdened with the compounding threats of systemic racism, state violence, queerphobia, and an exploding HIV/AIDS pandemic, the predominance of white, wealthy artists trafficking in this form, lifting sounds and samples from its progenitors, is testament to the abstractive power of gentrification and its uneven burdens on different populations (Wei 2020). Further, the severance of this history from the present, leading to a global ubiquity of white artists within dance music throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, can be understood as preconditioned by a mass of trauma and loss of life that allowed the pillaging of these cultures to occur. The violence that is necessary for the extraction of profit through whitewashing and gentrification, in this light, can also be seen as a continuance of older forms of exploitative economy and culture, elevating the position and power of privileged white capitalists through the dislocation of labor from racially oppressed classes such as Black, Latinx, and Indigenous peoples, alongside the systemic application of harm (Brown 2019). Even when house music is presented within a gay or queer context, as Nefertiti describes, its origins may be obscured, further attesting to the specificity of the art form's legacy within both racial and queer histories.

HIV/AIDS scholarship offers a multitude of perspectives on the concept of a queer generational cleavage. In particular, the rise of a new gay conservatism throughout the 1990s provides a perspective on how, even within queer spaces, house music's memory may be gentrified and appropriated by white queer capitalists (Castiglia and Reed 2011; Duggan 2003; Schulman 2012; Warner 1997, 1999). Throughout this time, in tandem with the whitening of dance music, a cadre of gay US American moralists were calling for the repression of expansive sexual cultures, denouncing queerness as unnatural deviancy, and reorienting the broader gay movement toward goals such as assimilation, home ownership, marriage, military service, and monogamy (Castiglia and Reed 2011; Warner 1997, 1999).³ Concomitantly, emboldened politicians targeted venues that facilitated alternative sexual formations, leading to a swathe of closures across the United States and particularly in New York City (Castiglia and Reed 2011; Warner 1999; Delany 1999).

Christopher Castiglia and Christopher Reed have named this process “de-generation,” a coordinated campaign of “temporal isolation” designed to erase the potentialities envisioned by the past in service of curtailing the imaginaries of the next queer generation (2011:9). As they argue, the loss of progressive voices to AIDS meant little resistance could be offered to the neoconservative wave that succeeded them. Michael Warner, too, diagnoses this phenomenon as a kind of “social amnesia” (1997:15), proposing that “since the most painfully instructed generation has been decimated by death, the queer culture of the present faces more than the usual shortfall in memory” (1999:52). In short, they have found that the segregation of the past and present has been driven by a homophobic conservatism, capitalizing on the HIV/AIDS crisis to reinforce the limits of morality.

This facet of reasoning, though sound, is somewhat (but not totally) problematized by its application to the Australian context, where HIV/AIDS activists throughout the 1980s gained a far more sympathetic ear from the government (Willett 2000). In successfully convincing authorities that a gay

3. Alongside the condemnation meted out by the religious right, gay men such as Andrew Sullivan began appearing in the media to claim that the discrimination and oppression faced by gay men, and the HIV/AIDS epidemic itself, was a natural consequence of behavior that was not endorsed by mainstream society. They promoted a “moral” view of the world, where “deviant” behavior was (rightly, in their view) punished by State oppression, homophobic violence, and disease (Warner 1997, 1999).

problem required a gay solution, the collectives prevented a crackdown on queer spaces and sex practices: instead, sex-on-premises venues, bars, and dance parties became informational hubs for health communication, as activists worked with government to develop and disperse a range of subculturally specific materials such as leaflets, posters, condoms, and lubricant (Willett 2000:178). Through education and behavior change alone, these campaigns brought the rate of local transmission under control by the early 1990s (Willett 2000), and although there were certainly media outlets and moralists calling for venue closures or even a total segregation of gay people from public utilities and employment, these voices were quickly consigned to the fringe as governments rebuffed the possibility of a punitive response (Wotherspoon 2016). Despite the widespread death, panic, and trauma, in the wake of HIV/AIDS, the varied network of Australian nightlife remained largely intact: its centrality to culture and health had been vindicated, and the links between activist collectives and the popular Australian gay population were stronger than ever (Willett 2000). Nevertheless, as the 1990s progressed, parallel forces to those witnessed in the US began to shape queer populations in a new image. The transformed sexual practices of gay Australian youth following the arrival of HIV/AIDS did lead to a generational suspicion of their elders, disrupting a previously common practice of gay “aunties” mentoring newly out youths (Drinnan 1991). With the survival of a queer infrastructure, however, the proposition that contemporary queer nightlife is recuperating the memories of a pre-HIV/AIDS history is evocative, but incomplete.

By 1999, Melbourne’s Midsumma festival was composed of 113 stalls, 82 of which were commercial and political operations vying for a slice of the queer market (Willett 2000:217). Meanwhile organizations such as Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras have become increasingly reliant on corporate sponsorship to operate, often forging partnerships with companies who profit off harming queer people: Qantas, the Australian Government’s collaborator in the forced deportation of refugees—many of whom fled their countries due to their sexuality—remains as one of these sponsors (Dawson 2017; SGLMG 2021; Wiedersehn 2018). Gilead, the company that famously price-gouged antiretroviral medication for the treatment of HIV, has also featured as a partner (Harilaou and Parissis 2020; Turner 2019). Sydney, in a few decades, traversed the distance from pioneering world-renowned HIV/AIDS activism to funding the Mardi Gras festivities with the spoils of queer suffering, doled out by the abovementioned companies. The ideological transformation of this community has been rapid and profound, or as Sarah Schulman words it, “[s]omething had been erased. Some truth had been forgotten and replaced” (2012:11). Far beyond the homophobic responses to HIV/AIDS that sought to curtail sexual alterity, resulting in de-generation, I follow Schulman in characterizing the insidious network of forces behind this shift—behind this process of political amnesia—as gentrification (202).

Gentrification, much like heterotopia, is a feeling—but of displacement. It is of this as-yet unnamed affect that Schulman asks: “What is this thing that *homogenizes* complexity, difference, dynamic dialogic action for change and *replaces* it with sameness? With a kind of institutionalization of culture? With a lack of demand on the powers that be? With containment?” (14). Gentrification appeals to the question of memory at hand, as it spans the continuum of practices that domesticates the most privileged of queer people with the promise of wealth and stability, while regulating, buying out, demolishing, and redeveloping the more under-resourced nightclubs, bars, and saunas that could potentially awaken a collective political consciousness. The corporatization of queer culture and organizations can thus be seen as simply another flank of what Lisa Duggan terms “a reinvention of Western imperialism” (2003:35), a strategy of tactical isolation that convinces, or coerces, select populations to support economic policies that redistribute wealth upwards. This is done through targeting a narrow portion of a marginalized group—especially one that is gathering collective political power—and offering them pathways to escape the violence and oppression of marginalized existence: while the unjust economic system remains intact.

Despite the success of Australian HIV/AIDS activists in conserving queer sites and integrating queer knowledge into public health, the gentrification forces that position violent

multinational corporations as allies, and that center white creators as the arbiters of taste in art forms such as house music, were still largely successful in transforming the local culture and ideology to align with the values of commercialization and white supremacy; that is, until the cultural and political reckoning of recent years began to wreak its own forms of nightlife transformation.

Cultural Memory II

How Do We Remember?

Queer nightlife is, at least at times, an oppositional archive that ferments beneath the sanitizing influence of gentrification. Ann Cvetkovich argues that “in the absence of institutionalized documentation or in opposition to official histories, memory becomes a valuable historical resource, and ephemeral and personal collections of objects stand alongside the documents of the dominant culture in order to offer alternative modes of knowledge” (2003:8). Despite gentrification’s successful neutralization of particular kinds of queer spaces and cultures, they were not erased completely. Cvetkovich’s work on lesbian publics reiterates the *performative* power of the past, which can potentially forge new forms of culture founded on memory. She proposes that the categories of the past and present—what’s in your head and what is real—are fundamentally unstable, particularly for marginalized people who are far more likely to have experienced trauma. This temporal porosity is found to be a creative resource for queer public cultures (Cvetkovich 2003).

A memory need not be the individual’s own to erupt unexpectedly into their present reality. Quoting an anonymous source’s narration of public sex, Castiglia and Reed provide us with the following tableaux: “when someone stuck poppers under my nose for the first time, I felt like I was actually transported back to the Seventies. I felt like I was feeling what ‘they’ must have felt [...] I felt like I had tapped into some eternal, carnal, homoerotic and brotherly stream of consciousness” (2011:41). Unlike a more traditional archive, this access to a feeling of another time and place, one that is organized by alternative social relations, can be far more direct and disturbing. Nightlife’s arena as a relatively unstructured, interactive experimental space for collective activity perhaps privileges this form of memorialization, one that may occur without words, or may be stepped into through the excesses of the senses. When Sarah Thornton wrote of British raves as an “archival dance culture” (1995:69), queerness—or any kind of community other than white straight demographics—was far from her mind: but her observation that nightclubs and raves also function as living archives reinforces why they remain so central to queer people.

The embodied nature of this memorial process, passed through word-of-mouth but also engaged with through music dancing, and interfacing with the technology of DJ equipment, sound recordings, and speaker systems, is critical to nightlife’s character and how it is experienced by artists, patrons, and community members. Nefertiti goes on to say that

if anyone has ever seen me at a club or at a party they will tell you that I dance like my life depends on it. And I love it because I just love the music, and in particular I love gospel house [...] I love it, and so I think these spaces are really important because I get to dance and I get to sort of show appreciation for this music, and in particular, when gospel house happens, there becomes this moment where it becomes like this full circle thing, where all of a sudden it’s like, not only about me being Black, not only about me being queer, it’s also this sort of Christian lineage that I clearly have been raised in, sort of coming back, and circling back in sort of musical form, and dance form that I deeply love. (LaNegra 2020)

The site of the queer party can be vital for distinctly pleasurable modes of memorialization, accessing both a history and pleasure that is often withheld from marginalized people. This recalls Elizabeth Freeman’s concept of “erotohistoriography” as a method through which queer people engage with, and also manipulate, memory. Evading the strict accuracy of a historical project, erotohistoriography summons the past into the present in a Frankensteinian fashion, crafting a fusion of the personal, cultural, and archival to serve the needs of the summoner. Freeman proposes that

[as] a mode of reparative criticism, erotohistoriography honors the way queer social practices, especially those involving enjoyable bodily sensations, produce forms of time consciousness—even historical consciousness—that can intervene into the material damage done in the name of development, civilization, and so on. Within these terms, we might imagine ourselves haunted by bliss and not just by trauma; residues of positive affect (idylls, utopias, memories of touch) might be available for queer counter- (or para-) historiographies. (2010:120)

The body, in this instance, is a tool through which to echo past materialities in the present, retracing the carved-out grooves of bygone bodily manifestations in order to experience the spectral remnants of bliss, pleasure, and communality that are left behind.

Although abstract—operating as much within the realms of myth as they do history—cultural memories and the living archive they arise from within queer nightlife spaces can be crucial resources in the creation of alterity, and thus heterotopia. As Castiglia and Reed contend:

Memories enable more than survival; they are imaginative ways to disrupt and transform conditions that make survival necessary. Like utopias, memories craft a world that stands as a counterreality to the lacking or painful present, creating narratives of “the past” so as to challenge the inevitability of dominant constructions of “reality.” The space-off and time-out of memory afford a critical distance from which to evaluate present conditions that lead to alienation and yearning as we picture alternatives that challenge the inevitability of those conditions and imagine other social arrangements that transform the “reality” into a more livable (relation to) time and place. (2011:12)

This construction of how memory can function as a tool to reimagine the present is profoundly heterotopic, and explains how memory works within queer nightlife spaces *as* a creative spatial practice. Much like heterotopia, “memory” here is cast as arbitrary, imaginative, tinted with utopia but grounded in the immediate restraints of a present that is lacking. It exists within a temporal and spatial anomaly that provides a playground where there are alternatives to the current social reality and a means to (partially) bridge the difference between that current reality and the envisioned alternatives. The power of memory as a constructive force in the creation of space and political vision can be glimpsed in the history of nightlife. Its origins as a culture of the marginal and oppressed were erased and then revived, a testament to the ambivalent and heterotopic role of the past in the ideological composition of contemporary queer nightlife sites.

Old Ghosts, New Tricks

Cerulean, a drag artist, recounts their performance of 28 February 2020 at *Honcho Disko*, a weekly Thursday night of queer performance in Melbourne’s inner-north. It began with a lip-synch to a monologue by Lady Gaga, featured in the music video for “Marry the Night”:

When I look back on my life, it’s not that I don’t want to see things exactly as they happened. It’s just that I prefer to remember them in an artistic way. And truthfully the lie of it all is much more honest because I invented it. Clinical psychology tells us arguably that trauma is the ultimate killer. Memories are not recycled like atoms and particles in quantum physics; they can be lost forever. It’s sort of like my past is an unfinished painting, and as the artist of that painting, I must fill in all the ugly holes and make it beautiful again. It’s not that I’ve been dishonest, it’s just that I loathe reality. (Lady Gaga 2011)

Cerulean then embarked on an eight-minute performance art piece that sought to turn motifs of tragedy and trauma into beauty, before pretending to bury themselves in a grave onstage (Cerulean 2021). Throughout my interview with the performer, they expressed an ambivalence around the role of the club in processing trauma. At first Cerulean expressed pessimism at the possibility of transforming trauma into something at all positive; in fact, in their pre-pandemic performance, they suggest that these efforts can be futile, or even harmful, by concluding the attempts to salvage

tragedy with their “death.” Despite this, the drawn-out months of pandemic life elucidated the remedial function, for them, of queer nightlife, with the erstwhile sociality and movement of the dance floor and stage as a method of coping with the difficulties of day-to-day life (Cerulean 2021).

In approaching the absence of queer nightlife, in mapping the shape of its ambiguous loss, it is necessary to step beyond the sensation it is primarily associated with: pleasure. In this regard, I follow Cvetkovich in the consideration of “trauma cultures” (2003:10), and the complex and creative publics they can build outside of standard healing outlets such as private therapy or public testimony. Cvetkovich problematizes the pathologization and categorical basis of trauma, refuting that a standard diagnosis can grapple with its unrepresentability. She contends that “trauma discourse is important precisely because it challenges distinctions between the mental and physical, the psychic and the social, and the internal and external as locations or sources of pain” (18), positing trauma instead as a cultural outcome, as individuals struggle with the “consequences of a historical event” (18). Even the most private of traumas, such as sexual violence, are public when considered as an outcome of the ideological decisions and structural forces that may have facilitated their occurrence, the apparent intimacy of the act obscuring the systemic and cultural factors that led to the violence. By being attentive to other modes of trauma culture that escape accepted modes of recovery, Cvetkovich finds a specifically queer public constituted by the partial taming of trauma’s unpredictability (2003).

In interviews with nightlife creatives, the liveness of the archive is prominent. Through performance, nightlife artists recontextualize the affective potential of trauma, in service of a catharsis that may be achieved through an embodied collaborative and community-based practice. Buckland, writing specifically on improvised social dancing in nightclubs, refers to these potentialities as “a theatrical environment of memory,” noting how patrons, in particular, would use the dance moves of loved ones who had passed, incorporating their movements into choreography to result in a series of performative gestural echoes that can estimate a sense of their presence (2002:20). This strategy can be located beyond the mass on the dance floor, also guiding the selections and performance of the DJ, thereby infusing the entire space with the reverberations of memory.

During an interview with Sybil Gillespie of *Resident Advisor*, Eris Drew, a DJ and producer from Chicago who has performed several times in Melbourne, provides insight into the intersection between trauma and her creative practice. She describes one festival where she played in recent years: “in Mexico, in a cenote, which is an ancient sinkhole” (in Gillespie 2018). While playing, she says, she “started pulling record after record that this guy Elliot had given me in the early ’90s.” This period of her life was defined by partying and discovery, as well as the internal violence of repressing her queerness. Her friend, too, was simultaneously inspiring and toxic, gifting her some of her most beautiful records while continuing to play a significant role in her gender suppression. These records, in the decades since, were too tender to touch. Despite their beauty they became “the soundtrack to our pain” (in Gillespie 2018), a reminder of the death of friends and the confines of the closet.

At the party in Mexico, Drew tells Gillespie, she started pulling these records, spinning them in a kind of autonomic state before realizing what she was doing, some of them played for the first time ever. She cried while playing. Reflecting on this moment, she says that

I processed it with [my friend] for hours afterwards [...] We both felt that the process of being who we are in the world, and forming communities with people like us, who like this music, is healing us. The records are saying, “You’ve done so much, you’ve overcome this trauma, you’ve transformed this music that used to mean something you couldn’t even face, and now you’re making people dance to it, you’re feeling love and beauty through it.” It was a big letting go, like the records wanted me to have a catharsis. I cried my eyes out during that set, I kept playing, and ever since then I know what that is, and I’ve started talking about it. I see DJing as a form of collage. You take existing cultural elements and by combining them you transform them

into something that has new meaning, it has you in it. That's what's happening here, people are collaging these existing cultural artefacts and creating something really radiant and new with it, and exploring their identities through it. (in Gillespie 2018)

The records themselves become laden with the trauma of their origin. This history, when the record is played, is imported into the performance space, along with the riotous affective riptide. Importantly, however, this history is recontextualized and transformed through the act of its summoning, as the bodies of dancers appropriate the music for their own ends. Drew suggests that this process acts as a kind of cleansing, a catharsis, with records forming a conduit between the past site and the present, where it is able to be exorcised by the power of queer communal movement. This echoes Micah Salkind's observation that record selections are "palimpsests of memory-rich potential that DJs wield with immense power" (2019:156).

Sevara Zaric, the founder of Umami, a queer Melbourne club night that prioritizes Black artists, artists of color, and First Nations artists, also speaks at length about her musical tastes as a DJ and as a dancer. She tells me that her selections reflect her history—as well as her family's history—allowing her to explore them within the party space:

I was born in Bosnia, in Sarajevo the main city, which has a huge Muslim diaspora. I was born to...in a gypsy camp actually...to *sinti*, is the right word, I think. And, we moved away from there with father's family for two years, in Serbia, and then we moved down here during the war that was happening with the NATO bombings down there. It was a huge thing, that's why my family decided just to flee. My Mum took her sisters with her, my Dad took one brother with him as well, and we came to Australia. (Zaric 2020)

She describes learning English in primary school, and as she grew older and attended family weddings and gatherings, realizing that she had an ear for music. As she reached high school and then eventually clubbing age, she sought to follow the sounds of her family's history and seek them out within the nightlife spaces of Melbourne:

So, [I] came into high school and I came into my queerness as well, that was an integral part of why I play the way I play [...] I think for all of us it's an integral part, it's a huge part of my identity [...]. After I turned 18 I started exploring clubs, 'cause I was...I always loved dance music, especially, like, anything to do with ethnic drums, or like rhumba, or, because our Romani family being so disenfranchised—being not a well-documented group of people—they were always listening to Latinx music or Arabic music, just anything with a really 6/6 drum beat pattern. I began to realize I loved going into spaces where I could just dance, you know. Especially queer spaces. (Zaric 2020)

These accounts from Drew and Zaric demonstrate selective criteria for club music beyond the bounds of what would be fun for the audience (although, importantly, they are also that). For both DJs, the songs they choose, the rhythms and instrumentation in those songs, and the means by which they first heard those kinds of sounds are all integral to their selection. Although this method is a far cry from Freeman's erotohistoriography—in that it draws on traumatic histories as well as those that can be construed as pleasurable—it does follow a similar trajectory in its affective evocation of the past, using the body's movements and temporally conductive instruments such as vinyl discs and music to intervene in both past and present, mutually reconstructing them in the process.

Cultural memory may be a means through which certain queer nightlife spaces gain a heterotopic character, but the role of memory is not consigned purely to mining it for liberative potential. Within these accounts, the curators of the club space are not just drawing on past constructions of sexual liberation, but also on deeply personal historiographies of trauma such as transphobia, drug abuse, genocide, civil war, and immigration. Within the wordless abstraction of sound selection and manipulation, these practices resonate with Cvetkovich's observation of queer trauma cultures, and her claim that "trauma puts pressure on conventional forms of

documentation, representation, and commemoration, giving rise to new genres of expression, such as testimony, and new forms of monuments, rituals, and performances that can call into being collective witnesses and publics” (2003:7). The eruptive affects that take form in the wake of trauma invite a further glimpse of the work that memory does in queer nightlife: extending beyond the heterotopic retrieval of political alternatives, memory also provides a zone wherein people can salvage their relation with traumatic histories.

This trauma-work acts contrapuntally to Castiglia and Reed’s proposal for the working of cultural memory, a time-space they characterize as antidotal to elements of the present that are painful or lacking (2011). Even while queer nightlife rummages through historical subcultural formulations for positive contrasts to contemporary social norms—hence providing the experience of alterity that defines heterotopia—its creatives simultaneously summon forth complex sites of trauma specific to their individual experience (in this case, through the selection of music) in order to transform their associated affects. These sites’ contingent presence within a new (pleasurable) context, conducted by the communal experiment of the dance floor, provides alternative avenues for queers to incorporate the alienating elements of their pasts into an ever-emergent identity informed by the collective ethos of queer nightlife.

Although this process of experimentalism may appear largely internal—the unique relation of certain sounds to the creative’s traumatic history remaining obscure to the audience—I propose these operations do tangibly impact the composition of the queer nightlife site. The memorial associations with sound described by Eris Drew and Sevara Zaric may originate within their own minds, in a totally abstract relation to the space itself, but these virtual dimensions are foundational to queer nightlife’s alterity: to its special quality that is often experienced as liberative or transformational. These are brought into the space first through the music that the DJs select, and secondly in their concomitant reactions to those selections, which may not be consciously registered but contribute to the flow of feelings that characterize queer nightlife when it functions in its full capacity. In providing a space wherein artists and patrons can work with the malleable expanses of trauma, these sites offer a differing mode of relation—of self-relation—than is generally accessed within their broader social context. To put it another way, one of the heterotopic elements that underpins these sites is the potential for marginalized people to transform the negative affects of memory into reoriented aspects of their identity, in a collaborative and often unspoken collective process fueled by the joys of a momentary escape from hegemony.

Heterotopia’s Virtualities, or Queerness in the Abstract

If asked directly, a patron is not likely to identify the realms of cultural memory and trauma as justification for their ongoing visits to a queer party site; however, within the commonly cited emotional registers of joy, ecstasy, transformation, and confrontation associated with nightlife, there lies the possibility that these affects are experienced, but not parsed, approximately translated at points of overflow into more clearly defined arenas of feeling. To better interrogate these immaterial convergences, I turn to Brian Massumi’s (2002) work on the virtual and affect. He provides a precis of his approach to affect by defining it as

this two-sidedness, the simultaneous participation of the virtual in the actual and the actual in the virtual, as one arises from and returns to the other. Affect is this two-sidedness as seen from the side of the actual thing, as couched in its perceptions and cognitions. *Affect is the virtual as point of view* [...]. Affects are virtual synesthetic perspectives anchored in (functionally limited by) the actually existing, particular things that embody them. The autonomy of affect is its participation in the virtual. Its autonomy is its openness. (2002:35)

Affect here is conceptualized as both transcendent of and limited by a material body. The “actual”—concrete matter and experiences, such as our physical body, that we ground ourselves in as constituting part of reality—receives affect as an incomplete sense or feeling of the incorporeal.

Much like a part of the body may refer pain to somewhere only related to its source by a network—or, as Massumi contends above, as the brain may join multiple senses together to form a synesthetic response between traditionally unrelated sensory inputs—affects are the partial capture, and attempted translation, of happenings that take place beyond the spectrum of our ability to interpret them. This renders these affects into emotions or sensations that may be confounding, their origin not easily determined. Considering this within the framework of heterotopia, I return to the term's original medical definition prior to Foucault's adoption. Heterotopia, within this field, is an organ or tissue that is somewhere it does not belong: it refers to matter out of place (Foucault 1986). Affects, Massumi intimates, also have an element of roguishness about them, manifesting as displaced responses to forces that move between what we perceive as the actual and the virtual.

Due to their nature, the influence of these elements—how they create particular experiences for the patrons and artists in the space—is largely a matter of speculation. However, the arrival of the pandemic and the subsequent closure of venues across the country led to a literalization of how nightlife already operated within virtual terrain. The virtual, within this analysis, encompasses Massumi's definition as the affective incorporeal dimensions that intercut “actual” material sites, as well as the more common (yet not-dissimilar) usage of the term as an electronic representation of something or somewhere else. With these understandings in mind, the boundaries between material club venues and the virtual memorials of Zoom parties, think pieces, and artworks that replaced them become productively blurred.

In an article for *VICE*, comedian Navin Noronha writes of their first, and only, queer party catered towards larger men. Reflecting on that evening at ARQ, a now-closed queer club in Sydney, Noronha claims that “[t]he whole fallout of the pandemic in 2020 killed parties and events worldwide. But for queer people, the parties were the only place we find solace, if not absolute acceptance” (2020). Dejan Jotanovic, writing in *Assemble Papers*, furthered this explication of the incompatible relationship between queer nightlife spaces and the societal needs of a pandemic:

For many queers, like myself, an extended Melbourne lockdown has us dreaming of sweat and bass; spaces completely antithetical to the shared and collective health of our time. These spaces now feel not only more distant but also more dangerous; vectors for disease and state-sanctioned surveillance. Can you imagine rubbing up against stranger skin? Can you imagine a room steamed with dance? I can barely imagine being outside past eight, or maybe nine. (Jotanovic 2021)

These examples of retrospective yearning continue to arise the longer the pandemic ensues. Matto Lucas, a photographer who has documented queer party life in Melbourne for the past decade, writes in the companion text to his online art exhibition for Darebin Arts:

Real art, the avant-garde, no longer exists in the galleries, it is on the dance floor, it is in the club, it happens at 3am, in the bewitching hour, as activations amongst the dancing bodies on the dance floor, or on the runway or makeshift stages. Real art is happening at Melbourne's queer parties and events. Art that is alive, and inclusive and subversive and vibrant and transient—and I have been lucky enough to experience and witness and document it. (Lucas 2020)

Through their lockdown remembrances, detailing as they do the toll of sudden divorce from the community and creative spaces of queer nightlife, patrons and artists are reckoning with the relationship between their queerness and their lone bodies, with their isolation as opposed to a febrile collectivity.

Jotanovic latches his memorial hook into the sheen of sweat across bodies, the vibration of bass, and the sliding of half-dressed strangers up against each other's steamy skin, longing for proximity and tactility while we are required by law to maintain distance. In counterpoint to the movement from physical club sites to a primarily web-based social commons, concerns regarding the materiality of the body became increasingly central to discourse.

Benjamin Riley, in a piece looking back on the final Mardi Gras parties held right as the first Covid-19 cases were detected in Australia, summarizes the complexity of this relationship neatly:

There are, of course, many ways to be queer, to *do* queer, but it is challenging for queerness to live wholly at the level of the abstract. How then now can I find that feeling, those moments, those spaces, when it might still be months, years even, until their possibility returns in all that messy, bodily queerness? In other words, what does it mean to say that I'm queer, sitting alone in my house during Covid? (Riley 2020)

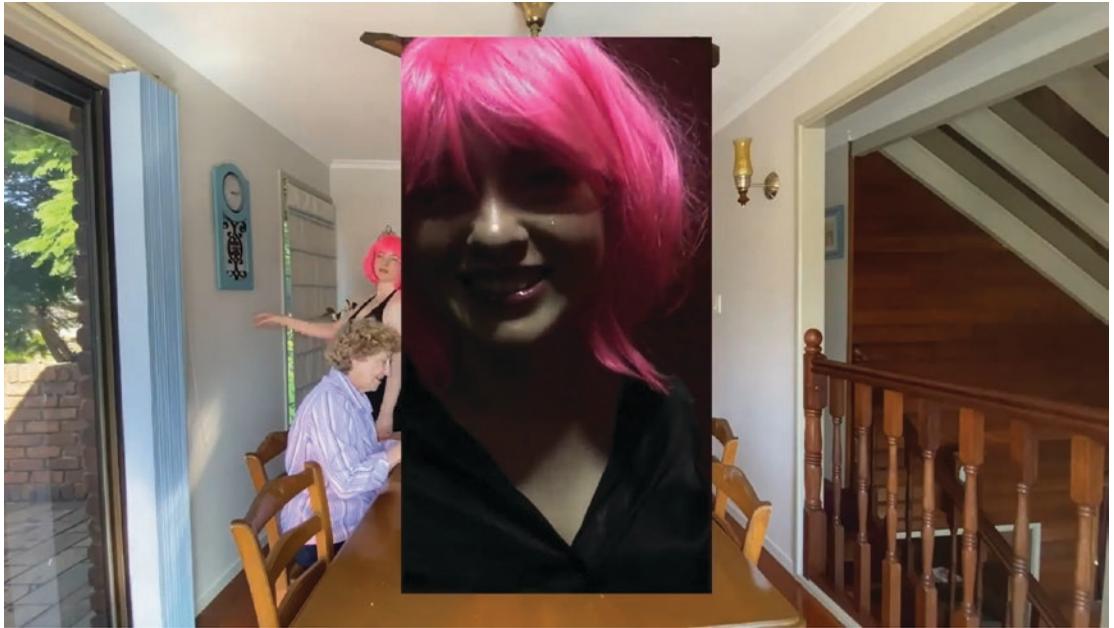
Queerness, Riley seems to contend, without the physical presence allowed by spaces and venues, is lived as an imagined relationship impossible to actualize within the solitary confines of the home. His queerness is revealed to be potentially contingent, not actually embedded within a stable identity but located instead in a particular way of feeling when in relation to others in certain spaces. To rephrase his core anxiety within the terms of this analysis, he asks: Can queerness be virtual? The operations of memory and trauma as constitutive affects of queer nightlife suggest that it always has been. As the materiality of queer events change form, however, and even change tense, situated mostly in the retrospective, the terrains of their virtual ancillaries also shift.

The ensuing months were frantic with digital experimentation in livestreamed interactive events, as promoters and performers attempted to transplant the experience of queer nightlife into software. The first I attended, Club Quarantina, was hosted through two platforms, Zoom and Mixlr. Through Zoom, the visuals of the webcams of all attendees and performers were displayed within a grid, while through Mixlr the DJs broadcast their sets and attendees simultaneously tuned in. I found this format did exert an unexpected pull of sadness and relief, far more so than watching a unidirectional-streamed event, as a performer broadcasted out to audience's homes and devices without direct feedback between the performer and patrons. On performing live on Zoom instead of broadcasting a prerecorded performance, Cerulean says that

it actually feels really good [...Y]ou may not see people's faces, but you know, it was really cool to see people live in the chat. People were like woo, yeah, it was really, it was really fun, and you can see these things kinda come up in the side of your eye; you're seeing a kind of give and take response. It's still there, it's different. But you still have that live element that it's happening now. (Cerulean 2021)

This sense of liveness was an experience I felt, too. In Club Quarantina, as I danced in front of the screen in my partner's living room and could see and respond to the dancing of others, I felt myself entering a parallel, if not identical, sense of spatial awareness as I would while dancing in a venue, knowing that I was dancing not just for myself but also being potentially watched by others. This critical difference—the fact my dancing was in some way performative—evoked a hint of the feeling of being in a club or at a party, and as I moved my body in the small space beside the dining table, memories and feelings of prior events and people surfaced, viscerally connecting me with the club and party spaces I had attended in the past.

This feeling was made all the more explicit by a performance by Fagstaff Gardens, who performed a lip-synch rendition of “Back for Good” by the band Take That. For this performance, which took place in their bathroom and bedroom, they performed to their web camera as all of the attendees watched through Zoom. The camera backtracked through the house as they walked towards it, lip-synching to the lyrics “whatever I said, whatever I did, I didn't mean it, I just want you back for good” (see Valery2806 [1994] 2012). While doing this, they used the technical benefits of the platform to change their background, green-screen style, superimposing themselves over images of queer nightlife spaces such as Poof Doof, Wet on Wellington, and the Gaytimes Festival, their postures yearning and wistful, reaching out towards the camera and, by proxy, these bygone sites. Although the show was comical, seeing other patrons, who I would otherwise be seeing in person, also watching this performance gave the event an undercurrent of grief, and I watched as one viewer fought back tears. This performance and



Figures 1 and 2. Stills from film by Poly Lez Slut, aka Sarah Stafford. Above: Still of Poly Lez Slut in an empty nightclub overlaid on footage of dancing while a family member sits at a dining table. Below: Poly Lez Slut tries to make themselves throw up over a nightclub toilet. (From Shandy 2020; courtesy of Sarah Stafford)



my experience dancing are examples of how online nightlife spaces and actual club venues can potentially share some operative modes. Kerryn Drysdale, in her observations of Sydney's drag king scene, writes that

The values of contemporary scenes are transplanted through political temporalities in which forms of recognition create a sense of bounded cultural and social space. Here, the connection between the pursuit of interests in the present and the historical trajectory from

which those practices derive instils a sense of collective affective purpose [...A]lliances and differences pivot on the imagined space of the scene against a meaningful historical backdrop. (2019:111)

Although the pandemic may have truncated the “historical backdrop” to venues that were operating only a few months beforehand, Fagstaff Garden’s layering of virtual spaces onto our screens similarly works to position the present Zoom event within a queer cultural history. The chasm of the unknown opened up by pandemic uncertainty places these spaces from our very recent past into the realm of the bygone—used by Fagstaff as historical backdrops to facilitate a collective, memorial response.

There are material differences between the online party and one that takes place within a venue, yet both gain meaning through their engagement with virtual domains:

Since the virtual is unlivable even as it happens, it can be thought of as a form of super-linear abstraction that does not obey the law of the excluded middle, that is organized differently but is inseparable from the concrete activity and expressivity of the body. The body is as immediately abstract as it is concrete; its activity and expressivity extend, as on their underside, into an incorporeal, yet perfectly real, dimension of pressing potential. (Massumi 2002:31)

This passage by Massumi applies to the ways queer nightlife patrons and artists experience the party space in a multitude of ways that extend beyond the immediate sensations of the body, and beyond the confines of the present. The movement of the party site from a brick-and-mortar venue to the realm of the digital enabled the visualization of how virtualities such as cultural memory lend meaning to queer nightlife sites, crowding them as effectively as corporeal bodies crowd the dance floor, an amalgamation of murmuring specters. It is possible that the charged emotive atmosphere of queer nightlife itself is the catalogue of the affective surplus brought about by the clamoring kaleidoscope of virtualities that, despite being comprised of myriad individual experiences, memories, histories, and interpretations, are somehow experienced as collective within the brief temporal zone of heterotopia.

Coda: Glitch Time

In March 2020, the Brisbane-based queer party Shandy hosted its own livestream of DJs and performances from a local venue in Queensland. Their setup, reminiscent of a telethon, was a garishly decorated stage with advanced production showing a rolling, custom crawl that ran text or held the current performer’s name. The night was programmed like a regular evening, even though I was watching it from my partner’s couch. DJ sets were interspersed with live performers aiming their performances toward the audience (or in this case, camera). This felt comfortingly familiar up until the third performance, which was a recorded and edited film created by performer Poly Lez Slut. This film was pieced together from phone footage and clips from what appeared to be a family home (family members and all), where they isolated from the pandemic. The video began with the performer dancing in the middle of an empty nightclub with a bright pink wig, filmed unsteadily on a phone camera, emulating the kind of informal footage that is uploaded to social media throughout a night out. The video then cut to Poly Lez Slut in the same outfit, except now transported to the middle of the day, dancing to cheesy trance music throughout the rooms of a house. They danced in the kitchen as their family moved awkwardly around them doing chores; they danced in the living room, shimmying down the length of the room as their family watched TV, paying no mind to the performer, as if they were from another dimension. Poly Lez Slut kept dancing closer and closer to the camera, until they stopped and said “I think that’s it, we’ve got the shot” (Shandy 2020).

The remainder of the film performance devolved into a kind of metavisual dialogue between the two worlds of the performance: the home of pandemic isolation and the club, with an extended sequence showing the performer trying to make themselves throw up into a nightclub toilet. This

scene eventually is overlaid on a shot of a family member sitting at a dining table at home (see figs. 1 & 2) with the performer—doubled, now, between both overlaid screens—dancing on a stuttered, uneven, repeating loop. This disorienting reorganization of the presentational format and the editing techniques used were emblematic of the “asynchrony, anachronism, anastrophe, belatedness, compression, delay, ellipsis, flashback, hysteron-proteron, pause, prolepsis, repetition, reversal, surprise” that Elizabeth Freeman focuses on as textual moments of queer temporality in film (2010:xxii). By making the virtual nature of the performance both the source of creative material and a point of interrogation, *Poly Lez Slut* rebuffed the otherwise widespread attempts at forging affective continuity between queer nightlife as it had been and how it stood now in the shadow of pandemic life. Instead, we experienced a formal overhaul of how performance could be presented within the nightlife context.

The long minutes of repetitive beats, the abject pleasure in self-inducing vomit, and the alienating layered realities of familial mundanity with a hypercharged but deteriorating way of being that had been displaced from its origins in club nightlife, sought to replicate the perturbing disruption and isolation we were experiencing during lockdown. This expanded into alternate nightlife virtualities particular to the material circumstances of digital broadcast events in lockdown, embodying the psychic distortions of time and identity, and aberrant relations of tactility and proximity, that have been occasioned by pandemic circumstance. Massumi writes that

[t]he body is as immediately virtual as it is actual. The virtual, the pressing crowd of incipencies and tendencies, is a realm of potential. In potential is where futurity combines, unmediated, with pastness [...] The virtual is a lived paradox where what are normally opposites coexist, coalesce, and connect; where what cannot be experienced cannot but be felt—albeit reduced and contained. (2002:30)

Moving between the actual and virtual sites of queer nightlife, the accounts of performances and other experiences demonstrate how the abstract zones of memory and trauma are a constitutive feature of how queer nightlife sites are created. As identified by Massumi, the raw potentiality of these spaces provides a playground where past, future, and present are spliced together, spawning a plethora of fleeting virtualities that are registered through bodies as affect. In the case of queer nightlife, these extraneous dimensions could be said to act as the synovial fluid between things: individual bodies; the body and the physical site; the subject and the queer ancestral past; this site and other heterotopic sites; the heterotopia and the dominant world it defines itself against. They provide the means for participants to melt down and reforge their relationships with trauma and memory—both personal and collective—salvaging, in tandem with a temporary community, an altered sense of personhood, newly situated within a context productive of new ways-of-being.

References

- Adeyemi, Kemi, Kareem Khubchandani, and Ramón H. Rivera-Servera. 2021. “Introduction.” In *Queer Nightlife*, ed. Kemi Adeyemi, Kareem Khubchandani, and Ramón H. Rivera-Servera, 1–18. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Atherton Lin, Jeremy. 2021. *Gay Bar: Why We Went Out*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.
- Bailey, Marlon M. 2013. *Butch Queens Up in Pumps: Gender, Performance, and Ballroom Culture in Detroit*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Brown, DeForrest, Jr. 2019. “Techno Is Technocracy.” *Fact Magazine*, 17 December. Accessed 1 March 2022. www.factmag.com/2019/12/17/techno-is-technocracy/
- Buckland, Fiona. 2002. *Impossible Dance: Club Culture and Queer World-Making*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Castiglia, Christopher, and Christopher Reed. 2011. *If Memory Serves: Gay Men, AIDS, and the Promise of the Queer Past*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Cerulean. 2021. Skype interview by author. Audio recording. Melbourne, 6 September.

- Collin, Matthew. 2021. "The Night is Ours: Dance Culture Activists and the Politics of Raving." In *You Got to Get In to Get Out: The Never-ending Sound Continuum*, ed. Sonia Fernández Pan and Carolina Jiménez, 36–51. Madrid: La Casa Encendida.
- Conquergood, Dwight. 2002. "Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research." *TDR* 46, 2 (T174):145–56. doi.org/10.1162/105420402320980550
- Cvetkovich, Ann. 2003. *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Dawson, Jasmine. 2017. "Looking Into: Australia's Approach to LGBTIQ Asylum Seekers and Refugees." Australian Institute of International Affairs, 2 July. www.internationalaffairs.org.au/news-item/looking-into-australias-approach-to-lgbtq-asylum-seekers-and-refugees/
- Dehaene, Michiel, and Lieven De Cauter, eds. 2008. *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society*. London: Routledge.
- Delany, Samuel R. 1999. *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*. New York: New York University Press.
- Drinnan, Neal. 1991. "Combating the Perils of Innocence." *OutRange* 100 (September):30–32.
- Drysdale, Kerryn. 2019. *Intimate Investments in Drag King Cultures: The Rise and Fall of a Lesbian Social Scene*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Duggan, Lisa. 2003. *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1986. "Of Other Spaces." Trans. Jay Miskowicz. *Diacritics* 16, 1:22–27. doi.org/10.2307/464648
- Freeman, Elizabeth. 2010. *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Genocchio, Benjamin. 1995. "Discourse, Discontinuity, Difference: The Question of 'Other' Spaces." In *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*, ed. Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson, 35–46. Cambridge: Blackwell.
- Ghanny, Hassan. 2016. "How White Kids Stole House Music from Black Aunties." *Medium*, 2 September. medium.com/cuepoint/how-white-kids-stole-house-music-from-black-aunties-bf8f1df631e
- Gillespie, Sybil. 2018. "The Art of DJing: Eris Drew." *Resident Advisor*, 22 November. Accessed 2 February 2019. https://ra.co/features/3352
- Grant, Sydney. 2020. "The Black History of House Music." EDM Identity, 19 June. Accessed 9 September 2021. edmentidentity.com/2020/06/19/black-history-of-house-music/
- Hae, Laam. 2012. *The Gentrification of Nightlife and the Right to the City: Regulating Spaces of Social Dancing in New York*. London: Routledge.
- Halberstam, Jack (Judith). 2005. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York University Press.
- Harilaou, Bridget, and Connor Parissis. 2020. "An Activist Future for Mardi Gras." *Overland Literary Journal*, 26 February. overland.org.au/2020/02/an-activist-future-for-mardi-gras/
- Hetherington, Kevin. 1997. *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering*. London: Routledge.
- Hutchinson, Frankie Decaiza. 2021. "Club Activism Is Crucial but Will Never Be Enough." In *You Got to Get In to Get Out: The Never-ending Sound Continuum*, ed. Sonia Fernández Pan and Carolina Jiménez, 52–63. Madrid: La Casa Encendida.
- Jiménez, Carolina. 2021. "To Get In to Get Out." In *You Got to Get In to Get Out: The Never-ending Sound Continuum*, ed. Sonia Fernández Pan and Carolina Jiménez, 24–35. Madrid: La Casa Encendida.
- Johnson, Peter. 2013. "The Geographies of Heterotopia." *Geography Compass* 7, 11:790–803. Accessed 20 January 2022. doi.org/10.1111/gec3.12079
- Jotanovic, Dejan. 2021. "Dreaming up the Future of Melbourne's Queer Nightlife." *Assemble Papers*, 2 March. Accessed 3 March 2021. https://assemblepapers.com.au/2021/02/03/hot-pursuit-melbournes-queer-nightlife/
- Lady Gaga. 2011. "Lady Gaga - Marry the Night (Official Music Video)." YouTube, 2 December. Accessed 7 September 2021. youtube.be/cggNqDATjYU

- LaNegra, Nefertiti. 2020. Skype interview by author. Audio recording. Melbourne, 3 September.
- Love, Heather. 2007. *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lucas, Matto. 2020. "The Decade Spanning Party." Darebin Arts. Accessed 1 December 2020. mattolucas.com/work/the-decade-spanning-party
- Massumi, Brian. 2002. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- moore, madison. 2018. *Fabulous: The Rise of the Beautiful Eccentric*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Muñoz, José Esteban. 2009. *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. New York: New York University Press.
- Noronha, Navin. 2020. "My Last Public Outing Was an All-Gay Underwear Party, and It Changed Me." *Vice*, 10 November. Accessed 11 Nov 2020. www.vice.com/en/article/xgzx7k/my-last-public-outing-was-an-all-gay-underwear-party-and-it-changed-me
- Nyong'o, Tavia. 2019. *Afro-Fabulations: The Queer Drama of Black Life*. New York: New York University Press.
- Riley, Benjamin. 2020. "With Queer Spaces Closed Due to Covid, I Feel More Disconnected Than Ever from Who I Am." *The Guardian*, 18 October. www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/oct/19/with-queer-spaces-closed-due-to-covid-im-feeling-more-disconnected-than-ever-from-who-i-am-as-a-queer-man
- Salkind, Micah E. 2019. *Do You Remember House? Chicago's Queer of Color Undergrounds*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schulman, Sarah. 2012. *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Shandy. 2020. "Poly Lez Slut – 'shandy in the time of Covid-19' Video." Facebook, 29 March. Accessed 30 March 2020. www.facebook.com/watch/?v=500147810870536.
- Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras (SGLMG). 2021. "Our Partners." Accessed 13 September 2021. www.mardigras.org.au/partners
- Szymanówka, Mateusz. 2021. "Forward Forever: On Being Real in Moving and Moving On." In *You Got to Get In to Get Out: The Never-ending Sound Continuum*, ed. Sonia Fernández Pan and Carolina Jiménez, 88–99. Madrid: La Casa Encendida.
- Thornton, Sarah. 1995. *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Tompkins, Joanne. 2014. *Theatre's Heterotopias: Performance and the Cultural Politics of Space*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Turner, Ashley. 2019. "Lawsuit Accuses Gilead of Propping Up Cost of Lifesaving HIV Drugs." NBC News, 15 May. www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/lawsuit-accuses-gilead-propping-cost-lifesaving-hiv-drugs-n1006226
- Valery2806. (1994) 2012. "Take That – Back For Good." YouTube, 14 November. Accessed 10 October 2020. www.youtube.com/watch?v=ka0Ujf9JtYE&ab_channel=Valery2806
- Warner, Michael. 1997. "Media Gays: A New Stone Wall." *The Nation*, 14 July:15–19.
- Warner, Michael. 1999. *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Wei, Whitney. 2020. "Electronic Music Is Black Protest Music." *Electronic Beats*, 5 June. Accessed 9 September 2021. www.electronicbeats.net/electronic-music-is-black-protest-music/
- Wiedersehn, Sarah. 2018. "Qantas Upholds Role in Forced Deportations of Refugees." SBS, 26 October. www.sbs.com.au/news/qantas-upholds-role-in-forced-deportations-of-refugees/5c6fa26c-498a-4ff8-ae76-8ca65a94a413
- Willett, Graham. 2000. *Living Out Loud: A History of Gay and Lesbian Activism in Australia*. St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin.
- Wotherspoon, Garry. 2016. *Gay Sydney: A History*. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing.
- Zaric, Sevara. 2020. Personal interview with author. Audio recording. 20 January 2020.

TDRReadings

- Crookston, Cameron. 2022. "What's Live Got to Do with It?: Digital Drag in the Time of Covid-19." *TDR* 66, 2 (T256):131–46. doi.org/10.1017/S1054204322000144
- McMains, Juliet. 2018. "Queer Tango Space: Minority Stress, Sexual Potentiality, and Gender Utopias." *TDR* 62, 2 (T238):59–77. doi.org/10.1162/DRAM_a_00748
- Werther, Janet. 2019. "Queer As a Verb: Critical Reflections on the *Explode! queer dance festival*." *TDR* 63, 1 (T241):151–58. doi.org/10.1162/dram_a_00822