

# ELECTRONIC DANCE MUSIC CULTURE AND RELIGION: AN OVERVIEW<sup>1</sup>

Graham St John

*This article provides a comprehensive and critical overview of existing research that investigates (directly and indirectly) the religio-spiritual dimensions of electronic dance music culture (EDMC) (from disco, through house, to post-rave forms). Studies of the culture and religion of EDMC are explored under four broad groupings: the cultural religion of EDMC expressed through 'ritual' and 'festa!'; subjectivity, corporeality and the phenomenological dance experience (especially 'ecstasy' and 'trance'); the dance community and a sense of belonging (the 'vibe' and 'tribes'); and EDMC as a new 'spirituality of life'. Moving beyond the cultural Marxist approaches of the 1970s, which held youth (sub)cultural expressions as 'ineffectual' and 'tragic', and the postmodernist approaches of the early 1990s, which held rave to be an 'implosion of meaning', recent anthropological and sociological approaches recognise that the various manifestations of this youth cultural phenomenon possess meaning, purpose and significance for participants. Contemporary scholarship thus conveys the presence of religiosity and spirituality within contemporary popular cultural formations. In conclusion, I suggest that this and continuing scholarship can offer useful counterpoint to at least one recent account (of clubbing) that overlooks the significance of EDMC through a restricted and prejudiced apprehension of 'religion'.*

KEYWORDS rave; youth subculture; dance culture; trance; neo-tribe; ritual

## Introduction

One of the chief obstacles to researching the religion, and indeed culture, of electronic dance music (EDM),<sup>2</sup> after its explosive development (as acid-house rave) in the United Kingdom in the late 1980s was the discipline of cultural studies. In the first major publication dedicated to rave, contributors under the guidance of Steve Redhead (1993) toyed with the postmodernist theory of Baudrillard to make sense of the phenomenon. It was a momentous period. A new youth cultural phenomenon had awoken, and with the assistance of accessible new digital-audio technologies, imported electronic music aesthetics, advanced DJ techniques, and MDMA (methylene-dioxymethamphetamine, the entactogen known as 'Ecstasy'), by the early 1990s this domestically popular rave

phenomenon would soon go global. Youth were committed to being 'on one', getting 'loved up' and becoming 'ardcore' in abandoned warehouses, in open fields and clandestine clubs. The tabloid media had labelled this commitment 'rave', the parent culture waged a moral panic, the scene was legislated against, and cultural and music studies scholars were either unprepared or uninterested. The discipline most likely to make sense of all this (given its early investigation of youth subcultures) is rooted in a cultural Marxist tradition ill-equipped to consider questions of play and the body, and indeed offering little insight into religious experience or spiritual life within youth cultures. As Angela McRobbie (1990) noted in 1980, dance—the domain of girls and young women in Britain in the 1970s—was dismissed by the mostly male researchers at Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), who enlisted heroic, spectacular and aggressive subcultures to support their models of class 'resistance', however style-laden, 'imaginary', 'inconsequential' and ultimately 'tragic' such turned out (Clarke et al. 1976; Hebdige 1979).<sup>3</sup> If disco was dismissed because of its remoteness from the heroic–tragic model, and dance dismissed within cultural and music research paradigms devoted to the verbal, aural and visual, then how would commentators respond to acid house and the (post)rave phenomenon? Lamenting rave as its 'pleasures come not from resistance but surrender', Stuart Cosgrove (1988, in Melechi 1993, 37) supplied the answer. But while critics were turning away from the stifling resistance/submission dichotomy implicit to earlier youth research, they would continue to observe the 'inconsequential' pursuits of youth. Via a Baudrillardian lens, young people would remain prisoners of circumstance—caught in a 'fantasy of liberation' (Melechi 1993, 37), an 'imaginary' form of resistance that was now *hyperreal*. They were disappearing into a world of appearances. The rave as an implosion of meaning. An ecstatic simulacra.

From 'rituals of resistance' (Hall and Jefferson 1976) to 'rituals of disappearance' (Melechi 1993, 33; Rietveld 1993, 41), youth research appeared to retain interest in *ritual* (indeed a key trope in youth cultural studies). Yet, analogical, possessing 'homologous' associations, politically ineffectual, these 'rituals' constituted the 'tragic limits' (Willis 1978, 175) of subcultural youth in the 1960s and 1970s, and a postmodern escapade for clubcultural youth in the 1980s and 1990s. For Antonio Melechi, the Ibizan clubs to which young British tourists flocked, and where acid house was born, exemplified this postmodern 'ritual':

the Ibizan reveller high on Ecstasy, abandoned to the beat, lost under the strobe lights consumes the radically different space of Dionysian pleasure: dance, music and drugs. To understand the pleasures of the dance floor we must move to a different logic of tourism where one comes to hide from the spectre of a former self (Britain and San Antonio [the main tourist town of the island of Ibiza]) to disaccumulate culture and disappear under the dry ice and into the body. This is the jouissance of Amnesia, where nobody is but everybody belongs. (Melechi 1993, 32)

With acid house, dance became a 'seductive absence', it had lost its use value. Dance and music (the signifiers) would no longer contextualise the

expression of the self (the signified): 'Acid house celebrates the death of this *scene* of dance, for it is now the materiality of the musical signifier which forms the new space of oblivion, as the dancer implodes and disappears into a technological dreamscape of sound' (Melechi 1993, 34). But while the proto-rave may very well have constituted a non-representational *void*, such gave us little awareness of who these people were, what influences shaped their behaviour and what their experience was. If this was a social dance experience (i.e. an experience that one could not have at home alone) then what of the sociality and sensuality of the dance? Observing participants in possession of a voracious appetite for meaning rather than surfaces, the approach would later attract criticism from those seeking to get beneath the sensory surface of the rave (see Hutson 1999, 58; 2000, 38; Olaveson 2004, 99; Takahashi and Olaveson 2003, 73). Critics could hardly ignore the growing weight of evidence that rave and its progeny consists of cultures whose participants have—through books, zines, websites, e-forums, etc.—committed to an ethos most famously expressed as Peace, Love, Unity and Respect, celebrated states of transcendence (for example, Saunders and Doblin 1996), reported revelations and life-changing experiences (for example, Fritz 1999), articulated a salvific experience (Apollo 2001), expressed commitment to a nascent planetary spirituality (Twist 1999; see also St John 2004b), or conveyed a sensation of awakening, renewal or rebirth via libratory and sometimes millenarian narratives of ascension and re-enchantment (see St John 2004a).

Scholars have, however, approached the religion of electronic dance music culture (EDMC) from various perspectives and it is to those perspectives that I now turn.

### **Rave and the Culture of Religion: Ritual and Festal**

There is growing scholarship that assumes EDMCs, or aspects of such cultures, to *be religious*, or to be expressive of a religiosity that is at variance to or complicates institutional religion (i.e. Christianity). Such approaches are often concerned with the subculture or popular culture of religion and the (re)appearance of the sacred. Translating French anthropologist Roger Bastide's *Le Sacré sauvage et autres essais* (1975), François Gauthier reminds us that 'religion is not always "in" what we are accustomed to call "religions"' (2004a, 66), and that rave exemplifies the cultural phenomenon of religion, particularly that which Bastide regarded as 'instituant' or 'savage' religion rather than the domesticated or 'instituted' forms associated with institutional religion.<sup>4</sup> In another approach, following Albanese (1996), Robin Sylvan (2002) argues that rave (along with rock, metal and hip hop) subculture exemplifies a 'cultural religion'. But, by contrast to Gauthier's constructivist approach, here rave is an expression of the 'religious impulse'. Since the human encounter with the numinous (for Rudolf Otto 1959) constitutes a 'religious experience' out of which the exterior forms we call 'religion' emerge (Sylvan 2002, 5), and since music can be an expression of the numinous, contemporary 'music subcultures' are assumed to carry 'traces of the spirit'.<sup>5</sup>

According to Sylvan, while this is not 'religion in the sense of a traditional form grounded in a stable cultural context, expressing some essential defining quality', what he describes as a rather generalised 'rave subculture' functions nevertheless 'in the same way as a religious community, albeit in an unconscious and postmodern way' (2002, 4). While Sylvan has little to say about what constitutes this 'postmodern way', it appears to constitute a cultural environment with more depth and purpose (albeit unconscious) than that considered by earlier scholars who pillaged Baudrillard in efforts to comprehend acid house.

Researching San Francisco rave culture, Sylvan (2002, 136–140) discusses the temporal and spatial ordering he sees forming the ritual dimension of the rave. Indeed, a growing body of research articulates rave's ritual as an ethnographic reality rather than a trope, homology or analogue. Melanie Takahashi and Tim Olaveson (2003; see also Olaveson 2004) take a serious approach to the ritual or, more to the point, following Grimes (1995), the 'syncretic ritualising' of rave. Investigations of contemporary EDMC regard the dance music experience as efficacious; it is experimental, transcendent, transformative; a source of 'spiritual healing' equivalent to a conversion experience (Hutson 1999, 2000); 'redemptive' through its capacity to release subconscious repression comparable with Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty (Arnold 1997, 189); enabling cathartic 're-identification with the gay body' (Bardella 2002, 27); an experience potentiating 'playful vitality' (Malbon 1999, 101) or mobilising cultural 'revitalization' (Olaveson 2004). From Hillegonda Rietveld's claim that techno constitutes the 'spiritual rite of the post-industrial cyborg' (2004, 48), to Des Tramacchi's (2004, 125) proposal that Australian bush parties or 'doofs' are 'psychedelic dance rituals', there exists an acknowledgement of the significance of ritual not found (or even possible) in earlier youth cultural research. And while CCCS researchers may have disrespected the idea of *magic* in a theoretical programme witness to 'imaginary' solutions, rave scholars recognise a subjunctive and re-creative *culture*; an assemblage—the music, dance, spatial reconfigurations, temporality, body modifications and alternative states of consciousness—which is seen to facilitate becoming. Morgan Gerard's (2004) approach is particularly useful here since he enhances understanding of the *ritual process* of the EDM experience. Gerard points out how dance commentators and scholars have repeatedly referenced the 'ritual' of clubs and raves without describing the structures and experience of such 'ritual-ness'. The sense of 'ritual-ness' inherited from the CCCS is thought to pose an obstacle to understanding the ritualised social interaction at EDM events:

Following Hall and Jefferson's (1976) study of British youth and the suggestion that virtually any collection of young bodies gathered under the banner of a subculture were engaged in rituals of resistance, Birmingham-inspired sociology and cultural studies have fallen short of addressing the structures and experiences of such rituals. This is largely because analyses informed by CCCS theory and method are marked by a disturbing lack of ethnographic material on the interactiveness of subcultural sites or events and the mediating role played

by music and dance in many of those events—a disturbing trend considering the prevalence of music scenes in CCCS-inspired literature over the past twenty-five years. (Gerard 2004, 169)

Accordingly, the invocation of ritual-ness within post-CCCS (post-structuralist) approaches to EDM neglect the central role of music and dance, constructing ‘idealized versions of raves and clubs rather than actual instances of situated, performed events. The result is that references to raves and clubs as ritual events or to DJs as ritual specialists remain primarily metaphorical, anecdotal and often culled from what might be called the ‘who feels it knows it’ approach of privileging informant testimonials’ (Gerard 2004, 170). Furthermore, there is ‘little or no analysis of the specific performative contexts from which to understand how a house music event is like a church, how a DJ can be likened to a shaman and how *communitas* is built from the dance floor’ (Gerard 2004, 170).<sup>6</sup> In his study of Toronto’s Turbo Niteclub, Gerard confirms Fikentscher (2000, 79–80) in asserting that the DJ–dancer interaction constitutes the heart of the ritual, and while Van Gennep’s (1909) tripartite rites of passage model is drawn upon in an effort to interpret the structure of the EDM experience,<sup>7</sup> more interesting, and convincing, is the idea that a passage process is ‘encoded in every mix between records’ (Gerard 2004, 177)—where stages in a DJ record mix are thought to correspond to Van Gennep’s model. For dancers, mixes are ‘liminal in that they can sometimes be uncertain periods between the rhythmic structures of records’. A successful mix:

allows for a continuous flow between mental, musical and physical states. It is generally in this transitional period that DJs (when their mix is recognized as not only technically successful but also innovative and/or daring) and dancers (when enthusiasm, energy, drugs and alcohol seem to best motivate a packed dance floor) find themselves caught up in those moments of spontaneous *communitas* that ravers and clubbers refer to as a ‘peak’. (Gerard 2004, 176)

Club participants are said to ‘negotiate liminality’ throughout the course of events and, depending on the ‘ritual knowledge’ of dancers, each DJ mix may replay, and eventually accelerate, the passage phases, effecting belonging in a dance floor community. Here, previous experience and raised expectation is critical to the performance, and to the achievement (as discussed later) of alternative states of consciousness.

But while EDM events are seen to constitute contemporary rites of passage possessing the qualities of demarcated *thresholds* through which initiates pass, the dance event is no ritualised passage in the conventional sense of practices marking transition (e.g. to adulthood). While events may approximate a transient experience, catalysing maturity, marking a nascent identity, effecting belonging to a dance floor community, they more generically possess little predictable *telos*.<sup>8</sup> It is in such light that, as a performative context, the dance experience approximates the *festal*, or ‘festive ritual’ (Gauthier 2001, 2004a, forthcoming). A timeless zone, a space of disorder and indeterminacy where dancers (neophytes

and experienced) are licensed to experiment with their *other selves*, suggests that rave is an explosive importation of the carnivalesque into the contemporary—a popular mode of subversive play, of the ‘subjunctive mood’ (Turner 1982, 83). This is immediately apparent in the rupture of categorical order such spaces constitute: ‘In the liminal arena of doofs, world elements are appropriated and juxtaposed in carnivalesque ways which serve to disrupt categories—not unlike the ‘amazements’ of Metsogo Bwiti. The ‘amazements’ of doofs include people in ‘freaky’ costumes, skilful acrobatic displays and fire-twirling, kaleidoscopic lightshows and elaborately constructed soundscapes and art spaces’ (Tramacchi 2004, 140). Such is reminiscent of ‘the people’s second world’ of the carnival, of Bakhtin’s ‘grotesque realism’ (1968). It is ‘the culture of laughter, of reversal and of cyclical time, where like in the season of spring, death and birth are confused. Spring can give a feeling of hope, a sense of the future, which was expressed in the names of rave-events such as Sunrise and Future’ (Rietveld 1993, 64). Indeed many EDM events are festivals orchestrated to celebrate calendrical/seasonal transitions and celestial events (e.g. moon cycle, solstices, solar eclipse and other planetary alignments (see St John 2004b, 225–226), while simultaneously motivated by a desire to abscond from the passing of time. From trance festivals to clubcultures, such experiences potentiate the transgression of imposed morality, exemplifying the expression of ‘passional’ or ‘orgiastic’ behaviour that Michel Maffesoli (1993) claimed re-discovers a Dionysian heritage in the present.<sup>9</sup> And while Nietzsche opposed science and technical knowledge to ‘the orgiastic spirit of Dionysian art’, in rave ‘the Dionysian paroxysm becomes part of the program, regularized, looped for infinity’ (Reynolds 1998, 199–200). Acknowledging Maffesoli and Georges Bataille’s ‘accursed share’, through excess, expenditure, unproductive behaviour and (sacrificial and erotic) consumption, the techno-rave ‘participates in a cultural resurgence of the festive, providing new avenues for experiences of the sacred in an atomized society’ (Gauthier 2004a, 68–69). This techno-festal culture:

implicitly seeks forgetfulness, selflessness and oblivion. What this implies is that the prompted effervescence is sought after *for itself* and *in itself*. In other words, it is its own purpose and reason. By opening up to creativity, by staging an otherly, unlicensed temporary world, the festive need only contain *itself*. Disengaging from temporality, the festive bursts into an ‘eternal’—or, to be more precise, ‘indefinite’—present. (Gauthier 2004a, 69)

But the eternal present of the ‘festive ritual’ remains ‘a realm of pure possibility’ (Turner 1967, 97). Like the Afro-Brazilian Bahian carnival discussed by Bernard Schütze (2001, 160), these techno-festivals are deemed ‘anthropophagic’ (or, more to the point, ‘technophagic’), constituting ‘an open process of dynamic incorporation in which identity is never fixed but always open to transmutations’. And that these techno-orgasms modulate ‘normative modes of subjectivation and permit the experimentation of novel forms of subjectivity’ (Schütze 2001, 162), leads us to the next perspective.

### Ecstasy, Trance and Subjectivity: The Dance Experience

Whereas earlier researchers saw rave as a sign of postmodern inertia, others sought to circumscribe the subjective significance of the dance experience (often regarded as a complex moment of de-subjectification and re-subjectification). Indeed since the 1970s and 1980s, the socio-sensual context and implications of social dance inspired speculation and subsequent research into the ways a 'sophisticated aesthetics of the body' (Hesmondhalgh 1997, 170) opens up a new space of possibilities for female and male subjectivities (Gilbert and Pearson 1999; Jackson 2004; McRobbie 1984, 1993; Pini 1997, 2001), and for the 'aesthetic-erotic... *style of life*' of nascent historical subjectivities (D'Andrea 2004, 239). While some, inspired by a 'liberatory postmodernism' (Goulding *et al.*, 2002, 265), embrace the fragmented rave as a 'potentially liberating force' enabling individuals to 'create meaning out of confusion by offering an alternative way of being which allows for the construction of, and the management of the self', others ruminate upon a 'cyborg-like subjectivity' available to 'the post-industrial alienated individual' through chemical enhancements and 'the machine pulse of techno' (Rietveld 2004, 55). Others, still, seek to reclaim 'ecstasy' from the postmodernists. Gilbert and Pearson remind us that ecstasy—or, more definitively, the Greek *ekstasis*—means 'standing outside oneself'. It is an 'ecstatic displacement' that, for them, amounts to 'standing outside the discourses which fix gendered identity' (1999, 104–105). Following Heidegger, Drew Hemment (1996, 23) earlier described *ekstasis* as 'a difference or a standing out from the surface of life's contingencies... [enabling] a more profound contemplation of being'. In this expansion, *ekstasis* denotes 'a life affirming experience fundamental to one's orientation to the world', an experience far removed from that which 'ecstasy' commonly signifies: 'a mixture of intense pleasure and loss of control (usually sexual or drug induced)... a casual and inconsequential psychological state' (Hemment 1996, 24). In the face of the word's current degeneration—seemingly sealed in its assignation to MDMA—Hemment thus challenges the view that dance is a site of 'hermeneutic depthlessness'. The struggle to define the 'ecstatic moment' appears to hinge upon acknowledging the paradox at the heart of the rave experience: the claim that participants feel simultaneously 'dissolved within *and* separate from the universe' (Landau 2004 ). James Landau takes up McRobbie's early (1984, 144) concern with the 'trance-like state conditioned by the dance floor' that enables 'a dramatic display of the self and the body, with an equally dramatic negation of the self and the body... The crowded mass of bodies, the insistent often trance-like disco rhythms and the possibility of being at once *there* and *not there*'. But instead of understanding 'ecstatic collectivity' via a framework that holds that ecstasy must 'speak' a feminist efficacy, and wherein 'ecstasies are forever the prisoners of ideology' (Landau 2004, 112), Landau seeks to comprehend the sensation of raving via depth psychology and the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty:

If the ecstatic raver is indeed an anonymous body of textless flesh, one that has shed its identity, ideology and language, one that has either divested or radically

altered its culturally inscribed body image, then the thematic boundaries that normally delineate our edges are destabilized and perhaps dissolved. Dancing amidst a crowd of ecstatic bodies, the raver is consumed not only by an immediate 'experience' of the phenomenal world, but also by his or her body's subconscious knowledges of unity and alterity (not to mention genderless sexual specificity)—knowledges that are quite different from those of self-reflective thought. Lost in the reflexivity and natural transgressivity of the flesh, in its indeterminacy and interwovenness, the raver is a mute witness to the blurring of once clear demarcations between himself and the crowd, between herself and the rave. (Landau 2004, 121)

Built into this is the understanding that the body possesses innate knowledge of its *continuity with and difference from* the world—its reversibility. 'Destabilizing and eventually dissolving the boundaries between such fundamental oppositions as self/Other, mind/body and here/there, ecstasy frees the body from its thematic veil so that it can become aware again, at a "deeper" level, of identity and difference' (Landau 2004, 121).<sup>10</sup> This provides an important contribution to EDMC studies, yet one wonders whether 'depth' approaches go so 'deep' as to overlook the social context of EDMC and the role it plays in the life of young people.

Further research on the ecstatic or 'trance-like' experience addresses the role of factors triggering altered sensual and psychic states, or altered states of consciousness (ASCs), and speculate how such states may catalyse mystical and/or carnal dimensions of subjectivity. Thus, Takahashi (2004, 154) discusses research on the psychobiological and neuro-phenomenological effects of prolonged dancing, overheating, fasting and sleep deprivation, and, of course, techno music and its repetition. Gina Fatone suggests that a key factor determining the appropriation of Balinese gamelan within the San Francisco rave community was that both possess an ASC inducing musical structure consisting of 'repetitive, minimalistic, seamless cyclings of sonic patterns accompanied by a relentless driving or metronomic rhythm' (2004, 202). Such processes are accelerated and facilitated in particular by MDMA, a subject that has been given extensive treatment (for example, Collin with Godfrey 1997; Harrison 1998; Metcalf 1997; Push and Silcott 2000; Reynolds 1998; Saunders 1993; Saunders and Doblin 1996; Saunders *et al.*, 2000; Stephenson 2003; Wright 1998). While MDMA is said to create 'an *oceanic eroticism* expressed by affective states of excruciating pleasures and overflowing immanence', for Anthony D'Andrea (2004, 247) LSD or 'acid' 'propitiates a *psychedelic asceticism* enacted by mental states of hyper imagination and mystical transcendence'. Drawing on the ground-breaking neuro-phenomenology of Laughlin *et al.*, (1990), Takahashi states that ASCs are easily accessed within the 'monophasic consciousness' of western cultures (i.e. in cultures where alternatives to rational, waking consciousness are devalued and legislated against). In the cultures where EDMCs have indeed flourished, psychoactive experimentation 'provides an easy and immediate access to an ASC, and these substances have the ability to tune and retune the autonomic nervous system with little effort'

(Takahashi 2004, 155). Cross-cultural research on trance and ceremonial possession that highlights learning and past experience as essential to inducing ASCs (for example, d'Aquili and Laughlin 1975; Winkelman 2000),<sup>11</sup> lends support to her observation that repeated exposure to the dance assemblage (especially MDMA) and its neuro-physiological responses 'tunes' the autonomous nervous system of ravers such that participants can become adept at 're-attaining these states naturally'. Furthermore, a reason why a 'growing category of rave participants' (Takahashi 2004, 159) seek to minimise and discontinue Ecstasy use is a possible response to a pharmacological dystopia believed to have developed as a result of polydrug use and abuse, which Simon Reynolds (1997, 102) argues has contributed to a 'seeping away of meaning, the loss of a collective sense of going somewhere'. For Reynolds, a dystopic comedown from chemical nirvana suggests that the living dream may have turned nightmare—with raving mutating from a 'paradise regained' to a 'psychic malaise'. With the excessive and routinised use of adulterated Ecstasy (and increased polydrug abuse—e.g. mixing methamphetamines with MDMA), 'scenes lose their idyllic lustre and become a soul-destroying grind' (Reynolds 1998, xxxi). But there appears to be no clear narrative here. Contributing to our understanding of the phenomenological complexities of de-subjectification within EDMCs, D'Andrea (2004) articulates the 'sublime and traumatic' possibilities of the 'limit-experience' reported by participants:

Pleasure, pain, catharsis, awareness, despair, and happiness underlie such accounts of non-ordinary sensations and states. Telepathy, mystical visions, paranoia, ego dissolution, excruciating pleasures, deep insight, serenity, and cosmic love are not uncommon. It is not that the experience awakens a particular feeling, but rather, that amplified feelings are the source of a limit-experience. As an exercise of intensity and impossibility, these transpersonal practices engender experiences of personal derailment—deterritorializing asignification—sacred madness with rewards and dangers. (D'Andrea 2004, 249)

### **Belonging: Social Vibes and Dance Tribes**

Both the performative possibilities within the ritual/festal framework of EDMC and the inter-corporeal possibilities of 'ectstatic' or 'limit' experiences have inspired discussions about the collective or communal characteristics of EDMC, and the sense of *belonging* it potentiates. Maria Pini (1997, 124) stated that the 'ecstatic moment' is 'a release from monadic territory—an outburst which represents less the escape of mind from body than the absorption of the individual in a wider body'. This 'wider body' has been the subject of much consideration: the 'collective body' of the rave precipitated by a 'desubjectified state of... rapture' approximating Deleuze and Guattari's Body-Without-Organs (Jordan 1995, 129); clubbers' 'indissoluble bond... with the external world' resembling Freud's 'oceanic experience' (Malbon 1999, 107); the 'communal soul' characterised by the house participant's 'intimacy with the spirit of the other'

(Rietveld 2004, 50); the 'sacrificial' destruction of raver individuality particular to Bataille's theory of consumption (Gauthier 2001; 2004a, 75–76); and the direct and immediate abandonment of socio-cultural divisions on the dance floor approximating Victor Turner's 'spontaneous communitas' (Bardella 2002; Gerard 2004; Gore 1995; Olaveson 2004; Sommer 2001/2002; St John 2004a, 29–33; Sylvan 2002). Attending to this experience, from informants' reports and an extensive review of the rave literature, Olaveson observes the techniques and practices of 'connectedness' in raves, a social condition that possesses ecstatic, non-rational, embodied, humanising and utopian dimensions. A principal theme here is the ostensible levelling experience implicit to the rave (Olaveson 2004, 93), assumed to be a context for the dissolution of class, gender, sexuality ethnic, age status and roles.

This experience of dissolution and inclusiveness is thought to approximate the womb-like pre-Oedipal character of rave (Rietveld 1993, 54), or the 'psychedelic communitas' characterising 'doofs', which in north eastern New South Wales Australia are said to 'open a juncture where individuals are able to share in a kind of *agape* or collective ecstasy that mitigates against the sense of *ennui* and isolation so often associated with modernity' (Tramacchi 2001, 184). The sense of reconnection or *return* endemic to such experience—often, although not necessarily, psychoactive assisted—might approximate Eliade's 'myth of eternal return': 'the nostalgic desire to return to an original, primordial, timeless land of perfect and total joy; a presexual age of innocence in which there is no social discord, no differentiation between self and other' (Hutson 1999, 65). The return to a kind of pre-separation stage is often articulated by participants as 'tribal' (for example, Fritz 1999, 168–177),<sup>12</sup> and the idea that rave constitutes a 're-connection with more tribal, primitive, simpler, fuller, truer, more powerful and "more real" times and experiences' is recognised to be a 'myth' which 'sets raves in opposition to a decayed, empty, superficial and meaningless world' (Gauthier 2005, 25). In the case of seasonal outdoor 'doofs' in Australia, events 'represent not so much an escape *from* somewhere as an escape *to* somewhere better, more in tune with nature and idealised, often premodern, community' (Luckman 2003, 322). And while such an experiential 'return' to primordial 'tribality' may confirm a Turnerian 'retribalisation' or 're-sacralisation' in the contemporary, given a pharmacological dystopia (Reynolds 1997, 1998), sexual division of labour (Bradby 1993; McRobbie 1994, 170), elitism, exclusivity and 'coolness' (Thornton 1995), and a possible new imperialism (see Saldanha 2002, 2004), communitas may be disrupted, the return undermined, the *vibe* jeopardised.

Insider slang, the 'vibe' most commonly denotes a successful or optimum social dance experience. One of several commentators who suggest that the term is interchangeable with 'communitas' (see Gerard 2004, 178–179; Olaveson 2004, 90; Takahashi and Olaveson 2003, 81), Sommer attempts to define the vibe within underground house clubs. The 'vibe', she says:

is an active communal force, a feeling, a rhythm that is created by the mix of dancers, the balance of loud music, the effects of darkness and light, the energy. Everything interlocks to produce a powerful sense of liberation. The vibe is an active, exhilarating feeling of 'now-ness' that everything is coming together—that a good party is in the making. The vibe is constructive; it is a distinctive rhythm, the groove that carries the party psychically and physically. (2001/2002, 73)

Pursuing a Turnerian logic, as the spontaneous vibe triggers formations whose purpose becomes the reproduction and defence of the vibe, *vibe tribes* would become a pervasive global phenomenon. When Sylvan states that 'the communitas which occurs on the dance floor can serve as a model for an alternative to mainstream society' where the experience 'spills over' into the everyday as rave co-liminals end up forming share households or large collective warehouses and participate in a range of rave-inspired activities, such as facilitating more raves (2002, 146–147), he articulates one such manifestation. When Gerard (2004, 174) sees 'the brokers' of the club/rave 'scene'—dance promoters, DJs, club owners and media personalities—'collaborate in contextualizing and disseminating the reformatory paradigm(s) of raving and clubbing to the everyday world', he witnesses the (re)productive mechanisms integral to Turner's 'normative communitas'. When Olaveson (2004, 99) speculates about the rave's approximation of a new religious movement, he articulates something of the regenerative function of rave's social liminality. And when Tramacchi (2000, 210–211) observes that 'shared ecstatic experiences and a search for connectedness to Land' characterise the liminal sociality of the party, he articulates how certain EDM formations (e.g. outdoor 'doofs') (re)produce an attachment to place (local environment) along with fellow liminalists. The implication that the 'vibe' becomes a context for the transmission of values (e.g. ecological, indigenous rights, peace), for the dramatisation of 'ultimate concerns', that which Turner would have deemed the 'sacra' (1967, 102), is explored elsewhere.<sup>13</sup>

While 'tribal' is often used within the San Francisco rave scene to denote, as it has done since the 1960s, a communal or cooperative way of living, that which was ostensibly *tribal* about such an experience would be articulated via the poststructuralist sociology of Maffesoli (1996), whose theory of 'neotribal' de-individualisation offers researchers of electronic dance, or techno, 'tribes' insight on the vibe and its role in contemporary social life. Indeed the voluntary, temporary, empathetic, networked sociality of post-war culture has found its most apposite manifestation in EDMC (Bennett 1999; Gaillot 1999; Gore 1997, 56–7; Halfacree and Kitchin 1996; Luckman 2003, 324; Malbon 1998, 1999; St John 2003). Techno-tribes are micro-communities whose principal motivation (and often only manifestation) is the party, the vibe. It is common that these *vibe tribes* remain aloof, secretive and *hardcore* in their 'elective centres' (Cohen *et al.*, 1987)—pragmatic tactics considering the history of moral panics, potential criminalisation

and the threat of 'domestication' through over-regulation and commercialism. Occasioning the possibility of potlatch-like orgies of consumption, charismatic revivals, peak experiences, apocalyptic visions and genre fundamentalism, the vibe is a primary source of belonging and identity. In the dance underground, a collective identity may form around a sound system, a party organisation, a squatted warehouse, a club night, a web list or a micro-label, and as oscillation between all such nodes is possible, a Maffesolian ambiance develops—a *vibrance* derivative of the successful orchestration and reproduction of the vibe. Here EDMC exemplifies the presence's *puissance*, which, as Maffesoli (1996, 1) explains, is the 'inherent energy and vital force of the people' (by contrast to institutional power or *pouvoir*). Dance cultures would thus exemplify those contemporary domains organised to fulfil, according to Maffesoli (1997, 32), a 'persistent and imperious need to be "*en reliance*", to be bound together' (see Gaillot 1999, 23–24; Malbon 1998, 1999). By comparison with Marxist subculturalism where youth formations are discrete, heroic and oppositional, or postmodernist clubculturalism where ravers are tourists seeking gratification, *jouissance* and destined for superficiality, researchers would attend to the corporeality, fluidity and 'empathetic sociality' (Maffesoli 1996, 11) of youth formations. Such was ultimately a recognition of re-enchantment and the sacred in the contemporary—which could not be apprehended via subculture theory.

### EDMCs as Spiritualities of Life

The final, largely sociological, perspective implicates EDMC in historical shifts observed in the latter half of the twentieth century. The thesis suggests that clubs (and by implication raves, etc.) are complementary to that which Woodhead and Heelas (2000) call the 'spiritualities of life' competing (and sometimes in collusion) with institutional religion. Having conducted exploratory research on clubbing as a popular source of meaning production amongst 'Generation X' (Lynch 2002, chapter 5), Gordon Lynch is a principal spokesperson. Lynch (in another article in this volume) suggests that clubbing constitutes, after Luckmann (1967), a 'secondary institution'—a source of meaning, identity and ethics achieved within social frameworks independent from a transcendent authority. Drawing on Lynch's research, Heelas and Seel (2003) imply that clubbing is comparable with other New Age 'spiritualities of life' promulgated by a '1960s-inspired cultural milieu'. Under this reading, it seems appropriate to suggest that EDMC (from disco, through house to rave and post-rave forms) consists of multiple sites of transmission for '1960s-inspired' self-spiritualities. Dance culture would thus be implicated in the:

shift from '*life-as*' or '*dictated life*' (life lived in terms of institutionalized or traditionalized formations *provided* by 'primary institutions') to '*subjective life*' or '*expressive life*' (life lived in terms of personal, intimate, psychological, somatic, interior experiences *catered for* by 'secondary institutions'). Of particular note,

this general 'cultural turn' includes a shift from 'religion' (involving 'life-as', which cannot deal with 'expressed life', and which is therefore declining) to 'spirituality' (associated with 'subjective-life', which can serve 'expressed life', and which is therefore expanding). (Heelas and Seel 2003, 239)

There is much evidence that participation in EDMC affords the kinds of experience (e.g. embodied expressivity, the transcendence and empowerment of self, a feeling of connectedness, synchronicity, inner peace, liberation) thought to have become redolent within the present's 'turn to life'. While secularisation theory may have some credence in its application to traditional religious institutions, it cannot account for 'secondary' or perhaps otherwise 'instaurant' religion flourishing in a period where the authority of the Self has taken the place of divine authority (i.e. God); at a time when 'truth and meaning must come from and be judged on the scale of experience' (Gauthier 2004a, 67). That proto-disco (and post-disco) dance forms could be considered religious in this way might seem outrageous to some, but one of the more comprehensive studies of the disco phenomenon (Lawrence 2003) lends support to the theory. From David Mancuso's influential early 1970s Loft project in Manhattan (in which LSD, Eastern religion and the 'set and setting' hypothesis formulated by Timothy Leary played a significant role (Lawrence 2003, 9) to the gay operated Sanctuary (a converted New York Roman Catholic church, complete with a DJ booth-altar), this dance music culture contextualised transcendence, communion and salvation, packaged into a popular global leisure phenomenon by the decade's end.

At least three significant developments are apparent. First, as disco (and, by implication, later EDMC forms) constituted a bridge from the experimental and consciousness expanding 1960s, psychoactives (both LSD and the entactogen Ecstasy) would be critical to the 'transmission of sixties values'. Around 25 years after Mancuso initiated the first Manhattan party called Love Saves the Day (code for LSD), and subsequent to the 'Second Summer of Love' of acid house (1988), what became 1990s psychedelic trance (or 'psy-trance')—following Goa trance—was a global site/milieu for expressive spirituality. Via New Age Traveller free rock-folk festivals (Partridge, article in this volume), *trance culture* would be a contemporary repository for a psychedelic inspired 'mystical consciousness' popularised through the evangelising tactics of Leary and the mescaline inspired revelations of Aldous Huxley.<sup>14</sup> Trance demonstrates contiguity with the 1960s through its connections to the East, although it also valorises both Pagan/Earth spiritualities of European and non-European derivations to which participants believe they are reconnecting, and techno-scientific developments anticipated to assist ascension beyond the human condition of the present (see St John 2004a, 22–29). The popular appropriation of and traffic in cultural traditions (e.g. dharma, Dreamtime, samadhi, satori and chakras), remixed with religious iconography (e.g. statues of the Buddha, Mayan symbolism, Aboriginal didgeridus and images of Hindu deities) and popular science-fiction or off-planetary themes (e.g. aliens, space travel) sometimes raises the ire of cultural authorities (see Velayutham and

Wise 2001).<sup>15</sup> Second, the development and adoption of electronic, especially digital, audio technologies has been critical to the development of expressive spiritualities. In Douglas Rushkoff's enthusiastic intervention (1994), rave was implicated in a nascent assemblage of cyber, chemical and audio-visual technologies enabling young people in early 1990s America to 'explore unmapped realms of consciousness... to rechoose reality consciously and purposefully' (Rushkoff 1994, 19). In collusion with psychedelics, computers, chaos mathematics and feedback loops, house/rave was facilitating an interconnected, virtualised, disembodied and gnostic Otherworld: 'Cyberia'. And while commentary on the esoteric (Reynolds 1997), Afro-futurist (Eshun 1998), 'techno-primitivist' (Fatone 2004), and millenarian (St John 2004b) disposition of EDM culture has been made, Erik Davis' *Techgnosis* (1998) provides a particularly fruitful foundation for the study of digital dance technologies and spiritualities of life. Third, the development of EDMC would be accelerated by consumer capitalism (and communication and information technologies) enabling the global flow of new spiritual 'lifestyles'. In individualist western societies where consumption experiences, including the consumption of experience, have become central to identity production and self-expression, enabling experiences of the sacred uncoupled from traditional religion (see Chidester 2000), EDMC provides the context for significant personal and collective subjectivity-forming experience. Independent from (and even replacing) family and traditional religious structures, both the 'spiritual hedonists' (Davis 2004) involved in what D'Andrea (2004, 238) calls the 'digital art-religion' of the present, or clubbers participating in 'experiential consumption' (Malbon 1999), are implicated in the self-realisation-through-consumption of the present.

While the interfacing of New Age and EDM (especially psy-trance) cultures (at countercultural sites such as Ibiza and Goa, India) would produce a diaspora of 'global nomads', who, through their reflexivity, expressive individualism and transpersonal experiences, directly inherited the aesthetic lifestyle aspirations of the earlier counterculture (D'Andrea 2004, 238),<sup>16</sup> expressive spirituality would have a more general impact. EDMC is replete with discourses of consciousness expansion, self-empowerment and metamorphosis that inflect the quest for self-realisation, which Sutcliffe (1997, 1998, 38) argues constitutes the 'hermeneutic turn' of the new spiritual 'seeker' (where the Millennium no longer awaits external catastrophe—the Apocalypse—for the 'New Dispensation' follows the private apocalypse of self-realisation). Insider accounts, scene histories and ethnographies reveal a tendency within EDMC, using the language of Heelas and Seel (2003, 240), to 'equate inner, subjective life (or, indeed, raw 'life-itself') with some sort of relatively ill-articulated, attenuated, diffuse or diluted spirituality'. Such is apparent in Sheryl Garratt's (1998, 112) account of the early rave scene in the United Kingdom where participants 'talked about the dawning of a new age, about opening new doors of perception, but there was no real philosophy behind these vague notions, no thought-out strategies or directions'. While diffuse, vague and without frameworks within which to make sense of their 'limit experience', such

experiences were and continue to be powerful nevertheless: 'My first complete rave experience changed my life forever. The MDMA experience makes you perceive by a kind of intuition, the real essence of your being. It's not something elaborated by your conscious or unconscious mind, it's something you suddenly realize you know without any doubt. You know the truth because you have experienced it. Now that you know that you, me, everything is one, or God as you wish to call it' (informant in Fritz 1999, 188). A context for truth, authenticity and self-realisation sought outside traditional religious frameworks, much of EDMC can be configured as a 'spirituality of life'.<sup>17</sup>

### Researching Popular Cultural Religion

As critics have made clear, early rave and club scholarship neglected an empiricism necessary to convey the voices and feelings of participants. Takahashi and Olaveson (2003) promote an experiential anthropology whereby ethnographers engage in 'empathetic participation', where the 'entire person of the anthropologist' becomes 'a research tool'. While this is desirable, I have yet to see such a full-bodied penetration of a dance scene informing scholarship outside perhaps that which Phil Jackson, attending to 'the social and sensual knowledge of the night' (2004, 2), performs on clubbing. And it is, by way of conclusion, to Jackson's study of London clubbing that I now turn. Refiguring Bourdieu via phenomenology, Jackson argues that the most popular form of EDMC, clubbing, represents a 'freedom from' the embodied straightjacket of the modern 'habitus' inscribed as it is with Protestant-Christian moralism. Such is taken by Jackson to constitute a freedom from religion: 'There was no God on my dance floor, there was no cosmology of possession, just people, booze, drugs, grins, music, all packed in on top of one another combining to produce an experience that becomes more than the sum total of its parts. "It's the bollocks" about sums it up' (2004, 22). Why Jackson dismisses the presence of religion in one of the United Kingdom's most popular night-time leisure cultures is easy to understand. Clubbers generally rail against the monotheistic and puritanical institution that has been directly responsible for domesticating and regulating the 'alternative body' of EDM and other historical social dance forms (Wagner 1997). Yet, Jackson's conflation of religio-spiritual experience with institutional religion and Christian faith is unfortunate since the sociological and anthropological insights outlined above are neglected. It may be true that practices orienting populations in the West 'towards a religious eternity have lost their power to create meaning and grant succour to people in times of pain and hardship'. Yet, that 'real people and real pleasures are replacing God because they provide lived and tangible points of connection to the world out of which a lived sense of meaningfulness arises' (Jackson 2004, 169) indicates significant practices may have risen in its place. When he states that it is 'the sheer intensity of the pleasure [clubbers] have shared that binds them together at a bodily level' (2004, 126), we could be mistaken for thinking

that Jackson is about to submit to Bataille's theory of consumption and the sacred. Jackson states that clubs assist in 'anchoring' people to the world offering a 'sense of social, sensual and emotional assurance in the face of the world's ideological and symbolic confusion' (2004, 169), and that 'extreme bodies can still provide access to a lived sense of meaningfulness on a much smaller social scale by creating experiences that move people beyond the sterile body of the everyday world and suffusing their lives with a sense of passion' (2004, 167). Is such not characteristic of the 'passional', an 'empathetic sociality', an 'imperious need to be *en-reliance*' (as per Maffesoli)? That clubbing ostensibly potentiates a new 'morality sensibility' (Jackson 2004, 152), appears, furthermore, to offer support for Luckmann's 'invisible religion' in the present.

Ecstasy, as Jackson is keen to stress, enables the dissipation of the fearful 'defensive body' and the adoption of the open 'extreme body'. According to one of Jackson's informants: 'When you are on E you just feel that everyone else's ego has expanded into you. There's a chemical overlap. Instead of being rigid lines between what's me and what isn't me they extend into each other and you get an overlap and you find this space that's still a bit of you, but it's also both of us as well' (2004, 146). As the 'chemical intimacy' of the club, especially that between men and women, is said to parallel the 'intimacy that arises from long-term relationships with people where you don't feel as if you have to put on a show, but can simply be yourself' (Jackson 2004, 147), we would be hard pressed to locate a clearer example of popular cultural, albeit corporealised, *communitas* in the present. And since the socio-sensual liminal experience of the club renders the 'structuring structure' (the 'logic') of the habitus visible and thus vulnerable (2004, 118), making possible 'new social modalities' in which experienced clubbers 'derive a sense of satisfaction and meaning from people, rather than things' (2004: 163), we are close, if not to the Bastidean *instituant*, then to the liminoidal processes that, within a Turnerian framework, hold the 'residue' of liminality and thus sacrality within the contemporary. Indicating that clubbing is not at all ineffectual, this study offers a useful phenomenology of contemporary EDMC. Yet, if analyses possess restricted and prejudiced ideas of religion (and indeed 'ritual') they will fail to grasp the full significance of this and other popular cultural phenomena.

## NOTES

1. I would like to thank Gordon Lynch and François Gauthier for their comments on an earlier draft.
2. By which I mean the rave and club developments evolving from disco, house, garage and techno and whose progeny includes jungle and psy-trance dance cultures.
3. There were other reasons why dance would be neglected. Social dance, and embodied pleasures more generally failed to conform to accepted understandings of 'the political' (see Dyer 1990; McClary 1994; Pini 1997, 113–114) and

faced general neglect from a rationalist sociological paradigm (Ward 1993). Music scholars (especially historians of jazz and rock) had regarded dance as a seductive force weakening critical faculties (Straw 2001, 159). Cultural studies is also largely 'text based' with analyses of popular culture concerned with 'verbal or visual cultural products, not kinaesthetic actions', and academia is noted to have possessed an 'aversion to the material body, as well as its fictive separation of mental and physical production' (Desmond 1997, 30).

4. Thus 'when instituted forms no longer provide for the vividness of the instituent experience we witness the appearance of *savage* quests for the *vivid fervour of the instituant* that shun any regard for domestication' (Gauthier 2004a, 67; see also Fontaine 1996; Gauthier 2001, 175–197). The perennial dialectic (instituant/instituted) indigenous to Bastide's theory possesses intriguing parallels to the processual paradigm (anti-structure/structure) of Victor Turner.
5. Also underlying Sylvan's approach is the argument that rave is a beneficiary of a 'hidden religious sensibility' transmitted from West African possession religions via African American secular entertainment musics (especially blues) appropriated and translated by white youth who, beginning with rock, were raised 'with an experience of the West African spiritual sensibility, albeit in a radically transformed context' (2002, 68). Other commentators articulate EDMC's inheritance of African-American gospel musical traditions (see Fikentscher 2000; O'Hagan 2004; Rietveld 1998), with O'Hagan discussing parallels in the roles of MCs and Baptist preachers. Other commentators make much of a generalised inheritance: of 'non-Western traditions of salvation and release through communal music and dance' leading to the 'exquisite integration of the erotic and the spiritual' in house and its successors (Apollo 2003, 24); or of a pagan heritage passing into contemporary 'trance', or 'psy-trance', culture (see ENRG 2001).
6. While there is a desire to render rave-oriented dance forms as 'ritual', 'shamanic', 'cultic', or 'tribal' (for example, Fritz 1999, 168–177; Saunders and Doblin 1996, 35) without providing detail about how this might be so, others make useful contributions. Broaching 'ceremonial constants', Tramacchi (2004) draws parallels between 'community focusedentheogenic dance rituals' in three cultures (Mexican Huichol, Barasana of Columbia and the Fang and Metsogo of Gabon West Africa) and psychedelic dance cultures. In a less favourable comparison, Gore (1995, 137–138) claims that, compared with trance or possession states within cults of the Southern Nigerian Bini, rave is 'a rite of passage leading nowhere . . . It is a ritual without content, an ecstatic, solitary and narcissistic. It is a game of chance; its trance is aleatory and dizzying'.
7. As it is loosely in Malbon (1999), and more thoroughly in Gauthier (2004b, forthcoming, 2005).
8. See St John (2007) for a discussion of the way (post)rave constitutes not so much a transitional/'liminal' moment, but a *transitional world* for contemporary youth. As 'heterotopia', EDM events can be indeterminate transitional zones (see Gauthier 2005, 26; St John 2001a, 2004a, 33–34).

9. Maffesoli is especially influential within the Francophone academic community (see Gaillot 1999; Gauthier and Ménard 2001; Hampartzoumian 1999, 2004; Petiau 2001; Racine 2002).
10. Unlike the Baudrillardian moment of EDMC research where 'ecstasy' constituted the playful relationship between signifiers without material reference, Landau's 'ecstasy' attends to the corporeality, and thus the depth, of 'meaninglessness', reminding us that, as an experience of de-subjectification outside language ideology and representation, such *must* be *meaning-less*. The experience pursued by ravers (with or without the use of Ecstasy), is conveyed to be inherently ineffable, which is not to suggest that such an experience is not attributed meaning subsequently.
11. Gore (1995, 136) points out that, as in possession rituals of the Southern Nigerian cult to the god Olukan, 'apprenticeship' (psycho-physical training) is a prerequisite for achieving alternate states in rave.
12. That participants in a self-authentication-seeking 'trance' scene sometimes indulge in a kind of polymorphous 'primitive communism' implicating living indigenous cultures, is a story of possible primitivism, cultural appropriation and homogenisation deserving further research (see Fatone 2004).
13. For discussions of EDMC events contextualising the search for legitimacy and belonging within a settler society (Australia), see St John (2001b, 2005) and Luckman (2003, 324–325).
14. This 'mystical consciousness' involves an individual relationship with the cosmos, a profound sense of interdependence with the world, triggered by psychedelic, or 'entheogenic', substances to use the non-pejorative and non-ethnocentric term recommended by Ott (1993) referring to the 'engendering of god within' (see Partridge 2003).
15. A techno-paganism developing within this complex cultural (re)constructionism has achieved notoriety in the popular techno-pharmacological millenarianism of Terence McKenna (1991). See St John (2004b) for discussion of the techno-millenarian trajectories of McKenna and Fraser Clark.
16. Constituting a significant bridge from the Eastern-influenced 1960s counter-culture and the 1990s electronic dance culture, *sannyasins* belonging to the Osho movement (of Bhagwan Rajneesh, who set up a 'meditation resort' in Poona near Mumbai, India) are implicated in the introduction of MDMA (which they used for meditation and body therapies) to clubbers in Ibiza in the late 1980s (D'Andrea 2004, 244; see also this issue). This primary juncture in a 'freak ethnoscape' provides an exemplary moment in the Easternisation of the West observed by Campbell (1999).
17. Although, as contributors to this edition (Till; Sai-chun Lau) make clear, contemporary EDMC is also a context for alternative Christian groups to express, and extend, their faith.

## REFERENCES

- ALBANESE, C. 1996. Religion and popular American culture: An introductory essay. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64 (4): 733–42.
- APOLLO. 2001. House music 101. Available online from: <http://www.livingart.com/raving/articles/housemusic101.htm> (accessed 16 September 2002).
- APOLLO. 2003. Electronic dance music and social liberation: Sacred sweet wicked ecstasy. *Fifth Estate* Summer: 22.
- ARNOLD, N. 1997. Come and expel the green pain: The Shamanic and the ecstatic features of trance-dance in rave culture. *Contemporary Drama in English* 5, 185–98. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier.
- BAKHTIN, M. 1968. *Rabelais and his world*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- BARDELLA, C. 2002. Pilgrimages of the plagued: AIDs, body and society. *Body & Society* 8 (2): 79–105.
- BASTIDE, R. 1975. [1997]. *Le Sacré Sauvage et Autres Essais*. Paris: Stock.
- BENNETT, A. 1999. Subcultures or neo-tribes? Rethinking the relationship between youth, style and musical taste. *Sociology* 33 (3): 599–617.
- BRADBY, B. 1993. Sampling sexuality: Gender, technology and the body in dance music. *Popular Music* 12 (2): 155–76.
- CAMPBELL, C. 1999. The easternisation of the West. In *New religious movements: Challenge and response*, edited by B. Wilson, and J. Cresswell. London: Routledge.
- CHIDESTER, D. 2000. The church of baseball, the fetish of Coca-Cola, and the potlatch of rock'n'roll. In *Religion and popular culture in America*, edited by B. D. Forbes, and J. H. Mahan. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.
- CLARKE, J., S. HALL, T. JEFFERSON, and B. ROBERTS. 1976. Subcultures, cultures and class. In *Resistance through rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain*, edited by S. Hall, and T. Jefferson. 9–74. London: Hutchinson & Co.
- COHEN, E., N. BEN-YEHUDA, and J. AVIAD. 1987. Recentering the world: The quest for 'elective' centres in a secularised universe. *Sociological Review* 35 (2): 320–436.
- COLLIN, M., and J. GODFREY. 1997. *Altered state: The story of ecstasy culture and acid house*. London: Serpent's Tail.
- COSGROVE, S. 1988. Forbidden fruits. *New Statesman and Society*, 2 September.
- D'ANDREA, A. 2004. Global nomads: Techno and new age as transnational counter-cultures in Ibiza and Goa. In *Rave culture and religion*, edited by G. St John, 236–55. London/New York: Routledge.
- D'AQUILLI, E. G. and C. D. LAUGHLIN. 1975. The biopsychological determinants of religious ritual behavior. *Zygon* 10 (1): 32–59.
- DAVIS, E. 1998. *Techgnosis: Myth, magic and mysticism in the age of information*. New York: Harmony Books.
- DAVIS, E. 2004. Hedonic tantra: Golden Goa's trance transmission. In *Rave culture and religion*, edited by G. St John, 256–72. London: Routledge.

- DESMOND, J. 1997. Embodying difference: issues in dance and cultural studies. In *Meaning in motion: new cultural studies of dance*, 29–54. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- DYER, R. 1990. In defence of disco. In *On record: rock, pop and the written word*, edited by S. Frith, and A. Goodwin, 410–8. New York: Pantheon.
- ENRG. 2001. Psychic sonics: Tribadelic dance trance-formation. In *FreeNRG: Notes from the edge of the dance floor*, edited by G. St John, 157–69. Altona: Common Ground.
- ESHUN, K. 1998. *More brilliant than the sun: Adventures in sonic fiction*. London: Quartet.
- FATONE, G. 2004. Gamelan, techno-primitivism, and the San Francisco rave scene. In *Rave culture and religion*, edited by G. St John. London: Routledge.
- FIKENTSCHER, K. 2000. *'You better work!': Underground dance music in New York City*. Hanover & London: Wesleyan University Press.
- FONTAINE, A. 1996. *Raver*. Paris: Anthropos.
- FRITZ, J. 1999. *Rave culture: An insider's overview*. Canada: Smallfry Press.
- GAILLOT, M. 1999. *Multiple meaning techno: An artistic and political laboratory of the present*. Paris: Editions des Voir.
- GARRATT, S. 1998. *Adventures in wonderland: A decade of club culture*. London: Headline.
- GAUTHIER, F. 2001. Consumation. La religiosité des raves. *Religiologiques* 24: 175–97.
- GAUTHIER, F. 2004a. Rapturous ruptures: The 'instituant' religious experience of rave. In *Rave culture and religion*, edited by G. St John, 65–84. London: Routledge.
- GAUTHIER, F. 2004b. Raves et espaces urbain: Bricolage d'un rite de passage à l'âge adulte? In *L'imaginaire urbain et les jeunes: La ville comme espace d'expériences identitaires et créatrices*, edited by P.-W. Boudreault, and M. Parazelli, 237–57. Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec.
- GAUTHIER, F. Rave and religion: A contemporary youth phenomenon as seen through the lens of religious studies. *Studies in Religion: Canadian Society for the Study of Religion* (forthcoming).
- GAUTHIER, F. 2005. Orpheus and the underground: Raves and implicit religion, a critical analysis. *Journal for the study of Implicit Religion* 8(3).
- GAUTHIER, F., and MÉNARD, G., eds. 2001. Technoritualités religiosité rave. *Religiologiques* 24.
- GERARD, M. 2004. Selecting ritual: DJs, dancers and liminality in underground dance music. In *Rave culture and religion*, edited by G. St John, 167–84. London: Routledge.
- GILBERT, J., and PEARSON, E. 1999. *Discographies: Dance music, culture and the politics of sound*. London: Routledge.
- GORE, G. 1995. Rhythm, representation and ritual: The rave and the religious cult. In *Border Tensions, Dance and Discourse: Proceedings of the Fifth Study of Dance Conference*, 133–9. Guildford: University of Surrey.
- GORE, G. 1997. Trance, dance and tribalism in rave culture. In *Dance in the city*, edited by H. Thomas, 73–83. London: MacMillan Press.

- GOULDING, C., A. SHANKAR, and R. ELLIOTT. 2002. Working weeks, rave weekends: Identity fragmentation and the emergence of new communities. *Consumption, Markets and Culture* 5 (4): 261–84.
- GRIMES, R. 1995. *Beginnings in ritual studies*. Washington: University Press of America.
- HALFACREE, K., and R. KITCHIN. 1996. 'Madchester rave on': Placing the fragments of popular music. *Arena* 28 (1): 47–55.
- HALL, S., and T. JEFFERSON, eds. 1976. *Resistance through rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain*. London: Hutchinson & Co.
- HEBDIGE, D. 1979. *Subculture: The meaning of style*. London: Methuen.
- HAMPARTZOUMIAN, S., ed. 1999. Effervescence techno. *Sociétés* 65. Paris and Bruxelles: De Boeck.
- HAMPARTZOUMIAN, S. 2004. *Effervescence techno ou la communauté trans(e)cendantale*. Paris: L'Harmattan, Coll. Logiques sociales.
- HARRISON, M., ed. 1998. *High society: The real voices of club culture*. London: Piatkus.
- HEELAS, P., and B. SEEL. 2003. An ageing New Age? In *Predicting religion: Christian, secular and alternative futures*, edited by G. Davie, P. Heelas, and L. Woodhead, 229–47. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- HEMMENT, D. 1996. E is for Ekstasis. *New Formations* 31: 23–38.
- HESMONDHALGH, D. 1997. The cultural politics of dance music. *Soundings* 5: 167–78.
- HUTSON, S. 1999. Technoshamanism: Spiritual healing in the rave subculture. *Popular Music and Society* 23: 53–77.
- HUTSON, S. 2000. The rave: Spiritual healing in modern western subcultures. *Anthropological Quarterly* 73 (1): 35–49.
- JACKSON, P. 2004. *Inside clubbing: Sensual experiments in the art of being human*. Oxford: Berg.
- JORDAN, T. 1995. Collective bodies: Raving and the politics of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *Body and Society* 1 (1): 125–44.
- LANDAU, J. 2004. The flesh of raving: Merleau-Ponty and the 'experience' of Ecstasy. In *Rave culture and religion*, edited by G. St John. 107–24. London: Routledge.
- LAUGHLIN, C. D., J. MCMANUS, and E. G. D'AQUILI. 1990. *Brain, symbol, and experience: Toward a neurophenomenology of consciousness*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- LAWRENCE, T. 2003. *Love saves the day: A history of American dance music culture, 1970–1979*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- LUCKMAN, S. 2003. Going bush and finding one's 'tribe': Raving, escape and the bush doof. *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 17 (3): 315–30.
- LUCKMANN, T. 1967. *The invisible religion: The problem of religion in modern society*. New York: MacMillan.
- LYNCH, G. 2002. *After religion: 'Generation X' and the search for meaning*. London: DLT.
- MAFFESOLI, M. 1993. [1982]. *The shadow of dionysus: A contribution to the sociology of the orgy*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- MAFFESOLI, M. 1996. [1988]. *The time of the tribes: The decline of individualism in mass society*. London: Sage.

- MAFFESOLI, M. 1997. The return of dionysus'. In *Constructing the new consumer society*, edited by P. Sulkunen, J. Holmwood, H. Radner, and G. Schulze, 21–37. London: Macmillan.
- MALBON, B. 1998. Clubbing: Consumption, identity and the spatial practices of every-night life. In *Cool places: Geographies of youth culture*, edited by T. Skelton, and G. Valentine, 266–86. London: Routledge.
- MALBON, B. 1999. *Clubbing: Dancing, ecstasy and vitality*. London: Routledge.
- MCCLARY, S. 1994. Same as it ever was: Youth culture and music. In *Microphone fiends: Youth music, youth culture*, edited by A. Ross, and T. Rose, 29–40. New York: Routledge.
- MCKENNA, T. 1991. *The archaic revival: Speculations on psychedelic mushrooms, the Amazon, virtual reality, UFOs, evolution, Shamanism, the rebirth of the goddess, and the end of history*. San Francisco: Harper.
- MCRROBBIE, A. 1984. Dance and social fantasy. In *Gender and generation*, edited by A. McRobbie, and M. Nova. London: Macmillan.
- MCRROBBIE, A. 1990. Settling accounts with subcultures: A feminist critique. In *On record: Rock, pop and the written word*, edited by S. Frith, and A. Goodwin, 56–65. New York: Pantheon.
- MCRROBBIE, A. 1993. Shut up and dance: Youth culture and changing modes of femininity. *Cultural Studies* 7 (3): 406–26.
- MCRROBBIE, A. 1994. *Postmodernism and popular culture*. London: Routledge.
- MELECHI, A. 1993. The ecstasy of disappearance. In *Rave off: Politics and deviance in contemporary youth culture*, edited by S. Redhead, 29–40. Aldershot: Avebury.
- METCALF, S. 1997. Ecstasy evangelists and psychedelic warriors. In *Psychedelica Britannica: Hallucinogenic drugs in Britain*, edited by A. Melechi. London: Turnaround.
- O'HAGAN, C. 2004. Sounds of the London underground: Gospel music and baptist worship in the UK garage scene. In *Rave culture and religion*, edited by G. St John, 185–96. London: Routledge.
- OLAVESON, T. 2004. 'Connectedness' and the rave experience: Rave as new religious movement? In *Rave culture and religion*, edited by G. St John, 85–106. London: Routledge.
- OTT, J. 1993. *Pharmacotheon: Entheogenic drugs, their plant sources and history*. Kennewick, WA: Natural Products Co.
- OTTO, R. 1959. *The idea of the holy*. London: Oxford University Press.
- PARTRIDGE, C. 2003. Sacred chemicals? Psychedelic drugs and mystical experience. In *Mysticisms East and West: Studies in mystical experience*, edited by C. Partridge, and T. Gabriel, 98–131. Carlisle: Paternoster.
- PETIAU, A., ed. 2001. Pulsation techno, pulsation sociale. *Sociétés*, 72. Paris and Bruxelles: De Boeck.
- PINI, M. 1997. Cyborgs, nomads and the raving feminine. In *Dance in the city*, edited by H. Thomas, 111–29. London: Macmillan.
- PINI, M. 2001. *Club cultures and female subjectivity: The move from home to house*. Hampshire: Palgrave.

- PUSH, and M. SILCOTT. 2000. *The book of E: All about Ecstasy*. London: Omnibus Press.
- RACINE, É. 2002. *Le phénomène techno: Clubs, raves, free-parties*. Paris: Imago.
- REDHEAD, S. 1993. *Rave off: Politics and deviance in contemporary youth culture*. Aldershot: Avebury.
- REYNOLDS, S. 1997. Rave culture: Living dream or living death? In *The clubcultures reader: readings in popular cultural studies*, edited by S. Redhead, 102–11. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- REYNOLDS, S. 1998. *Energy flash: A journey through rave music and dance culture*. London: Picador.
- RIETVELD, H. 1993. Living the dream. In *Rave off: Politics and deviance in contemporary youth culture*, edited by S. Redhead. Aldershot: Avebury.
- RIETVELD, H. 1998. *This is our house: House music, cultural spaces and technologies*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- RIETVELD, H. 2004. Ephemeral spirit: Sacrificial cyborg and communal soul. In *Rave culture and religion*, edited by G. St John, 46–61. London: Routledge.
- RUSHKOFF, D. 1994. *Cyberia: Life in the trenches of hyperspace*. London: Flamingo.
- SALDANHA, A. 2002. Music tourism and factions of bodies in Goa. *Tourist Studies* 2 (1): 43–62.
- SALDANHA, A. 2004. Goa trance and trance in Goa: Smooth striations. In *Rave culture and religion*, edited by G. St John, 273–86. London: Routledge.
- SAUNDERS, N. 1993. *E for Ecstasy*. London: Neal's Yard Press.
- SAUNDERS, N., and R. DOBLIN. 1996. *Ecstasy: Dance, trance & transformation*. Oakland: Quick American Archives.
- SAUNDERS, N., A. SAUNDERS, and M. PAULI. 2000. *In search of the ultimate high: Spiritual experiences through psychoactives*. London: Rider.
- SCHÜTZE, B. 2001/2002. Carnavalesque mutations in the Bahian Carnival and rave culture. *Religiologiques* 24 (Fall): 155–63.
- SOMMER, S. 2001. C'mon to my house: Underground-house dancing. *Dance Research Journal* 33 (2): 72–86.
- STEPHENSON, W. 2003. Scoring Ecstasy: MDMA, consumerism and spirituality in the early fiction of Irvine Welsh. *Journal for Cultural Research* 7 (2): 147–63.
- ST JOHN, G., ed. 2001a. Alternative cultural heterotopia and the liminoid body: Beyond Turner at ConFest. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*. 12(1): 47–66.
- ST JOHN, G. ed. 2001b. Doof! Australian post rave culture. In *FreeNRG: Notes from the edge of the dance floor*, edited by G. St John, 9–36. Altona: Common Ground.
- ST JOHN, G. 2003. Post-rave technotribalism and the carnival of protest. In *The post-subcultures reader*, edited by D. Muggleton, and R. Weinzierl, 65–82. London: Berg.
- ST JOHN, G. 2004a. The difference engine: Liberation and the rave imaginary. In *Rave culture and religion*, edited by G. St John, 19–45. London: Routledge.
- ST JOHN, G. 2004b. Techno millennium: Dance, ecology and future primitives. In *Rave culture and religion*, edited by G. St John, 213–35. London: Routledge.
- ST JOHN, G. 2005. Outback vibes: Sound systems on the road to legitimacy. *Postcolonial studies: Culture, politics, economy* 8(3): 321–336.

- ST JOHN, G. 2007. Trance tribes and dance vibes: Victor Turner and electronic dance culture. In *Victor Turner and contemporary cultural performance*, edited by G. St John. New York: Berghahn.
- STRAW, W. 2001. Dance music. In *The Cambridge companion to pop and rock*, edited by S. Frith, W. Straw, and J. Street, 158–75. Cambridge University Press.
- SUTCLIFFE, S. 1997. Seekers, networks and 'New Age'. *Scottish Journal of Religious Studies* 15 (2): 97–114.
- SUTCLIFFE, S. 1998. Between apocalypse and self-realisation: 'Nature' as an index of New Age religiosity. In *Nature religion today: Paganism in the modern world*, edited by J. Pearson, R. Roberts, and G. Samuel, 33–44. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- SYLVAN, R. 2002. *Traces of the spirit: The religious dimensions of popular music*. New York: New York University Press.
- TAKAHASHI, M. 2004. The 'natural high': Altered states, flashbacks and neural tuning at raves. In *Rave culture and religion*, edited by G. St John, 145–64. New York: Routledge.
- TAKAHASHI, M., and T. OLAVESON. 2003. Music, dance and raving bodies: Raving as spirituality in the central Canadian rave scene. *Journal of Ritual Studies* 17 (2): 72–96.
- THORNTON, S. 1995. *Club cultures: Music, media and subcultural capital*. Cambridge: Polity.
- TRAMACCHI, D. 2000. Field tripping: Psychedelic *communitas* and ritual in the Australian bush. *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 15: 201–13.
- TRAMACCHI, D. 2001. Chaos engines: Doofs, psychedelics, and religious experience. In *FreeNRG: notes from the edge of the dance floor*, edited by G. St John, 171–88. Altona: Common Ground.
- TRAMACCHI, D. 2004. Entheogenic dance ecstasis: Cross-cultural contexts. In *Rave culture and religion*, edited by G. St John, 125–44. London: Routledge.
- TURNER, V. 1967. Betwixt and between: The liminal period in Rites de Passage. In *The forest of symbols: Aspects of Ndembu ritual*, edited by V. Turner, 93–111. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- TURNER, V. 1982. *From ritual to theatre: The human seriousness of play*. New York: PAJP.
- TWIST, C., ed. 1999. *Guerillas of harmony: Communiques from the dance underground*. Los Angeles: Tribal Donut.
- VAN GENNEP, A. 1909. *The rites of passage*, trans. by M.B. Vizedom and G.L. Caffee. London: Routledge and Keagan Paul.
- VELAYUTHAM, S., and A. WISE. 2001. Dancing with Ga(y)nesh: Rethinking cultural appropriation in multicultural Australia. *Postcolonial Studies* 4 (2): 143–60.
- WAGNER, A. 1997. *Adversaries of dance: From puritans to the present*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- WARD, A. 1993. Dancing in the dark: Rationalism and the neglect of social dance. In *Dance, sex, and gender*, edited by H. Thomas, 16–33. St Martin's Press.
- WILLIS, P. 1978. *Profane culture*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

- WINKELMAN, M. 2000. *Shamanism: The neural ecology of consciousness and healing*. Westport: Bergin & Garvey.
- WRIGHT, M. A. 1998. The great British ecstasy revolution. In *DIY culture: Party and protest in nineties Britain*, edited by G. McKay, 228–42. London: Verso.
- WOODHEAD, L., and P. HEELAS. 2000. *Religion in modern times*. Oxford: Blackwell.

**Graham St John** (author to whom correspondence should be addressed),

Department of Sociology, City University London, Northampton Square,  
London EC1 0HB, UK. Email: g.stjohn@city.ac.uk

Graham St John is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Centre for Critical and Cultural studies at the University of Queensland. He is author of *Technomad: Global Pathways of Post-Rave Counterculture* (Berghahn, forthcoming), and editor of *Victor Turner and Contemporary Cultural Performance* (Berghahn, 2007). He recently edited *Rave Culture and Religion* (London/New York: Routledge, 2004).