It is as if some experiences were reminiscent or evocative of others: this ability to flow from one set of experiences to another is a quality of interconnectedness that I value highly. Drawing a flow of connections need not be an act of appropriation. On the contrary: it marks transitions between communicating states or experiences. Deleuze’s work on lines of escape and becoming is of great inspiration here; nomadic becoming is neither reproduction nor just imitation but rather emphatic proximity, intensive interconnectedness. Some states or experiences can merge simply because they share certain attributes. Nomadic shifts designate therefore a creative sort of becoming; a performative metaphor that allows for otherwise unlikely encounters and unsuspected sources of interaction of experience and of knowledge. (Rosi Braidotti, 1994, p. 5)

In this chapter, I want us to imagine. I want us to think of the images which emerge from the accounts of raving women as if these constituted popular refigurations of the world and subjectivity within this: refigurations which parallel some of the fictions currently being mapped within a sphere of contemporary feminist philosophy. The aim is to consider the extent to which rave – as a lived social practice, and female ravers – as embodied cultural subjects, resemble the kinds of formations being imagined by philosophers Rosi Braidotti and Donna Haraway in their strategic construction of particular Utopias and political fictions. In short, I want to suggest that rave can usefully be
considered in parallel to these often heady philosophical debates – as constituting a popular cultural reframing or refictioning of the world; a reframing which problematises the same dualisms and conceptual frameworks currently under attack from this body of philosophy. In particular, I shall concentrate upon the resonances which such popular cultural visions can be seen to have with Braidotti’s ‘Nomadic Subject’ and Haraway’s ‘Cyborg’. The chapter is therefore an attempt at bringing into communication the contemporary cultural practice of raving with a particular body of contemporary philosophical inquiry. It is about mapping parallels, resonances and connections between the two.

Why turn to figurational feminism in a study of dance cultures? This is not an unproblematic move I know. But such work does suggest some new ways of looking at what raving women say about their practices and also, at what this might indicate about the transformations which femininity is currently undergoing. The work of Haraway and Braidotti points to one way of exploring not simply cultural practice, but also cultural hopes, visions and a cultural imagination. It encourages us to recognise and address the fantasmatic dimensions of these interviewees’ personal accounts and of the different experiential worlds into which these women claim to move when raving. For me, this work therefore suggests a way of stepping beyond some of our preoccupations with the distinctions between the ‘real’ and actual and the ‘Utopian’ and fictional. As Constance Penley writes in addressing Haraway’s work:

Most Utopian schemes hover somewhere in between the present and the future, attempting to figure the future as the present and the present as the future. (1991, p. 8)

The work to which Penley is referring, suggests a radically different understanding of the relations between the visionary and the ‘objective’. And for the purposes of the present, it encourages an alternative approach to questions about the ‘credibility’ of raving women’s experiential accounts. I therefore want to step for a moment beyond any concerns with how ‘true’ such accounts might be, and consider instead, what these are saying about the present, the future, the visionary and the as-yet-unknown. Clearly, this is not about turning away from the real or the actual. It is about drawing out the visions and fantasies informing and emanating from this reality.