Foreword

The dilemma of scholarly interest in subcultural activity is always bound to the resonance that a given subculture may hold on a broader socio-cultural or historical spectrum. This is rendered more of a challenge the more a subculture is placed (or, for that matter, places itself) further from the radar of mainstream legibility. Yet as the time of the grand narratives has now effectively come to an end as pressaged by Lyotard, it is often in discreet fringe cultural manifestations that one can find templates, signs and perplexities that may illuminate a reading of contemporaneity: a contemporaneity where technology and subjectivity converge and potentiate one another without paradox, where rituals of self-reinvention and communal emancipation lead us strangely to the evidence of a current hunger for archetypes, an inevitability of their presence, even if of a spectral nature. Shamanism, rebirth, trance, hallucination, travel, dance, enlightenment: each of these words convey an ancestral territory of action, experience or vocation - and each of these equally belongs in the lexicon of Psychedelic Trance, the core subject of the present book.

Psychedelic Trance has perhaps cultivated and enjoyed both a radical, existential approach to Electronic Dance Music, and a cautious self-sufficiency that has ensured a semantic and operative distance from mass consumption. These characteristics, one may argue, have provided particularly favourable circumstances for its scholarly study, both as a comparatively autonomous ecosystem and as a potential template for a wider set of cross-disciplinary studies. In a way, Psychedelic Trance becomes the ideal point of convergence for the study of a series of key contemporary phenomena that, while remaining profoundly of the now, find their potential decipherment in a renewed reading of ancestrality. Where modernity saw choices to be made, music subcultures re-harmonise: there is suddenly no desired (nor experienced) contradiction between automation and expression, no fracture between online and offline, no separation between mental and geographical traveling, between communion and introspection, between entertainment and enlightenment. If subculture was the projection of shared utopia of youth, under scientific scrutiny it has always carried the promise of mythological revelation, of anticipation and inevitability: just as the eradication of ritual from the social sphere of modernity fosters its endless
ontological return in various forms (often chaotic, sometimes catastrophic), music
subcultures, particularly those in possession of a more radical lexicon of procedures,
reacquire a purpose of social re-inscription of the individual in face of the collective,
of anthropological placement of the self, of lexical essence.

This is therefore why a book such as the present one is a valuable and timely
scholarly statement: it not only unravels and deciphers a multitude of aspects per-
taining to one of the most fertile territories of dance music, it successfully informs
a range of further territories and disciplines, both historical and forward-looking.
Further to prior sociological and anthropological scrutiny, this book dramatically
expands the scope of analysis, on the evidence that, in face of a seemingly expon-
ential complexity of cultural, historical, philosophical, technological, semiotic and
creative rupture, it is through the multiple, contrasting and complementary weaving
of these potential disciplinary contributions that we may unravel an otherwise
impenetrable cognitive coherence.

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