

# Transfested Horizons: An Introduction

**Graham St John**

University of Huddersfield, United Kingdom

## KEYWORDS

Transfested

Transformative event

Transformational festival

Meta-transformational

Burning Man

Event culture.

## ABSTRACT

This article identifies conceptual lacunae, connections, and cross-talk in an interdisciplinary field of research targeting a wide distribution of events that possess an intentionally transformational—or “meta-transformational”—remit. While such events—including Burning Man and “transformational festivals”—are embraced by diverse groups as signature contexts for transformations of self, society, and culture, and while research in this field has grown apace across disciplines, there has been little effort to survey, define, or critically evaluate this field of research. The first part of the article defines nomenclature, outlines morphology, describes event models and their prototypes, critically reviews relevant literature, discusses interpretative frameworks, and highlights the complexity of “transformative events,” before focusing on Burning Man as a researched phenomenon. The second part outlines the issue content, before making observations on future research directions. By way of its attention to, and explanation of, novel nomenclature—e.g. “transfested”—the article serves as an introduction: both to the issue “Event Horizons: Transformational Festivals, Movements, and Cultures,” and to a broad field of research on transformative events.

## Transfestive Horizons: An Introduction

Graham St John

Around the globe, large-scale gatherings—for example, Burning Man, Rainbow Gatherings, alternative music and lifestyle festivals, and other events, including “transformational festivals”—are embraced by diverse groups as signature contexts for transformations of self, society, and culture. While research on such events has grown apace in anthropology and allied disciplines, there has been little effort to represent, compare, and challenge their “transformational” pretensions. The absence of such an inquiry belies the appealing and compelling nature of catharsis and experimentalism, and innovation and cultural change, associated with these events. Intentionally transformational events have emerged as vehicles, platforms, and showcases for a transformative zeitgeist. But what is altered, reconfigured, and transformed by such events? Independent arts, lifestyle, and music festivals, hybrid countercultural gatherings, “new paradigm” and “change maker” events promote transformation and make possible transitions in status, identity, and history. What is the character of these evental transitions, and what are the variations in aesthetic, structure, content, and population of events with an intentional “transformational” objective? How have individual events evolved unique ethos, principles, and culture? How do events that involve a significant carbon footprint also offer models of ecologically sound lifestyles? If the powerful potential of transformation is assured by the ephemerality and bounded space of a seasonal event, what changes when the event grows beyond these spatio-temporal limits to become a year-round cultural movement? Such are among the inquiries that stimulated the current thematic section of the *Journal of Festive Studies*, which gathered momentum through two scholarly events: a symposium on “Burning Man and Transformational Event Cultures” at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, in November 2018, and an invited roundtable on “The Anthropology of Transformational Events” at the November 2019 Vancouver AAA/CASCA meeting, convened by the Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness. There were over twenty responses to the initial call for papers (circulated in 2018/2019) for this project. Through the selection and editing of full submissions throughout 2020, the list was whittled down to five essays, three with a Burning Man orientation. Beyond introducing the individual essays in this issue, this piece serves as a prologue to a field that has, thus far, not enjoyed any such introduction. This oversight is quite extraordinary given that the phenomenon addressed has its roots in the 1960s and 1970s, and has existed in some form or another in the five decades since, with so-called transformation festivals representing a contemporary composite of an evental phenomenon that has morphed and mutated in transnational contexts over fifty years.

It is, then, with the responsibility of introducing a far-flung field of research that this article was produced. The pandemic quite obviously complicated this production, ringing in a period in which we, as researchers and contributors, were compelled to become distant from those festive domains of our personal becoming and professional labors. Festivities and “social distancing” are grim companions indeed.

This article has two parts. Part 1 will define nomenclature, outline morphology, describe event models and their prototypes, discuss interpretative frameworks, and highlight the complexity of events before offering a specific focus on Burning Man as a researched phenomenon. Part 2

1. Jeet-Kei Leung, "[Transformational Festivals: Jeet Kei Leung at TEDxVancouver 2010](#)," TEDx Talks, August 20, 2011, YouTube video, 87 min.
2. As discussed in Graham St John, "Ephemeropolis: Burning Man, Transformation and Heterotopia," *Journal of Festive Studies* 2, no. 1 (2020): 291–92. See also St John and Botond Vitos, this issue.
3. For this reason, the neologism has a better handle on this event milieu than "transformational event"—although the latter phrase is sometimes used in this article.
4. While this is no place for an exhaustive analysis or list, ritual and ceremonial "transformation" has been addressed by numerous anthropologists who have assigned varying definitions to a concept applicable to festivals. These include, "conflict resolution" (Gluckman), "liminality" (Turner), and performative "context" (Kapferer). See Max Gluckman, *Essays on the Ritual of Social Relations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1975); Victor Turner, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage," in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 93–111; and Bruce Kapferer, "Introduction: Ritual Process and the Transformation of Context," *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Anthropology* 1, no 1 (1979): 3–19.

outlines the issue content, before making observations on future directions. Via an up-to-date critical review of relevant literature, this work offers a substantive point of entry to this field, at the same time providing an introduction to the thematic section.

## Transfeste

Though the events under consideration possess a family resemblance, they are remarkably diverse—among the reasons classificatory efforts are so fraught. While the phrase "transformational festival" was introduced in 2010 by documentary filmmaker Jeet-Kei Leung, for reasons clarified below, that convention presents a problematic solution to classifying events in this field.<sup>1</sup> Recognizing that existing terms (including "festival" and "transformation") are disputed, I made an exhaustive search for more appropriate terminology. A portmanteau of "transformation" and "festival," "transfeste," was adopted—a term with several advantages. Foremost, there is a need for bridging language that recognizes the transformational intent of a broad milieu of festive gatherings (including those now labeled "transformational festivals"). Additionally, there is a need for nomenclature responsive to intracultural disaffection while remaining non-dismissive. That is, terminology is desirable that is responsive to grievances prevalent among organizers and participants across this event milieu for whom "festival" has become maligned as a misleading designation, given this term's close association with mass-produced commercial music and dance events from which event cocreators seek to be distinguished. At the same time, appropriate language will acknowledge the seasonal "festive" roots and character of gatherings. Further, suitable language will be responsive to the way the term "transformational" has attracted critical scrutiny in application to events with a wide spectrum of objectives, motives, and content.<sup>2</sup> A term that is intended to evoke the fraught status of its derivative language, "transfeste" signifies the absence of unequivocal terminology in this field.<sup>3</sup>

As "transfeste" is useful as a noun (and is also plural, as in "transfestives") and an adjective, it holds the potential to enhance clarification of the diversity, ambiance, and milieu of the wide spectrum of events discussed here. Also, it should be clear that while the "trans" in *transfeste* does not specifically connote "transgender" identification, it does not necessarily exclude this connotation. While I feel the term offers a useful bridge across various event prototypes, field ethnography, interviews, and participant observation remain essential for recognizing inter-event variations, and intra-event mutations.

There is a further reason for adopting this neologism. Since transformativity and transition are themes native to festivals, there is a need to distinguish the transformational events under consideration from other festive events with transformative and transitional logics. Festivals have long been observed by anthropologists as contexts for "transformative" performances that shape identity, resolve conflict, and maintain values.<sup>4</sup> Celebrations that mark the transit of seasons are essential for rejuvenating cultural memory, reinforcing tradition, and restoring order. Further, many festive events are intended to sustain national, regional, and ethnic objectives, notably in the face of social crises and economic downturns, where events implement reforms intended to encourage revitalization. As events in regional calendars become instrumental in generating growth and enhancing regional tourism, they can become pivotal to "transformative"

5. See, for instance, Maria Monakhova, "Festivals as a Sustainable Development Tool: Case Study of Teriberka, Russia" (MA thesis, University of Northern Iowa, 2020); Alessandro Testa, "This Is Not a Spectacle! Poetics and Practices of Authenticity, Ritualisation, and Tradition in Revitalised European Festivals," in *Expressions of Religion: Ethnography, Performance and the Senses*, ed. Eugenia Roussou, Clara Saraiva, and István Povedák (Berlin: LIT Verlag Münster, 2019), 201–24.

6. Pau Obrador, Antoni Vives-Riera, and Marcel Pich-Esteve, "The Renewal of Festive Traditions in Mallorca: Ludic Empowerment and Cultural Transgressions," in *Festival Cultures: Mapping New Fields in the Arts and Social Sciences*, ed. Maria Nita and Jeremy Kidwell (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 227–48.

7. That the events in question themselves establish traditions and rituals, or otherwise incorporate traditional ritual forms, frustrates attempts to distinguish festivals that maintain from those that transform the social order. For example, transfestives are sites for marriage ceremonies, funerary rites, birthday parties, and sometimes births (although these in situ rites are typically unconventional).

For a discussion of events defying neat typologies, see Don Handelman, *Models and Mirrors: Towards an Anthropology of Public Events* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 60. For a discussion of the confluence of the ritualesque and carnivalesque at Burning Man, see St John and Vitos, this issue.

8. Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977).

9. This is reflected in the annual Black Rock City Census survey data. The most recent survey (2019) saw 47.7 percent of Burners identifying as

agendas.<sup>5</sup> Other times, events, for example, the *neofestes* of Mallorca, effectively transform conservative regional identities through newly invented traditions.<sup>6</sup> While they contribute to regional development (notably in the field of music and performing arts) and may sometimes attract government aid, and while typically requiring permissions and licenses to achieve and maintain legitimacy, transfestives are marked by their relative independence from, and/or antipathy with, the state (e.g., arts grants and subsidies, law enforcement) and corporate sector (e.g., commercial sponsorship).<sup>7</sup>

The first caveat to keep in mind when creating a classification for public events is that events tend to defy systems of classification. For that reason, no hard and fast rules are intended for what follows. The events under consideration do tend to possess a few primary characteristics that they share with other temporary destination event spaces in the calendar. They are recurrent seasonal phenomena, produced as unique annual (or sometimes biennial) editions. They are typically outdoor encampments, often located in rural regions remote from urban populations. They are, thereby, destinations necessitating travel, sometimes from great distances, and may attract a sizeable population of international visitors. These zones usually feature multiday events, sometimes operating for a week or more. Finally, participants generally dwell in close proximity to others—often strangers—and the natural elements.

Perhaps the most distinctive attribute of transfestivity is a "redressive" status—they are reflexive sites of (counter) cultural experimentalism. In other words, they are creative event spaces that are responsive to hegemonic sociocultural patterns. As conscious exercises in change making, they can be considered "meta-transformational." Comprising hybrid forms that break from traditions in religion and leisure, and often promoted as eventual panaceas in a world of growing uncertainty, the transfestive is a recurrent experiment in the pursuit of alternatives to modern life. These events, then, embody the postmaterialist values of Ronald Inglehart's "silent revolution."<sup>8</sup> Heir to the cultural and political dissent of the 1960s and 1970s, primarily, but not exclusively, the privilege of white middle-class populations, they have inherited the quest for equality, diversity, and individual freedoms characterizing that era. At this point, while I will not attempt an exhaustive list of the redressive cultural movement tendencies that have given shape to these events, two such tendencies stand out.

In the first instance, influenced by the human potential movement and its concomitant bid for self-realization, events in this milieu have borne the imprint of the postmaterialist quest for an evolved consciousness (which is as consonant with the New Age as much as it is with autonomous experiments in self-reliance). Providing yoga, meditation, and other "mindfulness" or "wellness" modalities and "healing" rituals, many gatherings with "transformative" formulae identify as retreat-like destinations intending to ameliorate the fractured conditions of the modern self. Such eventscapes are rich topoi for a growing population identifying as "spiritual but not religious" (SBNR).<sup>9</sup> Eventualizing the departure from faith, and notably from Christianity, these events are platforms for privileging the self (the "inner" or "higher Self," and "intuition") as the ultimate source of authority and responsibility. While eventgoing enthusiasts turn away from institutional religion and monotheistic dogma, the SBNR participate in a monistic religion, radical spiritualities of self-expression, and are otherwise participants in the "religion of no religion" that has its epicenter at the Esalen Institute, Big Sur, California.<sup>10</sup>

"spiritual, but not religious" (and 5.7 percent identifying as "religious"). "2.6: Spirituality," *Black Rock City Census: 2013-2022 Population Analysis*, accessed June 14, 2023. For SBNR, see Lee Gilmore, *Theater in a Crowded Fire: Ritual and Spirituality at the Lee Burning Man Festival* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); and Sarah Pike, "Selling Infinite Selves: Youth Culture and Contemporary Festivals," in *Religion and the Marketplace in the U.S.*, ed. Detlef Junker, Jan Stievermann, and Philip Goff (London: Oxford University Press, 2014), 191–214.

10. For Esalen, see Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

11. Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double*, trans. Mary C. Richard (1958; repr., New York: Grove Press, 1994); Andrew Huggill, *Pataphysics: A Useless Guide* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012); Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1994), trans. from the French by Donald Nicholson-Smith; Hakim Bey, *TAZ: The Temporary Autonomous Zone—Ontological Anarchy and Poetic Terrorism* (New York: Autonomedia, 1991); for Rainbow Family, see Alberto Ruz Buenfil, *Rainbow Nation without Borders: Toward an Ecotopian Millennium* (Rochester, VT: Bear & Co, 1991); and Garrick Beck, *True Stories: Tales from the Generation of a New World Culture* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2017); for the San Francisco Cacophony Society, see Kevin Evans, Carrie Galbraith, and John Law, *Tales of the San Francis-co Cacophony Society* (San Francisco, CA: Last Gasp Publishing, 2013); for the impact of the Cacophonists on Burning Man, see Graham St John and Botond Vitos, "Wurst Storm Rising: The Dadaist Legacy of Burning Man," *Journal of Festive Studies* 3 (2021): 177–99; for "third-space," see Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996); for Massey, see Doreen Massey, *For*

Not disconnected from this broader redressive mood, the second tendency I will mention carries the imprint of surrealist, bohemian, and revolutionary art movements answering to the plight of modernity, in particular the commodification of "art." Protagonists in this tradition seek to hack patterns of consumer behavior, disrupt dominant artist/spectator distinctions, and create spaces of possibility. With influences as diverse as Alfred Jarry's absurdist "pataphysics," Antonin Artaud's "Theatre of Cruelty," Guy Debord's Society of the Spectacle, and Hakim Bey's *Temporary Autonomous Zone*, the result is "fourth wall" breaking, autonomous zones of cocreative theater, collaborative participation, and interactive immediacy. These developments gave shape to groups as diverse as the Rainbow Family and the San Francisco Cacophony Society (the latter exerting influence on Burning Man). The critical-practical attention to "space" is significant here. Alice O'Grady's idea of festival as "relational performance" offers insight on the distinctive character of space in the transfestive milieu. This idea is indebted to various thinkers, including Edward Soja, whose "thirdspace" represents a radically inclusive spatiality positioned as an expression of resistance against the rehearsed and the fixed; and Doreen Massey, whose idea of space as "open, multiple and relational, unfinished and always becoming" was considered a prerequisite for "the possibility of politics." With this in mind, festivals, or certain kinds of festive spaces, are reckoned as frames for, in O'Grady's terms, "the politics of possibility."<sup>11</sup>

These and other tendencies (e.g., communitarian, ecological) have informed the character of transfestives which otherwise feature commonalities in form and content. As for content, they play host to variable shaping influences from a cornucopia of environmentalist, feminist, LGBTQIA+, Indigenous, surrealist, and other social and cultural movements. These interventions field a heterogeneity of practices that break conventions in architecture, diet, sex, drugs, and art. A conflagration of transgressive and progressive praxis is intended to disturb and transcend hegemonic practice. As a result of this profusion, temporary enclaves become dynamic cultural "worlds" or lifestyle centers of discourse and practice recognized as "freak," "DiY," "artisan," "maker," "queer," "feral," or "slow," among other designations.

As for form, transformative event enclaves typically adapt the model of the *rite of passage*. The observation of distinct events through their recurrence over the course of decades reveals a variation in outcomes. For example, the transition rite that is originally adapted to momentous change and even revolutionary ends may lose this impetus through seasonal recurrence (e.g., Glastonbury). On the other hand, events with less politically and more personally charged beginnings may historically gather cultural momentum to become significant cultural movements (e.g., Burning Man).

Socioculturally, the transitional morphology of these events echoes the complexity of *travel* for post-1960s generations (notably millennials). In a climate of authenticity seeking, eventgoers approach the definition of tourists—that is, "spiritual tourists" or "experiential" travelers committed to "existential transformation"—as much as they do *pilgrims*, of the secular-spiritual variety, who seek the "sacred" self and an awakened consciousness. A hybridized quest to resolve existential anxieties and achieve inner wellness and belonging makes for a complex set of possible outcomes for events that are intentionally "transformative," and may be among experiences associated with post-tourism and postpilgrimage. Transfestivity demonstrates a noteworthy circumstance apparent to researchers of tourism, leisure, and spirituality: that the *outer journey*—

Space (London: Sage, 2005), 59; for "relational performance," see Alice O'Grady, "Exploring Radical Openness: A Porous Model for Relational Festival Performance," *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 33, no. 2 (2013): 140.

12. For "spiritual tourists," see Alex Norman, *Spiritual Tourism: Travel and Religious Practice in Western Society* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011); for "existential transformation," see Erik Co-hen, "A Phenomenology of Tourist Experiences," *Sociology* 13, no. 2 (1979): 179–201; and Kesenia Kirillova, Xinran Lehto, and Liping Cai, "Tourism and Existential Transformation: An Empirical Investigation," *Journal of Travel Research* 56, no. 5 (2017): 638–50; for pilgrims, see Justine Digance, "Religious and Secular Pilgrimage: Journeys Redolent with Meaning," in *Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journeys*, ed. Dallen Timothy and Daniel Olsen (London: Routledge, 2006), 52–64; Adrian Ivakhiv, "Nature and Self in New Age Pilgrimage," *Culture and Religion* 4, no. 1 (2003): 93–118; for post-tourism and postpilgrimage, see Zygmunt Baumann, "From Pilgrim to Tourist—or a Short History of Identity," in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 18–36; for the outer/inner journey, see Alun David Morgan, "Journeys into Transformation: Travel to an 'Other' Place as a Vehicle for Transformative Learning," *Journal of Transformative Education* 8, no. 4 (2010): 246–68; for "elective centres," see Erik Cohen, "Pilgrimage and Tourism: Convergence and Divergence," in *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, ed. Alan Morinis (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press: 1992), 47–64; and for "self-actualization," see Abraham H. Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50, no. 4 (1943): 370–96.

13. Michel Maffesoli, *The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society* (French, 1988; London: Sage, 1996).

physical movement—becomes a vehicle for the *inner journey*—psychosocial development. As events become centers for fulfilling advanced needs, they become specialized "elective centers" potentiating "self-actualization."<sup>12</sup>

While events are circumstances enabling the performance and attainment of authentic selfhood—sometimes known as "radical self-expression"—these new, marginal centers of self-fulfillment are, all the same, intensely social. These events, then, contextualize the "deindividualized" empathic sociality of the "neotribe."<sup>13</sup> That these often self-identified "neotribal" gatherings are also privileged sites in which the affluent of European descent borrow a diversity of cultural—notably Indigenous—symbols has made for fraught circumstances leading to charges of "cultural appropriation." For example, neo-colonialist practices like wearing feathered "war bonnets" and other evidence of "playing Indian" at dance music festivals and other events like Burning Man have sparked controversy.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, some events are said to demonstrate the persistence of orientalism.<sup>15</sup> Echoes of the simplistic and romanticized distortions of a predominantly white event populace, these practices effectively ensure the underrepresentation of marginalized peoples. "Neotribalism" is far from straightforward, however, if Panama's Tribal Gathering—an eighteen-day event involving representatives of sixty Indigenous groups alongside non-Indigenous "neotribes"—is any measure. Applying Catherine Bell's "ritualization" thesis to intentionally transformational events, Leonore van den Ende explores the "cultural strategy" of "tribal aestheticization"—a practice that deserves further critical attention.<sup>16</sup>

These events may grow into cultural movements that evolve beyond the time-space framework of the event. Distinct rites, principles, and aesthetics derive from seasonal recurrence. Events attract and grow a "grassroots" population of volunteers (and typically, in time, staff) with a strong group identification. They develop internal merit systems in which actors are rewarded with status, position, and belonging. They respond to adversities, and internal disputes that threaten their survival. Administrative bodies, cooperative societies, and nonprofit organizations are formed to manage their reproduction, complete with distinct roles, structures, and rules. Some organizational bodies—notably, the Burning Man Project—encourage the emergence and multiplication of progeny events in regional and worldwide locations. Events can become nodes in an international sphere that attract circulating networks of artists, performers, and participants. Growth in size and scale precipitates crises, controversies, and debates that scrutinize environmental impact, inclusivity, and objectives. Growth in size and scale also entails obligations to comply with laws, standards, regulations, and insurance. The ensuing patterns of governance are remote from idealist depictions of "autonomy." Thus, while infused with "poetic terrorism," Bey's TAZ—routinely applied to transfestive enclaves—is more a fantastic oversimplification than an accurate description.<sup>17</sup>

Possibly the most compelling trait of the events under consideration is that they are intended to be spaces of liberty. Not only are they sites of freedom, these events facilitate different types of *freedom*. On the one hand, transformative events allow freedom from responsibilities, status, and inhibitions. These are behaviors characteristic of carnivalesque spaces: that is, typically periodic contexts permitting respite from labor and familial (and traditionally, faith) obligations. Within their temporary precincts, participants are licensed to behave unrestricted by the social norms and taboos governing life outside their bounds. At the same time, these events enable freedoms to experiment with alternate lifeways and practices that may persist beyond the return to the

14. For "playing Indian," see Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 1996); for appropriation at events, see Chris Dart, "[Bass Coast Festival Bans First Nations Headdresses](#)," *CBC Music*, July 25, 2014; and for appropriation at Burning Man, see Yelena Filipchuk, Dio Ganhdi and Allegra Lucas, "[Radical Inclusion: Listen Up Before Dressing Up](#)," *Burning Man Journal*, August 22, 2016.

15. See Amanda Lucia, *White Utopias: The Religious Exoticism of Transformational Festivals* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2020), and Lucia in this issue.

16. Leonore van den Ende, "Festival Co-Creation and Transformation: The Case of Tribal Gathering in Panama," in *Festival Cultures: Mapping New Fields in the Arts and Social Sciences*, ed. Maria Nita and Jeremy Kidwell (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 195–226.

17. Bey, TAZ.

18. For problems with "liminoid," see Graham St John, "Victor Turner and Contemporary Cultural Performance: An Introduction," in *Victor Turner and Contemporary Cultural Performance*, ed. Graham St John (New York: Berghahn, 2008), 1–37; and for Berlin, see Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

19. Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), 36.

20. Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960).

21. Arpad Szokolczai, "Liminality and Experience: Structuring Transitory Situations and Transformative Events," *International Political Anthropology* 2, no. 1 (2009): 141–72.

"default" world. In traditional carnivals, as imagined by Mikhail Bakhtin, the world that is turned upside down is righted at carnival's end, order is restored, and liminars return to the default world. The transfestive is a playful site of renewal, but it is also utopic, autonomous, prefigurative, and responsive to growing social, ecological, and political discontent. These potential states are not untypically ritualized within the context of events, where praxis acquired and performed in situ converts to life, status, and identity in the postliminal world. Possessing a conscious intent to transit from the old to new ways of life, these petridish events are complex sites of transformation. They fuse the prefigurative with the recreational and merge the ritualesque with carnivalesque forms.

In its varied forms, then, the transfestive approximates that which Victor Turner late in life identified as "liminoid," that is, a modality of ritual that is creative, potent, and experimental. This is not the place to address the problems associated with this term, but it is useful to recognize that it was vaguely influenced by the "negative" and "positive" liberties to which political philosopher Isaiah Berlin lent attention.<sup>18</sup> Turner's terminology denotes the exploits of typically middle-class postindustrial populations in contexts outside traditional frameworks where individuals practice their "freedom from" religious, family, and workplace "contracts," and their "freedom to" transcend, imagine, and play.<sup>19</sup> As the transformative lifestyle events introduced here illustrate, these modalities are interdependent. Events that play host to the former modality are often dismissed as "escapist" while those that cater to the latter may be cast as "rebellions." Given its multiple stakeholders, interpretations, and antagonists, *freedom* is the single most fraught condition with which the transfestive is associated.

## Transitional Worlds

Introducing examples of events and event cultures illustrative of this freedom dynamic, this issue of the *Journal of Festive Studies* begins to fill a gap in the research literature on transformational events. It demonstrates that, informed by proactive and avant-garde adaptations of Arnold van Gennep's classic rites of passage model, a spectrum of events emergent in the post-1960s and 1970s have become style-of-life worlds and conscious models of living for urban-dwelling, religiously unaffiliated, and predominantly white middle-class patrons.<sup>20</sup> Responsive to contemporary (or "late modern") ecological, humanitarian, and existential crises, these evental prototypes are informed by management practices, aesthetic imagination, ethical frameworks, architectural designs, and media and public relations. As alternative cultural celebrations, dance music festivals, and new spiritual gatherings, these hybrid events combine camping, ecstatic dance, visionary art, innovative science, slow consumerism, esoteric practices, and self-organizing design models. At their most innocuous, they offer avenues of escape for "rootless cosmopolitans" seeking belonging in a world devoid of meaning and purpose. In this way, they become meta-liminal domains in which "now" is extended as long as possible, where the *process of transforming* may become more significant than expected goals or outcomes, where the threshold is occupied by those seeking lifestyles suffused with liminality. At their most ambitious, "new paradigm" events with conscious evolutionary, entheogenic, and eco-millenarian agendas are propagated as vehicles for multispecies survival. In that way, consciously transformative/transitional gatherings are evidently responsive to the "transformational events" of late modern history: notably the Anthropocene.<sup>21</sup>

22. Anthony D'Andrea, *Global Nomads: Techno and New Age as Transnational Countercultures in Ibiza and Goa* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 13–14.

23. D'Andrea, *Global Nomads*; Anthony D'Andrea, "Global Nomads: Techno and New Age as Transnational Countercultures in Ibiza and Goa," in *Rave Culture and Religion*, ed. Graham St John (London: Routledge, 2004), 249.

24. Graham St John, *Global Tribe: Technology, Spirituality and Psytrance* (Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2012).

25. Cohen, "Pilgrimage and Tourism."

26. Gilmore, *Theater in a Crowded Fire*.

27. Graham St John, "Total Solar Eclipse Festivals, Cosmic Pilgrims and Planetary Culture," in *Pop Pagans: Paganism and Popular Music*, ed. Donna Weston and Andy Bennett (Durham, UK: Acumen, 2013), 126–44.

The events considered here, and in this issue, have propagated in the gulfstream of "freak" travelers inhabiting a "global countercultural diaspora." In *Global Nomads*, Anthony D'Andrea surveyed a hypermobile postnational constituency of Osho sannyasins, New Age DJs, raving neonomads, and other "expressive expatriates" who see themselves as part of "a trans-ethnic dispersion of peoples that despise home-centered identities." The identity of this "negative diaspora" is not based on ethnic or national nostalgia, but on "a fellowship of counter-hegemonic practice and lifestyle."<sup>22</sup> While their predecessors may have sought alterity in exoteric and seasonal locales like Ibiza and the former Portuguese colony of Goa, India, these neonomads recovering from the collision of "Techno" and "New Age" subsequently located their "post-tourist" desires within temporary, exotic, and rural environs catering to their techno-spiritual demands. Such festive precincts are identifiable at the intersection of "horizontal" (geospatial) and "vertical" (psychological) "trips."<sup>23</sup> While participants in the freak exodus sought "the end of the world" at seasonal full moon trance dance gatherings on Anjuna beach, Goa, and proximate locations, their successors imported "the end of the world" back into their liberal, late capitalist homelands. They packaged the "Goa state of mind" in "Goa trance" festivals and other encampments of the "psychedelic," "visionary," and "well-being" arts.<sup>24</sup>

While Goa was but one neonomadic beachhead in this development, the transfestive legacy champions participation, as evident in radical expressions of the self and community. With their fuzzy boundaries between performer and audience, and artist and patron, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish consumer from producer in such "cocreative" spaces. As these participatory experiments are suffused with a transitional sensibility, their occupants are not unlike initiates. Given that these events do not simply recreate the past, but incite innovation, they become potent contexts for pioneer neophytes who occupy the interstices between the known and unknown. Occupying an extraordinary eventscape of wonder and novelty, inhabitants are exposed to new knowledge, praxis, and skills that may be adopted in their postevent lives. In language, practice, and exchange, these cocreative worlds tend to be characterized by bricolage and improvisation. Within these laboratory-like domains, novices are licensed to inhabit a mode of discovery.

Because such events typically require travel to sometimes remote locations involving endurance, hardships, and sacrifice, the *novice* is at the same time a *pilgrim*. Event participants behave like travelers who have arrived at the center of their faith, craft, or calling, which, through symbolic gestures, purification rites, and gift exchange, may be reaffirmed. A process of sacralization is notable where, over its operational life, an event destination becomes a center of identity (and even considered "home") for a far-flung diaspora. Such events become transformational centers at the margins for alternative, disenchanting, and questing populations who convert marginal and peripheral sites into "elective centers."<sup>25</sup> While the Black Rock Desert's playa—the site of Black Rock City (Burning Man)—is exemplary, most other sites perform comparable roles.<sup>26</sup> The celebrations at which an eclectic, transnational populace of "eclipse chasers" observes a total solar eclipse provide a unique example.<sup>27</sup> In this development, the celestial event is celebrated in a social event considered "home" even though this cosmic synchronicity is marked in different locations around the globe. Given the assumed revelatory and transitional effect for the self that corresponds to the cosmic transition (i.e., from daylight to umbra and back to daylight) occasioned by the sun's total alignment with the moon, total solar eclipse celebrations can be recognized as the festive acme of the transpersonal, psychedelic, and visionary arts movements.



28. For novice/pilgrim aesthetics, see Dewi Jaimangal-Jones, Annette Pritchard, and Nigel Morgan, "Going the Distance: Locating Journey, Liminality and Rites of Passage in Dance Music Experiences," *Leisure Studies* 29, no. 3 (2010): 253–68; for "superliminality," see Graham St John, "Liminal Being: Electronic Dance Music Cultures, Ritualization and the Case of Psytrance," in *The Sage Handbook of Popular Music*, ed. Andy Bennett and Steve Waksman (London: Sage Publications, 2015), 243–60.
29. Adrian Ivakhiv, *Claiming Sacred Ground: Pilgrims and Politics at Glastonbury and Sedona* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 8.
30. Elizabeth Perry, "[Transformational Festivals: Where Ecstatic Spirit and Sonic Celebration Unite](#)," *Redefine*, June 18, 2013.
31. Jeet-Kei Leung and Akira Chan, [The Bloom: A Journey through Transformational Festivals](#), 2014, documentary webseries, twelve episodes.
32. Ashley Taylor, "The Exploration of Transformational Experiences at Festivals" (MA thesis, University of Lethbridge, 2015).
- Kelci Lyn Mohr, "Dancing through Transformational Music Festivals: Playing with Leisure and Art" (MA thesis, University of Alberta, 2017), 7.
34. Peter Treagan, "Altar States: Spirit Worlds and Transformational Experiences" (MA thesis, California State University, Chico, 2019); Sarah Pike, "Architects of the Now, Gatekeepers of the Past: Transformational Festivals and Other Destinations of 'Spiritual' Americans," in *The Future of Metaphysical Religion in America*, ed. Mark Silk and Christopher White (New York: Springer Link, 2022), 63–88.
35. Andrew Johner, dir., *Electronic Awakening*, Federation of Earth and Keyframe-Entertainment, 2011, film,

From greenfield raves to desert burns to celestial alignments, transfestives embrace the novice and pilgrim. The creative combination of novice/pilgrim aesthetics affords a *transitional* sensibility that is consciously adopted within event programming and design, with contemporary events not unlike superliminal ministates and interstitial republics of transition.<sup>28</sup>

One effect of the ritualization endogenous to these events is that they are not only contexts for affirming affinity with other habitués—that is, as "Burners," "Rainbows," "ConFesters," "Beloveds," et cetera—or for affirming affinity with Earth (where pantheistic performances may give expression to identification with nature religion). As eclipse celebrations demonstrate, events can also occasion the transhumanist expression of extraplanetary consciousness. Such complex sympathies were identified in a study of "Gaian pilgrims" and their harmonic "power spots" in which Adrian Ivakhiv explored an alternative milieu of Earthen and New Age spiritualities, notably at Glastonbury and Sedona. In this "transepistemic cultural arena," eco-spiritual immanentism and off-planetary ascensionism are said to be "two sides of a loosely unified spiritual-cultural movement: one seeks to rekindle the connection with Earth's power directly, while the other looks for wisdom beyond our planet's weakened frame."<sup>29</sup>

### Prototypes

Now that various dimensions and attributes of what I have identified as transfestive events have been discussed, we can move to a discussion of event prototypes and the existing research that addresses them. With seasonal event organizations demonstrating a transformational intent over decades of event management, today's transformational events have inherited hybrid means to augment the freedom dynamics addressed earlier. Those events identifying as "transformational festivals" have proliferated in the new millennium, notably on the North American West Coast, though they are more frequently mounted internationally, and have attracted growing international audiences.<sup>30</sup> Lightning in a Bottle (California), Beloved (Oregon), Symbiosis (California), Shambhala Music Festival (British Columbia), Envision (Costa Rica), Tribal Gathering (Panama), and Boom (Portugal) are among the events named "transformational festivals" by Leung in webseries *The Bloom*.<sup>31</sup> These events serve the purpose of fostering communities dedicated to environmentally conscious living practices, while enabling spaces supportive for transpersonal development.<sup>32</sup> An early bar was set in the study of "transformational festivals" by Kelci Lyn Mohr, who negotiates the multidimensionality of Canadian transformational festivals—Astral Harvest Music & Arts, Shambhala, and Intention, Alberta—in a methodologically innovative approach exploring how these events "nurture life-changing experiences by cultivating a specific ethos and aesthetic."<sup>33</sup> A benchmark event in this tradition, Symbiosis possesses an ethos of sustainable community and "right relationship," notably given the commitments to creating permanent village culture, land stewardship, and festival life year-round, as well as establishing relationships with Indigenous cultures through "cross-pollination" rather than cultural appropriation of their beliefs and practices.<sup>34</sup>

While events in this development are also regarded as "visionary arts" gatherings—with painters like Alex Grey revered in this community—these multisensorial events are equally zones of sonic arts, including notably electronic dance music. The prevalence of electrosonic body arts in these events was documented in the film *Electronic Awakening*.<sup>35</sup> Events early identified as "transformational" are those featuring tents, stages, and enclaves with workshops, lectures, films,

87 min.

36. St John, *Global Tribe*, 167-76.

37. "Inside the Wellness Festival for Millionaires," *VICE*, Fringes episode 1.2, November 27, 2022, YouTube video, 22:30 min.

38. Some researchers within leisure, tourism, and event studies are preoccupied with the subject of the "transformational economy," which is imagined as an emergent sector of the "experience economy." Evolving from its original status as a produced holistic experience complete with product interactivity, customer satisfaction, and brand loyalty, researchers have observed a second-generation "experience economy" where experiences are cocreated by supplier and consumer, and further identifying an "experience economy 3.0" where the meaning-seeking consuming individual is said to adopt a central role in designing experience consumption. See B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre and Every Business a Stage* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999); and Albert Boswijk, Ed Peelen, and Steven Olthof, *Economy of Experiences* (Amsterdam: European Centre for the Experience Economy, 2013).

39. For "free festivals" as a marginal center for hippies, see Sharif Gemie, "The Case for a Free Festival (1969–1974): Hippy Culture and Pop Festivals," in *Festival Cultures: Mapping New Fields in the Arts and Social Sciences*, ed. Maria Nita and Jeremy Kidwell (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 45–63; for "New Age travelers," see Kevin Hetherington, *New Age Travelers: Vanloads of Uproarious Humanity* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2000); for Glastonbury, see George McKay, *Glastonbury: A Very English Fair* (London: Victor Gollancz, 2000); and for Stonehenge, see Andy Worthington, *Stonehenge: Celebration and Subversion* (Loughborough: Alternative Albion, 2004).



and exhibitions designated as "chill spaces." Offering participants respite from the main dance floor, these alternative zones—such as Boom's Liminal Village<sup>36</sup>—became distinctive pedagogical enclaves. While these events attract predominantly white participants, they feature concerted ceremonial efforts—for example, Oregon Eclipse (2017), Rainbow Spirit Festival (formerly Rainbow Serpent Festival, Australia)—to host Indigenous representatives, echoing a broader commitment to reconciliation with First Nations peoples. As typical to event design, ancestral and sci-fi themes converge in "ancient futurist" décor and stage design, or in invented traditions, such as steampunk.

The label "transformational festival" has now circulated long enough to characterize a large range of events, from Oregon Country Fair to Tomorrowland (a large-scale EDM festival in Belgium) to exclusive wellness gatherings like A-Fest, described in a *VICE* report as "an annual super-elite, invite-only festival that promises to radically change your life."<sup>37</sup> The popularization of the phrase and its application to Silicon Valley influencer happenings appears to have emptied the denomination of its original significance. Nowadays, any event tapping into the "transformational economy" might be considered ripe for this prefix, given their status as ostensible contexts for the "experience economy 3.0."<sup>38</sup>

With a complex and contested pedigree, transformational festivals are a composite of multiple event forms and regional traditions. The lineage of transfestive events (including transformational festivals) is intricate and synergistic. Demonstrating their inheritance from multiple lines, the prototypes are diverse. Probably the most prolific, mutant, and fraught strand is that of the "free festival." While it may be futile to attempt to locate the Ur-moment, most commentators report that this product of the 1960s had its chief advent in January 1967 when one hundred thousand hippies gathered for a free psychedelic rock concert in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park named "Gathering of the Tribes for a Human Be-in." Another event has, however, assumed greater notoriety—that is, when fences were torn down during a massive rock concert on Max Yasgur's dairy farm in Bethel, New York State, in August 15–18, 1969. Iconic of the 1960s, the unintentional "free festival," Woodstock Music and Art Fair/Rock Festival, provides stock mythology for countercultural origin stories. Within this festive tradition, "free" implied more than the absence of an admission fee (intentional or not). It referred to the free culture prefigured in autonomous enclaves of foment that in the UK were dubbed "free festivals." In the UK, in the wake of huge free concerts in London's Hyde Park in the late 1960s through the 1970s and into the 1980s, as marginal centers for hippies and "New Age travelers," the early Glastonbury Festival and the Stonehenge Free summer solstice festival were pivotal, themselves nostalgic efforts to revive folk festivals and the medieval fair.<sup>39</sup> Responsive to massive pop festivals such as the Isle of Wight festivals in which the freedoms of eventgoers were constrained according to the chief purpose of the event—that is, providing a spectacle for crowds to witness star musicians perform on a main stage—through the 1970s, events like Phun City, Windsor, Trentishoe festivals, and lesser-known festivals like the Psilocybin Fayre in Llanafan, Wales, were all self-proclaimed instances of "The Free State of Albion."

As scholars like George McKay and others have observed, the cultural history of free festivals is a complex story of subversion, suppression, reform, and collaboration. Shaped by local cultural and political circumstances, subsequent music festivals worldwide have forged a utopian sensibility, the spaces of which are the subject of much attention and contention. Traced through

40. Jelena Gligorijević, "Micronational Spaces: Rethinking Politics in Contemporary Music Festivals," in *Musical Spaces: Place, Performance, and Power*, ed. James Williams and Samuel Horlor (New York: Routledge, 2021), 375–400.

41. Michael Niman, *People of the Rainbow: A Nomadic Utopia* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997).

42. Sarah Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

43. Pike, *Earthly Bodies*, 27.

44. A melange evident in Erik Davis and Kyer Wiltshire, *Tribal Revival: West Coast Festival Culture* (San Francisco: Lovelution Press, 2009); Alan Dearling, *Travelling Daze: Words and Images from the UK's New Travellers and Festivals* (Berwickshire, Scotland: Enabler Publications, 2012); and Leung and Chan, *The Bloom*.

45. With "rave" being a designation used since the 1950s for all-night dance parties.

46. For the "second summer of love," see Jane Bussmann, *Once in a Lifetime: The Crazy Days of Acid House and Afterwards* (London: Virgin, 1998); and for the roots of rave, see Christopher Partridge, "The Spiritual and the Revolutionary: Alternative Spirituality, British Free Festivals, and the Emergence of Rave Culture," *Culture and Religion* 7, no. 1 (2006): 41–60.

47. For rave's ritualization, see Graham St John, ed., *Rave Culture and Religion* (London: Routledge, 2004); Francois Gauthier, "Orpheus and the Underground: Raves and Implicit Religion," *Implicit Religion* 8, no. 3 (2005): 217–65; and Robin Sylvan, *Trance Formation: The Spiritual and Religious Dimensions of Global Rave Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2005); for superliminalization, see St John, "Liminal Being."

the work of geographers Henri Lefebvre, Massey, and Soja, Jelena Gligorijević has, for example, addressed the utopian spatial dimensions of music festivals, notably Exit in Serbia, with its opposition to authoritarian rule and right-wing popularism, as "micronational" spaces, or spaces of "microcitizenship."<sup>40</sup>

Another original and enduring model was founded in the United States in the early 1970s by the Rainbow Family. Since the first festival of "prayer for world peace" in Colorado in 1972, Rainbow Gatherings have been dedicated to cooperativism, healing arts, and world peace.<sup>41</sup> Rainbow Gatherings became an evental platform for alternative spirituality traceable to nineteenth-century Chautauquas and lyceum programs.<sup>42</sup> The path identified as the "Rainbow Road" promised a metaphysical palette, later culminating in transformational festivals. The Rainbow Gathering model has been adopted internationally since the early 1980s (see Katri Ratia's contribution to this issue). In the US, Rainbow impacted contemporary pagan festivals, whose participants forged a model that in the 1980s emerged as popular alternative spiritual destinations. Marking the solstices and equinoxes, at neo-pagan festivals like Pagan Spirit Gathering, "nature" is the "event" in which those gathered become immersed, an immersion that potentiates a transformative experience.<sup>43</sup> What are today called "transformational festivals" are hybrid occasions that facilitate the expression of pagan and gnostic esotericisms found within alternative spiritual networks.

There is considerable traffic between event types.<sup>44</sup> For example, cross-pollination is evident in psytrance, an electronic dance music genre and event culture indebted to Goa trance and its worldwide progeny. This psychedelic festivalization is apparent in Boom (Portugal) and Ozora (Hungary), among a global concatenation of transfestive dance events. The Goa connection is a critical through-point to "transformational festivals." While psytrance events are heir to traveler seasons in Goa (and the full moon gathering on Anjuna beach), they also derive their evental *élan*, or *vibe*, in no small part from the underground rave tradition. Evolving music among other sensory technologies to optimize the dance experience, rave is itself a transfestive prototype which obtained an apotheosis with Acid House in the late 1980s.<sup>45</sup>

The Acid House rave explosion in the UK has been identified as the "second summer of love," the roots of which are traced through the free festival tradition.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, rave also drew from multiple traditions of electronic dance music events, including house, techno, and trance, which had proliferated in event cultures worldwide representing regional adaptations of rave: for example, *orbitals* in the UK, *teknival* across western Europe, *ruta destroy* in Valencia, *mesibot* in Israel, *doof* in Australia, among many other regional variations. These electronic dance music movements have become integral to the transformative zeitgeist of contemporary festivals. Considerable research attention has been devoted to rave's transformative ritualization, and the capacity for altering consciousness via an assemblage of sensory technologies, recognized to facilitate *superliminalization*—the deliberate augmentation of liminal conditions.<sup>47</sup> While a clinical-judicial paradigm has conventionally targeted the prevalence of psychoactive substances (e.g., MDMA, ketamine, psilocybin, and LSD) as evidence of a pathological-criminal crisis, recent studies emphasize their "transformative" role.<sup>48</sup> Given their presumed capacity to "expand consciousness" ("psychedelic") or "awaken the divine within" ("entheogen"), the labeling of psychoactive compounds accessed in these spaces further illustrates their "transformative" potential. Investigating psychedelics/entheogens amid the "culturally seismic" role of the "4Ds"

48. Audrey Redfield and Marie I. Thouin-Savard, "Electronic Dance Music Events as Modern-Day Ritual," *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies* 36, no. 2 (2017): 52–66.

49. For the "4Ds," see Martha Newson, Ragini Khurana, Freya Cazorla, and Valerie van Mulu-kom, "I Get High with a Little Help from My Friends: How Raves Can Invoke Identity Fusion and Lasting Cooperation Via Transformative Experiences," *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (September 24, 2021): 2; and for harm reduction, see Deirdre Ruane, "Harm Reduction or Psychedelic Support? Caring for Drug-Related Crises at Transformational Festivals," in *Weekend Societies: Electronic Dance Music Festivals and Event-Cultures*, ed. Graham St John (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 115–36.

50. See Paul Chambers, "Beyond the Brain: Happening at East Edge," forthcoming in *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 15, no. 1 (2023).

51. David Landis Barnhill, "Conceiving Ecotopia," *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 5, no. 2 (2011): 126–44.

52. Cristiana Pires, Helena Valente, and Maria Carmo Carvalho, "Transformational and Experimental Social Contexts: Tamera Ecovillages and Boom Festival as Analyser," in *The Transformational Wave: Beyond Covid-19*, ed. Paulo Castro Seixas and Nadine Lobner (independently published, 2021), 222.

53. Ibid.

54. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 22–27.

55. Rachel Bowditch, *On the Edge of Utopia: Performance and Ritual at Burning Man* (London: Seagull Books, 2010), 79.

56. Hetherington, *New Age Travellers*; Graham St John, "Alternative Cultural Heterotopia and the Liminaloid

("dance, drums, drugs, and sleep deprivation") in raves, participants make claims for the intense group "fusion" triggered "by awe-inspiring experiences" at these events. Furthermore, safety and integration are encouraged and harm prevented through education, psychological support, and drug testing.<sup>49</sup> The impact on transfestivity of the psychedelic sensibility and aesthetics is significant. An exemplar was the Beyond the Brain event series mounted in the mid-1990s in North-East New South Wales, Australia, as documented by Paul Chambers.<sup>50</sup>

### Transformational Heterotopia

As single events have many roots and are multivalent, simple heuristics, whether critical or idealistic, are inadequate. Portugal's Boom Festival exemplifies this complexity. While arguably emerging as the result of a desire among Goa travelers to festivalize the Goa "state of mind" in Europe, over twenty-five years, Boom grew to assume a much more complex, even schizoid, identity. While the event has been a premier occasion for enthusiasts to enter experimental and "visionary" states of consciousness (contextualized, for example, by its primary dance floor, the Dance Temple), it also makes strong claims toward advancing sustainability through its promotion of low-carbon lifestyles and practices that mitigate climate change (as explicitly tied to its 2022 theme, "The Anthropocene," and in its receipt of "Greener Festival" awards). Said to hold its place in a network of socio-ecological experiments or "ecotopias,"<sup>51</sup> one study recognizes Boom among "living laboratories" whose participants are "active researchers and experimenters in the transition to a more sustainable future."<sup>52</sup> Boom is thought to "envision a society-wide transformation in a way that conciliates nature restoration with life quality, well-being and social justice."<sup>53</sup> But such characterization provides a limited perspective on a phenomenon that may be better served through the language of "heterotopia," which Foucault adopted in an approach to "other" spaces seeking to avoid the romantic pitfalls of "utopia."<sup>54</sup>

It has often been said that free festivals, Rainbow Gatherings, and other events are utopic in intent if not in practice. It has been a common refrain, for example, that Burning Man is a "utopian movement."<sup>55</sup> The complex historical and cultural conditions of events, however, problematize unidimensional views. Given that they gather celebrants with diverse identities, predilections, and expectations, events are plural domains, the meaning and significance of which are disputed by stakeholders. With this view in mind, "heterotopia" aids comprehension of the discordant and cacophonous potency of events.<sup>56</sup> The search for innovative models is taken up in critical event studies where the "event" is conceptualized as "essentially contested."<sup>57</sup> Multiplicity and contestation complicate the transformational character of transfestivity. Given event dissensuality, their ostensible "utopian" (or "dystopian") character needs rethinking. For example, while Burning Man is often declared to have fallen from its utopian origins ("jumped the shark")—a conceit burgeoning in media reports during the 2023 "Raining Man" event when a lockdown was temporarily implemented due to unusual rainfall—such allegations appear grounded in disputed idealism.<sup>58</sup> Responding to the extremes of their historical moment, evental enclaves nurture principles that range from the surrealist to the environmentally sensitive. Their fusions signal a hybrid eventalism interfacing transgression and progressivism, outlawed and proactive agendas, combinations that signify what is sometimes described by scholars as "conscious partying" or "protestival."<sup>59</sup>

There is a paucity of longitudinal research on transfestive events. Studies that could determine

Body: Beyond Turner at ConFest," *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 12, no. 1 (2001): 47–66; St John, "Ephemeralopolis."

57. Ian Lamond and Louise Platt, "Introduction," in *Critical Event Studies: Approaches to Research*, ed. Ian Lamond and Louise Platt (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 1–15.

58. Graham St John, "[Jumping the Shark? The Enigma of Burning Man](#)," *Beyond Burning Man*, Medium, April 22, 2020.

59. For "conscious partying," see Giles Beck and Gordon Lynch, "We Are All One, We Are All Gods': Negotiating Spirituality in the Conscious Partying Movement," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 24 (2009): 339–55; and for "protestival," see Graham St John, "Protestival: Global Days of Action and Carnivalized Politics in the Present," *Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social, Cultural and Political Protest* 7, no. 2 (2008): 167–90.

60. McKay, *Glastonbury*.

61. Christine Griffin, Andrew Bengry-Howell, Sarah Riley, Yvette Morey, and Isabelle Szmigin, "'We Achieve the Impossible': Discourses of Freedom and Escape at Music Festivals and Free Parties," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 18 (2018): 292.

62. As has been conveyed, for example, by representative chroniclers in the UK, the US, and Australia. For respective stories, see Harry Harrison, *Dreaming in Yellow: The Story of DiY Sound System* (London: Velocity Press, 2022); *Cinnamon Twist, Guerillas of Harmony: Communiques from the Dance Underground* (San Francisco: Tribal Donut, 1999); and Peter Strong, "Doofstory: Sydney Park to the Desert," in *FreeNRG: Notes from the Edge of the Dance Floor*, ed. Graham St John (Altona: Common Ground, 2001), 108–35.

63. Chris Anderton, *Music Festivals in the UK: Beyond the Carnavalesque*

historical roots and causes and address leadership, direction, organization, and dissensus in the face of wider sociocultural changes are absent. Some events are founded in critical moments of historical foment and crisis. For example, Australia's ConFest was born in 1976 in the wake of the National Union of Students' Aquarius Festival that transformed the quiet dairy town of Nimbin, New South Wales, into that nation's alternative capital. On another continent and in another era of transition, Germany's Fusion Festival emerged in the revolutionary wake of reunification that reclaimed a Soviet air base at Lärz for the purposes of advanced pleasure. Many enduring events in a seasonal event tradition have evolved into composite assemblages of movements, voices, and causes. While ConFest and Fusion provide good examples, Glastonbury represents a significant case in point.<sup>60</sup>

Congested, multidimensional events pose challenges for researchers seeking to design research projects that recognize the spectrum of shaping influences, diversity in content, community of participants, creative compromises with state and commercial interests, and the range of possible participation outcomes. Given complex constituencies that have grown over decades of event making, the transfestive is contested. Events grow contentious among their publics as they are seen to devolve from grassroots and countercultural origins as participatory (or "cocreative") and avant-garde (or "edgy"), into gated events that are consumed by patrons and which are observed to have unscrupulously monetized freedom, authenticity, and transformation. In one UK study positioning festivals somewhere between "technologies of neoliberal governance" and "a means of coping with neoliberalism," "free party" activists dismiss the contemporary Glastonbury Festival as a simulacra that enables an illusory "freedom."<sup>61</sup> Glastonbury (the town) and its festival have long been battlegrounds for an assortment of liberty advocates, among them traveler sound systems, which internationally and over the decades have become booming fronts of independence and authenticity.<sup>62</sup>

Glastonbury, Lightning in a Bottle, and other enduring annual music festivals are seen by some researchers as examples of the "countercultural carnivalesque."<sup>63</sup> In this view, vestiges of their "transformational" roots are maintained and mythologized, while the events themselves remain highly regulated, surveilled, and subject to licensing laws. At the same time, a dedication to promoting a distinct identity in a marketplace competing for eventgoers results in events committed to branding and re-branding strategies. Festivalscapes in the world of electronica (i.e., "EDM festivals") illustrate these strategies. Rooted in the San Francisco rave underground and today attracting hundreds of thousands to massive, corporate-driven spectacles complete with VIP areas, sponsorship deals, and licensing monopolies, Electric Daisy Carnival exemplifies the trend of commercialization.

Event organizers and communities critically responding to festival commodification and music industry monopolization have undertaken new event initiatives, while others have revised existing models. For example, with its roots in underground raves, operating from 1995 to 2011, the UK's Big Chill was promoted under the banner, "More than a festival, it's a lifestyle." Targeting middle-class and ethnically diverse patrons and billing eclectic music and art, cabaret, gourmet food, and alternative therapy, the event pioneered an emergent and self-identified "boutique" formula. Catering to a discerning audience, subsequent intimate specialist events, like Bearded Theory and Secret Garden Party, were promoted as spaces resistant to commercial exploitation and independent from the concert model. Nevertheless, as Roxy Robinson points out in her

(Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018).

64. Roxy Robinson, *Music Festivals and the Politics of Participation* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2015), 67.

65. Robinson, *Music Festivals*, 87.

66. Itself a complex development. For example, in 2020, under the theme "The Multiverse," Burning Man was officially represented by eight different interactive online worlds. At the same time, live-projected "mini-burns" took place at home locations around the world, and a Man burn was projected from the Black Rock Desert. See the Burning Man "2020 AfterBurn" report, *Burning Man Journal*.

67. William L. Fox, *Playa Works: The Myth of the Big Empty* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2002); and William L. Fox, "Keeping it Strange," in *Playa Dust: Collected Stories from Burning Man*, ed. Samantha Krukowski (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 48–55.

nuanced UK study, *Music Festivals and the Politics of Participation*, these events, while deploying "authenticating discourses," developed uniquely profitable tactics.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, their rhetoric, and their implicit "alternativism," appeared to echo the strategies of commercial rock festivals of the 1980s, which, as Simon Frith averred, were sites for the "reconciliation of rebelliousness and capital."<sup>65</sup> How "transformational festivals" may repeat reconciliations of this kind deserves close scrutiny. Additionally, given the prevalence of luxury or "VIP" camping (or "glamping") options, there is scope for critical studies of intra-event stratification.

## Burning Man

While commonly recognized as the primary prototype for contemporary transformational events, Burning Man is a multifaceted phenomenon. As its storied background and transnational legacy illustrates, Burning Man signifies the enigmatic character of "transformation." As it grew from modest origins into a phenomenon widely labeled the "Burnerverse," its own transformative profile evolved. There are numerous phases and elements to this development, each signifying transitions in magnitude, popularity, and complexity. Among the most significant transitions is that the event migrated from a sandy beach in California (San Francisco's Baker Beach, initiated in 1986) to a dusty, desolate wilderness in Nevada (the Black Rock Desert playa, since 1990). What had commenced as a small-scale summer solstice effigy burn in the mid-1980s had, by the end of the 1990s, evolved into a world-recognized fire-arts gathering with distinct large-scale "burn" rites (notably Burn Night on which the eponymous effigy is incinerated, and, from 2000, the Temple Burn). By the early 2000s, Burning Man had grown from a Labor Day weekend holiday into a week-long settlement, Black Rock City, guided by an ethical system of "10 Principles" and hosting a population of circa thirty thousand (today eighty thousand). After two decades of seasonal burns mounted in Nevada, Burning Man expanded to become the Burning Man Project, a nonprofit which has fostered a large and evolving international network of regional events and inspired prolific civic engagement initiatives, exemplified by Burners Without Borders. In 2016, the Burning Man Project acquired a 3,800-acre property, Fly Ranch, for year-round projects such as land art, smaller community events, and sustainability initiatives. More recently, during the global COVID-19 pandemic, Burning Man went virtual,<sup>66</sup> which coincided with the advent of unofficial Renegade Burns mounted in the Black Rock Desert. These combined circumstances have made for a complex evolving phenomenon, a Burner universe with a conglomeration of recurrent and ongoing elements, with both predictable and uncertain outcomes. This dynamic demands appropriately nuanced research.

In fact, various aspects of this evolving phenomenon have been addressed by researchers and commentators, many identifying as Burners. While the possibility of a complete and total understanding of the transformative architectonic of the Burnerverse is remote, collective observations enhance our awareness of its unique qualities. Spatial and topographical considerations demonstrate that Burning Man is essentially, as conveyed in the works of poet-geographer Bill Fox,<sup>67</sup> transformative. That the Black Rock Desert *playa* is a topography subject to significant seasonal transitions has no small influence on the Burner phenomenon, not only as an ephemeral event, but as a culture and movement. As the *playa* annually cycles from wet to dry, its surface is renewed like a *tabula rasa*, its human visitors occupying a natural "blank canvas," or "Etch A Sketch," unparalleled in scale. Under a wilderness area mandate enforced by the Bureau of Land Management, the *playa*'s human inhabitants are compelled to "Leave No

68. Graham St John, "At Home in the Big Empty: Burning Man and the Playa Sublime," *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 13, no. 3 (2019): 286–313.

69. See Sarah Pike, "No Novenas for the Dead: Ritual Action and Communal Memory at the Temple of Tears," in *Afterburn: Reflections on Burning Man*, ed. Lee Gilmore and Mark Van Proyen (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 174–95; Gilmore, *Theater in a Crowded Fire*; and Bowditch, *On the Edge of Utopia*.

70. For Black Rock City, see Kerry Rohrmeier and Paul F. Starrs, "The Paradoxical Black Rock City: All Cities Are Mad," *Geographical Review* 104, no. 2 (2014): 153–73; for the Burning Man organization, see Katherine K. Chen, *Enabling Creative Chaos: The Organization behind the Burning Man Event* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); and for "traces" in the world, see Neil Shister, *Radical Ritual: How Burning Man Changed the World* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2019) (See also Pike, this issue).

71. See Evans, Galbraith, and Law, *Tales of the San Francisco Cacophony Society*.

72. For Catharsis on the Mall, see Graham St John, "[The Cultural Heroes of Do-ocracy: Burning Man, Catharsis on the Mall and Caps of Liberty](#)," *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies* 15, no. 1 (2019); and for Temple Burn in Londonderry, see Hilary Downey and John F. Sherry Jr., "Ritual Dynamics of a Northern Irish Festivalscape," *Journal of Business Research* 153 (2022): 365–77.

73. Botond Vitos, Graham St John, and François Gauthier, "Burning Man in Europe: Burns, Culture and Transformation," in *Festival Cultures: Mapping New Fields in the Arts and Social Sciences*, ed. Maria Nita and Jeremy Kidwell (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 87–114. See also St John and Vitos, this issue.

Trace," an edict giving shape to a purification ritual complex.<sup>68</sup> At the same time, that this space provides an unparalleled context for large-scale fire performance amplifies the unique ephemeral stature of the experience.

Burning Man's signature fire ritual complex has been addressed by various ethnographers.<sup>69</sup> Others have addressed the role of urban planning in the annual re/formation of Black Rock City, an "ephemeropolis" specifically designed to be unbuilt. The organization of Burning Man was the subject of longitudinal research through the 2000s, notably as it became responsive to a spectrum of adversities that have threatened its survival and shaped its organization. Over its history, Burning Man has evolved from a temporary "leave no trace" event into a movement that desires to "leave traces" in the world.<sup>70</sup> "Leave no trace" itself presents a complex story, given that Burning Man is rooted in illicit surrealist urban stunts associated with the Suicide Club and the San Francisco Cacophony Society in which participants were expected to leave a temporarily inverted and revived place without any prosecutorial traces of their presence.<sup>71</sup>

The history and culture of Burning Man has received growing attention among scholars. There is increased awareness of the proliferation of "burns" and burn-inspired festivalscapes, like Catharsis on the Mall at the US Capital, or the Temple Burn in Londonderry.<sup>72</sup> The Burning Progeny project based at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland (2016–19), was the first effort to study this development in a comprehensive longitudinal fashion.<sup>73</sup> Studies have addressed the role of the principles integral to a proliferating cultural movement, the performance of which recreated Burner culture. Focusing on how Burning Man became a cocreated phenomenon that blurred the boundary between spectacle and participation, research has demonstrated how burns are a unique context for participation, with the blurred boundary between performer and audience, or producer and consumer ("artistic prosumer"), providing inspiration for events further afield.<sup>74</sup>

Researchers have begun to take up the challenge of understanding the emergent and complex character of Burning Man, highlighting, for example, its implications as a city *and* a platform for artistic expression. Providing a case study for how "a fusion of art and pedagogy uniquely facilitates widespread and meaningful social transformation," as one commentator suggests,<sup>75</sup> Black Rock City is a civic-participatory context for socially engaged art (SEA). With its many layers—for example, city, nonprofit, network, spin-off organizations and events, and public art installations—Burning Man is an identifiably multidimensional project that illustrates the internal logic of SEA that successfully foments kin projects in a widening network.<sup>76</sup>

Other recent research addresses the career of Burning Man in the world. Cultural geographer Ian Rowen—a contributor to this issue—understands Burning Man as a "subversive toolbox" for a "reimagined and reconfigured tourism," notably as the Burning Man principles of "Participation" and "Civic Responsibility" are pursued outside the bounds of an event that is enacted by people "burning" 365 days a year. This widening scope of Burning Man and its culture is a circumstance underwritten by the global pandemic. Longitudinal emic research gave Rowen the insight to recognize that Burning Man has effectively transformed *tourists* of transformative events into *participants* in a broader movement. The changing conditions of the pandemic prompted community members to apply technical and organizational skills and collaborations honed through decades of experimentation in the harsh conditions of the Black Rock Desert.<sup>77</sup> For

74. For the “principles, see Caveat Magister, *The Scene That Became Cities: What Burning Man Philosophy Can Teach Us about Building Better Communities* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2019); for context for participation, see Graham St John, “Dramatic Heterotopia: The Participatory Spectacle of Burning Man,” in *Interrupting Globalisation: Heterotopia in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Simon Ferdinand, Irina Souch, and Daan Wesselman (New York: Routledge, 2020), 178–94; for “artistic prosumer,” see Katherine Chen, “Artistic Prosumption: Co-creative Destruction at Burning Man,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 56, no. 4 (2012): 570–95; for events further afield, see Robinson, *Music Festivals*; and Van Den Ende, “Festival Co-Creation and Transformation.”

75. Becky Neil, “Burning Man: Socially Engaged Art Gone Viral” (unpublished document, 2015), 2.

76. The idea derives from the conceptual model of Pablo Helguera, notably in the capacity of Burning Man (as SEA) to promote empowerment, criticality, and sustainability among participants, and with its emphasis “less on the act of protest than on becoming a platform or a network for the participation of others, so that the effects of the project may outlast its ephemeral presentation.” Pablo Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* (Bethesda, MD: Jorge Pinto Books, 2011), 12.

77. Ian Rowen, “The Transformational Festival as a Subversive Toolbox for a Transformed Tourism: Lessons from Burning Man for a COVID-19 World,” *Tourism Geographies* 22 no. 3 (2020): 695–702.

78. “2020 AfterBurn” report.

79. Max Ritts and Karen Bakker, “New Forms: Anthropocene Festivals and Experimental Environmental Governance,” *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 5, no. 1

example, in 2020, Burners Without Borders joined forces with over a dozen decentralized databases to create “the most comprehensive database of PPE needs and offers in the US, connecting people to 2.5 million units.”<sup>78</sup> Such civic engagement initiatives are suggestive of the postfestival career of movements that have evolved from their evental roots, a development deserving further attention.

The Burning Man Project has, in recent years, committed to a “2030 Environmental Sustainability Roadmap,” which ambitiously aims to eliminate all nonsustainable waste streams from events and operations. With such intent, Burning Man resonates with the “Anthropocene Festival,” a label applied to a range of prefigurative experimental hybrid arts-science events modeling novel forms of environmental governance that generate new understandings of materiality and ecological community.<sup>79</sup> While Black Rock City could be identified as a proto event in this category, events of this character are more typically indoor biennales, hackathons, and experimental conferences of digital arts and ecological solutions. These events tend to blur the boundaries between the human and the nonhuman. Examples include Citizens Unconference for the Environment (Hong Kong), Earth Lab (London), Bioneers (San Francisco), and the events discussed by Max Ritts and Karen Bakker (i.e., Climate Symphony and Terra0). Research on emergent transfestive events of this nature arising in response to planetary emergency remains in its infancy.<sup>80</sup>

## Issue Content

This issue section features content illustrative of the transfestive morphology and content discussed above. Including scholars representing anthropology, cultural geography, and studies in religion, and deploying a variety of methodological and conceptual approaches, it includes empirically grounded research that interrogates transformative idealism and focuses on the lived experiences and actual practices, ritual and otherwise, of event participants and organizers. These articles critically explore the paradoxical parameters, internal inconsistencies, and disparate “transformational” agendas of events.

Three of the five articles offered here address Burning Man, its unique event culture, and its worldwide movement. Using conceptual tools like “heterotopia,” “hyper-liminality,” “diaspora,” and “shanzhai,” the authors of two of these articles analyze cultural dramas internal to Nevada’s Black Rock City and its global progeny; the comparative career of the “carnavalesque” and “ritualesque” in regional burns in Denmark and Israel; and a comparison of sanctioned burns and unauthorized commercial festivals in China. The third article explicitly connects issues raised in Black Rock City to other events, such as Beloved, Oregon Eclipse, and Lucidity. It explores the material traces of ephemeral events in a study of the porosity of event cultures. The remaining two articles explore a range of trans-festive events in the United States and Europe, including Wanderlust, Lightning in a Bottle, and Rainbow Gatherings. These articles offer close analyses of the history, material culture, tiered legacy, ritual practices, and spatial sacrality of events. Specifically, these essays address: spatial meaning-making in a global circuit of transformational yoga festivals and the alternative political model of Rainbow Gatherings across Europe expressed through an “object biography” of the Talking Stick.

The events and their cultures included in this edition occur on a spectrum from those that are self-consciously “festivals”—transitory, festive, and bounded in space and time—such as



80. See Lucy Lippard, *Undermining: A Wild Ride through Land Use, Politics, and Art in the Changing West* (New York: The New Press, 2014); Mark A. Cheetham, *Landscape into Eco Art: Articulations of Nature Since the '60s* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018).

Beloved, to event organizations contesting the “festival” label, notably Burning Man, now a year-round movement engaged in civic and artistic initiatives worldwide. This introduction to the “transfeste,” then, offers a fresh approach to festival studies, calling for a critical examination of the context of events and event cultures that are commonly labeled “festivals.” As articles question the continuing relevance of the label “transformational festival” (and implicitly document an ambivalence with terms like “transformation” and “festival”), this research begins to expose the fraught status of existing frameworks in festival and event studies. The acquisition of permanent sites (Burning Man’s Fly Ranch) and the development of eco-villages in connection with Oregon Eclipse/ Global Eclipse are examples of the ways event cultures are transfigured into ongoing spaces outside the confines of the events themselves. In addition, initiatives that developed out of event cultures, such as Burners Without Borders and Lucidity’s permaculture initiatives, suggest some ways in which the cultural values of events are being implemented by participants in the broader society. As the authors in this issue section of the *Journal of Festive Studies* collectively demonstrate, while the various events contest, challenge, and problematize the “transformational festival” paradigm, they nevertheless remain seasonal festive spatial reoccupations with transformative possibilities.

The first essays in this issue section serve to illustrate the complexities of Burning Man as an evental movement. With its meaning, significance, and identity contested and debated by organizers and participants, no singular narrative defines the Burner universe. Building on the idea that the Burnerverse is a heterotopian archipelago, as conveyed by Graham St John and Botond Vitos in the first article, “Burnerverse: The Borderland, Midburn, and the Global Event Culture of Burning Man,” heterogeneity grows more apparent the farther one travels from the center of the Burnerverse—Black Rock City—toward satellite burns and outlier events that are variously positioned vis-a-vis the prototype. Drawing on collaborative, multi-sited longitudinal research, the article addresses the transnational career of this transformative event culture. Through a study of two Burning Man regional events—Midburn (Israel) and the Borderland (Nordic)—and the ways they mimic and mutate, mirror, and contest, the prototype (Black Rock City), this study of event-cultural “hyper-liminality” assists our understanding of the mosaic of transformation within intentionally transformative events. Specific attention to ritualesque and carnivalesque characteristics within and across these events aids clarification of the performative means by which a transformational culture is transmitted, iterated, and transformed.

In further pursuit of the transnational trajectory of Burning Man, Ian Rowen’s contribution explores various manifestations and transformations of Burning Man embodied by different events in China and Taiwan in his article, “The Capitalist Surrealism of Chinese Burning Man.” Rowen’s essay offers a rich discussion of the specificities of the Chinese context and reflects on ways in which Burning Man serves the very same capitalist systems its many proponents criticize. Drawing on his experiences as a Burner artist and regional event representative, Rowen traces the history of Burning Man’s various developments and manifestations in China and Taiwan, including Dragon Burn (China) and Turtle Burn (Taiwan). Rowen uses the notion of “capitalist surrealism” to analyze the ways in which Burning Man might be understood within the complex and multifaceted relationship between the United States and China. Even the “authentic” Burning Man itself, as Rowen shows, had already become immersed in its own romance with global capitalism, especially due to its close relationship with Silicon Valley, despite the important Burning Man principle of “Decommodification.”

Rowen's analysis of the tensions between Burning Man's idealism, especially its 10 Principles, and the actual practices and function of these transformative events in the Chinese and Taiwanese cases is echoed in Sarah Pike's article on similar contradictions involving Burning Man. In "Leaving Traces: Transformative Events and the Porosity of Human and Environment," Pike calls into question the extent to which the widespread motto "Leave No Trace" is actually practiced at Burning Man and other events with similar environmental guidelines. As Pike argues, transformative events may be established as places apart from the outside world, but the boundaries between them are porous and frequently transgressed. Her essay explores some of the lasting material effects experienced in participants' bodies and at event sites. As in other contributions, especially Lucia and Ratia in this issue, Pike explores various mnemonic and physical practices that sacralize event spaces, even when these spaces are virtual, as was the case with Burning Man in 2020.

Amanda Lucia also focuses on spatial sacrality and material culture in her contribution, "Marking Sacred Space: Altars and Yoga Mats in Transformative Events." Drawing on extensive ethnographic research at a wide variety of events, including Bhakti and Shakti Fests, Wanderlust yoga festivals, Lightning in a Bottle, and Burning Man, Lucia explores the process of creating sacred space for self-transformation at these events. Touching on an important theme running through this issue section, she emphasizes that many event participants turn to the past for ancient wisdom (which becomes exoticized in these spaces), at the same time that they look to and envision new futures. Practices that shape and create sacred space at festivals through altars (public ritual space) or yoga mats (personal space) result in a unique material landscape that expresses distinctive religious and spiritual identities, even in more secular festive spaces such as music festivals. Like other contributions to this issue, both Lucia's and Pike's essays suggest new ways in which spirituality is configured within the contexts of transformative events, especially through material culture.

Rounding out this discussion of articles focusing on material culture and sacred space at a range of events, Katri Ratia's contribution focuses on the European manifestations of one of the earliest transfestive prototypes, the Rainbow Gathering. In particular, Ratia investigates a unique ritual artefact and focalizing object essential to the practical functioning and lived experience of Gatherings, the Talking Stick, exploring the object's significance in material, symbolic, and instrumental terms. Through her attention to the Talking Stick and its ritualized place in a horizontal political system, Ratia critically considers the complex power relations at Rainbow Gatherings, as well as the potential these sites have for developing new modes of participatory culture.

### Research Directions

Festivals, gatherings, and other events have become social laboratories, cultural battlegrounds, and consciousness hubs for navigating contemporary crises. As diverse events and their cultures illustrate, "transformation" is a subject that is almost as fraught as that of "freedom." As we continue to face a litany of dire ecological, social, and cultural conditions, and as a spectrum of transformative evental movements continues to emerge in response, studies such as those presented in this issue will continue to grow in number and significance. In such studies, the meaning of "transformation" and "festival" (and "event") will become as much the subject of

debate and inquiry as that of “freedom” itself. Festivals may be a dynamic means for transforming society; their study is also a context for challenging the transformativity they ostensibly precipitate. The contributions to this issue section offer a small sample of the current range of events within the emergent field, sector, and industry. While the content provided is limited, the scope is broad. It is hoped that future studies will develop, explore, and challenge the insights offered here. While the content is weighted toward Burning Man, this reflects the editors’ interests as researchers and mirrors the weight of the Burniverse in the transformative zeitgeist. Burning Man is a reservoir of novelty, an influential “change agent,” and a model prototype. And just as Burning Man is itself prototypical, its study informs research on other transformative events, festivals, and movements.

In the following, approaches, themes, and inquiries of possible interest to the emergent interdisciplinary field of transfestive studies are identified. Much can be learned from appropriately balanced research projects that are autoethnographic, ethical, longitudinal, comparative, and collaborative. With lessons drawn from past and existing projects, business models, event design, organizational framework, mission objectives, and cultural principles ought to be of interest. How do events compare with more traditional festive event forms, including those they actively counter, or from which they depart? How do mission, design, goals, and agendas of events compare with the empirical reality? We will benefit, furthermore, from studies designed to critically address the festivalized rebranding of “transformation” as an exclusive and lavish lifestyle experience (in the same way the rave became rebranded in “EDM” festivals). Such studies will address how transformation is, in a sense, being transformed. Other investigations may give greater attention to the relationship between transformativity and exclusivity. To what extent are innovation, novelty, and transformation the preserve of the privileged? How might practices echo patterns of privilege and opportunity determined by gender, sexuality, race, class, and ability? How does socioeconomic stratification manifest within transfestive precincts and movements?

As this article has outlined, appropriate research design and theory recognizes the complex transformative architectonic of the events under consideration—that is, that they are contested spaces with considerable variation in motives and expectations among participants and stakeholders. In acknowledgement of this complexity, a fruitful line of inquiry could address events as contexts for the interfacing of tourist and pilgrimage vectors. Does the transfestive represent yet another form of transformative tourism? To what extent are event habitués spiritual tourists and/or secular pilgrims? How might these characterizations differ across event types? What are the tourist and “post-tourist” characteristics of the events, including those integrated with local and Indigenous communities (e.g., in the form of creative workshops, heritage tours, billing local musicians and performers, art installations, and architectural design)? In what ways do events mirror and refract ways that tourism can facilitate “engaged contributions” toward others or the environment?<sup>81</sup>

Transformational events possess large communities of loyal volunteers, logistics crews, and networks of departments, each with unique traditions, symbols, and rituals. Not unlike biographies, intimate cultural histories of these communities recognize how events pass through phases, come of age, make mistakes, unite with others, flourish, and expire. Such studies could explore the founder experiences—often transpersonal and life-changing—that shaped the event. Performed longitudinally, grounded studies will understand how these recurrent seasonal events

82. For longitudinal studies so far as Rainbow Gatherings are concerned, see Niman, *People of the Rainbow*.

For Burning Man, see Chen, who has observed how volunteers and staff are encouraged by the BMP to “charmatize the routine” through the expression and mediation of their own stories of Burner-becoming: Katherine Chen, “Charismatizing the Routine: Story-telling for Meaning and Agency in the Burning Man Organization,” *Qualitative Sociology* 35, no. 3 (2012): 311–34.

83. Fabian Holt, “EDM Pop: A Soft Shell Formation in a New Festival Economy,” in *Weekend Societies: Electronic Dance Music Festivals and Event-Cultures*, ed. Graham St John (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 2–43.

84. Sarah Pike, “Do Avatars Weep? Ritual and Sacred Space at Virtual Burning Man,” *Religion* 52, no. 2 (2022): 199–213.

85. Sara Morgado Nunes and Ana Rita Garcia, “Boom Festival: A Study about the Evolution of Local Inhabitants’ Perceptions,” in *Festival and Event Tourism: Building Resilience and Promoting Sustainability*, ed. Anukrati Sharma, Jeetesh Kumar, Bakhodir Turaev, and Priyakrushna Mohanty (Oxfordshire: CABI, 2022).

have shaped the lives of those serving in key positions.<sup>82</sup>

This field will also benefit from critical and comparative studies addressing the impact on events of the internet, new communications technology, smartphone apps, virtualization, virtual reality, and social media. If many transformational events emerged in the same period as the inception of the World Wide Web, and/or pressed the latter into the service of their cause, has the career of those events mirrored the fate of the internet, which was in the mid-1990s optimistically embraced for its inclusivist properties and peer-to-peer (or later Web 2.0) promise? Taking cues from Fabian Holt’s analysis of the “EDM pop” festival (notably Tomorrowland) as a mediatized event, culture industry–focused sociological studies could be designed to usefully address the mediatization, marketing, and massification of transformational festivalscapes.<sup>83</sup> Attention to the virtualization of transformation could lead to useful inquiries addressing the roots and continuing significance of virtual eventalism. For example, with its origins in the 1990s, and held simultaneously in multiple worldwide locations, Earthdance is a global “prayers for peace” event and early adopter of the “cyberdelic” event-synchronizing streaming methods later adopted in the COVID-19 era. Extensive and critical research on virtual events could complement Sarah Pike’s study of the virtualization of Burning Man.<sup>84</sup> Attention to the digital arts—and here one thinks of festivals like Transmediale or Mutek—necessitates recognition of a range of platforms, institutions, and industries whose year-round, transnational, or “glocal,” operations also serve to problematize the ephemerality implicit to the conventional understanding of “festival.” At the same time, such attention assists our interrogation of the standard view of “transformation” thought to derive from a singular temporary “event.”

Further research could potentially expand our understanding of the uniquely participatory character of the events in question. Departing from the view that event participation is primarily a consumer-end experience, nuanced research will address the voluntary work implicit to event production. What are the long-term postpandemic implications of the experimental responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, when—resulting from the implementation of national health and safety protocols—live events were suspended and replaced by live-stream events? Finally, while there have been limited studies of the impact of events on local communities, there is a need for sustained attention to wider social effects.<sup>85</sup> If events are efforts to model change, what is the evidence for their success? How are individual participants impacted, and what are the longer-term local effects of events, for communities in wider regions and in global society? These among many other approaches and inquiries will assist our understanding of transfestive events and their transformative architecture.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article was produced with the assistance of a MSCA postdoctoral fellowship undertaken at the University of Huddersfield and a University of Huddersfield 2021 International Collaboration Fund. I wish to thank my coeditor of this issue section, Sarah Pike, for her excellent insights and her collaboration throughout the production of the issue from its inception so long ago now. Thanks also to our contributors for their perseverance. Immense gratitude is extended to *JFS* editors Aurélie Godet, Isabel Machado, Cora Gaebel, Basia Nowak, and Emily Elliott (along with past editor Ellen Litwicki) for their dedication to the journal and support with this issue. I am also indebted to the anonymous reviewer for valued comments.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderton, Chris. *Music Festivals in the UK: Beyond the Carnavalesque*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018.
- Artaud, Antonin. *The Theater and Its Double*. Translated by Mary C. Richard. 1958. Reprint, New York: Grove Press, 1994.
- Ateljevic, Irena, Pauline Sheldon, and Renata Tomljenovic. *Global Report on the Transformative Power of Tourism*. Madrid: UNWTO, 2016.
- Barnhill, David Landis. "Conceiving Ecotopia." *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 5, no. 2 (2011): 126–44.
- Baumann, Zygmunt. "From Pilgrim to Tourist: Or a Short History of Identity." In *Questions of Cultural Identity*, edited by Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, 18–36. London: Sage Publications, 1996.
- Beck, Garrick. *True Stories: Tales from the Generation of a New World Culture*. Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2017.
- Beck, Giles, and Gordon Lynch. "'We Are All One, We Are All Gods': Negotiating Spirituality in the Conscious Partying Movement." *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 24 (2009): 339–55.
- Berlin, Isaiah. *Four Essays on Liberty*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Bey, Hakim. *TAZ: The Temporary Autonomous Zone—Ontological Anarchy and Poetic Terrorism*. New York: Autonomedia, 1991.
- Boswijk, Albert, Ed Peelen, and Steven Olthof. *Economy of Experiences*. Amsterdam: European Centre for the Experience Economy, 2013.
- Bowditch, Rachel. *On the Edge of Utopia: Performance and Ritual at Burning Man*. London: Seagull Books, 2010.
- Buenfil, Alberto Ruz. *Rainbow Nation without Borders: Toward an Ecotopian Millennium*. Bear & Co., 1991.
- Burning Man. "2020 AfterBurn" report, n.d. *Burning Man Journal*.
- Bussmann, Jane. *Once in a Lifetime: The Crazy Days of Acid House and Afterwards*. London: Virgin, 1998.
- Chambers, Paul. "Beyond the Brain: Happening at East Edge." *Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture* 15, no. 1 (2023, forthcoming).
- Chen, Katherine K. *Enabling Creative Chaos: The Organization behind the Burning Man Event*.

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

———. "Artistic Prosumption: Co-creative Destruction at Burning Man." *American Behavioral Scientist* 56, no. 4 (2012): 570–95.

———. "Charismatizing the Routine: Storytelling for Meaning and Agency in the Burning Man Organization." *Qualitative Sociology* 35, no. 3 (2012): 311–34.

Cheetham, Mark A. *Landscape into Eco Art: Articulations of Nature Since the '60s*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018.

Cohen, Erik. "A Phenomenology of Tourist Experiences." *Sociology* 13, no. 2 (1979): 179–201.

———. "Pilgrimage and Tourism: Convergence and Divergence." In *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, edited by Alan Morinis, 47–64. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992.

D'Andrea, Anthony. "Global Nomads: Techno and New Age as Transnational Countercultures in Ibiza and Goa." In *Rave Culture and Religion*, edited by Graham St John, 236–55. London: Routledge, 2004.

———. *Global Nomads: Techno and New Age as Transnational Countercultures in Ibiza and Goa*. New York: Routledge, 2007.

Dart, Chris. "Bass Coast Festival Bans First Nations Headdresses." *CBC Music*, July 25, 2014.

Davis, Erik, and Kyer Wiltshire. *Tribal Revival: West Coast Festival Culture*. San Francisco: Lovelution Press, 2009.

Dearling, Alan. *Travelling Daze: Words and Images from the UK's New Travellers and Festivals*. Berwickshire, Scotland: Enabler Publications, 2012.

Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*. New York: Zone Books, 1994. Translated from the French by Donald Nicholson-Smith.

Deloria, Philip. *Playing Indian*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996.

Digance, Justine. "Religious and Secular Pilgrimage: Journeys Redolent with Meaning." In *Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journeys*, edited by Dallen Timothy and Daniel Olsen, 52–64. London: Routledge, 2006.

Downey, Hilary, and John F. Sherry Jr. "Ritual Dynamics of a Northern Irish Festivalscape." *Journal of Business Research* 153 (2022): 365–77.

Evans, Kevin, Carrie Galbraith, and John Law. *Tales of the San Francisco Cacophony Society*. San Francisco: Last Gasp Publishing, 2013.

- Filipchuk, Yelena, Dio Ganhdih, and Allegra Lucas. "Radical Inclusion: Listen Up Before Dressing Up." *Burning Man Journal*, August 22, 2016.
- Fox, William L. *Playa Works: The Myth of the Big Empty*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2002.
- . "Keeping it Strange." In *Playa Dust: Collected Stories from Burning Man*, edited by Samantha Krukowski, 48–55. London: Black Dog Publishing, 2014.
- Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces." *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 22–27.
- Gauthier, Francois. "Orpheus and the Underground: Raves and Implicit Religion." *Implicit Religion* 8, no. 3 (2005): 217–65.
- Gemie, Sharif. "The Case for a Free Festival (1969–1974): Hippy Culture and Pop Festivals." In *Festival Cultures: Mapping New Fields in the Arts and Social Sciences*, edited by Maria Nita and Jeremy Kidwell, 45–63. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.
- Gilmore, Lee. *Theater in a Crowded Fire: Ritual and Spirituality at the Burning Man Festival*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.
- Gligorijević, Jelena. "Micronational Spaces: Rethinking Politics in Contemporary Music Festivals." In *Musical Spaces: Place, Performance, and Power*, edited by James Williams and Samuel Horlor, 375–400. New York: Routledge, 2021.
- Gluckman, Max. *Essays on the Ritual of Social Relations*. Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1975.
- Griffin, Christine, Andrew Bengry-Howell, Sarah Riley, Yvette Morey, and Isabelle Szmigin. "'We Achieve the Impossible': Discourses of Freedom and Escape at Music Festivals and Free Parties." *J. Consumer Culture* 18 (2018): 477–96.
- Heelas, Paul. *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996.
- Helguera, Pablo. *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook*. Bethesda, MD: Jorge Pinto Books, 2011.
- Hetherington, Kevin. *New Age Travellers: Vanloads of Uproarious Humanity*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2000.
- Holt, Fabian. "EDM Pop: A Soft Shell Formation in a New Festival Economy." In *Weekend Societies: Electronic Dance Music Festivals and Event-Cultures*, edited by Graham St John, 2–43. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.
- Hugill, Andrew. *'Pataphysics: A Useless Guide*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012.

- Ivakhiv, Adrian. *Claiming Sacred Ground: Pilgrims and Politics at Glastonbury and Sedona*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.
- . "Nature and Self in New Age Pilgrimage." *Culture and Religion* 4, no. 1 (2003): 93–118.
- Inglehart, Ronald. *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977.
- Jaimangal-Jones, Dewi, Annette Pritchard and Nigel Morgan. "Going the Distance: Locating Journey, Liminality and Rites of Passage in Dance Music Experiences." *Leisure Studies* 29, no. 3 (2010): 253–68.
- Johner, Andrew, dir. *Electronic Awakening*. Federation of Earth and Keyframe-Entertainment, 2011. Film, 87 min.
- Kapferer, Bruce. "Introduction: Ritual Process and the Transformation of Context." *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Anthropology* 1, no. 1 (1979): 3–19.
- Kirillova, Kesenia, Xinran Lehto, and Liping Cai. "Tourism and Existential Transformation: An Empirical Investigation." *Journal of Travel Research* 56, no. 5 (2017): 638–50.
- Kripal, Jeffrey J. *Esalen: America and the Religion of No Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- Lamond, Ian, and Louise Platt. "Introduction." In *Critical Event Studies: Approaches to Research*, edited by Ian Lamond and Louise Platt, 1–15. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- Leung, Jeet-Kei. "Transformational Festivals: Jeet Kei Leung at TEDxVancouver 2010." TEDx Talks, August 20, 2011. YouTube video, 23:41.
- Leung, Jeet-Kei, and Akira Chan. *The Bloom: A Journey through Transformational Festivals*. Documentary webseries. Twelve episodes. 2014.
- Lippard, Lucy. *Undermining: A Wild Ride through Land Use, Politics, and Art in the Changing West*. New York: The New Press, 2014.
- Lucia, Amanda. *White Utopias: The Religious Exoticism of Transformational Festivals*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2020.
- MacDonald, Michael B. *Playing for Change: Music Festivals as Community Learning and Development*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2016.
- Maffesoli Michel. *The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society*. London: Sage, 1996. First published in French in 1988.
- Magister, Caveat. *The Scene That Became Cities: What Burning Man Philosophy Can Teach Us*



*about Building Better Communities*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2019.

Maslow, Abraham H. "A Theory of Human Motivation." *Psychological Review* 50, no. 4 (1943): 370–96.

Massey, Doreen. *For Space*. London: Sage, 2005.

McKay, George. *Glastonbury: A Very English Fair*. London: Victor Gollancz, 2000.

Mohr, Kelci Lyn. "Dancing through Transformational Music Festivals: Playing with Leisure and Art." MA thesis, University of Alberta, 2017.

Monakhova, Maria. "Festivals as a Sustainable Development Tool: Case Study of Teriberka, Russia." MA thesis, University of Northern Iowa, 2020.

Morgan, Alun David. "Journeys into Transformation: Travel to an 'Other' Place as a Vehicle for Transformative Learning." *Journal of Transformative Education* 8, no. 4 (2010): 246–68.

Neil, Becky. "Burning Man: Socially Engaged Art Gone Viral." Unpublished document, 2015.

Newson, Martha, Ragini Khurana, Freya Cazorla, and Valerie van Mulukom. "'I Get High with a Little Help from My Friends': How Raves Can Invoke Identity Fusion and Lasting Cooperation Via Transformative Experiences." *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (September 24, 2021).

Niman, Michael. *People of the Rainbow: A Nomadic Utopia*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997.

Norman, Alex. *Spiritual Tourism: Travel and Religious Practice in Western Society*. London: Bloomsbury, 2011.

Nunes, Sara Morgado, and Ana Rita Garcia. "Boom Festival: A Study about the Evolution of Local Inhabitants' Perceptions." In *Festival and Event Tourism: Building Resilience and Promoting Sustainability*, edited by Anukrati Sharma, Jeetesh Kumar, Bakhodir Turaev, and Priyakrushna Mohanty. Oxfordshire: CABI, 2022.

Obrador, Pau, Antoni Vives-Riera, and Marcel Pich-Esteve. "The Renewal of Festive Traditions in Mallorca: Ludic Empowerment and Cultural Transgressions." In *Festival Cultures: Mapping New Fields in the Arts and Social Sciences*, edited by Maria Nita and Jeremy Kidwell, 227–48. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.

O'Grady, Alice. "Exploring Radical Openness: A Porous Model for Relational Festival Performance." *Studies in Theatre and Performance* 33, no. 2 (2013): 133–51.

Partridge, Christopher. "The Spiritual and the Revolutionary: Alternative Spirituality, British Free Festivals, and the Emergence of Rave Culture." *Culture and Religion* 7, no. 1 (2006): 41–60.

- Perry, Elizabeth. "Transformational Festivals: Where Ecstatic Spirit and Sonic Celebration Unite." *Redefine*, June 18, 2013.
- Pike, Sarah. *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
- . "Desert Goddesses and Apocalyptic Art: Making Sacred Space at the Burning Man Festival." In *God in the Details: American Religion in Popular Culture*, edited by Eric Mazur and Katherine G. McCarthy, 155–76. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- . *New Age and Neopagan Religions in America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- . "No Novenas for the Dead: Ritual Action and Communal Memory at the Temple of Tears." In *Afterburn: Reflections on Burning Man*, edited by Lee Gilmore and Mark Van Proyen, 174–95. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005.
- . "Selling Infinite Selves: Youth Culture and Contemporary Festivals." In *Religion and the Marketplace in the U.S.*, edited by Detlef Junker, Jan Stievermann, and Philip Goff, 191–214. London: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- . "Architects of the Now, Gatekeepers of the Past: Transformational Festivals and Other Destinations of 'Spiritual' Americans." In *The Future of Metaphysical Religion in America*, edited by Mark Silk and Christopher White, 63–88. New York: Springer Link, 2022.
- . "Do Avatars Weep? Ritual and Sacred Space at Virtual Burning Man." *Religion* 52, no. 2 (2022): 199–213.
- Pine, B. Joseph, II, and James H. Gilmore. *The Experience Economy: Work Is Theatre and Every Business a Stage*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999.
- Pires, Cristiana, Helena Valente, and Maria Carmo Carvalho. "Transformational and Experimental Social Contexts: Tamera Ecovillages and Boom Festival as Analyser." In *The Transformational Wave: Beyond Covid-19*, edited by Paulo Castro Seixas and Nadine Lobner, 220–40. Independently published, 2021.
- Redfield, Audrey, and Marie I. Thouin-Savard. "Electronic Dance Music Events as Modern-Day Ritual." *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies* 36, no. 2 (2017): 52–66.
- Ritts, Max, and Karen Bakker. "New Forms: Anthropocene Festivals and Experimental Environmental Governance." *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space* 5, no. 1 (2019): 125–45.
- Robinson, Roxy. *Music Festivals and the Politics of Participation*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2015.
- Rohrmeier, Kerry, and Paul F. Starrs. "The Paradoxical Black Rock City: All Cities Are Mad."

*Geographical Review* 104, no. 2 (2014): 153–73.

Rowen, Ian. "The Transformational Festival as a Subversive Toolbox for a Transformed Tourism: Lessons from Burning Man for a COVID-19 World." *Tourism Geographies* 22 no. 3 (2020): 695–702.

Ruane, Deirdre. "Harm Reduction or Psychedelic Support? Caring for Drug-Related Crises at Transformational Festivals." In *Weekend Societies: Electronic Dance Music Festivals and Event-Cultures*, edited by Graham St John, 115–36. London: Bloomsbury, 2017.

Shister, Neil. *Radical Ritual: How Burning Man Changed the World*. Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2019.

Soja, Edward. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996.

St John, Graham. "Alternative Cultural Heterotopia and the Liminoid Body: Beyond Turner at ConFest." *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 12, no. 1 (2001): 47–66.

———. ed. *Rave Culture and Religion*. London: Routledge, 2004.

———. "Victor Turner and Contemporary Cultural Performance: An Introduction." In *Victor Turner and Contemporary Cultural Performance*, edited by Graham St John, 1–37. New York: Berghahn, 2008.

———. "Protestival: Global Days of Action and Carnivalized Politics in the Present." *Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social, Cultural and Political Protest* 7, no. 2 (2008): 167–90.

———. *Global Tribe: Technology, Spirituality and Psytrance*. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2012.

———. "Total Solar Eclipse Festivals, Cosmic Pilgrims and Planetary Culture." In *Pop Pagans: Paganism and Popular Music*, edited by Donna Weston and Andy Bennett, 126–44. Durham, UK: Acumen, 2013.

———. "Liminal Being: Electronic Dance Music Cultures, Ritualization and the Case of Psytrance." In *The Sage Handbook of Popular Music*, edited by Andy Bennett and Steve Waksman, 243–60. London: Sage Publications, 2015.

———. "At Home in the Big Empty: Burning Man and the Playa Sublime." *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture* 13, no. 3 (2019): 286–313.

———. "The Cultural Heroes of Do-ocracy: Burning Man, Catharsis on the Mall and Caps of Liberty." *Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies* 15, no. 1 (2019).

———. "Ephemeropolis: Burning Man, Transformation and Heterotopia." *Journal of Festive Studies* 2, no. 1 (2020): 289–322.

- . "Dramatic Heterotopia: The Participatory Spectacle of Burning Man." In *Interrupting Globalisation: Heterotopia in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Simon Ferdinand, Irina Souch, and Daan Wesselman, 178–94. New York: Routledge, 2020.
- . "Jumping the Shark? The Enigma of Burning Man." *Beyond Burning Man*, Medium, April 22, 2020.
- St John, Graham, and Botond Vitos. "Wurst Storm Rising: The Dadaist Legacy of Burning Man." *Journal of Festive Studies* 3 (2021): 177–99.
- Strong, Peter. "Doofstory: Sydney Park to the Desert." In *FreeNRG: Notes from the Edge of the Dance Floor*, edited by Graham St John, 108–35. Altona, Germany: Common Ground, 2001.
- Sylvan, Robin. *Trance Formation: The Spiritual and Religious Dimensions of Global Rave Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Szakolczai, Arpad. "Liminality and Experience: Structuring Transitory Situations and Transformative Events." *International Political Anthropology* 2, no. 1 (2009): 141–72.
- Taylor, Ashley. "The Exploration of Transformational Experiences at Festivals." MA thesis, University of Lethbridge, 2015.
- Testa, Alessandro. "This Is Not a Spectacle! Poetics and Practices of Authenticity, Ritualisation, and Tradition in Revitalised European Festivals." In *Expressions of Religion: Ethnography, Performance and the Senses*, edited by Eugenia Roussou, Clara Saraiva, and István Povedák, 201–24. Berlin: LIT Verlag Münster, 2019.
- Treagan, Peter. "Altar States: Spirit Worlds and Transformational Experiences." MA thesis, California State University, Chico, 2019.
- Turner, Victor. "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites de Passage." In *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*, by Victor Turner, 93–111. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967.
- . *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*. New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982.
- Twist, Cinnamon. *Guerillas of Harmony: Communiques from the Dance Underground*. San Francisco: Tribal Donut, 1999.
- van den Ende, Leonore. "Festival Co-Creation and Transformation: The Case of Tribal Gathering in Panama." In *Festival Cultures: Mapping New Fields in the Arts and Social Sciences*, edited by Maria Nita and Jeremy Kidwell, 195–226. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.
- van Gennep, Arnold. *The Rites of Passage*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960.

Vitos, Botond, Graham St John, and François Gauthier. "Burning Man in Europe: Burns, Culture and Transformation." In *Festival Cultures: Mapping New Fields in the Arts and Social Sciences*, edited by Maria Nita and Jeremy Kidwell, 87–114. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.

Worthington, Andy. *Stonehenge: Celebration and Subversion*. Loughborough, UK: Alternative Albion, 2004.

## AUTHOR BIO

**Graham St John** is an anthropologist and cultural historian specializing in transformational events, movements, and figures. He is author of the forthcoming biography *Terence McKenna: The Strange Attractor* (MIT Press) and has authored/edited several books, including *Global Tribe: Technology, Spirituality and Psytrance* (Equinox, 2012), *Weekend Societies: Electronic Dance Music Event-Cultures* (Bloomsbury, 2017), and *Victor Turner and Contemporary Cultural Performance* (Berghahn, 2008). He is Marie Curie Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Music and Design Arts at the University of Huddersfield, United Kingdom, and is founding executive editor of [Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture](https://www.dancecult.com/).

## OPEN ACCESS

© 2023 by the author. Licensee [H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online](https://www.h-net.org/). This review is an open access review distributed under the terms and conditions of the **Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0** license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>)

## HOW TO CITE

St John, Graham. "Transfeste Horizons: An Introduction." *Journal of Festive Studies* 5 (2023): 11–40. <https://doi.org/10.33823/jfs.2023.5.1.187>.

**The Journal of Festive Studies** (ISSN 2641–9939) is a peer-reviewed open access journal from H-Celebration, a network of [H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online](https://www.h-net.org/), and is the inaugural journal published through the [H-Net Journals](https://www.h-net.org/journals) initiative. It can be found online at <https://journals.h-net.org/jfs>.