




Chinese revolution and neither was the Russian revolution. Both relied on the alliance between the industrial working-class and the peasantry. Lenin, too, had the theory of the vanguard. In effect, Gall seems to want to take us back to a pre-Leninist position that would deny the validity of even the Russian revolution.

The problem with the book is the earnest and endless search for ‘the truth’ in terms of Strummer’s political beliefs via a literal reading of countless texts. There is no poststructuralist awareness here, no concept that Strummer’s understandings were fragmentary and contradictory. He was Marxist and not Marxist, at varying times and to varying degrees, and depending on which definitions one chooses. Gall doesn’t consider that the definitions are themselves contested and change over time. And Strummer’s views reflected the changing events of history (he was in confusion after the collapse of the Soviet Union), and hence also constrained him in terms of what he could conceivably think. These problems make the book duller than its title would suggest, although the second half is better.

In closing, it seems that here we have a work that is pre-Foucault, pre-postmodernism, pre-1968, pre-the Frankfurt School even, and which aims to locate (Marxist) truth by defining it rigidly, protecting and enforcing it upon those who use the definitions in a different way or more loosely. There is no awareness at all that many regard truth as being socially produced. Punk was a movement of individualism and identity politics, at least to some extent, so it presaged today’s world. With this book and this author, there appears to be no understanding at all that the categorisation process, and the categories themselves, can be oppressive, and that is problematic.

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***Raving*. By McKenzie Wark. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2023, 136 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4780-1938-1 doi:10.1017/S0261143023000430**

In *Raving*, McKenzie Wark offers a breezy but thought-provoking work that straddles a line between literary and academic writing on electronic music culture. On one level, it can be read as a follow-up to *Reverse Cowgirl*, her 2020 auto-ethnography about gender and sexuality. Where that work was a look in the

rearview at several decades grappling with queer identity, *Raving* finds Wark settling into the groove of a deeply situated trans identity inseparable from the sociotechnical assemblages of twenty-first-century techno music, with all its musical, visual and chemical components. Yet while it's easy to read *Raving* as a book about identity, it is also a book about technology. Sound systems, lighting rigs, fog machines and club drugs are positioned within a media ecology that stretches both out into technically constructed collectivity and inwards towards a self that is inseparable from its entanglements with all manner of perceptual alteration technologies. As such, *Raving* introduces a touch of media studies within the broader and more accessible rave-literature canon.

The book is a very quick read filled with sex, drugs and techno. Its cursory qualities invite contextualisation among secondary literature, or analysis in the company of a class, reading group or seminar. Yet in its 136 pocket-sized pages, *Raving* introduces several innovations to the rave-literature canon, centring topics previously underexamined. First, it is deeply rooted in twenty-first-century New York City, documenting a recent club-culture renaissance that has followed 20 years of anti-nightlife policy and enforcement spearheaded by the mayoral administrations of Rudolph Giuliani and Michael Bloomberg. In contrast, the famous scenes in Europe that are so preeminent, both in the electronic music industry and in related literature, are treated as a distant memory—literally, in the form of four quick paragraphs flashing back on time spent partying in newly reunified Berlin during the 1990s.

Raving's chronological and temporal orientations represent a point of departure from existing works as well. The book is largely autoethnographic, punctuated with many quick references to outside sources. It is acutely situated in New York City during the late 2010s and early 2020s, and yet it still benefits from Wark's historical perspective, informed by lived experiences with the practice of raving running from the 1990s to the 2020s. *Raving* addresses this temporal framework in part through writings and photos related to the author's 60th birthday party, held at Brooklyn's Bossa Nova Civic Club. The practice of raving has historically been associated with youth, but Wark examines the possibility of intergenerational raving knowledge, shared tacitly rather than explicitly, in everything from one's choice of footwear to their chosen harm reduction practices when consuming drugs.


On the topic of drugs, Wark's *Raving* also breaks raves away from their historically close association with empathogenic stimulants like MDMA (aka 'ecstasy'). She devotes considerable space instead to the dissociative drug ketamine's contemporary role in rave practices. In prior works of rave lit, ketamine was often positioned as a sign that any given scene was becoming unsavoury. For Wark, writing during a boom in legal usage of psychiatric ketamine products, the drug shakes users out of entrenched gender roles, reconfigures their relationships to embodiment and thus lubricates the disruption of entrenched social practices. The role of the unsavoury drug, in this case, is played by the sedative GHB, which has become a topic of recent concern and debate among raving populations, and which is implicated in the book's only truly negative drug outcome.

Frank discussions of drug use are not the only criminalised behaviours discussed in *Raving*. Wark also touches on the role of sex work in some ravers' lives, as well as a variety of illegal party-throwing practices. The most controversial of these practices, at least at the time they took place, is the throwing of parties during early phases of the COVID-19 pandemic. New York City was a major COVID hotspot, with more than 500 New Yorkers dying of the virus daily during

its peak in April 2020. With all this in mind, it makes sense that Wark, writing as an (auto-)ethnographer, opts to anonymise most of the locations, promoters and participants discussed. In the future, these records of social practices during the COVID pandemic will be highly valuable despite their anonymous nature. Overall, however, the book's tone toes the line between memoir and theory such that many interested readers seeking the fine details of New York City's reinvigorated 2010s/2020s rave scene may be slightly frustrated. Some details survive, however, and conversations with scene-makers like the DJ Volvox and scholar/DJ Nick Bazzano help considerably to thicken the narrative's description of its social and aesthetic milieu.

Raving makes perhaps its most significant contributions in its treatment of embodiment, which is in turn closely tied to identity and gender. Although queer identities have been central to dance music for decades, the cisgender gay male always loomed large as a dominant archetype. *Raving* punctures this hegemony by focusing on Wark's trans femme experiences, while also finding more generalisable insights within those experiences. 'Trans people are not the only ones who dissociate', she writes, 'but we tend to be good at it' (p. 8). This feeling of alienation is keenly expressed in Wark's anecdotes about her and other trans ravers being denied by cab drivers or followed around a party. The destabilisation of identity, however, is not unique to trans ravers in Wark's framework. Instead, it is a practice of total immersion in the technical environment of a rave, including lights, sound, fog, drugs and proper social behaviour. This immersion is 'not for the ones who stand around', she writes, but is open instead to all who can 'dissociate out of the enclosed shell of their bodies, into the mix' (p. 33).

As a book-length snapshot of New York City raving in the 2010s and 2020s, *Raving* is very nearly the first of its kind. As a theoretical text about the *practice* of raving, it works best as a point of entry, rather than a main destination. References to theoretical concepts are abundant but fleeting, making the book's list of references a comprehensive resource in its own right, all while maintaining an extremely brisk pace.

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***Shonen Knife's Happy Hour: Food, Gender, Rock and Roll.* By Brooke McCorkle Okazaki. New York: Bloomsbury, 2021. 156 pp. ISBN: 9781501347955
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Shonen Knife's Happy Hour: Food, Gender, Rock and Roll by Brooke McCorkle Okazaki explores questions of gender, food and sexuality, through the music of all-female pop punk group Shonen Knife. Formed in the early 1980s in Osaka during Japan's bubble economy era, Shonen Knife broke onto the international independent rock scene in the early 1990s and were famously invited by Kurt Cobain of Nirvana to be the opening act on their 1991 UK tour. After more than 40 years, the band continues to actively perform and record music, a feat, according to the author, that is partly due to their 'potent fusion of two seemingly incongruous components: cute and cool' (p. 6). Inspired by the name of a pocketknife for children, the band's guitarist