Transformational Festivals and the Enchantment Economy: Performance and Race in Neoliberal Times

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my parents Susan and Bill, my wife Sarah, and to the memory of my grandfather Norman Feuer—all educators who have inspired and encouraged me.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the phenomenal global growth of music festival culture over the last two decades, with particular emphasis on "Transformational Festivals," a genre of participatory, for-profit event influenced by New Age ideology and aesthetics. I use ethnographic examination of these festivals in the United States and Costa Rica as a basis for understanding the role that participatory culture and event economies play in territorialization and racialization. I historicize this analysis as a component of liberal and neoliberal culture by examining the lineage of repertoires and event structures in US temporary outdoor communities, which utilized the natural landscape as a basis for creating a White-dominated participatory culture. These communities were crucial to furthering a settler colonial project by creating deeply affective forms of social connectivity among White liberals, while also iteratively and imaginatively overwriting the landscape's history of conquest so as to render native claims to colonized land pliable and, ultimately, dismissible.

Turning to the aesthetics of contemporary festival culture, I trouble the scholarly tendency to examine the festival event as a social interstice that exists "outside" of quotidian time and space. I build a concept of "enchanting performance" that allows the production of event space, and the performance of idiosyncratic festival repertoires to appear as activities self-consciously connected to political and social commitments. This offers an alternative to structural interpretations of festivals as "counter-spaces," allowing us to consider the complicated role such events play in ongoing movements for social change—especially those that pertain to race. I then outline how festival aesthetics tie in to a wider "enchantment economy" that operates at local and transnational levels. With an examination of the Harmony Park Music Garden in Minnesota, I articulate how struggles over symbolic and material control of the festival space create a fraught politics of Whiteness that manifest through claims of autochtony vis-à-vis the festival grounds. I then examine Envision Festival in Costa Rica to discuss the phenomenon of "Destination Festivals," with attentiveness to transnational symbolic and material exchange. I outline how Envision utilizes an erotics of the Other to capitalize on the libidinal economy that attends festivalgoing in order to generate identity capital for White tourists. I also discuss the economic and social consequences of this culture mining, which offer up heritage as an object of mass consumption in the service of White identity formation.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2012 I traveled with my brother to Logan, Ohio to attend Rootwire, a 3,000-person music festival organized by Papadosio, a band that fused electronic dance music (henceforth EDM) production, jam band improvisation, and "conscious"[1] lyricism into a style they call "space rock." The event took place on a sprawling piece of property in the Ohio foothills called Kaeppner's Woods, a remarkably different setting than the more massive festivals I had previously attended. This was not a "corporate festival," the pejorative sometimes used to describe mega-events like Bonnaroo (Tennessee), Coachella (California), or Electric Daisy Carnival (Nevada) organized by well-funded production companies, which book big-name pop music headliners, attract immense crowds, and build predictable package entertainment experiences. Rootwire 2K12 was put on by a local band, and expressed its identity in opposition to the "pitfalls of today's modern music festivals, which are funded by corporations, and designed solely for profit." It was advertised as "an environment designed […] to inspire and enlighten, created entirely by those in attendance," and it promised, in addition to music, "visual and performance art of the nation's greatest visionary masters," and attractions like an art gallery, installations, guided meditations, yoga and ceremonies, forums and live speakers, film viewings, woodland lighting, wooded camping, workshops, lessons, "and much, more more."[2] Differences between Rootwire and the larger festivals I had attended were stark from the outset. Instead of participants camping in vast parking lot plots laid out

[1] "Conscious" here indicates a sense of political conscientiousness that tracks along the New Age trope of "changing one's consciousness" as a first step towards wider social change. "Conscious" music is a sonically and racially diverse field that tracks especially across folk, hip-hop, jam band, and electronic communities—the music of Rootwire was predominantly made up by the latter three groups.

[2] N.a., "Rootwire 2012: Papadosio, Ott, Random Rab, Dopapod & more", *JamBase*, 11 Apr 2012, accessed 25 Apr 2019, https://www.jambase.com/article/rootwire-2012-papadosio-ott-random-rab-dopapod-more.

with utilitarian efficiency, at Rootwire participants set up their tents in the forest, stretching hammocks across tree trunks, swinging LED lights from branches, arranging their tents into village-like clusters with a fire pit at the center; the campgrounds felt architecturally coherent and, especially at night, *vibrant* as participant-hung lights and decorations lit up the land. There were seemingly endless pathways—some leading to the main music stages, some leading deep into the woods—which provided opportunities for flaneurs to wander and take it all in.

Late on the first evening, I awoke from a heavy slumber and hiked towards a bank of port-a-potties. The event headliners had ended several hours earlier, and had featured a familiar scene of throngs of young people collapsing together into collective breakdowns with each heavy bass drop. So when I heard a faint beat coming from the woods, I took a roundabout path back to my tent to investigate. I slowly moved towards a purple glow where the sound was coming from. Wedged between the treeline, a covey of tents, and a rainbow-colored geodesic dome (an interactive art installation created as a social space for the event), a group of six people sat in front of a wooden platform raised just six inches off the ground. A woman was kneeling on the ramshackle stage, uplit by bright purple LED lights, while an otherworldly psychedelic beat combining an electronic drum machine and synthesized sitar strumming played behind her. She was not exactly singing, and not exactly rapping, but was rhythmically chanting poetic verses—either writing that she had memorized, or which she was improvising. She presented as racially White, but was adorned in jewelry and flowy “harem pants,” which reminded me of exotic depictions of classical Persia; she was also balancing a brass bowl atop her head, perhaps an homage to bowl dances that are part of cultures in West Africa and Central and

Southern Asia. Of course, at the time, I did not experience her appearance as a complex assemblage of specific cultural practices, but rather, as a single performance of dislocation—a White woman in Ohio conjuring a composite of the exotic Other, but doing so while displaying very real musical and physical skillsets that demonstrated exacting artistic commitments.

I only watched her for about ten minutes before lumbering back to my tent, but this surreptitious performance marked a palpable shift in my understanding of music festivals and the myriad community practices and artistic forms they bring together. It was characterized by the incomprehension of an outsider—what drove this woman to dress and perform in this way? Why was such a skillful performance enacted as a semi-private show for a tiny audience in the middle of the night? What kind of *work* was it doing for the event, and how did it intersect with the visual art, installations, and other modes of spatial production that accompanied familiar concert stagings? Why, as a theatre person, did this nocturnal paratheatrical seem so familiar and yet so foreign—something that appeared to logically intersect with my field (it was, after all, a staging), but which my existing analytical tools did not feel quite adequate to describe? What kinds of cultural and economic exigencies allowed this moment to occur, and what role was race playing in all of it?

Rootwire was my first taste of the "Transformational Festival" genre, a subset of the music festival industry that has exploded in popularity over the last two decades. Transformational Festivals are a distinct type of for-profit event that differ markedly from large-scale music festivals that dominate media coverage. They are events that do not merely purvey musical acts, but articulate transitive immersive worlds that get actualized

by the co-participation of event attendees. They appear not as sites of leisurely consumption, but as purposeful gatherings that create pathways towards instituting profound life changes and forms of social consciousness for attendees—a consciousness framed through psychedelic and New Age ideals based on flexible modes of spirituality and the divinity of nature. And they are predicated on the notion that artistic practice is a universally accessible, democratic, and overwhelmingly positive means of approaching these ideals.

Transformational Festivals are a subset of "festival culture" a formation comprised of hundreds of multi-day outdoor music and camping events, and the millions of people who attend them. Music festivals have not only become trendsetting components of the culture industry, they are also the loci of various subcultural formations; today, department stores feature entire sections devoted to "festival fashion," and the moniker of "festie" has arisen to describe those whose lives are organized around constantly attending different events. The expansion of the festival industry from a narrowly controlled group of mega-events primarily to a more expansive ecosystem of niche, locally variant "weekend societies"[3] has instigated a flurry of academic work to assess its role and impact on regional, national, and global levels, including the rise of "festival studies" as an academic subfield within sociology, anthropology, tourism studies, and management studies.[4]

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[3] Graham St. John Ed., "Weekend Societies: Electronic Dance Music Festivals and Event Cultures," *London and New York: Bloomsbury* (2018).

[4] See, for example, from the perspective of management studies Donald Getz's article "The Nature and Scope of Festival Studies", *International Journal of Event Management Research*, 5.1 (2010), pp. 1-47; from anthropology and the broader humanities research from *Dancecult: The Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture*; and from the standpoint of policy Emma Webster and George McKay, "From Glyndebourne to Glastonbury: The Impact of British Music Festivals", *Arts and Humanities Research Council* (2010).

These analyses have legitimized music festivals as domains of culture and creative practice, but they have also tended to fall into a troubling binary identified by James English, Liana Giorgi, and Monica Sassatelli: some scholars, particularly those who position themselves as cultural insiders, optimistically emphasize the potential of festivals as sites of debate, participation, and civic engagement, with the potential to produce critical publics capable of "realizing a discourse about public good(s)";[5] others more pessimistically emphasize the emplacement of events within existing social structures, pointing to them as "means of drawing and reproducing distinctions within societies," including race, gender, sexuality, and nationality.[6] In other words, festivals tend to either be seen as sites of profound political potential, or as cynical capitalist exploits that re-entrench social divisions.

While the increased scrutiny of festivalgoing indicates an important shift towards taking seriously how emergent forms of popular culture participate in national and transnational flows of people and capital, images and gestures, rituals and repertoires, scholars have found it difficult to reconcile the internal logics of particular events with their accounts of the ways those events remain attached and responsive to quotidian society. Tourism scholars David Picard and Mike Robinson demonstrate how a binaristic inside/outside approach to festivals occludes the important ways that the event industry ideologically and economically shapes a globalized present; they argue that we need to

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[5] This notion of the festival as a circumscribed public sphere stems from an optimistic reading of Habermas in particular, but this idea of a privileged communicative territory existing outside of quotidian life also animates the theory of Victor Turner and Mikhail Bakhtin.

[6] Examples of both perspectives appear in Andy Bennett, Jodie Taylor, and Ian Woodward (eds.), *The Festivalization of Culture*, London and New York: Routledge (2016 [Ashgate 2014]). Liana Giorgi and Monica Sassatelli, "Introduction", *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*, Eds. Liana Giorgi, Monica Sassatelli, and Gerard Delanty, London and New York: Routledge (2011); James English, "Festivals and the Geography of Culture: African Cinema in the 'world space' of its Public", *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere* (2011).

avoid discussing festivals "with an emphasis on closed spaces, fixed times, indigenous [read: "local"] social actors, internal regimes and symbolic contexts, and bounded rituals," and instead "position festivals in a context that is fluid, open to different scopes of (transnational) society and cultural vectors, and that resonates with the realities of ongoing change."[7]

This dissertation examines Transformational Festivals and their sudden rise to popularity to address two problems: the first is a question of how to think about the role played by outdoor gatherings in the historical and contemporary construction of territorializing US national, settler colonial identity, and the projection of US cultural power abroad. This requires producing critical tools that allow us to visualize the tensive relationship between the internal theatrical logic of specific event communities, and the cultural operations these communities enact within local and global material flows. The second problem has to do with our understanding of the role that race plays in festival culture. The transition from an industry dominated by the concert model (premised on witnessing musical acts) to a participatory model (premised on exploring and co-producing unique event-worlds) often involves theatrical citations of bodily and cultural difference to produce for participants a sense of dislocation from modern daily life. Festivals profit, in part, by appealing to countercultural ideals and critical sensibilities; they create elaborate environments that perform a radical alternative to the everyday (the "Default World" as some festies call it), which usually gets coded as White Western consumer capitalism. Consequently, these alternatives reach for aesthetics that rely on

[7] David Picard and Mike Robinson, *Festivals, Tourism, and Social Change: Remaking Worlds*, Bistol, UK: Channel View Publications (2006), 4-5.

grammars of racial otherness in order to provisionally mark a space that exists "outside" of this quotidian context.

But the very concept of counterculture—which relies on a binary between a perceived mainstream and a radical counterpart that tries to fly from that system's contradictions—has cachet in liberal societies that value individuality and personal freedom; consequently, event producers can parlay a festival's countercultural mystique into an effective business model. The "counter" in counterculture ostensibly marks a rejection of the wider social order, but this rejection only occurs across a narrowly defined set of axes, which are specific to each localized event community and its sociopolitical values. Gestures that appear countercultural for one festival community—say, the much-publicized barter economy of Burning Man (Nevada) in which on-site financial transactions are barred—may be deemed unnecessary, or even an example of "yuppification" to another.[8] As Robert Asen points out, relying on the notion of the "counter" reductively flattens the terms of discussion to those of a "putatively undifferentiated bourgeois public [and] its corollary counterpublic." He argues that, rather than replicate this oversimplified sense of oppositionality, scholars should "seek the counter" by examining "alternative discourse practices and norms" to outline *how* participants articulate their recognition of exclusion from wider public spheres.[9] A singular "counterculture" is a misnomer for what is, in reality, a dispersed network of locally variant subcultures whose unique aesthetics and social commitments perform

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[8] See Keith A. Spencer, "The Data Behind the Gentrification of Burning Man", *Salon*, 2 Sep 2017, accessed 7 Apr 2019, https://www.salon.com/2017/09/02/the-data-behind-the-gentrification-of-burning-man/.

[9] Robert Asen, "Seeking the 'Counter' in Counterpublics", *Communication Theory*, 10.4 (Nov 2000), 427.

sociocultural alternatives—what Deleuze and Guattari call a "lines of flight."[10] While festival communities may unite in their desire to reject the mainstream, they differ markedly from one another in the terms they use to define that mainstream and in the substitute practices they emphasize.

The uptake of festival culture as counterculture has been remarkably compelling for festivalgoers and scholars alike, and it has also proven extremely profitable for event producers looking to sell unique experiences with claims to political import and impact. Thus, one of the tasks of this project is to develop a way of talking about festivals without reverting to structural binaries. I attempt to discuss Transformational Festivals not by replicating the language of their promotional materials—which frequently depict events as idealized and egalitarian spaces of social rebellion—but by trying to develop a way to approach festival participation as an ongoing mode of theatrical labor. This labor, I suggest, would best be described as *immaterial labor*, Maurizio Lazzarato's term for work which "produces the informational and cultural content of a commodity"—the commodity here being the festival itself, the value of which is expressed in its ticket price.[11] The theatrical labor enacted through the braiding of event production (the hired performers and forms of spectacle coordinated by organizers) with the improvised creative activities of participants themselves produces a pervading atmosphere; this atmosphere is not phenomenological, but the product of human *work*. As Lazzarato

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[10] Deleuze and Guattari use "lines of flight" synonymously with "movements of deterritorialization and destratification."As explained by Brian Massumi, the French *Fuite* covers not only the act of fleeing or eluding but also flowing, leaking, and disappearing into the distance (the vanishing point in a painting is a *point de fuite*). It has no relation to flying." *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (2005 [1987]), xvi, 5.

[11] Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labor", trans. Paul Colilli and Ed Emery, *Generation Online*, accessed 6 Apr 2019, http://www.generation-online.org/c/fcimmateriallabour3.htm. Original publication in Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt, *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, University of Minnesota Press (1996), pp. 142-157.

points out, immaterial labor is often invisible to the eye; it is also, like theatre itself, *collective* in nature, built upon processes of coordination and management. Immaterial labor has particular power in the realm of social communication, a function that carries significant stakes in consumer societies:

> It gives form to and materializes needs, the imaginary, consumer tastes, and so forth, and these products in turn become powerful producers of needs, images, and tastes. The particularity of the commodity produced through immaterial labor (its essential use value being given by its value as informational and cultural content) consists in the fact that it is not destroyed in the act of consumption, but rather it enlarges, transforms, and creates the "ideological" and cultural environment of the consumer.[12]

In other words, immaterial labor lubricates and amplifies commerce in a cyclonic manner that continuously refigures markets and the subjects they produce. It is perhaps for this reason that festivals—sites produced by theatrical creativity, and which in turn *produce* niche material cultures, styles, and subcultural values—have become so ascendant within postindustrial societies.

The economic logic underpinning how festivals create value for participants intersects with the other research problem that this project addresses: the racial dynamics of festival culture. While a discussion of these dynamics is sometimes present in academic or popular discussions of music festivals, it often gets submerged in discussions of community, ideology, or style. But the fact is that an overwhelming majority of music festival patrons are racially White—particularly in highly participatory events like Transformational Festivals.[13] And yet, within the entire field of festival studies, few

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[12] Ibid.

[13] While I have been unable to locate the raw data, the widely cited Nielsen Audience Insights Report on Music Festivals (2016) reports that White people comprise 69.2% of the festivalgoing population, and 87% percent of the population at Burning Man (perhaps an indication that Transformational Festivals are *more White* than a predominantly White festivalgoing public). Jemayal Khawaja, "The Kids are All White: Can

attempts have been made to address race as a substantive component of the industry, and none, to my knowledge, have considered how the astounding proliferation of such events participates in the *political economy of race* on national and global levels.

What interests me about Transformational Festivals in particular is the way in which they offer vivid examples of how culture and difference get taken up as objects of fascination, spectacle, and marketization in an effort to produce events charged with a palpable sense of radical difference from the existing social order. In Transformational Festivals, race is hyper-visible *everywhere* from the objects on sale, to the symbols on stage, to the bodies and performance repertoires of participants. I use "race" here in an expansive way that encompasses not only Whiteness and non-Whiteness, but resonates with the relation between *settler* and *indigene* (which generally tracks similarly along boundaries of color). Scholars like Philip Deloria have outlined a particular settler genus of Whiteness historically produced in Western culture by leaning on a settler-indigenous dyad.[14] I foreground this entangled sense of race and indigeneity when writing about Transformational Festivals as a way of simultaneously understanding event aesthetics (say, how the New Age tropes of its visual art use ethnic composites of Native Americans and Asians to produce an "enlightened" or "cosmic" sensibility available for White consumption) and their territorial function as activities that take place on conquered land. This is a complex relation that cannot be fully accounted for under the dyadic rubric of "cultural appropriation," which usually supposes a victim-perpetrator duality in which the culture of one group gets commodified and capitalized upon by another, more powerful

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US festivals live up to their 'post-racial' promise?", *The Guardian*, 4 Jul 2017, accessed 7 Apr 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2017/jul/04/music-festivals-race-white-black-coachella-afropunk.

[14] Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, New Haven: Yale University Press (1998).

group.[15] I am suggesting that festivals are actually sites in which participants develop a sense of racial subjectivity, which cuts across boundaries of settler and indigene, White and non-White, and which indeed pose Whiteness itself as a fraught racial status.

In completing this study, I frequently struggled with thorny questions regarding how to write about race: This dissertation represents the first scholarly attempt to address Transformational Festivals as a genre, so how to be critical and attuned to the legacies of Western imperialism, while also being generous to the communities with which I conducted my research? As I articulate a cultural "object," and offer it for circulation in the scholarly economy, how to be conscious of my own racial, educational, class, sexual, and legal privilege vis-à-vis those communities? How to reflexively *perceive* race both in its spectacularly visible (and, often, profoundly offensive) forms, and in the moments where it functioned as an invisible force that underwrote social dynamics?

The approach to race I have chosen for this project owes much to Michael Omi and Howard Winant's historicist approach to racial formation, which views race as an ever-changing and socially constructed identity. They articulate racial categories as the product of sociohistorical processes comprised of discrete "racial projects" that discursively represent human bodily differences and organize them into positions of power and subordination.[16] While Omi and Winant generally discuss race as a game of representation, I am also inspired by scholars like Alexander Weheliye, who call attention

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[15] As described by Bruce Ziff and Pratima V. Rao, cultural appropriation "connotes some form of taking," and has to do with power relationships between different cultural groups. It often denotes a dominant group generating wealth and power via material associated with a marginalized group (cutting across race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, nationality, ability, etc.); but it has also been used to describe modes of cultural syncretism that include strategic appropriations of dominant culture on the part of marginalized groups. William Crane, "Cultural Formation and Appropriation in Merchant Capitalism," *Historical Materialism*, 26.2 (Jul 2018), accessed online 18 Apr 2019.

[16] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 3rd Ed., London and New York: Routledge (1986[1994]), 55-56.

to the ways in which race is experienced and executed upon human beings in their fleshly materiality. Transformational Festivals tell us something about how race is understood, but also how it is *felt*, how it animates individual desires and drives. I see Transformational Festivals (and their historical antecedents) as "racializing assemblages"[17] that sort bodies into degrees of humanity and inhumanity; they articulate racial identities, delineate social boundaries, and animate ethical drives that relate to encounters with racial others.

By foregrounding race as a foundation of today's festival culture, I am also pressed to consider how similar outdoor gatherings participated in the historical project of producing White, liberal nationalism in the US, policing racial boundaries, and contributing materially to settler colonial expansion. In this dissertation, I use Transformational Festivals to outline how outdoor gatherings have operated as paradigmatic sites for consolidating White identity, absorbing cultural difference into a liberal sensibility, and projecting power over land. I present Transformational Festivals as part of a lineage of territorializing operations that today are solidifying as an economic complex predicated on converting cultural identity into consumable components of private event industries—what I am calling the "enchantment economy."

My deployment of this term "enchantment," further explicated in my second chapter, comes from the work of political theorist Jane Bennett, who uses it to describe a dimension of human activity that arose in parallel to the ascendance of scientific rationality and demagification associated with political modernity. Enchantment is a

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[17] Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*", Durham, NC: Duke University Press (2014); Bryan Schmidt, "Black Feminism Fleshes Out the Human (Book Review)", *Cultural Studies*, 31 (2017), pp. 973-975.

cultivatable perceptual disposition that denotes an openness to affective encounters in which wonder, awe, and excitement pleasurably perturb our ontological certainty; it pushes back against logocentric regimes of perception that view the world as cold and calculable. Enchantment is especially compelling to me because it evokes the affective intensity of spontaneous, transformational moments that materialize in festival settings, while also approaching these experiences as systematically cultivatable; in other words enchantment allows us to consider how these powerful moments, what Anthony D'Andrea calls "peak experiences," are actually the result of systematic *work* that takes place at the level of the senses.[18] I see Transformational Festivals as making visible an aesthetic paradigm based on enchantment, and I propose the concept of "enchanting performance" as a way of understanding the specialized perceptual language that guides festival participants' creative choices. This allows me to avoid approaching festivals negatively (using binaristic theoretical structures like "counterculture" that define events by what they are not), and to instead approach them as sites of material and immaterial *production*. Doing so allows me to think machinically about how the internal action of festival formations, including the creative poiesis of their participants, feeds myriad intersecting industries, shapes global racial geographies, and facilitates transnational flows of people, capital, affect, and desire.[19]

The complexity of thinking through a festival formation (consisting of discreet but poly-vocal events) as it immanently participates in evolving sociocultural dynamics

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[18] Anthony D'Andrea, *Global Nomads: Techno and New Age as Transnational Raving Countercultures in Ibiza and Goa*", New York and London: Routledge (2007), 213-214.

[19] Examples include fashion (H&M has a "festival wear" section), tourism (festivals not only draw participants abroad but also serve as start and end points for guided travel), and art direction (films like *The Maze Runner* and music videos like David Guetta's "Hey Mama" make use of a kind of "festival aesthetic").

on local, national, and global levels necessitates an ethic of scholarship that avoids structural binaries and resists finality. My analysis attempts to hold a field of forces in productive tension: I traverse representational and political economic frameworks, while also experimenting with an "enchanting" lens that privileges the productive and experiential dimensions of Transformational Festivals; I bring critical attention to subtle and overt forms of racism that inhabit gestural, visual, cultural, and sexual economies of participant subcultures, while also attempting to honor the political imagination, struggles, and diverse identities of those I study by outlining how they gesture (often a flailing gesture) to new ways of being-in-the-world.

Background

What is a Transformational Festival?

The most extensive work to precisely outline the contours of Transformational Festivals has been conducted by avid festival participant and documentarian Jeet-Kei Leung in both a TEDx Vancouver talk, and the multi-part documentary *The Bloom Series: A Journey Through Transformational Festivals*.[20] Leung lays out several elements that distinguish Transformational events from other festivals: they are organized around an ecstatic core ritual provided by electronic dance music; they feature performance, art installations, and live painting, as well as a workshop curriculum; they promote the creation and honoring of sacred space; they integrate ceremony and ritual; they cultivate a social economy of artisans and vendors, or an alternative gift economy; and they take

[20] *The Bloom Series: A Journey through Transformational Festivals* was originally a 4-part web documentary series filmed from 2012 to 2013 (to my knowledge only three episodes were ever released). The series' website currently advertises a forthcoming 12-part series about "a generation who have found their home in powerful Transformational Festivals and the journey to bring their life-altering experiences back to the 'default world'". Producers for the series include Jeet-Kei Leung, Pierre Bagley, Jerome Foster, Adam Krim, Nicole Sorochan, Zac Cirivello, Alex Fredericks, and Mitch Kirsch. *The Bloom* webpage, n.d., accessed 15 Apr 2019, http://series.thebloom.tv/.

place over a multi-day duration in natural, outdoor settings to honor the Earth.[21] Leung further identifies the presence of "Visionary" art and a "New Paradigm" education program in Transformational events. These genres build from the aesthetics and ideology of New Age, an esoteric movement engaged primarily by White citizens of Western nations beginning in the 1970s. New Age was founded on pervasive cultural criticism directed against the mainstream values of the modern West, and attempted to reassert the importance of nature and spirituality by grounding a search for alternatives to Western society in the metaphysics of Eastern and indigenous traditions.[22] New Paradigm is a more recent movement that supplemented New Age's search for cultural alternatives by embracing forms of scientific knowledge that appeared to corroborate these cultures' spiritual claims, or that provided new technologies for protecting and preserving nature. Visionary art (e.g. Figure 1) attempts to render the metaphysics of this worldview into a visual language.

Figure 1: *Universal Mother, Aeon* by Tessa Mythos

Leung cautions, though, that these elements need not all be present for an event to be considered Transformational, and the

[21] See, for instance, Jeet-Kei Leung, "Transformational Festivals and the New Evolutionary Culture", *TEDx Talks*, YouTube ("Transformational Festivals: Jeet Kei Leung at TEDxVancouver"), 20 Aug 2011 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8tDpQp6m0A.

[22] George D. Chryssides, "Defining the New Age", *Brill Handbook of New Age*, Eds. James Lewis and Daren Kemp, Leiden: Brill Publishing (2007), pp. 1-24.

connection between festivals he places in the category sometimes appears tenuous. Events like Project Earth (Minnesota) or the Oregon Country Fair, for instance, do not usually feature electronic dance music, and tend to be dominated by folk and psychedelic motifs of the 1960s instead of the more recent New Paradigm. Leung's work ultimately places less emphasis on concretely assessing the tenets of Transformational Festivals than on building partnerships between specific high-scale event producers and festival-related industries;[23] from the standpoint of promotion and corporate branding, *The Bloom Series* is part of a complex marketing platform that uses web media production (including festival journalism) to articulate an elite tier of events, attracting participants and dollars to a select group of promoters who can best communicate a promise of wholesale spiritual transformation. In this sense, then, the label "Transformational" operates as a kind of endorsement of VIP status, denoting events of a certain size, professionalism, and media visibility. It is for this reason I capitalize the term throughout this dissertation, calling attention to its value as a label, and pointing to its function in what I call the enchantment economy.

By demonstrating how enchantment can become a focal point for economic organization—as made visible in Transformational Festivals—I am not simply dismissing their efficacy as a political practice. While I do suggest that Bennett problematically isolates enchantment as an individual ethical project (rather than a social practice that participates in, and gets conditioned by networks of embodied and financial exchange), I agree with her general premise that an energy for social change can be

[23] In addition to the partnerships between specific festivals chosen to be featured in the *Bloom Series*, today's *Bloom Series* website features a list of "celebrities of the festival world." Previous iterations of the website have included links to numerous sponsors in festival-oriented industries, such as FlowToys and GlowFur.

created by building a kind of perceptual flexibility via encounters with wonder, awe, and excitement—this idea stems from Foucault's approach to "techniques of the body" as the locus of sensibility formation, and its focus on the aesthetic dimension of politics has been echoed by scholars like Jacques Rancière.[24] My point, however, is that enchantment as a politico-aesthetic project cannot be disentangled from circuits of symbolic and material exchange; pressing into how this exchange works within festival spaces—the specific operations that go into producing enchanting, "transformative" experiences for participants—allows us to recognize how the enchantment economy draws its power and impact from the very impulse of social change.

The Context of Neoliberalism

The ascension of the enchantment economy can be traced in no small part to the rise of neoliberalism in the 1970s, and its dominance over the global economic structure in the 1990s. Neoliberalism is an array of economic policies and cultural attitudes predicated on individualism, privatization, financial and commercial deregulation, a retreat from public social programs, and renewed faith in market forces as the most efficacious adjudicators of the public good. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, neoliberalism became "the only game in town," and was embraced—particularly in the United States—not only by the wealthy classes and political Right as a way of dismantling State welfare initiatives, but also the political Left as a spectral avenue of mass democratic participation.[25] As David Harvey notes, neoliberalism is predicated on a

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[24] Jane Bennett, "'How is it, then, That We Still Remain Barbarians?: Foucault, Schiller, and the Aestheticization of Ethics", *Political Theory*, 24.4 (Nov 1996), 653-672; Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*, London and New York: Continuum (2004).

[25] Margaret Thatcher famously used the phrase "There is no alternative" to claim that the neoliberal market system was the only system that works. See also, Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?", *The National*

"radical reconfiguration of class relations" that emphasizes the individual, personal responsibility, and meritocracy, rather than collective responsibilities.[26]

But neoliberalism is far more profound than a set of policy choices that reasserted the power of the wealthy class. Foucault outlines how neoliberalism functions as a biopolitical project in which populations are moved towards macro-scale social goals via an emphasis on self-making; it couches the managerial dimension of this work through a discourse of personal liberty that encourages the cultivation of an entrepreneurial spirit, while also managing the "conduct of conducts" to align with the productive goals of a ruling class.[27] From this perspective, neoliberalism's power comes from its flexibility as a socioeconomic system capable of adapting to individuals, while simultaneously propelling them towards constant productivity by emphasizing enterprise and self-actualization—it couples individuated creativities, drives, needs, and desires with regimes of productivity and customized marketplaces that participate in macro-scale social organization. Scholars like Nigel Thrift and Nikolas Rose have extended Foucault's argument by focusing on new regimes of self-making that compel people to manage their own psychological and physical well-being; self-work that seems confined to the individual actually helps secure a broader "presupposition of the autonomous, choosing, free self as the value, ideal, and objective underpinning and legitimating" the political mentality of the modern West.[28]

Interest, 16 (Summer 1989), pp. 3-18; Jodi Dean, *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics*, Durham and London: Duke University Press (2009), 33.

[26] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2007).

[27] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power", in *Power: Volume 3: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, Ed. J Faubion, trans. R Hurley, London: Penguin (2002), 337.

[28] Nikolas Rose, "Governing the Enterprising Self", conference paper, The Values of the Enterprise Culture, University of Lancaster (1989), accessed 25 Apr 2019, http://neoliberalfeminism.com/wp-

As sites that encourage creative expression and the free play of ludic drives, the participatory nature of today's music festivals fits remarkably well into the designs of neoliberalism. They exist as both a product one consumes, but also as self-contained markets where individuals can see themselves as objects of display, production, and consumption. Participants come with disposable income, and often purchase everything they desire on-site for several days in a row. Multiple tiers of vendors (from those who pay for premium space near the music to those who hop from campsite to campsite with backpacks full of goods) create a high degree of competition and a frenetic air of commerce. As we will see, the festival marketplace sells individual products, but it also manages subcultural hierarchies that cut across regimes of technique, style, and libidinal play—for festies, being at the festival is not only about having a good time, but about doing *work* for the event, for the community, and for the self—and hopefully being recognized for that labor. This includes both formal theatrical economies and their financial remuneration (musical performances, hired dancers, professional fire spinners), as well as informal modes of jockeying for position within a community hierarchy; the latter may be compensated through a free ticket as a recognition of labor, or through a more speculative promise of future gigs and connections. Put simply, Transformational Festivals display in miniature neoliberalism's ability to reform the image of the self to a collection of marketable traits, and to initiate ongoing, open-ended projects of self-making that refigure leisure time as potential labor time.

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content/uploads/2018/04/Rose-1990-Governing-the-Enterprising-Self-ENT-R.pdf; Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*, 2nd Ed., London: Free Association Books (1999); Nigel Thrift, *Knowing Capitalism*, London: SAGE (2005).

Race is not peripheral to this dynamic; it is an underpinning logic that animates it. As scholars like David Theo Goldberg have suggested, race is simultaneously invisible and hypervisible within neoliberalism. While the system prods governments to exclude race-conscious policies, this does not make them racially neutral; rather, it works to systematically secure Whiteness as the unmarked, default identity position towards which economic gains flow.[29] This comes as a result of legal, financial, and violent subjugation of marginalized racial others, while also strategically integrating their culture into the market system as a way of naturalizing is power. Transformational Festivals, nominally predicated on exploring cultural alternatives to the modern West, demonstrate neoliberalism's push towards the marketization of everything, including heritage, ritual, creativity, resistance, and consciousness itself. Culture—in a form abstracted from history, geography, and community—forms the aesthetic building blocks of festival spaces; its contextual specificity becomes a raw material in the production of unique material culture, experiences, and self-help tools in the service of subcultural markets dominated by Whiteness. The danger of this practice, as Margaret Werry has articulated, is that it threatens to drain heritage of its specificity, historical significance, and symbolic power by catering to consumers who can effortlessly detach from the web of cultural associations that sustain community and resistance.[30]

And yet, grappling with the way that festivals help secure systemic logics of cultural consumption and naturalize of racial hierarchies should not prevent us from also understanding how they hold weight as an imagining of collectivity. While I am putting

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[29] David Theo Goldberg, *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing (2009).

[30] Margaret Werry, *The Tourist State: Performing Leisure, Liberalism, and Race in New Zealand* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 185.

forth the proposition that festivals are dominated by Whiteness, it is important to remember that they are neither racially nor socially homogeneous. Individual festival communities are crossed by inequality, economic precarity, and social alienation, which force us to recognize the role such events play in fostering ethics of community support, generosity, and even cross-cultural connection. While neoliberalism's dominance circumscribes the economic landscape of music festival culture, it is also important to remember that this is an "unstable, incomplete, and limited governmental regime" that leaves space for the reassertion of collective power and the will to economic and social justice.[31]

Neoliberalism's encoding power pushes towards singular, homogeneous conceptions of time, space, and culture, which can be efficiently abstracted and managed; as pointed out by Jack Halberstam, this same encoding power is also sometimes replicated by neo-Marxian critics of neoliberalism.[32] Festivals, as transitory projects of world-making, demonstrate intriguing attempts to trouble the ontological certainty of neoliberal time and space. It is in this respect that I suggest "enchanting performance"—which aims to perturb ontological certainty—can be considered a political act. It is also why I have titled this dissertation with the pluralized "neoliberal times": it simultaneously forces attention to the way that the social philosophy of neoliberalism manifests through ontological compulsion (prodding subjects towards a common, progressive, and

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[31] Catherine Kingfisher and Jeff Maskovsky, "Introduction: The Limits of Neoliberalism", *Critique of Anthropology*, 28.2, pp. 115-126.

[32] Halberstam, for instance, points to David Harvey, Fredric Jameson, and Edward Soja as scholars of neoliberalism that problematically abstract the body (including desire, sexuality, and identity) in order to pursue notions of activism that they define as the "real" work of the Left. J. Jack Halberstam (see also Judith Halberstam), *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, New York: New York University Press (2005).

undifferentiated "straight time"), while also alerting us to agential possibilities that exist in the reimagining of time and space.[33]

Lastly, it is important to consider how the international expansion of festival networks beyond the Euro-American contexts (where their rapid growth began in the 1990s), participates in the globalization of social imaginaries and enchanting repertoires—including problematic or damaging ones predicated on settler-colonial Whiteness. The rise of a transnational festival industry has benefited from the financial deregulation and selective easing of border restrictions that accompanied neoliberalism. Today, "destination festivals" have not only become a growing tourism apparatus catering to cosmopolitan "global raving countercultures," they have also created massive opportunities for international business partnerships and capital networks.[34] The soft power exerted by these deterritorialized networks wields significant influence over the geographically emplaced communities that host these events. They function as capillary-level networks that simultaneously invite and compel those on the racialized economic periphery to integrate into the world system.

Race-Whiteness-Indigeneity

My attentiveness to the often-overlooked dimension of race in the study of festivals is informed by a commitment to trouble the tendency for Whiteness to appear as an unmarked or neutral racial status. Such studies can allow race to go unacknowledged or underemphasized because they rely on an abstraction to delineate a special symbolic, inverted, or liminal space from everyday life and the enduring racisms that animate it in

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[33] See Patricia Ybarra, *Latinx Theater in the Times of Neoliberalism*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press (2018).
[34] Graham St. John, *Technomad: Global Raving Countercultures*, London: Equinox Publishing (2009).

settler colonial and postcolonial societies. As Richard Dyer points out, the obfuscation of or the failure to acknowledge Whiteness discursively reifies it as the singular racial position that "defines normality and fully inhabits it."[35] I examine festival culture and its historical antecedents as components in a genealogy of Whiteness that emerged in conjunction with settler colonial expansion, and that continues to globally project power via the control of land, the production of culture, and the management of feelings, drives, and desires.

Indigeneity fits into this dynamic in a complicated way. As an identity predicated on geographic emplacement, lineage, and custom (rather than the body), it is not reducible to race; at the same time, colonizers subjected the ethnic differences of indigenous peoples to forms of racial categorization—this explains the use of "red" people as both a pejorative and a source of power.[36] This ambivalent racial categorization of indigeneity gets picked up in curious ways in Transformational Festival settings: Visionary Art (often depicting indigenous bodies), rituals, ceremonies, and participant costuming (like "native chic" festivalwear, including headdresses) figure indigeneity as a mobile concept that can provide White participants a critical line of flight from the anomie of modern living. As Philip Deloria points out, this is a familiar story, part of a long genealogy of "playing Indian" as a technique of White racial formation in the United States.[37] Transformational Festivals repackage this appropriative form of Indian play as a

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[35] Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture*, London and New York: Routledge (1997), 9.

[36] See, for instance, Troy R. Johnson, Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., and Joane Nagel (Eds.), *Red Power: The American Indians' Fight for Freedom*, Lincoln, NE: Bison Books (1999); Sherry L. Smith, *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2012); Maximilian C. Forte, *Who is an Indian?: Race, Place, and the Politics of Indigeneity in the Americas*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press (2013).

[37] Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian*.

mode of redemptive self-work geared towards assuaging feelings of guilt and complicity for privilege enjoyed in the postcolonial present. Jeet-Kei Leung speaks of "reindigenization" as a goal of Transformational Festival culture, articulating indigeneity as a kind of proto-humanity that potentially encompasses all people—not a product of heritage, but a nostalgic and fetishistic primitive idyll. The natural setting of the festival allows it to become a place where indigenous culture—sometimes enacted for White audiences by indigenous people that choose to participate, but often presented in badly imitated or invented forms by non-indigenous people—becomes available as a consumable product that promises enlightenment, consciousness, and an encounter with spiritual authenticity.

My discussion of the Whiteness of Transformational Festivals is not intended to characterize their constituency as homogeneous; rather, I insist on exposing how festival culture is crossed by class politics that grant differential access to sanctioned forms and privileges of Whiteness. Transformational Festivals stage Whiteness as a variegated category: certain people (through clean living, yoga, and a sense of style) perform the aspirational potential of White racial embodiment, while others get coded as abject and discussed in sub-human terms (as I discuss with the example of the "Wook" stereotype in Chapter Three). This reflects scholar John Hartigan, Jr.'s discussion of the historical importance a pejorative sense of Whiteness—"White trash" or "those people"— had in fashioning a racialized national consciousness, imbuing it with the status of human

achievement and superiority (civilization), and positing an wretched internal other from which it needed to disidentify to preserve this progressive momentum.[38]

This point colored my ethnographic engagement, forcing me to be conscious of the power relationship between myself as a White ethnographer with a middle class background and institutional backing, and Whites I encountered who clearly did not experience the same degree of privilege. One way I attempted to do this was to recognize ways in which participants lived *precarious* lives—lives that were impacted by the psychic, physical, and legal violence of a police state (which not only disproportionately targets people of color but also *certain Whites* who fit the bill), the financial insecurity and dehumanization of late capitalism, the abjectification of the drug war, and the alienation stemming from neoliberal erosion of community. While I remain suspicious of utopian ideals espoused by Whites who figure themselves as part of a radical counter-culture, I found it important to acknowledge the real reasons that many participants (ill-served by a country in which they supposedly thrive) chose to invest in the particular genus of Whiteness it offers. This also ventures a corrective to the legacy of anthropological examinations of Whiteness that allow ethnographers to engage in "politically safe race talk" by placing distance between their own Whiteness and the problematic racial ideologies of those they study—as a way of securing progressive *bona fides* with cachet in the academic marketplace.[39]

Burning Man: The "Great Man" Myth of Festival Culture

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[38] John Hartigan, Jr., *Odd Tribes: Towards a Cultural Analysis of White People*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press (2005).

[39] Les Back, "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner? The Political Morality of Investigating Whiteness in the Grey Zone", in *Out of Whiteness: Color, Politics, and Culture*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press (2002), 37-38.

Often, when I describe my dissertation to people, I am reflexively asked whether I have been to Burning Man. An object of endless media fascination, Burning Man is the 70,000 person annual event that takes place in Nevada's Black Rock Desert—which began as a tiny gathering of the San Francisco-based Cacophony Society in 1986—that has become perhaps the most famous multi-day outdoor camping festival in the world. It is known for monumental art installations, elaborately and pristinely constructed theme camps, a bartering and gifting economy that disallows monetary exchange on-site, a highly specialized ethos codified as a list of the "Ten Principles of Burning Man," and a continuous, libidinous party atmosphere—all organized around the central ritual of burning a giant effigy at the end of the year's event. Many people have no frame of reference for a participatory festival culture besides Burning Man, and consequently, many consider it the *progenitor* of today's festival culture, the purest, most *authentic* example.

I would suggest that Burning Man's centrality to the narrative of festival culture is overstated. Outdoor concert festivals (in their contemporary form) have been a part of the US landscape since at least the Newport Jazz Festival in 1954. These events, which historically emphasized jazz and rock music, utilize stages with clearly demarcated areas for viewing, and usually create clear separations between performers and viewers. Transformational Festivals differ markedly from concert festivals building from the venue production of raves; the back-to-nature ethos, and emphasis on collective community and grassroots education from Rainbow Gatherings in the US and the "free festival" movement in the UK; the frenetic commercial atmosphere and psychedelic art and drug economy of Phish and Grateful Dead lot parties. However, Transformational

Festivals have undeniably been influenced by its aesthetics, financial success; its popularity allows me to deploy it throughout this dissertation as a point of reference for readers who might have little familiarity with festival culture. Thus, Burning Man's place in today's festival culture and its wider social significance warrant some explication here:

Burning Man often gets heroically characterized as the idiosyncratic home to an ideologically aberrant group of artists with no other outlet for their radical creative practices—the success of which awakened a latent, global creative energy that powers today's event industry. However, its success might also be considered in terms of sheer economic investment; Burning Man is the product of an annual multi-million dollar investment shared by organizers and participants alike. Its success demonstrated an emerging market demand, which was initially filled by regional Burning Man events ("Burns," which are franchise-like festivals[40] sanctioned by Burning Man but run by regional collectives), as well as myriad other for-profit events that attempted to replicate particular dimensions of Burning Man on a smaller scale in order to target individual cliques and niche consumers.

While the performance of Burning Man in time and space appears as an organic production of its artistic multitude, its organizational structure is corporate. This has led to continual tension between its original ethos predicated on unrestricted artistic freedom in the desert, and the contemporary need to regulate the admission and behavior of

[40] In my Master's thesis I conducted ethnographic field work at three Regional Burns—these were a network of Burning Man-inspired events held in various locales throughout the United States, as well as several global offshoots (e.g. AfrikaBurn in South Africa; Midburn in Israel). I argued that these events functioned as a branding platform for Burning Man; participants wishing to use the "Burn" label in their marketing had to subject their events to a committee to determine whether it sufficiently met certain criteria. Competition to be recognized as a region's representative to these committees created rivalries (with definite stakes in terms of financial and subcultural capital). Bryan Schmidt, "Welcome Home: Engendering Community through Performance and Play at the Euphoria and Scorched Nuts Regional Burns", Florida State University, Masters Thesis (2012).

participants. Burning Man's growth was aided by the rise of the tech industry on the West Coast, especially the San Francisco Bay Area. The capital in this area led to the blossoming of an industrial art scene that allowed artists to create compelling works of interest to a mass public. As Burning Man got popular, tickets turned into hot commodities—so much so that it became financially untenable for many of the original artists who helped grow the event to attend today. Today, many people speak pejoratively of Burning Man as an example of rampant "event gentrification," where celebrities and famous personalities from the tech world (like Google's co-founders and CEO) have replaced struggling artists.[41]

Placing this narrative in conversation with Burning Man's ethos of "radical self-reliance" demonstrates how the event fits in remarkably well with the neoliberal emphasis on individualism and market outcomes at the expense of collective investments. Keren Zaiontz eloquently summarizes this dynamic, while relating it to the wider festival scene that emerged alongside "The Big Burn":

> Burning Man was once a counter-cultural symbol that espoused gifting, creative expression, and collective responsibility to fellow Burners and the festival site. While those principles remain (at least, on paper), the festival now plays host to the competitive networking culture of corporate tech elites in Silicon Valley. The dual processes of counter-cultural performances and capitalist co-option are a reoccurring dynamic of contemporary festivals.[42]

If we were to go by the narrative told by *The Bloom Series*, or the myriad popular articles that appear on Burning Man's blog *Burning Journal*, or even the stories about

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[41] See, for instance, Mark Robinson, "Here's Why Google Went to Burning Man to Find its Next CEO", *Business Insider*, 28 Aug 2018; Keith A Spencer, "The Data Behind the Gentrification of Burning Man", *Salon*, 2 Sep 2017, https://www.salon.com/2017/09/02/the-data-behind-the-gentrification-of-burning-man/.
[42] Keren Zaiontz, *Theatre & Festivals*, London: MacMillan Education UK (2018), 10.

festivals that populate mainstream newspapers, we would be led to believe that the radical artists and savvy businesspeople who began Burning Man were visionary innovators whose ingenuity managed to "spawn a global movement."[43] Performance scholars (myself included) have been particularly important to lending this narrative credibility. Heather Ramey, for instance, goes so far as to argue that Burning Man is "a new form of American theatre."[44] However, this legend omits the rich and dynamic history of festival practices that have long been part of the American landscape; this includes important regional events that were happening at the same time as Burning Man (e.g. the High Sierra Music Festival), which never grew to its extreme size, and perhaps never intended to. Burning Man no doubt represents the pinnacle of festival culture for many people, but it represents just the opposite for many others: an event that is so large as to be impersonal, so expensive as to exclude the very artists who made it grow, and so contradictory as to render its lofty ethos laughable. By presenting festival culture as a geographically dispersed and centuries-old phenomenon, I hope to challenge the "Great (Burning) Man" theory of origins in favor of a more open-ended genealogical investigation

[43] See, for instance, the annual Burner Global Leadership Conference, which has, for the last 11 years, brought Burning Man Regional Network representatives to the San Francisco Bay Area to discuss the spreading of Burning Man culture; Bear Kittay, "Burning Man: A Global Movement", TEDx Oaxaca City, n.d. YouTube, *TEDxTalks*, published 28 Sep 2013, accessed 22 Apr 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bwj3SVZZOHo.

[44] Framing Metropolis: Performing Theatre of Affect at the Burning Man Project, 2010; Ramey, Heather Lee. TheatreForum - International Theatre Journal; La Jolla, Calif. (2010): 35-46.

Participation and Immersion

Festival studies emerged in the early 20th century as part of the field of anthropology, focusing on rituals and cultural festivals.[45] The study of music festivals emerged in the 1990s tracking along two subfields: the first was social scientific—coming from fields like tourism studies, organizational management, and development—and was especially prominent in the UK and Australia with longstanding festival traditions that had become objects of government policy; the second track intersects with a variety of humanities fields, and emphasizes ethnographic engagement with festival spaces. While individual projects have addressed festivals as public spheres,[46] as homes for a transnational counterculture,[47] or as nostalgic remnants of 1960s radical energy,[48] the field is generally organized by a view of the festival as a temporary interstice that allows for alternative social possibilities to play out; scholars analyze these possibilities with varying degrees of criticism. Furthermore, we should add that since the early 2000s an entire genre of writing has emerged around Burning Man, on subjects ranging from performance and ritual,[49] consumer culture and organization,[50] and theatricality.[51]

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[45] See, for instance, Durkheim's use of "collective effervescence," which is frequently engaged alongside Victor Turner's research on "communitas" as ways of describing processual modes of social togetherness. Èmile Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Swain, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd. (1912); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, New Jersey: Aldine Transaction Publishing (1969 [2008]); Tim Olaveson, "Collective Effervescence and Communitas: Processual Models of Ritual and Society in Èmile Durkheim and Victor Turner", *Dialectical Anthropology*, 26.2 (June 2001), pp. 89-124.

[46] See Liana Giorgi, Monica Sassatelli, and Gerard Delanty (eds.), *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*, London and New York: Routledge (2011).

[47] Graham St. John, *Technomad: Global Raving Countercultures*, London: Equinox Publishing (2009); Anthony D'Andrea, *Global Nomads: Techno and New Age as Transnational Countercultures* in Goa and Ibiza, London and New York: Routledge (2007).

[48] George McKay, *The Pop Festival: History, Music, Media, and Culture*, London and New York: Bloomsbury (2015).

[49] Rachel Bowditch, *On the Edge of Utopia: Performance and Ritual at Burning Man*, Chicago, Il: University of Chicago Press (2010); Lee Gilmore and Mark van Proyen (Eds.), *Theatre in a Crowded Fire: Ritual and Spirituality at Burning Man*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press (2010).

One academic work has already addressed music festivals as an event formation premised on the participatory aesthetics I theorize here as enchanting performance: Roxy Robinson's *Music Festivals and the Politics of Participation* looks at the evolution of the British music festival scene as it transitioned from concert models predicated on big-name musical stars (e.g. Glastonbury, Reading and Leeds Festival, Isle of Wight Festival) to participatory models predicated on co-created content by attendees and organizers around thematic ideas (e.g. BoomTown, Bestival). Robinson sees this as a "democratizing shift" within the event industry, with the potential to create a greater sense of horizontal control and egalitarianism.

However, while Robinson and I are both interested in the emergence of participation as a valued component of event production, and in understanding the cultural and economic forces underpinning this shift, this attempts to reach beyond the purview of the festival industry to consider how event formations participate in the production of national and global social dynamics in neoliberal times. I am not convinced that the pivot from concert-model festivals to participatory festivals signifies a democratizing impulse and politically progressive potentiality. As we will see, not only do participatory festivals continue to replicate social hierarchies (especially as they relate to race), they also trouble boundaries between production and consumption, work and leisure; they demonstrate how individual momentum and creativity can be routed into global flows of capital.

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[50] Robert V. Kozinets, "Can consumers escape the market? Emancipatory Illuminations from Burning Man", *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29 June (2002), pp. 20-38; Katherine Chen, *Enabling Creative Chaos: The Organization Behind the Burning Man Event*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press (2009).
[51] Clupper; Ramey; Dawn Larson, "Burning Man: Professor Coaxes Theatre Students 'Out of their Boxes' with Annual Trip to Counterculture Festival", *Southern Theatre* , 53.2 (Spring 2012), 22-25, 29.

Entangled with the conceptual vocabulary related to festival participation is that of "immersivity." Immersion has an increasing cachet in festival promotion as a description for detailed, professionally produced event spaces that create an otherworldly atmosphere; this aesthetic paradigm also has particular valence in the field of performance studies as it relates to open-ended theatrical experiences in which audiences navigate—choosing their own custom paths—through elaborately constructed environments. Josephine Machon's *Immersive Theatres*, like Robinson, approaches these aesthetics optimistically, sees them innovative approaches with the potential to "enable emotional or existential transformation."[52]

The optimism that accompanies Machon and Robinson's scholarly assessments of aesthetic paradigms predicated on shifting the creative process from a monologic audience-artist binary to a more dispersed and collaborative scenario can be traced back to Nicholas Bourriaud's influential work on "relational aesthetics" in the world of gallery art. Bourriaud argued that 1990s gallery art deployed a new artistic language via "relational art," which attempted to complicate monologic models of aesthetic experience by using the work of art as a means for prompting dialogic exchange. Relational art countered the traditional paradigm in which art consumers took in completed works of art in a private, symbolic dimension by creating interactive and social art experiences that "tak[e] as [their] theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context."[53] This was seen as a way to sidestep "benign consumerism," and to undercut the "narrow control of cultural production" in the art world.[54]

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[52] Josephine Machon, *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediately*, New York: Palgrave (2013), 63.
[53] Nicholas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Paris: Les Presses Du Reel (1998), 5.
[54] Robinson, *Music Festivals and the Politics of Participation*, 8.

However, Bourriaud's rosy claims for relational aesthetics have been forcefully challenged by Claire Bishop both on their own terms as part of the gallery art world,[55] as well as in their uptake within performance studies. In *Artificial Hells*, Bishop counters the optimistic conceptualization of participation as a democratizing practice by discussing how it attaches to neoliberal social conditions with an emphasis on entrepreneurialism and the marketization of everything. Bishop also tracks how participatory art became tethered to government "social inclusion" initiatives aimed at increasing employability, minimizing crime, and fostering aspiration and entrpreneurialism—all while chipping away at existing forms of public assistance. Far from a utopian aperture that evades the market, participatory performance was seen as a platform for creating submissive citizens who "respect authority and accept the 'risk' and responsibility of looking after themselves in the face of diminished public services."[56] We should keep this in mind, especially as festivals have moved from fringe activities to objects of governmental observation and instrumentalization, events on which White Papers and "Creative City" initiatives are predicated.[57]

Methodology

My primary method of engaging with Transformational Festivals, their modes of performance, and their racial logics, was through participant-observer ethnography conducted over the last eight years in the American Midwest, South, and West Coast. I also conducted research on a "destination festival" in Costa Rica, which is organized primarily by US expatriates, and draws participants from the US and Canada. This work,

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[55] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History*, London: Tate (2005).
[56] Ibid., 14
[57] Bryan Schmidt, "Fault Lines, Racial and Aesthetic: The National Arts Festival at Grahamstown," *Theatre Research International*, 43.3 (2019), pp. 318-337.

stretching back to my master's thesis on regional Burning Man events (Burns) in 2012, aimed to survey a broad ecology of event structures, geographies, and performance practices in order to map an event formation.[58] To select sites and prepare for the ethnographic portion of this work, I consulted festival journalism, Transformational Festival social media platforms, the websites of individual events, and those whom I considered to be cultural insiders. Specific events were chosen to reflect a diversity of size, geographic location, and ticket cost (as a reflection of the class to which events catered), with longitudinal attention paid to the Harmony Park Music Garden in Minnesota because of its proximity.

Because the multi-focal, polyvalent nature of festivals makes them impossible to comprehensively document, my on-site strategy was to territorially explore as much of each event as possible. This resulted in a research method based in *wandering*; day, night, and overnight (for as long as my body would hold up), I would move in repetitive loops from one end of the grounds to another, stopping to document interesting sites—especially those in which racial dynamics became highly palpable—and allowing myself to be pulled in to conversations and activities along the way. Wandering not only replicated a common festivalgoing choreography ("taking a lap"), it gave me opportunities to generate an experiential understanding of festival performance as a series of improvised and serendipitous encounters—this figures significantly in my discussion of enchanting performance. My wandering, of course, remained contingent to the project's evolving demands, and the momentum of field sites. When I attended Envision Festival in Costa Rica, I extended my range of wandering beyond the confines of the

[58] Schmidt, "Welcome Home".

event itself to encompass nearby villages whose social life was significantly impacted during festival time. Before traveling to a festival I would map out different workshops, lectures, or collective activities that seemed promising as spaces to witness especially fraught racial dynamics, ideologically revealing (and hopefully quotable) speech-events, or socially significant rituals. While these plans provided a skeleton for my movements, they were frequently interrupted by the exigencies of the live event—a conversation that lasted longer than expected, the sudden eruption of an interesting improvised performance, or simply mistiming my movements from one end of the grounds to another. In the end, I decided to reveal my project on an ad-hoc basis to those with whom I spent a significant amount of time (usually, for instance, those who camped in close proximity to me), but I mostly did not mention it in one-off encounters.

Beyond documenting the material culture, performance repertoires, and social dynamics of Transformational Festivals, I was interested in gaining experiential knowledge of their choreographies, perceptual regimes, and subcultural economy. I attempted this, first, by actively participating—eating, dancing, shitting, socializing, and doing all the other things that festival-goers do. This included attempting to learn common performance repertoires (for instance, I learned to spin fire), selectively engaging in forms of intoxication, and serving in numerous capacities as an event volunteer. These experiences helped deepen my ethnographic engagement in several ways: first, they allowed me to pivot from describing what I *saw* at individual festivals to articulating the *logic* underpinning festivalgoing as a social practice; second, they granted me unique forms of access to event spaces, and helped me understand the way those spaces work: for instance, volunteering allowed me to understand the different strands of

labor that go into producing an event, and spinning fire helped me understand the way that performance traditions bind event communities together; third, my participation led to important conversations and personal connections that provided numerous avenues for discovering new sources of information, and new axes of analysis.

My ethnography was guided by principles set forth by H.L. Goodall (2000), especially his insistence on foregrounding the ethnographer's relationship to those he studied. My identity as a White, heterosexual, cisgender male from the United States allowed me to easily "fit in" to communities populated by people from similar backgrounds. However, one notable difference stuck out: I was a scholar pursuing my PhD by studying festivals. This did not seem quite so radical in the more expensive festivals I attended, where many participants came from middle- and upper-class backgrounds; however, at venues like Harmony Park, which cater to a more working-class constituency, I often perceived a gulf. This alerted me to differential racial privileges that exist within Whiteness.

In addition to the ethnographic component of this research, I utilize a number of media and archival resources to help me understand the conceptualization, organization, and representation of festival culture. Of particular note is a 'zine called *The Weekly Freak*, which was independently published by Timothy Paul Smith from 1989 to 2009. *The Weekly Freak* chronicled music scenes in Minneapolis, New Orleans, and San Francisco, and provided a longitudinal source of documentation on Harmony Park. Both long-form event reviews, and the 'zine's subtly changing art direction provided me useful tools for thinking about the trajectory of the park's evolution (since I only attended beginning in 2012), and maintained traces of the performance culture that once existed

there. Other sources include interviews with organizers, artists, and subcultural intellectuals, as well as activists and participants from indigenous communities. I examined commercials, blogs, vlogs, music videos, event web sites, promotional documentaries, Facebook pages, and web forums to learn about the ideological leanings and external projects of Transformational Festivals, as well as how they represent themselves to broader publics.

Chapter Breakdown

In Chapter One I begin by presenting an historiographic analysis of festival discourse to identify two dominant tropes in how scholars have analyzed these events. I call these the "counter-cultural" and the "cosmic" tropes—the former places festivals in a complex of postwar anti-establishment ideology that began in the early 1950s, and the latter positions them as a transhistorical element hardwired into human psychology. I argue that these tropes give us a blinkered approach to thinking about the important role that outdoor gatherings have played as a material practice that intersected with the racialized formation of US national identity since the beginning of the 19th century. I then conduct what Joseph Roach calls a "performance genealogy" that examines how specific repertoires of today's Transformational Festivals came into being—particularly the creative manipulation of natural settings as a function of White community-building, and the use of Indian play as a complement to this back-to-nature sensibility. I identify the Circuit Chautauqua and the camp meeting movement as two event formations that, like today's Transformational Festivals, created a network of White-dominated temporary outdoor communities that were imagined as sites of participation where unique event-worlds could overlay the natural landscape. I argue that that this was important to the

process of settler colonialism because it helped form White culture by iteratively and imaginatively overwriting the landscape's history of conquest; this practice rendered native claims to colonized land pliable and, ultimately, dismissible, while also creating a deeply affective form of social connectivity for Whites who participated in this practice.

In Chapter Two I give language to the theatricality that coheres many of the divergent performance forms enacted by participants in the time and space of Transformational Festivals (from theme camps, to costuming, to lectures and workshops, to flow arts and dance), and try to describe a connective political significance. The idiosyncratic nature of festival repertoires can be incomprehensible or even invisible to outsiders unfamiliar with the corporeal experience of being there, and it often gets simplified as "blowing off steam," hedonism, or escaping daily life. I look at how the spatial production and techniques of the body that combine to produce an event function as immersive and durational performance, self-conscious operations that do aesthetic *labor* to produce a transitory world. I call this "enchanting performance."

I then interpret and explicate examples of enchanting performances, paying specific attention to how they often rely upon racialized and indigenous tropes to produce transformational moments of awe, wonderment, and incomprehension, and I link this to neoliberalism's marketization of culture. I also point to how enchanting performance inaugurates perceptual faculties generally occluded by the aesthetic regime of modernity, provoking attention to and ethical interest in alternative epistemologies, ontologies and embodied practices. I argue the theatricality of enchanting performance creates a reflexive perceptual self-awareness that inspires a questioning of one's own social conditioning. This theatricality is also funneled through production, branding, and the

ethical positioning of organizers, which acts as an event "dramaturgy"—the theatrical term used for describing the logic that coheres a particular text. This operates on the level of desire and affect constructing an "enchantment economy" that funnels participants (and their capital) towards certain people, industries, and places.

In chapters three and four I use case studies that represent two different axes of festival culture. These final chapters aim to articulate the diversity of Transformational Festivals by considering how values and performance repertoires shift based on the politics of different geographical spaces; they also trouble the conception of festival as a bounded site by outlining how events attach to the political and economic exigencies of their locales.

Chapter three focuses on Minnesota's Harmony Park, which has hosted small festivals drawing from rural communities in the US Midwest since the 1980s. Harmony Park exemplifies the network of outdoor event venues throughout the United States that cater to niche local cultures, places like Horning's Hideaway (Oregon), Nelson's Ledges (Ohio), and Spirit of Suwanee Campgrounds (Florida). I attended 10 events over several years at Harmony Park and I discuss these to illuminate how festivals produce for White patrons a sense of kinship and connection to the land, resulting in a troubling sense of ownership (what I call the "autochtonous trope") over formerly indigenous-controlled—even more problematic is that sense of ownership arises through Indian play that appears to participants as a redemptive form of self-making. This appropriation is crossed by a deep sense of community need that builds from participants' own feelings of precarity and abjection vis-à-vis an imagined social mainstream; Harmony Park participants see the event space as a site of refuge, and develop intense ethics related to the maintenance

of its appearance and the "feel" of its community atmosphere. I call this drive to maintain an imagined integrity in the management of land and the forms of kinship that flow from it a "politics of stewardship." I construct a history of Harmony Park that attends to social schisms within the event-community, as well as between festivalgoers and the local authorities. I also discuss the stereotype of the "Wook"— an animalistic trope of an abject festivalgoer—as a way of articulating how complex politics of class animate Whiteness in festival communities. The Wook is a foil to the clean, "enlightened" White bodies that ostensibly belong in Transformational Festivals; by pressing into this division as it materializes at Harmony Park, I call attention to the racializing function of festivals—how they produce variegated access to humanity.

Chapter Four looks at the Envision festival in Costa Rica as an example of a "Destination festival." Unlike Harmony Park, Envision draws relatively few local residents; its main constituency is travelers from Western, predominantly White countries. I discuss how Envision makes strategic use of Costa Rica's cultural resources—its people as well as its national branding around the concept of *Pura Vida*, "Pure Life"—in order to position itself as the purveyor of contact with a racialized, tropical essence. This essence makes use of an erotics of the Other in order to capitalize on a libidinal economy that attends festivalgoing; it gets deployed in publicity materials to attract a moneyed clientele, and it gets materialized in event space via enchanting performance.

I also discuss some of the economic and social consequences of this culture mining. I point out that although Envision does bring a good deal of economic stimulation to the local area, it also creates a platform for what I term "Fraternal Network

Tourism," a practice wherein traveling participants pool their own resources and form clusters to move through foreign spaces together, often funneling resources to expatriate communities, rather than locals. I ask what kind of negotiations festival organizers engage in with locals to be part of this arrangement? What are the power dynamics of these engagements? And what role do indigenous and non-indigenous Costa Ricans have in relation to White tourists? Envision's dependence on participants from the United States and other Western countries helps us understand how a festival-oriented tourism industry, including an emerging "ethical tourism" industry, participates in the neoliberal transformation of culture into commodity.

CHAPTER ONE

Whiteness, Modernity, and a Speculative History of Festival Culture

Why is [Burning Man] mostly white people? It's mostly white people out here because they think they're the richest people in the world, [that] they've got the crown of creation. That's what they've been told; but some of them are so damn isolated that they'll go to a desert, travel six hundred miles, pay two thousand dollars in one of the most inhospitable places in North America in order to connect to other people!

- Larry Harvey, *Burning Man Festival* documentary

The repertoire [...] *enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge. Repertoire, etymologically 'a treasury, an inventory,' also allows for individual agency, referring also to 'the finder, discoverer,' and meaning 'to find out.' The repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by 'being there,' being a part of the transmission.*

- Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Cultural Memory and Performance in the Americas*

Introduction

The event that signals the start of festival season at Harmony Park is called Revival. It occurs over the Memorial Day weekend at the end of May, and has become notorious for rainy days that leave the park a waterlogged mudpit. When the spring rains come no one is particularly happy about it, but they make do by packing into the covered IllumiKnation Station and Om Dome mini-stages to catch an informative lecture or relaxed music set; or by making friends with a neighbor who has erected a large canopy around her campsite; or by just embracing the dampness and stripping down to their underwear to frolic in the mud. Some prankster always sets down a kayak in a giant puddle that inevitably forms in the middle of the main walkway; in other words, the rain does not put a damper on the weekend, but instead infects the crowd with a spirit of rejuvenation: "Re•vi•val: restoration of life, consciousness, vigor, strength; to live

again."[1] The name foregrounds festivalgoing as an annual tradition, and emphasizes the pattern of cyclical continuity as a source of physical and psychic enrichment. For many participants, it is their first chance to see friends from hundreds of miles away since the previous September, the first chance to spin fire outdoors in front of a captivated audience, the first chance to dance with abandon since the start of the frigid winter.

Revival also cites the historical movement of religious *revivalism*, which had a significant presence throughout the 19th century United States, especially in New England and the developing Midwest. It was a period known as the "Second Great Awakening," an evangelical campaign that began at the turn of the 19th century and reached its zenith in the 1850s, characterized by a seismic rise in *en masse* conversions to Protestant denominations—Methodism and Baptism in particular. Revivals were multi-day Christian gatherings that were often held outdoors under big tents with hundreds or thousands of participants, for the purposes of gaining converts and reinspiring the flock; the energy and emotionalism of these large community gatherings provided a counterpoint to the skeptical rationalism of the Enlightenment that dominated urban culture, appealing instead to aesthetic experience, passionate zeal, and faith in nature as a source of the divine. Revivals ultimately aimed at creating wholesale spiritual transformation through a durational collective spectacle, much in the same way that I suggest Transformational Festivals do today. They produced a matrix of outdoor events that dotted the country, and evolved behavioral repertoires that associated its camping culture with an ecstatic expression of community; in the process, they created a fervent event-oriented subculture, with its own unique aesthetics, that inspired Christian activism

[1] "About," Revival official website, accessed 4 Dec, 2017, https://revivalfestmn.com/about/about-revival/.

in the United States—an activism that coincided with the country's accelerating territorial expansion.

Revivalism came about as the United States pivoted from the project of revolution and the establishment of republicanism, to the project of nation building and the production of an expansionist national imaginary based on the populist vision of Jacksonian democracy. As Philip Deloria has pointed out, this required a racial project that articulated a uniquely American identity predicated on a complicated and contradictory ideal of racial Whiteness that was simultaneously politically modern and "civilized," but also endowed with an absolute sense of social freedom; this freedom was located in the land itself, figured as an expansive *tabula rasa* available to the imagination and momentum of citizens in the new nation. Outdoor gatherings served as a nationally networked event formation that participated in accelerating genocidal policies of expansion and expulsion; the aesthetics of these gatherings fetishized and appropriated indigeneity as a symbolic expression of human closeness to the land, while also absenting Native Americans from that land.[2] To White Americans, Native culture appeared as an unmediated outgrowth of the land itself, and the spiritual authenticity this denoted lent itself to interlocking projects of Christian spiritual development and the establishment of a national culture.

Although the moment of Jacksonian expansionism has gone, its sentimental legacy regarding the idea of the Native American remains an undercurrent in the mythos of festival culture today. Consider, for example, this description for Revival:

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[2] See Chapter 2: "Fraternal Indians and Republican Identities." Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, New Haven: Yale University Press (1998).

> "The Harmony [Park] Playground is on the banks of Lake Geneva under the shade and wisdom of the ancient Burr Oak forest. These Elders have blessed this sacred space for our community to gather and befriend each other around campfires under majestic stars. / Revival is the first gathering of the summer where we shake off winter hibernation and come alive! We get to Revive the Vibes for the Tribe and fill our spirits with Harmony love right from the start."[3]

Interesting to note here is the use of "Tribe" to refer to Harmony Park attendees, and the transposition of the park's majestic oak trees to "Elders" (a proper noun). Both word choices hail a New Age spiritual sensibility that articulates indigenous tropes (e.g. "the tribal elder") as racially transferrable sources of cultural vitality available to festivalgoers regardless of actual claims to indigeneity. As an introductory script for event attendees, it activates an approximation of indigenous cosmology regarding the animacy of the environment, symbolically framing Harmony Park as an archetypal "state of nature,"[4] a place where one can return to the root aspects of being human. Concurrently, it positions festival participants who inhabit that space, regardless of race or claim to indigeneity, as rightful inheritors of the divine wealth that passes fitfully through the land itself.

Revival points towards the ongoing role that outdoor camping event formations play in the production of Whiteness; such formations have served as "racial projects," Michael Omi and Howard Winant's term for discursive and material activities that reorganize and rearticulate racial identities, boundaries, and definitions.[5] As with other

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[3] "About," Revival official website, n.d., accessed 25 May 2018, https://revivalfestmn.com/about/about-revival/.

[4] I use "state of nature" here in a way similar to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who in *The Social Contract* imagines a hypothetical, prehistoric place and time where human beings lived uncorrupted by society. The term was frequently used to convey a sense of romantic utopia, and often grafted to indigenous bodies in both infantilizing and fetishizing ways.

[5] Omi and Winant discuss race as "a way of making up people." This is a continuous process, one which "is fraught with confusion, contradiction, and unintended consequences. Concepts of race prove to be unreliable as supposed boundaries shift, slippages occur, realignments become evident, and new collectivities emerge." They call these shifts in racial terrain *rearticulation*, which they define as a "practice

Transformational Festivals, Revival's promotional materials and spatial production script for (mostly White) participants a sense of absolute spiritual connection to (colonized) land, a connection which then gets ritualized via participants' social performances that take their cue from the event's framing dramaturgy. In this way, they participate in the ongoing reaffirmation of settler colonialism as a structure by normalizing White claims to land (via appropriating gestures of indigeneity), while simultaneously rendering invisible the indigenous people who existed there first. Harmony Park is part of an ecology of festivals and event grounds that collectively rearticulate indigeneity as a malleable *disposition* (rather than an historically-rooted identity) that can be redeployed to produce feelings of rootedness on stolen land.

Revival's citation of bygone outdoor event structure, as well as its etymological foregrounding of the process of recurrence, hails the lineage of past events that allowed for the present to materialize. While I take up in chapter three the specific history of Harmony Park, here I wish to think about the longer historical lineage that created the conditions for annually repeatable outdoor festivals to emerge as a coherent cultural phenomenon. Revival prods us to consider the repertoires, memories, and other "acts of transfer" (Diana Taylor's term for reiterated behavior that transmits social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity across time and space) that accrete over time to produce festivalgoing as a culture.[6] It also guides us towards the 19th century (a time period that

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of discursive reorganization or reinterpretation of ideological themes and interests already present in subjects' consciousness, such that these elements obtain new meanings or coherence." Rearticulations occur as a result of concerted *racial projects*, which is "simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial identities and meanings, and an effort to organize and distribute resources (economic, political, cultural) along particular racial lines." Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, Third Edition, Routledge (2015), 105, 125, 165.

[6] Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Durham: Duke University Press 2003, 2.

has, surprisingly, remained almost wholly absent from festival historiography) as a formative moment for this culture. This history is trenchant not only for understanding the racial dynamics of Transformational Festivals as they operate as a movement today, but also for understanding a more fundamental role that outdoor event culture has played in the production of Whiteness, liberalism, and nationalism.

Understanding the lengthy history of outdoor event culture in the United States allows us to more deeply engage the important question, "Why are festivals today so White?" which has become something of a cliché in both journalistic and academic discussions. The question is sometimes posed as an ironic interrogation of festival culture's aspirational self-narratives that typify event spaces as unique and transitory sites of absolute social equality; headlines read: "The kids are all white: can US festivals live up to their 'post-racial' promise?" or "The Unbearable Whiteness of Burning" or "Is Burning Man just a White-people thing?"[7] These articles take an overwhelmingly presentist approach to race, countering festivalgoers' appeal to the radical nature of the festival setting by outlining how it gets enabled as a function of privilege that extends from current, racialized social inequality. They alternately point to economic reasons,[8] or even dubiously supported assumptions regarding racialized differences in relationship to "sexual mores" or "family acceptance" of partying to explain why White people today

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[7] Stephanie Beasley and Emanuel Cavallaro, "Is Burning Man Just a White-People Thing?" *The Root*, 23 Sep, 2017, Accessed 1 December, 2017, http://www.theroot.com/is-burning-man-just-a-white-people-thing-1818596733; Leilani Leila Riahi, "The Whiteness of Lucidity: Everything but Inclusive" 16 April, 2015, Accessed 1 December, 2017, http://dailynexus.com/2015-04-16/the-whiteness-of-lucidity-everything-but-inclusive/.

[8] "Therein lies the reason for the glaring dissonance between the intent and effect of the festival industry's push for diversity: those in executive positions, from the record label to the management to the promoters to the corporate sponsors, are usually caucasian." Jemayel Khawaja, "The kids are all white: can US festivals live up to their post-racial promise?" *The Guardian*, 4 July, 2017, Accessed 1 December 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2017/jul/04/music-festivals-race-white-black-coachella-afropunk.

dominate the festival scene.[9] These discussions generally flatten out the complicated valences of Whiteness as a complex and evolving social articulation, and characterize it instead as a monologic racial identity.

Academic accounts, especially from the emerging field of festival studies, take a variety of more-complicated approaches to the question of race: one is a supraracial approach that views the transnationality and EDM-focus of festival culture as opening space for troubling identitarian boundaries.[10] This research often takes its cue from writing on club culture and ritual, where the DJ and the dance floor represent a sacred potentiality for the withering away of difference, and the emergence of a temporary, egalitarian community. Its theoretical bedrock is Victor Turner's anthropological writing on spontaneous communitas, the transitory social modality characterized by the shedding of rank, status, and property, which arises when social structures get inverted in experiences of liminality.[11] These studies often glissade over a consideration of festival culture's participation within wider racial politics; they examine themes like orientalism, indigenous fetishization, and the impacts of racialized tourism as an addendum to their primary interest—which is the psychic terrain of the festivalgoer vis-à-vis the State or quotidian society. For example, in *Global Tribe: Technology, Spirituality, and Psytrance*, Graham St. John shrugs off critiques of rave culture as neo-imperialist, arguing that

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[9] Caveat Magister, "Is Burning Man a White People Thing?" *Burning Man Journal*, 4 Jan 2012 https://journal.burningman.org/2012/01/philosophical-center/tenprinciples/is-burning-man-a-white-people-thing/.

[10] See, for instance, Anthony D'Andrea, *Global Nomads: Techno and New Age as Transnational Countercultures in Ibiza and Goa*, London and New York: Routledge (2007); Philip R. Kavanaugh and Tammy L. Anderson, "Solidarity and Drug Use in the Electronic Dance Music Scene," *The Sociological Quarterly*, 49.1 (2008), pp. 181-208; Graham St. John, "Neotrance and the Pyschedelic Festival", *Dancecult: The Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture*, 1.1 (2009), pp. 35-64.

[11] Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Ithaca: NY, Cornell University Press (1966) 96, 106.

"while Goatrance has been demonstrated to have had an aesthetic romance with Orientalism, this story does not infuse its 'neotribal' mobilization," a conclusion soundly critiqued by Tobias van Veen in his review of the book.[12] Other scholarly approaches self-consciously attempt to fracture such aspirational narratives of radical egalitarianism by deploying culturally-specific critiques that explore social exclusion in festival settings; Judy Sujin Park, for instance, investigates Asian American participation in EDM festivals to "study [the] tension between the massive contemporary EDM festival scene and the ideology of PLUR [Peace, Love, Unity, Respect], which purports that EDM festivals are free from identity-based boundaries or inequalities."[13]

However, while these approaches do consider how festivals may potentially exacerbate existing racialized inequities, they characterize festival culture as something that *emerges* from the present racial context, rather than something that *participates* in the historical dialectic between culture and race. Rather than ask, "Why are festivals today so White?" I want to engage a more complicated investigation of the role festivals have taken in imagining the very idea of Whiteness. In doing so, I approach race not as a stable and ideological phenomenon, but, as performance scholars E. Patrick Johnson, Faedra Chatard Carpenter, and Harvey Young have argued, as a mobile and motile

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[12] Van Veen writes: "St John's position is complex around these issues and far from antithetical to their points—he observes how "the trappings of tripping in the East continue to be deployed to make the hard sell" (332)—thus noting how psyculture is implicated within the "exoticism" of self-reflexive modernity and the very tourism industry that caters to and reinvents the figure of the traveller. At the same time, and understandably so, St John wants to substantiate the experiential claims of psyculture as undertaking an exodus that escapes something of (post)modernity's racialized neocolonialism. Graham St. John, Global Tribe: Technology, Spirituality, and Psytrance, Sheffield: Equinox (2012), 69. Tobias van Veen, "Book Review: Global Tribe," Dancecult: The Journal of Electronic Dance Music, 6.2 (2014).

[13] Judy Park, "Searching for a Cultural Home: Asian American Youth in the EDM Festival Scene," *Weekend Societies: Electronic Dance Music Festivals and Event Cultures*, Ed. Graham St. John, Bloomsbury Academic (2017), 1.

construction that is entwined with citational performance genealogies.[14] While Omi and Winant emphasize the way racial categories get continuously reframed by social discourse, these scholars focus on how race is embodied, experienced, and made legible via performative reiterations—they map the affective terrain through which discursive constructions of race graft to fleshly corporeal realities.[15]

As I argue here, festivals have been paradigmatic spaces for the formation of Whiteness throughout US history. But to clearly understand this, we have to reach back to a time before such an object as the music festival existed. In this chapter I trace—as Revival cites—how 19th and early 20th century outdoor gathering movements provided the behavioral and infrastructural bedrock that would evolve into Transformational Festival culture today. I perform what Joseph Roach calls a "genealogy of performance" on Transformational Festival culture; a genealogy of performance traces how the embodied past evolved into the present by "document[ing]—and suspect[ing]—the historical transmission and dissemination of cultural practices through collective representations."[16] Roach's endorsement of a speculative approach to history—especially as it relates to the process of transmission that reflects an entangled relationship between race, power, and culture—is particularly important here; I am attempting to unpack a longer lineage of festival culture than typically acknowledged by conjecturing what festival performance idioms might have looked like in the distant past. Taking his cue

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[14] Faedra Chatard Carpenter, *Coloring Whiteness: Acts of Critique in Black Performance*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor: Michgan (2014); E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity*, Durham and London: Duke University Press (2003); Harvey Young, *Embodying Black Experience: Stillness, Critical Memory, and the Black Body*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press (2010).

[15] Alexander Weheliye, *Habeus Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitcs, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*, Durham: Duke University Press (2014).

[16] Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*, New York: Columbia University Press (1996), 25.

from Foucault's discussion of historical genealogies in the essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Roach argues that a critical genealogy "aims to excavate the past that is necessary to account for how we got here and the past that is useful for conceiving alternatives to our present condition."[17] A genealogy, importantly, is not a search for a kernel of *origin*; instead, it aims to "cut" into our sense of historical coherence in order to trouble the certainties of the present, and reveal their historicity.[18]

In this case, what I aim to "cut" is a reflexive association of festival culture with a particularized expression of Left-progressive counter-cultural ideology that emerged following the Second World War (first with the Beat Generation, then with hippie and communitarian movements, and then with free festivals, rave traditions, Burning Man, and the diverse festival ecology of today). Instead, I discuss two prototype event formations in the United States that, like today's Transformational Festivals, were predicated on outdoor camping culture, the transitory production of space in natural settings as a theatrical action, and a communal program of spiritual and intellectual betterment that made particular use of music as a core experience. These formations laid a logistical groundwork still replicated in today's festivals, and were important to the very articulation of political modernity as racialized project. Thus, it allows me to approach the question: "why are festivals so White?" by considering how collective

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[17] Ibid.

[18] My thinking around this word choice is influenced by Michel Foucault's writing on "effective history": "Knowledge, even under the banner of history, does not depend on 'rediscovery,' and it emphatically excludes the 'rediscovery of ourselves.' History becomes 'effective' to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being-as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against itself. 'Effective' history deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature, and it will not permit itself to be transported by a voiceless obstinacy toward a millennial ending. It will uproot its traditional foundations and relentlessly disrupt its pretended continuity. This is because knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting." Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, NY: Cornell University Press (1980), 88.

outdoor gatherings historically participate in the *articulation* of Whiteness, and in the extension of settler colonialism as an organizing social structure.

I begin by examining two epistemological tropes that organize the existing historiography of festival culture—what I call the "counter-cultural" and "cosmic" tropes—which have effectively bracketed the scholarly discussion of festivals to two different temporal scales: the "counter-cultural" trope views festival culture as a recent phenomenon that emerged following the Second World War. It traces the development of festivals through the fragmentary counter-cultural activity of the Beat Generation in the US in the 1940s and 1950s, up through the development of a more globalized counter-culture that characterized the 1960s, and finally to rave culture that emerged in the US and Europe in the 1980s and 1990s. I critique the "counter-cultural" trope for being relatively presentist, and for credulously locating festivalgoing as an avant-gardist expression of liberal idealism that overlooks the degree to which liberalism was predicated on a racialized settler colonial project.[19] The "cosmic" trope takes a more abstract and trans-historical approach to festival history, viewing festivals as a connective tissue between various cultures through the entirety of human civilization. This evolutionary view posits festivals as natural expressions of communality that are necessary to achieving health and happiness. I critique the "cosmic" trope for its universalism, and for its subtle primitivism that locates human authenticity within social encounters in and with Nature—an association that allows for indigeneity to appear as a flexible concept.

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[19] Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Settler Colonialism as Structure: A Framewokr for Comparative Studies of US Race and Gender Formation", *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 1.1 (2015), pp. 54-74.

I attempt to complicate such presentist and trans-historical approaches by discussing two outdoor event formations that helped develop repertoires of festivalgoing still seen today, and that participated in the formation of Whiteness as a tool of settler colonial expansion in the 19th and early 20th centuries: camp meetings and the Chautauqua movement. Camp meetings were multi-day mass gatherings organized around a circuit of traveling preachers bringing the gospel to small, frontier communities that lacked church infrastructure, which eventually evolved into a thriving national phenomenon that was central to evangelical revivalism. Camp meetings were theatrical, musical, and participatory; they came about as itinerant preachers traveled to different regions, gathering together thousands of parishioners (and potential converts) over several days in massive tent cities to partake in church rites and hear fiery sermons. Eventually, designated meeting grounds sprouted up throughout the United States, and camp meetings became annualized affairs with their own distinct aesthetics. As the tradition became more established, and as campgrounds got developed, camp meetings eventually evolved into leisure and vacation destinations for urbanites looking to escape the city and experience a revivifying encounter with the natural world. As the United States expanded westward, the camp meeting tradition (which was mostly a White phenomenon, but which often made use of indigenous culture in its repertoires) established the participatory outdoor gathering as a land-based ritual of social belonging that networked a developing US national culture.

As this national culture became more established, the Chautauqua movement evolved directly from, but in contradistinction to camp meetings. Over time, camp meetings developed a reputation for being too emotional and rowdy for middle class

respectability; the Chautauqua movement reframed the idea of the collective gathering as an opportunity for intellectual betterment in the pursuit of liberal humanist ideals. Bridging religious principles with scientific and anthropological sensibilities, Chautauquas established the secluded outdoor gathering as an avant-garde project towards social progress. Like camp meetings, designated Chautauqua event grounds popped up throughout the United States, and a traveling Circuit Chautauqua—what John Tapia has described as the "missing link between nineteenth-century platform arts and twentieth-century forms of electronic mass media"[20]—brought this programming to small, rural communities until the 1940s. Chautauquas were also White-dominated events, and their programming frequently focused on establishing a cosmopolitan consciousness by exposing participants to the exotic Other.

For over 150 years camp meetings and Chautauquas simulated the land as a negative space for materializing the imagination and desire of White Americans—a practice fantastically compatible with the idea of settler colonialism, especially via the civilizing expansionist project distilled as Manifest Destiny. Examining these forerunners to Transformational Festivals allows us critically interrogate the radical ambitions of today's festival culture by calling attention to how its lineage was entangled with the very *development* of racialized political modernity. They reveal not only how social horizons became inextricably tied to an expansionist, white supremacist, and genocidal settler colonial structure, but also how performance helped invisibilize and naturalize this shift.

[20] John E. Tapia, *Circuit Chautauqua: From Rural Education to Popular Entertainment in Early Twentieth Century America*, McFarland (2008), 3.

A Tale of Two Histories: The "Counter-Culture" and the "Cosmic" Tropes

> *[A]s mythic countercultural spaces, rock festivals continue to hold out the possibility of the emergence of a 'new consciousness'. Hence, the frequent references to, the widespread belief in, the potential for rock festivals to alter our experience of the world, however much we are aware of the commercial imperatives that make them possible in the first place. It is precisely this history of the rock festival as* the *expression of the counterculture which continues to open up a social space for a pop star like Beyoncé to speak of dreaming to become a*
>
> *rock star, but also for her to conceive of inviting her audience to do the same.*
> - Nicholas Gebhardt[21]

Hayden White reminds us that the writing of history relies on typologies like emplotment, argumentation, and ideology to make sense of the past, and organize it into a coherent narrative. These narratives take the form of familiar literary tropes and archetypal genres that corral the messiness and heterogeneity of the past to order.[22] Two such tropes have organized festival history, which reflexively frame how participants, scholars, and journalists approach these events today: the first is a "counter-cultural" trope that sees festivalgoing through the lens of its historical relation to movements of social protest; the second is a "cosmic" trope that envisions festivals as a spiritual connective tissue throughout all of human civilization.

As it relates to literary genres, the "counter-cultural" trope takes the form of a cyclical tragedy: it begins with the emergence of beat culture and outdoor jazz festivals following the end of the Second World War, with the Newport Jazz Festival in the United States (1954) and the Beaulieu Jazz Festival in the UK (1956) often taken as points of

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[21] "'Let there be rock!' Myth and ideology in the rock festivals of the transatlantic counterculture," in *The Pop Festival: History, Music, Media, Culture*, Ed. George McKay, Bloomsbury Academic (2015), 57-58.
[22] Hayden White, *Metahistories: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe*, Edition 1, Baltimore: MD, Johns Hopkins University Press (1975).

origin.[23] It peaks with the rise of the hippies and the seismic events of 1968 in Europe, taking center stage in the US national consciousness with the iconic Woodstock, 1969. Festivals then undergo a period of decline and dormancy in the 1970s and 1980s, defeated by the conservative turn of the mainstream and the fracturing of the political Left—hippies, as the story goes, abandoned their utopian dreams and decided to get jobs. Festivalgoing continued, but as interstitial, nostalgic happenings, rather than coordinated public spectacles with a clear political impact; visions of radically upending society were replaced by compartmentalized single-issue debates or, as Kurt Anderson has recently suggested, a retreat into the "disconnected mysticism" of New Age.[24]

Here, the narrative repeats: from the ashes of hippie radicalism, and in response to the social conservatism of the Thatcher and Reagan administrations, a new festival tradition began to blossom with the aid of innovative technologies and music styles (namely, electronica). With the increasing affordability of air travel, the enactment of neoliberal trade policies that facilitated easy movement abroad and cheaply available goods for building event spaces, and with the internet providing a means of transnational networking, festivalgoing could now transcend national boundaries in favor of global cosmopolitan connections. Psychedelic beach parties in Goa, India attended by globetrotting "freaks" in the late '80s and early '90s intersected with the aesthetics of Europe's rave community (especially its party drug scene, and its experimental production of found spaces) and the industrial art scene and site-specific theatrical

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[23] George McKay, *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance since the Sixties*, London: Verso (1996).

[24] McKay, *Senseless Acts of Beauty*; Kurt Anderson, "How America Lost its Mind," *The Atlantic*, September (2017), accessed online 15 December 2017.

tradition of the US west coast.[25] These elements grafted to the experimental fire rituals begun by the Cacophony Society, which eventually evolved into an art-based desert commune called Burning Man that steadily gained momentum as the beacon for a global festival movement. Burning Man came to signify the new pinnacle of counter-cultural imagination—a new Woodstock, but one designed to be more permanent, more city-like, an institution.

But, as with Woodstock, the insurgent potential of this new generation of events was blunted—this time by once-radical participants succumbing to commodifying and consumerist impulses. Festival culture rose to prominence again, but in the form of massive corporate entities that redeployed the communal and earthy ethos of the beatniks and hippies as stylized nostalgia, and parlayed the values of Peace, Love, Unity, and Respect (PLUR) that cohered the rave scene into advertising strategies of profit-seeking megaventures like Coachella, Bonnaroo, and the Electric Daisy Carnival. Even Burning Man grew from an anarcho-utopian artist colony into the favorite stomping grounds of celebrities and San Francisco tech scenesters.

In this narrative, the popularity, principles, and consumerist aspects of music festivals proceed in waves of utopian longing and subsequent backlash or establishment corruption that ripple back to the 1950s. One example is England's Glastonbury, which, as Roxy Robinson tells it, emerged from the "free festival" tradition of the 1970s (free admission events usually organized around folk music and back-to-the-earth principles), and for much of its history embraced folk values and aesthetics. In the 1990s, facing the economic realities of a consolidated music industry, Glastonbury embraced more

[25] See, for example, *The Institute*, dir. Spencer McCall, *Argot Pictures* documentary film (2013).

mainstream aesthetics and a musical "star system" that increasingly aligned it with corporate culture and "family values." Today, Glastonbury appears in the media as less of an anti-establishment gathering, and more of a Disneyified sex party, where middle class icons like Bridget Jones can get away from the city and "get their groove back" with an anonymous encounter.[26] For Robinson, festivals operate on a continuum between authentic/participatory models and commodified/concert format models. The former harkens back to the idea of the carnival, and represents democratic and subversive potential, while the latter represents capitalist conservatism that tragically captures and contains democratizing energy. She interprets the format of festivals as a heightened symbolic terrain on which historical materialist dialectics play out vis-à-vis the degree to which attendees (figured as the proletarians in relation to bourgeois organizers) can achieve creative control. But if Glastonbury, for Robinson, represents the corruptibility of festivalgoing's innately counter-cultural impulse, the rise of a "DIY scene of amateur-produced music newspapers, zines, non-profit gigs and independent record labels," and an "ethic of user-produced content" has defined a new movement in art that challenges the narrow control of cultural production—in other words, the emerging movement towards niche festivals (which Transformational Festivals represent), appears as a budding source of redemptive potential.[27] In this tale, the "concert model" festival (centered on celebrity acts commanding the unitary focus of the audience) is the villain, while "participatory," "immersive," "interactive," "user-based" art events like Burning Man are the emerging heroes.

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[26] See, for instance, the films *Bridget Jones's Baby*, dir. Sharon Maguire, Universal Pictures 2016; *Kingsman: The Golden Circle*, dir. Matthew Vaugh, 20th Century Fox (2017).

[27] Roxy Robinson, *Music Fesitvals and the Politics of Participation*, London: Routledge (2015), 8.

The counter-cultural trope is repeated in many other narratives: George McKay's *Senseless Acts of Beauty*, uses festivals to trace the remnants of 1960s hippie fervor into the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. He characterizes his work as a recuperation of an anti-establishment ethos that was presumed to have dissipated after the more radical activity of the 1960s.[28] He argues that the class consciousness of 1960s festivalgoers transformed into a solipsistic politics with free festivals and raves, which confined themselves to single-issue campaigns like legalizing marijuana or ecological consciousness. Graham St. John and Anthony D'Andrea describe the transnational development of a raving counterculture as a reaction against strict laws like the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act in the United Kingdom (1994), and the Reducing Americans' Vulnerability to Ecstasy (RAVE) Act in the United States (2003).[29] In fact, they see the rise of a "global raving counterculture" as a critique of the nation-state model altogether; instead, participants align themselves with "tribes" organized by aesthetic disposition, rather than location or political affiliation.[30] Participants flocked, and continue to flock, to places like Goa, Ibiza, and Costa Rica, where less regulation offered lucrative financial potential for event organizers, and opportunities for particular forms of lifestyle anarchism celebrated by participants. They depict these communities as heroically experimental, always forced into a defensive posture to combat the neutralizing effects "authorities ('cops'), outsiders

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[28] McKay points specifically to the retreat to single-issue direct action and New Age politics from the 1960s student protests, anti-Vietnam protests, and the women's movement. *Senseless Acts of Beauty*, London: Verso (1996)), 1-2.

[29] The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994 introduced new powers to police for the prevention of terrorism, sexual offenses, and 'public order'. Its section 63, 'Powers in Relation to Raves,' defined a rave as a succession of repetitive beats, and gave police powers to seize soundsystems and generators, and to stop raves by force. Robinson, *Music Festivals and the Politics of Participation*, 35-36. The RAVE Act (2003) was legislated as the Illicit Drug Anti-Proliferation Act, and involved penalties for promoters and club owners.

[30] See Michel Maffesoli, *The Time of Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society*, SAGE Publications ltd. (1996).

('tourists') and conventions ('cheese') that may otherwise actualise the reach of the 'mainstream' into the *free space* of the event."[31] D'Andrea and St. John position festivalgoers as heroic "psychonauts"—electively fugitive, but perpetually in danger of succumbing to mainstream forces seeking to claw them back to earth.

This heroic sense of radical libertarianism became mythologized in the event of Burning Man, which began in 1986 as a small bonfire ritual on a San Francisco beach; when it moved to the Black Rock Desert in Nevada in the early 1990s, its organizers were heavily influenced by anarchist philosopher Hakim Bey's treatise *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone*. The T.A.Z. argued for a libertarian form of counter-cultural politics that relied not on confrontation, but on a "tactic of disappearance."[32] Relying on newly available networking technologies that could presumably evade State monitoring (a romantic outlook that seems absurd today), Bey and the Burning Man organizers he inspired envisioned temporary, secluded spaces where people could gather, live intensely for a brief period of time, and then disappear before their rebellious energy could be crushed by the State or subsumed into the capitalist mainstream. But Burning Man's yearly iterability, and its organizers' decision to continuously grow the event's size and media presence, created tension with the principles of the TAZ. This tension frames the documentary *Burning Man Festival*, which pits expansionist voices (like founder Larry Harvey), against those who wished to keep the event under-the-radar, more

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[31] Graham St. John, "Psytrance: An Introduction", in *The Local Scenes and Global Culture of Psytrance*, Ed. Graham St. John, London: Routledge (2010), 2.

[32] Hakim Bey, *TAZ: The Temporary Autonomous Zone*, Autonomedia (1991), accessed on Hermetic Library on 15 December, 2017, https://hermetic.com/bey/taz_cont. Hakim Bey is writer Peter Lamborn Wilson. The pen name of *Hakim Bey* is derived from il-Hakim, the alchemist-king, with 'Bey' a further nod to Moorish science. The racialized self-imagination in relation to theorizing on space and aesthetics provides an interesting accent to my discussion here.

true to an impulse of revolution through elective marginality. Bey's theory still occupies a place in the Burning Man mythos,[33] but it belies the event's current size, fame, and cultural capital.

While Burning Man is just one iconic event within a vast and disparate festival ecology, this narrative of how counter-cultural energy can be contained or warped through massification—which gets differently articulated by scholars, journalists, organizers, and participants—speaks to a wider anxiety about the ability of festival culture to act critically vis-à-vis wider society. Yousef Baig, for instance, laments that "Something that was once a counterculture, hippie escape from the lulls of the rat race is now a key cog in mainstream society and almost a rite of passage for young people," and points to the rise of hierarchical corporate entities like AEG and Live Nation to explain the destruction of a "grassroots" festival tradition.[34] Festivals moved "from counterculture to subculture," with the hippie being replaced as the prototypical festivalgoer by the hipster—a figure that similarly rejected mainstream looks and lifestyles, but which nonetheless remained a "willing consumer."[35]

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[33] John Bell writes: "The third primary influence was a written philosophy collected in a book called *TAZ* [… which] devised a very compelling theory of creative freedom and anarchistic collaboration that required participants to find a physical space far away from the cloying, civilization-engendered mechanisms of control. They would bring with them everything they needed, and for a period of time do whatever they wanted with absolutely no rules, regulations, laws, or other examples of social, political, economic control, or any other aspect of human oppression. They would then pack up and leave quickly before being noticed (and consequently, mandatorily crushed by the institutions of humankind), only to regroup in total freedom at a later unannounced time in another secret place." Summer Burkes, "Essential Burning Man History: William Binzen & John Law talk Desert Sitworks", *Burning Man Journal*, 27 July 2016, accessed 15 December 2017, https://journal.burningman.org/2016/07/black-rock-city/building-brc/essential-burning-man-history-william-binzen-john-law-talk-desert-siteworks-fri-july-29/.

[34] Yousef Baig, "Inside the Rapidly-Rising, Bubble-Bursting Culutre of Music Festivals", *Live for Live Music*, 17 Mar 2016, https://liveforlivemusic.com/features/inside-the-rapidly-rising-bubble-bursting-culture-of-music-festivals/.

[35] Cody C. Delistraty, "Commercializing the Counterculture: How the Summer Music Festival Went Mainstream", *Pacific Standard Magazine*, 24 July 2014, https://psmag.com/social-justice/commercializing-counterculture-summer-music-festival-went-mainstream-86334.

The counter-cultural trope finds its critical import in attempting to reanimate the radical energy and revolutionary potential of the 1960s. To the credulous, festivals appear to provide models of political empowerment that wrest democratic control of creative experience from cultural gatekeepers in a milieu of rampant commodification, consumerism, and integrated capitalism. This desire to reclaim an idealized form of liberal democratic participation takes its cue from the contemporaneous optimism that attended the rise of the internet, social networking technologies, and participatory culture.[36] The hope was that, by augmenting human interconnectivity and creating new pathways to (creative) production, these developments would result in a subsequent political emancipation by creating a heightened sense of citizen engagement with governance. This optimism, of course, has been roundly critiqued by scholars like Jodi Dean, who illustrates that networked technologies today still rely on corporate consolidation (similar to the music industry itself); furthermore, the "fantasy" of democratic participation's liberatory potential in information, entertainment, and communication technologies reinforces conditions of "communicative capitalism" that paradoxically "capture resistance and intensify global capitalism."[37] This goes to show that the valorization of a counter-cultural mythos, and the reflexive representation of festivals as idealized spaces for it to play out, can be easily rerouted to reinforce the very social system it is seen to critique. As an analytic, the counter-cultural narrative characterizes festival culture as being fundamentally oppositional, perpetually and

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[36] See Manuel Castells, *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*, Cambridge: Polity (2012); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, New York: Penguin Books (2004); Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*, London and New York: Routledge (2012).

[37] Jodi Dean, *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press (2009), 2.

electively marginal.[38] It relies on a populist structural binary that pits the State against the People, and thus has a distinctly libertarian feel to it.

The story of counter-cultural festivals is also historically shortsighted, with establishment of a new world order following the cataclysm of the Second World War providing a convenient origin point. Even scholars searching for the aesthetico-philosophical origins of the counterculture usually only go back as far as the turn of the century. Robinson, for instance, traces precedents for the art-based communalism of Woodstock to the Maverick Art Colony of the early 1900s (which was also located in Woodstock, New York);[39] in *Music, Power, and Politics* Annie Janeiro Randall argues that "proto-hippies" emerged in Germany's *Wandervogel* movement at the beginning of the 20th century, which looked to Nietzsche, Goethe, and Hesse to support their rejection of urbanization and desire to return to nature and spiritual life.[40] Generally, though, the emergence of the open-air festival phenomenon is treated as synonymous with the emergence of rock and roll as it became available as a form of mass media. Ideological roots can be traced, but *repertoires* appear original and authentic—in addition to being

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[38] The first contemporary usage of the (approximate) term was written by John Milton Yinger, who defines *contraculture* as "wherever the normative system of a group contains, as a primary element, a theme of conflict with the values of the total society, where personality variables are directly involved in the development and maintenance of the group's values, and wherever its norms can be understood only by reference to the relationships of the group to a surrounding dominant culture." "Contraculture and Subculture," *American Sociological Review,* 25.5 (1960), 629.

[39] The Maverick Art Colony was an artistic commune that hosted "trailblazing outdoor summer festivals" from 1915 to 1931. Photos of the event depict men and women wearing angel, devil, and gypsy costumes, scenic décor, and large-scale art installations that "would not be out of place at a contemporary music festival". The Maverick Art Colony helps us think about how the practices of camp meetings and outdoor spectacles transitioned to a festival tradition centered in an antihegemonic space of "artists, poets and 'free thinkers'". Robinson, *Music Festivals and the Politics of Participation:* 26-27.

[40] Britta Sweers, "The Power to Influence Minds: German Folk Music During the Nazi Era and After", in *Music, Power, and Politics,* Ed. Annie J. Randall, New York and London: Routledge (2005), pp. 65-86.

historically short-sited, this also has the effect of abstracting the labor of transmission that preserved festivalgoing traditions.

The other dominant narrative of festival culture intersects with the countercultural trope, but takes the literary form of a pastoral epic. It locates festival culture as part of a kaleidoscope of events and ideologies throughout human history that utilize ecstatic activity and the reversal of social hierarchy as a wellspring of resistance to oppression, conservatism, and monotony. I call this narrative the "cosmic" trope, since it locates music festivals today as part of a lineage of festal activities that have occurred throughout the entirety of human history, foregrounding a transhistorical sense of human authenticity that enunciates itself through the folk tradition. For instance, in the forward to Ken Goffman's *Counterculture through the Ages: From Abraham to Acid House*, famed LSD experimenter Timothy Leary begins:

> "Counterculture—as this book demonstrates—is a perennial phenomenon, probably as old as civilization, and possibly as old as culture itself. In fact, many of the figures who have come to occupy prominent positions in the schoolbooks—from Socrates to Jesus, Galileo, Martin Luther, and Mark Twain—were countercultural in their time."[41]

Here, counterculture is a logic that connects a most disparate group of icons. Notably, these are all men who have been canonized and lionized as part of Western cultural history in areas from religion, to science, to writing, to philosophy. This is not atypical. The cosmic trope frequently attempts to transform the historically-situated counter-culture that developed in the United States and Europe in the mid-20th century into a

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[41] Leary is a legendary figure in the festival community for helping to popularize LSD for its therapeutic effects. He popularized catchphrases that promoted his philosophy, such as "turn on, tune in, drop out", "set and setting", and "think for yourself and question authority". His notoriety is such that, even today, his son, Zach Leary, is frequently invited to give workshops at festivals. Over 300 people (myself included) attended a panel discussion on "Indigenous Intelligence and Plant Medicine" in which he participated at Lightning in a Bottle 2016. Timothy Leary, "Forward", *Counterculture through the Ages: From Abraham to Acid House*, Ken Goffman and Dan Joy, New York: Villard Books (2004), x.

positive proto-human truth by citing popular and (even mythologized) movements and people. Barbara Ehrenreich, tracing the history of ecstatic rituals and festivities, passes from Greek and Roman mysteries, to the emergence of Christianity, to medieval carnivals, to imperial encounters with the indigenous groups in the New World, and eventually to rock and roll. The book's structure details an historical trajectory that relies on a perpetual cycle of outbreaks of ecstatic social performance (which she centers on the act of dancing intensely outdoors and in public), conservative backlash, and the heroic rebirth of ecstasy in another time and space. Her project is motivated by a sense of loss that attends a secularized modernity: "If ecstatic rituals and festivities were once so widespread, why is so little left of them today?"[42] For Ehrenreich, ecstatic activity—dancing, singing, moving wildly, and generally acting against social mores—expresses a healthy, liberating form of human authenticity, an affective dimension that cannot help but emerge despite the best efforts of civilizing forces mechanized to implement cultural sameness: The efficiencies of colonial administration were undermined by the ecstasy of indigenous ritual; the solemnity of Fascist mass rallies led to a resurgence in youth vitality with the "rock rebellion." In this narrative, the best aspects of humanity survive—despite all odds and in the face of man's greatest inhumanity to man—in the interstices of secluded gatherings that elicit affective extremes.

Three main theories undergird the cosmic trope of festival historiography: Victor Turner's theory of liminality as it relates to his anthropological study of Ndembu ritual and its application to the field of social performance; literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of carnival and the carnivalesque; and sociologist Émile Durkheim's concepts of

[42] Barbara Ehrenreich, *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy*, New York: Metropolitan Books (2006), 19.

collective effervescence and sacred/secular. These theories are also frequently deployed to support the counter-cultural trope. An analytic thematic that ties them together is that they seek to understand fundamental processes of social unification by looking away from modern society and towards pre-modern or archaic roots; Turner and Durkheim use ethnographic study of indigenous tribes to discover primal elements of humanity, while Bakhtin looks to the medieval carnival to identify a proto-cultural rebellious spirit that binds common people together in contradistinction to social ordering and authority. These theories are often placed alongside one another as a way of outlining festivals as special transitory sites that allow for a reencounter with authenticity as a salve to the anomie or social strictures of quotidian life.[43]

We see all of these texts at work in Alessandro Falassi's oft-cited introduction to the edited volume *Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival*. Falassi begins by enunciating the transhistorical scope of his project, while also situating the object of the festival within the anthropological gaze: "Festival is an event, a social phenomenon, encountered in virtually all human cultures. The colorful variety and dramatic intensity of its dynamic choreographic and aesthetic aspects, the signs of deep meaning underlying them, its historical roots and the involvement of the 'natives' have always attracted the attention of casual visitors, have consumed travelers and men of letters alike."[44] The "natives" here are "native informants," gesturing, interestingly, to an insider/outsider

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[43] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky, Bloomington: Indiana University Press (1984) [1968]; Turner, *The Ritual Process;* Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Oxford University Press (2001) [1912]; *Weekend Societies: Electronc Dance Music Festivals and Event Cultures*, Ed. Graham St. John, Bloomsbury Academic (2017); George McKay, "Introduction," *The Pop Festival: History, Music, Media, Culture*, Ed. George McKay, Bloomsbury Academic (2015), Ehrenreich, *Dancing in the Streets* (2006).

[44] Alessandro Falassi, "Festival: Definition and Morphology", in *Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festival*, Ed. Alessandro Falassi, Albuquerque: NM, University of New Mexico Press (1986), 1.

gaze in which festivalgoers' fascination with their particular aesthetics and values seems to stand in absolute contradistinction to the established social world. This tradition of examining festivals follows an avenue of early performance studies scholarship that used social dramas as a legend for reading underlying symbolic insights into different cultures.[45] In more contemporary scholarship, festivals are taken as contemporary sites for the re-emergence of the sacred amidst the spiritual disenchantment initiated in the shift to political modernity.[46] This provides a justification for festivals as a societal need, a critical move designed to maneuver against dismissals of the party atmosphere as marking an object unworthy of academic inquiry.

One explanation for the reflexive deployment of counter-cultural and cosmic tropes to describe festival culture is that they both appear to hold a redemptive capacity that aligns with liberal values: the former because it outlines festivals as an almost biological human need, and therefore offers the potential to reveal one's authentic self in a context of extreme capitalist alienation; and the latter because it offers a potential line of flight from perceived social anomie within consumer capitalist societies. This makes them remarkably suitable not only as ways of (implicitly or explicitly) demonstrating the stakes of scholarly work, but also as potential promotional material for organizers themselves.

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[45] Victor Turner, "Social Dramas and Stories About Them", *Critical Inquiry*, 7.1 (1980), pp. 141-168; Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight", *Daedalus*, 101.1 (Winter, 1972), pp. 1-37.

[46] See, for instance: Lee Gilmore, *Theatre in a Crowded Fire: Ritual and Spirituality at Burning Man*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press (2010); Robert V. Kozinets and John F. Sherry Jr., "Dancing on Common Ground: Exploring the Sacred at Burning Man", in *Rave Culture and Religion*, Ed. Graham St. John, London: Routledge (2004), pp. 287-303; Rachel Bowditch, *On the Edge of Utopia: Performance and Ritual at Burning Man*, New York: Seagull Books (2010); Gabriel Bar-Haim, "The Dispersed Sacred: Anomie and the Crisis of Ritual", in *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture*, Eds. Stewart M. Hoover and Knut Lundby, London: SAGE (1997).

Yet I also want to call attention to a troubling anti-modernist sensibility that inhabits these tropes, which often verges on a fetishizing primitivism that locates passion, zeal, and authenticity in bodies that appear to *escape* (even temporarily) civil society. This same quality was to be found in 18th and 19th century European philosophy, which looked to Nature, and to those who were presumed to be closest to Nature (indigenes) as an expression of poetic and artistic ideals. As indigenous studies scholars like Deloria have shown, this philosophy came about especially through the remote forms of contact metropoles began to have with indigenous peoples via the colonial Age of Discovery, and helped justify colonialism through scholarly projects that linked a discovery of those that exist outside modernity with a discovery of Truth. I suggest that the counter-cultural and cosmic tropes retain a degree of this imperial gaze, not only because they frequently deploy anthropological methods that emerged from this time, but because they rest upon an implicit modern/anti-modern binary in which the festival exists contrapuntally to the responsibilities, rhythms, and consumer culture of modern society; festivals appear to presence a desirable energy that looks remarkably similar to what Marta Savigliano terms "Passion"—a culturally-inflected sense of identity capital that modern societies usually ascribe to those on the outside. The cosmic trope renders a racialized concept of Passion into a transferable human trait that modern people can "tap into" again if they find the right setting, and the festival appears as such a setting because it theatrically harkens to a primal human-nature connection.

But the practice of making festival, and festivalgoing, has not always been synonymous with revelry, hedonism, ecstasy, and abandon. In 19th century US outdoor camping culture order, efficiency, and decorum were absolutely intertwined with the

affective intensity and sense of occasion that accompanied communal events. By writing camp meetings and Chautauqua into the history of festival culture, I attempt to complicate several common (even reflexive) ideological associations we have about music festivals, which express our own contemporary longings: radical resistance, Dionysian abandon, encounters with the authentic. It may be for this reason that these event formations never factor into historical narratives of festivity—perhaps the evangelism and temperance of camp meetings, and the religious intellectualism of Chautauqua appear too culturally conservative to reflect the "sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll" atmosphere that form the mythic story of festivals most today want to tell. In understanding the braided counter-cultural and cosmic tropes of festival history, we prod ourselves to think critically about the values we *wish* to invest in festival culture today, understanding that they are as much expressions of ourselves as they are of historical fact.

A Speculative Genealogy of US Festival Culture: 1800-1945

A speculative genealogy asks: were there festies in the nineteenth century? Or something like them? What would such a community look like? What might they have handed down that shaped today's festival culture? What are the gestures and habits related to festivalgoing we now take for granted, but which had to be developed and sustained over time through a labor of transmission? How does attentiveness to the context in which these gestures and habits formed reveal the tacit ideological and racial projects to which they contributed? As a heterological encounter that forces us to self-reflexively acknowledge our own historicity, what does examining this particular festival

genealogy vis-à-vis the familiar counter-cultural story of postwar origins reveal about epistemological shifts in how outdoor communal events made meaning then and now?[47]

As it turns out, there are precedents for multi-day outdoor communal camping events that, like Transformational Festivals today, were organized around music, spirituality, the theatrical production of place, and encountering nature. Their participants, like festies, interpreted the social intensity of such experiences as means to initiate profound life changes, to construct an intimate community, and to disseminate their principles widely—beyond the event context. In their social experimentation with the aesthetics of improvised space-making in natural settings, as well as their prompting of a celebratory sociality, these festivalesque formations exemplify germinal examples of a participatory creative labor used to construct immersive and imaginative event-worlds—a labor related to producing a value-added experience of land itself, which I call "enchanting performance," and discuss in greater detail in chapter two. Also, like today's festival scene, these activities existed as a networked formation, with migrating crowds, specialized niche events, and a thriving subcultural star system. As distinctly *American* institutions that arose during a period of national formation, spread during a time of Jacksonian expansionism, and morphed into developmental and ideological apparatuses in the postbellum years, they participated decidedly in the growth of a national consciousness and the racial project that attended it. Dispersed from the east coast to the frontier territories, camp meetings and Chautauquas created a cultural infrastructure throughout the United States that performed a capillary-level function in developing a cohesive idea of Whiteness, rehearsing its right to imprint itself upon indigenous land as

[47] Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press (1986).

a function of Manifest Destiny, and to continuously (re)sediment settler colonialism as a social structure.

This approach to the role of performance and land as it relates to American expansionism owes much to Susan Tenneriello's work on 19th century scenic spectacles. She argues that emergent visual technologies like dioramas, immersive scenic displays, and site-specific spectacle "animate[d] landscape on historical platforms of sensory media," and "amend[ed] territorial conquest and regional development to monumentalize the phantom memories of the country's ongoing destiny."[48] In other words, theatricality in and with nature operated as a scenic technology that solidified Americans' theocratic expropriation of land at the level of perception itself, while simultaneously producing a distinct sense of national sovereignty and identitarian distance from England. Elizabeth Dillon has called attention to how this process—which she calls "commoning"—was critical to the construction of a racialized and classed national imaginary. She argues that theatrical scenarios were crucial to American identity's emergence as a White nationalist idea, evolving from a formerly creole identity that self-consciously differed from the White British metropole due to slave and colonist cohabitation. A White-national American "people" emerged through "a theatrics of indigenization performed by way of invoking, erasing, and rewriting a history of settler colonialism[.]"[49] This was linked to a class project that established Whiteness as a variegated identity to which only certain Whites (particularly those of the right religious denomination) had complete access. I consider the outdoor camping culture of Chautauquas and camp meetings—especially in

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[48] Susan Tenneriello, *Spectacle Culture and American Identity, 1815-1940*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan (2013), 2, 49.

[49] Elizabeth Dillon, *New World Drama: The Performative Commons*, Durham: Duke University Press (2014), 28.

the way that their cyclical nature built events into traditions—an important mode of *social reproduction* that imbued this racial logic into the hearts and minds of participants.

Camp Meetings

Although there is some precedence of camp meetings in England, Ireland, and Scotland in the late-1700s, this mass-religious outdoor tradition is generally discussed as a uniquely American novelty that began in the frontier territories of Kentucky and Tennessee in the 1790s.[50] Camp meetings utilized a format that combined the social element of primitive camping (in the early days, participants even slept side-by-side on the ground), with an immersive religious setting sequestered from the daily world. The tradition began when, lacking Church infrastructure in newly settled areas, itinerant preachers would travel on a regional circuit and gather people from the nearby towns to take part in mass religious rites and conversions. Camp meetings were thus initially conceived as instruments of efficiency, an early model of religious mass production.

Camp meetings integrated the informal style and custom of frontier people with an emotional, boisterous form of preaching to which the outdoor setting lent itself. By all accounts, the fiery emotionalism of this preaching style is what gave camp meetings their signature atmosphere. The basic layout of a camp consisted of a raised tabernacle at the center of the grounds, from which preachers would give vent, with long rows of benches set before it to provide seating for participants. Tents that housed participants were laid out in vast concentric rings around the tabernacle. The location of one's tent corresponded to the level of one's devotion—those farthest away from the main activities

[50] Rev. A.P. Mead, *Manna in the Wilderness: The Grove and its Altar, Offerings and Thrilling Incidents*, third edition, Philadelphia: Perkinpine and Higgins (1860); Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., And They All Sang Hallelujah: Plain-Folk Camp-Meeting Religion, 1800-1845, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press (1974).

were referred to as the "devil's camp," and this area usually housed those who had not yet converted.

A good deal of writing on camp meetings examines the way their architecture seamlessly integrated the natural environment. Meeting grounds converted the contained, semi-private experience of church spirituality into a public, social event renowned for its affective intensity, and infamous for its unruliness; this unique atmosphere was seen to augment the power of religious messaging, and thus prepare not-yet-Christianized souls to become part of a "people" by entering the flock. As Ellen Weiss has suggested, camp meetings practiced an "eccentric place-making" to transform land into "a peculiar place, a magical environment, a work of art." (1) This was, in part, achieved by the creation of environmentally-located scenic effects created by both the designers of the space and the improvised activities of participants. Camp meetings became iconic because of an *atmospheric quality* seen as a vehicle for instituting profound life changes, which were usually theatricalized and communalized by rites like baptisms or conversions taking place on-site on a mass basis. The result was an early example of the kind of creative place-making that resembles the immersive environments and theme camps seen in festivals today:

> Lamps, pine torches, fireflies, and stars all mingled into another light-filled vision. For Thomas Low Nichols, a night revival scene elicited special attention. The camp was lighted by lanterns in the trees and blazing fires of pine-knots, the scene becoming strange and beautiful. Lights shone in the tents and gleamed in the forest, and rude, melodious Methodist hymns rang through the woods. There was a glittering phosphorescent gleam from roots rubbed raw by the feet of the crowd, a moon, and the melancholy scream of a loon across the lake. 'In this wild and solemn night-scene, the voice of the preacher has double power, and the harvest of converts is increased.' 'Firestands,' or 'fire altars,' a common lighting device, increased this effect. […] Camp meetings at sites

> which had to be approached by water offered another range of psychic dislocations to aid religious experience. The passage increased the distance from worldly matters, and the sound of lapping waters on shores close to the preaching area added to the joyous mixture of natural sensations.[51]

While first-person accounts of camp meetings do not tend to discuss the events in aesthetic terms (they normally list the number of people present, highlight impressive sermons, and credulously attest to a generalized sense of social uplift), Weiss cobbles together speckles of detail from numerous sources to speculate on the experience of *being there*, and renders them into a "night-scene" that attests to how camp meetings scenographically rendered bodies amenable to proselytizing. Conversion was facilitated not only through haptic effects that sensorially dislocated participants, but also through a nominal narrativization of place that allowed the grounds to echo with a divine quality that appeared consonant with the Christian pastoral cosmology. This place-making acted as a dramaturgical cue that allowed participants to visualize themselves imaginatively occupying religious scenes, with the camp meeting operating as a metaphysical opening to the Biblical world.

For example, one camp meeting custom (which, as we will see in chapter two, appears remarkably consistent with contemporary Transformational Festivals) was the practice of adopting play names for campgrounds that prodded participants to collectively imagine their own participation in biblical places and events. Campgrounds called themselves "Canaan," "Zion," or "Beulah Land"; Wesleyan Grove's campground had a bridge that traversed a pond, so that moving across it became known as "crossing over

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[51] Ellen Weiss, *City in the Woods: the Life and Design of an American Camp Meeting on Martha's Vineyard*, New York: Oxford University Press (1987), 11-12.

[the River] Jordan."[52] A thirty and one-half acre campground near Denville, New Jersey was given the biblical name "Mount Tabor," and its streets and avenues named for bishops, prominent clergy, and lay persons; two large, open-sided tents that housed prayer meetings and classes for children were named "Bethel" and "Ebenezer."[53] Clearly, an important—if not necessarily explicit—part of the camp meeting experience included imagining oneself as part of a biblical story, and specularly mapping the Holy Land onto the geographic space of settled territory.

This divine atmospheric quality was aided by embodied repertoires on the part of preachers and parishioners alike. By all accounts, revivals were known for being rowdy and boisterous affairs, an aspect that likely developed from their outdoor setting and large crowds, which called for a fervent and intense evangelism scenario. The excitement that issued from the tabernacle was mirrored and intensified by parishioners. A number of common (perhaps even standardized) camp meeting participatory repertoires accompanied sermons: *the falling exercise*, where participants would let out a loud scream and fall to the ground as if dead; *the jerks*, where one's head jerked rapidly back and forth and to the sides when taken by the spirit; *the rolling exercise*, where people would fall to the ground and roll back and forth in the mud like dogs; *the dancing exercise*, a never-ending series of steps and retreats that would continue for hours until participants dropped from exhaustion; *the laughing exercise*, where a solemn-faced

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[52] Ibid., 8.

[53] Robert D. Simpson, "Early Meetings and Mount Tabor," in Camp Tabor: A Story of Child Life in the Woods, Mary Harriott Norris, New York: Phillips and Hunt and Cincinnati: Cranston and Sloan (1874).

subject would suddenly burst into uncontrollable fits of laughter; *the singing exercise*, which consisted of the full-chested belting out of songs.[54]

Such scenes of affective overflow helped characterize camp meetings as libidinal affairs where one could embody passion itself. This reverberated beyond the act of sermonizing to imbue event grounds with an infectious prurience. Much to the chagrin of organizers, camp meetings were notorious for sexual promiscuity. As Lee Sandin writes:

> In the pervasive atmosphere of extreme excitement, people weren't all that careful to make a distinction between religious ecstasy and sexual hunger. The campgrounds were notoriously good places for prostitutes to do business; among the tents of the hawkers and peddlers around the margins of the camp would often be full-service brothels. But at the height of their religious transports, many campgoers would simply go off into the woods together, day or night, in complicated and impromptu combinations. According to one scandalized report from a vigilance committee, a woman at one camp meeting invited six men to meet with her in the woods at the same time. It was a standard joke that the local population invariably spiked nine months after any meeting. Those children were known throughout the river valley as camp meeting babies.[55]

This sexual excitement was undoubtedly part of why camp meetings were so popular, but it also gestures towards a more complicated understanding of camp meeting space than typically acknowledged by organizers, who were primarily concerned with the growth of the faith. While the spiritual activities around the tabernacle formed the social core of the event, they also inspired a thriving peripheral world that was usually unaccounted for in official camp meeting reports. Because part of the camp meeting idea included creating a sensually extravagant social center that would inspire outsiders to join the flock, the presence of a peripheral "Devils' Camp" was intrinsic to the affair, marking a social outsider status that could then be shed by joining the center. This outsider status was

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[54] Lee Sandin, *Wicked River: The Mississippi When it Last Ran Wild,* New York: Random House (2010), pp. 95-96.
[55] Ibid.

located in the "undeveloped" part of the grounds (away from the architectural marvel of the "city in the woods") and thus was more associated with an untamed state of nature.[56] Thus, while camp meetings expressed a degree of primitivist longing by escaping to the woods, they also performed an implicit development narrative in which the natural world—and the "baser" human drives associated with it—slowly moved towards the "civilization" at the center. This civilizing narrative speaks to both a construction of White communities with insider/outsider status (a variegated articulation of Whiteness), as well as to an implicit drive to develop land, and the people who occupy it, from a state of nature. Vigilance committees who policed the devil's camp—perhaps analogues to today's festival security—rehearsed this sense of yoking "wild" urges in the name of promoting public decorum dictated by the People (the camp's social center).

While the action of the camp meeting center has dominated the historical record, traces of the tensive relationship between the center and periphery can be found. For example, Mary Harriott Norris's 1874 novella *Camp Tabor*, which discusses a Massachusetts camp meeting ground, relies on Norris's own recollections of attending camp meetings to narratively recreate the experience of being there through the eyes of a child. It creates a vivid account of the *sensory* dimension of camp meeting activity—like what it was like "to hear the tabernacle bell, to smell the wood fires, and to walk to evening meetings beneath the gas lamps along tree-lined streets."[57] In doing so, it also uniquely highlights the creative labor of developing camp space from a state of nature, and marks this labor as a joyful participatory act that helps designate oneself as part of

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[56] Keith Dwayne Lyon, "God's Brush Arbor: Camp Meeting Culture during the Second Great Awakening, 1800-1860", doctoral dissertation, University of Tennessee: Knoxville (2016), 304-305.

[57] Megan D. Simpson, "Introduction to *Camp Tabor*," *Camp Tabor*, Madison: NJ, Northern New Jersey Historical and Archival Society, 1995, 21.

the People formed on the grounds. For instance, upon first arriving at "Mount Tabor," (the Galileean site of Jesus's transfiguration in the New Testament) the protagonist, Bentie, decorates her campsite with a piazza-railing and garden, "*artistically* placing [m]osses, ferns, and flowers" and constructing "a rustic railing [with] old trees rejuvenated by their quaint and novel decorations" (emphasis added).[58] The matter-of-fact nature with which she does this aesthetic action indicates that participant-driven beautification of camp meeting grounds was a naturalized practice—perhaps one that was not so different from the "themed camping" of today's festivals.

Camp Tabor's narrative style attempts to evoke experiential memories, and link them to the project of spiritual transformation at the heart of these events; rather than focus on how architectural and programmatic designs facilitated the efficacy of camp meetings (as most archival accounts do), the novella focuses on children moving interstitially around these designs. This allows Norris to articulate how camp meetings both *enabled* a libidinal quality via the free movement throughout event space, and also *discouraged* this freedom in favor of disciplined practices of the center.

Race is heavily imbricated throughout the novella via the character of Belle, a black woman "whose good humor and largeness of mind and spirit allow her to lead [the white protagonists] to an understanding of a goodness and kindness far beyond the pious language [of sermons] that the child continually repeats without any understanding."[59]Although Belle is a devout Christian, and takes part in camp meeting activities of the center, her camp site is located on the outskirts of the meeting grounds,

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[58] Mary Harriott Norris, *Camp Tabor: A Story of Child Life in the Woods*, New York: Phillips and Hunt and Cincinnati: Cranston and Sloan (1874), 30.
[59] Ibid., 27.

and her time is mostly spent cooking for other camp parishioners in order to supplement her income. The children protagonists happen upon Belle's tent while frolicking in the woods, and continuously return between official camp meeting programming; but by the end of the camp meeting, they have internalized the importance of spiritual devoutness, and spend the final few days wholly engrossed with the activities of the center. *Camp Tabor*, as a fictional rendition of the sedimented logic of camp meetings, outlines how the geography of campgrounds and the established repertoires of camp meeting participation performed a narrative of development; though taking place in a natural setting, the construction of campgrounds rehearsed overcoming a state of nature in favor of the establishment of site of civilization. An implicit notion of a proper Whiteness was imbricated in this action: non-Christians occupied the periphery, but moved to the center upon giving themselves over to God's word.

Spiritualist Camp Meetings

The camp meeting format proved remarkably flexible for many forms of Christianity throughout the 19th century. From the early years of the Great Kentucky Revival camp meetings at Cane Ridge, Shaker missionaries were present to spread the gospel as well, and ended up beginning around a half-dozen religious communities in Kentucky and Ohio. Shakers believed that a new spiritual age was close at hand, and began a tradition where "a bewildering series of spirits of all ethnicities and political perspectives and persuasions appeared and disappeared" among them.[60] This belief in the presence of spirits of the dead—transmitted through mediums and séances—led to the emergence of Spiritualism in the 1850s, a Protestant denomination premised on the

[60] Bridget Bennett, *Transatlantic Spiritualism and Nineteenth Century American Literature*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan (2007), 120.

existence and tangibility of the supernatural. Spiritualists believed that souls continued to exist after the death of the physical body, and that communication with them was possible. Spirit mediums were able to carry on such communication, and the most popular ones were able to generate the massive interest necessary to draw participants to camp meetings.

Bridget Bennett argues that racial othering was a foundational component of both Shaker and Spiritualist conjurings. "Indians" (I use the term of the times in order to highlight their status as a *representation* of native people) were paradigmatic subjects of these conjurings, and were envisaged as "being involved in a process of vanishing and of becoming effaced through the enactment of ideological and political campaigns against them in the name of manifest destiny."[61] The Indians of conjurings were informed by the theatrical sentimentalism of melodrama and its stock character of the "noble savage," a fetishized hero whose proudness, bravery, honesty, and intimacy with nature earned him respect from White colonists—but whose story almost always ended in defeat as a function of imperialist nostalgia that "mourn[ed] the passing of what [colonists] themselves had transformed," rather than prompt meaningful empathy.[62] Conjurings of Indians helped to stage this idea of Indianness as an apparitional presence that granted Whites access to a world of spiritual truth; Shakers and Spiritualists projected onto Indian spirits their own sense of marginality and persecution in order to claim a sense of authentic connection with the land of conquest. Indians certainly appeared in their apparitional form in Spiritualist camp meetings when they began in the 1860s, and we

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[61] Ibid., 124.

[62] Renato Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia", *Representations*, 26 (Spring, 1989), pp. 107-122, 108.

might surmise how the presence of these spirits in the natural setting of the camp meeting might have profoundly naturalized participants' sense of belonging on conquered land.

Spiritualist camp meetings modulated the traditional architecture of meeting grounds, which to that point tended to be constructed around the singular—almost panoptic—centerpiece of the raised pulpit, with concentric rows of tents surrounding. Spiritualist camp meetings utilized a more dispersed event space;[63] although their main draws were famous mediums who (like evangelizing preachers) traveled an event circuit, much of participants' time was spent in semi-private activities happening throughout the campgrounds. The production of these meeting grounds (often through participants' decoration of their own sites) scenographically rendered the land into a heightened atmosphere amenable to the facilitation of conjurings. The following lengthy account from a Spiritualist camp meeting articulates this scenographic quality, painting it as affectively sublime; but while this sublimity appears as a disorienting group sensibility to outsiders, the account claims that it is possible to acclimate to it, and become naturalized as part of the alternative community:

> "To a visitor who has never before beheld, or taken part in such a scene, a Spiritualistic camp meeting produces an indescribable feeling of strangeness and bewilderment, which scarcely allows him to determine whether he is under the influence of pleasure or pain. The gatherings are so vast, the scenes so new, and each member of the busy crowd seems so intent on pursuing his own special avocation, that a sense of loneliness, even of desolation, such as if often experienced by strangers in thronged cities, almost invariably possesses the sensitive mind. Gradually, the multitude of objects crowding in upon view on every side, arrange themselves into order, and then the sight is one of endless interest and amusement. To a lounger passing through the various groups, some

[63] Anna Andrzejewski argues that the layout of these camp meetings "worked to direct the gazes between and among buildings and their users," creating a more horizontal mode of visuality than indicated by the raised pulpit. "Gazes of hierarchy at camp meetings", *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, 8 (2000), pp. 138-157, 139.

> arranged in picturesque knots at the tent doors, others reclining beneath shady trees, or stretched out upon grassy knolls, the fragments of conversation that meet the ear are as curious and heterogeneous, as the objects that appeal to the sense of vision. From the first peep of day, the campers are astir, lighting gipsy fires, preparing breakfast, and trading with the various hawkers who ply with their provisions regularly through the white-tented streets. After the morning meal, visits are exchanged, and the business of the day proceeds with as much energy and order as in the cities. Sailing parties, séances, amusements, and business, all proceed in due course, until the hour for speaking arrives, when thousands assemble at the speaker's stand, to partake of the solid intellectual refreshment of the day. Lectures, balls, parties, illuminations, public discussions, &c., &c., fill up the time until midnight, when the white tents enclose the slumbering hosts; the fires and lamps are extinguished, and the pale moonbeam shines over rocks, groves, and lakes, illumining scenes as strange and picturesque as ever the eye of mortal gazed upon."[64]

I found this account astonishing for its consonance with my own experience of festival settings today. Indeed, many of the activities from a Spiritualist camp meeting could easily be mapped onto the contemporary Transformational Festival site: the "hawkers" of today still flit about different campsites selling crystals, glass pipes, pins, and drugs; the "sailing parties, séances, [and] amusements" have transformed into fire spinning displays, silent discoes, and costumed improvisations; the platform given to event speakers are now given to musical headliners, but the "lectures, balls, parties, illuminations, and public discussions" that occurred on the side still remain in rather literal form. While my own experiential linking of the camp meeting tradition with present day festival traditions perhaps risks decontextualizing and oversimplifying both, I point out these links in order to show how the idea of a participatory outdoor camping event (which Roxy Robinson locates as a recent innovation that began with Burning Man) had very clear antecedents at least as far back as the mid-19th century. Unlike the historical records of evangelical

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[64] Emma Hardinge Britten, John H. Dadmun, *Nineteenth Century Miracles, or, Spirits and their work in every country of the earth: a complete historical compendium of the great movement known as "Modern Spiritualism"*, inscriber George W. Walrond, New York: Lovell and Co. (1899), 543.

camp meetings, which almost exclusively discussed the content of preaching and the efficacy of the event (in terms of social uplift and conversions), this writer describes Spiritualist camp meetings by casting his eye on the crowd. His emphasis is not on the number of souls converted, but the creation of an intriguing and mysterious social logic that organizes and ties together the crowd into a People. In other words, we perhaps see evidence of an epistemic shift that was necessary to allow event participation to emerge as a form of aesthetics.

Evangelical camp meetings' reputation for unruliness made the camp meeting format controversial for Spiritualists at first, and organizers were surprised by the degree to which participants adapted to it.[65] Perhaps this success was partly due to how the idiosyncratic production of camp meeting grounds, in conjunction with the natural setting, appeared to facilitate the Spiritualist ability to violate temporal, spatial, and Thanatological laws; this anticipates the way today's festivals figuratively endow the land they stand upon with a special quality of materializing contradictory and impossible visions—which I relate to the concept of "enchantment" in the next chapter. The following account alludes to the marvelously enchanting qualities of camp meeting grounds (via the beauty of the land itself, and its production into a heightened experiential domain), and outlines how these qualities were seen to facilitate a form of social intimacy that was necessary to tie participants together into a cohesive community. Furthermore, it articulates this social intimacy in terms of an authentic "Americanness," and imbricates race and indigeneity in this construction:

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[65] This information was distilled by an editor with The International Association for the Preservation of Spiritualist and Occult Periodicals (IAPSOP), using the US spiritualism periodical *The Banner of Light* from: August 25, September 15 and 22, October 20 and 27 (1866). JB, "1866", iapsop.com, n.d., accessed 20 March 2019, http://www.iapsop.com/spirithistory/1866_first_spiritualist_camp_meeting.html.

> "Amongst those who greet you as you take your morning's walk from street to avenue, or linger on rocky pinnacles to contemplate the busy hive of life thronging below, are strangers from States a thousand miles off, and neighbours from the next village. You may talk politics with a white-haired knot of grandsires sunning themselves on a social bench, around an ancient elm; talk metaphysics with a group of lecturers assembled "from the four corners of the earth," hear some merry "Indian maid" pouring out through the lips of her entranced "medy" [medium], shrewd philosophy, mingled with clairvoyant tests, and comical jokes, interspersed with startling proofs of super-mundane intelligence. Glancing down the avenues of gaily decorated tents, with wreaths, banners, inscriptions, and all manner of fanciful devices adorning them, the visitor cannot but be struck with the multitude of signs which almost every habitation exhibits. The shrewd practical spirit of "the Yankee," evidently knows how to combine business with pleasure, and turn each shining hour into profit, as well as amusement. Bookstalls abound, photographs of spirits and mortals are on sale, and literature is rapidly changing hands. Healing, trance, test, and physical Mediums, put out their signs, and ply their professional avocations as industriously here as at home. In a word, every one who has anything to say, says it here, and the "dear public" need be at no loss to find all they want to see, hear, purchase, or take part in, just as readily as in the midst of the busiest cities. The Spiritual camp meetings are in all respects such thoroughly practical illustrations of American life, that any visitor may glean more knowledge of popular institutions in a single day's ramble through "Lake Pleasant," than he could gain in many weeks of far and wide travel."[66]

This rich quote not only gives a sense of the daily goings-on of Spiritualist camp meetings and hints at the specialized sensibilities that participation demanded, it also articulates the practice as a social drama from which can be gleaned a fundamental sense of what American life means. This authentically American identity is expressed through a trace of Indianness (the "Indian maid") that issues forth from presumably White mediums; thus, we can see a way in which the camp meeting created a space for a form of transracial performance in which Indianness was appropriated and mapped on to White bodies as an emerging idea of an authentically American people.

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[66] Emma Hardinge Britten, John H. Dadmun, *Nineteenth Century Miracles, or, Spirits and their work in every country of the earth: a complete historical compendium of the great movement known as "Modern Spiritualism"*, inscriber George W. Walrond, New York: Lovell and Co. (1899), 543-544.

Also key to this emerging identity was the notion of commerce, to which the camp meeting seems particularly well-suited. Far from replicating a primitive communist idyll or a capitalism-evading folk carnivalesque interstice (that would typify the "counter-cultural" imaginary of the free festival movement and Burning Man), spiritualist camp meeting grounds were sites of specialized professionals practicing idiosyncratic forms of labor. The author reads the event as a city-in-the-small that *models* US modernity, rather than *evades* it. Furthermore, it associates the meeting ground with a kind of cosmopolitanism that indicates a geographically diverse contingent of travelers whose co-presence makes for a kind of public sphere. We see camp meetings moving from frontier enclaves towards niche sites of networking for a dispersed subculture, and this hints at their unique importance as an outlet for circulating ideology and culture throughout the growing nation.

Both evangelist and spiritualist camp meetings followed a similar trajectory: their early development as tent camping spaces capitalized off a primitivist longing, but also spoke to a need to wed this desire for closeness to nature with the customs and order of an imagined social community (whether in the dispersed settlements of frontier territories, or in a nationally dispersed community with particular aesthetic dispositions). With time, camp meeting grounds became steadily developed as organizers used collections to construct socially useful infrastructure, and wealthy participants built cottages on small parcels of land they purchased. Rings of tents around the pulpit would eventually be replaced by rowhouses, and tabernacles were replaced by raised platforms that made the whole endeavor more accommodating. In other words, though camp meetings were temporary affairs imagined as an encounter with nature, their annual

iteration constituted a longitudinal narrative of development, a performative communal enactment of social progress. Eventually, many campgrounds even evolved into outdoor resorts designed for urbanites looking to escape the city in the summer time. The history of camp meetings thus theatrically and materially enacted the taming of land, and used this action as the centerpiece for creating an emergent community that expresses some sense of authentic Americanness.

The Chautauqua Project

A traveling Chautauqua was everything that the permanent, and more famed, chautauquas were. It was not in any sense a carnival. Nothing was sold, nothing was advertised; there were no side shows, no juggling acts.

- Evert and Robin Winks[67]

Mr. Marshall took notice of the various meanings ascribed to the name, as 'The place where a child was swept away by the waves;' 'the foggy place;' 'the elevated place;' 'the sack tied in the middle;' but preferred the one given him by 'Dr. Peter Wilson, an educated Seneca.' This was 'where the fish was taken out' […].

- W.M. Beauchamp[68]

I make the people want to be good citizens.

- Charles Zueblin (Sociologist and Chautauqua lecturer)[69]

The Chautauqua Institute, originally named the Chautauqua Lake Sunday School Assembly, was founded in New York in 1874 by Minister John Heyl Vincent and businessman Lewis Miller, after a series of Methodist camp meetings in the 1870s that took place on Lake Chautauqua. It quickly evolved into a full-fledged adult educational, spiritual, civic, and entertainment apparatus, the tendrils of which would eventually spread across the whole country. Part resort and part summer school, the Chautauqua

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[67] Evert M. Winks and Robin W. Winks, "Recollections of a Dead Art: The Traveling Chautauqua", *Indiana Magazine of History*, 54.1 (March 1958), pp. 41-48, 42.

[68] "Chautauqua and Other Iroquois Names", *Science*, 18.457 (1891), pp. 261-263.

[69] Ctd. in Charlotte Canning, *The Most American Thing in America: Circuit Chautauqua as Performance*, Iowa City: University of Iowa Press (2005), 6.

Institute was organized around a central program consisting primarily of lectures on civic, scientific, and ethical topics, as well as entertainment by distinguished and diverse performers. Camp meetings, as well as the growing Lyceum movement,[70] provided the blueprint for this type of secluded gathering, but Chautauqua's programming was not of a purely religious nature. As soon as 1878, with the foundation of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle—a correspondence-based adult education curriculum that prescribed a thorough reading list of a generally secular character—the Chautauqua project came to signify a devotion to intellectual pursuit and, moreover, the fusion of Christian spirituality with conceptions of scientific rationality hailed as markers of dignified culture and modernity. The idea quickly caught on, and throughout the late 19th century, communities throughout the United States developed their own Chautauqua Assemblies modeled after the New York original, setting up campgrounds, cottages, and amphitheaters in lush rural settings. For a jubilant few weeks in the summer, the stages of these Assemblies played host to lectures, oratory, elocution, prayer, hymns, debate, ballet, ethnic dances, opera, jubilee singers, pageants, comedy, and, eventually, theatrical performance. Chautauqua programming was an early form of mass media; from 1904 to around 1930, caravans of performers and technicians traveled throughout the rural United States as part of the Circuit Chautauqua, bringing this programming—unified in its general messaging but locally variant based upon town preference and performer availability—to an even greater populace. The Circuit Chautauqua operated through bureaus located in several major U.S. cities, like Chicago, New York, and Atlanta, but

[70] The Lyceum Movement was a series of organizations who sponsored public education programs and entertainments in the mid- to late-19th century, flourishing especially in the Northeast and Midwest. Angela G. Ray, *The Lyceum and Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century United States*, East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press (2005).

played predominantly to rural towns located throughout the Midwest and South. Between 9 and 20 million people annually partook in Chautauqua during its peak years, and as many as 40 million people might have attended in its golden jubilee year of 1924.[71]

A visitor to the famed Chautauqua Institute in New York in 1876 might have been in for a surprise when she attended a Methodist prayer circle to find a dark-skinned man wearing robes, a heavy sash, and a red fez sitting among the handsomely festooned and uniformly white crowd of parishioners. The seeming interloper would be local orientalist A. O. Van Lennep, a convert from Islam to Christianity, who became something of a Chautauqua celebrity for his role in various anthropological activities that took place around the institute's pastoral lakeside grounds. Rumored to be Egyptian, Syrian, or Turkish, Van Lennep curated the Moorish Oriental House that contained artifacts from far-away lands—sometimes authentic, and sometimes cheap knockoffs. He grinded a hand organ to set the mood as he lectured on Egyptology; he led participants on tours through a scale model of the Holy Land, which afforded him a chance to ascend to the summit of Mount Hermon and "give vent to the most discordant yells, which are supposed to be lamentations of a religious custom of his countrymen."[72] Van Lennep appeared to some as a walking, talking ethnological exhibit, as "the queerest specimen in the collection."[73] The site of him walking about the Institute grounds might have served as a constant reminder of Chautauqua's mandate to expose patrons to the newest ideas in

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[71] John Tapia, *Circuit Chautauqua: From Rural Education to Popular Entertainment in America*, Jefferson, N.C.: MacFarland & Company (1997), 3. Charlotte Canning, *The Most American Thing in America: Circuit Chautauqua as Performance*, Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press (2005).
[72] Andrew Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment: Protestants, Progressives, and the Culture of Modern Liberalism, 1874-1920*, New York: Columbia University Press (2003), 153.
[73] Ibid., 155.

global thought, lending a complicated authenticity to the institute's role as a purveyor of universal culture and cosmopolitanism.

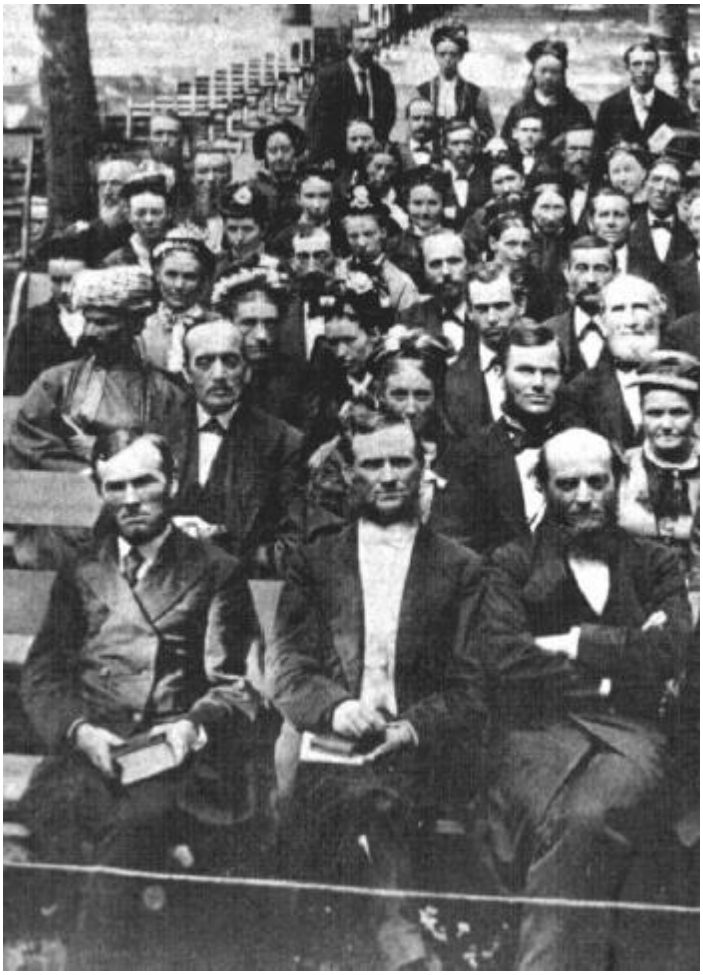

Figure 2: A close-up of a gathering at the prayer circle, circa 1876. Van Lennep is in a turban, seated in the third row on the far left. – Chautauqua Institution Archives, Chautauqua, New York

I take Van Lennep's performance as an entry point for discussing the spatialized and participatory aesthetics—which evolved directly from the camp meeting tradition—that helped Chautauqua function as an educational and acculturating apparatus during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Somewhat theatrical and somewhat social, somewhat staged and somewhat ambulatory, Van Lennep's performance helped build a Chautauqua experience that was three-dimensional and immersive. It extended the theatrical frame beyond the raised platforms and amphitheaters that housed lectures and performances—which were the ostensible focal points of a Chautauqua program. It filled in the interstices of the grounds, creating an event that was constant, multi-medial, and tactile.

As Charlotte Canning has convincingly argued, the Chautauqua project played an important role in popularizing theatre throughout the United States. By gradually attaching theatrical performance to the Chautauqua brand, which had come to signify cultural betterment in line with Christian values, the Circuit Chautauqua mitigated theatre's taboo status among rural Protestants who traditionally took it to be an immoral vice that inspired sinful activities. Canning shows that staged performances inside the Circuit Chautauqua's iconic brown tents served as a crucial apparatus for disseminating the cultural and racial values of liberal modernity, and sedimenting a sense of US national identity. Canning's analysis views the stage as a privileged platform that efficaciously captured the gaze and imagination of attentive audiences. Under the Chautauqua tents, isolated and often community-educated populations were exposed to cutting edge ideas and (albeit in a circumscribed manner) an understanding of new lands and people.

But Chautauqua was an all-day or multi-day affair that patrons traveled some distance to attend, often staying overnight in cottages and tented campgrounds. And furthermore, not every speaker or performer was captivating: "Whether from the country or from the town, the audience soon becomes impatient with anything technical or academic […] and quickly avails itself of the open-sided tents or auditoriums to make their escape."[74] But if participants did not spend the entirety of their time dutifully listening to lectures and taking in performances, what did they "escape" to? Considering Chautauqua's genealogical link to camp meetings and its complex spatial production, it is

[74] Paul M. Pearson, "The Chautauqua Movement", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 40, Country Life (Mar 1912), 214.

important to consider the significance of the *para*theatrical space of the event grounds in conversation with the dimension of its staged theatrics.

As part of a speculative genealogy, I ask: what would happen if, instead of viewing Chautauqua as a monologic platform, we consider it an immersive spectacle that replicated many of the same participatory repertoires developed in camp meetings? How might this allow attentiveness not only to the event formation's discourse, but to the way that its production of US citizenship ideals operated through corporeal and social activity that operated laterally throughout the event space? How might it press us to consider the way that this networked, dispersed, and racialized outdoor camping culture extended a tradition of performances in and with nature that intersected with the simultaneous development of settler colonial structures and popular cultural industries? And how might it orient us to the complex techniques by which forms of cultural participation function as racial projects—in this case, the sedimentation of White nationalism, and its intersection with progressive liberalism at a crucial post-Bellum moment when US culture was being rearticulated.[75]

As scholars like Andrew Rieser have pointed out, Chautauqua was firmly associated with the White cultural sphere, frequently deploying Protestant missionary narratives, demonstrations of European cultural superiority, or denigrating racial

[75] Andrew Rieser writes on the importance of understanding how Chautauqua functioned as a capillary-level entertainment apparatus that instilled intellectual norms and cultural habits that helped coalesce a social hegemony after the Civil War: "Chautauqua was not merely a passive response to universal human needs or a fixed truth outside the stream of history. Rather, it was a vehicle by which these trends were rationalized and given meaning. The movement was enmeshed in a dense thicket of material and ideological relations. Exemplars of useful knowledge faced tensions and conflicts among groups—workers, clubwomen, ministers, and millionaires—whose criteria for what made knowledge 'useful' differed widely. Thus, Chautauqua's rise and fall reveals much about the historical experience of some middle-class Americans in the sixty years after the Civil War." *The Chautauqua Moment*, 4.

minstrelsy to implicitly indicate the superiority of Whiteness.[76] Rieser approaches Chautauqua through the lens of critical whiteness studies to address the relationship between race, a growing sense of US nationalism, an evolving concept of higher education, and an emerging global consciousness that accompanied the completion of continental territorial expansion. He sees the racial politics of Chautauqua as complicated and oblique; they "rarely linked blood and nation with the same bluntness as the Daughters of the American Revolution or the Ku Klux Klan," choosing instead to subtly attest to Whiteness as an "unmarked norm" that gave its members "access to a privileged rhetorical position from which the needs of some are presented as universal." Indeed, Chautauquans apparently never explicitly turned away Black patrons—in fact, George E. Vincent once noted that "we have colored students every year and are glad to accord them the treatment which any self[-]respecting American Citizen should receive." However, Rieser points out that the very standards of citizenship heralded by Chautauquans "relied uncritically on a cultural construct that was itself the product of deeply problematic racial thinking," and that such standards were (re)enacted "through patriotic rituals, regional stereotypes, selective recruitment of nonwhites (like Booker T. Washington), and exoticist fantasies." In other words, Chautauquas were sites in which the American public was constructed as a White public: "There, the particularities of racial, ethno-religious, and national diversity were absorbed into a vision of good citizenship based largely on how good white people were supposed to behave."[77]

To this we might add that Chautauqua's activities were branded as a transition point from the evangelism of camp meetings and revivals to a Christian-informed liberal

[76] Canning, *The Most American Thing in America*, 79.
[77] Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment*, 129.

humanism that was gaining legitimacy in the frontier areas. With the 1862 passage of the Morrill Land Grant Act (which appropriated millions of acres of land for purposes of agricultural and mechanical arts education) and the Homestead Act (which encouraged westward expansion and the development of land), education came to intersect with a sense of national identity and territorial control. Self-betterment and a broad horizon of worldly knowledge became entangled with the civilizing mission that animated Christian thought. This resonated throughout the stage programming and participatory activities of Chautauquas, with religious studies being supplemented by anthropology, evolutionary theory, and the physical sciences. As a live, entertainment-driven social apparatus, Chautauqua provided unique pedagogical tools for exposing participants to cultural otherness—this occurred both in ways that aimed for authenticity and in ways that self-consciously played into existing stereotypes.

Van Lennep's performance is a useful example. It is not exactly certain whether his anthropological activities were an immigrant's attempt to bring some slice of local knowledge to the American public, or a huckster's simulation of the exotic Other as a means of augmenting the feelings of spatial dislocation created by the event—indeed, the lack of certainty about his identitarian authenticity echoes an anxiety that has haunted my own ethnography of today's festival spaces, where participants' dubious claims to a field of cultural knowledge sometimes forced me into a reflexively incredulous disposition. Patrons were invited to physically participate in Van Lennep's travel, to place themselves inside theatrical storytelling scenarios within the cordoned off or demarcated Chautauqua site. His embodied activities programmatically fit in with the travelogues, ethnological displays, and artifact exhibits that made Chautauqua something of a rural museum

culture. Lectures on distant lands would often be embellished through the use of sets on and around the stage depicting the area explored. Sometimes, visual images were projected through a magic lantern or vitascope; performers would don authentic (or authentic-looking) outfits, and answer questions posed by audience members.[78]

Participants themselves enthusiastically partook in this materialization of the exotic on the event grounds, in part through forms of conspicuous consumption encouraged by the Circuit Chautauqua's commercial apparatus. Some Chautauqua assemblies "catered to [Orientalist] fantasies by letting space for oriental specialty shops, [selling] offcolor items made acceptable by their Asian-ness, such as daggers, ornate fans, and seminude sculptures of Middle Eastern goddesses."[79] Purchasing such a product effectively made audience members part of the show, since they could presumably wear or carry such artifacts with them during the rest of the events. It allowed them to feel as if they were taking part in a special cosmopolitanism that could only be achieved through Chautauqua infrastructure. When Chautauqua came to town, it not only brought entertainment, but the opportunity to imaginatively escape one's surroundings and enter far away spaces and long gone times through Orientalist and primitivist play. Such microperformances were part of an

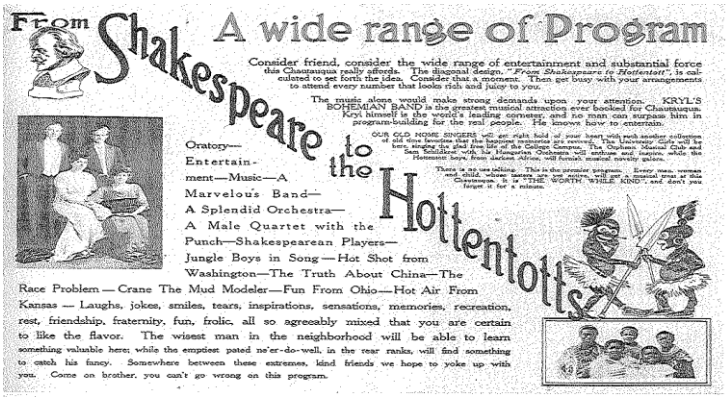

Figure 3: An advertisement for the Redpath-Vawter Circuit Chautauqua programming. *Redpath-Vawter Collection*, University of Iowa.

[78] Tapia, *The Circuit Chautauqua*, 71.
[79] Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment*, 157.

affective and subjunctive dimension of festivity that allowed patrons to give the Chautauqua a similar feel to the camp meetings—even if they lacked the same sense of an escape to Nature.

These microperformances intersected with cultural programming that frequently focused on questions of race. From the beginning the Chautauqua project deployed non-white performers prominently in their program—though, critically, they often had to be yoked to white imaginings of ethnic authenticity. Black singing groups, called Jubilee Singers, or "jubes" were often "star attractions" throughout the life of the Chautauqua movement. Rieser, Tapia, and Canning all agree that these performances, known for singing old plantation songs, helped foster an antebellum nostalgia; while "Plantation Songs, Negro Melodies, Camp Meetin' Songs, Negro Lullabies, Songs of the Old Southland Slavery Days" and "an occasional coon song" were the standard fare of Jubilee Singers, other performances included "opera and oratorio selections, folk music of various parts of the world, classical choral music, and popular songs of the day."[80] Some group members were even noted to have done readings from classical authors. In this way, Jubilee Singers embodied a cosmopolitan and upwardly mobile element of the Chautauqua project; they performed renditions of "authentic" Black culture, but were also shown to be capable of performing White art forms seen to be sufficiently civilized.

The above advertisement for the Redpath-Vawter Circuit Chautauqua (Figure 3) demonstrates how such performances rested on a cultural dyad that separated the culture of Whiteness from other cultural forms. It juxtaposes White Shakespeare recitation and grass-skirt Hottentot cultural exhibition; simultaneously, it notes that this programming

[80] Frederick Crane, "The Music of Chautauqua and Lyceum," *Black Music Research Journal* 10.1 (1990): 105-106.

will appeal to "the wisest man in the neighborhood" and the "emptiest pated ne'er-do-well." Keeping in mind that the primary audience for such an advertisement would have been Whites, it implies that those who lack exposure to the fine arts Chautauqua provides are not merely uncultured or intellectually slow, they are in fact not yet fully White. Taking part in the activities of Chautauqua becomes an activity that leads to cultural discovery, and this discovery appears as an achievement of one's racial potential.

As has been well-documented, Native American mimicry was a constant presence at Chautauquas.[81] A common activity for young people was to play Indian by dressing up and performing skits around the event grounds. Indian play happened in the nooks and crannies of tents and lecture halls, as well as in out-of-doors in ways that played into stereotypical associations with Native Americans and a state of nature. This contributed to endowing Chautauqua space with a sense of theatricality and fantasy. The material process of enabling this Indian play ensured that the activity was not confined to only boys and girls; parents attended specialty shops on-site to purchase kits for the creation of Indian costumes, and advertisements instructed them on intensive detail work that might lend additional theatrical effect:

> Some boy will have a drum to use as a tom-tom in the war dances. It would be nice if some would have bows and arrows. You can whittle out tomahawks. The girls may bring dolls for papooses…. Oh, yes, about your clothes. Well, mamma can easily fix the matter by sewing some bright red or yellow fringe along the boy's trousers and the girl's skirts. A few feathers in the hair will help to make you look savage.[82]

In other words, adults and children alike helped create a tradition and atmosphere informed by indigenous mimicry.

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[81] Canning, *The Most American Thing in America*; Tapia, *Circuit Chautauqua*.
[82] 1910 Redpath-Vawter Brochure, Ctd. in Tapia, *Circuit Chautauqua*, 74.

If the Chautauqua project was instrumental in fashioning a US national identity, the ubiquity of Indian play there would seem to corroborate Phillip Deloria's observation that White Americans distinguished themselves by mimicking what they *were not*. Deloria describes playing Indian as a precondition for the formation of a White US identity due to the nation's inability to grapple with the foundational genocide that coincided with its colonization of the continent. He argues that White Americans yearned to feel a natural affinity with the land, and that the figure of the Indian could grant them a sense of such aboriginal closeness. Playing Indian also exemplifies the trace of a back-to-the-land mentality that Chautauqua inherited from camp meetings.

Figure 4: Young woman standing on rock in stream, Darlington, Wisconsin, 1910s. *Redpath-Vawter Collection, University of Iowa*

The word "Chautauqua" ostensibly refers to Lake Chautauqua where the original Institute was founded. However, it was originally an Iroquois word that resonated as a marker of authentic closeness to the land in response to growing urbanization; it resonated with a gendered sense of US nationalism predicated on a rugged and pious frontier mentality that contrasted with metropolitan decadence: "Naturally, the Chautauqua idea grew up in the forests and on the prairies, not in the cities. It grew up, that is, where the native American occurs free and true to type, not where he has been infected by the worldly and effete European notion of going out and having a gauzy and gaseous Good time utterly

unbuttressed by uplift."[83] An imaginary of the Native American underwrote the entire Chautauqua endeavor as a distinctly American enterprise sanctified by the authenticity of the Other, and signaling an encounter with absolute human purity amidst anxieties regarding spirituality and masculinity that accompanied the US transition from an agrarian society to an urban industrial society.[84]

Figure 5: Young woman standing on rock in stream looking into the distance, Darlington, Wisconsin, 1910s. *Redpath-Vawter Collection, University of Iowa*.

This desire played out in other ways around Chautauqua space. For example, in the Redpath Vawter Circuit Chautauqua archives, a series of pictures depicts young women in Darlington, Wisconsin dressed up in various costumes, standing on rocks in a stream. In one picture we see a woman posing with her arms spread out with a cape drifting behind her. She wears a flowing dress and a headpiece that looks like it might come from a Renaissance ball. The costume is somewhat ambiguous: is she pretending to be a princess, or a sea nymph, perhaps? In another, decidedly less ambiguous picture, a young woman in the same stream is dressed as a Native American, with stereotypical braided hair, a feather sticking up from her head, and wearing necklaces and a smock

[83] *Everybody's Magazine* (1914), Ctd. in Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment*, 137.
[84] Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian*, New Haven: Yale University Press (1998), 7.

with frayed edges. She poses in-character, staring off to the side with a stoic gaze. The second picture clearly exemplifies classic Native American stereotyping, using the stream to foreground an indigenous closeness with the land. Both pictures speak with a grammar of embodied fantasy that gets played out through an encounter with the natural landscape. They both figure the stream as a backdrop that can sustain or augment their subjects' transfigurative or transracial theatricality. Posing for these pictures in the Chautauqua setting, and all that it signified, these patrons rehearsed a mode of visuality that allows nature to appear as a negative space available for materializing one's imagination in ways unconstrained by racial embodiment or geo-temporal emplacement. Such experiences neatly coincide with settler colonial mentalities and manifest destiny by rendering land a blank canvas ripe for sustaining the dreams and fantasies of white US citizens—as a feminized site of potential for constructing an imagined world.

Other paratheatrical activities reinforced this dynamic. Some Chautauqua's had activities called "Junior Towns", which used role-playing to allow children to simulate the functions of government. Children were elected officers and would then move about the Chautauqua space performing different town functions. The goal was to build a functioning civic space from the ground up, playing out utopian notions of the American idea. Similarly, this socio-theatrical approach of recreating the urban environment in a natural setting occurred through the camping culture of Chautauqua; although there are only limited archival records, the elaborate and creative camping culture that marked camp meetings—Spiritualist camp meetings in particular—appears to have survived in the Chautauqua tradition. Chautauquas could feature tent cities sometimes as large as 2500 people; many patrons would haul in wagonloads of furniture and set up house in

and around their tents.[85] This went beyond the bare necessities needed to live; one visitor to an Assembly in Ocean Grove, New Jersey noted that many of the tents "were furnished like parlors."[86] And at least one picture exists that seems to show a man who has affectionately labeled his tent "Hotel de PuP."[87] In these sorts of activities, participants literally played out a settler imaginary on an already colonized landscape by attempting to transiently bring forth a civilized town where before there was only bare earth. Their participatory nature and architectural theatricality echo the drive to creative space-making that animates today's Transformational Festivals.

Chautauqua theatricality extended beyond its theatre spaces, fostered patron participation, and often entailed some sort of physical interaction with the land itself. We should see Chautauqua as an experience that was three-dimensional and multi-focal, as an evolution of the outdoor gathering culture that trained bodies to inhabit a festive ethos of hyperactively taking part in imaginative social activity. Attending to Chautauqua's paratheatrical dimension, we see how its space figured as a site of embodied fantasy, where you might encounter a faraway place in some oblique material sense (as in Van Lennep's performances), or where you could physically touch another time or temporarily escape your racial embodiment (as in Indian play), or where you could tactilely participate in civilization teleologies (as in the junior towns and camping culture). All of this played out within a nearly monolithic White cultural sphere,

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[85] Paul M. Pearson, "The Chautauqua Movement" (1912), *The Annals of the American Academy of Political an,d Social Science*, 40.1 (March 1912), pp. 211-216, 214.
[86] J. D. Adams, "Solomon at Ezion-Geber" in E. H. Stokes, *Ocean Grove. Its Origin and Progress* (Philadelphia: Published by the Order of the Association, Press of Haddock & Son, 1874), 69. Ctd. in Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment*, 198.
[87] Photograph, "Harold Justin Byron, Berlin, Pennsylvania, 1925", *Redpath Chautauqua Collection*, University of Iowa.

revealing the important role that this form of performance culture took in the rearticulation of US nationalism as a racialized settler colonial structure in the Post-Bellum age.

Conclusion

Camp meetings and Chautauquas demonstrate an historical lineage of embodied repertoires and modes of spatial imagining that contributed to the development of today's festival culture. While their ideological matrix was decisively different from Transformational Festivals (especially in their Christianity, their embrace of temperance, and their emphasis on gentility), their existence as networked formations of White-dominated transitory camping events, and their embrace of participatory aesthetics to produce theatrically heightened encounters with the natural environment demonstrates remarkable similarities: evangelical camp meetings on the expanding frontier created standardized repertoires of outdoor sociality and architectural conventions of creative place-making; spiritualist camp meetings solidified the outdoor gathering as a space of enchantment with intrinsic qualities that facilitated perceptual and ontological flexibility (a point I explore more thoroughly in the next chapter); Chautauquas formalized these qualities, and repackaged them into an event industry premised on culture and social uplift as a curative to the anomie of a sedimenting urbanity. In each case, race and indigeneity implicitly or explicitly grafted to these sites, differently resonating with an evolving settler colonial social imperative.

Writing these traditions into the narrative of Transformational Festivals complicates festival historiography's reliance on counter-cultural and cosmic tropes to call the past to order in a way that substantiates the political desires of the present. It

demonstrates that the corporeal and spatial repertoires of festival extend back to at least the early 19th century, rather than spontaneously emerging as a component of communal avant-garde experimental living, or as a reactionary art of social rebellion. Indeed, challenging this counter-cultural origin creates space to critically analyze festival culture *as culture*—predicated on creative poiesis, rather than performing political marginality in a way that is always already tethered to the hegemonic social structure. At the same time, this approach resists the idea of festivalgoing as a transhistorical evolutionary drive, instead locating how its associated material and representational practices were fundamentally entangled with the establishment of US nationalism as both a settler colonial structure and a racial project. While the US festival tradition is only one axis of what today exists as a global phenomenon, its demonstration of how localized—but networked—camping enclaves helped develop and cohere a racialized national identity, and reify its claims to land gestures to the stakes of thinking critically about how festivals today function as material and representational projects.

Susan Tenneriello argues that outdoor spectacles in the United States created an ongoing discourse with the landscape that helped render land a site of identity and mythology, expressing American culture's adaptive efficiency in conjunction with the drive of manifest destiny. Though Chautauquas and camp meetings were transitive events, their annual iteration also made them longitudinally durational, and the slow but steady process by which they built infrastructure upon once-bare grounds simultaneously rehearsed and performed the forward march of progress on (on micro-scales as individual events, and on macro-scales as event formations). In this way, they fit into a genealogy of activities like the 1893 Columbia Exhibition in Chicago, the 1901 Pan-American

exposition in Buffalo, or World's Fairs (all of which advertised Chautauquas).[88] We might, then, consider Chautauquas and camp meetings as conjunctive technologies of modernity, nationalism, and racialization that intersected with these mass exhibitions. Keeping this speculative genealogy in mind allows us to begin answering the question of why today's festival culture is so White in a way that avoids approaching festivals as epiphenomenal outgrowths of a preexisting social structure; instead, it allows us to visualize with historical grounding how the festival and the festivalesque participate in the very production of this social structure, and the ongoing inequality and settler colonial imagining that stem from it.

[88] Rieser, *The Chautauqua Moment*, 146.

CHAPTER TWO

Enchantment and Enchanting Performance: Aesthetics, Politics, and Race

Introduction

On November 28, 2016 several friends with knowledge of my project forwarded me an article that had been circulating among activist online circles, headlining: "Standing Rock: North Dakota access pipeline demonstrators say white people are 'treating protest like Burning Man.'" It was written by music correspondent Roisin O'Connor at British newspaper *The Independent*, and focused on the protest movement against the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), an oil transportation system that posed great risk to the environment, water supply, and burial grounds of the Standing Rock Sioux. What began in April as a political occupation by Sioux people living on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation and in the Dakotas had ballooned into a national progressive *cause célèbre* in the months before and after the 2016 US presidential election; thousands of Native American water protectors had been joined by a sizable contingent of non-Native allies, including Green Party presidential candidate Jill Stein.[1] The article, citing a small sampling of social media discourse, concluded that water protectors were being overrun by "colonizing" Whites treating the event like a festival: "They are coming in, taking food, clothing and occupying space without any desire to participate in camp

[1] Stein's arrest at the protest for spray painting a bulldozer with the words "I approve this message" neatly encapsulates how the DAPL protests were appropriated for the purpose of campaign tactics in the presidential election; it was differently utilized in the service of Democratic, Republican, and third party political campaigns, but had particular valence as a wedge issue for the political Left. See, for instance: Kirsten West Savali, "#NoDAPL: Arrest Warrants Issued for Green Party's Stein, Baraka for Standing With Standing Rock Sioux Tribe," *The Root*, 10 September 2016, accessed 4 March 2019, https://www.theroot.com/nodapl-arrest-warrants-issued-for-green-party-s-stein-1790856686.

maintenance and without respect of tribal protocols. [They] are treating it like it is Burning Man or The Rainbow Gathering and I even witnessed several wandering in and out of camps comparing it to those festivals."[2]

The practices that distinguished festival-like behavior in the article included drug and alcohol use, playing guitars around campfires, and appropriating protest funds for seemingly frivolous purchases like fluoride-free drinking water.[3] The article was clearly framed by identity-political concerns of the US political left (e.g. cultural appropriation, social exclusion, and racial privilege), and was circulated via left-leaning web news media;[4] but it was also seized upon by the Morton County Sheriff's Department policing the DAPL protests as evidence of an agitating, drug-inclined element within the camps.[5] In each case, and for contrasting reasons, festivalgoers appeared as a problematic fringe capable of disrupting the occupation's potential as a political movement.

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[2] Qtd. from a *Facebook* post by Standing Rock protester Alicia Smith. Roisin O'Connor, "Standing Rock: North Dakota access pipeline demonstrators say white people are 'treating protest like Burning Man', *The Independent*, 28 Nov., 2016, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/standing-rock-north-dakota-access-pipeline-burning-man-festival-a7443266.html.

[3] As pointed out by the American Cancer Society, the public health effects of drinking water fluoridation introduced in the United States following the Second World War remain controversial due to "concerns [based on] everything from legitimate scientific research, to freedom of choice issues, to government conspiracy theories." The *Independent* article's ironic tone regarding white protesters' desire to purchase "fluoride-free drinking water" obfuscates the "legitimate" bases for participants' concerns; it dismissively recasts a reflexive suspicion of State control of the water supply as an exercise in privilege that spoils democratic socialist centralization ideals. Though anti-fluoridation is a profoundly political issue (one which, at its core, relates to who controls the commons), it operates here as a paranoiac indulgence—a political demand that veers into asinine noise. "Water Fluoridation and Cancer," *American Cancer Society*, n.d., accessed 4 March 2019, https://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancer-causes/water-fluoridation-and-cancer-risk.html.

[4] The article was reposted in outlets like *Medium*, *SFGate*, *Buzzfeed*, and *democraticnderground.com*.

[5] Rene Rougeau eloquently demonstrates how the Morton County Sherriff's Department publicized the *Independent* article to fracture protester solidarity and sway public opinion against the occupation. She not only outlines a much more tolerant approach to "white hippies" on-site than the *Independent* article characterized, she wisely points out that preoccupation with the "Burning Man crisis" at Standing Rock "suggests that sovereign Native Nations aren't capable of democratic organization or leadership, or are so fragile in the face of cultural differences that they can be overwhelmed by a small group of people belonging to an even smaller subculture." "A Smear against solidarity at Standing Rock", 1 Dec., 2016, accessed 4 March 2019, https://socialistworker.org/2016/12/01/a-smear-against-solidarity.

In a subsequent *Gentlemen's Quarterly* (*GQ*) article, staff writer Jay Willis editorialized on the *Independent* story, titling his piece "Dear Fellow White People: Standing Rock Isn't Goddamn Burning Man." Interestingly, the title called attention to the author's own racial Whiteness while simultaneously disidentifying from another, apparently more toxic form of Whiteness represented by the festie protesters. The article outlined a proper mode of White allyship ("the continued integrity of the demonstration will depend heavily on the exercise of restraint, sound judgment, and common sense"), and located practices associated with festivalgoing as incommensurable.[6] To my knowledge, this was the only coverage of the DAPL occupation that appeared in *GQ*, a taste-making magazine and web platform for metropolitan men; that this coverage took the form of adjudicating an ethical mode of White allyship speaks to how indigenous struggles can be refracted in public discourse to produce classed and raced markers of social distinction. In the article, White festivalgoers who approached the DAPL protests as merely a "meaningful spiritual journey to find [themselves]" appeared to not only fail in their attempt at political activism, but also in their ability to perform a properly genteel mode of Whiteness via socially acceptable practices of solidarity (which, for the author, appeared to trump the significance of actually *being present* at the occupation).

I begin this chapter by focusing on these critical accounts to outline what I see as a pervasive pessimism regarding festival culture's capacity to contribute to political struggle, a pessimism which intersects with the politics of race and indigeneity. The *Independent* and *GQ* articles demonstrate a reflexive association between festival culture

[6] Jay Willis, "Dear Fellow White People: Standing Rock Isn't Goddamn Burning Man", *GQ*, 29 Nov. 2016, accessed 4 March 2019, https://www.gq.com/story/standing-rock-burning-man.

and an ideologically retrograde performance of Whiteness; they also gesture to Whiteness as a variegated identity category where one's racial status can be authenticated by good politics—not only one's ideology or activist intent, but also one's *style of performing* that activism. The articles were loci for a much wider social media discourse that characterized festival culture as a White, New Age leisure practice incommensurate with indigenous struggle or political activism in general. This discourse frequently deployed classed stereotypes depicting festivals as spaces of drug-fuelled escapism, solipsism, and careless cultural appropriation, with the White festie appearing as a limit-point for social commitment—the point at which political participation veers into mere party.[7] Willis and O'Connor neither interviewed DAPL protest leaders, nor attempted their own ethnographic corroboration of the social media discourse they cited; they instead relied on a popular conception of the White festie as an always already compromised extension of neo-colonial cultural politics. Their incomprehension regarding how festival culture's idiosyncrasies ("drugs," "guitars," and "fluoride-free water") could intersect with repertoires of occupation points to a wider blinkering in terms of how and where political ethics get formed and performed; festival repertoires appeared devoid of political stakes, as paradigmatic examples of diversion from a more

[7] An animated video by Taiwan-based YouTube channel TomoNewsFunnies provides a fascinating look at how these stereotypes operate within a global mediascape: as a Mandarin voiceover reads the *Independent* story verbatim, we watch as cartoon water protectors use psycho-kinetic powers to fight back against militarized police forces. Their struggle is conspicuously interrupted by bong-smoking and Pabst Blue Ribbon-guzzling hipsters, who set teepees on fire and take selfies as riot police fire at the indigenous occupiers. At the end, the water protectors ally with the riot police (!!) against the hipsters, grabbing guns and firing to scare them off. The video concisely indexes a number of tropes subtly at work in the original *Independent* article, and makes visible how the story was viewed more broadly. Importantly, the stereotyping of the White hipsters as shallowly invested in the protest for the purpose of personal enjoyment runs parallel to a stereotyping of indigenous protesters as magical and immune to pain. "White hipsters are treating the Standing Rock protests like it's Burning Man – TomoNews," *YouTube*, 30 Nov. 2016, accessed 4 Mar. 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9E-VMVQk_ts&fbclid=IwAR12iinBx7URJkgkLjSkYFE0R8WZLHeJ_sCv32Wo1ufAS19ooPMA3g_NAD4

serious activist domain—their intersection with an unmannered aesthetics of White leisure practices predicated on cultural appropriation appeared to corroborate this point.

Belying this perspective, Transformational Festivals today not only explicitly define themselves via their political disposition,[8] they increasingly act as institutions that aspire to materially build power and contribute to social causes—including many related to indigenous activism. In 2016, for instance, Lightning in a Bottle, Symbiosis, Lucidity, and Burning Man led fundraisers for the DAPL occupation, and provided infrastructure for volunteer caravans to travel there; the same year, Project Earth held workshops with indigenous protesters from a Native American occupation at Apache Leap and Oak Flat in Arizona—in fact, it was this workshop in June that introduced me to the Standing Rock occupation, a full five months before the *GQ* and *Independent* articles raised the alarm over festie protesters, three months before *The Independent* ran its first article on the occupation, and over a month before the occupation was covered by the *Associated Press*.[9] My point is not to credulously characterize White festies who participated in the DAPL occupation as part of a progressive avant-garde, nor to dismiss water protectors' complaints about behavior that may have been counter-productive to their strategies of resistance; rather, it is to demonstrate that festival culture's engagement with indigenous

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[8] Many, for instance, adopt mission statements that attempt to enunciate their event's significance by tying it to a populist language espousing social commitments. See, for example, "About Envision" Envision website, n.d., accessed 4 Mar. 2019, https://envisionfestival.com/about-envision/.

[9] *Associated Press*, The Big Story, 10 Aug. 2016, http://bigstory.ap.org/article/bf6edac45e394c2b9568cbfde950f06e/iowa-landowners-seek-immediate-halt-pipeline-construction; Feliks Garcia, "Dakota Access Pipeline: Native American Protesters 'attacked' with pepper spray and guard dogs", *The Independent*, 4 Sep. 2016, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/dakota-access-pipeline-protests-native-americans-attacked-dogs-north-dakota-sioux-a7225571.html.

struggle extends beyond careless cultural appropriation, and was at least as socially committed as the voices on the political left that dismissed and trivialized it.

The tension between festival culture's activist impulse and its actual potential to contribute to social change is a problem frequently taken up by the field of festival studies. Graham St. John, for instance, argues that festival aesthetics have increasingly intersected with direct political action as a repertoire of horizontal collective imagining in the age of global neoliberalism, with the model of the "protestival" demonstrating how festal repertoires allow for a networked mode of spatial contestation and grassroots identity formation. Yet, he also points to a widespread and enduring skepticism regarding the efficacy of this mode of political action, with cultural critics variously characterizing it as "ritual[s] of rebellion" that reify and stabilize the social order, as "sanctioned transgression" or "safety valves" that reroute rebellious energy into domesticated modes of opposition, or as forms of "lifestyle anarchism" that transform sites of struggle into a social scene for White, middle-class hipsters.[10] As Liana Giorgi and Monica Sassatelli point out, sociological treatments of festival culture tend to downplay events' capacity for "expressing and consolidating a sense of community," locating them instead as either rituals in an abstruse religion that electively disassociates from the material struggles of everyday life, or as components of a culture industry in league with the pulverizing forces of capital.[11]

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[10] Graham St. John, "Protestival: Global Days of Action and Carnivalized Politics in the Present", *Social Movement Studies*, 7.2 (September 2008), 167-190; see also Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm*, Edinburgh: AK Press, 1995; Max Gluckman, *Rituals of Rebellion in South-east Africa*, Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1954.

[11] Liana Giorgi and Monica Sassatelli, "Introduction," *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*, Eds. Liana Giorgi, Monica Sassatelli, and Gerard Delanty, London and New York: Routledge, 2011; 1.

This tension gets reinforced by scholarly approaches that use structural binaries to frame festival culture contrapuntally to an imagined social order. Touchstone theoretical apparatuses like the counter-culture, the liminal, the heterotopia, and the carnivalesque help scholars authenticate festivalgoing as a socially committed practice by locating festivals as spaces that exist as a sort of "time out" from the quotidian.[12] These schematics characterize festivals as *inversions* of reality, as representational "counter-sites" or "play-worlds" that allow participants to play out latent social drives, rather than material spaces for grappling with daily political commitments, forging community identity, or building power.[13] Much of this surely owes to the spectacle and theatricality of festival aesthetics, where fantastical costumes, stylized environments, mystical skills, intoxication, bartering and gift economies, alternate names, and trance-like dancing appear as firm breaks from daily living. But by approaching these idiosyncrasies as epiphenomena that symbolically *reflect* the "real world" by inverting it, counter-site models downplay events' material significance as spaces of production and poiesis.

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[12] Alessandro Falassi argues that a festival requires "symbolic inversion and intensification," as well as "symbolic absence—for instance from work, from play, from study, from religious observances." Indeed, sometimes scholars take the "liminality" of the festival setting as a definitional given. Interestingly, a doctoral dissertation by Laurie Kendall argues that the now defunct Michigan Womyn's Festival actually provides an alternative to the "liminal" conditions that constitute the daily lived reality of lesbians, opting instead to use the word "interstitial" in a similar way. "Festival: Definition and Morphology", *Time Out of Time: Essays on the Festivals*, edited by Alessandro Falassi, Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1987, pp. 3; Laurie J. Kendall, *From Liminal to the Land: Building Amazon Culture at the Michigan Womyn's Festival*, doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, 2006; see also Jennifer Laing and Judith Mair, "Music Festivals and Social Inclusion – The Festival Organizers' Perspective", *Leisure Sciences*, 37.3 (2015), pp 252-268; Susan Luckman, "Location, Spirituality, and Liminality at Outdoor Music Festivals: Doofs as Journey, in *The Festivalization of Culture*, eds. Andy Bennett, Jody Taylor, and Ian Woodward, London: Routledge (2014).

[13] See, for example, Willmar Sauter's framing work for the IFTR/FIRT volumes *Theatrical Events: Borders, Dynamics, Frames*, Eds. Vicki Ann Cremona et al., New York: Rodopi, 2004; *Festivalising!:Theatrical Events, Politics, Culture*, eds. Temple Hauptfleisch et al., New York: Rodopi, 2007.

Such binaristic approaches lead to thorny questions when confronted with festivalgoing as a field of cultural production, a continuous lifestyle, or a social movement: by characterizing the festival as a counter-space, do we also necessarily characterize their constituents as part of a reactive "counterculture," and does this limit our capacity to examine such social formations as productive and creative in their own right? Can the notion of a festival as a "time out of time" account for the embodied labor that produces events (from organizers to vendors to artists to drug dealers to individuated modes of creative practice), and attend to the forms of social precarity that often attends this labor? Does locating festivalgoing as an expression of a latent subjunctive energy recognize the historicity of aesthetics and repertoires, or allow for ethnographic attentiveness to how social traditions develop via ongoing modes of bodily discipline? And do such binaristic approaches prioritize participants' psychic experience of *dislocation*, at the expense of considering their implication in the material *production of place* (an operation that is always significant in the politically charged present of settler colonial societies)?

In this chapter, I locate festivalgoing as a strategic mode of theatrical expression predicated on building subcultural communities, structuring their ethics, and enacting their claim to space. Transformational Festivals provide a compelling case study for considering how events can operate as immersive sites of political practice, because their politics self-consciously speak through aesthetic production (building living spaces through theatrical repertoires based in play and fantasy) rather than legible discourse. By "aesthetic" I mean, as philosopher Jacques Rancière has enunciated, a system of forms that presents itself to sense experience within a sociopolitical field. Who is visible as a

political actor, and who invisible? What qualifies as speech and what just noise? For Rancière, politics "revolves around […] who has the ability to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time."[14] If the esoteric spirituality and fantastical theatricality of Transformational Festivals appear as spatiotemporal negatives of social life, as leisure *par excellence*, as problematic exceptions to an "ethical" political domain, as antithetical to rational discourse, then from the standpoint of Rancière festivalgoing should be fundamentally understood as a form of politics.

I argue that we should approach festivalgoing as a political practice embedded in theatricality, a practice in which social commitments and ethics get articulated via the embodied and material co-production of space. Transformational Festivals produce enclaved communities wherein artistic co-creation helps forge a cohesive and geographically emplaced social identity—a transitory expression of "The People"—with affective and material ties to the land on which the event is held. I see festivalgoing as a complex political practice that at once operates as an insurgent populist social movement, while also participating in the continued entrenchment of settler colonialism as a cultural structure. My approach builds from the cultural materialism of Raymond Williams and Antonio Gramsci, who articulate the immanent relationship between political consciousness, economic production, and cultural expression—rather than see the latter as a mere reflection of the other two;[15] it also reaches to performance and dance studies to

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[14] Rancière, Jacques. The Politics of Aesthetics. London: Bloomsbury (2004), 8.

[15] Williams's explicit invocation of cultural materialism drew from Antonio Gramsci's theorizing of "hegemony" as an active and continuous process of intellectual monopolization—rather than simple social domination. His work strove "to replace the formula of base and superstructure with the more active idea of a field of mutually if also unevenly determining forces." Raymond Williams, *Culture and Materialism*, London and New York: Verso (2005), 20; see also Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford:

speak to the interplay of representation, embodiment, and repertoire in forming social identities and event economies.[16]

A challenge to reading politicality into Transformational Festival culture is the puzzling and idiosyncratic nature of its aesthetics, which defy narrative structures and build from transitory, improvised, and participatory theatrical encounters. It requires theoretical tools that allow us to move nimbly between a variety of creative forms, understand the affective means by which they generate community ties and shape social dispositions, and attend to their significance as a *spatial and symbolic* practice that takes place on stolen lands. I propose the term "enchanting performance" as a way of thinking through this complex operation. Enchanting performance names a mode of spatialized aesthetic practice that aims at reorienting perception; it ties together myriad forms of creative place-making (from the flow arts, to theme camps, to self-costuming, to adopting alternative festival identities) that tessellate and congeal to animate festival spaces as cohesive event-worlds. Enchanting performance helps us examine festival performance as an assemblage, as an atomized matrix of embodied practices that exist at the precipice between representational and material dimensions; it also forces us to attend to how performance, as a spatial practice, always already relates to *land itself*—a point that is necessary to examine carefully within settler colonial societies.

Oxford University Press (1977); Benedetto Fontana, *Hegemony and Power: On the Relation Between Gramsci and Machiavelli*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (1993).

[16] Susan Foster's body of work has focused on shifting our approach to choreography from the basis of communication and semiotics, and instead to its materiality as a process of movement and bodily inscription. In the edited volume *Corporealities: Dancing Knowledge, Culture, and Power* Foster brings together a group of writers who "refuse to led bodies be used merely as vehicles or instruments for the expression of something else," and instead argues that bodies "instantiate both physical mobility and articulability." London and New York: Routledge (2005), xi.

Thus, it allows us to visualize festivals as sites where a twinned process of social production takes place: first, the production of a community via acts of embodied aesthetic poiesis that create bonds of intimacy resembling an emergent and authentic social unit (a populist articulation of "The People"); and second, the production of a value-added experience of place that similarly evokes a sense of intimacy related to land itself. Elizabeth Dillon's work in the context of the colonial Atlantic world is particularly illustrative of such an approach, and has deeply influenced my thinking. Her work observes how sites of representation (e.g. the 19th century theatre) socially produced an idea of nationhood by articulating The People through symbolic and material claims to space; as the idea of lands as commons was disappearing in the face of capital expansion, popular sovereignty was displaced into other sites of social gathering. These enclaves produced imaginations of occupation that operated in consonance with a settler colonial project, allowing White Americans to transform indigenous land into a nominally public site of the People. Dillon argues against dominant literary paradigms that seek to understand the formation of imagined political communities in the colonial Atlantic (e.g. public sphere theory);[17] she instead proposes a concept of the "performative commons" to outline how embodied representational practices not only imagine, but also corporeally *train and shape* emergent social patterns. In the 19th century theatres operated as paradigmatic sites of "commoning" (the social production of a community's status as The People, and its claims to space). These gatherings created crowds with a sense of

[17] She points in particular to scholarship that overemphasizes the role of rational political discourse in the formation of national consciousness because of its subtle exclusivity; it fails to take into account the multitude who did not participate in a literary public, and as well as the corporeal forms of being-together that were necessary to create a national idea. Her argument explicitly counters the influential work of Benedict Anderson, Jurgen Habermas, and Nancy Fraser. Elizabeth Dillon, *New World Drama: The Performative Commons*, Durham: Duke University Press (2014).

sovereignty and a collective claim to space, while simultaneously participating in a meta-operation that consolidated a national White identity with expansionist claims to indigenous lands. This idea of commoning was an undercurrent in my previous discussion of Chautauquas and camp meetings, which demonstrated how communal camping culture intersected with imaginative poiesis tied to the mythos of colonized grounds; this chapter considers how Transformational Festivals similarly participate in an extension and reification of this operation today.

I begin by outlining my concept of "enchanting performance" as a way of understanding the political logic of festival culture's distinctive creative repertoires. I build from the work of political theorist Jane Bennett's thinking on the concept of enchantment as a cultivatable aesthetic disposition that intersects with the formation and enactment of ethics; I put this into conversation with performance studies' attentiveness to the role of corporeal repertoires in building social identities and sensibilities.[18] I attempt to flesh out this idea of "enchanting performance" by discussing several intersecting arenas of festival aesthetic production, including promotional literature, environmental installations, immersive environments, and the flow arts. These examples demonstrate a mode of labor upon which the festival economy is premised: a spatial labor that involves transforming a material site into a magic, exotic, otherworldly dimension—a transformation of *perception.* They also allow us to consider the theatrical practice of

[18] See, for instance, Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theatre*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press (2005); Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Theatre Sacrifice Ritual: Exploring Forms of Political Theatre*, London and New York: Routledge (2005); Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Durham: Duke University Press (2003).

festivalgoing as a racialized form of commoning that fundamentally enacts a claim to land.

But I am also interested in a paradoxical consideration of how this commoning can provide a basis for activist commitments and popular challenges to hegemonic systems of knowledge. I devote the last portion of the chapter to a detailed discussion of the workshop and lecture curriculum of Transformational Festivals in order to locate the theatrical repertoires of enchantment within a more legible sociocultural discourse, as well as to outline the connection between embodiment, epistemology, and politics within festival culture. I use ethnographic discussion of these lectures and workshops to flesh out the complex economy that exists around education (from a speaker star system to a traveling "grassroots" festival education nonprofits), and to further complicate how Transformational Festivals produce a politicized articulation of The People.

Enchantment and Enchanting Performance

My concept of enchanting performance builds from political theorist Jane Bennett's work in *The Enchantment of Modern Life*. Enchantment, for Bennett, is a subterranean dimension of human activity that accompanied political Modernity, nipping at the heels of the ascendant hegemony of scientific rationality that Horkheimer and Adorno call the "disenchantment of the world."[19] Rather than succumb to this demagified vision of a cold and calculable world, enchantment denotes openness to encounters wherein wonder, awe, and excitement are allowed to perturb ontological certainty and tweak sedimented regimes of perception. Bennett describes enchantment as a cultivatable

[19] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press (2002 [1944]), 1.

affective disposition that relates to the formation and enactment of political ethics, arguing that sensual wonderment "augment[s] the motivational energy needed to move selves from the endorsement of ethical principles to the actual practice of ethical behaviors."[20] For Bennett, the perceptual celerity enabled by enchantment links to an expansive and aspirational sense of social imagination; it somatically generates longing for *something else*, something other than the given state of the world. This in turn creates an ethical locomotion that "is at the heart of a variety of social and liberation movements".[21] Anticipating Rancière's attentiveness to aesthetics as a defining axis of politics, Bennett's work describes enchantment as part of a speculative project aimed at radically expanding our sense of who and what participate in a political arena, and how they give voice to this participation.

Performance scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte similarly (though in a less careful way) uses the language of enchantment to describe the power of embodied encounters in theatrical settings to materialize a subjunctive disposition that aims to violate modern specular regimes, arguing that the transformative power of performance has the potential to "reenchant the world."[22] For Fischer-Lichte, "the nature of performance as event – articulated and brought forth in the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators, the performative generation of materiality, and the emergence of meaning – enable[s]

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[20] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Durham: Duke University Press (2009), xi.

[21] Jane Bennett, The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, Ethics, Pinceton: Princeton University Press (2001), 19.

[22] Fischer-Lichte, like Bennett, marks the Enlightenment's disenchantment of the world with a sense of loss. But unlike Bennett (whose tentative endorsement of enchantment as a counter-operation is linked to a steady disciplining of alternative perceptual regimes), Fischer-Lichte embraces a Left-progressive artistic exceptionalism that imagines the realm of art-making to exist as an *a priori* alternative that resists the capture of capitalistic modernity. "By transforming its participants, performance achieves the reenchantment of the world" she boldly asserts. But she leaves out any discussion of how transformation might also *reinscribe* a disenchanted present. *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics,* trans. Saskya Iris Jain, New York and London: Routledge (2008), 181.

transformation" at the level of the individual, which steps towards larger projects related to inaugurating alternative modes of collective being.[23] Bennett and Fischer-Lichte both approach enchantment as a cultivatable disposition that resists the logocentrism of Modernity, emerges through the body and its senses, and carries potential to bring new actors into the political conversation. As Bennett points out, this work fits into a recent shift in political discourse dubbed the "ethical turn" or "aesthetic turn," which takes the form of an increased attentiveness to the role of individual behavior as a component of wider political projects.[24] This move emphasizes processes of "will formation," resonating with cultural Marxist theory that views the production of dispositions and personal ethics as a critical domain of politics—that is, the ethical turn considers politics to be not only about defining social principles and priorities, but also the cultural processes that generate an ability to see them, and the energy to materialize them.

Transformational festivals demonstrate how, at the aesthetic turn, politics manifest through cultural technologies that not only represent a mappable ideological disposition, but also performatively *produce* a "People" whose social drives get framed around it. Bennett notes that the word "enchant" derives etymologically from the French verb for *to sing* (*chanter*), combined with a sense of encompassment: "To 'en-chant': to surround with song or incantation; hence to cast a spell with sounds, to make fall under the sway of a magical refrain, to carry away on a sonorous stream."[25] Transformational Festivals are devised as immersive spaces that generate a haptically disorienting environmental experience, which emerges from the combination of organizer-initiated

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[23] Ibid., 189.
[24] Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, xi-xii.
[25] Bennett,*The Enchantment of Modern Life*, 6.

event production and participant improvisation within that spatial matrix. There is an activist impulse to work, though one that differs markedly from familiar forms of political participation that directly address policy, political practice, and the material conditions of life; in Transformational Festivals, activism happens in the form of psycho-social self-work that often gets articulated via the New Age aphorism of "changing consciousness."[26] This self-work—the cultivation of "techniques of the body" that allow feelings of enchantment to emerge—comes not only through workshops, lectures, and activist initiatives, but also through the more abstract and idiosyncratic aspects of festival performance repertoires: dance forms predicated on magical and mythical tropes; rituals based on eastern symbologies and indigenous cosmologies; environmental art installations that produce tactile encounters with Nature staged as a heightened version of itself.

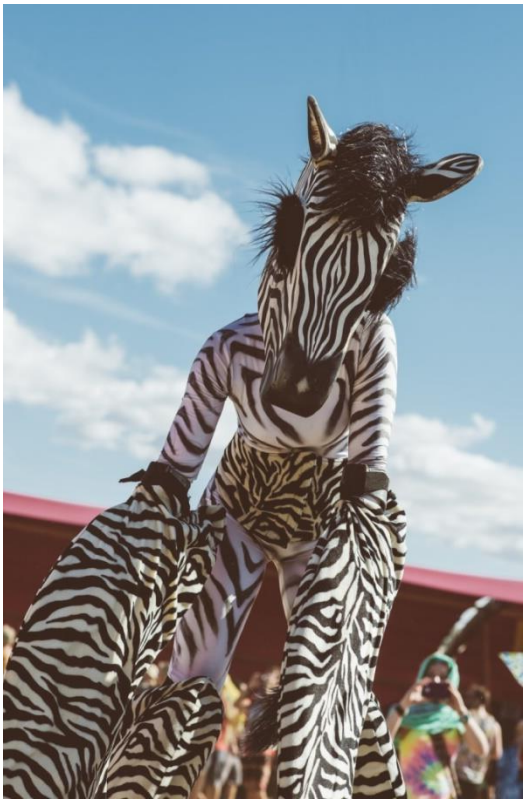

Figure 6: Photo of Zebra-man at Envision by Mario Covic Photography.

Although planning and production are an important part of festival experience, it also involves participant improvisation and momentum. Bennett conceives of enchantment as something that is both surprising and unsettling, something that "you did not expect and are not fully prepared to engage." She writes: "Contained within this

[26] See, for example, Wouter Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, Leiden: Brill (1996).

surprise state are 1) a pleasurable feeling of being charmed by the novel and as yet unprocessed encounter, and 2) a more *unheimlich* (uncanny) feeling of being disrupted or torn out of one's default sensory-psychic-intellectual disposition."[27] These disquieting encounters have the potential to "extend the limits of one's current embodiment; to escape the confines of biology, culture, and training; to expand the horizon of the conceivable."[28] A brief vignette from Envision 2015 helps me explain how embodied festival performance can materialize this sense of disquieting surprise:

During a sunrise set by the Desert Dwellers—attended only by a few dedicated night-owls, many of whom had used psychedelics or amphetamines to remain on the dance floor so late—I noticed one participant ambling about costumed as a zebra. He walked on stilts to appear taller and more majestic, plodding slowly across the dance floor while smiling like a Cheshire cat with black lipstick stretched across his white-painted face. At one point, he sidled up close to a man who was also in a zombie-like trance-dance, too preoccupied with the music to notice him. When the entranced dancer spotted the zebra-man in his peripheral vision, he wheeled around in a defensive jerk, eyes bulging. You could read on his face a momentary freakout, a glitch that required a moment of perceptual reorientation. He kept turning around to look at the zebra-man as it pranced away, frantically shaking his head as if trying to re-center his proper field of vision. The stilt-walking zebra-man produced a theatrical effect that materially impacted the senses—it created a phenomenological encounter that haptically punctured the dancer's quotidian perceptual regime. In the brief moment of affective touch, that split

[27] Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, 5.
[28] Ibid., 19.

second where the costumed performer intersected with the jungle setting, the witness's own bodily exhaustion, and perhaps a chemical intoxicant, it was suddenly possible for a zebra-man to exist.

This episode indicates how I perceive enchanting performance arising via the improvised collaboration of event participants in the form of social play that stands on the precipice between reality and representation. Festivals are full of such "encounter scenes," Heather Ramey's term for brief theatrical scenarios that constantly flit in and out of existence as attendees intersect throughout event space. Participants weave between different, constantly-emerging encounter scenes, with social life constantly veering into imaginative play through the use of theatrical embodiment, spectacle, scopic techniques, and chemical technologies.[29] The zebra-man was created through labor that included costuming, make-up, physicality, and mimesis, a theatrical labor predicated on materializing the impossible (an animal-human hybrid); Deleuze and Guattari might refer to this as a "rhizomatic labor of perception," a phrase they use to describe the project of drug use as a means of unraveling rigid subjectivities and socially-induced sensorial blockages.[30] This is a collaborative and relational process, one which builds from physical repertoires and a symbolic economy deployed to produce perceptual vertigo, and which is always tied to the environment in which it takes place.

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[29] Encounter-scenes, as described by Ramey, are "encounters that occur between individuals/groups and the environment and/or art in which a theatricalized improvisation based in Diana Taylor's concept of the *repertoire*—and the *scenarios* that spring from the repertoire, and hypertexts of those scenarios—is played out by the participants." Her use of the term hypertext, from computer terminology, alludes to the process of different elements in an encounter (costume, environment, dialogue, etc.) bouncing and reflecting off each other in a referential interplay. Ramey, Diss, 50

[30] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi, London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (2005 [1987]), pg. 283-285.

The form in which enchanting performance emerges depends on an event's staging and dramaturgy. Transformational Festivals figure festival space as an imaginative environment capable of holding myriad, often contradictive, modes of creative expression. They build from a concept of event production that involves staging locations as heightened versions of themselves—this is why festivals so often take on personas grounded in the environment itself: Burning Man as a desert festival; Envision as a jungle festival; Project Earth as a festival whose identity is tied closely to its local oak trees, etc. These personas are crafted through architecture (say, the bamboo structures that give Envision a tropical feel) and publicity apparatuses that communicate an event's stylization to potential attendees. To be sure this environmental identification intersects with event branding, but it also forms an art directional bedrock that coheres event production and participant improvisation. Frequently, festival spatial construction relies on indigenous, orientalist, and primitivist tropes to layer on an experience of psychic dislocation. This allows events to resemble sites of speculative consciousness and imaginative play, providing a provisional sense of alterity from the perceptual norms that govern the quotidian (the "default world" in Burning Man parlance).

This publicity image from the 2017 Electric Forest festival held in Rothbury, Michigan demonstrates how Transformational Festivals use promotional media to erect dramaturgical frames that script the emergence of enchantment, stage the event environment as a space of theatrical potential, and ground these operations in a provisional and deterritorialized sense of the exotic. It fantastically depicts a procession of African elephants marching through a deciduous forest characteristic of the US Midwest, which is animated with spritely wisps of neon colors bending through the tree

trunks. The elephants appear to be of the African variety, but they are attired in South and Southeast Asian garb, including colorful tapestries draped over their torsos, ornate headdresses with ruby *bindis*, and throne-like *hathi howdahs* (Indian elephant carriages) atop their backs; they flank a Romani vardo waving a flag that reads "EF" [Electric Forest]. Alongside the caravan saunters a woman sporting a flowy white dress that evokes the "gypsy chic" fashion style, and behind her lags a man in a top hat and black

Figure 7: 2017 Electric Forest promotional photo.

coat that would not be out of place in a 19th century European metropolis. Barely visible poking up diagonally behind the woman's back is the wick of a long staff, the kind of staff used for elaborate fire-spinning performances that are the mainstays of music festival flow arts.

As an advertisement the image does little to depict what the festival will actually look like, or what attractions participants will likely find there. It instead attempts to poetically represent the Michigan forests as a space of imaginative potential, a site for the production of awe and wonderment. It does so by utilizing tropes rooted in 19th century exoticism and circus culture; the roving caravan's locational and temporal indeterminacy, combined with the landscape's lively and magical figuration. The image produces the

festival as a space of ontological uncertainty, a place capable of supporting temporal or geographical contradictions. As a visual framing device it attempts to symbolically cohere the myriad atomized encounter-scenes that will aggregate to produce Electric Forest's aesthetic. Its effectiveness as a publicity image comes from depicting the festival's potential to inaugurate an alternative mode of perception—in this case, one that can collapse time and space, materialize exotic fantasyscapes, and seed a mystical animacy into the local environment.

Such dramaturgies superimpose layers of meaning onto the grounds of Electric Forest, rearticulating the landscape as an uncanny dreamland populated by "otherworldly characters, and surprises around every turn."[31] This gets further corroborated through naming and mapping operations that occur on paper (see image below) and on-site. One such place is Electric Forest's iconic "Sherwood Forest," a large wooded area, with housing installations, hidden mini-stages, and thousands of lights and lasers bouncing off white pines and cedars. Taking the name of Robin Hood's legendary hideaway of English folk myth, Sherwood Forest fuses organizers' technical production with the embodied talents of participants and hired performers to create a contemporary mythological play place right in the middle of the American Midwest. Melding medieval referents to high tech, even sci-fi enhancements, it indexes an alluring and enabling spatial condition of impossibility that can be adapted to fit participants' own creative drives. This imaginative place-making (harkening to a pre-modern European idyll) enables an intoxicating perceptual celerity—a frenetic shifting of sensorial registers—that allows participants to

[31] Jesse Champagne, "8 Reasons Why Electric Forest is Unlike Any Other Festival", *lessthan3.com*, 15 May 2014, http://www.lessthan3.com/news/8-reasons-why-electric-forest-is-unlike-any-other-festival.

play along in their own unique ways. The land itself takes on scenographic qualities that paradoxically depict it as a materially real site, and also as a negative space that offers design potential for event organizers, and allows participants to proactively indulge their creative drives. The dramaturgical cues from Electric Forest's publicity images intersect with a matrix of theatrical conventions to stage the land of Electric Forest as a heightened version of itself, as a place of both legend and contemporary myth-making for an emergent community.

The following environmental art project demonstrates how festival land becomes a raw material for a theatrical labor in the service of changing participants' perception. Each year Costa Rica's Envision features an environmental art installation called a "nature mandala" or "earth altar" on a Mangrove tree centrally-located within the event space. Building from Hindu and Buddhist philosophies in which mandalas represent a

Figure 8: Nature Mandala Installation, Envision Festival 2015

microcosm of the universe, the earth altar creates a mesmerizing effect that also brings vivid focus to the landscape on which it is built.

Envision's 2015 nature mandala (Figure 8) was created by Scott O'Keefe. It traced the mangrove's root system with seeds, pine cones, leaves, berries, stones, and shells, as well as found objects like bottle caps, all arranged in eye-catching spirals and

Sacred Geometry patterns. Also interspersed throughout the piece were objects reflective of a variety of spiritualities, like Hindu gods, Madonna figurines, and pendants that evoked Mesoamerican cosmologies. The patterned placement of seeds and detritus into spirals, Yin-Yangs, and fractal geometry turns the mangrove into a visually stunning environment that beckons festivalgoers to sit and observe it in its intricacy. This is especially true at night, when colored LEDs placed strategically around the tree light the piece from different angles; using programmed lighting patterns, the LEDs specularly draw viewers' attention to particular components of the mandala design and to parts of tree itself. For a few moments your eye gets drawn to the leaves, then to the texture of the roots, then to the figure of the Buddha head, then to the individual grains of corn that lead in a circuitous path to a talisman—if you're lucky you might notice an ant trudging along the roots, only to have it disappear from view as the lighting pattern shifts.

Though the earth altar is inanimate, yet it conceptually choreographs patterns of interaction by spectators. In other words, it functions as what Robin Bernstein would call a "scriptive thing," an object that prompts meaningful and repetitive human interactions capable of subtly shaping social dispositions via corporeal patterning.[32] The nature mandala choreographs participants' visuality; it scripts a series of shifting glances that slowly reveal the tree as an elaborate environmental assemblage, an act that becomes especially gripping with bass music playing in the background and with psychedelics intended to produce synesthesia. As an architectural exhibition, it creates a social

[32] Bernstein's term "scriptive thing" describes the way certain objects map out forms of human interaction with them, and thus "script" modes of physical and psychic meaning-making. Utilizing a new materialist mode of ascribing agential powers to inanimate objects, Bernstein articulates a "thing" as an object that "hails human action," or, "invites you to dance." She also notes the importance that such objects had in the formation of racial consciousness in the 19th century. *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights*, New York: NYU Press (2011), 77.

interstice for conversing, meditating, or simply sitting and staring. It enchants insofar as it prompts participants to slow down their bodily rhythms, continuously shift their gaze, visually shift between spiritual symbols and complex geometries, and focus on the unique warp and woof of the mangrove tree and its surrounding junglescape—to take in the environment not as backdrop or scenery, but as an active participant in an unfolding theatrical experience.

Such earth altars are common at Transformational Festivals, and poetically encapsulate how enchanting performance utilizes theatrical labor to create surprising, wondrous social encounters that operate on the level of perception itself, and in conversation with the environment on which it takes place. This points to how commoning happens through spatial production related to land itself: the mandala is a gathering point in which participants are led to collaboratively experience psychic dislocation and epiphany through an intense encounter with the land. Event production is about proliferating such experiences, building an all-encompassing sense of alterity that sometimes gets enunciated as a particular theatrical buzzword: Immersion.

Immersion, Participation, and the Social Turn

> "I barely even look at [an event's] lineup; that's not important. I just want to see real people. What's cool about Project Earth is it's small, but there are lots of things going on. IllumiKnation Station workshops, tea ceremonies, fashion shows for kids. People take that on themselves. Festivalgoers take on responsibility to bring something besides themselves. Community drum circles. […] I go for the people. […] That's what I look for in a festival is fostering those relationships."

- Jess "Seahorse" Anderson, Festival Organizer (Galactic Get Down and Valhalla in Minnesota)[33]

Enchantment's etymological evocation of being completely surrounded points to a mode of spatial production that has over the last several decades become a highly valued component in what Joseph Pine II and Lee Gilmore have termed "the experience economy."[34] In industry discourse, creating a cohesive feeling of an event's three-dimensionality gets articulated as achieving an "immersive" experience. Jeet-Kei Leung, for instance, states that Transformational Festival culture is built on "the co-creation of an immersive, participant-driven reality"; he outlines festivalgoing as a mode of poiesis linked to the production of alternative ontological possibilities—"new realities," unique "event-worlds."[35] Festivals frequently promote themselves by playing up the event as a form of "cultural immersion that nourishes the spirit," as "a [participatory] chance [to] immerse ourselves in a magically created world."[36] California's Lightning in a Bottle festival, for instance, advertises the presence of "immersive environments" within its festival space (such as The Grand Artique, Amori's Casino and Burlesque, The Lightning Inn, and the Fungineers' Sitcommune) that invite you to "drop into an entirely different world."[37] And in event criticism, immersivity signifies thorough and professional spatial production that produces a coveted sense of social dislocation, as in this EDM.com review of Boomtown 2018 in England: "Every now and then a music festival goes

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[33] Jess Anderson, interview with author, 10 October 2015.

[34] Joseph Pine II and Lee Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre and Every Business a Stage*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press (1999).

[35] Jeet-Kei Leung, "Transformational Festivals, *TEDx Talks*, TEDx Vancouver (2010), published on YouTube 20 Aug 2011, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q8tDpQp6m0A.

[36] "Transformational Festivals of North America", *Festival Fire: Gatherings Cultural Transformation*, 2019, https://festivalfire.com/festivals/.

[37] "Immersive Environments", *Lightning in a Bottle* webpage, 2016, Lightninginabottle.org/experiences/immersive-environments.

beyond the realms of its supposed capabilities – producing a display of not only good music, but successful crafting of an immersive world, one that tricks you into believing life outside of the festival walls is non-existent."[38]

Immersion's elevation to a defining axis of a festival's value has been propelled by organizational and aesthetic shifts that took place over the last two decades; Roxy Robinson argues that in the 1990s, music festivals steadily moved away from a celebrity-centered star model (characterized by large stages and big-name headliners commanding the unidirectional gaze of audiences) to a more "participatory" approach; this was characterized by an increased focus on patron self-performance, and attentiveness by event organizers to the production of informal social spaces in addition to central sound stages.[39] This coincided with an expansion of the event field from a few mass marketable mega-events to a diverse array of specialized festivals catering to niche subcultures (as I have explored elsewhere, today's event scenes are composed of a wide array of "boutique festivals" that respond to the specialized aesthetico-philosophical demands of their particular constituencies).[40]

Robinson especially emphasizes the popularization of Burning Man (known for its "no spectators" artistic philosophy) as a transatlantic phenomenon that instigated the

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[38] Jake Hirst, "Boomtown 2018: The Immersive Festival City (Review)", *EDM.com*, 30 Aug 2018, https://edm.com/events/boomtown-2018-the-immersive-festival-city-review.

[39] Robinson suggests that the forces affecting this shift were: a) the transatlantic influence of Burning Man, and its much-publicized principle of "radical participation," b) frustration over the increasing yuppification of signature events that had come of age during the 1980s Free Festival movement, like Glastonbury, and c) the sudden introduction into the festival market of many undercapitalized events that needed to find ways to compete against more big-name competitors. *Music Festivals and the Politics of Participation*, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited (2015). See esp. chapters 3-5.

[40] Bryan Schmidt, "Boutiquing at the Raindance Campout: Relational Aesthetics as Festival Technology", in *Weekend Societies: Dance Music Festivals and Event Cultures*, ed. Graham St. John, New York and London: Bloomsbury (2017).

broad adoption of immersivity in event aesthetics. But immersivity has been a growing paradigm in urban entertainment and experience economies for some time, valued not only in event production, but also in diverse sectors like gaming culture, restaurants, education, and the arts more broadly. In the last decade immersive theatre has become an artistically compelling and outrageously profitable event genre.[41] Although interactive theatrical experimentation and complex environmental production have been hallmarks of the global theatrical avant-garde since at least the 1950s,[42] its ascent to a highly popular cultural paradigm under the rubric of "immersion" owes to the spread of specular technologies developed over the last two decades through the rise of video gaming, the internet, social media, virtual reality, and other components of what Henry Jenkins calls "participatory culture."[43]

Participation and immersion are frequently extolled by artists and critics as components of a politically progressive pivot within the world of art-making. In the 1990s, for instance, Nicholas Bourriaud argued that an emerging paradigm of participatory gallery art (which he termed "relational art") held a democratizing potential because it troubled the firm divide between artists and consumers, while also refiguring

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[41] Perhaps the most famous example of immersive theatre is *Sleep No More* by British theatre company Punchdrunk, an adaptation of *Macbeth*. After productions in London (2003) and Massachusetts (2009), a reinvented New York production—which takes place in a massive complex of warehouses that audiences are free to explore—has been running continuously since 2011. Precise profits are hard to gather, but the production's initial capitalization was rumored as being between $5 and $10 million. Alexis Soloski, "Sleep No More: From Avant-Garde Theatre to Commercial Blockbuster," *The Guardian*, 31 Mar 2015.

[42] Josephine Machon reaches as far back as Richard Wagner's *gesamkunstwerk* to track the conceptual development of immersion in theatre, including Artaud's *Theatre of Cruelty*, happenings, and the environmental theatre of the 1960s. Claire Bishop has likewise identified a complex and often under-discussed avant-garde tradition throughout Eastern Europe and South America that have prominently used participation. Josephine Machon, *Immersive Theatres: Intimacy and Immediacy in Contemporary Performance*, New York: Palgrave (2013); Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, London: Verso (2012).

[43] Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*, New York and London: Routledge (2012).

art works as "social interstices" capable of generating dialogue, connection, and even inter-subjective experiences.[44] Josephine Machon has similarly attributed a democratizing potentiality to the distinct field of immersive theatre that emerged in the 1990s due to its capacity to blur boundaries between audiences and artists via physical intimacy, and to "reawaken holistic powers of cognition and appreciation that celebrate and call into play alternative methods of 'knowing.'"[45] This parallels Robinson's own optimistic assessment of festival culture's move towards participatory models, which she associates with giving audiences a degree of "authorial control," and thus "elevating" spectators to role of artist; in this way immersive festivals appear to her as radically egalitarian spaces that self-consciously seek alternatives to perceived social hierarchies—especially those related to artistic exceptionalism.[46]

However, this egalitarian imagining becomes messy when confronted with the complicated economics related to labor, prestige, and remuneration that attend festival formations. The creative labor that creates an immersive experience is frequently the subject of intense debate and division, and has the capacity to fracture event communities or create patterns of exploitation. In chapter three, for example, I explore how live painters at Harmony Park have found themselves toeing a precarious line related to their labor's value within different events and organizational structures—sometimes they are viewed as valued artists worthy of subsidy and VIP treatment, sometimes as low-level staff who should be given a free ticket to attend, but not paid, and sometimes as only enthusiastic participant-consumers whom organizers need not compensate for their labor

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[44] Nicholas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Paris: Les Presses du réel (2002), 5-7.
[45] Josephine Machon, *Immersive Theatres*, 37 and 47.
[46] Roxy Robinson, *Music Festivals and the Politics of Participation*, 19.

in any way. In contrast to the star model of festival organization, and its explicitly tiering of musical acts according to their perceived value as an event attraction, the participatory model disperses and occludes the labor of aesthetic production. While musical artists still tend to be booked on a tiered system of financial remuneration (i.e. the most valued acts are given the biggest font and top billing on the poster), others are financially compensated under-the-table, with a free ticket, or not at all; frustrations and tension that attend one's position in this economy (particularly while, as for-profit events, money accrues at the top) form a constant undercurrent in the social life of event communities.

As Claire Bishop argues, the turn towards participation was a direct reaction to the sedimentation of neoliberal social conditions, with the model of the collective creative experience appearing as an *efficient and accessible* avenue for distributing dwindling State resources. This was especially visible in European societies in the 1990s and 2000s, which used participatory art as part of government-sponsored "social inclusion" initiatives aimed at increasing employability, minimizing crime, and fostering aspiration. Participatory performance was seen as a platform for creating submissive citizens that "respect authority and accept the 'risk' and responsibility of looking after themselves in the face of diminished public services."[47] Though this work created opportunities for a wider participation in the art world, it also radically reduced individual artists' sustainable career opportunities and reinforced an entrepreneurial ethos that justified the State's retreat from collective social projects. Bishop labels this pivot towards collective modes of artistic production the "social turn," acknowledging how participatory structures at their most aspirational were seen to diffuse single authorship

[47] Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 14.

into collaboration, and—eschewing the commercial art system's mandate to supply the market with commodities—to "channel art's symbolic capital into constructive social change."[48] But this form of participation also became a tool to instill the ethic of personal responsibility and entrepreneurialism in a citizenry expected to hew themselves to the needs of the artistic marketplace, rather than rely on the social safety net.

Bishop's work clearly problematizes optimistic assessments of festival culture's adoption of the participatory event model, but it should not prevent us from considering why immersion appears so hopeful and exciting for participants. Neoliberalism's push towards individualism and the "privatization of everything," has also instigated a counter-movement towards "the establishment of a new common […] open to all"; David Harvey describes this "commoning" as a search for "creative ways to use the powers of collective labor for the common good," but it also reaches beyond the process of production to the social tools for being-in-the-world together.[49] The rise of participatory festival models as compelling and popular forms of corporeal experience speak to a desire to live authentically and cooperatively within increasingly fractious, individuated, and alienating societies—to see oneself as part of a People.

The premium Transformational Festivals place on the collective production of an *aesthetic*—an embodied labor that involves staging and reimagining the environment—speaks to this "commoning" impulse, but also to this impulse's fraught nature in a settler colonial society like the United States. As indigenous studies scholar Patrick Wolfe has

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[48] Ibid., 12.

[49] David Harvey, "The Future of the Commons", *Radical History Review*, 109 (Winter 2011), pp 101-107, 107.

argued, land is "a precondition of social organization," and we should always keep in mind that the land on which music festivals take place is almost always usurped space. Its appropriation for use in creative projects of commoning within capitalist and settler societies—of producing a new articulation of the People—exemplifies a repeated claim to sovereignty; despite festivals being only transitory events, their production of land speaks to how settler colonialism gets continuously reified as "a structure, and not an event."[50]

To ground this discussion in a material example, let us consider the work of San Diego-based arts collective The Grand Artique, which specializes in creating "immersive environments" for use in music festivals. The Grand Artique describes itself as a "collective of artists, builders, event producers and coordinators, craftspeople, set dressers, painters, performers, and musicians [who can] transform any space [into] a fully immersive interactive art installation." They transport participants "to another time and place" through theatrical techniques that include material spatial production and instigating embodied encounter-scenes by devising "interactive roaming characters" that "bring the space alive!"[51] At Lightning in a Bottle, the Grand Artique produces an approximately ¼ square mile replica of a turn-of-the-20th century Wild West mining town, called Frontierville. The town, which sees constant foot traffic day and night, consists of several buildings (including a trading post, general store, tavern, hotel, and "gypsy encampment") as well as a sound stage that features stylized performance acts

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[50] Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology*, London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group (1998), 2.

[51] "Our Story", Grand Artique, *Facebook* group page, accessed 30 March 2019, https://www.facebook.com/thegrandartique/?ref=br_rs.

that fit the old-timey vibe. Scheduled activities run from 7:00am to well past midnight, including staged musical acts and variety shows, one-time happenings like a mayoral election and a Sunday religious revival (complete with a traveling preacher and choir), and innumerable moment-to-moment interactions with Frontierville citizens.

Frontierville was clearly guided by Hollywood's popular and romantic caricature of the American west; when I attended in 2016 it did not seem to contain particularly unsavory forms of indigenous stereotyping or "Indian play" typical of the genre, but it did feed into a settler-colonial fantasy of the west as a negative space of possibility—an emergent society in its optimistic infancy building up from nothingness (which was never really nothing). This distinct idiom of commoning, became clearer when I witnessed a theatrical happening in the form of a mayoral election: three candidates, each stylized in a take on a Wild West "type" (the spunky cowgirl, the haughty gentleman, the decadent casino and brothel owner), gave competing speeches listing their qualifications to be the mayor of Lightning in a Bottle—participants later filled out ballots to elect a winner. The speeches were laden with ironic camp and comical bawdiness, and the candidates satirically took on qualities of Bernie Sanders, Hillary Clinton, and Donald Trump, who were contemporaneously running in the US presidential election. In doing so, they brought self-conscious attention to processes of defining The People, with the festival world exemplifying a transitory alternative; this commentary would be made even more

explicit a year later when one of the mayoral candidate characters, Paul E. Amori, registered in the *real* Los Angeles Democratic mayoral primary.[52]

While I paid some attention to the speeches, my concentration was broken when I was knocked aside by a band of costumed brigands rushing the stage. Sporting fake rifles, and wearing bandanas over their faces, the bandits attempted to take a group of participants hostage, but were thwarted when one of the mayoral candidates intervened, magically hypnotizing and disarming them. The episode, which used kinetic force to jolt me and other participants into the imaginative scenario, spoke to Frontierville's intention to engage participants in an embodied experience of westward expansion as an emergent social experiment in an imaginative sandbox—it is worth pointing out that in this scenario, indigenous individuals were almost wholly absent from the visual economy. This project of collective (re)imagining intersected with an articulation of civic values and identity via democratic political pageantry—performing a cleansing operation regarding the genocidal nature of this formative moment in national culture. Just like the interactive Wild West Shows that were contemporaneous to Frontierville's time period (important players in the genealogy of outdoor spectacle that contributed to the aesthetics of today's outdoor event culture), [53] participants haptically and choreographically recast

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[52] Amori lost to incumbent Eric Garcetti, receiving 2231 votes or .55%. His candidacy used his Frontierville campaign slogan "Vote4Love," tying it to issues like voter turnout, homelessness, and reducing traffic. A look at Amori's campaign page reveals how "love" appears as a non-partisan mode of social engagement that appears as a line of flight from the toxic discourse of US electoral politics: "Amori and The Vote 4 Love Campaign reject the angry, hateful and vitriolic campaign tactics that steer us away from intelligent discourse about solving the problems that affect us all (regardless of party affiliation) and embraces love as the fundamental fuel that should be driving the political system." "What is the Vote 4 Love Campaign?", n.d., http://vote4love.com/, accessed 31 Mar 2019; "Paul Amori", *Ballotpedia*, n.d., accessed 31 Mar 2019, https://ballotpedia.org/Paul_Amori.

[53] See L.G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians 1883-1933,* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press (1996);

westward expansion as an innocent time of budding democracy, sexual liberation, and playful brigandry.

Frontierville exemplifies an entire industry of event production predicated on creating a sense of participatory immersion via the interplay of spatial transformation and theatrical imagination.[54] Its effectiveness stems not only from its production quality and spectacle, but from its performers' ability to flexibly adapt to the patrons that attend. Theatrical play happens three-dimensionally: participants visit the Trading Post to spice of their outfits with Wild West flare, they suddenly get scooped into a "hold-up" scenario, and they finally unwind with a dance party that breaks out on the brothel balcony. By drawing participants into cooperative acts of aesthetic creation, immersive environments (sometimes also called theme camps) enlist participants in the poiesis of an imagined community—the People—whose identity is linked to a sense of belonging within a particular site. Given the demographics of Transformational Festivals in the United States, Frontierville reifies settler colonialism as a structure by continually restaging (White) claims to indigenous space.

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[54] Meow Wolf, for instance, is a Santa Fe-based purveyor of "immersive and interactive experiences that transport audiences of all ages into fantastic realms of story and exploration". It coheres a variety of media to build theatrical scenarios and elaborate environments for audience exploration, including "architecture, sculpture, painting, photography, video production, cross-reality (AR/VR/MR), music, audio engineering, narrative writing, costuming, and performance." The group, a registered non-profit, also attaches political stakes to this work by considering the ways that it "champions otherness, weirdness, challenging norms, radical inclusion, and the power of creativity to change the world." "About Meow Wolf", Meow Wolf homepage, n.d., accessed 31 Mar 2019, https://meowwolf.com/about; another dimension of this industry includes organized festival "crews," or performance collectives that coordinate interactive content for use in events. This might include costuming, circus acts, flow arts performances, improvised dance offs, and other forms of spectacle. Festival crews (some examples include the Chicago-based Safety Crew, the Minnesota-based Chaplins, or the Los Angeles-based Zen Arts LA) are often hired by events as a way of producing mobile spectacles that complement the event's architectural dimension.

But while immersive environments showcase how enchanting performance can take the form of large-scale, coordinated aesthetic production, we should recognize that this completed spatial totality is actually an assemblage composed of individual acts of embodied labor. In the next section, I use the example of a popular festival dance practice—the flow arts—to discuss how enchantment emerges at the level of the body via corporeal repertoires aimed at reorienting perception. By doing so I hope to 1) draw attention to the myriad atomized sites of creative expression that coalesce to build an event's aesthetic, and the labor needed to materialize them (which often goes unacknowledged and uncompensated), and 2) gesture to the political stakes of these modes of creative expression, which outwardly appear lighthearted, leisurely, and even frivolous. These micro-practices allow us to visualize commoning as a scalar operation that emerges at the level of *personal* space in addition to geographic space.

Flow Arts as Enchanting Performance

The "flow wand" (also called the "levistick," "magic wand," or "levitation dance wand") is a simple dowel rod with a thin bit of twine drawn through a hole in the middle, which ties to one's index finger. One side of the rod is heavily weighted so that when it hangs from the string it can easily be balanced to stand vertical. You manipulate the flow wand by moving your arm in slow arcs and circles, trying to keep the prop standing upright as it whips around your body. The barely visible twine is the only thing that connects your hand to the object, so it appears as if you are moving the wand through some sort of telekinetic power (like a Jedi using the Force), rather than physical technique. Flowtoys—a major player in the festival equipment economy—designs LED

light-up versions of flow arts props like the flow wand, and uses the language of enchantment in its advertisement of the product: "Designed for dance, creative expression and meditation through movement, these enchanting toys float and move around your body as if by magic, as you control the wand with a string."[55]

It takes a certain technical finesse to manipulate the flow wand convincingly—even a slight bump against your knee or hand sends the object into an unrecoverable spiral that breaks the illusion—but imbuing the Flow Wand with its desired enchanting quality requires not just precision, but also theatricality. Even though only one hand manipulates the object, coordination between both hands is required to create the effect that the wand is being moved by some kind of extrasensory force. The non-manipulating hand travels parallel to the manipulating one, curving and bending in anticipation of the wand's next move. For a really convincing performance, flow wand artists commit their entire body to the illusion; when they set the object into motion, their entire carriage changes—they crouch in a wide stance, pulse their shoulders in conjunction with the wand's movement (as if invisible energy is tethering them to the object) and stare intensely—sometimes even going cross-

Figure 9: Levistick promotional photo. Soul Artists Store.

[55] "learn:: levitation wand", *Flow Toys* webpage, n.d., accessed 10 Apr 2017, https://www.flowtoys.com/learn/wand/.

eyed—to create the impression of tapping into the dark occult to gain this mysterious power.

Figure 10: 2015 Festival Fire "Festival Guide: Gatherings for Cultural Transformation".

The Flow Wand is a prototypical example of a category of dance performance ubiquitous to all the festivals I studied for this project: the flow arts. From dazzling fire-spinning displays to random flaneurs juggling as they saunter through event grounds, the flow arts are a hallmark of festival culture, an enchanting movement-based performance style that utilizes gesture, technique, and affect in order to animate the festival world. What little has been written about the flow arts in scholarly literature discusses them as an individual meditative practice driven by an objective of centering the psyche, achieving a kind of spiritual catharsis, or facing one's most primal fears.[56] This inward-looking approach owes to the popularization of the concept of "flow" and "flow states" by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, whose research in the 1980s and 1990s helped cohere several movement practices that built from long-existing circus repertoires. Csikszentmihalyi defined flow as an individual's psychosomatic state of total concentration, "when a person's mind and body are stretched to [their] limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile."[57] Emerging from the

[56] Rachel Bowditch, "Phoenix Rising: The Culture of Fire at the Burning Man Festival", *Performance Research*, 18.1 (2013), 113-122.
[57] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, New York: Harper and Row (1990), 3.

field of positive psychology—a branch of science that aimed to generate practices leading to an optimistic outlook on life (believing this to correlate with desirable social outcomes)—flow appeared as a restorative and liberating practice that could salve personal feelings of ennui, depression, or social alienation.

But in the paradigmatically social setting of the festival, the flow arts do not function as an individual activity. The concentration and technique of flow artists is not only a psycho-somatic operation on the part of the performer, but a kinetic and affective expression that contributes to producing an event's overall aesthetic. This is why so many festivals now hire or give out free tickets to professional flow arts troupes; their skill and theatricality create value by filling in the nooks and crannies of dance floors and campsite alleyways with a spectacular animus that enhances the general impression of being completely immersed in another world. The flow arts use objects to surface an ethereal quality that recasts the performer as a sorcerer; they entertain by violating ontological certainty, creating magical moments that stand at the precipice of illusion and reality. In other words, the flow arts are individuated techniques that aggregate to contribute to spatial production; the value created by the labor of flow artists relates to tweaking the boundaries of the possible—by working at the level of perception itself.

Csikszentmihalyi's research was the product of a cultural moment in which the West was deeply invested in searching for techniques to mitigate the alienation and anomie of consumer capitalism – techniques which were also widely accessible to populations rendered increasingly precarious (or superfluous) by neoliberal social

policies.[58] The positive science and "information theory" that undergirded his study intersected with the growth of the self-help genre and New Age literature, and like these fields, it looked to Eastern philosophy and mysticism for cultural models that might be adapted for use in the West. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, the text that popularized Csikszentmihalyi's concept, is shot through with a strain of orientalist primitivism that fetishizes Eastern culture as timeless and static, and thus an expression of humanity at its most authentic. It refracts distinct cultural traditions (like yoga or tai chi) through a scientific schema that detaches them from their context and philosophy, and renders them iterable technologies for systematic self-improvement. As seeking flow became a popular "technology of the self"[59] in western consumer cultures, it retained a trace of this underlying orientalism.

It is perhaps for this reason that the flow arts coalesced around particular martial art forms and dance practices that intersected with orientalist fantasy within western popular culture. Common flow arts idioms draw from the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, China, Japan, and Oceania, including fan dance, sword spinning, rope dart (Japanese *Jōhyō*), staff spinning (Japanese *bō* staff), fire knife dance (Samoan *Siva*

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[58] Nikolas Rose, for instance, illustrates that self-help psychological discourse operates at the level of the social. He sees the propagation of forms of expertise that render the human psyche measurable and calculable (we might point to Csikszentmihalyi's use of the evaluative term "optimal experience" as a synonym for Flow). The meta-operation of "provid[ing] a mechanism for rendering subjectivity into thought as a calculable force" enables authorities to accomplish objectives by acting upon the very choices, wishes, values, and conduct of individuals, rather than through outright coercion. Building on Foucault's concept of governmentality, Rose sees techniques of the self as the means whereby citizen subjects of liberal democracies are not dominated, but instead "solicited into a kind of alliance between personal objectives and ambitions and institutionally or socially prized goals or activities." Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*, 2nd edition, London and New York: Free Association Books (1999 [1989]), 7.

[59] This is Michel Foucault's term (which he also sometimes interchanges with "technologies of the self") for operations that individuals effect "on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform I themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality." Ctd. In Martin, L.H. et al, "Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault" London: Tavistock (1988), 18.

Afi), fire eating (from Hindu, Sadhu, and Fakir origins), fire breathing (Ancient Persia), and poi spinning (from Māori culture). While individual artists exercise varying degrees of fidelity to the cultural traditions of their craft(s) of choice, the event formation that established a marketplace for the flow arts emerged within psychedelic and rave cultures located primarily in the US and Europe, and responded to the needs of consumers looking to the past and the future for alternatives to the entrenched world system. The standard repertoires and social codes associated with the flow arts took inspiration from popular cultural imagery associated with the primitive and the cybernetic, including genres like steampunk and cyberpunk, sword and sorcery fantasy, anime, and harem fantasy.

To explore what this looks like within festival settings, and to simultaneously examine the flow arts as a mode of enchanting performance with a social, theatrical character (in addition to being an inward-looking meditative idiom), let us consider the art of poi spinning, which I myself have practiced for the last eight years as part of this project. *Poi* is the Māori word for a small flax bag attached to a tether, which was used to develop strength, flexibility and coordination in Māori warriors. *Poi* were used in numerous games, and in the 19th century *poi* spinning developed into a collective ceremonial performance; this performance practice was conducted by Māori women, and entailed a light ball made of flax being swung around with one hand and rhythmically slapped by the other to produce a percussive sound—skill was demonstrated by the group's coordination to produce these sounds in unison.[60] Poi spinning only became a fire performance in the mid-20th century, evolving from the emergent Samoan fire knife

[60] D. C. Starzecka, *Māori Art and Culture*, London: British Museum Press (1996), 46.

dance created by Uluao Letuli and popularized by Hollywood deployments of the practice as a way of producing exotic flare in films like *Salome*.[61]

Taking its cue from this popularization of fire dance, poi spinning as a flow art is markedly different from its Māori origins: whereas Māori poi is a group percussive art, flow poi is usually a solo dance form; while multiple spinners sometimes perform nearby one another their performances are generally not coordinated.[62] Although rhythmic precision characterizes both, flow poi spinning is primarily a visual (rather than auditory) form predicated on building patterns through the tethered weights streaking through the air, while simultaneously maintaining graceful lower body movement. In festival culture and flow arts communities, poi spinning as a fire art is considered the purest expression of the form; specially made poi with steel chain tethers and Kevlar wicks are lit after soaking in white gas, which allows for a continuous five-to-seven minute performance—the fire leaves streaks created by the spinning poi, and also presents an element of theatrical danger (for audiences and performers alike) that generates spectacle and wonder. Although it is not a requirement,

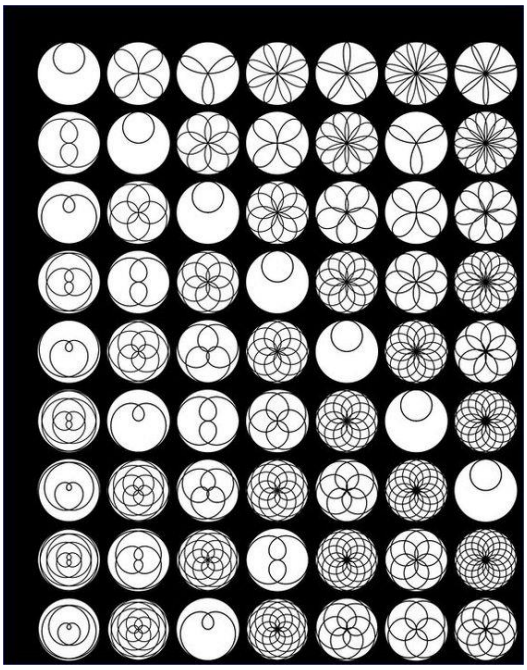

Figure 11: This "rose rhodonea curve" is frequently used in technique articles about poi spinning to mathematically break down different spinning patterns. Public domain.

[61] "The History of Fire Dancing", Zen Arts LA, 3 June 2011, accessed 31 Mar 2019, https://www.zenartsla.com/history-fire-dancing/.

[62] In the last two years I have seen doubles poi-spinning emerge as a common performance repertoire, but this is still based on creating complicated weaves and patterns with the poi, rather than the repetitive rhythmic percussion that characterizes traditional Māori poi.

spinners are generally expected to perform for the entire duration of a burn. Audiences pay attention to two moments in particular: the light-up, and the extinguishing: the former enunciates to the audience the performer's particular style for the burn (e.g. subdued and martial, or wild and ostentatious); the latter begins when the fire begins to significantly dim as the fuel burns out, initiating an elaborate finishing routine that ideally ends with the spinner extinguishing both poi with a dramatic whip, signifying her complete control of the apparatus.

At festivals, poi spinning happens in a number of places, with varying degrees of theatrical stylization. During the daytime, many spinners practice at their campsites or as they saunter through the event grounds, using cheap practice poi made of cloth, silicon and nylon, or even recycled tube socks. There is no theatrical distancing in this spinning; performers continue participating in conversations and social life, with spinning appearing as a subconscious (if still eye-catching) tic—a form of kinetic doodling. But as nighttime descends, poi spinning becomes more dynamic, stylized, and integrated with event production. LED poi proliferate on the dance floors, creating a ground-up stratum of audience-produced visuals that intersect with stage light shows. The dark, evening backdrop allows the poi streaks to become elongated and specularly distinct; their patterns resemble sacred geometry—spatial forms based on mathematical principles that resonate with ancient mystic systems (particularly Judaism and Hinduism), psychedelics, and the laws of nature (e.g. the patterns on leaves and flower petals).[63] In this way, poi spinning operates—for performers and spectators alike—as a material specular practice

[63] "Concentric spinning, relations, and the golden ratio," web forum, *homeofpoi.com*, 2016, accessed 31 Mar 2019, https://www.homeofpoi.com/us/community/forums/topics/709894/Concentric-spinning-relations-and-the-golden-ratio.

that reverberates with the spiritual symbols, cultural imagery, and psychedelic tropes that make up the visual economy of festival spaces, as well as with the formal qualities of the land itself.

We can visualize in greater detail how land figures into the flow arts' perceptual operations, as well as in its participation in the corporeal articulation of community, by examining the "fire circle"—a designated festival space where fire-based flow arts (fire arts) take central focus as a staged theatrical performance. Fire circles usually operate during the late evening hours, though their conventions differ from event to event according to the particular rules and ethos of a community. At Envision, for instance, the fire circle is located next to the main sound stage so that performers can create dazzling accompaniments to the big-name music acts; at the Oregon Country Fair the fire circle is located away from sound stages, and is accompanied only by drumming to evoke a kind of primal intensity of tribal ceremonial performance; the fire circle at Harmony Park often occurs without musical accompaniment due to local noise ordinances, making the audience's banter the performers' inspirational undercurrent. Besides produced stage spectacles, the fire circle is where flow artists perform with the greatest degree of audience awareness; dedicated performers usually approach the space with gravitas, with an almost ritualistic significance.

Because the fire circle forms a focal point for the audience's gaze, those in charge of them (a job usually outsourced by event organizers to a significant member of the local flow arts community) think critically about how their spatial aesthetics communicate to spectators, and spinners give serious consideration to how their own costuming and physicality play off these aesthetics. Fire circles aesthetically recode a particular patch of

land as a sacralized stylization of itself, while also creating a social interstice in which participants come together to experience perceptual dislocation via the magical virtuosity of performers. In order to embellish this dislocation, conventions of the idiom frequently cite popular representations of exotic fantasy and generically "tribal" culture. Fire circles often use tiki torches to create a perimeter over a bare patch of grass or dirt; as Sven Kirsten points out, tiki culture arose as an American invention that evoked a longing for travel to tropical regions, symbolically signifying Polynesian culture through stereotypes of idyllic scenery, forbidden love, and bracing danger. This exoticism is further accentuated by musical accompaniment that deploys either faux-tribal drumming or world music beats funneled through libidinous styles of electronic production used in club scenes. Though one's choice of costume is optional, artists usually make choices that reflect their particular aesthetic, often embodying gendered expressions of pop-orientalist imagining. Men might costume themselves in a *shemagh* to do a sword dance, or in robes that evoke the Shaolin martial art tradition for staff spinning; women might dress in an *abaya* as they perform fan dances, or in Polynesian-inspired bikinis as they spin a rope dart. These culturally-inflected costumes speak to a convention of geo-temporal dislocation within fire performance, which gets corporeally produced through a White language of exoticism. It strives for a sense of cosmopolitanism, but actually draws on decades of tourist and circus kitsch, and lowbrow entertainments with only the scantest remnants of geographic referent. Costume choices also often make use of eroticism in order to participate in the live libidinal economy that attends the theatrical staging; costumes fit snugly to highlight musculature and form, or are intentionally

ripped or tattered (or non-existent) in order to bare more skin.[64] This eroticism permeates the performance form itself, with hip gyrations, writhing extensions, and seductive or powerful glances providing a theatrical undercurrent to the display of technical finesse. This "Goddess" aesthetic, as it is sometimes called, verges on orientalist comic book glamor-porn, and contributes to a visual sexual economy that entices festival patronage.

We might think of the fire circle as a microcosm of the festival itself. It stylizes land and enlists performers and spectators in a collaborative, libidinal project of reorienting perception. It stages an intimate encounter with both the land itself (which becomes pregnant with the meanings and affect being mapped onto it through the fire performance), and with the community witnessing the performance. In this way, the flow arts act as a commoning practice that enlists spectators in an imaginative act, and in grounding that imagination in the materiality of the land. It does this by grafting non-western cultural traditions to western psychedelic tropes and a local libidinal economy. The fire circle affectively produces a People by transforming cool

Figure 12: Woman spinning poi in costume. Pixabay. Free for commercial use

[64] For examples of this in women's costuming in particular, see the YouTube channel for Jessy Spin, which includes live videos taken at festivals as well as produced videos. In both cases, the music choices also indicate the way that spinning scenarios are often imbued with exotic flare. For examples of male costuming, see the YouTube channel of Nick Woolsey, which also is something of a travelogue where we follow Woolsey spinning all around the world. Jessy Spin, YouTube channel, accessed 31 Mar 2019, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJIAO0qt7ePj_PFozvHugDg; *playpoi*, YouTube channel, accessed 31 Mar 2019, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1JgoAfZwzwO7himGUiYPlQ

tricks done well into provisional lines of flight from the neoliberal present towards a transcendent Orientalist ideal.

Examining the flow arts as an example of the atomized collection of enchanting performances that coagulate to produce an event's aesthetic demonstrates Bennett's articulation of enchantment as a cultivatable disposition. It fundamentally involves technique on the part of both performers and observers, who must learn to convincingly portray *and believe* in magic-making. Bennett sees this disciplinarity as a systematic approach to changing subjectivity, a project with a fundamentally political character that relates to ethics and social identity. While Nikolas Rose builds on Michel Foucault to outline how this attentiveness to self-making feeds into neoliberal modes of governmentality (allowing personal objectives and ambitions to hew to institutionally- or socially-prized goals), Bennett in turn points out that Foucault also used "techniques of the self" to posit the body as the locus of "cultural education." Finally, it is the deliberate operations of the body that allow for "modulation[s] of the psyche" as a precursor to changing habits and investments.[65]

In the next section, I attempt to more concretely flesh out this conception of the political by discussing the workshop and lecture curriculum of Transformational Festival culture. As I hope to have made clear by now, I am not suggesting that politics occur through festival culture's educational activities in a way that they *do not* in its more abstract and playful elements repertoires; rather, I wish to use the discursive clarity of

[65] Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self", 18; Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, 144-148.

workshops and lectures to help ideologically locate Transformational Festivals, and to flesh out how enchantment traverses epistemological, ontological, corporeal axes.

From perception to epistemology – Workshops, Lectures, and the Enchanting Assemblage

> Come for the Classes, Stay for the Festival
> - Lucid University Courseweek webpage[66]

> They're recording us so you want to speak clearly into the mic.
> - Zach Leary (son of Timothy Leary), "Indigenous Intelligence and Plant Medicine" workshop at Lightning in a Bottle, 2016

Thus far, I have been trying to demonstrate the implicit political stakes of enchanting performance. Here, I try to make these political stakes more explicit through an exploration of workshops and lectures within festival culture. I attempt to outline the Transformational Festival curriculum as a whole, while also using ethnographic vignettes of workshops I attended as case studies that speak to their subject matter, presentational style, and reception, as well as to scalar distinctions in the workshop economies of large and small events. I discuss how this educational curriculum points to the relationship between the embodied dimension of enchanting performance and a socially-engaged community ethos; this project of "commoning" appears as a redemptive counter-movement vis-à-vis the march of progress, and the cultural and environmental degradation that attended it.

As chapter one explored with the example of Chautauquas, the outdoor community gathering has long operated as a populist site for education, acculturation, and

[66] Homepage, Lucid University, accessed 31 Mar 2019, https://luciditiyfestival.com/welcome-to-courseweek/.

grassroots organizing; it has only been since the late 2000s, though, that workshops and lectures became a common attraction in contemporary music festival culture. The rise of on-site education apparatuses coincided with the transition towards immersion and participation as the defining feature of festival production values. The curricular elements of some Transformational Festivals have become so successful that they have even spawned standalone events and organizations. California's Lucidity, for example, began Lucid University in 2017, an 80-acre eco-village in Jacksonville, Oregon that focuses on "creating immersive educational experiences that offer students tools for empowerment, inspiration, introspection, and integration to promote harmonious and regenerative relationships with all of life."[67] Curriculum has become a prominent sector of today's event economy, with individual lecturers traveling international festival circuits, and with non-profit organizations arising to service the needs of different regions.

As pointed out by Chris Peters, an instructor and organizer for the Midwest-based IllumiKnation Station traveling workshop platform, economics drove the rapid rise of education as a valued component of event production. The proliferation of events since the early 2000s created a sudden glut of competition, necessitating that organizers find cheap ways to create differentiate their event from others; education could fill programming slots for markedly less than it would cost to book additional music acts. This allowed smaller events to credibly compete for a niche population that otherwise attend mega-events; as patrons were lured away, mega-events responded in kind by initiating their own educational initiatives, often investing significant capital that smaller

[67] Lucid University, Facebook group page, accessed 31 Mar 2019, https://www.facebook.com/pg/LucidUniversity/about/?ref=page_internal.

events could not replicate. Thus, scalar differences between festivals have influenced the overall organization of workshop and lecture ecology: smaller festivals tend to outsource this programming to specialized organizations (e.g. IllumiKnation Station, Creative Commons, Home Dome, or Love Dome) that provide space and teachers to host a variety of workshops throughout an event's duration; large festivals usually manage their educational platform, with designated event staff booking desired speakers much like they would a musical act.[68]

The presence of education on-site also helped legitimize festivals to the middle-class by rebranding them as sites of committed social practice, rather than rebellious non-compliance. This gave large festivals a better position from which to draw corporate sponsorship, receive government permits, or attract families. This became especially necessary upon the passage of the 2003 RAVE Act in the US and the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act in England.[69] Education helped change festival culture's public image from one of antisocial hedonism to one of personal betterment through art, community, and spirituality. At the same time, it created interstitial opportunities for generating public awareness regarding safe drug use, psychedelic harm reduction, and other festival-oriented legal questions, which had been quashed by civic acts curtailing access to this information. Perhaps for this reason the educational activities as a whole

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[68] Chris Peters (Eastern chapter manager for the IllumiKnation Station), phone interview with author, 7 May 2016.

[69] The enactment of these laws created harsh penalties for venue owners and event promoters at events where drugs were consumed, particularly "party drugs" like ecstasy and cocaine. This resulted not in the decline of drug use at such events, but a decline in health and safety awareness and emergency support systems. The laws' effects extended to groups like the IllumiKnation Station, who cannot allow workshops to explicitly discuss drugs—whether that be philosophically, or in terms of safe consumption—for fear that the festival could become liable for drug use that occurs on the property. In the last five years groups like MAPS (the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies) have begun pushing for a presence of psychedelic harm reduction at festivals. Ibid.

took a rebellious tone vis-à-vis mainstream political participation, and instead offered forms of knowledge deprioritized within college and university curricula.

Festival workshops generally fall into five interlocking categories, though the boundary between them is porous: 1) body work and festival repertoires; 2) social activism; 3) technology, skills, and environmentalism; 4) anthropology and philosophy; 5) magic, astrology, and the occult.[70] I will briefly discuss each individually:

1) **Body work and festival repertoires:** This category relates to the teaching of embodied techniques with particular valence in music festival performance culture. It encompasses myriad forms of bodily and somatic disciplining, including yoga, meditation, flow arts training, and musical workshops. The skills developed in these workshops can be visibly circulated throughout event space, contributing to the overall aesthetic and integrating participants into the social community, but they are also seen to have a political purpose insofar as they "invoke psychosomatic liberation."[71] This category also includes workshops related to festival fashion (e.g. "How to wrap hair," "How to make a wildcrafted parasol"). These workshops are crucial to producing community within festivals because they rehearse choreographies of bodily engagement that acclimate

[70] These are provisional categories, and other divisions are possible. Lucid University, for instance, divides their courses into five categories: Spiritworks, Communityworks, Earthworks, Creativeworks, and Bodyworks, http://2016.luciditiyfestival.com/lucid-university-courseweek/; IllumiKnation Station generally sees workshops fall into the category of crafts and skills, esoteric workshops, and academic subjects. Chris Peters, Interview with Author, 7 May 2016.

[71] "Somatic Movement and Embodied Freedom", Lucidity Festival, accessed 31 Mar 2019, https://luciditiyfestival.com/course/bodyworks/.

participants to physical closeness, touch, emotional openness/vulnerability, and sociality, which give Transformational Festivals their familial feel. In addition to teaching concrete skills, they rehearse kinaesthetic responses in improvisational art-making and sociality.

2) **Social Activism:** These workshops discuss concrete issues related to social change, as well as legal information deemed critical for festivalgoers in particular. Activism here is almost always framed outside of left-right party politics, often gesturing to a more fundamental mode of political participation that precedes national democratic activity. Some workshop titles that fall into this category include: "Civil Liberty and Personal Freedom: Exercising your Sovereign Natural and Human Rights," "Alternate History: Protest in America," "The War on Drugs, Mass Imprisonment, and the New Jim Crow," or "Water is Life: 'Mniwoconi' A Veteran's Tale from the Front Line at Standing Rock," and "De-Colonization and Anti-Oppression for Supportive Allyship." Some workshops that speak to festivalgoers include "Marijuana Law 101," and "Civil Liberties, Personal Freedoms and Exercising Your Sovereign National and Basic Human Rights." This category might also encompass certain abstract or esoteric forms of knowledge that have to do with cultivating critical consciousness, rather than direct social participation.

3) **Technology, health, skills, and engineering:** This category encompasses workshops on applied technical skills related to concretely solving social

problems, especially those connected to environmentalism and human health consciousness. Its overarching theme is to provide inspiration, know-how, and networking that enable participants to engage in solutions-oriented projects beyond the festival. The existential crisis represented by climate change is the organizing logic of this category, and the concept of permaculture—David Holmgren's term for environmentally sustainable and renewable design principles related to human consumption—often brings together its diverse threads.[72] Technology, here, sometimes indicates future-oriented inventions and innovative practices (e.g., "Make your own solar generator," "Closed-Loop Living Systems Explained," or "How to Build a Rain Catcher"); other times technology indicates a recognition of low-tech human skills—sometimes called "Ancestral Arts" to indicate an association with indigenous culture—that have steadily disappeared from the repertoires of modern societies (e.g. "Introduction to blacksmithing" "Plant-Based Living: Medicine and Magic," and "Bow Drill Fire Making"). Technical problem-solving is the most important element in this category, but it often gets fused with creative expression or business-oriented approaches seen to instill these ideas as an enjoyable and scalable ethic (e.g. "The Future of Regenerative Culture and Artrepreneurship" or "Scaling Permaculture Solutions").

4) **Anthropology and Philosophy:** These workshops are almost entirely informational, and have to do with generating awareness for global

[72] See David Holmgren, *Permaculture: Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability*, Holmgren Design Services (2012).

ontologies and epistemologies that are seen to offer lines of flight from Western capitalist ways of being. While they are sometimes led by people with an identitarian connection to the material or a credential from an educational institution, but they are more often given by hobbyist participants with a fascination for the particular subjects. Teachers of these workshops sometimes frame their subject matter as a redemptive project related to resurfacing subjugated knowledge. Examples include: "Boruca Cosmology," "Brazilian Culture and History," "Indigenous Futurism: Stories of Resilience," "The Aztek Calendar: Astronomical Calendar and Cosmic Clock," and "Women Protectors of Mother Earth Across the Americas." This category also includes workshops that articulate ways of bringing the Transformational ethos into wider society: "Financial Liberation," "Bringing your Message to the Mainstream," "Thriving in the 21st Century," or "Recreating our cities with intention."

5) **Magic, Astrology, and the Occult:** These workshops provide information on speculative subjects both current and historical. They often intersect with the anthropology and philosophy category in that they provide provisional alternatives to Western forms of Being (functioning as what Elizabeth Povinelli calls popontology, which I discuss in greater detail in chapter four). Though arcane, this category interlocks with the more applied knowledge of the other workshop categories, enchanting them with a sense of primal or divine power. Some workshop titles in this category include: "Living Kabbalah," "21st Century Shamanism,"

> "Mystical Persian Dance," or "Understanding Black Moon Lilith." This category also encompasses New Age subjects that search for forms of spiritual significance within systems of nature: "Mystical anarchism," "Wetter Water: Geometry and Hydration," "Understanding crystal growth and powers," and "An Introduction to Sacred Geometry."[73]

The following ethnographic vignettes discuss the tensive and sometimes contradictory dynamics that infuse festival education: the earnest desire to learn and teach versus pedagogy-as-kitsch; festival workshops and lectures as modes of experiential discovery versus workshops and lectures as networking opportunities and attractions that bloat the cost of event tickets; and learning built on presence and intimacy versus learning built on a commodified "star system."

Imagined Community and Corporeal Closeness: "A Heart Opening Journey"

At Envision Festival 2015 I participated in a workshop titled "A Heart Opening Journey," which attempted to help participants achieve physical comfort and intimacy within the social space of the festival. The workshop began with the leader asking us to partner up with a member of the same sex, and to spend several minutes cradling our partner's head in our lap and gently stroking their hair. It was important that this be done with a member of the same sex, the leader explained, because Western social codes of masculinity discourage young men from achieving this level of intimacy with other men—even their own fathers. The approximately fifty-person workshop was an even mix

[73] These workshops were sampled from multiple years of observation at the following festivals: Envision, Lucidity, Lightning in a Bottle, Project Earth, Shang-ri-la, the Raindance Campout, the Werk Out Festival.

of women and men, but the presenter appeared to be attempting to preempt a familiar gendered pushback that accompanied this form of intimate touch.

I admit that, while I consider myself an open and sociable person, this kind of physical contact with a total stranger made me uncomfortable. I could tell that the same was true for my partner, Ajay, and it didn't help that we were both sweating profusely. I began the exercise, timidly following my instructions by awkwardly stroking Ajay's head with just my fingertips for the first minute. With time, though, my discomfort slowly melted away, and I began to use my entire hand in a loving, familiar way. I felt Ajay's body, initially (and understandably) tense, slowly relax as a kind of corporeal trust began to build between us. After some time, we switched positions, and a similar experience happened as Ajay held and stroked my head. When this part of the exercise finished, the leader instructed us to share a "heart hug," a durational chest-to-chest embrace that allowed for us to feel one another's hearts beat so that our bodily connection could deepen.

The next phase of the workshop began with participants being asked to form a pathway by arranging themselves in two parallel lines. Individuals would begin at one end of the path and close their eyes. They were then slowly moved down the pathway by the gentle guidance of the workshop participants—they were not to initiate movement themselves, but had to allow themselves to "be moved" by the group. This was a slow walk that involved being lightly pushed from behind or gently pulled forward by participants clasping at our hands, shoulders, and back. Along the way, those in the lines were instructed to whisper compliments in the ears of passers-by. These compliments

usually took the form of sweet nothings. I remember someone whispering "You are wonderful" and "You're beautiful" to me. This part of the exercise was repetitive, and lasted a very long time—you could tell after about twenty minutes that many people wanted to leave. But it seemed to me that everyone stayed, since a crucial lesson of the workshop was the sustenance of corporeal community ties.

The "Heart-Opening Journey" participated in a project of commoning by cultivating affective forms of corporeal familiarity between participants, and by rehearsing a reflex to inhabit similar relationships with others in the festival grounds. It literally *redistributes the sensible*, aesthetically reorganizing the body and perception to allow new modes of human connection. This was especially useful because Envision was a destination festival (where most participants were tourists, and so strangers), rather than a local event where people most likely knew one another. But it also helped familiarize participants with protocols of the event aesthetic; heart hugs, for instance, were a common custom at Envision, and practicing them in the workshop setting prepared participants to spontaneously engage them throughout the event grounds. In this way, the workshop contributed to the enchanting corporeal practices that made up the event aesthetic, while also cultivating feelings of confidence, trust, and safety in participants.

There was, of course, a complicated politics to the New Age "let's all just love one another" undercurrent within this workshop that problematically bracketed off social difference in favor of what some might consider a shallow form of intimacy located in physical touch. My connection to Ajay, for instance, was reflexive and transitory, rather than contextual and enduring—I had no idea of his background or politics, and only a

very cursory idea of his personality, and although we found each other again during the event, our connection ended with the festival's closing. The Heart-Opening Journey was ultimately about stripping oneself of social acculturation (gendered social reflexes most explicitly, but also habituation related to encountering and engaging with others) in order to enchant the event space. This articulated the festival as an arena of *authenticity* that problematically associated one's personal essence as preceding or ignoring their cultural location. This was especially troubling to me in consideration of female participants who had to walk blind through a mixed gender crowd, while also being touched and whispered to, all as a rehearsal towards eliminating inhibitions, personal boundaries, and defensive reactions. The workshop's attempt to break down social blockages in the service of producing an expressive and trusting community existed in a tensive relationship with the festival's own identity as a libidinal, sexually-charged space.

Networking Knowledge: "Indigenous Agroforestry with Timo Granzotti"

Figure 13: The Permaculture Action Hub at Lightning in a Bottle (California) 2016. Permaculture Action Network.

At Lightning in a Bottle 2016, a small wood-slatted building covered by a large canvas was dubbed the Permaculture Action Hub. It was part of The Village, a group of buildings dedicated to a variety of workshop and lecture subjects, including The Learning Kitchen, the Community Lodge, the Casa Sagrada (Sacred House), and the EO Learning Lab. The Permaculture Action Hub contained wooden benches with enough seating for at least forty people—

though its spacious entrance also allowed passers-by to drop in and stand at the back in order to escape the sun. Participants sat facing workshop leaders at the front of the room, which included a mounted television capable of showing video and Powerpoint, as well as a white board. Lecturers also had access to a PA system to amplify their voice over the music leaking in from elsewhere on the grounds.

The workshop I saw on "Indigenous Agroforestry" focused on historical and contemporary modes of farming within indigenous communities, which the organizer offered as a positive and scalable alternative to dominant monoculture farming models. The latter was a frequent topic of concern in festival culture for the litany of deleterious effects they had on the environment and the food chain, as well as for their centralization of power over the food supply in the hands of private GMO-oriented food companies like Monsanto. Granzotti, who has mixed Italian-Ethiopian heritage,[74] began the workshop with a selective autobiography, including that that he had had formative youth experiences in Alaska and North Africa, that he received a botany degree from the University of California, Santa Clara, and that since graduating had devoted time to studying native ecology and botany in California and the Mediterranean.

The workshop focused on how indigenous cultures offered models for cultivating "perennial polycultures," which he described as diverse, sustainable populations of plants and crops—but also people. Using a PowerPoint presentation to provide illustrative pictures, his discussion touched on three examples that offered efficient models of cultivation that might be appropriated to address contemporary agricultural needs: the

[74] "About", Timo Granzotti webpage, accessed 31 Mar 2019, http://www.timogranzotti.com/about.

combination of hunter-gathering and farming techniques used by the Cahokia mound builders in the US Midwest, Meso-American *chinampas* (floating islands used for creating arable land on lake beds), and the traditional Hawaiian land management system of *ahupua'a* (a pattern of social organization based on stream systems and organized around shared water usage). Granzotti argued that indigenous systems of agriculture demonstrate there is no need for subsidized monoculture farming, since abundance could be produced through generational tending of different crops; furthermore, this might provide a more equitable and unmediated way of approaching what we eat. Contrary to monoculture farming practices that prioritized efficiency and unrelenting production, but which ultimately lead to soil degradation, water overuse, and the introduction of chemicals into the food supply, he believed that a pivot to indigenous farming might allow society to refocus on social and spiritual importance of food. He also drew the audience's attention to the work of Rudolf Steiner, a founder of the "biodynamic" approach to agriculture and the field of anthroposophy—a counter-pharmaceutical epistemology that sought to use natural means to optimize physical and mental health.[75]

Granzotti's presentation style was smooth and prepared; he clearly knew his subject matter well, and he moved through a good deal of material in the short time allotted to him. He brought the workshop to a close by asking his audience: "What are you going to walk away with from this workshop?" After a few moments of awkward

[75] Rudolf Steiner is the founder of a branch of philosophy known as anthroposophy, which aims to study spiritual experience with the same precision and clarity attained by the natural sciences in their study of the physical world. The Anthroposophy Society in America describes the field as "a spiritual path, [that] is unique in being research-based, an invitation to shared inquiry rather than a revelation to be believed." This emphasis on research-based modes of approaching spirituality and wisdom resembles the positive science that undergirded Csikszentmihalyi's work on Flow. "Anthroposophy: On Being Human", *Anthroposophy Society in America*, accessed 31 Mar 2019, https://anthroposophy.org/learn-more/.

silence, someone spoke up: “Start on a small scale.” He nodded, and then more silence. “Um, ok. Does anyone have any questions?” Immediately, a woman who appeared to be in her late-teens or early twenties sitting in the back spoke up: “Yeah… do you have a girlfriend? Because you’re super sexy and you know a lotta’ stuff.” There was laughter in the audience and the woman reiterated: “Really, you’re so handsome!” Granzotti, chuckling, shrugged it off and said jokingly: “Well, I guess you could chat with me after. But seriously, does anyone have any questions about the material?” Hearing none, the workshop concluded.

The content of Granzotti’s workshop spoke to a very concrete practice of commoning, and was framed through an explicitly activist mentality. It spoke to a sincere engagement with indigenous traditions as a means of providing cultural and technical alternatives to help solve problems and change contemporary social values. But this knowledge was also refracted by the dramaturgies and drives that frame popular conceptions of festivity, which emphasize unmediated personal connection that is often connected to the event’s libidinal economy. The audience member’s comment at the end demonstrated that the indigenous history in which Granzotti showed a passionate interest could easily transpose into just “a lotta’ stuff,” an event attraction that was really just a means towards a sexual encounter.

At the same time, the workshop speaks to how networking (personal, sexual, professional) intersects with festival workshop platforms. This includes the literal platform of the stage, where speaking to a gathered audience confers a degree of subcultural status that can be used to proselytize for personal projects, or even parlayed

into a hook up. It also includes networking within the scene's provisional star-system. Granzotti, for example, has brought his workshops to other California festivals like the Northern California Permaculture Convergence, Buckeye Gathering, and Symbiosis;[76] other teachers use their platforms to promote their businesses or even their own festivals. Large workshops can be attended by hundreds of people—especially when they are held in well-shaded areas that offer refuge from the sun. These workshops provide major opportunities for organizers to dramaturgically craft their event's brand and their participants' ethos.

Epistemological Relativism: "How to Flourish in a Medical System Based on False Science" by Dr. John Bergman

Though Dr. Bergman was one of a very few participants to list an academic credential in his workshop title, he never explained the subject or affiliation of his doctoral degree.[77] His lecture had feature status at Lightning in a Bottle 2016, and was held at the Temple Stage, a massive circus tent with space to house hundreds of participants (far more than could pack into the Permaculture Action Hub). The tent allowed participants to cool off, fully shielded from the sun's rays; it contained numerous large, fluffy pillows lying about—making for an exciting attraction to sleepy patrons, and sometimes creating impromptu "cuddle puddles." I would guess that over two hundred people were present for his talk, many of whom were napping, chatting amongst themselves, or even spinning poi in a corner, rather than paying rapt attention.

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[76] "Collaborations", Timo Granzotti webpage, accessed 3 Mar 2019, http://www.timogranzotti.com/groups.
[77] Bergman is a chiropractor and holistic doctor. He obtained his Doctor of Chiropractic degree at Cleveland Chiropractic College in Los Angeles, eventually becoming an academic teacher there. "Meet the Chiropractors," Bergman Family Chiropractic, accessed 31 Mar 2019, https://www.bergmanchiropractic.com/meet-the-chiropractor.html.

His talk began by calling out mainstream culture's sedimented psychology of trust in the medical sciences; he claimed that this indicated a "fear-based society" where we leave the care of our bodies in the hands of experts: "Eat this food; take this drug; do this treatment." For the next twenty minutes or so, Bergman went through a litany of social problems that he believed the medical field had incorrectly diagnosed. "People are not dying of the flu. They are getting sick from depression and inflammatory illnesses that affect breathing"; "Cholesterol does not clog arteries. What does? Toxic food." His argumentation played on festival culture's concern regarding industrial society's deprioritization of organic and natural food processes; he emphasized holistic medicine and a "back to nature" ethos. He tried to wow the audience by articulating the natural world as vital matter: "[Did you know] seaweed can actually make water into oxygen to lift itself towards the sun? But, oh, sure, *there's no intelligent life* [besides humans] on Earth."

Confidently and indignantly decrying the organization of Western medicine, his speech toed a line between critiquing a kind of blind trust in technocratic social regimes (a project towards which I felt sympathetic), and falling into a paranoiac libertarianism that intersected with anti-vaxxing conspiratorial thinking. Eventually, Dr. Bergman made this point more explicit, openly forwarding a (thoroughly debunked) correlation between vaccinations and autism. At this point in the talk, a young man stood up and walked to one of the microphones set up to the side of the stage so that audience members could ask questions during the Q & A to follow. Scowling, the young man said: "I'm sorry, but vaxxing is absolutely not connected to autism, and the doctor that you're citing has actually been disbarred." Bergman disagreed and suggested that the government was

hiding the link between vaccination and autism as a form of population control. The young man responded: “What you’re saying is dangerous. Unvaccinated kids are coming into schools and getting people sick!” Again, Bergman dismissed him with a laugh: “You gotta’ get better educated, brother.”

I was surprised when, at this, the young man suddenly demurred. Bergman had remained confident and unfazed throughout the brief exchange, while the young man was clearly feeling some pressure in the form of annoyed murmurs from the crowd. Perhaps deciding that the speaker was intractable, or that this was a situation that he could not win, he stepped away from the microphone, saying “I’m not trying to disrupt your talk, I’ll get with you afterwards.” Bergman used the energy of the exchange to lead him into an inspirational finale; he excitedly telling participants that they were now part of the resistance, and concluded with a motivating collective cheer of “Revolution!”

The rebellious tenor of Bergman’s talk intersected with the festival lecture’s air of being a site of democratized education. Talks at festivals promise a unique and socially fugitive curriculum that can address taboo topics that are avoided in institutional educational sites. These examples range from natural medicine and homeopathy to 9/11 Truther claims. I found this compelling because it illustrates how complicated attributing a political stance to Transformational Festival culture can be within the left-right binary of US democracy. The anti-vaxxing thread certainly seemed to corroborate the libertarian streak I often felt within festival communities, but at the same time, I felt that festies were generally suspicious of social positions associated with the US political Right. Bergman’s articulation was generally palatable because he framed his intervention through a lens of

epistemological suspicion. If his critique of vaccinations appeared plausible, it was because it interrogated a wider hegemony that related to what was sayable in public discourse, and what was legible as a marker of social progress. If anti-vaxxing appeared absurd, perhaps it was only because it was subject to the same State-sponsored gag orders that circumscribed what could be said about the healing properties of marijuana, or enmeshed in pharmaceutical companies' domination of the media. In other words, Bergman's subject appeared valuable because he convincingly inscribed it with a rebellious sensibility vis-à-vis the ontological certainty provided by science.

These large lectures generally lacked the intimacy and agonism of a classroom setting, and favored more of what Paolo Freire calls a "banking model" of education—where the job of learners is to acquire facts from an educated superior.[78] Proper decorum constituted patient listening, rather than the instigation of epistemological friction that might jeopardize "good vibes." It seemed to me that the young man questioning Bergman withdrew his critique because he realized he was in violation of this unspoken protocol. While this offers organizers an opportunity to steer participants towards modes of thought that they value, it invests speakers with a form of institutional authority that can be felicitously or infelicitously utilized. Bergman's talk spoke to the pretentions of festival workshop curriculums as a radical democratization of knowledge; but it also spoke to a problematic relativism that attends this democratization. Bergman's anti-vaxxing discourse, for instance, appeared in close proximity to workshops on "Ancestral Dance of

[78] Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, New York and London: Continuum (2000 [1970]), 72-73.

the Māori People" and a "Flat Earth Panel," and it would be difficult for a participant to read either of these as any more (or less) valid as a form of knowledge than the other.

This, I suggest, is not a problem with Bergman per se, but a problem endemic to large festivals themselves. It exemplifies a number of tensions and contradictions outlined in this section: the imperative to present radical information crossed by ethics of accuracy subject to the political imaginings of popular gatherings; the need to package lectures in a way that maintains the energy of festive excitement; and the desire to produce cultural alternatives while remaining ensconced in the material reality of daily life. But how do these tensions change in the workshop and lecture formations of smaller events? The next section examines this question in order to allow us to understand how commoning utilizes different idioms at different scale.

Knowledge from the Grassroots

> **Saturday IllumiKnation Station Workshop Schedule**
> Let Your Soul Play presents: Life's Journey Turning Darkness Into Light
> 9:00-10:00am, By: Let Your Soul Play
> Exploring Body Memory
> 10:00-11:00am, By: Cassandra Galbier
> Vinyasa Yoga – A collective journey toward elevated consciousness
> 10:30am-11:30am, By: Kelsey Fishman
> Blueprint for a Better World and Escaping the Matrix 101
> 11:00am-Noon, By: Dorothy Thompson, BA in Psychology
> Open Jam Session: Bring an instrument and come jam!
> 11:30am-12:30pm, By: By: Sese Erickson
> Balancing The Spirit & Tonic Herbs
> Noon-1:00pm, By: Justin Jacobsen
> AcroYoga with MaryGold
> 12:30-2:00pm, By: Goldie Harmon and Mary Chapman
> Apache Stronghold- Save Sacred Oak Flat
> 1:00pm-2:30pm, By: Wendsler Nosie
> The Gathering: A Communal Expression Session
> 2:00-3:00pm, By: Adam Elfers from The Gathering

Partner Massage Techniques
2:30-3:15pm, By: Hayley
9/11 Q&A: Just the Facts
3:15-4:00pm, By: 911Truth.org
How to Build Community
4:00-5:00pm, By: Dairdre Kennedy
The World of Poi: Beginner to Advanced
4:30-5:30pm, By: Lewis Kelly

(Times may run up to 30 minutes behind schedule.)
- Project Earth 2016

There is another tradition of festival workshops and lectures that differs from large festivals' push to promote education as a marketable attraction (and the emergent subcultural star system that attends it). Its interventions are smaller-scale and less technologically equipped, and its activities are more dispersed, improvisational, and cloistered. It self-consciously evokes the concept of grassroots populism as a more authentic and communally responsive mode of consciousness-raising. To be sure, this has something to do with the fact that these knowledge apparatuses usually take place in less capitalized events, but it also speaks to a different conception of event-based activism—a more modest understanding of the educational relationship that foregrounds intimacy, volunteerism, and community responsiveness as a mode of commoning.

Here I wish to discuss the IllumiKnation Station (IKS) as an example of this kind of small-scale participant-driven educational program. IKS is a collection of people and resources that tours festivals in the Midwest, providing space for lectures and workshops. It describes itself as a "workshop group that travels around to music festivals and other events promoting education, exploration, entertainment, community, and making a difference in the world. [A] 100% grassroots volunteer[-]driven participatory educational

non-profit."[79] Their language of the grassroots suggests a political ambition that works through populist idioms prioritizing the local. IKS speakers lack the subcultural star power of the featured speakers at larger events, and consequently, they must usually put in a greater deal of labor in exchange for their compensation (usually just a handful of free tickets, and maybe some meal vouchers if they're lucky—the rest of their money is earned through voluntary donations given by "passing the hat"). Usually two to four people staff the IKS dome at an event, and they are expected to provide continuous workshops throughout the daytime hours.

But while this makes for a more labor-intensive festival experience, it allows for a more nimble and responsive mode of education to emerge, one that performs an idealized horizontal conception of education as a vocational practice. IKS workshops look and operate very different from those at larger events. All activities take place inside a 20-foot diameter geodesic dome, which creates a host of complications: on rainy days the dome floods and participants have to sit in muddy or soggy grounds; because only fifteen people or so can fit inside the dome, many are forced to hover at the edge (usually losing interest and leaving after a short while); even the fact that there is no seating makes staying for the duration of an hour-long workshop difficult. Much of the dome's space is taken up by a table displaying advertisements for other IKS events, crystals and knickknacks for sale to support IKS, and informative brochures on subjects important to the staff (e.g. copies of Peggy McIntosh's influential article "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," and brochures asking "Am I an Anarchist?"). Some of

[79] "Home", IllumiKnation Station webpage, accessed 31 Mar 2019, http://iksdome.com/.

workshops are held outdoors, but because it has no sound system, even these workshops tend to be capped at around twenty-five people.

But these complications also enable IKS to be responsive to its community. IKS has a core series of workshops that their staff plans, but it also invites participants to give their own workshops that speak to unique skills or knowledge they would like to share. It advertises these workshops by strategically placing a few chalkboards around event grounds listing the day's lectures, and by circulating staff as a workshop nears in order to generate interest as town criers. Unlike the regimentation of larger events—where activities are printed on official schedules, and contracts necessitate prompt start and end times—IKS workshops move with the flow of the event. Lectures may start up to a half-hour late depending on if the workshop leader is absent, if a previous session has run over, or if not enough people show up.

Enchantment, Activism, Indigeneity: "Apache Stronghold" and "Water is Life: 'Mniwoconi' A Veteran's Tale from the Front Line at Standing Rock,"

To discuss the complicated politics of grassroots education, and its link to enchantment as a process of "commoning," here I wish to discuss two workshops I witnessed at the IllumiKnation Station while attending Project Earth that dealt explicitly with indigenous activism. "Apache Stronghold"—which I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter as the moment I first learned about the occupation at Standing Rock—took place on June 18, 2016 outside the IKS Dome. It was given by a group of activists affiliated with Apache Stronghold, an organization dedicated to saving Apache Leap and Oak Flat in southeastern Arizona (*Chi'Chil Bildagoteel*) from being opened up to mining without consultation with San Carlos Apache and Tribes that consider the area

sacred. About twenty-five people were present for the workshop, and the group members asked participants to refrain from filming or audiorecording.

The workshop opened with four indigenous men leading call-and-response chanting and drumming, explaining that it was a prayer that was important to do upon entering new land out of respect for the others who had lived there previously. A young man gave background on the movement to save Oak Flat—he had been occupying since 2015, but others had been there for nearly a year longer. He then outlined in detail the political maneuvers by which John McCain and other Republican lawmakers had snuck in a land grant for Oak Flat as a rider to the National Defense Authorization Act, which Barack Obama had promised to sign.[80] He explained the danger to native burial grounds in the area and the local water supply, and also pointed out that federal land was being granted to a foreign mining company. He then turned his attention to decolonization as a collective project, saying: "Even though I'm not White, speak for me." Although about ten of the people present outwardly appeared to be people of color, including members of local tribes who frequently attend Harmony Park festivals, the speaker presumed a White audience, and articulated decolonization as a mutual project to be engaged in by White

[80] As described on the Apache Stronghold website: "The Southeast Arizona land exchange was one of the bills that was attached to the National Defense Authorization Act and passed by the U.S. House and the Senate in [2016]. It is a bill pushed by Arizona Representatives Gosar & Kirkpatrick and Arizona Senators McCain and Flake (and prior to Flake, Kyle) which for over the past 10 years has not been able to get enough votes for passage in either the House or the Senate. The Arizona Congressmen could not get the bill to pass using the normal Congressional procedures. This is because the bill gives land at Apache Leap and Oak flat in southeastern Arizona to a foreign Mining Company, Resolution Copper without any environmental impact studies or without consultation with San Carlos Apache and Tribes that consider the area sacred. The last time the bill came up for vote in the House of Representatives it was shut down by New Mexico Representative Lujan who proposed an amendment to the bill that required that Native American concerns regarding Sacred Sites be addressed. […] Now this bill has been snuck in a land package that has been added to the National Defense authorization Act that must be signed by Obama to fund the U.S. Military. The San Carlos Apache tribe has worked tirelessly to avoid this from happening. "About Us", Apache Stronghold webpage, n.d., accessed 31 Mar 2019, http://www.apache-stronghold.com/about.html.

allies and indigenous people alike. Finally, he closed by saying: "Thank you for letting us join what you are accomplishing here. To me, this is spiritual. This is holy. We can defeat them!" The workshop concluded with remarks by Dwight Metzger, an activist involved in conservation projects and indigenous activism in Minnesota. He handed out postcards to be mailed by July 18th to Al Franken (then a Minnesota senator). Finally, they announced that they were leaving from the festival immediately to join the Standing Rock protests in solidarity.

This workshop was somewhat unusual for its framing of politics in explicitly partisan terms, as well as for its advocacy for electoral democratic participation, rather than consciousness-oriented or esoteric modes of politics. It spoke to a conception of the festival as a site for materially building power, with the capacity to anticipate and provoke public engagement on issues that were off the radar of the general public (and it is worth noting that the occupations at Oak Flat and Apache Leap received far less media coverage than Standing Rock). It spoke to transnational connections between sovereign indigenous societies, as well as for festival culture to initiate a form of White allyship attentive to the cultural protocols of indigenous people.

Let us put this workshop in conversation with another that took place a year later (2017), on the exact same land—months after South Dakota police put an end to the Standing Rock occupation, buoyed by the election of Donald Trump. Entitled "Water is Life: 'Mniwoconi' A Veteran's Tale from the Front Line at Standing Rock," the workshop was led by a participant wearing a glittery, rainbow shirt who appeared to be racially White, and who had spent six months at the Standing Rock occupation. He was a

military veteran, and he seemed to be suffering from some kind of breakdown—though it may very well have also been an acid trip. He was unable to look anyone in the eye, and almost always appeared to be on the verge of tears; it was difficult for him to structure his talk, and when he didn't know what to say next he would utter "*Mniwoconi*, water is life," like a mantra that allowed him to center.

His talk began by discussing how "beautiful" he had found the occupation at Standing Rock, but then quickly splayed into a litany of governmental injustices he had witnessed while in the military and at home: "I've seen what our government does to people abroad. And I've seen how we shoot cannons of freezing water at protesters in order to protect oil companies. How we've destroyed our environment and poisoned our drinking water. The government is in the business of protecting the wealthy few, and they made me into an instrument of their destruction." People occasionally asked for details of what it was like at Standing Rock, but his answers were cryptic, explained in exuberant platitudes rather than specifics. To an outside observer, his speech might have given credence to the accusation that festivalgoing White people attended Standing Rock more as part of a personal "spiritual journey," than with the intention of humbly contributing to the cause. And yet, as I listened to his lecture, I began to see that his unfocused speech was locating the struggle at Standing Rock within a much broader network of social abuses, so immense as to be incapacitating. He was working within a language accessible to him, one that surely would not have passed muster in an academic institution or political think piece, but that gestured (in fits and starts) towards a systemic critique that didn't speak through the language of theory, but through a colloquial and experiential language that clearly resonated with the fifteen of us who had gathered to hear him.

Regardless of his pedagogical efficacy and cultural tact, the workshop certainly belied the reflexive association of festivals as spaces for the temporary extrication from the weighty matters of political life.

Taken together these workshops outline how enchanting performance participates in a process of commoning that speaks to the festival as an opportunity to articulate a People that is at once critically attuned to national issues in which they have a stake (including as allies), but it also demonstrates the capacity of enchantment to motivate social ethics that exceed the social horizons of the existing political system. The festival figured here as a method for mobilization, rather than an inversion of the quotidian, and these workshops also spoke to a committed and ongoing intersection with diverse indigenous social causes that belie the *Independent* and *GQ*'s reflexive reading of the "Burning Man crisis" as a party time for uncritical hipsters. These mobilization efforts emphasized a grassroots mode of politics that prioritized small-scale, face-to-face corporeal encounters (rather than organized proselytizing) as a way to create meaningful change through a combination of consciousness-raising, influencing the dispositions, habitus, bodily conduct, perceptual habits, and ethical orientation of participants.

These workshops also demonstrate how enchantment can materialize through educational encounters that speak using a critical sensibility that is affective and creative, and which locates the land—the natural world—as a precious locus of social and environmental conservation, which serves to counter-balance the violent reality of the present. This is how I interpreted the speaker's repeated need to center with "Water is Life"; it allowed him avoid being completely overwhelmed by the chemicals and

personal history weighing on his psyche (presenting physically through shaking and a thousand-yard-stare) by returning to the land itself. The purpose of his workshop was not exactly to educate—but to mourn what had been lost at Standing Rock. His glittery rainbow—perhaps appearing unsuitable to this mode of mourning—constituted the speaker's own form of enchantment; It simultaneously communicated the informality of the educational setting, as well as an impulse to *think differently*. And it was with this line of flight that he sought to articulate a People in the wake of social tragedy.

Conclusions:

In June of 2016, as I walked across hilly California terrain, dazed from several long nights at the Lightning in a Bottle Music Festival, I was stopped in my tracks by a giant image of Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders projected on a raised outdoor monitor. It was the weekend before the California presidential primary, and Canadian musician Grimes delayed her set to allow the 20,000 people present to hear a pre-recorded message in which Sanders implored the crowd to vote the following Tuesday. Even though he only cryptically referred to Lightning in a Bottle as "this event," he appeared to address the festival crowd specifically, saying: "Somebody said a long time ago that when we're making a political revolution, we want to dance and we want to sing in that revolution, and that is what tonight is all about."[81] Sanders appeared to be quoting Emma Goldman, the Russian feminist and anarchist political philosopher,

[81] As discussed by Alix Kates Shulman, the quote may not be authentic (it was cobbled together from comments from Goldman's autobiography), and has been appropriated to suit a variety of social causes. "Dances With Feminists", *Women's Review of Books*, 9.3 (Dec 1991).

who, after being chided by a male comrade for dancing too freely at a party, famously retorted: "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution."[82]

Sanders's appropriation of the aphorism in support of a decidedly *un*anarchic political movement attempted to authenticate his own voice as that of "the People" by linking the aesthetics of Transformational Festivals to a revolutionary ethos. His endorsement of Lightning in a Bottle—which was part of a larger strategy of music festival outreach—interpreted its loud, wild, and goofy aesthetics not as collective frivolity, but as a latent populist energy. This energy appeared via the festival's production of live community predicated on bodies moving together in space, participating in myriad acts of artistic co-creation. As Erika Fischer-Lichte has argued, "shared space and time open up the possibility for […] transferring [spectators] into a state of 'strange intoxication,'"[83] and this intoxication presented itself as a somatic mode with an inherently political meaning. Furthermore, the affect generated by such practices appeared to stand adjacent that of standard political arenas, and thus—to the Sanders campaign—appeared capable of integrating new voices into the electoral process.

Festivals offer scaled modes of mobilization that contribute towards particular social projects through financial support, volunteerism, and consciousness-raising, but their unique power as an affective experience speaks to a more fundamental level of politicalness. This sense of the political, as Sheldon Wolin has articulated, extends beyond officeholding, fundraising, and elections, and speaks to a more fundamental mode of participation that "originat[es] or initiat[es] cooperative action with others" as a means

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[82] In her autobiography, Goldman writes: "The Cause, which had stood for a beautiful ideal, for anarchism, for release and freedom from conventions and prejudice, [had come to] demand denial of life and joy." *Living My Life*, New York: Knopf (1934), 56.

[83] Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 193.

of responding to felt social needs.[84] In reaching to the concept of "enchanting performance" to outline the stakes festivalgoing repertoires, I have sought to articulate how the corporeal labor that produces an event aesthetic within a localized social site can prove a generative force for reorganizing perception and ethics—motivating forces from which the momentum for an ongoing pursuit of change stems.

This chapter has sought to outline a concept of enchanting performance through a number of axes: through its theoretical underpinnings in political theory as a way of understanding how culture and aesthetics operate as a form of self-(re)disciplining that operates at the level of perception, and which is capable of rearranging personal priorities; through performance and dance studies, and their attention to corporeality as a way of understanding the production of a social community and its associated visual/affective economy; through a discussion of the turn to immersion and participation within the creative industries as a way of understanding how emergent forms of collaborative artmaking intersect with the demands of capital in neoliberal times and attendant social desires; through a description of both the spatial production of festivals and the individualized corporeal labor that interlocks with that production, as a way of making sense of the perceptual rearticulation of land as part of a (racialized) process of commoning; and through a discussion of workshops and education in order to consider how enchantment weaves together corporeality, ideology, philosophy, epistemology, and ontology within festival repertoires.

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[84] Sheldon Wolin, "Contract and Birthright", *Political Theory*, 14.2 (May 1986), 192.

To continue defining this provisional concept, I will further deploy enchanting performance throughout this dissertation, with the hope that this will help solidify its usage, as well as begin gesturing to its utility beyond the festival context. As an affirmative way of addressing geographically-emplaced theatricality, I see the utility of enchanting performance in its capacity to offer an alternative to structural, binaristic theoretical apparatuses that bracket off the event from the everyday, the liminal from the quotidian, the representational from the material. This has value in terms of bringing visibility to forms of labor that evade social recognition, or modes of participation that appear drained of commitment—which often cuts along classed and racialized stereotypes, as we have seen. Furthermore, it demands a constant attentiveness to the complicated and continuous struggles related to land and the People within settler colonial societies, alerting us to how settler colonialism—as a social structure that gets continuously challenged and re-entrenched—builds from techniques of the body and self.

CHAPTER THREE

Festival Stewardship and Variegated Whiteness at the Harmony Park Music Garden

Preface

In this and the following chapter I use Transformational Festivals as a lens through which to examine wider axes of "festival culture," an emergent term for communities and lifestyles organized around music festivalgoing. Festival culture is already a commonly understood term in event communities (see, for example, numerous Reddit threads and social media groups), and with the rapid expansion of outdoor music events over the last decade it has steadily become recognized as an object of public policy, economics, politics, material culture, and fashion.[1] But what does it mean to imagine and circumscribe a cultural formation that exists around the act of festivalgoing? How does festival culture manifest differently on regional and global scales, attuning us to the braided material and racial economies that operate around enchanting performance today? In approaching event formations, how can we maintain a materialist analysis that foregrounds the embodied labor required to produce "festive excitement,"[2] while simultaneously building awareness of variant axes of commodification, exploitation, and resistance that attend this labor? That is, how can we explore festivals in a way that takes

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[1] Constance DeVereaux, "Music Festivals: A Preliminary Investigation for Policy and Management", Colorado Creative Industries and Music District LLC, n.d., accessed 23 Apr 2019, https://coloradocreativeindustries.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/festival_report_12_11_2017.pdf; Amy X. Wang, "Music Festivals in Australia have become a Hot Political Issue", *Rolling Stone*, 25 Feb 2019, https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/music-festivals-australia-798718/; Scott Borque, "Business Angles for Covering Music Festivals", The National Center for Business Journalism, 27 Feb 2018, https://businessjournalism.org/2018/02/covering-the-money-behind-music-festivals/.

[2] I borrow this term from Leslie Witz, who uses it to denote not only the sense of joy that attends festivals, but also the way that this joy comes from the momentum and improvisation of participants, which may not necessarily follow the officially sanctioned activities and narratives laid out by organizers. *Apartheid's Festival: Contesting South Africa's National Pasts*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press (2003).

seriously Marx's admonition that we should not think in historical abstractions without also recognizing how those abstractions are the products of "real individuals, their activity[,] and the material conditions under which they live"?[3]

The case studies I offer here present contrasting but interlocking models for studying formations of festival culture: In the next chapter I approach this festival culture through the lens of transnational mobility, examining "destination festivals" as tourist formations. I ground my claims in observations of Envision in Costa Rica, which draws a mobile, cosmopolitan constituency from countries throughout the Global North, and is organized primarily by capital originating in the US. This case study demonstrates how festival culture, as an economic formation, participates in transnational capital flows (and their attendant territorialized power dynamics and racial inequities), while also masking this participation by offering enchantment as a means of cross-cultural connection, and spiritual betterment.

This chapter, in contrast, approaches festival culture through the lens of geographic emplacement, examining an event *venue*—the Harmony Park Music Garden in Geneva, Minnesota—that has hosted a variety of festivals populated by a relatively stable and insular (and majority White) regional community since the mid-1990s. It uses longitudinal ethnographic engagement as a way of inquiring into intricate patterns of exchange, organizational strategies, and modes of community formation that animate the grounds at festival time—the mechanics that generate enchanting performance. My analysis tracks an immediate history of Harmony Park exploring questions of power and

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3 I reach to Marx here to emphasize my view that festival culture is best understood through a consideration of the materiality of bodies moving through time and space as a practical response to their social circumstances, rather than as an essentially religious ideological impulse, as often characterized in festival studies.

status within the event community *as that community has responded* to local and national political exigencies over the last quarter-century (including the complicated politics of Whiteness). I also put this history in conversation with a longer one that shows how the settler colonial past allowed Harmony Park to emerge as an event venue, and how its current "politics of stewardship" converse with indigenous struggles today.

Introduction: Harmony Park and the Politics of Stewardship

> "[Freeborn County Sheriff Bob] Kindler said there have been problems at [Harmony] [P]ark for several years, but the problems have grown exponentially in the last two years. Some festivals draw as many as 5,000 to 6,000 people from all over the country, and drug sales and purchases taking place at the park run the gamut from LSD and heroin to cocaine, bath salts, marijuana and methamphetamine, among others. 'Guns follow all drug transactions, and I'm very fearful of a serious event happening in that park if somebody loses control and starts shooting at people and we have a mass shooting incident,' Kindler said."
>
> - Sarah Stultz, "Harmony Park is on a Hot Seat", *Albert Lea Tribune*, 19 June 2013.
>
> "I read your story 'Harmony Park is on a hot seat.' From the nature of the report, it appears that you are not familiar with the culture of Harmony Park. If you are going to write about this issue in the future, I would encourage you to attend a festival or at the very least interview people that do have experience with the culture of the park. This park does not fit the stereotypical 'music festival' norm. It is a much more grown-up, responsible gathering."
>
> – Dan Renner, "Harmony Park is not like portrayal", *Albert Lea Tribune*, 29 June 2013

The above dueling narratives about Harmony Park Music Garden played out during a crisis-point in the park's quarter-century history. Harmony Park is located in Geneva, Minnesota, a tiny town in Freeborn County about ninety miles from a major

urban center. Geneva's population is just 555,[4] but several times a year that population triples or quintuples as festivalgoers from throughout the Midwest gather to attend events at what a local music 'zine affectionately dubbed the "Minnesota's kindest Outdoor music venue."[5] The crisis had to do with the "Festi di Bella Mente" (the Festival of Beautiful People), more commonly called "Bella," which took place in 2011, 2012, and 2013. Recent changes to the event grounds, including investment in bathrooms, showers, and a playground for kids, had put Harmony Park in a position to attract major EDM headliners, including Beats Antique, Primus, Big Gigantic, and Bassnectar. While this investment created potential for bigger and more profitable events, it also created greater risks and responsibilities for individual event promoters and park owner Jay Sullivan. The home of what some would call a neo-hippie freak community, and what others might moralizingly label a "drug culture," Harmony Park had always maintained a tense relationship with the groups who lived nearby.

Bella's bass-heavy programming resulted in more people coming to Harmony Park than ever before, but the promoter ignored limitations to the land's capacity, slashed funding for security and medical personnel, and neglected waste management protocols in order to turn the maximum profit. Harmony Park can only comfortably support three to four thousand people, but the final year of Bella saw some six thousand attendees, "tents upon tents upon tents," as one participant told me.[6] It made for an uncharacteristically impersonal atmosphere as well as a disregard for the land of the park (trash was

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[4] Geneva's ethnic makeup is 98.6% White, 0.2% Asian, 0.2% from other races, and 1.1% from two or more races. "2010 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171)", U.S. Census Bureau, accessed 23 Apr 2019.

[5] "Webbed Freaks", *The Weekly Freak*, 11.7 (1998).

[6] Author's field notes, 23 June 2017.

apparently strewn about everywhere). The music style and the particular drug scene that followed it piqued law enforcement to a greater extent than usual; while drugs (mostly marijuana and psychedelics like mushrooms and LSD) had been present at Harmony Park since it was purchased by Sullivan and Amie Bartlett in 1994 to become a dedicated event venue, Bella's overbooking presented a business opportunity for dealers of "party drugs" that had had only a limited presence to that point (e.g. cocaine, MDMA, ecstasy, or "designer drugs"[7]). Park regulars spoke of "seeing the darkness come in" with Bella, especially in the community's deviation from "the three good drugs";[8] they pointed, for instance, to a participant who fell into a fire pit and, with his campmates too intoxicated to help, had to be airlifted out of the park with third degree burns.[9] This emergency, and a greater number of drug arrests than normal, irked Geneva residents who believed Harmony Park was becoming a magnet for crime and danger that threatened to spill out to nearby areas. This was exacerbated when a local sheriff claimed that, upon encountering a drug deal, a group of attendees surrounded him and threatened him with firearms (a story that was never actually documented or corroborated). He began a campaign to shut down the park by revoking the conditional use permit that allowed its owner to throw events.

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[7] Designer drugs are synthetic analogues of legally prohibited or restricted drugs. While the term can sometimes indicate substances like MDMA or LSD, they more often refer to synthetic chemicals with a less documented history in psychedelic movements. In other words, while LSD and MDMA are synthetic drugs, they are seen as tried and true, and thus usually not called "designer drugs"; that label is reserved for experimental pharmaceuticals like 25i, K2, or 2C-B, which mimic certain effects of psychedelics, but are regarded as less "clean" and more dangerous.

[8] Author's field notes, 23 June 2017. See previous note. This comment was made by a sixteen-year-old whose parents had brought her to Harmony Park for many years. By calling LSD, marijuana, and mushrooms "the three good drugs", she was calling attention to the way that these chemicals could positively intersect with the sense of enchantment produced at a festival, but also their manageable side effects (vis-à-vis synthetic chemicals).

[9] Tim Engstrom, "Arrests Abound at Harmony Park", *Albert Lea Tribune*, 28 May 2013.

Calls for Freeborn County commissioners to revoke Harmony Park's conditional-use permit were countered with town hall meetings in which Sullivan demonstrated reforms to event protocols. He also brought in around two dozen members from the Harmony Park community to attest to the venue's value: "I owe my life to Jay Sullivan and the community of people I belong to out there," said recovering methamphetamine user Sarah Haukoos, who claimed to be living proof of the positive impact Harmony Park can have for people dealing with addiction (perhaps a surprising sentiment for someone to express about a "drug culture." An Eagan, Minnesota resident claimed that, for his late wife, Harmony Park "was part of her medicine," and a petition to save the park received over 200 signatures.[10] Eventually, an agreement was reached allowing the park to continue operation under a number of stipulations: first, Harmony Park had to permanently cut ties with the promoter for Bella; second, Sullivan was permitted to hold a maximum of five events with over 800 people each year; third, a reputable security company had to be approved for any event over 500 people; fourth, police were authorized to make two daily sweeps of the event grounds to inspect for drug use and other illegal behavior; and fifth, a 1:00am curfew was placed on all amplified music and drumming. In the year that followed, Sullivan and other promoters attempted to reorient the park's mission, initiate changes to repair its relationship with local residents, and curate a more subdued participant community.

It was at this point that my own encounter with Harmony Park began. Part of the strategy to resuscitate the venue's community standing involved putting front-and-center the band Wookiefoot, a Minnesota-based group with a following that stretched from the

[10] Sarah Stultz, "Harmony Park fans voice their support," *Albert Lea Tribune*, 7 Aug, 2013.

Midwest to Colorado, and which was known for alternative and uplifting world music that embraced politically conscious lyrics (what has been dubbed "medicine music"—an appropriation of a pan-tribal generic native use of the term medicine).[11] Wookiefoot had already been promoting the park's flagship benefit event, Project Earth, since 2008, and they had attracted a dedicated following from a music-going community that embraced "Transformational" aesthetics. Now, Sullivan allowed them to promote the Memorial and Labor Day events that were the venue's cash cows.

Predictably, tension followed the elevation of a particular group within the subculture to a position of prominence and the power, and the financial remuneration that attended this. Harmony Park generates profit in three main ways: 1) through rent paid by the promoter to Sullivan and cash generated at an on-site bar he operates, 2) through profits from ticket sales and merchandise, which go to event promoters, and 3) through the commerce that occurs on-site, including both formal vendors (selling food, jewelry, flow toys, costumes, decorations, glassware, etc.) and informal ones (selling the same items—as well as drugs—in interstitial encounters to avoid paying vending fees). Wookiefoot's being in charge meant not only that they stood to make money themselves, they were also in control of the regime of creativity that would shape Harmony Park's style (and thus the particular artists who might stand to profit) and, through booking, comps, and access to VIP status, its community.

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[11] Little has been written on the genre of "medicine music," which is also informally referred to as "music with a message." The "medicine" moniker probably refers to the band Medicine for the People, which is a major influence on the community. Medicine music features positive, uplifting lyrics that call attention to the psychic and environmental ravages of contemporary society (with addiction often being a subtle theme), and attempt to inspire audiences to survive and resist. Shangrila Festival webpage, accessed 20 July, 2018, https://shangrilafest.com/lineup/.

Wookiefoot's embrace of "Transformational" aesthetics—which made Harmony Park briefly legible as a Transformational Festival to Jeet-Kei Leung when he produced *The Bloom Series*, the media source by which I first encountered the venue—was intended to resuscitate the park's image by building a more "conscious" atmosphere emphasizing spirituality, education, and environmentalism. A program of calm, uplifting music, charitable promotions, and the presence of rituals (both invented New Age rituals performed by White people and culturally-based ceremonies by a small group of local indigenous people) were placed front-and-center in a way that could appear palatable to local residents. But many longtime attendees of Harmony Park bristled at this shift. It wasn't just a matter of disliking the music style (though, in many conversations I had, a denigration of the music served as a proxy for wider subcultural critiques), it was that, for many, Wookiefoot's style appeared only as a guise—as "layers of ultra-spiritual bullshit" meant to mark a person as "woke" and "enlightened."[12] They saw Wookiefoot's use of Transformational aesthetics as a way of disidentifying from Harmony Park's past, and characterizing its former culture as one of unchecked hedonism. The transition to Wookiefoot as a Harmony Park promoter installed what I have elsewhere called an "aesthetic fault line," an immaterial form of social division that categorized and tiered Harmony Park attendees based on how closely they hewed to a particular set of stylistic and ideological principles.[13] It generated subcultural capital (and in some cases material capital) for a subset of the Harmony Park community that could successfully perform this "enlightened," "woke," or "conscious" identity, while marking others as abject, as *those*

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[12] Jess Anderson, Interview with author, 20 Jan 2014.

[13] Bryan Schmidt, "Fault Lines, Racial and Aestehtic: The National Arts Festival at Grahamstown", *Theatre Research International*, 43.3 (October 2018), pp. 318-337.

people who threatened to ruin the vibe with irresponsible self-indulgence.[14] Of course, this moralistic posturing served to obscure the continuedtroublesome personal behavior that plagues many event communities: blatant profiteering, wildly irresponsible drug use, even sexual harassment or predation.[15]

This chapter explores this tension, and why it holds such stakes for people who see themselves as a part of the Harmony Park community. Places like Harmony Park highlight the pastoral function of festivals—how they serve to cultivate a flock, rather than promote the carnivalesque release of anti-establishment energy. They demonstrate how interpersonal squabbles—which are palpable but submerged during festivals in the service of a wider social drive towards creating "festive excitement"—are symptomatic of broader dynamics relating to subjectivation, racialization, and territorial struggle. I argue that Harmony Park demonstrates how festivals stage the unfolding of communal tensions in what I refer to as a "politics of stewardship" that relate to the land on which events takes place. The stylization of event grounds (through enchanting performance) creates a sense of mythos and heritage intertwined with the land itself, and this comes to carry political stakes that inform how event-communities invest in their festival participation. The fact that this so often occurs among largely White populations staging events on colonized land speaks to how festivals can reify settler colonial imaginaries of

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[14] See Sarah Thornton, *Club cultures: music, media, and subcultural capital*, Hanover: University Press of New England (1996); Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul (1984).

[15] I personally encountered this use of spirituality as a disguise for ulterior sexual motives at Envision Festival in 2015, when a pair of American men, who had earlier gifted drugs to some of my campmates, told me they were looking for some SP ("spiritual pussy"). The festival environment produces vulnerabilities associated with personal transformation, but also *intoxication* that can be infelicitously capitalized upon for sexual conquest. This is a familiar story, and a reason why the #MeToo movement has found its way into the festival world. Alycia Grace, "Midwest Music says #MeToo. Part 2: Festivals," 16 June, 2018, *Thisisperfectharmony.com*.

authentic territorial connection (on usurped land) in an ongoing erasure of indigenous sovereignty. Importantly, though, the tension in this process also relates to Whiteness itself, revealing how racial identities are internally animated by striations based on social status and precarity.

In this chapter, I first begin by describing this idea of divisions within Whiteness through a conversation about the festival concept of the "Wook," an abject form of Whiteness. Transformational Festivals ostensibly disidentify from Wooks, who represent a baser form of festivalgoer who cannot approach an event as anything more than a hedonistic party. I then go more in-depth on the history of Harmony Park, and detail a series of local community customs as a way of relating subcultural tensions to a politics of stewardship, and demonstrating how these politics tie into the land of the event itself.

The Politics of Stewardship: Old-timers and the New Paradigm

One thing that interested me about the way tensions between old and new regimes of Harmony Park played out was that they rarely led to eruptions during events. They were palpable only as an undercurrent to the process of making the festival go. One example I might point to occurred while I was volunteering on event set-up during Project Earth 2017, doing the work of hanging long streams of East Asian language characters strung together as a stage decoration (I interpreted this as being part of Wookiefoot's creating of a "global" feel to the event):

Bart, one of the old-timers (probably in his 50s or 60s) was chatting with Mark Murphy, the front man for Wookiefoot, about where he could unload the hulking piano he brings each year to provide musical accompaniment to fire spinning. During the conversation, he asked what seemed like a difficult question for him to articulate: "I was

really wondering about why you decided to have a pre-party this year?" He was pointing to the addition of an extra day to the festival; the 2016 Project Earth was a two-day event where people arrived on Friday and left by early Sunday. But this year participants could pay an extra thirty dollars to enter the park grounds (and grab preferred camping spots) on Thursday. This is a fairly common value-added experience at festivals, usually called a pre-party; like VIP passes, they allow organizers to generate additional profit on top of the event's sticker price. But they can also be galling for purists who, following the radical egalitarian ethos of the 1960s and 1970s Free Festival tradition, view them as a creeping form of stratifying and commodifying the experience. Pre-parties allow those with money early access, which allows them to grab the best camping spots, score drugs early, and hear additional bands.

This tension is particularly visible at Burning Man, which cultivated its mythos in part through its custom of refraining from financial transactions while on-site. Now, longtime burners have begun to speak of "event gentrification"[16] that has accompanied its embrace by the San Francisco tech scene. One recent trend has seen wealthy attendees paying thousands to hire lower-class hippies as "Sherpas," so as to "not be bothered by all those time consuming tasks like cooking, cleaning, building, and whatever else the lower class citizens do, in order to enjoy the best party EVER."[17] Sherpas also acquire drugs for the campsite, taking on the legal risk associated with the possession and

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[16] "The stories about the ways that wealth and tech gentry have invaded Burning Man are telling. Google used Burning Man as a venue to interview its CEO Eric Schmidt, believing the creative environment would spur a better candidate interview process. In the past decade, "turnkey camps" have emerged, lush quarters prepared by oft-exploited laborers and rented by those who can afford five-figure sums. And there are charter flights that will take you directly from Silicon Valley to Black Rock City's temporary airport for a cool $1,463 round-trip. Keith A. Spencer, "The Data Behind the Gentrification of Burning Man," *Salon*, 2 Sep 2017, https://www.salon.com/2017/09/02/the-data-behind-the-gentrification-of-burning-man/.

[17] "A Sherpa's Tale," *Burners.me*, 12 Sep 2014, https://burners.me/2014/09/12/a-sherpas-tale/.

distribution of controlled substances. Given the overwhelmingly White racial makeup of Burning Man,[18] that this egregious form of festival classism is analogized by the relationship between presumably White adventure tourists and the Tibetans hired to assist them alludes to how festivals can serve as spaces that mediate conceptions of Whiteness itself, and how questions of class intersect with a politics of race.

Mark seemed to understand that this anxiety animated Bart's question about the extra day of Project Earth. He responded: "But we're not calling it a pre-party. We're calling it an *opening ceremony*."

"What's the difference?"

"There's no bands. We're going to have an opening prayer with some instrumentation. We'll set an intention for the weekend, and hopefully that will keep things..." he patted the air with his hands in a gesture of calming.

Bart responded to this with a huff: "Because, you know, a pre-party really isn't the point," as if to say, come on, call it the profiteering gesture it is rather than hide behind an appeal to New Age philosophy. Perhaps he was pointing to the fact that this "opening ceremony" was a two-hour "Bana Kuma Prayer-formance" comprised of some thirty people who paid a $275 fee to rehearse with grammy-winning musician Chris Berry during the week leading up to Project Earth, and then perform on the Harmony Park main stage.[19] This fit in with other changes to Harmony Park's grounds, like a larger

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[18] According to a survey conducted by Burning Man, 77.1% of Burners identify, 5.6% as Asian, 4.9% as Hispanic/Latino, less than 1% as Native American or Black, and 9.5% as Other or Multiple. Since 2013 the percentage of White Burners has fallen by about 5%. DeVaul, D.L., Beaulieu-Prévost, D., Heller, S.M., and the 2017 Census Lab. (2017). Black Rock City Census: 2013-2017 Population Analysis. Black Rock City Census. Copyright © 2018 DeVaul et al. https://burningman.org/culture/history/brc-history/census-data/

[19] This prayer-formance involves, drumming, singing, and dance organized around the four elements: fire, air, water, and earth. Berry explains Bana Kuma as "a wisdom tradition and word that sees our creative power as a sacred gift. Our ability to make ethereal thoughts manifest in the physical is 'Bana Kuma,' and

section for RV camping—another expensive ticket add-on, and one which potentially felt incongruent with Project Earth's eco-activist focus. (Project E.A.R.T.H., as it was called when it began in 1993, stood for "Environmental Activism and Restoring the Harmony"). Furthermore, the issue of a pre-party also relates to event atmosphere and public safety. An additional night of partying means an additional night of sleeplessness, drinking, and drug use, elements that, by the end of a festival, can result in a fraying of the social fabric, greater risks of bodily injury or psychic harm, and a greater chance of police intervention—all of which could permanently jeopardize Harmony Park's ability to hold events.

Mark defended his choice by appealing to both the market and social values: "We're hoping that by calling it a ceremony, but not having bands perform, it will make sure that people are entering the space with the right frame of mind." He rerouted a decision that directly relates to his ability to profit as an investment in the ethical dimensions of Harmony Park, a means to help people conduct themselves in a right relationship with the space. Knowing that it was Mark's show, Bart withdrew, dissatisfied, and continued setting up his piano. This exchange, while seemingly

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each person possesses this power. My 'Bana Kuma' is based on the Ancient concept that music and dance is a form of prayer that includes community, erasing the lines between performer and observer." Berry's personal biography is interesting to think about in order to understand how the sacred element of this music style is imbued with a sense of authenticity: "Chris was born and raised in California where he began his apprenticeship with Master Drummer Titos Sompa (one of the founders of the African drum and dance scene on the West Cost of the U.S.) as a fifteen year old boy. This relationship led him into a ten year journey to Africa. Eight of these years were spent in Zimbabwe during the Mugabe Regime. During this tumultuous political period, Chris found himself living in the ghettos and villages of Zimbabwe where he sought to study the music of the Shona people, adding to his growing repertoire of Traditional African Music. He became initiated by the village elders into their heritage, mastered the Mbira, and learned to speak their language fluently. Immersed in the culture of all-night Mbira Ceremonies, Chris found his voice singing among the polyrhythmic harmonies commonly found throughout Zimbabwe and most of South Africa. It was soon after that his musical career took off." "Chris Berry's Bana Kuma Orchestra," *YouTube*, STiL Focus Media, 6 Apr, 2017, accessed 20 July, 2018; "About", Chrisberrymusic.org, 2018, Accessed 20 July, 2018.

innocuous, demonstrates a brief surfacing of community tensions, and their repression in order to serve a festive atmosphere. Such tensions—informed by Harmony Park's quarter-century history as a site of festival culture—often simmer just below the surface of an event. Bart and Mark's disagreement was ultimately a political one that viewed the performance of festival as a point of intersection for a range of cultural struggles. In the context of Harmony Park, these struggles include questions of rural community identity, class divisions and values, social precarity and State surveillance, the meaning and ethics of drug use, and the racial, gendered, and sexual politics of New Age spiritualism.

This vignette demonstrates how festivals take on a political dimension for attendees insofar as they render participation a means of *protecting* and *prolonging* communities, spaces, and traditions. I call this a "politics of stewardship," which highlights ethics of care, responsibility, and long-term vision that festivalgoers frequently deploy in relation to events and event grounds. The job of steward traditionally indicates a supervisory role within a public event, and certainly festival stewardship has to do with the choices organizers make to guide and dispose participants to certain behaviors and ideologies; but, as we shall see, politics of stewardship also happen laterally, moving between festival participants who recognize that the yearly reproduction of an event's social imaginary is predicated on ethical codes and structured practices. As political terrains, festivals are peculiar because they display continuity not through daily practice, but rather through periodic (usually annual and/or seasonal) reiterations of a particular social horizon; participants evaluate their experience of an event by considering its fidelity to past iterations, and by projecting into the future what the event/community might eventually become.

In this way, festivals magnify and mediate cultural divisions, acting as what Catherine Squires has termed a "satellite public sphere," a zone for debate and deliberation that avoids discourse or interdependency with other publics. Satellite publics, which can emerge from within dominant or marginalized populations, "aim to maintain a solid group identity" and to limit entrance into public debates only when there is a clear convergence of interests.[20] Contrary to characterizations of festivals as ideal sites for euphoric and collective opposition to orderliness and social control,[21] the emergence of an array of event grounds like Harmony Park (e.g. Nelson's Ledges in Ohio, Spirit of Suwannee Campgrounds in Florida, Horning's Hideout in Oregon), and dedicated regional communities that patronize them year after year, make visible the importance of routine, discipline, and debate in festivalgoing practices—which occur most often through inherited techniques of the body, rather than legible discourse.

A politics of stewardship also points to how event grounds create intense attachments to lands themselves, generating a sense of stakeholdership in space for those who attend. Upon arriving to Harmony Park, patrons are greeted with the cheer of "Welcome Home," and inside they frequently encounter altars, rituals, decorations, and enchanting performances that endow the park with spiritual connotations. Just as 19th century camp meetings and Chautauquas fulfilled an important function of settler colonialism by allowing White Americans to generate imaginative ties to newly

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[20] Catherine Squires, "Rethinking the Black Public Sphere: An Alternative Vocabulary for Multiple Public Spheres," *Communication Theory*, 12.4 (November, 2002), 463.

[21] Roxy Robinson recounts a formative moment in her own initiation into festival culture as being part of a rioting group of participants that burned stages and Portaloos at the 2000 Reading Festival. She suggests that the rioting took place because audiences felt a lack of connection to the organizers and place of the festival, meaning that "the impulse to create our own disorderly spectacle was more powerful than the incentive to behave ourselves." *Music Festivals and the Politics of Participation*, Surrey: Ashgate (2015), 16-17.

conquered lands, the contemporary cultivation of a politics of festival stewardship demonstrates an ongoing need to reify those ties, but to do so by demonstrating a progressive sense of social responsibility for the legacy of that conquest.

Project Earth, particularly as it has acquired a New Age bent via Wookiefoot's aesthetic direction, frames the festival experience as an attempt to un-think the ideological conditioning of quotidian society, and the feelings of alienation produced by neoliberal regimes of thought that prioritize individualism and consumption over collective projects. Race gets subtly imbricated in this process through an appeal to the "tribal":

> "Most festivals are jam packed with non-stop over stimulation for your inner Bliss Junkie to get its fix. Although we do love that… Project Earth had a different mission last year. To slow it all down and open space for the family to discover more of each other and strengthen our community roots. We feel, and have been told by you, that the more intimate setting in the forest was just the right medicine for the Tribal convergence."[22]

In this mission statement, it is notable that "most festivals" are characterized through the language of drug addiction ("junkie," "fix," "overstimulation"). In contrast, Project Earth is defined through a language of calming and support ("medicine," "slowness," "family," and "community"). The juxtaposition of these poles indicates how Transformational Festivals attach ideological stakes to modes of bodily comportment, and to the textured position that drug culture has within community, policing boundaries of respectability.

We can see this more clearly by looking at the promotional material (Figure 14) for another Wookiefoot-organized Harmony Park festival, Shangri-La (which typically takes place Labor Day weekend).The image depicts Shangri-La as a point of convergence for Ancient and mythic tropes confined to no particular geography. In the center is

[22] Project Earth Festival Homepage, 2018, https://projectearthfest.com/.

Universal Man figured as a Buddha in the lotus position—presumably meant to symbolize the festival attendee who will attempt to achieve "consciousness" through participation. The image insinuates that the festival is a pathway to a transcendental enlightenment created via the collision of copious strands of cultural and epistemic

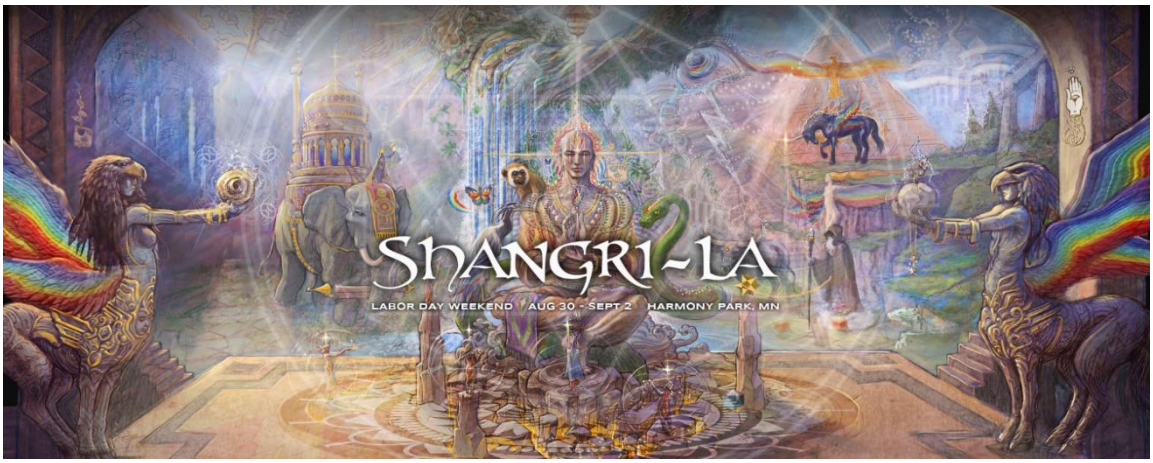

Figure 14: Publicity Image for Shangri-La 2018 at Harmony Park, promoted by Wookiefoot

difference. This transcendence is racialized; it suggests overcoming Whiteness as a toxic identity position complicit with the modern sensibility that has eliminated these Ancient forms of knowledge from our perception. By illustrating the festival as a pathway towards spiritual transcendence, it suggests a more "proper" mode of Whiteness, one that rises to a higher level of value from other White bodies. What is at stake here is not only a question of the ongoing settler colonial politics of festivalgoing—conducted by producing enclaves in which White populations can posture defensively from dominant society, and, in doing so, claim a stakeholdership in conquered lands via a spiritual claim—but also an understanding of how Whiteness operates as a diffuse and mobile identity assemblage that constantly categorizes bodies as clean ("conscious," "proper," "pure,") or abject, more fully human or less. To consider this abject pole—the

festivalgoing Other from which Transformational Festivals disidentify let us consider the trope of the "Wook" in festival culture.

Wooks, Abject Bodies, Variegated Whiteness

> Wook: noun or adjective. A dirty, hairy, stinky, mal-nourished, dishonest creature that often travels in packs, with possibly and unfortunately, mangy, multi-colored dogs, on hand-made all natural, organic hemp leashes, or alone wandering aimlessly around a concert (usually "hippie music") parking lot with a few seemingly more important than music goals[:] find as many mind altering substances and cram them into their bodies as fast and furiously as possible, get into the show somehow, don't lose the dog this time, and if by chance they come across unattended property such as a cooler, chair, backpack, or a beverage, it will then become their own. […] Wooks are only useful in one way: if you are trying to warn or scare a younger more easily influenced friend about the dangers of drugs, just tell them to observe and study the behaviors of Wooks in their natural surroundings, but warn them that if they get too close, they may risk becoming one themselves![23] – Urban Dictionary

From time to time at Harmony Park you'll hear a guttural growl sound out, "RRRRRRrrrrrrr…" perhaps in response to a strong music set, or a killer fire-spinning sequence, or for no reason at all. It is an imitation of Chewbacca, the hairy Wookie from the Star Wars universe, who can only communicate through incoherent barking. This is the cry of the Wook, a pariah of the music festival scene. Wooks are something of a reduction ad absurdum for the drug culture of music festivals. Usually gendered male, he appears as the polar opposite of the transcendental Buddha image used to publicize Shangri-La, or the shapely yoga bodies used in advertisements for premiere destination festivals (as I will discuss more explicitly in the following chapter). He has not "gotten into shape" for festival season, nor spent the year practicing dancing, fire-spinning, playing an instrument, or making visual art to contribute to the enchantment of the

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[23] Sweaty Ray, "Wook," *Urban Dictionary*, 27 May 2005, https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=wook. See also David Garber, "How to Spot a Festival Wookie", *Vice*, 6 Apr 2015, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/xyp8e3/how-to-spot-a-festival-wookie.

grounds; his is a body whose sclerotic movements and incoherent babbling materialize all the negative aspects of drugs—those that Transformational Festival organizers and participants seek to transcend. I should note that the Wook stereotype is not related to the band Wookiefoot. It came into usage during parking lot parties for Phish concerts during the 1990s, and was used to describe negative trends in drug culture (including thieving and the unsafe use of synthetic drugs) from the earlier touring days of the Grateful Dead.

The YouTube video "Adopt a Wook Public Service Announcement"[24] dubs over Sarah McLachlan's infamous commercial spots urging donations to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), which pans over the dismal faces of abused animals seeking adoption, while the emotional "In the Arms of the Angel" plays in the background. The "Adopt a Wook" video comically replaces the images of abused animals with photos of Wooks in various states of intoxication or debasement in festival settings: a shirtless man with his ass crack exposed stumbling about until he finally falls to the ground in front of a crowd of onlookers; a bearded twenty-something with crooked teeth whose eyes are glazed over in a drug-fueled haze; a dread-y old

Figure 15: Wook meme, Photo provided with permission from Jess Anderson

[24] The video punctuates the Wook's unhealthy and hedonistic lifestyle with the following message: "Every day on Phish Tour, a wook goes without vital necessities like pop tarts, deemsters [the drug DMT], and dabs [a drug made from taking a butane torch to marijuana residue]."Adopta Wook, "Adopt a Wook Public Service Announcement," *YouTube*, 5 Nov, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dsxm259nYYY.

man, eyes bulging from chemical intoxication, being dragged off by event security; a young man wearing a water balloon bra struggling to keep his Bud Light from spilling while stumbling to the ground. The video represents the Wook as, most often, an unkempt, heavily bearded white male. Wooks are figures of abjectness amongst a population that imagines itself to be abject vis-à-vis the dominant culture. If festies question tight social controls on access to drugs and information about them, and the police apparatus that enforces these controls, Wooks would seem to demonstrate why some limitations should exist. They do not approach festivals as sacrosanct spaces that lead to profound, life-affirming transformations. They are caricatures of bodies ravaged by a lifestyle of drugs and partying—not the Body without Organs that Deleuze and Guattari saw as the positive potentiality of drug culture, but the "vitrified," "empty," or "cancerous" body of the drug *addict* that they saw as its obverse; a body whose dependencies render it incapable of Becoming.[25]

Wooks conjure a sense of failure: they are people who do festival *wrong*. These are the people that media accounts point to when they want to show festivals to be vacuous and unsafe affairs. Participants will sometimes speak of a festival scene

[25] Deleuze and Guattari begin by discussing drugs not from the position of deviance, but as an ethical project aimed at altering perception, allowing one to grasp the imperceptible in order to make possible the dissolving of solid forms—a Becoming-molecular. They contrast this with psychological approaches based on deviance and desire, which interpret drug use as escape, a way to numb pain, a manifestation of unconscious drives to gain pleasure or avoid misfortune. However, the conversation quickly takes a more ambivalent turn. By looking at the bodily effects of continued drug use, as well as the economies in which one must interact in order to participate, they outline how drugs always exist as part of an assemblage with as much capacity to impede Becoming as to instigate it. They eventually become negative about the whole enterprise, giving special consideration to the vitrified body of the addict; just as one's arborial self becomes undone (a positive development), it gets reconstituted with blockages based on physical dependency. Eventually, the original project is betrayed: "instead of making a body without organs sufficiently rich or full for the passage of intensities, drug addicts erect a vitrified or emptied body, or a cancerous one." *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: A Thousand Plateaus*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980, 284-285.

becoming "Wook-tastic" or "Too Wook'd Out" to mark a sense of loss, a feeling of discomfort, impersonality, a rise in theft, and even lack of safety. The presence of Wooks marks an impediment to communal enchantment and a rise in solipsistic overstimulation. While other festivalgoers' muddy, second-hand clothes (perhaps found at the Giving Tree) communicate something of the community's minimalist ethos and threadbare sensibilities, the Wook's decrepit appearance goes too far. His dirty dreadlocks and unkempt beard do not constitute a statement of rebellion toward middle-class dress and grooming standards, but rather, complete apathy, an abdication of the implicit responsibilities in self-conduct participants have as part of a precarious community. In short, the Wook stereotype represents a festival culture that has abdicated a politics of stewardship (and its dimension of care and investment in a community); he symbolizes instead a politics of *pure consumption*.

This notion of Whiteness as a multi-tiered identity position is an important idea in the field of critical whiteness studies. Popular identity politics tends to situate Whiteness as a singular, majoritarian positionality reflective of ongoing social privilege conferred on the basis of skin color. While not disagreeing entirely with that basic premise, critical Whiteness studies seeks to clarify and texture how this operation works, noting especially that Whiteness is neither a *singular* nor *static* concept. Matthew Frye Jacobson, for instance, points out that, although White privilege has been a hallmark of American political culture since colonial times, "[W]hiteness itself has been subject to all kinds of contests and historical vicissitudes."[26] Class, for instance, has been a factor that mediates

[26] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press (1998), 4.

access to the privileges of Whiteness. While traditional Marxist theory approaches race as merely a function of structural class warfare (a purely ideological construct created by the bourgeoisie to divide the proletariat), David Roediger has argued for a more interlocking conception of how a *sense* of Whiteness and working class formation developed in conjunction with one another.[27] Relatedly, John Hartigan Jr. argues in *Odd Tribes* about the importance of "White trash" stereotypes as a discursive means of policing color lines. Contrasting ideological, psychoanalytical, and representational theories of Whiteness, which tend to flatten identity by projecting a uniform collective consciousness, Hartigan argues for a "cultural view that comprehends subjects as composed by multiple (at times discrepant) discourses and responding to diverse, shifting sets of concerns." He points to how stereotypes like "White trash" constantly produce subjects with incomplete access to the privileges of Whiteness.[28]

The stereotype of the Wook exemplifies how a "White trash" dynamic operates in the aesthetic language of today's festivals, but festival culture has participated in these racializing dynamics for a long while. We might think, for instance, of Norman Mailer's use of the term "White Negro" to describe hipsters of the 1950s who adopted the "primitive" pleasures of the body associated with African American cultural forms—as Mailer saw it, the psychic trauma African Americans *always* experienced under the threat of daily violence was now being replayed as existential crisis by Whites experiencing a loss of faith in the civilizing project. These hipsters—who began the tradition of the pop festival and would evolve into the hippies of the 1960s—attempted to adopt a hybridized

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[27] David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness*, London: Verso (1991 [2007]).

[28] John Hartigan, Jr., *Odd Tribes: Towards a Cultural Analysis of White People*, Durham: Duke University Press (2005), 1, 4.

identity, a not-quite-Whiteness, to escape the contradictions and conformity of dominant society by experimenting with cultural forms of the Other. Today, as Kimberly Chabot Davis has pointed out, "wiggers" (say, White people who wear dreadlocks—a common site in transformational festivals) present a similar, though decidedly less romanticized, version of the same idea.[29] And lest we forget to reach further back in time, we should recall that the establishment of Chautauquas in the 19th century began as a project for urbanites on the East Coast intending to *civilize* camp meeting practices associated with the undeveloped frontier. My point here is to demonstrate that festivals have historically operated as part of a social terrain where racial boundaries get revealed and policed, where the color lines *within* Whiteness can become visible. Harmony Park (as seen by Geneva residents, for instance) is an example of a place for *those people*, Hartigan's way of describing the misfits who fall outside a social boundary that simultaneously traverses racial, gender, and class lines. And Wooks are *those people* within *those people*.

Class is an important element in this variegated sense of Whiteness. Despite ethics of sharing and communal giving that permeate Harmony Park, frustration with the Wook's sponging and thieving reveals how strict principles regarding personal property and reciprocity are also at work. While the common practice of gifting, in principle, implies no need for remuneration, there is clearly an expectation that this generosity

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[29] Davis argues that most critical race scholars today are dismissive of practices of White affinity towards racial others, seeing them as part of a "long and repetitive story of the imperialist and racist nature of whites' desire to possess the black 'Other.'" Davis problematizes this dismissal by arguing that such dismissals fail to account for the "varied politics of cross-racial identification," including encounters that "foster the development of 'white allies' who are divesting from, rather than investing in, white power and privilege." *Beyond the White Negro: Empathy and Anti-Racist Reading*, Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press (2014), 1-2; For examples of pessimistic popular analyses of Whites' wearing of dreadlocks, see Rachel Lubitz, "Is it ever ok for white people to wear dreadlocks," *Mic*, 15 Sep, 2016, https://mic.com/articles/154045/is-it-ever-ok-for-white-people-to-wear-dreadlocks#.kEKGDg6rA; Emanuella Grinberg, "Dear white people with dreadlocks: somemo things to consider," *CNN*, 7 October, 2016, https://www.cnn.com/2016/10/07/health/white-dreadlocks-cultural-appropriation-feat/index.html.

means rules will be followed. There is a general belief that a festie should be able to attend a festival with little but the clothes on her back and still be able to find food, shelter, and a decent high, so long as she brings positive vibes; but there is also a contrasting directive for participants to *patronize* Harmony Park's own mini-economy by spending money on art, clothing, food, alcohol, drugs, firewood, toys, gems, and jewelry. Intra-tribal patronage is a component of the politics of stewardship: continued growth in the complex system of activities and objects within the event economy are seen as a way of growing the tribe, and building resources available to fund future festivals. For instance, at Project Earth it is common to see children set up small displays of their arts and crafts (bead jewelry, coloring book drawings, etc.) to sell their works; some create cute grifts, like asking if you'd like to hear a joke, and then charging you a dollar for it. The festival serves as an inauguration into a particular material culture, and the economy that surrounds it; at once they learn a form of sharing and generosity that extends to the rest of the Tribe, as well as the importance of industriousness, creative labor, and financial remuneration. Festies may not adhere to the form of consumer culture operative in the outside world, but they still place a premium on material contribution. Non-participation in this monetary circuit is seen as a drag on local resources. One thinks of how similar racialized stereotypes, like, say, the "welfare queen," are weaponized to create a sense of outsiders living within on a national level; Wooks are similarly demonized at the level of the Tribe, and point to how a strand of conservative demonization of poverty operates alongside festival culture's selective embrace of a "Tribal" style that might classified as threadbare-chic.

The Wook is a classed stereotype, and one that reaches to animalistic metaphor as

a way of understanding festival behavior rendered deviant. This dehumanizing operation, usually reserved for ethnic minorities in the history of White racist thought, constitutes an act of othering within a White community that already imagines itself to be marginalized vis-à-vis dominant society. Like the "Sherpas" of Burning Man, whose time at festival gets spent tending to menial tasks in support of wealthier participants, Wooks get relegated to a lower tier of (White) festivalgoers. Their unwillingness to follow tacit rules of the grounds becomes a referendum on character framed through the concept of *race*. Harmony Park festivals are usually full of White people, but the Wook represents a *toxic* Whiteness to be avoided. But if the Wook is one pole of toxic Whiteness, the other is the Whiteness of dominant consumer culture. The politics of stewardship attempts to maintain a community that threads the needle between the two to create an *alternative Whiteness*: White, to be sure, but not a Whiteness compromised either by complicity with late capitalist and neocolonialist enterprise, or by a solipsistic ethic of mindless hedonism.

A Brief History of Harmony: Social Divisions and "Clean" Bodies

> [N]ot enough can be said of the uplifting kindness of the venue Harmony Park which has ambitiously grown to become Minnesota's premiere prominent outdoor concert/festival venue -- all done with heart as well as conscience for our planet's environment (thinking of her future). […] So if you haven't yet made a visit to Harmony Park please treat yourself to this on-going giving community – you'll emerge with much more than you came with (and it will all be good). Engulf yourselves in planetary pleasure. We'll see ya where the grass grows greenest and your mind grows keenest (there). Be kind. Share the harvest. Freak your mind.
> – *The Weekly Freak*[30]

[30] "Geneva Lake Jam (Review)", *The Weekly Freak*, 11.5 (October 1997).

Here I attempt to look back at the history of Harmony Park in order to outline how fault lines between its regimes of enchanting performance emerged, and how they produced fault lines amongst the local community that relate to the variegated notion of Whiteness previously discussed, and to consider how all this intersects with settler colonial politics that relate to a mythos of land. This history was constructed through a combination of my ethnographic engagement with Harmony Park for four years (a total of ten events—in both volunteering and participant-observer capacities—for no less than forty days on-site), interviews with longtime event attendees, and consultation of a subcultural ‘zine called *The Weekly Freak*, which detailed happenings in the park beginning in 1994. This strategy allowed me to approach Harmony Park in a way that allowed my critical disposition towards the obviously thorny politics of this White, New Age satellite public to be informed by an understanding of the community’s own social precarity—the very real axes of social exclusion that, while carrying different stakes than those that face racial minorities, nevertheless necessitated the formation of an alternative gathering space in the first place.

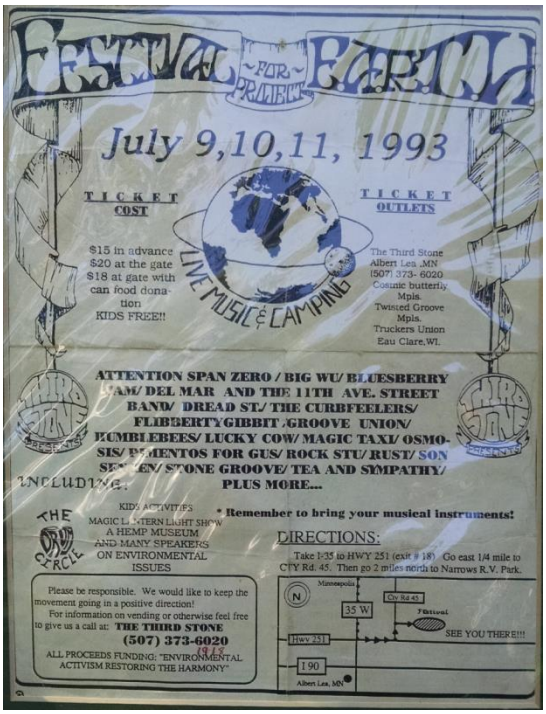

Figure 16: Flyer for the first Project Earth. Photo provided by the author.

Before becoming the Harmony Park Music Garden, there existed a small RV park owned by the American Legion known as “The Narrows on Lake Geneva,” so named

because it was perched on a shallow crossing and swimming hole used as a park by local townspeople. Amid a thicket of oak trees and smartweed could be found a distinctive "marking tree," an arc-shaped tree created from the controlled bending of a young sapling over many years—indigenous people used such trees to "create permanent trail markers, designating safe paths through rough country and pointing travelers toward water, food or other important landmarks."[31] Perhaps for this reason the park acquired a reputation as being an old Native American hunting ground, though I have found no written source to verify this. For a time, the park played host to small events like the annual picnic for the First Baptist Church of Clark's Grove, and family reunions. It was eventually used by the Hells Angels (a motorcycle club known for its rowdiness, anti-establishment disposition, and itinerant lifestyle) as an annual meet-up site. Specific information on these older gatherings has been hard to come by, but it is clear that, even then, participants saw the grove as an ideal spot for live outdoor music. Hells Angels gatherings hosted rock bands like Lynyrd Skynyrd, and featured activities like bikini and wet t-shirt contests, as well as an annual "keg toss" (in which members would take turns hurling full kegs of beer over the highest tree branch they could find).[32] Despite a decidedly harder disposition than the self-described "freaks" who use the park today, the Hells Angels have a long history of connection to hippie and psychedelic movements, including their presence in the formative 1960s Haight-Ashbury scene, and their involvement with Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters' early experimentation with LSD. Close by, in Minneapolis, motorcycle

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[31] Kathy Paulsen, "Park to celebrate anniversary this weekend," *New Richland Star*, 1 July, 2016, http://www.newrichlandstar.com/jnews/index.php/newspage/5375-20-years-of-harmony; Katrina Marland, "Trail Trees," *American Forests*, 10 Apr 2012, https://www.americanforests.org/blog/trail_trees/

[32] Timothy Paul Smith (author of *The Weekly Freak* and 20 year Harmony Park regular), Interview with Author, 15 September, 2016.

clubs including the Hells Angels have shared with deadheads, hippies, and freaks (today's Harmony Park regulars) the Cabooze music club, an important site through which jam bands, psychedelic rock, visionary art-making, and the flow arts have toured in the Twin Cities since the 1970s, and which would eventually be a key advertiser for events at Harmony Park.

In 1993, Jay Sullivan and his partner at the now Third Stone from the Sun (a hemp product and head shop located in Albert Lea, the county seat five miles away) threw the first Project E.A.R.T.H. festival. It was originally envisioned as a gathering of Minnesota deadheads to celebrate ecological activism, and to promote the legalization and use of hemp products. One of its key sponsors included the Truckers Union from Eau Claire, Wisconsin, and Twisted Groove, a "hand-craft gift emporium" in Minneapolis. This early emphasis on artisanship and ecological sustainability continues to be an important factor in the vending and informal economies operating in the park today. Advertising for the event was primarily geared to rural communities in northern Iowa, southern Minnesota, and northern Wisconsin, and a food donation would knock two dollars off the $20 entry fee—an indication of the modest means of many early participants. Children received free admission—a tradition which continues today—and it is important to remember that although a drug culture always existed at the park, that culture always negotiated boundaries related to safety and propriety. This is one way in which a politics of stewardship manifests at Harmony Park—through assessing whether behavior is appropriate for children (or not), and negotiating those boundaries with parents, non-parents, and children who share the same space. At this point, Harmony Park had no stage; musical acts took place atop flatbed trucks. At the time, only a handful

of festivals existed in Minnesota (mostly revolving around rock and country music), but local hippies were taking a cue from ascendant events like the High Sierra Music Festival in California.[33]

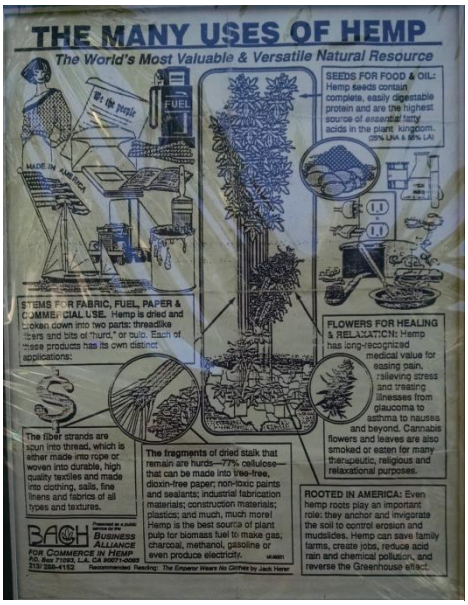

Figure 17: Backside of 1993 Project Earth Poster, photo provided by author.

In 1996, Sullivan and Amie Bartlett purchased Harmony Park and began a process of renovating the space into an ideal site for hosting music festivals. Trees were planted, brush steadily cleared, and the grounds gradually expanded to accommodate roughly 3000 people. A wooden main stage was erected in a clearing now called the "Music Bowl," and Harmony Park suddenly became available for a number of large annual events, including Harvest Fest (1996), the Geneva Lake Jam (1997), the Big Wu Family Reunion (1999), and the Prairie Grass Festival (1999). Each event had its own particular feel and energy, often corresponding to the time of year in which the event was held. With the exception of Project Earth, none of these festivals has survived annually under its original name; they have either been renamed, switched locations, or gone through extended periods of dormancy.[34] There was always a psychedelic strain to these early events, which were heavily influenced by the legacy of Grateful Dead touring (and the coinciding experimentation with psychedelics) as well as the intersection of hemp and marijuana culture; however, participants remember the early

[33] Dee Grundy, Interview with Author, 17 June, 2016.

[34] For instance, The Geneva Lake Jam, formerly a three-day festival, was revived in 2018 as a one-night event after a three-year hiatus.

years as being more in tune with rural folk culture than the more globally-influenced New Age aesthetics that typify today's scene. Prominent musical acts, for instance, included string bands, picking, and elaborate jam sessions, rather than the array of didgeridoos, bagpipes, sitars, and other imports found in today's Wookiefoot shows. Camping culture was also more subdued; it took some time before elaborate decoration of the park became a hallmark of the scene, and theme camps only emerged when Wookiefoot took over.[35]

Sullivan was never in the financial position to implement wholesale changes that would enable Harmony Park to safely house large enough numbers of participants to generate a rich profit. The business model was not to exponentially grow events year after year (as was the case with other Midwestern jam band events like Bonnaroo), but to develop a reliable base and keep tickets cheap through minimal overhead. It would not be wholly unfair to call Harmony Park a "budget" festival model (but I use the label only as a marker of the event's low cost, which indicates the socioeconomic status of those who attend it rather than the *quality* of its events). Over time, construction projects developed the park's facilities, funded in major part by investment by longtime participants who in some cases were looking to secure access to a particular space in the event, or even angled for promotion slots. In the mid-2000s, a financial crisis left Jay temporarily homeless, potentially forcing him to sell Harmony Park. A core group of participants invested cash to help build a house and some park infrastructure (including buildings that could serve as a woodshed and pub for events), which allowed Jay to work the park grounds full time.

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[35] Robinson argues that Burning Man created a transatlantic shift in festival culture, leading to more participatory events that counteracted the star concert model that dominated in the 1990s. See Chapter Five, *Music Festivals and the Politics of Participation*, Ashgate (2015).

Beginning in 2003 Wookiefoot came onto the Harmony Park scene. Eventually, in 2008, Wookiefoot took over organizing Project Earth. The band was known for its uplifting lyrics particularly aimed at individuals battling depression and addiction, as well as its use of "World Music" tropes through the deployment of a wide range of instruments.[36] They also had relationships with local Lakota communities; as one Harmony Park regular who is also Lakota explained to me, the group had, for years, attended sun dances in the area, and this informed their embrace of Transformational aesthetics.[37] Wookiefoot came to the Twin Cities in 1999, having been previously involved in the West Coast festival scene that was heavily influenced by the New Age emphasis on yoga and conscious thinking, and Burning Man's focus on DIY theme camps.

When Wookiefoot took over Project Earth they shifted the event's focus away from musical acts and toward forms of audience participation predicated on spirituality and education. Timothy Paul Smith, a longtime Harmony Park insider who documented his experiences on the grounds through a self-published 'zine called *The Weekly Freak*, remarked that "the marketing angle was genius, because it was 'Welcome Home.' Everybody who came to the festival was part of what was going on, part of the show.

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[36] Lyrics from the song "Be Fearless and Play" are indicative of the direction of the music. The song begins by calling attention to the difficulty of living in a world defined by "greed" and "fear, and discusses a rejuvenating journey to the East, and an inspirational encounter with the Other (a "toothless" holy man who seems to represent a non-materialist way of living):
These are no normal times my friends / I can see the storm clouds gathering / Try to close your eyes to the ignorance and lies / But it still feels like a heavy load / Greed and fear are the seeds that appear / To have taken root through our garden right here / These sights and sounds were draggin' me down/ So I went out upon the road / I went out across the ocean /out to Thailand and Cambodia out to Katmandu / Sri Lanka through Tibet and then down to India / And up on a hill in Rishikesh I came across a holy man / With shining eyes and a toothless smile / He grinned and this is what he said / "There's nothing so tall we can't climb over / There's nothing so wide we can not cross / The time has come to raise your voices / The light burns brightest when all hope seems lost. Wookiefoot official webpage, accessed 23 Apr (2019), https://wookiefoot.com/vault/lyrics/be-fearless-and-play.

[37] Glen Drapeau (aka "Dragonfly"), Interview with author, 17 June 2016.

Flow arts, fire dancing, temples of meditation, weird theatrics."[38] One telling shift was that Project Earth no longer prominently advertised its musical lineups. When tickets for the event came available, participants knew only that Wookiefoot would headline; the rest of the musical acts remained a mystery until about a week before the event. Despite its lack of a publicly available lineup, Project Earth continued to sell out year after year, buoyed by longtime event participants, a reputation for bringing unknown talent to the local scene, and an increased presence of participant-generated content like workshops, flow arts, and campfire jams.

Wookiefoot's rise within the scene resulted in a major shift in the park's aesthetics. Events moved away from what some older respondents proudly called "hillbilly" aesthetics,[39] and towards more "conscious" ones. This transition was made especially clear when Wookiefoot renamed Harvest Fest (the annual Labor Day event whose name references the farming cycle so crucial to the agricultural community in which Harmony Park is ensconced) as Shangri-La, a reference to a mythical, isolated, and permanently happy Himalayan paradise.[40] A scene that was predicated on music and socializing now had an underlying New Age vein predicated on spirituality and disciplined self-making (early morning yoga and energy healing sessions were suddenly regularly on offer).

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[38] Timothy Paul Smith, Interview with Author, 15 September, 2016.

[39] Dee Grundy, Interview with Author, 17 June, 2016.

[40] Shangri-La is a fictional Himalayan utopia described in the 1933 novel *Lost Horizon* by British author James Hilton. Shangri-La has become synonymous with any earthly paradise – a permanently happy land, isolated from the world, and sought by Eastern and Western explorers. Some believe that the name Shangri-La derives from Shambhala, a mythical kingdom of Tibetan Buddhism. Transformational festivals called Shambhala exist in Canada and the United Kingdom.

This brings us to the time of the Bella crisis. While I have already outlined the organizational and legal headaches that stemmed from Bella, here I wish to think about the social divisions it inserted into the event-community. One way this could be seen is through the changing drug culture of Harmony Park, which intersected with a growing drive towards bodily self-world, discipline, and cleanliness:

> "It was impossible to find real LSD. Everyone was doing [25I-NBOMe], or other fake analog chemicals. Those drugs will make you trip, but it is heavier and has a darkness to it. Instead of 8 hours, it's 12 hours. Instead of a half hour to kick in, it takes 1.5 hours. People expected real L, and would take more, and all of a sudden you have people who are SO HIGH, and they are in puddles near trees because they can't do anything. I saw a kid bite this dude in the neck vampire style. They have so much in them they don't know what to do w/ themselves. […] The vibe is so much different [when clean LSD is around]. […] Good, clean psychedelics can create an extremely unified vibe. Everybody is on the same level, and you realize you're a part of one living, breathing organism. When you think about it, we're part of this one fucking thing. We need to play our parts to take care of it or it all falls apart.[41]

Important to note here is both the radical difference between the atmospheres created by "clean" versus "fake" chemicals, particularly the sense of unity and caretaking created by the former. Dealers that deviated from "the three good drugs" were seen as purveyors of "evil shit" that attracted abject bodies ("tweakers" and "meth heads stealing out of tents")[42] to the park—the specter of the Wook inhabited this "non-clean" mode of drug consumption. Wooks are generally associated with "dirty" synthetic drugs and the class associations (e.g. "meth heads") that accompany them. This categorization of certain chemicals—and the bodies that consume them—as "clean" or "evil" is important to keep in mind to understand how a heterogeneous drug culture fits into Harmony Park's politics

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[41] Jess Anderson, Interview with author, 20 Jan 2014.

[42] Tweaker is generally used as a term for someone exhibiting frantic and compulsive behavior as the result of being high on crystal meth or another stimulant. Chuck Hues, Inerview with author, 15 December, 2016.

of stewardship. “Party” drugs were generally discussed negatively, partly because they create aggressive highs and partly because they render the drug experience as a source of personal stimulation, rather than a social encounter or spiritual journey. Drug use as a form of pure feeling appears deviant because it is solipsistic, whereas drug use to achieve “enlightenment” is read as pure because it premises a forward movement, a progressive psychic shift.

This should be contextualized with reference to State curtailment of access to not only drugs themselves, but also information about them (which forced even moderate exposure to drug culture to become a clandestine affair), and consistent media portrayals of drug scenes as the site for deviance, the antithesis of “family values.” It *means something* to occupy a space wherein conversations that must remain hushed in daily life can be openly shared with even complete strangers—there is a particular joy that comes from openly passing a bowl around publicly, particularly in states that lack legal marijuana. In Minnesota and, I suspect, many other states with dedicated festival sites, ongoing battles with violent and debilitating forms of addiction must be put into context with both the war on drugs (which amped up enforcement, curtailed access to information, and radically trimmed employment options for users, heightening their sense of precarity) and ongoing public health crises related to addiction (especially methamphetamine crises in the early 2000s and today, and the ongoing opioid crisis that began in 2000). These crises disproportionately impacted rural, working class populations like the one that attends Harmony Park, and part of the association with certain drugs as

"clean" and others as "evil" surely hinges on the uneven forms of devastation these drugs wrought.[43]

The crisis created by Bella demonstrated Harmony Park's fragility, both in terms of its on-site social dynamics, as well as its legal status. Project Earth played a key role in rebranding Harmony Park, ensuring that it was seen as a family space, and a source of enlightenment, rather than a site for Wooks—not to mention urban party animals and profiteers. Wookiefoot transformed Project Earth into a benefit event for its self-managed non-profit "Be the Change Charities," which supports "third world relief efforts" and other charitable causes; they brought in famed physician, comedian, and social activist Patch Adams to give speeches and participate in the festivities; and they invited members of local Native American tribes to share their cultural history and promote activist causes.[44] All of these changes found their way into local newspapers,[45] and this projected outwardly the sense that Harmony Park was no longer a drug haven, but was imbued with a familial sense of belonging and an ethic of care for the grounds and people.

It is interesting to question the extent to which White privilege has allowed the site to thrive for over twenty years despite clearly being a space of drug culture—could

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[43] Shannon M. Monnatt and Khary K. Rigg, "The Opioid Crisis in Rural and Small Town America", *Carsey Research National Issue Brief*, University of New Hampshire Carsey School of Public Policy, 135 (Summer 2018).

[44] Be the Change Charities has raised over $500,00 for the organizations it sponsors, including the American Refugee Committee, Bumi Sehat Foundation (Indonesia), SOS Children's Villages, Rabondo Community Project (Kenya), the Peace Rehabilitation Center (Nepal), and many more. Its mission statement reads: "Be The Change is a collective of positive, conscious artists all sharing a basic belief in the good of humanity. Our Mission is two fold: One is simply to fund raise in support of international relief projects. The other is to connect the artists and our combined networks to broadcast crucial information about the issues effecting the planet and shine light on the needs of activists in the field. By combining all of our social networks reach we have a powerful voice." Be the Change Charities, Homepage, 2018, https://bethechangecharities.org/.

[45] N.A., "Harmony Park show has charitable aspect," *Albert Lea Tribune*, 26 May 2014; N.A., "Project Earth Raises over $50,000 for Charity," *Albert Lea Tribune*, 20 June, 2016.

such a place exist in the United States if its constituents were primarily people of color? At the same time, we should also consider the efforts of participants and organizers alike to make the park into a "reputable" space, toeing a line between two divergent ideals: first, to the Geneva community where education, ecological activism, and multiculturalism bear a redeeming moral valence; and second, to the event community that sees potential for chemical experimentation and partying to intersect with family-oriented modes of communal support. This is one dimension of a politics of stewardship—the careful cultivation of codes, ethics, and practices made in conjunction with the outside world. And these codes divide a White community into those who are "clean" and those who are abject.

A Walk Around the Park: Stewardship, Land, and White Autochthony

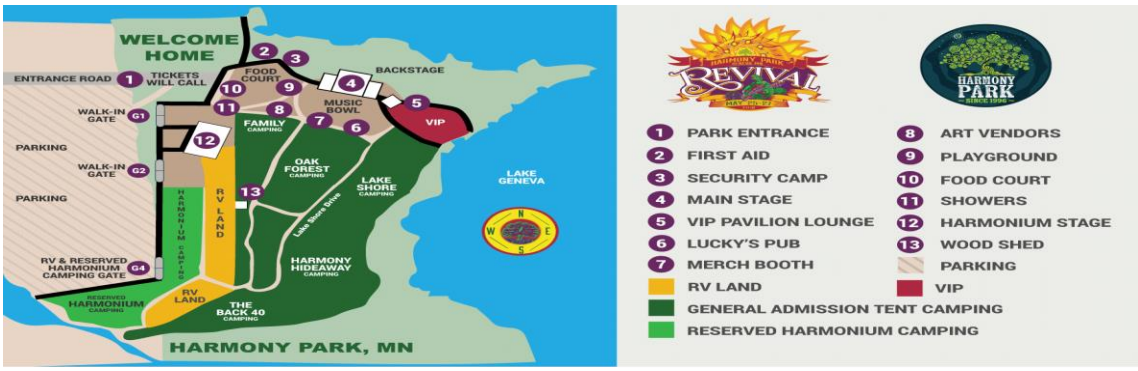

Figure 18: A Map of Harmony Park, 2018

This map of Harmony Park—a recent invention by MJG Productions, the current promoter for Revival—gives a sense of how the grounds are laid out, but it is more notable for what it *cannot* show: namely, the people and campsites that bring texture and excitement to the space in the form of enchanting performance. The history of Harmony Park I have just outlined is a history from above, one that thinks through changes to

Harmony Park by considering primarily the decisions of owners and organizers as they have responded to economic structures and legal demands. But how does a notion of stewardship emerge from within a community of participants themselves? What kinds of bottom-up practices materialize the dramaturgical cues provided by the rules, architecture, and promotional material for the grounds? And how do *they* articulate this racial complex I am describing in which variegated White bodies participate in a building a sense of community embedded in the land itself?

In this section, I explore these questions by taking us on a brief walk around the park, outlining common enchanting performances that might be thought of as focal points for Harmony Park community formation. This helps us understand how the park functions as a participatory space that comes to take on mythical qualities, forging a unique relationship between festivalgoers and the grounds that house them. The affective intensity of experiences with the people and land of Harmony Park creates ethical demands on participants, generating a sense of stakeholdership in the space and feelings of familial closeness with its inhabitants. This feeling of stakeholdership, a sense of investment in the site of Harmony Park, gets at what I mean by a politics of stewardship. How do people come to feel like stakeholders in a space—a grounds—that exist as both a stylized event-space (co-produced through participants' enchanting performance) *and* as land itself (which we should not forget is pregnant with a history of conquest)? How do such feelings of stakeholdership respond to feelings of social precarity, and how do they offer a critique of settler colonialism as an ideology while also *reifying* settler colonialism as a structure? How can we see a politics of stewardship operate within the time and space of an event?

The Giving Tree, Festival Fashion, and the Trope of Autochthony

When you arrive at Harmony Park, after setting up your tent and meeting your neighbors, the first destination for many people is the Giving Tree. Located in the Music Bowl near the sound stages, the Giving Tree is a land-based community tradition that plays off the Shel Silverstein children's book of the same name. The book tells the story about a matronly tree that continually sacrifices parts of itself (branches, leaves, trunk, etc.) to provide material support over the lifetime of a young boy. Highly gendered, the story is a bittersweet allegory for the mother-child relationship; while not exactly a Deleuzian Becoming-tree, the story suggests a deep-seated, familial bond between person and plant, human and nature. At Harmony Park, the Giving Tree allegory takes material form as a broad-based oak tree with sprawling branches, standing about fifty yards back from the side stage—right in view of vendors selling gemstones, flow toys, and artisanal clothing. Even newcomers will notice the tree immediately because its trunk is ringed with copious objects and articles of clothing strewn haphazardly about its base: tapestries, cotton pants with a small hole in the crotch, a box of old VHS tapes, coloring books and crayons, a box of condoms, tent stakes, a rain fly, a water cooler, a Scooby-Doo doll, cookbooks, pillow cushions, a set of candles, oranges, a jug of water. The list is as long as it is varied, with some items clearly meant for use in the festival, and others that might be taken outside and used in daily life. The Giving Tree is a site for participants to donate and collect items of their choosing: "Give what you can, take what you need," is the motto. No one is specifically placed in charge of the Giving Tree (though there is likely a designated person who collects or disposes of any items left over at the end of a festival),

but it has become an engrained practice that arises organically in any Harmony Park event.

The Giving Tree exemplifies an enchanting performance that routes community cooperation through a landmark; it is part of a coordinated assemblage of such performances that endow the *land* on which Harmony Park stands as a fantasy space capable of providing sustenance, inspiration, and aid. The festival event transforms the tree into a vessel that represents a *Tribe*, the Harmony Fam (this tribal element surely intersects with the totem pole constructed next to the main stage just a few paces away). The Giving Tree is a performance of institutional memory; it merges community identity (maintained within the aura of objects donated and acquired) with a local landmark. The objects, seeming to sprout naturally from the soil, allow the landscape to take on a heightened symbolic identity as the expression of a *people*. This is one way in which the land of Harmony Park (from Sullivan's careful curation of the pathways and maintenance of foliage to participants' attentiveness to throwing away their trash) takes on a greater significance, a sense of familial responsibility that extends to individuals and the environment—though, crucially, circumscribed within the space of the festival.

The Giving Tree materializes how festivals become sites for encountering land in its materiality, while also overcoding that land with a community-based mythology that emerges through the enchanting performance of participants. Other examples of this dynamic include lighting displays that use "tear drop" LED effects to make the oaks seem like they are crying, or the Gnome Garden, a small art installation composed of lawn gnomes and other ornaments placed at the base of a tree. The art of these enchanting performances comes from giving the impression that the community emerges naturally

from the land itself, but also that their labor can *heighten* its affective intensity—can *develop* its aesthetic richness. There is a neo-colonial element to this operation; it follows a Lockean mode of thought that views labor spent in the *cultivation* of land as conferring a sense of belonging and entitlement. Locke's theory of property (an influential 18th century treatise that helped justify the colonial project in Africa and North America) imagined development to occur through the labor of production; at Harmony Park, this production is not industrial, but perceptual. It is a clean, *affective* labor that appears to leave no physical blemish, but which nonetheless transforms how land is apprehended by participants.

In the case of the Giving Tree, the exchange of objects—which takes the form of a "gift," that appears to arise organically—augments a sense of *belonging to* the grounds. One does not watch people planting objects at the Giving Tree's base; rather, they return to the tree periodically, finding new objects that appear to sprout over the course of the festival. Traces of this seemingly *organic* quality attach to people as they adorn themselves with articles of clothing found at the tree (a purple cape; a pair of bright-orange pants; an oversized Mad Hatter hat) and move about the grounds. Donning a costume found at the Giving Tree is like adorning yourself in an artifact of the grounds themselves. It confers a sense of autochthony. The word "autochthon" refers to the ancient Greek concept of a people who have sprung from the earth itself; "autochthony", sometimes used interchangeably with "indigeneity," refers to the first human tribe to inhabit a possessed piece of land.

Figure 19: Commissioned painting for Dejahn Bell and Laura Cuccia-Nelson. Artist Chuck Hues. Harmony Park 2015. Photo provided with permission from owner.

At Harmony Park, a link between land and people is produced through *performance* as a kind of kinaesthetic/technological interaction. A trope of autochthony streams through Harmony Park's symbolic and discursive universe composed of tapestries, costumes, live painting, puppet shows, musical acts (roaming and staged), and other forms of enchanting performance that constantly pass one by. The "Music Garden," designation frames Harmony Park as a celebration of nature, even a *return to* nature. Constant references to the home, the tribe, the community, and the oaks produce a sense of natural flow between participants and the event grounds—a feeling that, regardless of where one was born, Harmony Park is the site to which one *belongs*. Live painters like Mary Thompson, Chuck Hues, and Tatiana Kitara—who work during music sets, and use the interactions between musical groups and audiences to guide their brushstrokes—often make landscapes featuring Harmony Park as the setting (sometimes using black light paint that glows bright during the festival's late nights to produce wondrous effects when combined with chemical influences). In commissioned paintings, members of the festive community will ask to be *painted into* the landscape.

This painting (Figure 19) by Chuck Hues, commissioned by Mary Thompson to celebrate the engagement of Harmony Park regulars Dejahn Bell and Laura Cuccia-Nelson, serves as a good example. The two figures (who are White people) are depicted with a drum and hula hoop (the patrons' preferred form of enchanting performance). Wafting mists emanate from them as they perform partly for one another, and partly (so it would seem) for the oak trees in the background and foreground. The painting materializes the affective quality produced from this performance through the wafting fumes that connect the two figures, and which leak into the park ether. This visual representation approximates how I suggest enchanting performance works, and one can imagine a multitude of similar connections that move laterally between participants and the environment in festive settings. The coloring of the figures is also significant. Their lower halves, painted green, echo the grassy clearing in the foreground, while their purple upper halves reflect the oak trees in the background. The composition of the park gets mirrored in the composition of their very bodies. They become children of the park, autochthons, identities forged through a connection to land itself. The painting also has an elemental quality, with the crouched figure on the left grounded with the earth, while the figure on the right, hair and body whipping with the wind, represents an air element. The painting's theme is a return to nature, a Becoming-elemental that takes place within the grounds of Harmony Park.

But we can also analyze this picture as more than a representation. It is a material element in a network of practices interlinking sonic, fleshy, atmospheric, technological, conceptual (i.e. "consciousness" or "psychic"), social, human, and non-human creativities of place. It is also an economic practice, a component of the enchantment economy—it

participates in the financial remuneration of a community artist, and also builds subcultural capital for the painting's subjects by marking them as authentic members of the Harmony Park "Tribe." What it lacks, however, is history. As the product of livepainting, the creation of the picture responds, in real-time to the present moment. It evacuates autochthony of its rootedness in the past; anyone with a commitment to the land (and money to pay for picture), can become a part of it—not just in the figural sense, but in the communicative circulation of such images as they become formative of the event community.

The visual economy at play in the painting gets repeated in myriad festival performance practices, aggregating into a trope of autochthony. This trope is deployed by organizers (through the language of the "tribal," for instance) and participants alike, creating a feedback loop that materializes in the time and space of the event. Thompson's painting shows one axis of how a politics of stewardship operates: as a foundational sense of identity that ties in directly with land itself, generating the belief that one's authentic self has an unmediated connection with specific grounds. An interlocking axis has to do with acknowledging the role of community (and, especially, the community's past), in *enhancing* those grounds through various modes of enchantment.

This trope of autochthony does not simply stem from idiosyncratic personal beliefs, it is implied through rituals/traditions that cohere the park space, that draw disparate individuals into a community. The Giving Tree, for instance, is a tradition rooted in land that also functions to bring together Harmony Park's fashion and material culture. As clothing items get discarded, picked up, and adapted, the tradition ensures

continuity between year-to-year festival iterations. It also produces a symbolic articulation of class politics via the cultivation of a threadbare, second-hand fashion style throughout Harmony Park that communicates—at least in the space of the festival—an earthy ethos that flies from the trappings of middle-class respectability; this clothing style also marks the class position of Harmony Park festivals vis-à-vis other Transformational Festivals. Rather than the flashy and expensive clothing, jewelry, and props worn at more expensive and profitable events, Giving Tree clothing is strewn about the grounds, battered by the elements, and trampled by the public. The result is that clothes collected there generally appear quite worn, and have a darkened, earthy complexion.

The items set down at the Giving Tree supply material for creative riffing. Costume becomes a collaborative body of expression, rather than an individuated choice. As one participant put it: "You feed off of someone else. […] You see someone with a weird hat and say, 'You know, what would be cool on that hat is if you have this. And if that hat had this.'"[46] Trading and combining objects in this way further builds a feedback loop that generates ties between people and place. The Giving Tree also inaugurates newcomers to the grounds, familiarizing them with the norms of park fashion and providing items that can allow them to look just like one of the regulars. Although vendors sell artisanal clothing at Harmony Park, an element of pride comes out when someone tells you they found their costume at the Giving Tree—they speak of it as if the Fates willed them together. Costume, then, participates in a subcultural logic of dress, but also gestures towards the metaphysical—one's ability to embrace the randomness of

[46] Jeremiah Silentwolf, Interview with Author, 2 Sep 2016.

operations of dress also expresses the degree to which they have embraced the "enlightenment" of Transformation.

The Giving Tree also intersects with the prevalence of barter and gift economies in Transformational Festivals as a larger formation; such performances of counter-capital processes, which appear to participants as embodied critiques to neoliberal styles of capital exchange, script a sense of subcultural alterity, a self-performance of marginality. In the case of Harmony Park, it gestures to the precarious class position of many participants, by making its festivals acceptable for those with limited means. It generates a spirit of neighborliness and camaraderie—a sense that the festival will provide, even if you are penniless upon arrival. Food, footwear, jackets, sleeping bags, air mattresses, and other essentials frequently appear, and other articles can be used for trade on site. The idea is that attending the festival (and feeling comfortable) should be as non-burdensome as possible, particularly for itinerant hippies on the festival circuit who hitch their way to different events and volunteer for free admission, as well as those who live parsimonious "off the grid" existences. By finding a way into the event, participants can also eat healthy meals at the Sweet Om Alabama Kitchen, a theme camp that travels to small festivals throughout the United States South and Midwest. Organizers donate tickets and firewood to a group of volunteers who runs Sweet Om, which sets up a kitchen area, tarps overhead for rain cover, and a series of hay bales around a fire pit. Meals are made throughout the day using food donated by participants (a continuation of the food donations that took place when Project Earth was first established). When music shuts down in the evening, the hay bales become a late-night stage for acoustic jams. Another theme camp, the Prayer Station, also serves free meals and snacks. Run by the

Minneapolis-based Christian church Street Level Ministry, participants ask for you to share a conversation (which usually involves some form of proselytizing) as you eat. "Mom," who camps near the Grundy's tie-dye store, provides coffee for a $1 suggested donation, and an ethic of sharing (whether it be food, sunscreen, or ganja) operates elsewhere.

In 2017, a sign appeared on the Giving Tree, reading: "Thank you for your contributions over the years. Unfortunately, all our foot traffic has damaged the root system. Please help us keep the tree healthy. Love, The Family." While a "leave no trace" ethic creates care and expectation among participants regarding their comportment in and with nature, the mass of participation could not help but physically damage the grounds. As a way to decrease foot traffic, a giving area was set up about twenty-five yards away from the Giving Tree, close enough to maintain a symbolic attachment to the landmark, but far enough to avoid further damaging it. Protecting the Giving Tree is one example of how a politics of stewardship arises at Harmony Park—protecting the grounds becomes a form of protecting the community.

The Point

While the Giving Tree is relatively obvious to anyone who attends Harmony Park, it usually takes some time for newcomers to hear about The Point—a special, idyllic woodland location not found on the park map. You reach The Point by finding a small trail that begins near the backstage area. During larger festivals like Revival or Shangri-la, The Point is inaccessible to those without VIP or Artist status, but at smaller events, like Project Earth, all are welcome to the path—though bright orange fencing nearby often deters unwitting participants from spotting the trail, ensuring that the location

remains a secret known only to Harmony Park regulars. The pathway leads to a series of picturesque alcoves amid the thicket along Lake Geneva, still in ear shot of the music stages. Eventually, participants pass by the fabled Marking Tree, which curves across a narrowing dirt path. The brush thickens, and the ground grows more uneven—a wrong step might make you trip into the marshy waters on either side. Sometimes a daring hermit will pitch his or her tent right along the path, far from the noisy foot traffic elsewhere on the grounds. Disregard the "Danger" sign posted to a fallen tree that you must climb over, and you will eventually find your way to a peninsular clearing where a thick, sprawling oak stands just at the foot of the lake. The Point is a strikingly beautiful area, and it is far enough from the music to take in the sounds of insects, birds, and lapping lake waters (though you can usually still hear some bass thumps as well). The safely climbable tree offers a grand view of Lake Geneva, particularly during sunrise and sunset. "But don't swim in the lake," people warn, "it's full of farm runoff."

Over the years The Point has become a public site for quiet meditation, improvised rituals, and jam sessions with strangers. Participants often will take a single trip each festival to "pay their respects." Visiting The Point is a devotional practice that verges on anthropomorphizing the grounds themselves. You might wind up with a few minutes to yourself, or you might wander into a ceremony or collective performance: once, I encountered a group of about eight men and women chanting, one of them wafting burning sage towards each new arrival, others hanging from the tree limbs. The chant—which reminded me a bit of indigenous and creole hymns (like "Kumbaya") that funneled into folk and campfire culture: "Joy-ful Joy-ful See-You-Aye, See-You-Aye-Ah-Tee" they would repeat while someone rhythmically smacked a tambourine. With the

completion of each verse, someone would shout out a new word ("Art," "Wookie," "Holy," etc.), which would then get inserted into the next verse. Someone passed around a homemade granola mixture in a clear plastic bag; another practiced yoga on a rock overlooking the lake.

The Point, like the Giving Tree, shows how the land of Harmony Park becomes pregnant with meanings for participants. WJT Mitchell has convincingly argued for the ability of landscape to become "a potent, ideological representation that serves to naturalize power relations and erase history and legibility." Mitchell suggests that *apprehensions* of landscape—how we encounter it in a contemporary setting—have considerable power to mobilize political passions, but to do so by operating "as a place of amnesia and erasure, a strategic site for burying the past and veiling history with 'natural beauty.'"[47] In other words, while landscape always has a deep history, its refraction during the live moment of encounter has a way of overwriting the deeper history of a place, even as a sense of the past helps generate its affective power. In the case of festivals, this veiling takes place through invented meanings produced within the community imaginary, which attach to and become indistinguishable from the landscape. This operation is not pulverizing, but appropriating; it funnels cultural and natural elements into a new belief structure (one circumscribed by the dramaturgical cues that frame the festival). What is most important to participants in this scenario is the encounter, the engagement with a live ritual in a pristine natural setting. The Marking Tree near The Point, serves as a good example: participants I spoke with believed the tree to varyingly mark holy grounds, hunting grounds, or a river crossing. Its exact meaning,

[47] WJT Mitchell, "Holy Landscape: Israel, Palestine, and the American Wilderness," *Critical Inquiry*, 26.2 (Winter, 2000), 194-195.

though, is beside the point. The tree solemnizes The Point by serving as a *reminder* of indigenous heritage. By presencing the past, the Marking Tree comes to signify the site's inherent power. Rituals that take place there, especially those that utilize indigenous cultural material (in felicitous or infelicitous forms), draw from an historical sense of autochthony (Native Americans) to develop more generalized and mobile sense of autochthony where a fundamental attachment to land gets produced through alternative thinking.

One interesting practice I noticed around The Point is that participants maintain a rigorous ethic of picking up any trash nearby, much more so than elsewhere on the grounds. Not the best kept of secrets, the Point sees a good deal of foot traffic during a festival, but the grounds remain somewhat pristine. When participants do spot an errant piece of trash, they promptly pick it up—perhaps placing it in a small leather pouch made specifically for holding small pieces of trash and cigarette butts found on the grounds of festivals. Of course, since this errant trash had to arrive from somewhere, not *all* participants observe this custom, which becomes an intense point of division in the community. Frequently, I encountered trash politics as an expression of the politics of stewardship; participants would articulate social divisions between good stewards (who knew to pick their trash up), and trash droppers (who were usually characterized as problematic newcomers to the space). This division tracked in interesting and sometimes contradicting ways across poles of Whiteness; Wooks, for instance, are often characterized as trash droppers par excellence, while the "Leave no trace" ethos of Transformational Festivals were seen as a more progressive sensibility. It is interesting that concerns over localized trash politics carry such weight, especially considering the

carbon footprint caused by numerous generators, automobiles, and electric service required to make the festival run.

Fire Camp

As the final notes of the headliner's last encore ring out, much of the crowd is already transitioning towards Fire Camp, located at the one o'clock position in the loop. Harmony Park's modest means cannot match the production elements of larger festivals, or even small but expensive "boutique" festivals; but its fire spinners attempt to compensate for the lack of an elaborate all-night party (and the rowdiness and dangerous chemical behavior that sometimes go hand-in-hand) with entrancing displays of corporeal virtuosity. Fire Camp is relatively quiet, but for the community's many night owls, it is the high point of every event—far more important than the musical acts. Whether spinners spin silently with a solemn, focused gaze, or integrate elements of showmanship and theatricality, fire performance constitutes a source of contemporary ritual that derives its power from human activity that adds a layer of meaning to the park landscape. The light of the flames bouncing off the trees and bodies creates an effect that builds a sense of intimacy and magic for those present.

Promoters delegate the operation of Fire Camp to a person or group, providing a number of free tickets and preferred camping space. Other members of the community, particularly those interested in spinning, are expected to bring donations of fuel. Fire Camp, in turn, constructs a spinning area, conducts safety inspections of props, runs safety meetings, appoints spotters to put out uncontrollable flames, and, of course, put on an exceptional spinning display. It is considered an honor to be selected to run Fire Camp, one that requires not only a demonstration of spinning prowess, but also faith in

the group's responsibility and organizing capacity. As such, Fire Camp is a site of surrogation in Harmony Park. Camp organizers change from year to year, as do the feel of the Fire circle and the sense of what it means to perform at Harmony Park. Because Fire Camp is such an important part of the festival experience, the question of who will be selected to organize it becomes a frequent point of community tension.

The previous Fire Camp coordinators, who performed through 2017, crafted a goofy atmosphere based on sarcastic banter and braggadocio showmanship. It was their fire circle, they knew their skills were top-notch, and they wanted the community to know it too. Sometimes performers interspersed vaudevillian shtick into their routines. Jack Austin, for instance, used to dress in a kind of Robin Hood garb and tiptoe along the edge of the fire circle holding a torch in one hand and a paraffin jug in the other, periodically pausing to take a swig of the fuel, turning away from the audience just feet away, and blowing a large fireball. Another fire blower used go cross-eyed and pretend to take deep, long gulps from the paraffin jug. "Don't you swallow that shit!" a sarcastic voice from the peanut gallery would sound out—the staged antics were accompanied by a repartee between those in the Fire Circle and those in the audience. When a spinner accidentally lost hold of his poi, sending it flying towards the crowd, someone shouted out "This is why we can't have nice things!" When someone would get caught up doing the same move over and over, someone would yell "This thing again!... Well, it's cool 'cause it's on fire." Fire Camp was defined by this meta-conversation between performers, spotters, and audience members, which involved short, interspersed comments shouted out publicly.

One memorable way this manifested was through a recurring shtick involving Jack, a Black man who lists his occupation as "professional dragon" on social media. Whenever Jack occupied the fire circle, someone from the audience would periodically shout out, "Hey, Mr. White?" to which Jack would respond, "Yes, Mr. Black?" like the setup for a joke in an old vaudeville routine. The audience member would come up with some random comment, to which Jack was expected to make a witty retort. This occurred over and over again—at least ten times in one night of spinning—becoming a familiar bit. The joke played ironically off of Jack's being one of few people of color at Harmony Park, and one of a very few heavily involved in the fire spinning community. It self-reflexively called attention to the dominance of Whiteness at the park but it also used humor to undercut the significance of that identity position as a hard boundary that might prevent participants from interpersonal connection. By attaching the labels of "White" and "Black" to bodies that reflected the opposite, the routine playfully called attention to race as a mobile and arbitrary construct—at least this is how I read the live speech-event. As a member of Fire Camp, Jack clearly had a place of importance within the Harmony Fam; but by incessantly marking his racial difference, participants articulated a racialized form of connection that underlay a mode of kinship apparently based more on aesthetics than blood or ideology. "Familial" traditions, formed through the labor of performance, could be *discovered* and passed on to succeeding generations of festivalgoers. Fire performance is one way in which these acts of transfer occurred. Whenever a child (perhaps as young as six) lit up for the very first time, it was an occasion that created no end to whooping and hollering from the audience. Likewise, it was a rite of passage for spinners to be the subject of playful razzing by the Fire Camp organizers, who would

shout things like “You did that move already” or “Hey, that staff’s bigger than he is!” The recurrent presence of fire spinning at Harmony Park is an exercise in maintaining tradition—of inspiring, inaugurating, training, and performing so that a core ritualistic element remains even as new bodies transfer in and out.

In 2018, Fire Camp switched organizers, a change made by Wookiefoot after complaints from the community that the fire circle no longer felt inclusive. Perhaps the group’s playful razzing and sarcastic condescension went too far at some point. One incident I remember came when Jeremiah, a longtime attendee, accidentally sent his rope dart soaring into the crowd (a dangerous mistake, no doubt, but not something unheard of for the fire circle). One of the spotters jumped up from his seat and got in Jeremiah’s face, checking to see if he was high on something—technically, you are supposed to be stone-cold sober when you spin in the fire circle, but, generally, some alcohol, marijuana, or LSD tend to be part of the mix. Jeremiah, visibly shaken by the confrontation, apologized profusely and claimed he would never enter the fire circle while tripping. At this point, a boy who looked to be about fifteen years old walked into the circle, lit his staff, and said: “Leave him alone! He said he was sorry!” before proceeding to spin an incredible routine. It felt like a touching display of courage from a youth standing up to the spotter’s masculine bravado in defense of kind old man who had simply made a mistake. This incident demonstrates how the Fire Circle can serve to mediate clean and abject White bodies. Jeremiah quickly went from being in a position of honor by spinning fire, to being a pariah that could be publicly dressed down. Part of the responsibility of Fire Camp includes choosing who is worthy of entrance, and perhaps the way in which

those boundaries were policed had to do with why a new group was chosen to take over the camp.

The ending of one group's tenure as head of Fire Camp prompted a process of surrogation in which a new Fire Camp was chosen. In 2018, the fire circle moved about fifty yards from its previous spot. The new organizers created a new format for the fire circle: The previous Fire Camp had little by way of musical accompaniment, save a giant wooden piano that would sometimes play little ditties which could barely be heard over the camp banter; in contrast, the 2018 fire circle featured almost no talking by camp organizers besides a declaration each night that the circle was now open to the public. Instead, two men provided a unique musical backdrop: one played a guitar and pan flute, while another accompanied with an adjustable didgeridoo that could lay down bass lines. The duo's playing provided a rhythmic background that overlaid the spinning, but it was also an impressive feat of stamina unto itself, with over two hours of continuous musical improvisation. The result was a Fire Circle that felt more somber and pastoral, and which commanded more rapt attention. The pan flute in particular created playful soundscapes that harkened to a pagan woodland idyll, and this was augmented by costuming and makeup worn by some performers, including fairy wings. Furthermore, the new Fire Camp was organized by several women and felt (to me anyway) like a decidedly less masculine space—the idea seemed to be to bring greater focus to displays of skill, rather than to an ongoing meta-conversation between a few individuals who felt confident enough to shout over the crowd.

The dueling Fire Camps, each characterized by a distinctive approach to spatial aesthetics and community practice illustrate the politics of stewardship. Such politics play

out both within the performance event of the Fire Circle, but also in the durational transition between organizers and spatial repertoires; the resulting social dynamics extend beyond the Fire Circle to permeate the entire Harmony Park space.

Memories of Drumming

Since 2014, one of Project Earth's featured activities has been a Lakota drumming ceremony that takes place on the festival's final day in the central Music Bowl. Nearby sound stages shut down during this time to help bring focus to the event, though, notably, vending and side activities continue. The ceremony is led by Galen Drapeau, a Yankton Sioux medicine man who had a longstanding relationship with Wookiefoot (the band attended sun dances with his family). Wookiefoot repeatedly invited Drapeau to Project Earth, and he finally accepted the invitation after lobbying from his son, Glen (aka "Dragonfly"), who had become a Harmony Park regular: "My dad *loved it*. […] I think he felt that because this is my place of release, and letting go, and being myself, I felt like he finally had a chance to do that with himself." Drapeau and several Lakota friends were given free tickets to the festival as compensation for providing the drumming ceremony, and also received gifts from the park community. As Dragonfly related it, Galen's interest in conducting the ceremony relied on a sense of cross-cultural possibility, a faith that the ceremony would be given due respect by event organizers, and generously received by participants:

> A lot of people had brought gifts and offerings, and my dad makes a point to connect to those people. After I talked to him about it, he gets it. He understands why this exists. I just want to mention that from the past ceremonies he told Wookiefoot 'this is a prophecy, you guys are doing amazing things here and what you are doing is powerful and for the

> people' so, he's like 'it's gonna continue to happen and continue to grow and continue to thrive,' so it's like a prophecy that this place exists.[48]

But despite this optimism, the festival setting created a complicated dynamic for encountering Drapeau's drumming ceremony, one which relates to the festival's inherent multi-vocality. The ceremony took place in the mid-afternoon in the most central location available; even so, it was attended by only about 150 participants, out of the 1200+ present. Presumably, most attendees remained at their campsites, rather than fry in the hot sun, and other activities (IllumiKnation Station classes, Om dome sound sets, organized hide and seek for kids) continued unabated. By no means was witnessing the ceremony mandatory; in fact, one might consider that its very status as just one of many similar activities makes for precisely the kind of weak cultural investments that many critique about festival culture—organizers receive cultural capital by holding the ceremony (which should also be put into context with Wookiefoot's charitable and political investments around issues of indigenous rights, especially surrounding the resistance at Standing Rock), but the time slot of the activity ensures that it will not detract from the party atmosphere that takes over later in the evening. The ceremony is featured, but it still must compete with the myriad other draws on participant attention.

Another story helps reinforces this way in which indigenous rituals and people get deployed as an event activity indistinguishable from other entertainment apparatuses around the festival: At Project Earth in 2016, a woman walked around all day selling red clown noses for two dollars apiece to raise money for a non-profit group called the Red

[48] Glen Drapeau (aka "Dragonfly"), Interview with author, 17 June 2016.

Nose Revolution[49] (which partners with Wookiefoot's own "Be the Change Charities" and the Gesundheit Institute run by Dr. Patch Adams). She was trying to raise enough money to move to Brazil and work in hospitals there cheering up sick, disadvantaged children. I saw her numerous times at the festival, and she was always doing some gimmick to make a sale—one of her favorite conversation-starting grifts was to put a foul-smelling particle on her index finger, and then walk up to people and get them to take a whiff (often affecting a hammy Brooklyn accent: "Wanna' smell my finga'?"). During the drumming ceremony, amidst the focused call-and-responses by the Lakota participants, I could hear her working her way around the crowd gathered to observe: "Hey, wanna' smell my finga'?" For many participants, including many families with children, the drumming ceremony was a time for reverence and keen observation (it was not so far off from when my own parents would take me to city-sponsored multicultural exhibitions featuring native cultural expositions when I was younger); yet, for this woman, the gathering was an opportunity for her to make money for her own venture. Perhaps the ceremony meant something to her as well, but it had clearly shifted into the background.

This ambivalent dynamic is one of the central complications to the politics of Whiteness as they operate at Harmony Park and throughout much of festival culture. The numerous cultural exhibitions and workshops create opportunities for developing cross-cultural connections, and even radical consciousness-raising; at the same time, like all

[49] "The Red Nose Revolution is a community-driven movement that is empowered by fearlessly playing and being silly whilst living life within very serious world; All of the proceeds from the sales of our noses and other clown SWAG is, in turn, matched by Be The Change Charities – which is then distributed for global humanitarian clowning ventures with Dr. Patch Adams of the Gesundheit Institute." Homepage, "Red Nose Revolution," *Paper Revolution*, 2018, *https://www.paperrevolution.org/red-nose-revolution/*.

festival activities, they are *optional* entertainment commodities that festivalgoers are positioned to consume based upon preference, desire, and momentum. Many approach these ceremonies with a sense of reverence, while many others conspicuously ignore protocols of decorum. It is easy to see how such ceremonies can serve contradictory purposes: on the one hand they attempt to build cross-cultural familiarity (between indigenous people whose claim to the land is heritage-based, and festivalgoers whose claim is aesthetic and ideological) and solidarity around certain issues that resonate with a struggle cosmology that takes place within Whiteness itself; on the other, they serve as empty markers of *cultural stuff* that simply further endow the park with a tribal *feel*. For some participants, the drumming ceremony participated in an operation that bell hooks has labeled "eating the other," a way of absorbing some essence from a marginalized group in the service of assuaging feelings of guilt, deprivation, and lack that "assault the psyches of radical white youth who choose to be disloyal to western civilization."[50]

Wookiefoot's own cultural capital is augmented by the presence of the drumming ceremony, as well as the presence of indigenous bodies. However, just as Bart seemed suspicious that Mark was using the ritual guise of the "opening ceremony" to mask a profit grab, we might wonder to what extent this drumming ceremony operates as a mode of profitability for Wookiefoot. During the last Project Earth, for instance, just as the big crowds began to gather for the evening headliners on the final night, Wookiefoot ran a video for "Be the Change Charities," their 501(c)(3), that began with an extended highlighting of the Keystone Pipeline protest, and interviews with protesters and tribal

[50] bell hooks, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance," in *Eating Culture*, eds. Ron Scapp and Brian Seitz, Albany: State University of New York Press (1998), 186.

members. A portion of the profits from Project Earth goes directly to Be the Change, and indigenous causes are often the recipients of this money. This is also part of a wider shift in which we see music festivals shift to the title of "Arts and Cultural" festivals. This might possibly be a way of avoiding regulation and negative stereotypes of music festivals, or as a way of drawing grant money that must be earmarked for cultural activities.

The festival setting features an abundance of images, symbols, activities, sounds, and ideas, which are encountered as objects of fascination, passing charms, or chemically-induced fetishes, *in addition* to also being considerately-engaged cultural practices. And the question is what does this all add up to? On the one hand we might look at the festival as a hypermarket of cultural commodification—where "authentic" cultural practices get churned into an array of "culture stuff" that operates according to the needs of the participant. Elements from the drumming ceremony (the beats, the chants, the symbols deployed) carry into the festival ether and attach to the space of Harmony Park. They intersect with other indigenous presences on site: the totem pole, the marking tree, IllumiKnation Station workshops, dreamcatchers, and random incantations. These elements combine to depict the site as a space for the recuperation of indigeneity—but the operative concept of indigeneity at work here relates not to ethnic heritage, but to a mode of thinking and critical sensibility that can arise from any body.

Conclusion

This history of Harmony Park and selective explication of its festivalgoing practices calls our attention to the importance of such spaces in building and managing a

grounds-based event community. This is a political terrain, and as such, festivals are distinct in several ways: 1) they demonstrate continuity not in terms of every day practice, but via periodic reiterations of a particular social field that subtly shifts with each occurrence. Each iteration of a festival—or, say, each trip to Harmony Park over the course of a summer—performs the evolution of its social world: the ethic of community formation is crossed by economic imperatives and status differentiations that build from stylistic choices, including such varied axes like trash politics, ritual choices, and social traditions; over time, though, these harden into aesthetic regimes that reward certain individuals according to shifting determinations of taste and judgment. These shifting tastes are subtly, and often not-so-subtly racialized; they articulate divisions within Whiteness itself, while also appropriating a discourse of autochthony in the service of heightening these divisions by producing clean "enlightened" bodies, and abject Wooks. 2) Festivals are festive—they insist upon *successfully* negotiating political friction (producing "good vibes"), rather than allowing differences to hamper an enjoyable event. They are satellite public spheres, but unlike traditional public spheres that emphasize legible deliberation and debate, they rely on discourse that happens *in media res*—political commitments get expressed implicitly, through the ambits of participants' own artistic practices or forms of communal giving. 3) Festivals are always *localized*. They grapple with the authorities, economic structure, demography, and personalities of their location in order to forge their particular community. All festivals speak *vernacular* languages related to a particular scene, with its own idiosyncrasies and rules, to which one must acclimate over time. In some instances this locality is sometimes disavowed or struggled against—we can see this in Harmony Park's tension with Geneva, and we will

see it again in the next chapter, when I discuss the tourism-oriented Envision festival as it relates to its host Costa Rican community.

An invaluable source of information for this study was Timothy Paul Smith, aka "Timmy the Freak," aka "Timmy Freaksmith," an unofficial documentarian who has been part of Harmony Park since the beginnings of Project Earth. For over twenty years, Timmy self-published a subcultural 'zine entitled *The Weekly Freak*, which tracked Minnesota's jam band scene and budding festival culture. "Freaksmith": a worker skilled in the forging of freakiness. The name foregrounds the *labor* of building a scene, a labor which stretches from aesthetics, to thought, to material action in time and space. *The Weekly Freak* was never distributed in a digital format so that it retained its aura as an object, but its circulation at Harmony Park events and other hippie gatherings in the Minneapolis area alludes to the notion of care and sustainability related to the park—a politics of stewardship.

At Harmony Park, stewardship stems from a sense of autochthony. White populations find their *home* and their *tribe* at events, and these feelings of attachment should be understood as part of an ongoing project of reinforcing Americans' theocratic ties to colonized lands. The Harmony Park Fam becomes inaugurated into what Michel Maffesoli calls the "laws of the milieu," a term he uses to discuss the ethico-aesthetic dispensations that elicit strict conformity amongst members of a tight-knit group. In contrast to scholars of subculture like Sarah Thornton or Dick Hebdige, who examine how niche communities tend to define themselves negatively, as a reaction to a stable center, Maffesoli outlines a form of groupism in which members "attempt above all to

serve the interests of the group, instead of simply taking refuge there."[51] In this formulation, there is "a mythic function which runs through the whole of social life [wherein] a political event or harmless, trivial fact, the life of a star or a local guru, can all take on mythical proportions."[52] What gains mythical status at events like Project Earth are the grounds of Harmony Park itself, and the community—whose festival activity *heightens* the beauty of an already beautiful space—comes to be seen as precisely those who belong to those grounds.

This sense of belonging should be put into conversation with the notion of how festival behavior mediates racial identity. As we saw in the stereotype of the Wook, ideas of humanity and inhumanity get played out through the way people conduct themselves at events. It is true that festival culture in general is very White, with places like Harmony Park being more so demographically than other grounds throughout the country. However, it is also important to texture our thinking around Whiteness, by understanding how the identity position operates as a mobile and variegated concept. Festival communities, especially those with a strong working class and rural background like that of Harmony Park, are frequently depicted by authorities, media, and the general population as *those people*; the concept of transformation would seem to suggest overcoming toxic Whitenesses located either as unconscious members of a larger consumer culture, or solipsistic members within the community that drag festivals towards a grungier version of that same consumer culture via unfettered drug use. The politics of stewardship, in contrast, represent festival behavior that follows a carefully

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[51] Michel Maffesoli, *The Time of Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society*, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Ltd. (2014), 15.
[52] Ibid., 26.

crafted code, one with explicitly activist principles (around environmentalism, indigenous rights, police injustice, and racialized violence) as well as more implicit notions for how to conduct one's self in a right relationship with his environment and Tribe.

In some ways, Harmony Park is an odd site to use as a case study on the transformational festival movement—an odd Tribe. For one thing, EDM is not a preferred music choice. In fact, the era when that music genre was most prominent (during Bella), was looked upon as the park's worst days. While Visionary Art, New Paradigm workshop curricula, and general New Age aesthetics are present, they evolved alongside the "hillbilly" aesthetics of agricultural communities that did the initial work of founding and developing the Harmony Fam. Project Earth was included in Jeet-Kei Leung's early mapping of the transformational festival scene, but has disappeared from that conversation as the moniker "transformational festival" has come to describe a tier of expensive events primarily on the West Coast and in international destinations. Harmony Park offers something of a counter-example to these events, which command high production values, an extensive media presence, and a moneyed, cosmopolitan constituency. It sustains itself not through wide publicization and maximum spectacular firepower, but from the cultivation of ethics that build deep-seated ties to an event grounds meant to build and sustain a community over the long duration. Project Earth is an especially potent example of this, since it is a fundamentally generational affair, a festival "for the kids."

These conclusions should be kept in mind and read alongside the following chapter on the Envision "destination festival" in Costa Rica. By placing these two sites in conversation, I anchor two divergent forms of festivalgoing today. It is important to note

that, while I do characterize Envision and the festivals of Harmony Park to be radically different from one another in terms of class, demography, and ethical horizons, I do not suggest that a politics of stewardship is absent from the former. However, I do call attention to the strong difference in community dynamics that emerge when a festival identifies itself as a *tourist* event, rather than a part of an ongoing local scene. Festivals like Envision have the resources to gain notoriety in ways that Harmony Park does not, and it is easy to see these larger, more popular, more diverse, more cosmopolitan, more outwardly politically "conscious" events as *developed* versions of local scenes that appear underdeveloped or even backwards. However, local scenes and communities (like the Harmony Fam) not only play crucial roles as sources of inspiration for these premiere events, but demonstrate how festivals can function as ongoing sites of survival for individuals and the traditions that sustain them.

CHAPTER FOUR

Seeking "Pura Vida" at Costa Rica's Envision: Destination Festivals and the Commodification of Place

> Exoticism is a way of establishing order in an unknown world through fantasy; a daydream guided by pleasurable self-reassurance and expansionism. It is the seemingly harmless side of exploitation, cloaked as it is in playfulness and delirium; a legitimate practice of discrimination, where otherwise secret fantasies can be shared aloud.
> - Marta Savigliano, *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion*[1]

> *[I]*f you fill your heart with this feeling....fill your wings with the winds of this magic...you may even take flight
> - "The Pura Vida Effect," Envision Promotional Video

The ease, speed, and relatively low cost of international travel in wealthy countries, coupled with the selective easing of global financial regulations through neoliberal policy has propelled the rise of a full-functioning global festival ecosystem, with transnational exchange constantly creating new markets and event models.[2] Transformational Festivals exist in Africa (Afrikaburn, Groovy Troopers, Earthdance), Australia (Rainbow Serpent, Maitreya Festival), South America (Cosmic Convergence, Universe Parellelo), Asia (Universal Religion) and Central America (Ometeotl, Geoparadise) in addition to the myriad US, European, and Australian examples that have received the greatest share of publicity. Some of these events emerged from tight-knit communities and grew large enough to gain international visibility, all while organizers attempted to maintain tight control over their image in order to preserve local customs and values. Others were devised through complex international partnerships between production companies, musicians and labels, media platforms, and politicians; they

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[1] Marta Savigliano, *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion*, Boulder: Westview Press (1995), 165.
[2] Nicola Frost, "Anthropology and Festivals: Festival Ecologies", *Ethnos*, 81.4 (2016); Roxanne Robinson, "No Spectators!: The art of participation, from Burning Man to Boutique festivals in Britain," in *The Pop Festival: History, Music, Media, Culture*, ed. George McKay, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

coordinate material resources, publicity, and labor to build immersive events aimed at attracting participants from beyond national borders. Such events are grounded in the geography and demography of a particular locale, but are also shaped by cross-currents of people, images, finance, technology, and repertoire.

These events are called "destination festivals," so named because they provide an anchor for travel and tourist experiences by positioning themselves as idealized expressions of their locale. Destinations, as Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has pointed out, get produced through operations that stage a particular location as itself, giving it a sense of "hereness," a unique identity that is also a consumable commodity.[3] Destination festivals are transnational in character, with organizers self-consciously cultivating multicultural, cosmopolitan, and moneyed constituencies that must cross borders in order to attend. Organizers of such events profit not only from participants' consumption of a geographic locale, but also by creating a *value-added experience of place* through propagating enchanting performances that get entangled in these broader material and cultural flows. Destination festivals are entrenched in the laws, customs, and economy of a particular country, but they are also enabled by supranational logics of governance associated with neoliberalism, including the free movement of people and goods, and the freedom to acquire property across national boundaries.[4] In contrast to Harmony Park's politics of stewardship, which expresses itself through a poetics of *emplacement* (through the performative reification of home, community, and tradition), destination festivals

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[3] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*, Berkeley: University of California Press (1998).

[4] David M. Kotz, "Globalization and Neoliberalism," *Rethinking Marxism*, 12 (Summer 2002), 64.

emphasize movement, crossing thresholds, and "jumping scales."[5] Anthony D'Andrea and Graham St. John have argued that transnational festivals and raves deploy a poetics of nomadism, Deleuze and Guattari's term for fugitive ways of life predicated on continuous movement and change, and which stand in stark contrast to systems of organization and the "State."[6] However, I suggest that this nomadism functions more as a form of social currency and art direction than an actual flight from structures of power. To participants, destination festivals attest to the flattening of global space, the surmountability of difference, and the synergy of cultural interconnectedness—even as their emplacement within existing national borders reinforces power and privilege based on attendees' geopolitical positionalities. Transformational Festivals that are also destination events attempt to model an aspirational form of global community, where a unified aesthetic field allows people to overcome differences in national culture, race, or language; local people and customs appear to seamlessly merge with a global event formation, providing travelers with safely familiar experiences that nonetheless retain an aura of novelty and experiential uniqueness.

The interdisciplinary field of critical inquiry known as "transnationalism" allows us to visualize and texture how power operates in the context of destination festivals by using a spatial lens that, as Margaret Rogers puts it, "clarif[ies] the emerging, diffuse, and

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[5] Cindi Katz, "On the grounds of globalization: a topography for feminist political engagement," *Signs* 26 (2001), 1231.

[6] Anthony D'Andrea, *Global Nomads: Techno and New Age as Transnational Countercultures in Ibiza and Goa, (*Routledge, 2007); Graham St. John, "Introduction," In *The Local Scenes and Global Cultures of Psytrance*, Graham St. John Ed., (London: Routledge, 2011); Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia: A Thousand Plateaus*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (1980 [1987]), 380.

abstract processes that are wrought by globalization."[7] Transnationalism resists binaries that pose the local as the paradigmatic site of opposition to the global; it sees globalization as neither a pulverizing/homogenizing cultural force (e.g. "Americanization" or "Disneyification"), nor as a fully deterritorialized sensibility (e.g. Deleuze and Guattari's nomadism, or neoliberalism), but as a diverse and contingent process that operates according to the tensive interplay of legal, cultural, and material differences between places and cultures as they play out in time and space. Aihwa Ong's work in particular has troubled the discursive tendency to characterize the encounter between local cultures and global forces through an oppositional lens predicated on victims and perpetrators, resistance and complicity; instead, she characterizes the local context as a site where global forces get reinterpreted and acquire new meanings.[8] Instead of exposing a unidirectional transaction between local victims and international perpetrators—identity categories often painted in broad strokes—transnationalism prioritizes motility, transformation, and space-making to track "how practices work across, and produce different geographies simultaneously."[9] It eschews the notion of unstructured flows or definite breaks between the territorial and deterritorial, and instead considers the frictions between mobile people/capital/media/technology and the enduring rigidity of nation-states—the tensions between movement and social ordering.[10]

Such tensions *produce* destination festivals, and suggest that the dynamics of event spaces—physically circumscribed though they may be—create ripple effects that

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[7] Amanda Rogers, *Performing Asian Transnationalisms: Theatre, Identity, and the Geographies of Performance*, New York: Routledge (2015), 9.
[8] Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality*, Durham: Duke University Press (1999).
[9] Rogers, *Performing Asian Transnationalisms*, 9.
[10] Ong, *Flexible Citizenship*, 16.

have short- and long-term impacts on host sites and countries. Often taking the form of multi-million dollar events that involve massive investment, employment, commerce, and political negotiation, festivals are becoming increasingly important to local and regional branding initiatives, national tourism campaigns, and global economic development policies.[11] This has already been particularly well documented in European and Australian contexts, and I have elsewhere argued that festivals have become important (if fraught) objects of policy in South Africa.[12] Perhaps this trend owes to the festival's particular aptness for aestheticizing locations, since they involve materializing a temporary, imagined architectural zone nestled within a specific geographic environment. Destination festivals not only create real, navigable places within particular locations, they also perform the *emplacement* of the people who live in these locations by staging a local culture for consumption on a networked, global scene.

In the case of Transformational Festivals, this marketization of culture takes place under the guise of "transformative" exchange, an activation of a progressive, fugitive sensibility that seeks lines of flight from modernity, the nation-state, and capitalism—even as festivalgoers participate in events that are enabled by these very forces. This happens through immersive experiences that allow participants to corporeally encounter other cultures while also participating in collective artistic production and meaningful social interactions that render culture itself as an acquirable commodity (regardless of

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[11] See, for example, South Africa's *Mzansi Golden Economy Strategy*, work from the South African Cultural Observatory (SACO), or an Arts and Humanities Research Council Literature Review on "The Impact of British Music Festivals," which all make a case for festivals to be a major point of investment for national and regional cultural bodies. Department of Arts and Culture, *Mzansi Golden Economy (MGE) Guidelines: Criteria, Eligibility, Processes and Systems*, Republic of South Africa, Version 1.0.5 (2016/2017); Emma Webster and George McKay, "From Glyndebourne to Glastonbury: The Impact of British Music Festivals," *Arts and Humanties Research Council*, 2016.

[12] Bryan Schmidt, "Fault Lines Racial and Aesthetic: The National Arts Festival at Grahamstown," *Theatre Research International*, 44.1 (2019), pp. 318-337.

their position in global material and cultural hierarchies). Tourists from wealthy countries travel to destination festivals to confront ways of being and knowing that appear as lines of flight from quotidian rationality—the pure, the wild, the mysterious, that unfulfillable Desire, what Marta Savigliano terms "Passion."[13] Through their emphasis on sustainability, community involvement, and artistic co-creation, Transformational Festivals depict culture as an inexhaustible and transferable resource that can be safely acquired by sufficiently "conscious" individuals—that is, Transformational Festivals promise unmediated encounters with cultural otherness that provide access to a kind of capital anchored in the human body, but they promise to do so without replicating toxic colonial dynamics familiar to savvy young adults seeking to escape the psychic baggage that attends their identity privilege as it operates on a geopolitical scale. In this context, "Transformational" denotes an imagined "ethical" form of transnational exchange that reframes tourism as a mutually beneficial practice, and gestures towards a teleology of global progress in neoliberal times.

As an example, the mission statement for Envision—a Costa Rica-based Transformational Festival that this chapter takes as its primary case study—reads as follows: "As a celebration dedicated to awakening our human potential, Envision provides a platform for different cultures to co-exist in sustainable community, and inspire one another through art, spirituality, yoga, music, dance, performance, education, sustainability and our fundamental connection with nature."[14] Envision positions itself as a catalyst for creating meaningful connections between strangers, where various genres of

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[13] Marta Savigliano, *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion* (1995).

[14] "Our Mission," *Envision Festival* homepage. Accessed 8/17/16. http://www.envisionfestival.com/event-info-main/#mission

performance and social encounters in/with nature provide a "sustainable" means to bridge cultural divides. As a festival that relies on global travel, Envision markets globalization itself by projecting a progressive potentiality created by the mobility afforded to tourists.

Figure 20: "Heartsong" by Tigre Bailando. The Lapa Stage at Envision 2017. Damien Riley Photography. Photo provided with permission.

Its organizers use promotional strategies that highlight the host community's cultural uniqueness, but also hail tastes in music, visual art, and workshop subjects familiar to affluent and experienced participants in the North American and European festival scenes. It creates allure by fashioning a demographically diverse subcultural enclave (as opposed to the more homogeneous enclave of Harmony Park) that appears to challenge the primacy of national or ethnic identity by prioritizing feelings of kinship based on ethico-aesthetic considerations—what Leela Gandhi calls "affective communities."[15] Envision constitutes an immersive art experience that becomes the temporary locus of

[15] Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anti-Colonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship*, Durham: Duke University Press (2006).

social life for international participants and a dedicated group of locals in order to inaugurate forms of kinship and fraternity based on affect, rather than genealogy.

However, these feelings of intercultural kinship come into tension with the neocolonial material politics of transnational circulation that enable such events. As events become institutions and economic lodestones within communities, financial opportunity guides local social rhythms and customs towards the image curated for international consumption. Destination festivals' packaging and sale of place often necessitates social disruption, environmental degradation, and political strong-arming. Furthermore, the increased presence of infrastructure (often foreign-owned) that arises to service events can erode local control of space and access to the capital that space produces. In the case of Transformational Festivals, part of this impact includes staging physical and symbolic markers of the exotic in order to build their cachet as unique experiences that radically differ from the familiar. Elaborate immersive temples, the presence of gurus, experts, or indigenous people, the sale of rare products that are only locally-available, and the staging of unique rituals and performances allow participants to view the festival experience as a haptic encounter with the Other. Destination festivals rely on a curious mix of civic and national branding campaigns, local folklore, indigenous customs, and Hollywood stereotypes to curate a self-image that is both uniquely local, but also capable of resonating within a globalized subcultural scene. Event production physicalizes these images by staging the environment in a way that augments its physical qualities with spectacular ornaments, allowing it to take on

heightened, even mythical qualities; this operation relies on local participants, who appear to authenticate the exotic package.

In this chapter I use Envision as a case study to examine this mode of transnational cultural production and exchange. I examine how the festival draws bodies across borders by reframing exotic allure as an "ethical" and productive encounter with difference, while also pointing out how such encounters figure into material and symbolic economies that operate locally and globally. I argue that Envision demonstrates how destination festivals build value by performing a cartographic operation that allows composites of place, people, and affect to travel globally, turning geographically-specific identities into mobile, consumable, and sometimes transferable commodities; simultaneously, such events outline a terrain of "ethical" practice that seeks to obfuscate the extractive nature of this transaction. I ask: what kind of transnational power dynamics get installed through the marketing and enactment of Envision, and how do they reverberate beyond the time and space of the festival itself? How do Transformational Festivals uniquely initiate international participants into a perceptual mode that recasts places and people into consumable essences—that is, how do they program (and remix) what John Urry has called "the tourist gaze"?[16] What role do ethics take in framing this form of travel, and how do destination festivals use media strategies, community initiatives, and economic investment to craft a terrain of "the ethical"? How do race, ethnicity, and indigeneity factor into the identity-making process of destination events, and what kind of cultural (and material) politics get enacted through the travel they generate? And how can an ethnographic accounting of the movement, repertoires, and

[16] John Urry and Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, London: SAGE (2011).

affect that arise in these events help us to map soft cultural power as it materializes on a transnational scale in neoliberal times?

I begin this chapter by providing background information on Envision that helps situate it within its local site and broader global flows. I then discuss how media from and about Envision aestheticize Costa Rican land and people, building an experience of place into a commodity for tourist consumption. This occurs through two parallel operations: first, web media build a narrative of Costa Ricanness that frames Envision as an unmediated and sexualized encounter with an authentic form of spiritual Being figured as a salve for First world anomie.[17] This occurs through media discourse that fuses Costa Rican bodies and land with the concept of *pura vida*, "pure life." Second, Envision uses an elaborate assortment of locally-focused initiatives, campaigns, and principles to position itself as an "ethical" event. These initiatives appear to authenticate the festival's progressive radicality by demonstrating its institutional responsibility to the local area. This includes the festival's integration of a nearby indigenous group, the Boruca, into workshops, rituals, and stage designs, the complicated politics of which I discuss in some detail towards the end of the chapter.

Envision's charitable actions in local towns attempt to cleanse this process of its racial politics by casting the festival as a benevolent event that is *necessary* to the economic development of the region; but I problematize this assertion by pointing out how the festival has also created disruptions, divisions, and frictions throughout its existence. To provisionally document these complicated economic dynamics, I end with a

[17] Though I do not wish to dwell extensively on my deployment of this term, it is worth pointing out that its history as a sociological concept indicating a lack of moral guidance and social ethic within wider society dates back to the work of Émile Durkehim. *The Division of Labor in Society*, 1893.

discussion of how Envision encourages an enclaved mode of travel I call "fraternal network tourism," which guides tourists and their capital to move along routes that align with subcultural aesthetics and values. Fraternal network tourism rewards businesses and people that self-perform through familiar subcultural codes, and this has the effect of funneling tourism dollars away from members of the local area, and towards international businesses and other tourists themselves.

Background

Envision began with an elaborate wedding celebration in 2010 for a group of expatriates living in the small surfing town of Dominical in the Puntarenas province in Costa Rica's Southern Pacific Zone. Brandon Jaffer—a South African ex-pat who became part of the US-West Coast music scene and was fresh back from a trip to Burning Man—brought numerous prominent electronic dance music artists to town, and drew some 800 people to the event. According to Jaffer, the original intention was twofold: to bring friends from the United States who had not yet experienced what Costa Rica had to offer, and to introduce the festival subculture to Costa Ricans (who are also called Ticos). Jaffer observed that most "worthwhile" festivals take place in natural settings, and as one of the most biodiverse places on Earth, Costa Rica offered something special in this regard. He noted that Costa Rica was also "amazing" in terms of the progressive politics that resonated with the festie subculture, such as its lack of a military, its being 90%-100% reliant on renewable energy, and its "forward-thinking" legislation on personal rights. Jaffer also knew that the money these travelers brought to the region would help

develop local businesses with which Jaffer had formed relationships during his dozen years working in construction in the region.[18]

Envision officially began as a festival in 2011 on a private plot of land near Dominical, drawing just 500 people in this first year; in 2012 it moved 15 kilometers South to a site bordering Ballena National Park near the tiny village of Uvita (population c. 1000); the festival's population continued to grow, and in 2014 Envision moved just a few kilometers North to its current location on a privately-owned wildlife refuge called Rancho La Merced. For the last two years the event has sold out with approximately 4000-5500 people attending. Envision does not keep any kind of demographic breakdown of attendees, but its website hints at who the event markets to in that it is available in the languages of English, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, and Portuguese (in addition to the locally-spoken Spanish); it is also worth noting that English is the *lingua franca* for stage performances, lectures and workshops, and event signage, though Spanish sometimes appears alongside. The primacy of English gestures to how language contours the social imaginaries of Envision—it outlines a presumption of accessibility for tourists from places in which English is common to the education system (including urban Costa Rican), but undercuts that of the local population for whom knowledge of English is less common. From my observations it appeared that Americans and Canadians made up the bulk of musical acts and attendees, followed by British and Australian people, and Ticos from San José (often university students).[19] Most appeared to be between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five—there seemed to be far fewer people over the age of forty

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[18] Brandon Jaffer, Interview with author, 2 August 2016, Skype.

[19] "Envision Festival" https://www.fest300.com/festivals/envision-festival; Envision Festival Homepage, accessed 17 November 2016, https://www.envisionfestival.com.

than the festivals at Harmony Park, and also far fewer people under the age of 22. Perhaps this difference owed to the strenuousness of international travel, legal barriers, and high cost of the event.

The diversity of nationalities represented, along with Envision's current reputation as a "premiere" event in the festival subculture creates a high degree of economic stratification within the grounds. Normal tickets for the 4-day festival run around $300, with a special price of $160 for Ticos—as with most festivals free entrance is given out to volunteers and guests in exchange for some sort of labor. However, the festival also offers numerous VIP, hotel, and "glamorous camping" options that begin at $625, which include access to a VIP lounge and campground. The most expensive package is a "Bamboo tree house" that goes for $2222 for four nights. Despite the egalitarian ideals espoused in Transformational Festival culture promotional materials, they recreate opportunities for class and national inequalities to play out in the microcosm of the festival.[20]

Envision is run as a legal liability corporation—a designation often needed to secure insurance—that is run by an executive team composed of US expatriates and Costa Ricans. It also partners with many other private companies, some of which are located in Costa Rica, others in the United States, and others that operate as multi-sited platforms (like the Kula Collective, a global yoga teaching initiative with sites in Costa Rica, Tennessee, Guatemala, and Bali, among other places). These partner companies either sell services to Envision, or provide in-kind donations with the expectation that the

[20] In 2017 general admission went as high as $400, and the most expensive tree house option went for $3333. "Buy Tickets," Envision Festival Website, accessed 21 February 2016 and 15 November 2017, http://envisionfestival.com/ticketing/.

festival will provide them with good publicity, and perhaps some free tickets. Some partnerships include local cafés, bars, supply shops, and boutique hotels in Costa Rica's Southern Pacific Zone (Mama Toucan's, Café Mono Congo, Tierra Mia, Café Mono Congo, Vista Ballena, Rancho La Merced), larger Costa Rican food, beverage, and clothing industries (Jinca Foods, Rain Forest Artesian Water, Fuego Brew Co., Costa Rica's Craft Brewing Co.), multinational companies and organizations invested in style and taste-making associated with Transformational Festivals (Everfest, North Face, Eventbrite, Ecotopian Enterprises, MAPS), and a slew of other Transformational Festivals (Hanuman Festival, Lucidity, Sonic Bloom, Arise Music Festival). This is all to point out that Envision's benefit to the local economy exists within a circuit of transnational economic activity that propels the further expansion of Transformational Festivals as an event formation. Furthermore, it should be noted that many partner businesses in Dominical and Uvita are owned by non-Costa Ricans, and longititudinal study might help specifically outline to whom Envision's profits flow.

From the beginning Envision was a controversial presence in Uvita and Dominical. In its first years, some residents complained about the event's "party aspect," and the police were irked that festivalgoers blocked roads and caused traffic snarls. However, according to Jaffer, owners of restaurants, stores, and supermarkets were thrilled at the influx of tourist dollars, and were only frustrated that they hadn't stocked more supplies beforehand. The source of greatest tension has circled around the issue of *water*. Envision's strain on local water infrastructure caused Dominical to temporarily run out of water in the years the event was held there. When the festival moved to Uvita, Envision invested in a water pump to ensure that the town's water (and its own) would

freely flow; however, Envision overused its allotment and had to give a "donation" to Uvita in order to get water trucked in. Now, Envision gets its water specifically from a site nearby Playa Hermosa.[21]

Envision's relationship with national and local authorities has also been a source of struggle. For several years its small size allowed it to "fly under the radar" in order to attain proper permits, but as the festival grew it became increasingly subject to the scrutiny of health and tourism boards.[22] Envision has thus had to proactively curate its image for the Costa Rican public, especially considering the region's large Catholic presence and its aversion to drug culture. This dissemination of a positive self-image, as we will see, occurred through numerous means, but especially through the festival's coordination of web production, social media, and news media. As Jaffer described, organizers embarked on a long-term project to convince local ministers of culture and the Costa Rica Tourism Board that the event was worth allowing, and even subsidizing. To this end, Envision hired Costa Rican Luigi Jimenez—a local music curator who, as he put it, understood the Tico youth scene—as a consultant and media liaison to give advice regarding how to make the festival "fit" into Tico culture.

Jimenez described to me a complex campaign aimed at downplaying the event's emphasis on a "group ecstatic experience" (for fear that authorities would just read this as a drug-crazed party), and instead highlighted its charitable works and quiet spiritual aspects. He cultivated relationships with media outlets to ensure that news coverage (particularly from local, Tico-oriented sources like *La Nación*) did not send journalists

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[21] According to Jaffer approximately 25% of Envision's water was trucked in—an unexpected carbon footprint that appears to have been left unaddressed. Brandon Jaffer, Interview with author, 2 August 2016.
[22] Jaffer recalls that in the third year of Envision, the health board inspector showed up "looking for any reason to shut the event down." Ibid.

who would simply film drugs and "naked *gringas*," but those who "understood the experience." He also held workshops for local culture ministers and gave presentations to the Costa Rican Tourism Board, seeking to pivot the festival's image as a site of drugs and sex to one of "yoga, healthy food, spirituality, [and] people from all over the world." In addition, by highlighting Envision's connection to nature and its potential "to make this country much, much richer," he hoped to allow the event to be less subject to an arbitrary closing by the Minister of Health.[23]

Another component of Envision's public image strategy was the curation of a select group of Tico artists to be part of the scene. Jimenez invited local visual artists, local bands, and key players in the Costa Rican music scene as a way of demonstrating the festival's openness and inclusivity. In our conversation, he emphasized choosing the "right" people, the "right" bands, the "right" Ticos to invite—it became clear that what he meant was that if Envision was not selective about which locals attended, it might attract thieves and potentially violent individuals just looking to hook up with White women, rather than those who could contribute to its aesthetic. Sustaining the image of Envision as an inclusive and locally vibrant event came into tension with the need to craft its reputation as a safe and "Transformational" space for potential international tourists—not a place for random interactions in Costa Rica, but a site to encounter the most "enlightened" individuals the country has to offer. Though one would not expect a representative from Envision to articulate the "right" people in terms of sexual attractiveness, I suspect that part of the festival's selective integration of Ticos also had to

[23] Luigi Jimenez, Interview with author, 8 August 2016, Skype call.

do with composing the event's erotic economy.[24] Sexuality is rarely made explicit in Envision's publicity material, but the festival certainly crafts the image of a sensuous Costa Rica, where erotics underpin the notion of a "conscious" sensibility.

Exoticizing Costa Rica through the Mediascape

The promotional media that transmits images of Envision and its Costa Rican setting conditions the performance horizons of festival participants. Before participants arrive in country web technologies brief them, suggest goals and strategies for their journeys, and present expectations for how tourists and hosts will comport themselves. Festival organizers devise narratives of the locale and dramatize the tourist encounter, an operation that gets amplified through social media.[25] As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has noted, "tourists travel to actual destinations to experience virtual places."[26] Envision exists as a virtual place within a festie subcultural information sphere that consists of event reviews, promotional media (including its own website and social media), user-generated and self-published videos, and subcultural news hubs. This constitutes an entire "mediascape," a term Arjun Appadurai uses to simultaneously call attention to media images and their global processes of production and dissemination. As he argues, image- and narrative-based mediascapes are not simply beautiful, idealized snapshots of their subjects, but performative platforms that produce subjectivizing strips of reality. Mediascapes compose entire "imagined worlds"—that is, they use their subject matter to craft unique modes of perception and social possibility.

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Tim Edensor, "Performing tourism, staging tourism: (Re)producing tourist space and practice," *Tourist Studies*, 1.1 (2001), pp. 59-81; 63.

[26] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture*, 9.

Envision's mediascape frames both the event and Costa Rica as sites for the extraction of identity capital and cultural capital—an operation that makes up the value of its $300+ ticket. It outlines Costa Rica as a spellbinding place that participants encounter as a source of psychic enrichment through cultural exposure. Cultural capital, a term originally theorized by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, refers to competencies, knowledge, and tastes that confer symbolic prestige to people, granting them access, social status, and economic command.[27] Bourdieu tends to discuss cultural capital in terms of its operation within the dominant public sphere of Western societies, but the concept has been adapted by Sarah Thornton to address a more splintered cultural landscape. In different subcultures, especially those that cultivate rebellious energy vis-à-vis an imagined "mainstream," the behaviors, objects, and institutions that confer social status differ from those most operative in the dominant social order; consequently, *subcultural* capital can be generated from activities that appear as radical alternatives to conventional tastes.[28] Cultural capital exists in embodied, objectified, and institutional states: embodied cultural capital refers to the interiorized ways that knowledge and skillsets get acquired, and the behavioral ways they get displayed as people move through the world and interact with others; objectified cultural capital refers to how objects like dress, decorations, or tools demonstrate particular competencies and social standing; institutional cultural capital

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[27] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. Richardson, Westport, CT: Greenwood (1986), pp. 241-258; Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, London: Routledge (1984).

[28] Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital*, Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press (1996).

refers to ways that cultural capital gets measured, ranked, and certified, such as the denotation of authority and qualifications.[29]

Envision's mediascape characterizes the event as a site where participants can acquire each of these forms of cultural capital: its "Global Mercado" and "Witches Sanctuary" vending platforms promise the opportunity to purchase costumes/outfits, paraphernalia, jewelry, art, all-natural beauty supplies, tinctures, and books—objects that resonate within the larger aesthetic of the festie scene, but often inflected with Tico flourishes that make them rare and distinctive; dozens of workshops compose an embodied curriculum that promises to initiate participants into a haptic dimension of Tico culture, granting access to specialized knowledge and awareness of alternative ideas and social practices, especially as they relate to eco-consciousness. Envision is known for its workshops related to permaculture and environmentalism; some of these workshops are offered by members of the indigenous Boruca tribe, while others are offered by experts and gurus with cachet in the wider festival scene. These instructors and VIPs, along with Envision's own reputational authority (cultivated via its careful coordination of media and information) denote the event's authenticity, expertise, and prestige.

The potential to acquire these objects and lessons from institutionally-connected actors promises displayable markers of social status within the festie subculture, but it also ideally results in interiorized operations of self-transformation. These operations on the self may be understood through the related concept of identity capital, a term deployed to denote the accumulation of social status based on investment in the self. As defined by clinical psychologist Meg Jay: "Identity capital is our collection of personal

[29] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of capital", in *Power and Ideology in Education*, Eds. J. Karabel and A.h. Halsey, Oxford: Oxford University Press (1978), pp. 511-34.

assets. It is the repertoire of individual resources that we assemble over time. These are the investments we make in ourselves, the things we do well enough, or long enough, that they become a part of who we are."[30] This interpretation of the individual through an economistic lens was anticipated by Michel Foucault's discussion of "technologies of the self" as a defining axis of neoliberal governmentality. Technologies of the self include self-knowledge and modes of self-performance that "permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality."[31] Identity capital points to the complex economy that exists around technologies of the self, which confers value to the discovery and finessing of self-making techniques. Perspectives like Jay's that configure the human being as a bank of skills, knowledge, and assets useful not for their intrinsic value, but for their potential to be put to work in the marketplace, is indicative of the neoliberal condition and its marketization of everything—even the individual. Transformational Festivals like Envision are part of this cultural and identity economy. They are Transformational precisely because they constitute an *investment* in the self, an act of production, rather than one of leisurely consumption. Destination festivals parlay their locational assets into opportunities for travelers to materialize self-transformation via rare encounters with matrices of cultural

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[30] Meg Jay, *The Defining Decade: Why Your Twenties Matter and How to Make the Most of Them*, New York: Canongate Books (2012); see also Nikolas Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*, London: Routledge, 1989.

[31] Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self", Lectures at University of Vermont Oct. 1982, in *Technologies of the Self*, 16-49. Univ. of Massachusets Press, 1988.

difference, and the potential these encounters hold for the extraction of both concrete and esoteric assets in the service of self-development justifies the events' high cost.

By way of example, here I discuss how Envision's mediascape scripts the acquisition of cultural and identity capital as a consequence of felicitous event participation—including the ways that race, indigeneity, and desire factor into this manufactured image. Envision's mediascape narratively scripts rousing and erotic encounters with Costa Rican geography, bodies, and culture as a means of extracting capital in the form of deeply meaningful personal experiences and cultural knowledge. Difference, especially racial difference, plays a crucial part: Envision's promotional materials frame Tico culture as a kind of radical alterity from Western (or Westernized) societies from which most of its participants hail; it portrays this difference as stemming from Costa Rica's tropical ecology, producing a composite of authentic Costa Ricanness that is anchored in its landscape—a kind of autochthony that encompasses both indigenous and non-indigenous Costa Ricans. Envision's mediascape produces a virtual sense of absolute difference between Costa Rica and the rest of the world; but it also outlines a way in which live aesthetic practices *within* the festival can render this difference affective, mobile, and acquirable for tourists.

Online Gatekeepers

This process begins with participants' virtual encounter with Envision through electronic media. Online subcultural gatekeepers denote the event's status by creating systems of comparison and evaluation that translate potential festival experiences into comparable commodities, and give them a particular mystique that often ties into their location. Transformational Festivals developed alongside the acceleration of global

internet usage in the late 1990s and 2000s; concurrently subcultural gatekeepers often take the form of web platforms that combine traditional written criticism, travelogues, ratings systems, and crowdsourcing to create event composites that allow potential customers to maximize the utility of their travel dollars. This ability to render intrinsic value, personal experience, and culture into standardized, calculable outputs is an important function of neoliberalism.[32] Online platforms offer ways of quantitative comparison between different events, with the festival attendee figured as *homo economicus*, a rational figure interested in the maximization of utility.[33]

For example, a starting point in my own search for examples of destination festivals was the website Everfest, which bills itself as "The Festival Authority," and was begun by "festival guru" Chip Conley. It publishes detailed descriptions of "the world's best" festivals. When I first attended Envision in 2015 (when EverFest was under the name Fest300.com) the event's page featured a quantified ratings system to help readers quickly assess elements like crowd size, degree of participant involvement, and level of preparation needed. Its most important category was the nebulous concept of "Transformation," which tracked along a five-star scale (from "Quiet" to "Life-Altering"). Envision received five out of five stars in this category.[34] In this formulation, Transformation stands as an analogue for cultural and identity capital potential, a concise indexing of how predictably participants might expect to acquire new techniques of the

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[32] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 20015.

[33] Michel Foucault, "The birth of biopolitics: lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79", Translated by G. Burchell, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

[34] "Envision Festival," *Fest300*, n.a., n.d., accessed 20 November 2016, https://www.fest300.com/festivals/envision-festival.

self, and new forms of cultural knowledge by attending the event.[35] Interestingly, while Fest300 was geared specifically toward Transformational Festivals, Everfest stretches its purview to encompass not just EDM music events, but also religious gatherings, wine festivals, and world culture fairs. In addition to Burning Man, Lightning in a Bottle, and Envision (Project Earth did not make the cut), EverFest reviews events like the Kumbh Mela pilgrimage in India or the Dia De Los Muertos celebration in Mexico, subjecting them all to the same five-star scale. In this way, Transformational Festival attendees are asked to view their participation through a lens that equates festival practice to religious epiphany; this produces a gaze capable of abstracting the historical and cultural specificity of events, rendering them into comparable commodities. These critical aggregation sites script potential participants to rationalize their tourist experience, even as the events they describe ostensibly offer alternatives to the overwhelming sense of liberal rationality that permeates economically developed societies. They frame travel through the lens of investment in the self, even as they characterize transformation as a fugitive sensibility that counters First-World anomie.

EverFest's quantitative valuation system intersects with the robust audio/visual elements devised by Envision's own media operatives to curate a cohesive festival identity, especially its relationship to place. Imagery and promotional strategies extend beyond the simple description and hyping of activities and artists that will be present; they gesture towards a unique somatic register that takes hold during an event. By

[35] In the last several years, EverFest (which is also a partner of Envision) has evolved its ratings system to reflect the more standardized crowdsourcing methods of Yelp or TripAdviser—customer reviews aggregate to a particular rating on a five-star scale. This method of assessment has been roundly critiqued as being prone to manipulation by entities with resources to invest in such operations. Michael Moyer, "Manipulation of the Crowd: How Trustworthy are Online Ratings", *Scientific American*, 1 July 2010.

"gesture," I do not mean the weak obverse of action, but rather, as Carrie Noland has articulated, a performative operator that brings things into being, and fabricates bodies that can accommodate their execution.[36] Envision's mediascape does not simply brief participants on what and who they will encounter on-site, it *initiates* them into a specialized aesthetic sensibility capable of materializing this virtual place and the transformation it promises. By consuming videos, images, and information at the outset (including mission statement, event history, and self-published news articles in the event blog), travelers acclimate to vocabularies and cultural codes that are part of the transformational process. For instance, a recent addition to Envision's web platform includes a blog campaign describing "The Eight Pillars of Envision," an ethico-philosophical guide meant to both demonstrate the event's spiritual grounding, and prod participants towards a behavioral orientation that will be developed through event participation. These eight pillars—movement, spirituality, art, music, radical acceptance, community, permaculture, and health (with associated articles composed on each)—remain sufficiently abstract in order to be open to the momentum and diversity of participants' own interests and dispositions. In other words, they suggest subcultural norms, but remain supple enough to enable libidinous play that resembles in encounter with one's authentic self; but they are also strategically grounded in a glossary of spiritual practice so as to resemble an extension of established, even Ancient, ways of knowing. The choice to refer to these principles as "pillars"—with the immediate resonance being the Five Pillars of Islam—appears intended to ascribe a kind of spiritual authenticity to the event, while also denoting its alterity from the Judeo-Christian values that dominate

[36] Carrie Noland, Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures/Producing Culture, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009, 16.

Western societies. Of course, few, if any of Envision's activities have to do with Islam specifically; rather, this constructed philosophy should be understood as part of an abstracting process. It allows the festival to render participation a means of tapping into something universal (culture as capital), rather than a particularized engagement with Costa Rica's own history and social condition.

Web Media and the Trope of *Pura Vida*

Envision gets promoted through web media that include organizers' self-published promotional materials and social media postings, user-generated content (like travel blogs and vlogs, field guides, time-lapse videos, and self-produced segments for online content providers), and published reviews, exposés, and think pieces in various news outlets.[37] This diffuse media array is often loosely organized around branding narratives devised by event producers that help conceptualize and interpret festival activity; in Envision's case, producers use web media to stage the event as an encounter with "*pura vida*." *Pura vida*, which translates to "pure life" or "good life," has been a Costa Rican idiom since the 1950s, eventually becoming a highly successful slogan for the country's tourism industry in the early 1990s.[38] *Pura vida* has numerous conversational uses in Costa Rica, including as a greeting, a farewell, and a substitute for "OK." As it operates in tourism campaigns, *pura vida* suggests a laid-back, trusting, neighborly affect that has developed in Costa Rican people through their sustained

[37] Some news outlets like The Guardian and EDM.com employ dedicated festival critics and aggregation pages. For a useful example of user-generated content, see the video "Envision Festival 2018: Finding Intentions" by the Conscious Resistance YouTube Channel, an "independent media organization focused on empowering individuals through education, philosophy, health, and community organizing. [They] work to create a world where corporate and state power does not rule over the lives of free human beings." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2lGZjOCV74.

[38] Anna Marie Trester, "Bienvenidos a Costa Rica, la tierra de la pura vida: A study of the expression 'pura vida' in the Spanish of Costa Rica," In Selected Proceedings of the First Workshop on Spanish Sociolinguistics, ed. Lotfi Sayahi, 61-69. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project.

engagement with tropical splendor. The phrase *pura vida* can be found throughout Envision's website, social media accounts, and ad media. A 2017 press release reads: "Take a journey into self-discovery and the awakening of humanity as you experience the Pura Vida life!" *Pura Vida* operates as an aesthetic disposition that can only be experienced through first-hand encounters with Costa Rican ecology and culture.

This encounter is rendered both libidinal and psychically restorative for tourists. Envision's web promotion deploys *pura vida* not just as a slogan, but as what Elizabeth Povinelli calls "popontology." Short for popular ontology, popontology describes encounters with unalienated forms of spiritual Being usually derived from interactions with indigenous cultures. Povinelli discusses popontology as a textual genre whose characteristics appear to "provide a provisional structure to speculations about the state of Being in Western [post]modernity."[39] I interpret this textuality to encompass narrative, images, sound, and filmic techniques; in fact, a more useful word might be "dramaturgy," which I have deployed throughout this dissertation because of its resonance with the labor of and attentiveness to scriptive composition related to the staging of sites and experiences.

To examine dramaturgically how Envision utilizes *pura vida* as popontology, we might consider as an example "The Pura Vida Effect," a well-produced three-minute promotional video published on Envision's YouTube channel in 2014. It consists of a poetic voiceover—which is worth quoting at length—that overlays earthy beat music by Plantrae, an Oregon-based band that mixes earthy acoustic beat music (with world music influences) and electronic production:

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[39] Elizabeth Povinelli, "Consuming Geist: Popontology and the Spirit of Capital in Indigenous Australia", *Public Culture* 12.2 (Spring 2000), 516.

> "Have you heard about the Pura Vida Effect? / legend says that once a year this already vibrant place becomes more full of life / that the wildlife become all the more diverse / mystical phenomena occur, and that time seems to stop / as if transported to a different dimension, reality and dream blend together just as the sea meets the sand / if you enter this world, you will meet people so unique, so different, yet some how [sic] deeply connected / people who pour forth their joys...their gifts...their tears...and their bliss / you will not have to look far to fill your eyes with wonder / the magical union of a fiery sun dissolving into the welcoming womb of the sea / an array of art that envisions and illustrates new realities / an environment so lush....it beckons you to live with all you've got / In this place...so full of sound / so rich with music, laughter, and monkey howls / you will find those moments of silence in between / but if you listen...listen closely... / you may hear your own heart sing in harmony with the song of this land / this song that calls us to live a life that is happy, joyous and free / a life that is pure...that is the pura vida effect! / you can carry the magic of this place with you / with every memory you recall / every lesson you learn which you teach again / every new skill or practice you incorporate into your life / but mostly, carry it in your heart / the way you greet a strange face with a smile / the way in which you interact with the world / the way to find joy in the simple things in life....no matter how small / the way to honor your relationship with the earth and find healing in her love / If you're courageous enough to let go of your expectations and to abandon your limits / if you fill your heart with this feeling....fill your wings with the winds of this magic...you may even take flight."[40]

The video, which seems to address a potential international participant, leads with a secretive word-of-mouth discovery of *Pura Vida*. It gives the festival the status of "legend" to denote Envision's authenticity—as if the nine-year-old festival is part of a long-standing, even indigenous, tradition. The ad's tone resembles that of an oral history to strategically frame Envision as an event that emerged organically from local land and culture, rather than as the product of international flows of people and capital.

The video also braids themes of autochthony and diversity to position locals, international travelers, and the festival itself, as fitting seamlessly into the Costa Rican

[40] Envision Festival, "The Pura Vida Effect," YouTube, published 5 Nov 2014, accessed 12 January 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ClIAq_t7TeQ.

landscape. Diversity, as deployed in the video, relates to Costa Rica's incredible plant and animal biodiversity, as well as the flow of a diverse contingent of international attendees into the country.[41] Human ethnic diversity gets equated with species biodiversity; in a double-move, ethnicity figures as an immutable marker of absolute difference between people (like the difference between two different species), but human beings simultaneously get placed on a plane of immanence with other animals. This human-animal equivalency (which gets reiterated later with the image of "music, laughter, and monkey howls" as the soundscape of the land) is a trope of Transformational Festival culture that gestures to the ability of social encounters in and with nature to prod participants towards unmediated, even primal affects capable of eviscerating ethnic difference. To reach briefly to Deleuze and Guattari, Envision figures as a place for becoming-animal, where lines of flight emerge that evade territorialized subjectivities—in other words despite ethnicity, nationality, and other identity positions appearing initially as Manichean divides between individuals, these can be overcome through the "magic" and "mystical phenomena" inaugurated by Envision. The festival is a place where one can "envision and illustrate new realities," which gets prompted by meetings between "people so unique, so different, yet some[h]ow deeply connected."

But Transformation—detecting these connections and overcoming difference—requires the felicitous participation of tourists. It is a contingent process that makes various material and immaterial asks; it has the potential to occur only *if* participants are "courageous" and willing to "listen," "fill their heart," and "let go of [their] expectations

[41] *National Geographic* referred to the Osa Peninsula and Corcovado National Park in Costa Rica's Southern Pacific Zone as "The Most Biologically Intense Place on Earth," owing to this extreme biodiversity.

[and] limits." The tourism experience gets refigured as a complicated and esoteric kind of labor. The abstract nature of these requirements is critical because it allows participants to remain open to instinctual vectors that simulate self-authenticity; but, of course, these signifiers are not empty. In "The Pura Vida Effect" the abstract expectations placed on tourists couple with carefully selected imagery of festival activities remixed with aesthetic choices like music and editing techniques that affectively pique would-be tourists: we see people taking plunging cliff dives into sparkling water pools just as the bass drops and the narration "beckons you to live with all you've got"; while ponderous eastern-inspired beats play, we see participants dancing and practicing yoga on the beach for seemingly no reason at all—seemingly hearing and moving with the song of the jungle; time-lapse segments show people frenetically shuffling through the "Global Mercado" vending hub, as if to demonstrate the constancy and intensity of movement and sale. The idea is not so much to prescribe specifically what participants *should do* when they attend the event, but to seed for tourists an aesthetic disposition that ascribes philosophical and spiritual significance to activities they choose.

Figure 21: From the Envision Website -- Accessed 6 October 2018.

With this in mind, it is also important to point out that "The Pura Vida Effect" recurrently features the extremely toned bodies of young people who are almost always shirtless or in swimsuits, and usually in the midst of some form of physical extension

(yoga, dance, aerials, etc.) that highlights their musculature and flexibility. To be sure, part of this is simply about endowing the festival with sex appeal to attract young people with disposable income—in this respect, the sexuality of Envision's marketing differs little from most other Transformational Festivals; but it is also about charging these sexual fantasies with a sense of intangible discovery associated with the exploration of a new place and people, a unique path towards personal enlightenment that emerges through a journey to a foreign land. This gets reinforced through narration that animates, feminizes, and sexualizes the Costa Rican environment. The earth is referred to as "her" and gets recast as a sexual object through suggestive word choice like the penetrative image of the "magical union of a fiery sun dissolving into the welcoming womb of the sea." Costa Rica is beautiful and also enticing, "an environment so lush....it *beckons* you to live with all you've got." It is important to point out that overt sexual activity is almost wholly absent from event promotional materials (though decidedly present when on-site), but the concept of *pura vida* created by Envision is always erotically charged.

It is also mobile. The abstract requirements placed on festival attendees to discover *Pura Vida* can lead to the material extraction of "memories," "lessons," "skill[s]," and "practice[s]" that can be incorporated into one's everyday life. The video especially emphasizes the value of an abstract quickening of the soul. *Pura vida* becomes something that can be readily acquired—"fill your heart"—based on the tourist's engagement with Costa Rican space. With the citation of "magic," *pura vida* takes on an enchanting quality that might open up latent powers that lie dormant in travelers. Part of this mobility relates to the identitarian boundaries. By proposing that the tourist's "own heart [may] sing in harmony with the song of this land," which repeats the imagery of

autochthony (Costa Rican culture as a direct outgrowth of its ecology), the festival appears as a uniquely empowering means of overcoming racial and ethnic difference.

This lengthy discussion of "The Pura Vida Effect" owes not to the video's singular importance as a tourist dramaturgy or its efficacy in event promotion (as of this writing it only had about 10,000 hits on YouTube). Rather, it is to demonstrate just one component of a mediascape that performatively enacts an aesthetic disposition for tourists that conditions their embodied encounters with Costa Rica. "The Pura Vida Effect" remixes psychedelics and popontology to frame Costa Rica as the site for erotic engagements with place, empowering discoveries of the self, and edifying encounters with the Other. It is one node that interlocks with other web traffic to produce a reality where destination festival travel to Costa Rica comes to hold potential for travelers to extract identity and cultural capital. It demonstrates organizers' attentiveness to extensive and continuous media production as means of developing *pura vida* as a shorthand for a localized emotional energy that is also transferable to event participants. Marta Savigliano refers to this emotional energy rooted in the exotic as "Passion." She argues that this Passion is "emotional capital" (to add another form into the mix) that arises from "[t]he imperialist circulation of feelings" that parallels "the processes by which the core countries of the capitalist world system have extracted material goods and labor [from] the Third World (periphery)."[42]

The characterization of Envision as a site for acquiring Passion gets further developed and verified through other components of its mediascape, such as travelogues,

[42] Marta Savigliano, *Tango and the Political Economy of Passion* (1995), 2.

reviews, and exposés. These tend to take a narrative form where we follow participants as they awaken to a new mode of Being through their Costa Rican journey, with a decisive breakthrough usually coming during the festival itself. A good example is the Vice International episode titled "The Craziest Hippie Festival in the Jungle." In the sixteen minute video (with 1.6 million YouTube hits) we follow Vice reporter Amelia Dimoldenberg, a white British woman attending Envision for the first time, as she journeys "deep into the heart of the jungles of Costa Rica, and my inner self." Envision becomes an analogue for authentic Costa Ricanness, and this authenticity becomes a way of finding one's most authentic self. Revealingly, the "heart of the jungle" Dimoldenberg speaks of appears to be a festival located at the *edge* of an actual jungle, with a white sand beach just a few steps away; harkening to Joseph Conrad, the jungle here operates as a synecdoche for absolute difference from modern British society. The video also frames Envision as the obverse of a "traditional," hedonistic festival scene that the writer associates with "tepid lagers, tents on fire, piss missiles" and "getting off your nut"; Envision, instead, promises to "transform your body and your soul through a rigorous schedule of lectures, yoga, and fire poi." It is a site of disciplined self-development, rather than raucous frivolity.

The rest of the episode shows Dimoldenberg move from an incredulous outsider to a temporary convert with the aid of experienced festival participants. These participants—including a White British yoga instructor, a pair of American "bros," and a goofy jester cap-wearing old man (notably, no Costa Ricans spoke in the video)—are recast as "spirit guides." Sometimes this transposition is marked with a strum of sitar strings or other iconic eastern soundscape, and sometimes through editing cues that break

the documentary aesthetic to layer in stylized psychedelic visuals. After listening to a lecture on Kratom, participating in a yoga session, and learning to spin poi on the beach, Dimoldenberg begins to experience feelings of transformation upon witnessing the sunset—one of Envision's most iconic scenes is that of the community gathered on the beach at sunset, with drum circles, fire performances, and collective howls.

Interestingly, Dimoldenberg articulates her transformation by referencing the evisceration of her nationality, which appears as a psychic burden that she associates with her own social awkwardness: "As I watched the orange circus toy [poi] rotate in the air, I felt the first awkward cobwebs of my Britishness blow away into the pure Uvita sunset." Her nationality appears as psychically draining cultural baggage, which she discards in favor of something more "pure." As we soon see, this cultural detachment also results in the *acquisition* of identity capital, which she locates in a learned social skill (not being awkwardly self-conscious). The following day, she quickly doffs her dour white shirt and jean shorts for her best imitation of festie garb: a woven belly-length shirt and bright yellow harem pants. She transforms from an inexpressive wallflower leery of heart-hugging hippies to a Pan flute-playing artist lost in wild ecstasy during the next day's sundown beach gathering. The video implies that the combination of Costa Rica's natural splendor and the festival's enchantment allow participants to tap into a primal state; she notes in conclusion (restating a line from one of her spirit guides): "we *are* all from one nation… the Imagi-nation," gesturing to a pre-national human state that is also its most unadulterated form of Being.

The Vice International video on Envision makes use of, and even seems to authenticate, the festival's own self-narrative, helping to build a complex mediascape that makes *pura vida* appear as a real and tangible product of event participation. This product relates to a libidinous engagement with a way of Being that is figured to be absent from and purer than that found in tourists' quotidian lives. Envision demonstrates how destination festivals participate in an economy predicated on the sale of culture that produces psychically enriching experiences and practical know-how rooted in the particular people and land of Costa Rica; through the matrix of Transformational aesthetics, which imbricate the tourist as a co-producer of exotic allure, this fabricated sensibility that is anchored in the location and history of a place (and seemingly authenticated by the presence of actual Costa Rican people present at the festival) gets abstracted and enters into a global marketplace.

Ethical Travel

> "Ethical travel to developing countries offers a positive, symbiotic exchange between travelers and their destination. By "voting with our wings," tourists give their economic support to such societies, raise the standard of living for the population, and reinforce programs that protect the environment. The reward we receive is also worthwhile: a memorable vacation, and the realization that, although the world is getting smaller, some parts of it are actually getting better."
> - *Kiran Auerbach and Jeff Greenwald, "Best Ethical Travel Destinations," Ethical Traveler*[43]

Although Envision was created by an expatriate community living in Costa Rica, and also the financial and human cross-currents of the transnational festival scene, its ability to draw participants depends on packaging itself as an authentic and valued part of

[43] Jeff Greenwald and Kieran Auerbach, "Best Ethical Travel Destinations," *Earth Island News*, n.d., accessed 20 November 2016, http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/eij/article/ethical_traveler/.

its local community. Envision markets itself by linking festival tourism to conscience, a move that Jim Butcher refers to as the "moralization of tourism," wherein certain styles of travel get positioned as more "ethical" than others.[44] "Ethical tourism" and cognates like "moral tourism," "responsible tourism," "sustainable tourism" and "ecotourism" react to the massification of the travel industry and attendant social, political, and environmental problems, rearticulating the tourist experience as mutually beneficial when enacted correctly. For instance, ecotourism, as articulated by the non-profit International Ecotourism Society, encourages "*responsible* travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people" (emphasis added).[45] Costa Rica has been as especially important case study for scholars interested in the braiding of eco- and ethical tourism since it embarked on aggressive conservation efforts and sustainable development initiatives in the 1970s.[46] A combination of government programs (including the creation of the national park system in 1970 and a recent push to become the first carbon-neutral country by 2021), small entrepreneurial start-ups, and environmental and scientific NGOs developed a vast assortment of ecovillages, sustainable backpackers, and permaculture retreats that capitalize on Costa Rica's global reputation as a leading site of environmental consciousness. As Angelique Lalonde has explored, this conservational interest is particularly well-suited to the backpacking culture and New Age back-to-nature mindset that characterize the young traveling cohorts who populate destination festivals; yoga retreats, spiritually-inflected jungle

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[44] Jim Butcher, *The Moralisation of Tourism: Sun, Sand… and Saving the World?*, London: Routledge (2003); See also Donald Getz, *Event Tourism: Concepts, International Case Studies, and Research*, New York: Cognizant Communications Corp (2013).

[45] Martha Honey, *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development*, Island Press (2008), 6–10, 15–16.

[46] Geoffrey Jones and Andrew Spadafora, "Creating Ecotourism in Costa Rica: 1970-2000", *Enterprise and Society*, 18.1 (March 2017), pp. 146-183.

walks, and ecolodges not only focus on the intrinsic edification that comes from enjoying natural splendor, but also demonstrate their efficacy as conservational practices by propelling the ecologically-oriented ethos, inspiration, and support necessary to promote long-term sustainability.[47]

Envision's promotional materials frequently call attention to Costa Rica's eco-conscious reputation as a means of demonstrating its own capacity to produce cultural capital in institutional, behavioral, and object forms. It cultivates a reputation of being the most environmentally conscious festival within the most environmentally conscious country in the world, and promises that some of this mentality will rub off on travelers. The festival takes pains to demonstrate its value not only to tourists, but also to the environment that houses the event and the local populations who stand to financially benefit from the influx of foreign money. Its website, for instance, calls attention to numerous eco-initiatives at its Rancho La Merced location, as well as initiatives to "improve the community and work together with the people of Uvita to help it reach its full potential."[48] The language here is particularly interesting in regards to a contradiction inherent in ethical/responsible tourism: the people of Uvita are positioned as having not yet attained their full potential, but can apparently do so with the aid of the festival's resources; this paternalistic articulation operates alongside the festival's attempts to capitalize off the uniqueness of Costa Rica's existing eco-consciousness and sustainable infrastructure—which it praises as a forward-thinking trove of knowledge that can benefit

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[47] Angelique Lalonde, *Embodying* asana *in All New Places: Transformational Ethics, Yoga Tourism, and Sensual Awakenings*, doctoral dissertation, University of Victoria, 2012.

[48] "About", n.a., Envision Festival website, accessed 1 Dec 2017, https://envisionfestival.com/about-envision/.

developed societies. Such contradictions are inherent to ethical tourism: while host populations are seen to offer something uniquely beneficial to tourists in terms of know-how and life experience (*pura vida*), tourists are always already figured as responsible actors with the capacity to bestow their own (presumably better) values on the locals. Tourists are learners, but also pedagogues to host populations understood to be chronically in danger of mismanaging their stewardship of beautiful lands, whether due to moral failings or material inequity.

The actual efficacy of ethical tourism as an environmentally sustainable practice remains an important point of contention in critical tourism studies,[49] and Envision's enterprising assumption of a stewardship role in Costa Rica's Pacific Coast Southern Zone demonstrates how transnational capital can assert control over local sites and people by commanding the terrain of the ethical. This is a complicated and multi-directional process that involves performances of institutional responsibility in the form of giving back, education, and outreach; these exist in tension with extractive and destructive operations like political and labor negotiations, the festival's material footprint, and its commandeering of local services and infrastructure to ensure a smooth-running and profitable event.

Envision consistently frames itself as an exceptional site for modeling and teaching eco-conscious values:

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[49] Clare Weeden and Karla Boluk eds., *Managing Ethical Consumption in Tourism*, (London: Routledge, 2013). Mary Mostafanezhad and Kevin Hannam, *Moral Encounters in Tourism: Current Developments in Geographies of Tourism and Leisure*, (London: Routledge, 2014); David A. Fennell and David Malloy, *Codes of Ethics in Tourism: Practice, Theory, Synthesis*, (Channel View Publications, 2007).

> "From group seminars on the beach to interactive demonstrations throughout the grounds and surrounding areas, we hope to engender a lasting consciousness about how our actions and choices influence the planet and to create viable solutions to the problems we face […] Envision aims to set a standard in eco-festivals by having a significant influence on the thought process of people from all backgrounds and places of the world as well as by developing a functional model based on sustainability and community."[50]

The festival's waste management procedures are considered the most comprehensive of any major festival in the world.[51] Participants are asked to sort their own waste, and to utilize designated compost areas for relieving themselves; the festival implements a system that encourages participants to reuse silverware and dishes so as to cut down on paper waste; its stages are powered using biodiesel generators; they pay a nonprofit to plant trees as a carbon offset for participants' international travel; and, like all Transformational Festivals,

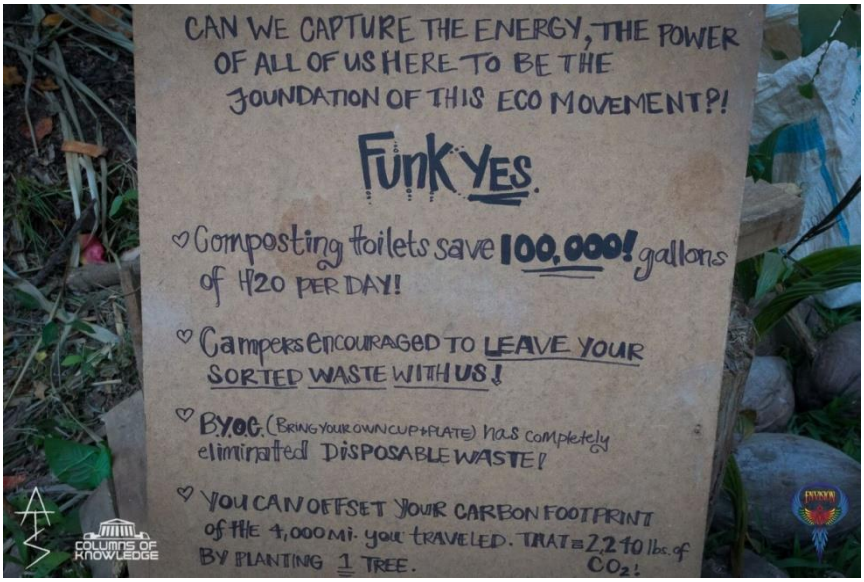

Figure 22: Sign from Envision 2015. Envision Promotional Photo. ATS Photography.

[50] "Eco Initiatives," *Envision Festival* website, n.d., accessed 8/17/16. http://envisionfestival.com/about-envision/eco-initiatives/

[51] B. Getz, "Envision Festival 2016: A Look Toward Eco-Consciousness and Education," *Live for Live Music* Website, 19 February 2016 (accessed 20 November 2016), http://liveforlivemusic.com/features/envision-festival-2016-a-look-toward-eco-consciousness-and-education/.

Envision is a leave-no-trace event where an army of volunteers cleans the festival grounds at the end.[52]

Envision also demonstrates its impact beyond the time and space of the event itself by publicizing year-round "community initiatives" and "eco initiatives" that build its local reputation as a positive institutional actor in Uvita, and an international reputation as a forward-thinking event. These initiatives always feature prominently in news stories and press releases about Envision that circulate locally and transnationally. An article from the *Tico Times* titled "Envision Kicks Off with Long Lines, High Spirits, and Community Service," details a Permaculture Action Day that took place just before the festival, which sought "to mobilize the music and festival community for a greater cause[,] and to make a difference in the community that hosts the event."[53] Likewise, Everfest's description notes that Envision is: "one of those festivals that walks the walk when it comes to ecological measures. Its location offers a natural limitation to its size and ensures that it remains sustainable for all parties—including the community."[54] Envision's website lists many self-funded initiatives that demonstrate its benefit to the region: give back days (where participants planted gardens and trees at local schools), the construction of a youth center, mentoring at-risk students in the Forjando Alas after-school program, and the creation of an environmental impact study. Envision also gave a series of financial donations to the local area, including a $13,207 donation to build a water line to service Uvita year-round, a $5000 donation to help build a new police

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[52] N.a. "Eco Initiatives," *Envision Festival* website.

[53] Erin Morris, "Envision Kicks Off with Long Lines, High Spirits, and Community Service," *Tico Times*, 27 February 2015, accessed 12 January 2019, http://www.ticotimes.net/2015/02/27/envision-kicks-off-with-long-lines-high-spirits-community-service.

[54] "Envision Festival 2019", *Everfest*, n.d., accessed 12 January 2019, https://www.everfest.com/e/envision-festival-bahia-ballena-costa-rica.

station, a $4,600 donation to the local Water Board, and unspecified donations to purchase sidewalks in Uvita and install a new roof in a local school. The value of these donations to the local area notwithstanding, it is worth noting that the listed donations on Envision's website only amount to roughly $25,000 dollars, a very small percentage for an event with a multi-million dollar annual operating budget. This is to simply point out how a minimal financial investment, when refracted through an elaborate mediascape and marketing campaign (the production of which surely eats up a far greater percentage of the annual budget), can produce an outsize representation of the event's impact, and a rosy self-assessment of its standing in the community.

Beyond its own context, Envision is part of a meta-discourse where ethical travel reinforces and disseminates the values of the developed world abroad. It does so by characterizing culturally- and historically-situated progressive causes of the First World as universal values necessary to implement globally. For instance, *The Ethical Traveler*, a non-profit San Francisco-based magazine, publishes a yearly list of ten destinations deemed to be the most "ethical," judged on categories like "environmental protection," "social welfare," "human rights," and "animal welfare." Its mission is to "use the economic clout of tourism to protect human rights and the environment" by imploring US traveling populations to be "conscious" with their traveling dollar.[55] *The Ethical Traveler* figures travel as a source of soft cultural power that can use economic leverage to propel desired global outcomes (usually causes that figure into US progressive political identities): "The idea is that community members will become aware of the value of their natural environment and cultural heritage if their income depends on it. This, in turn,

[55] "The World's Ten Best Ethical Destinations," *Ethical Traveler*, 12 January 2016, accessed 12 January 2019, http://ethicaltraveler.org/reports/destinations/the-worlds-ten-best-ethical-destinations-2016.

encourages the community to become actively involved in the conservation of these resources." *The Ethical Traveler* exemplifies how ethical tourism follows a neoliberal logic that sees market solutions as the ideal way for solving problems that stem from global inequality and the ongoing legacy of colonialism. It allows First World consumers to shape the long-term planning, policy decisions, and even the subjectivities of those on the geopolitical periphery. Rather than approach ethics as a contingent field open to contestation and reinterpretation through the encounter between people of differing contexts, it places onus on host countries to adapt to the values of monied tourists. Perhaps paradoxically it further entrenches the existing world capitalist system by reframing the vast disparities in wealth between different nations as both the cause *and* the solution to global problems. Ethical tourism in the context of destination festivals constitutes what Slavoj Zizek might call a "chocolate laxative," a way in which liberal societies refigure acts of consumption as curative steps towards eliminating social problems. When "the very thing which causes damage [is] already [in] the medicine," travel can not only be enjoyed guilt-free, but can also be seen as a way of furthering political values and critical projects.[56]

While Envision's most prominent ethical posturing relates to environmentalism, it also extends to political concerns that resonate with crowds from countries in the Global North. I found this to be especially evident in lectures and workshops on-site, which frequently braided in references to feminism, LGBTQ rights, sexual freedom, and indigenous rights, and which frequently assumed participants' wealth and access to resources through the lens of White middle class social privilege in the Euro-American

[56] Slavoj Žižek, 'A Cup of Decaf Reality', *Lacan dotcom*, 2004, accessed 6 December 2014, http://www.lacan.com/zizekdecaf.htm.

context. For example, a workshop titled "Visionary Solutions and Resilient Relationships" focused on helping participants martial their access to financial resources. The speaker repeated mantras like "money is easy to get," and advocated that participants continuously take on debt in order to further their social priorities. In addition to advocating that participants "die in debt to the system" (a loophole that, for the speaker, appeared to enable consequence-free access to capital), she also advocated that participants "activate [their] parents' financial resources."[57] The workshop called attention to privileges and possibilities created by neoliberal policies regarding personal debt, absenting the destructive potential of such debt experienced by many on the global periphery. Resonating with Democratic Socialist sensibilities, it appeared to score points by striking a rebellious tone vis-à-vis the world capitalist system (since the plan involved never paying debt accrued); however, it also promoted the value of unfettered personal access to resources at the expense of community concerns (like the finances of one's parents, or questions of who ultimately pays for the debt).

Within lectures, the telegraphing of liberal political sensibilities often came through brief asides made by speakers to build a rapport with the crowd, and generate applause. At a lecture entitled "Ways to Spread the Movement," which was an inspirational speech that proselytized for Transformational Festival culture, the presenter—who was a White woman from the United States—interrupted her discussion to monologue about a series of desires: "*I want* to be able to wear whatever the fuck I want and not be afraid of being raped; *I want* to leave a bag, and not feel like the shit's getting stolen; *I want* to escape a world where women can't love other women; *I want* to

[57] Author's field notes, 26 Feb 2016.

live in a world where people aren't tied down to their community. Why the nuclear family?" The aside slowly built up steam, gaining applause and whoops from different people in the crowd with each different issue she mentioned. It seemed to not only foment a sense of Envision's identitarian inclusivity, but figured the movement as a redemptive project capable of overwriting a flawed society and erecting an idealized world free from the historical exigencies of the present. While I did not disagree with the speaker's desires, I found it troublesome that Costa Rican land seemed to figure as an ahistorical *tabula rasa* suitable for imprinting the "enlightened" values of First-World subjects.

One last way where I saw these values deployed was through staged performances. For example, while waiting in line to enter the festival in 2016, participants were treated to a male drag performance by an event volunteer (who appeared to be from the US or Canada) dressed in a red kimono with high heels, a blond wig, and a corset. In a playful manner she briefed attendees on some of the "rules" of the event space, instructing them to conserve water (never to shower off using the drinking spigots placed around the grounds), self-sort recyclables, and use the compost toilets provided. She also warned participants to engage in safe sex, simultaneously satirizing the event's spirituality with ironic campiness: "Be careful, and always buckle up. I've got four children from guys around the festival telling me that they're *tantric*. He may be able to make your *kundalini* flip around in circles, but don't let him in there without a love glove."[58] What was interesting about this staged encounter was that it called attention to Envision as a sexually-charged environment, where libidinal desire was linked to the

[58] Author's field notes, 25 Feb 2016.

sense of encounter with the Other. It also satirized the festival's Transformational ethos in a way that relied upon participants' familiarity with the ironic campiness of urban drag culture. In addition to telegraphing the space as LGBTQ-friendly—perhaps reassuring nervous travelers moving through the heavily Catholic Southern Pacific Zone—the performance's locational non-particularity (mixing the Japanese kimono with Indian spiritual terminology) authorized an orientalist gaze that framed the event as an expression of radical alterity from the West.

Lectures and workshops at Envision feature social values that resonate with cosmopolitan urbanites from developed nations, but my project here is not to critique those values in and of themselves, nor to suggest that they do not exist in Costa Rica's Southern Pacific Zone. Rather, I am trying to show how Envision's capacity to perform as an "ethical" festival—especially when its image travels transnationally—relies on its ability to hail political sensibilities that are familiar and comforting to participants, even as it constructs a fetish of *pura vida* that appears as a radical departure from that socio-political context. Envision functions like a cosmopolitan node that bears certain elements of the place that houses it, but otherwise looks very different from the surrounding community. Although Envision creates value by purporting to offer a novel and "conscious" way of engaging with exotic destinations, its conception of the "ethical" is singular, firm, familiar, and predicated on the political and psychic priorities of paying customers.

The Festival Spills Out

Although Envision is a bounded space—an island unto itself where only paying customers and the "right people" (as Jimenez put it) can enter—its impact spill out

beyond the event frame to materially impact nearby civic areas in both intentional and unintentional ways. From the perspective of tourists, this impact and the social friction it creates are often invisible, since the event's extensive production elements focus attention and energy onto the myriad activities available within the event grounds; this minimizes participants' engagement with off-site areas and their denizens during the festival, so that the only Ticos many tourists encounter are festival participants themselves, or employees who seemingly attest to a positive net relationship between the festival and the locals. When I was on-site, the only hint of a problematic relationship between Envision and its surroundings came during a half-hour shutdown of the event's sound stages; this brief but conspicuous interval (which came in the middle of a headlining set on the last day) arose because local government officials were finagling with event organizers over noise complaints. However, this moment passed quickly and, perhaps due to a technical change, or some other reason (the scuttlebutt was that someone was looking for a bribe), the sound stages began playing once again—an unaware participant might not have even realized that something was amiss.

However, by examining what we might call "para-festival" spaces—those sites just outside Rancho La Merced that were frequented by participants looking to shop or buy supplies—further traces of friction between Envision and its local context could be found. In Uvita, for instance, where each day long lines of tourists wearing only swimsuits and bikinis stood in front of the bank and grocery store in the town square, a nearby bulletin board bore a sign reading: "Visitors, respect our community: Wear clothes in public; no sex in public […]."[59] The sign clearly spoke to frustrations or

[59] Author's field notes, 26 Feb 2016.

anxieties that outlined a perceived disjuncture between the values of participants and the values of the community. It was also ignored; I several times witnessed people quickly changing clothes in public in order to avoid paying to access a restaurant bathroom (or even taking time to find a spot out of public view). Likewise, when I interviewed a trader in Dominical, a middle-aged woman whose kiosk sat on a beach frequented by participants pre- and post-festival, she described her frustrations with "everyone [being] naked" and "everyone having [s]ex".[60] These examples point to the perception that physical and affective elements seemingly contained within Envision leak out into the public spaces nearby; these spillovers are neither easily quantified (in the way that Envision's own material donations to the locale can be) nor contained by the event. Uvita resident Ester Vindas reported to the *Tico Times*: "The community is affected, first because of the example [attendees set]. Our children think it is normal to act and dress like they do, and that's not our culture, with so much freedom[.] The drug use [by attendees] increases [each year]… There are already drugs in this community, so we have to work on prevention. We are affected by sound and visual pollution, [and also] the flora and fauna, because this is a wetland and nobody has taken it into account."[61]

Furthermore, despite Envision's donations, action days, and opportunities for local businesses, many people I spoke with believed that its economic benefit was conditional and uneven. Some donations to the area appeared more as a *quid pro quo*. In 2015, Envision purchased a water pump for Uvita, ensuring a steady flow of water at festival time, but also for the town year-round; however, this project was only initiated

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[60] Author's field notes, 24 Feb 2016.

[61] Amanda Zuñiga, "Community Debates Envision Festival: Boon or Threat?", *The Tico Times*, 2 Mar 2016, http://www.ticotimes.net/2016/03/02/behind-evision-real-threat-community.

when the festival's own overuse of Uvita's existing water supply briefly cut off water access for its constituents.[62] Likewise, while Envision creates significant economic opportunities for dozens of professional taxis to shuffle participants to and from the event each day, in 2016 it began to require that all drivers work for a single approved cab company (participant safety and insurance purposes were cited as the main reasons for the change). This monopolization of a necessary event service forced drivers in Uvita's already existing informal taxi sector to pay a premium in order to conduct their business, and these exclusive rights were enforced via Envision's relationship with local police. Furthermore, the outsourcing of taxi services allowed drivers from all parts of the country to enter the local market, creating greater competition and keeping prices down for participants.

Business opportunities nearby the festival are similarly uneven. Hotels, grocery stores, and restaurants all do very well during the event, but small-scale traders face a complicated terrain. The most lucrative sites for vending are located inside the festival itself, but because of their exorbitant cost, these prime locations tend to be purchased by international vendors or Ticos from urban areas. Instead, many local traders (as well as a significant influx of itinerant traders who follow the tourist crowds) set up along a one kilometer pathway that leads from Envision's back entrance to the publicly accessible Playa Hermosa beach. During the day, these areas are hotspots of commerce for jewelry, clothing, gems, pipes, food, ice cream, and anything else a traveling festie might need; the stiff competition forces prices to remain significantly lower than people selling the exact same wares inside the event. An interesting consequence of this informal vending

[62] Author's field notes, 28 February 2015.

operation is the uniquely demanding labor required of traders and their families during festival time. They cannot afford entrance into Envision, and because the back entrance closes soon after sundown, they are forced to remain camped out in the jungle alongside their wares overnight (lest someone else take their space). An informal community arises to sustain these traders during the festival's duration; families camp out together, with children and spouses spending the day cooking cheap communal meals and washing clothes so that others can work full-time. While there was profit to be made, the work appeared (to me at least) as uniquely intense and demanding.

The friction between Envision's own ethics and the concerns of local residents became particularly visible during a protest that took place during the 2016 event. On the festival's penultimate day, some twenty to sixty people (accounts differ) marched four kilometers from Uvita to the festival entrance in scorching heat, waving signs that read "*No más Envision*" and "Stop Envision."[63] The protestors framed their demonstration as a rejection of the drug culture and sexual liberalism brought into the area by tourists, a framing that allowed festival organizers and local businesspeople to casually dismiss their concerns as conservative religious puritanism. Organizers had heard rumblings that an action would take place, and even opened a "department of conflict resolution between the festival and the community of Uvita" to head off a clash.[64] So when protesters reached the event entrance, they were greeted by Envision's organizers, who, in a magnanimous posture (and, perhaps, trying to stave off a major public relations problem

[63] The recorded number of protesters present varies between the two news sources that covered the protest. Amanda Zuñiga, "Community debates Envision Festival; Rico, "Uvita Neighbours Peacefully protested Against Envision Festival," *Q Costa Rica*, 28 February 2016, http://qcostarica.com/uvita-neighbours-peacefully-protested-against-envision-festival/

[64] Luigi Jimenez, Interview with author, 8 August 2016, Skype.

for a "conscious" festival) brought out fruit and water, and offered the protestors a chance to air their grievances. The protesters reportedly refused, telling reporters "they're trying to buy us [off], but values have no price" before eventually leaving on a chartered bus.

In what we might call an ethnographic faux pas, I missed this protest entirely as I shuffled to and from lectures during the day. I only heard about it on-site through some word-of-mouth rumblings, and verified it later through newspaper accounts. My engagement with this protest—through its traces—resembles the way that most other Envision participants would have encountered this challenge to the event's own ethical pretense. From a vantage point inside the idyllic event it was easy to focus on the inspirational speeches on environmental activism, the copious conservational gestures, the organizers' plentiful "thank you's" to the local community announced from booming speakers, the urban Ticos felicitously engaging with event activities; doing so created an overwhelming affect of "ethicality" that obfuscated ongoing ethical conundrums Envision inaugurated.

The local community's protest and complaints against Envision demonstrated the complicated and contradictory nature of ethical tourism. Ideals like "sustainability," "eco-consciousness," or "moral tourism" can result in concrete efforts and initiatives that help ameliorate some unsavory side effects created by typical global travel. But for-profit events that must prioritize their own financial well-being frequently leave in place (or even capitalize off) existing structural inequality, and create external spillovers that unequally benefit local populations and foment social divisions. Tourism-driven, Envision approaches ethics not as an ongoing and inherently fraught engagement with a heterogeneous local community, but as a universalized ideal framed through the

ideological priorities of monied travelers; this allows the event to build value for itself by creating a comparison to less "conscious" festivals and traditional modes of tourism. Ethics, in this sense, are another means of abstracting a place, and allowing it to become mobile and calculable as a source of capital. The ethical imprimatur and geopiety that mobile neoliberal agents can claim at no cost to privilege build from imaginaries of unmediated engagements with place, and, as the next section explores, frequently gesture to the indigenous as an authentic expression of geography.

Indigenous Muse(ology)

> If you are on the path of connecting with the earth, you are going to naturally esteem and listen to those people who have been carrying that lineage forward. I'm speaking about the current indigenous people on the planet. Quite often, festivals are taking place on native lands and the festivals themselves are touching into ancient tribal ways of being. With Re-Indigenization we're exploring a re-encounter between the neo-tribal festival communities and representatives of indigenous communities, and the learning curve of how to do that right. How to do that in a good way, in right relationship[.] In a way that is not replaying the dynamics of colonialism, but is attempting to heal those dynamics.
>
> – Jeet-Kei Leung[65]

In Transformational Festival culture, indigeneity appears as an identity category that is, in a contradictory way, bound to geography and history, but also contingent and mobile. Leung's quote, for instance, positions indigenous people as "carrying the lineage" of the earth, and thus "naturally" worthy of esteem; at the same time, festivals allow non-indigenous people to "touch [i]nto ancient tribal ways of being," to reawaken indigenous sensibilities seemingly present (if dormant) in everyone. Indigeneity operates not as a stable marker of history and heritage, or as a political call-to-arms, but as a contradictory mode of proto-human embodiment at once latent, particular, transferable,

[65] Saphir Lewis, "An Interview with Jeet-Kei Leung", *Festival Fire: Gatherings for Cultural Transformation*, 19 Apr 2013, http://festivalfire.com/jeet-kei-leung/.

and precious. Events like Envision deploy this supple sense of indigeneity to play up their own locational uniqueness and ethical bona fides, to build variety into their programming, to demonstrate a capacity to deliver forms of difference that can be acquired as cultural capital, and to affectively charge festival activities as authentic encounters with humanity, place, and the self.

But there is a tense politics of difference at work in this flexible conception of indigeneity, politics that can begin to be untangled through ethnographic examination of

Figure 23: Luna Stage, 2015. Designer Ernest "Hoodie" Salinas. MASS EDMC.

how indigenous objects, discourse, and people get deployed within the time and space of the event. For destination festival participants these politics are often masked through the propagation of an ethos that reframes tourist encounters from an extractive leisure pursuit to an ongoing experimental search for "right relationship" with colonized people.[66] Interestingly, this concept of right relationship—which I encountered frequently during

[66] The term "right relationship" also comes up in published interviews with festival organizers (http://festivalfire.com/elliot-rasenick/), and appears on event websites (http://2016.luciditiyfestival.com/six-year-story/).

my fieldwork in lectures, informal conversations, and interviews—always gets articulated as an ongoing state of Being, rather than a singular objective (as in "*a* right relationship" or "*the* ethical"). Though I have encountered its use within the field of indigenous studies, its origins are unclear;[67] it has valence in Quaker and Unitarian Universalist churches, and its popularization may stem from the folk wisdom book *Medicine of the Cherokee: The Way of Right Relationship* by J.T. and Michael Garrett, members of the Eastern Band Cherokee of North Carolina.[68] Although right relationship always gets defined abstractly, it usually gets deployed as a symbolic depiction of sustainable engagements between modern subjects and the environment, with indigenous people figuring as vulnerable extensions of the environment that testify to the violence and degradation that attended political modernity. Thus, the idea of seeking right relationship parallels the impulse of ethical tourism in its capacity to abstract place and build transferable value.

One important way Envision attempts to model right relationship is by integrating members of the Boruca indigenous tribe into the festival. The Since 2014, it has invited ten to fifteen representatives of the 2000-member tribe (whose protected reserve is located about an hour east of Envision in the Talamanca Mountains) to lead workshops and perform ceremonies for participants.[69] Workshops have included subjects like mask-making and Boruca cosmology, and each year several members of the tribe perform excerpts from an annual mask festival called the *Juego de los Diablitos* (The Little

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[67] Alesha Claveria, "Resistance, Reclamation, Humor and Healing," conference presentation, *ASTR Forum* (2018).
[68] J.T. Garrett and Michael Planusta Garrett, *Medicine of the Cherokee: The Way of Right Relationship*, Rochester, VT: Bear and Company Publishing (1996).
[69] N.a., "About", n.d., accessed 18 Apr 2019, http://www.boruca.org/en/about-boruca/.

Devils' Game), a celebration of the Boruca people's resistance to Spanish colonization and "ability to maintain an identity rich with their own traditions in the face of foreign influence."[70] Boruca people have also advised in the construction of the festival space, and donated labor and materials to help build a tribal presence on the event grounds.

Although only a handful of Boruca actually come to the festival, Boruca symbols feature prominently throughout the event. In 2014 and 2015 the design for Envision's Luna Stage—its main stage for musical headliners—was inspired by Boruca cultural icons. The 2015 stage featured a massive sculpture built from locally-collected driftwood[71] called "Mama Jaguar," (Figure 23) which was designed to fuse together global systems of spirituality using Boruca culture as an anchor. Designed by San Francisco-based sculpture artists Ernest Hoodie Salinas and Tigre Bailando, "Mama Jaguar" served as a spectacular totemic figure that colored the main dance area with a sacred feel. The piece's most memorable feature is its jaguar head and deep yellow, glowing eyes, which reference an important symbol in the Boruca totemic tradition (ceremonial masks often depict the jaguar). But the sculpture also cites other global spiritual systems: the animal head stands atop a humanistic body as a nod to Egyptian cosmology; the figure kneels with its hands in the prayer position as a reference to Buddha; it is multi-limbed, citing the Hindu tradition; and the triple-moon projection screen behind the piece references the European pagan representation of the three-formed

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[70] Ibid.

[71] Tellingly, Costa Rica has laws against the collection of this driftwood. According to an organizer who wished to remain anonymous, the driftwood used to create the sculpture had to be collected illegally in secretive nighttime operations. I found this a particularly telling example of how Envision's aesthetic concerns sometimes trumped protocols of felicitous and sustainable interactions with its locale. It is also interesting to consider how this illicit activity was used to materialize the designer's desire to produce "environmentally inspired locally sourced, custom stage designs, and high quality art for the creation of transformational spaces." In this case, to fulfill the ethic of local sourcing, local laws had to be circumvented. "Hoodie Salinas" n.d., accessed 18 Apr 2019, http://www.hoodiesalinas.com/.

divine goddess.[72] In 2014, the Luna Stage was more directly modeled off of the Boruca balsa-wood mask tradition for which the tribe is most known (Figure 24). Upon being commissioned by Envision to create the stage, Bailando and Salinas met with Boruca elders and artisans at their tribal reserve to "ask permission to make a piece that was based off their tradition and their culture." As Bailando described it: "[T]hey granted us that permission, and it was a beautiful experience of being understood […] that we were trying to honor their culture and not just steal or exploit the culture."[73] I take Bailando at his word, and see his request for permission and Envision's integration of Boruca culture as examples of how the festival negotiates a desire for right relationship with indigenous peoples while also self-consciously aestheticizing their culture in the service of event production.

It is important to consider power dynamics at play in such negotiations, and to point out that lending tribal authenticity to tourist activities carries special danger for indigenous groups. As Margaret Werry has noted, such redeployments threaten to drain heritage of its specificity, historical significance, and symbolic power by redeploying them in a neoliberal marketplace that caters to consumers who can effortlessly detach from the web of cultural associations that sustain community and resistance.[74] Boruca get construed as a "culture" on the same terms as festival culture—a shallow and elective tie based on common aesthetics and ideology, rather than a generational form of kinship connected to a particular place with existential and political stakes.

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[72] Tigre Bailando, Interview with author, Skype call, 16 July 2016.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Margaret Werry, *The Tourist State: Performing Leisure, Liberalism, and Race in New Zealand*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 185.

But these risks compete against the financial imperatives for indigenous groups to strategically utilize their culture as a resource for securing a future within the global economic order. For Boruca, sustainability relates to the imperiled possibility of the

Figure 24: Luna Stage, 2014. Designer Ernest "Hoodie" Salinas. Envision Festival Promotional Image.

continuation of their community (a far cry from the sustainability of ethical tourism that projects a neoliberal fantasy of playing and consuming without feeling bad about it). As John and Jean Comaroff have eloquently argued, for many indigenous peoples branding their ethnicity and deploying it in the marketplace has become a crucial means of survival; contrary to a binaristic perspective that might characterize the marketization of ethnicity as a simple neocolonial mode of domination or exploitation that inherently tarnishes pristine cultural identities, branding ethnicity can also serve as a mode of reflection or self-construction for the ethnic group—of *producing* and *feeling* ethnicity under conditions of neoliberalism.[75]

In this regard, we should consider Envision as a fraught site of indigenous museology where Boruca culture gets publicized and marketed in a tensive relationship

[75] John and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnicity, Inc.*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2009), 9.

between tribal desires and the event's own organizational, financial, and aesthetic prerogatives. While Envision utilizes Boruca bodies and culture as theatrical means of bolstering its exotic and spiritual feel, it also provides tribal members opportunities to sell crafts, advertise their reservation as a post-festival travel destination, and actively and corporeally craft narratives of Boruca culture as they enter transnational circulation. For example, the festival dedicated a slot at its Village Stage to the performance of an excerpt from the *Juego de los Diablitos* (about 100 people attended); afterwards, a performer used a microphone to explain a bit about the performance, and offered interested participants a "special invitation" to visit the Village of Boruca. Envision generated value for itself by advertising this cultural exhibition, and outlined Boruca culture as an ethno-commodity; but we should not dismiss this as cynical cultural appropriation in a victim-perpetrator duality, and instead consider how the uneven dynamics of global financial opportunity allowed this commodification of culture to appear valuable for both parties.

Figure 25: *Within* by Laguz Lykamo. Photo provided with permission from the artist.

One clear illustration of the complicated politics of culture, commodification, and live display as they relate to Boruca culture at Envision could be seen in the festival's 2016 Visionary Art Gallery. Art galleries are common in Transformational Festivals, operating as sites of commerce, exhibition, and immersive experience. They are usually placed within earshot of a sound

stage, and feature art styles designed to produce haptic interactions aided by chemical intoxicants. Galleries often feature indigenous bodies as the subject matter for works of art, like this example from Envision 2016 by Costa Rican painter Laguz Lykamo (who is based in San José and not indigenous). Entitled *Within* (Figure 25), the painting depicts an enchanting rendition of a Native American woman, who is naked, smoking weed, and hybridized with a fantastical natural environment (including insect antennae, elf ears, and tree branch wings sprouted at the back); Lykamo explained to me that the piece depicts his own struggle with anxiety and depression, reminding him that in tough times one should relax, smoke some weed, and "go within." Explained thus, the artwork clearly resonates with the theme of "reindigenization," pointing to how the encounter with indigeneity allows for a parallel encounter with one's innermost authentic self.[76] Of course, it must also be pointed out that the image has nothing to do with actual native people, and everything to do with the global transmission of cultural kitsch. Taken up by Lykamo in Costa Rica, it owes to a long White American tradition of producing signs of Indianness deployed for various self-making procedures.

Figure 26: Photo of a Boruca mask and body draping at Envision's Visionary Gallery. MASS EDMC.

Keeping in mind that much of Envision's gallery art similarly utilized indigeneity in its semiotics, we should

[76] Laguz Lykamo, Interview with author, Skype call, 17 Mar 2016.

consider how the same space displayed a costume piece from the *Juego de los Diablitos* performance. The wooden, feathered jaguar mask and body draping had an entire panel to itself (Figure 26), and faced directly outward from the gallery's main entrance so that anyone who entered was likely to see it. Of the dozens of visual art works that hung on the walls, with prices ranged up to four thousand dollars, this was the only piece that was not for sale. The presence of this non-purchasable object on the wall of an art gallery predicated on aesthetic consumption speaks to an awkward museological function provided to Envision not only by Boruca culture, but multiple indigenous identities. Existing in two registers—first, as with everything else on the walls, as a piece of art, but also as a cultural artifact that resisted financial valuation—the costume shows how Transformational Festivals offer up culture as commodities on a global marketplace, but also outline an ethical limit-point for this market. In this way, they help reconcile participants' search for right relationship with the continued pursuit of capital in object and immaterial forms. Definitive parsing of the dramaturgical significance this costume piece held for participants' experience of the gallery, and the symbolic work it did in the context of the wider festival, is not so easy; but this example points to how Transformational Festivals operate as ambivalent interfaces between heritage, culture, consumption, and technologies of display.

While Envision gives Boruca people opportunities to shape the narrative and image of their culture, and to disseminate them in ways that might be conducive to ongoing tribal material objectives, it also controls the terrain and format of this museology. Part of a festival's charm as a medium of cultural exposure is that, as opposed to museums or cultural villages, its social encounters (particularly those between

indigenous and non-indigenous people) appear organic—like moments of kismet enabled by transnational travel, common aesthetics, and parallel ethico-philosophical sensibilities between people of radically different identity positions. While not discounting this entirely, it is also important to point out that managed operations help materialize these seemingly-spontaneous (read: authentic) interactions. Boruca people who attend Envision must fit their cultural offerings into the event's time slots and format, and in some cases are asked to sign contracts designed to maintain organizers' desired aesthetic. A Boruca elder I spoke with (working through a translator) named Menito, who led the workshop on Boruca cosmology in 2016, expressed frustration at being contractually obligated to man an information booth on Boruca Village for several hours per day; curiously, he noticed that other information booths run by White participants went unmanned for large swaths of time, and he surmised that these participants' familiarity with the subculture helped them understand the elective nature of their contractual obligation in a way that was not made explicit to him.[77] This example problematizes the romantic notion that festivals operate as egalitarian interfaces between indigenous people and non-indigenous people felicitously seeking right relationship, since it indicates how events are governed by subcultural codes and knowledge to which Boruca people have

Figure 27: Drumming circle at the Sacred Fire at Envision. *The Costa Rica News* (unattributed).

[77] Author's field notes, 27 February 2016.

unequal access. Furthermore, while I suspect that Envision does not require that its lecture and workshop leaders maintain sunny dispositions, the momentum of festive excitement, combined with the prospect of future participation (and its financial potential), produces a powerful imperative to maintain an affable positivity and swallow frustrations for the event's duration.

Another aspect that complicates Envision's integration of Boruca culture into its environment has to do with the festival's proliferation of symbols, beliefs, rituals, and icons from non-Boruca people. While Boruca culture anchors and authenticates Envision's local connections and progressive ethos, other indigenous and faux-indigenous elements abstract this locational specificity, and mobilize indigeneity as a participatory practice and aesthetic disposition. Indigenous icons provide inspiration for the production of immersive environments that create haptic experiences for participants—like a zone that consisted of dozens of dream catchers (modeled from Ojibwe culture) hanging from tree limbs. Copious interactive rituals and workshops led by teams of indigenous people, non-native Ticos, and White people—with titles like "Ancestor Circle," "Medicine Ceremonies," and "Primal Technology: Roots to Our Shared Heritage"—sample and remix diverse tribal traditions and New Age imitations, and link them to personal epiphanies and concrete skills that build identity and cultural capital for participants. As forms of cultural production, such activities rely less on identitarian authenticity than on the ability of speakers to confidently and convincingly cover material in an attention-grabbing manner, while also linking it to subcultural aesthetics and political commitments. Envision even features a ceremonial Fire Circle (Figure 27) continuously tended from sundown to sunrise, which serves as the locus for

ongoing participatory rituals that integrate objects, music, and embodied practices from a variety of world cultures, while also remaining open to spontaneous modulation by passers-by that join in. Elective, geographically-situated, and also imaginative, such performances function primarily to enchant the space of Envision, building an affectively charged experience of place.

One of the most interesting ways in which indigeneity appears as a mobile and transferable trope at Envision is the presence of a "Free Blue Clay Bath" station that allows participants to lather themselves in restorative blue clay (Figure 28). Envision's website advertises the clay as being "native to the rainforest [that] has been used for centuries by the land's indigenous peopl[e] as a natural remedy for various body ailments."[78] The clay has a functional value as an exfoliant, antiseptic, body temperature regulator, sunscreen, and insect repellant, which attests to indigenous people as keepers of specialized knowledge that can be rediscovered in the present as a sustainable technology with social benefit. It also has imaginative value in its ability to "make you look like a badass otherworldly creature," helping to enchant the space of Envision by proliferating blue bodies whose ambulation augments the jungle aesthetic and contributes to travelers' sense of dislocation.[79] Envision's website notes that, by the

Figure 28: Blue clay at Envision. Photo by Katia Alferova.

[78] Andrée Pontbriand, "The Healing Properties of Blue Clay, Envision Festival website, 10 Feb 2017, https://envisionfestival.com/healing-properties-blue-clay/.
[79] Ibid.

end of the festival, "it is common to find yourself surrounded by tribes of beautiful, [*Avatar*]-like mud people." The word choice of "tribes" is significant because it seems to metaphorically link participants' donning of the mud to an experimental assumption of indigenous identity—but although this identity is anchored in the Costa Rican rainforests, it is also injected with Hollywood-inspired fantasy.[80] Easily washed off with water, the blue clay points to a conception of indigeneity that is not only transferable, but also easily disposable and in service to the production of an enchanting spatial affect.

These examples point to a thorny problematic that circumscribes indigenous peoples' elective and strategic participation at Envision: although the event offers edifying and potentially profitable ways to construct, control, and transnationally disseminate a branded form of ethnicity, it also creates conditions where that identity's historic specificity gets submerged in a sea of diverse and sometimes fantastical cultural effluvia. In the festival's frenetic environment, constructed to allow participants' interest to latch onto a new vector of cultural difference after just a few small steps from the last, Boruca and other indigenous cultures become radically relativized flotsam that service the identitarian needs of privileged and mobile world travelers. Cultural difference appears valuable not for intrinsic reasons, but for its capacity to perform as popontology—as an engaging, inclusive, and sustainable alternative to tourists' normative state of Being.

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[80] *Avatar* is a particularly interesting filmic association here because its subject matter mirrors the anti-colonial stance and redemptive narrative seen in Transformational Festival culture. However, as many, including Dominic Alessio and Kristen Meredith have discussed, the film also replicates a colonialist mindset by portraying the blue-skinned Na'vi tribe as "one-dimensional, environmentalist, noble savage caricatures." "Decolonising James Cameron's Pandora: Imperial History and Science Fiction," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 13.2 (Fall 2012), *Project MUSE*, doi: 10.1353/cch.2012.0015.

Fraternal Network Tourism

The exhibitionary function of indigenous people in destination festivals relates to how participants' transnational mobility comes into contact with the frame of emplacement. While places like Harmony Park fetishize this emplacement, destination festivals prioritize movement as the putative source of spiritual transformation. Existing scholarly literature on transnational raves and festivals echoes this; it has taken a particular interest in the psychic space of traveling bodies, often deploying a liberatory subtext that emphasizes the unique capacity such events have to build diverse, mobile social networks that resist subjectivities tethered to the nation-state. Anthony D'Andrea, writing about migrational partying hubs like Ibiza, Portugal or Goa, India (which were crucial forerunners to today's destination festivals) theorizes that globetrotting ravers form cosmopolitan communities that shed the yoke of national attachments and social conditioning, becoming "expressive expatriates" who model a postnational, postidentitarian positionality.[81] Similarly, Graham St. John suggests that participants travel to destination festivals (such as the biennial Boom Festival in Portugal, another premiere Transformational event) to be exposed to difference, to have their sensibilities rhizomatically reconditioned, and to find "accomplices in aesthetic fronts."[82] In this discourse the nomadism of the festival/rave tourist functions as a counterpoint to two paradigmatic figures of global modernity that stand in for arborial, territorialized sensibilities: the sedentary nationalist, and the ambivalent consumer of packaged mass tourism experiences. Frequently reaching to Deleuze and Guattari's affectionate

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[81] Anthony D'Andrea, *Global Nomads*, 3-6.

[82] Graham St. John, "Introduction," In *The Local Scenes and Global Cultures of Psytrance*, Graham St. John Ed., (London: Routledge, 2011), 2.

perspective on chemical experimentation and physical mobility, D'Andrea and St. John implicitly endorse the alternative, specialized mode of travel that destination events provide, emplotting transnational ravers as scions of globalized postmodernity's progressive potential.

However, by focusing on the social freedoms and psychic breakthroughs of tourists as they move through foreign spaces, this literature tends to downplay the continued valency of racial and national privilege that operate on a geopolitical scale. It obfuscates not only the financial and military force that secures this privilege, but also event culture's constructive power within local sites, which allows privilege to territorially expand. As Envision exemplifies, festival and party hubs not only create demands upon local communities, they contribute to the steady construction of expatriate enclaves, infrastructure to service them, and security to protect them. This is especially true for global nomads in psychedelic subcultures, whose values often radically clash with those of the host community, and whose interest in chemical experimentation usually requires the subversion of local laws. Arun Saldanha (writing about trance parties in Goa) argues that psychedelic culture is "raced white," and that when it travels to non-White societies its acolytes perform a number of operations to secure the conditions for felicitous psychic experimentation: these include gaining access to drugs, building safe spaces to party, and recruiting tolerant locals, all while relying on subtle operations of racialized self-segregation in order to reinforce feelings of safety and security.[83] The presence of such cultures has a profound effect on daily life in international party hubs, bringing changes to social conditions regardless of local citizens' ability to participate in

[83] Arun Saldanha, *Psychedelic White: Goa Trance and the Viscosity of Race*, (University of Minnesota Press 2007), 15.

or capitalize upon these changes. Providing an important counter-perspective to D'Andrea and St. John's faith in the psychic nomadism inaugurated by rave/festival culture, Saldanha outlines out how social barriers of race and nationality fail to wither away during tourism experiences, even those predicated on the inclusive ethos of PLUR (Peace, Love, Unity, Respect).

With this in mind, here I will consider the role destination festivals play as theatrical anchors for travel experiences that extend beyond the time and space of events themselves. I am interested in understanding how such events produce intense forms of temporary community among subcultures that inspire collective modes of moving through foreign spaces, but I also wish to consider the consequences of this form of travel for local populations. I suggest that destination festivals inspire a contingent mode of tourism that involves spontaneously acquiring companions, pooling resources, and moving along pre-established routes through lodgings and adventures that resonate with subcultural values. As with package tourism, this allows travelers to move through foreign spaces while maintaining familiar conventions of accommodation, cuisine, art, and social mores; but the improvised nature of this travel, and the particularity of subcultural aesthetics and social experiences masks these routes' artificiality, maintaining the pretense of an alternative travel experience organically open to the traveler's own physical and psychic momentum.

I will provisionally call this form of travel "fraternal network tourism," building off Aihwa Ong's little-explicated concept of "fraternal network capitalism." Ong describes how Chinese migrants forge transnational circuits of production and support between migrant and mainland communities, which build on common ethnicity and

shared culture to help individuals navigate the legal and social terrain of foreign countries in which they reside.[84] Likewise, I use fraternal network tourism to highlight how the spontaneous camaraderie and friendship that emerge during destination events provide travelers an ongoing base of material and emotional support, and a networked access to resources as they move through international space. The "fraternalism" I point to acknowledges the particularly tenacious solidarities that arise through niche aesthetics, and not, as in Ong's work, to ethnic or kinship ties (though Ong and I commonly use fraternalism in a non-gendered sense). These feelings of aesthetic mutuality can cut across identity boundaries like race, nationality, and language—though they sometimes mirror their firmness.

Fraternal Network Tourism relates to, but is different from Free Independent Traveler tourism strategies deployed by State and private agencies to attract patrons to customized tourism experiences.[85] Rather than framing the traveler as individual customer in a dyad with the service provider (a commodity relationship) it poses tourism as a horizontal assemblage in which tourists are providers of resources to each other—a kind of utopian economic model. Festivals commonly deploy a language of kinship funneled through the ties of artistic sensibilities and ethics, rather than blood; this is evident in colloquially referring to one's "festival family" or the common greeting of "welcome home" upon entering a Transformational Festival. At the core of this familial closeness is the principle of artistic exceptionalism, where creativity is seen as a unique vehicle for overcoming difference, and thus a rebellious sensibility within a divisive and

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[84] Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship* (1999), 7, 144-45.
[85] Margaret Werry, *The Tourist State: Performing Leisure, Liberalism, and Race in New Zealand* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 170-174.

exploitative global capitalist system. This perspective's critical posturing vis-à-vis structural systems of power, and its reflexive forging of unlikely cultural ties parallels what Leela Gandhi calls "affective communities." Describing the improbable friendships forged between colonial subjects and the rare (often marginalized) citizens of metropoles who managed to shed imperialist structures of feeling, Gandhi pointed to art as a fertile space for building "a politics of friendship," which also stands as a metaphor for dissident cross-cultural collaboration.[86]

Envision operationalizes a romantic conception of artistic experiences in the festival setting as unique means of bridging cultural difference. It curates an especially diverse arts-oriented crowd predicated as much on identitarian difference as on unity, flow, and getting along. This parlays the mobility and financial privileges accrued by participants living in global economic centers into exhilarating experiences of crossing thresholds, moving outside one's comfort zone, and forging unlikely cross-cultural friendships. Such friendships often arise from shared artistic experiences, and appear as kismet or epiphany. One way we might visualize this is through a participatory art wall present each year at Envision (Figure 29). The art wall begins as twenty yards of wooden panels covered by a long black cloth, with sets of paint, brushes, buckets of water, and a cleanup station placed before them; for the duration of the festival participants can paint the wall at their leisure. Volunteers continuously refill supplies, and substitute a new panel when one becomes too saturated (interestingly, completed panels are placed along a swath of the treeline nearby the Luna Stage, not only providing color for the dancing space and an archive of the weekend, but also helping to wall off an unsecure area where

[86] Leela Gandi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 20016).

non-payers might sneak in). Hundreds of participants paint the art wall during the festival—you are as likely to find a toddler fingerpainting as to find a professional painter crafting something ferociously intricate. Art works intersect and build off one another, often radically transforming in size and scale. A toddler's scribble might suddenly become the base pattern for another participant's depiction of sacred geometry; phrases scrawled in English and Spanish become the themes for entire panels of work. This creative entanglement often facilitated conversations between strangers from different countries; I witnessed a couple occasions where people who did not speak each other's language improvised their way through a co-painting, which seemed to provide a form of communication and connection. The art wall scripts continuous and relational artistic flow, and uses this creative activity as a social interstice; each individual's painting becomes a contact point for another's improvisation, and this synergistic experience serves as the basis for ongoing conversation and connection. The art wall reflects an overall ethos of Envision that is an important component of fraternal network tourism, where aesthetics appear to productively and affectingly bridge barriers of difference. As with many of the festival's participatory activities, it functioned as what Robin Bernstein calls a "scriptive thing," rehearsing an ethic of improvisation and collaboration.[87]

The emotional connections created through artistic practice at Envision have intrinsic value, but they also function as a social network with the potential to generate access to material resources. This much was made clear by participants' frequent use of the festival's stages as platforms for self-promotion. Perhaps unsurprisingly, lecture and workshop speakers often used their presentations as opportunities to market products,

[87] Robin Bernstein, "Scriptive Things", in *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights*, New York: NYU Press (2011).

brands, lodges, and workshops to which they shared connections; but this constant stream of promotion even extended to Q and A sessions that audience members utilized to market their own initiatives. In one interesting example, a White woman from Colorado was invited onto the stage after a lecture by an Indian activist who had been speaking about her educational work with street children. Using the stage microphone to amplify what was clearly a prepared speech, she veered from the speaker's subject matter to promote her own burgeoning charity initiative, which involved selling buttons reading: "I am Love."[88] At the end of the event, audience members came in equal numbers to both the lecturer and the participant to discuss ways of getting involved. Scenes like this were common during Q & A's; participants with questions related to the subject at hand might also intersperse brief asides calling attention to their own projects, and alerting interested participants to find them afterwards.

Figure 29: Art wall at Envision. Lost in Sound.

Another way we can see how Envision functions as a site of subcultural networking was through a signboard that read "Share Your Offering." This space operated as a hub where participants could pin short handwritten notes to search for "new connections & partners". In practice, the billboard was generally used for requests that had to do with travel after the festival:

[88] Author's field notes, 26 Feb 2016.

"Looking for a ride to Puerto Viejo on Monday," "I need a place to stay after the festival," "Help get me back to San José to catch my flight—gas $$" (perhaps anticipating the enterprising nature of attendees, posting flyers or business cards was not allowed).[89] This archive depicts fraternal network tourism by demonstrating how Envision provides access to (and the pooling of) material resources to enable post-festival travel. The contingency of these requests outlines the improvised nature of participants' travel style; foundational questions like where one would go, or where they could find accommodation were left up to the last minute, with faith that the festival community would provide. Intriguingly, the billboard frames these requests as ethereal "dreams and visions," gesturing to an enchantment of the post-festival travel experience; finding an unexpected ride to one's next travel destination becomes not simply a request answered, but a dream fulfilled, a vision realized. This demonstrates how fraternal network tourism rearticulates the travel experience, transposing the material needs of movement, accommodation, and companionship into poetic manifestations.

Envision utilizes this enchanting travel sensibility to craft its own pre- and post-festival "immersions"—the word choice is significant because it links the immersivity of festival aesthetics to the sense of a deeper, more authentic engagement with place.[90] These immersions comprise retreats, theme camps, tours, and excursions that allow Envision to stretch its tendrils throughout the Puntarenas Province, building for travelers extended experiences with Costa Rican land refracted through its own enchanting aesthetics. In 2015, for instance, participants could pay $1895 to "Decompress in

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[89] Author's field notes, 27 Feb 2016.

[90] N.a., "Immersions", *Envision Festival* webpage, n.d. accessed 18 Apr 2019, https://envisionfestival.com/immersions/.

Paradise" through a journey that "magically captures top travel destinations, adventure, and deeply-rooted eco-permaculture principles […] Perfect for anyone wanting to extend their Envision experience and see what locals mean when they say, pura vida, the pure life!" Others paid $150 to stay on-site after the festival with a "Shamanic Yoga Retreat" that enabled them to "go deeper on this sacred land [for] an inner journey of transformation, [and to] connect with the shaman inside all of us."[91] Envision's immersions stylize travel experiences as encounters with nature that are deep, magical, and pure, often utilizing tropes of indigeneity to signal a profound closeness to the land.

To be sure, these are packaged experiences, and not the kind of improvised movement that I am calling fraternal network tourism. But these packages often hold value as ways of fostering ongoing social connections with subcultural actors, which might be parlayed into future travel potential within or beyond Costa Rica. They speak to how destination festivals operate as institutional hubs that provide art direction to array subculture-oriented locations, businesses, and experiences, building destination archipelagos for tourists to patronize. Envision not only operates its own excursions, but also serves as a platform for partner businesses in Costa Rica to advertise and recruit. These select businesses include hostels, eco-lodges, permaculture communities, and even resorts; often owned or managed by expatriates, these businesses mirror Envision's own ethical posturing, and serve as suitable destinations when the festival ends. Some include La Ecovilla—an "intentional community with a permaculture forest" located near San Mateo—and the Punta Mona Center—a "family owned, environmental education center, botanical collection, permaculture farm and eco-lodge, dedicated to regenerative

[91] @envisionfestival, *Facebook* post, 27 Nov 2015.

ways of living" located in Manzanillo.[92] Envision's success has also led to a burgeoning Costa Rican festival scene, with events like the Bamboo Bass Festival in Jacó (which takes place the weekend before Envision, and which was created by a Canadian expatriate with ties to EDM industry leader PK sound) offering participants a pre-Envision destination. Such sites serve as bases for extended interactions with familiar and new members of one's festival family, hailing particular sensibilities that also narrativize Costa Rica through the lens subcultural aesthetics.

Thinking about this cooperative and networked form of travel has significant implications for our consideration of Envision's economic impact in Costa Rica. Though the event does bring money into the region, fraternal network tourism has a way of funneling tourism dollars towards specific businesses and people—often global travelers or out-of-towners whose connections to global information flows better position them to flexibly acclimate to the trending interests of tourists. While a comprehensive economic analysis is outside the scope of this project, I will share some observations from my time in Dominical to outline my initial assessment:

Before Envision 2016 began I spent the night, as many participants do, in the nearby surfing town of Dominical; the hostels were completely booked, but a shady strip of palm trees at the edge of the public beach provided an accessible campground where dozens of travelers pitched tents. When I arrived, Dominical felt like Envision in miniature—its local bars had even hired prominent US-based jam bands to play in the days before and after the event, feeding on the continued presence of monied foreigners. The flood of participants meant extra business potential for the local bars, hostels,

[92] *Kula Collective* website homepage, n.d., accessed 18 Apr 2019, https://www.thekulacollective.com/costa-rica-yoga-teacher-training.

restaurants, and groceries, as well as for local traders who owned permanent stalls on the main strip running parallel to the beach; but it also created competing opportunities for festies who had brought their own goods to sell. They used camping equipment to set up makeshift kiosks and displays along the beachfront. Reminiscent of the festival grounds, some people even traveled from tent to tent with their display cases, stopping from time to time to enjoy conversation and perhaps smoke a J. The competition created by these temporary traders was not crippling, but it severely tempered resident traders' ability to sell to tourists. A Dominical trader named Jorge complained: "There are more people here, yeah, but there is also more competition. See all these [traders] on the streets? None of them are from the area. They come here from different parts of the country, from other countries, and they can set up here [for free]."[93] Jorge sold common Costa Rican souvenirs of the ilk I saw in craft markets throughout the country; though they were affordable, they did not quite have the exotic flare of the goods participants might see in a festival marketplace, and few people seemed to be patronizing his shop.

About thirty yards from Jorge's stall, a US citizen named Devin set up a table and laid out beautiful red sashes. He spent most of the day standing nearby, practicing a flow art called *buugeng* that involved the rhythmic spinning of two S-shaped wooden sticks. He was on a six-month journey through South and Central America, and told me he acquired the red sashes while traveling through Ecuador. He said that he wanted to keep the sashes for himself, but he had run out of money and needed to be able to pay the thirty dollar exit tax required to fly home after the festival—though I suspect that he was playing up his own financial precarity to help secure a sale. The *buugeng* seemed to

[93] Author's field notes, 24 Feb 2016.

attract people, and his display area saw constant traffic (much more than Jorge's stall) and a few sales throughout the day. I encountered Devin again inside Envision a few days later; he had sold some, but not all of his sashes, and was trying to offload more merchandise on the down-low (festival authorities were supposed to police vendors who had not paid for a stall). When our conversation turned to Envision's Visionary Art Gallery, I was surprised to hear that he had purchased one of the paintings for two hundred dollars—a picture of a human heart, which had come alive for him during a drug trip the previous evening. Hadn't he just lamented that he needed to sell his sashes to afford the trip home?

This telling story, while not fully encapsulating fraternal network tourism, outlines a few important elements: it shows how destination festivals anchor longer term travel experiences; how their aesthetics create corporeal forms of connection that allow subcultural members to viscously stick together and create networks (as seen with Devin's *buugeng* attracting potential customers); how such networks allow capital to both come to local sites, but also skip over local people; and how such operations are enabled by privileges of mobility and limitations of emplacement that operate on a geopolitical scale. Fraternal network tourism operates through shared aesthetics and the sense of mutuality they produce; just as Devin's *buugeng* attracted likeminded tourists to his display case, those who can embody festie culture can hail others in the network, and stand a better chance of benefiting from their resources. Seen thus, people like Devin, and the urban Ticos that travel the festival circuit, stood to perform much better in Envision's informal economy than locals like Jorge. Furthermore, as a final destination point for his extended travel, Envision provided to Devin a commercial hub that he reasonably

assessed would allow him to stretch his financial resources. His presence in both Dominical and Envision was enabled by his privilege of mobility and finance, which also allowed him to flexibly utilize interstices within both of these sites to make sales; this privilege was unavailable to Jorge, who had to balance the brief opportunity Envision provided with his ongoing economic reality in Dominical.

Fraternal network tourism points to the unevenness of economic benefits that destination festivals provide to the local area, and suggests that outcomes are likely to benefit tourists and expatriates to the exclusion of locals whose outlook may differ from that of the subculture, or whose resources may not enable adaptation. Envision's dramaturgies emphasize the presence of artisanal goods sold by knowledgeable and ethical merchants: "Change the paradigm of what 'shopping' means and learn to vote with your dollars & colones [Costa Rican currency]! Hand selected merchandise vendors and artisanas offering their handmade or fair trade products. Meet the artists and designers you are buying from. Ask them about their production and sourcing!"[94] Cultivating consumption patterns based on such ethical paradigms functions as a way of directing capital towards particular people and particular vectors of activity. Envision creates pathways of travel through international spaces for members of the festival community, seeding subcultural ideas and institutions into Costa Rica's landscape; though it cultivates an organic "go with the flow" attitude that renders travel into a magically contingent process, over time these pathways harden into favored businesses and common routes.

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[94] "The Village", *Envision Festival* website, accessed 21 November 2016, http://envisionfestival.com/village/.

Conclusion

In April of 2017, news outlets across the United States began covering Twitter reports about the massive failure of the Fyre Festival, a two-weekend destination event in the Bahamas, promoted by famed rapper Ja Rule. Word was spreading that the festival, which billed itself as a luxury event (with ticket costs ranging from $500 to $12000), had descended into chaos: major headliners were pulling out, festival grounds were unprepared for the influx of people, and attendees were coming to the island with no place to stay. The media bonanza that ensued mostly involved expressions of schadenfreude regarding ultra-wealthy kids being forced to rough it. In the months that followed, Fyre Festival's organizer Billy McFarland was sentenced to six years in jail for fraud, and ordered to forfeit around $26 million, to be mostly paid to the event's investors. Although an elaborate mediascape had allowed Fyre Festival to sell vast amounts of tickets, its product was only speculative—supported by an elaborate mediascape—and turned out to lack almost any territorial materiality.

I bring up the spectacle of Fyre Festival to, first, outline the scale of the destination festival market, and second, to magnify how deterritorialized finance and media simultaneously utilize and warp the territorial experience of place. Fyre Festival sold tickets by appropriating linguistic codes established by Transformational Festivals like Envision that construe festival participation as a unique and distinctive consumption of place: participants could expect to experience "two transformative weekends" of "an immersive music festival," which represented "a quest to push beyond boundaries," and

which would take place "on an island once owned by Pablo Escobar."[95] The promotional discourse relied on articulating the tourism experience as an identity-stretching experience of alterity, using the enchanting word choice of a "quest," and deploying immersivity as a shorthand for absolute dislocation from the quotidian. The citation of notorious drug lord Pablo Escobar in this advertising seems to function as a way of charging the festival experience with an air of fantasy that stitches together exotic allure and a rebellious energy vis-à-vis the established social order. Strategically interspersing risqué shots of scantily-clad women and stock footage of other EDM festivals, publicity materials eroticized this travel fantasy, while also attempting to depict a premiere event with cultural capital in an ongoing transnational event scene. This optimistic outlook for transnational travel occluded the presence of a host Bahamian community whose labor was necessary to enable the event, and ignored the specter of uneven distribution of mobility, access, and outcome. Many Bahamians were stiffed for payment from the festival[96] or became embroiled in legal fights, but were generally invisible from marketing and, I would suggest, the interests of attendees.

To return to Envision, I have argued here that destination festivals perform a cartographic operation that create shorthand bricolages of place, people, and affect, which circulate globally through a mediascape directed by festival organizations and the resources they control. Such events turn geographically-specific identities into mobile, consumable, and transferable commodities that hold value for tourists operating from the

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[95] "Announcing Fyre Festival", *Fyre Festival*, YouTube, 12 Jan 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mz5kY3RsmKo.

[96] See, for instance, Carla Herreira, "Caterer Stiffed by Fyre Festival Organizers to Receive $169,000 from Donors", *Huffington Post*, 22 Jan 2019, accessed 27 Apr 2019, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/fyre-festival-restaurant-owner-donations_n_5c4788ece4b0b6693674cc2b.

geopolitical center. This value comes in the form of cultural and identity capital, which get built through narrativizing a location, its people, and tourists' own mode of travel. In the case of Transformational Festivals, this operation braids geography, people, and a desired affective sensibility—*pura vida*. This sensibility takes the form of a libidinous form of popontology (often making use of indigenous culture and tropes), which is at once rooted in the location, but also mobile and acquirable for tourists.

Such events mask the extractive nature of this experience by devising a counterbalancing ethical terrain, so that festivalgoing figures as a form of self-work related to the furtherance of tourists' moral and political priorities. Ecological initiatives, institutional forms of giving back, and felicitous engagements with local indigenous groups both deepen the sense of Envision's authentic and germane emplacement in Costa Rica's Southern Pacific Zone, while also redirecting participants' gazes away from thorny tensions it creates in relation to the local community. Destination festivals become institutions in their communities, and their significant economic impact has weight in ongoing policy decisions and the shaping of local social life. They also act as hubs for a networked travel experience that renders the affective ties created through creative experiences on-site into ongoing material connections and imaginative sensibilities. Thus, Envision not only impacts its own locale, but also myriad sites throughout Costa Rica, since it guides participants' gaze and kinetic momentum.

Though it is important to attend to the internal operations that construct traveling communities, it is crucial to avoid romanticizing or overemphasizing the psychic space of the tourist. The concept of fraternal network tourism helps us keep a dual perspective that

at once acknowledges what makes global travelers come together, while also allowing us to visualize how these travelers direct resources to particular actors—usually those with subcultural ties—in ways that put local actors at a disadvantage. This forces our critical eye to move from the bounded and particular festival site to spaces that exist in contingent relation; such a move will allow continued research in this area to become more attentive to the people whose lives are caught up in the event's orbit.

By way of conclusion, I would like to reflect on my ethnographic methodology (and its limitations) as a way of thinking through the experiential dimension of the tourist's encounter with destination events; this also leads me to future research propositions that might allow us to consider how understanding this tourist perspective might allow us to better map the operations of transnational capital with attention to local outcomes: I attended Envision in 2015 and 2016, staying in Costa Rica for about a week each time; the first year was a whirlwind trip in which I simply tried to get my bearings and understand what the event was vis-à-vis festival culture in general. I was primarily focused on the festival site, and had little exposure to the local region. My ethnographic track mirrored that of a typical festival tourist: I used Envision's web page to book travel directly to and from the San José airport, rented a tent and sleeping pad on-site, and spent the entirety of my stay inside the festival's perimeter with the exception of two brief trips into Uvita. My second year at Envision I continued to observe the festival itself, but I also paid attention to the spaces *around* it—sites that, though outside of Envision's official boundary, were more or less organized by the presence of the event crowd. In order to have conversations with traders who serviced the festival I stayed in Dominical (a popular spot for Envision participants to camp on the beach in close proximity to

Envision) before and after the festival, and I spent considerable time during the event in Uvita. I also collected field notes and engaged in informal conversations at Envision's entrance (where cab drivers, fruit vendors, and local residents hoping to find a way into the festival stayed), and along the pathway that led from festival grounds to the public beach. In addition to numerous informal and formal conversations during the event, these two trips helped me develop contacts for future interviews.

But perhaps more important is to conduct more longitudinal work tracking the evolution of Uvita and Dominical over the last decade. Subsequent research trips might, for instance, aim to better understand the development, organization, and regulation of formal and informal industries that service Envision, and seek documentation on how public partnerships and policies (and struggles therein) have intertwined with the desires of event organizers. In addition, it would be important to conduct lengthy interviews with individuals well-positioned to detail changes in business patterns and culture associated with the event, especially members of the Boruca tribe whose symbols and people have been steadily integrated into the event.

My patchy Spanish and narrow field work windows (which owed to Envision taking place during the academic year) created unsatisfying shortcomings in this ethnography that offer useful opportunities for future research: First, because my Spanish only allowed me to meaningfully engage with locals who could speak some English, a more textured account of the labor economy that operates in and around Envision is possible. One particular area of interest should be the work of security guards in the festival. Many of these individuals were Nicaraguans with significantly darker skin complexions than Ticos; interviews and attentive ethnography with these individuals

might provide a complex accounting of how sites like Envision presence Costa Rica's own racial dynamics, and how these dynamics modulate when examined on a global scale.

Second, given that Envision constitutes Uvita and Dominical's busy season, a longitudinal ethnography of these sites that observes downtimes, and the ramp up and event build (which begins the influx of travelers to the area and begins with the New Year approximately two months before the festival) could help flesh out the relationship between Envision and its locale by allowing the ethnographer to consider how these sites change over time. Such observation might generate access to activists and politicians who could speak to what Envision leveraged to secure permits and utilize public infrastructure in the service of a private, for-profit event. It would also allow more extended conversations with traders, drivers, and businesspeople who work during the festival. One dynamic I found particularly difficult to negotiate in my ethnography was an awareness that my interviews with these individuals during festival time potentially interfered with their ability to make a living. This necessitated me being selective and patient in deciding when to begin and end conversations so that the interviewees could return to work. While I found that this vigilance actually helped attune me to the ways that Envision organized the lives of these individuals, it often necessitated that conversations be short, cordial, and somewhat surface-level.

Third, future work might discover local archival sources (including oral histories) that can outline a genealogy not just of Envision, but of the development of an expatriate community living in Dominical and Uvita over the last two decades. Such a genealogy might concretize the workings of transnational capital in Costa Rica's Puntarenas

Province, and speak to long-term trends regarding local control of land and resources, the reshaping of civic and social values, and the circulation of community images abroad. Considering the significant resources that Envision deploys to help produce its mediascape, and the unsurprisingly rosy self-assessment that it publicizes, collating local resources into a sustained critical examination might provide a crucial counterweight that articulates a subjunctive imagining of communal possibilities.

Destination festivals like Envision are particularly fecund grounds to critique aspirational narratives of globalization that romanticize transnational movement's potentiality for egalitarian intercultural exchange while also abstracting ongoing inequalities regarding the privilege of international mobility and access to capital. Such sites challenge us to understand how power operates multi-directionally in tourist experiences, and relies on the felicitous participation of tourists and locals alike. Destination festivals exert financial pressure on the communities that host them, resulting not just in a simple victim-perpetrator process of abstraction, but in the creation of social tensions via competing community obligations. These tensions arise as much from new opportunities as from new problems; they respond to financial imperatives, but also to invitations to craft and publicize a narrative of the community (including indigenous groups). Festivals like Envision ironically illustrate how theatrical events disrupt the communities that house them; this disruption reverberates beyond the local context, trafficking a global discourse of the exotic by rendering race and ethnicity tangible, acquirable, and mobile in a neoliberal context.

CONCLUSION

Transformational Festivals are sites of tension and contradiction: they are market-driven and community-oriented, times of leisure and times of production, heavily racialized but also animated by supra-racial conceptions of the human. Part of what makes these events compelling and special today is that they stage these tensions during the time and space of the event, but do so while maintaining a sense of festive excitement; in other words, they maintain social coordination between a complex of individuals operating along a fluid spectrum of organizational and participatory capacities. There is a ludic sensibility to this coordination; while economic exigencies and political commitments are part of what drives individuated modes of participation, these duties are always in conversation with a degree of an enriching jouissance that makes the festival culture appear as a valid avenue for one's labor.[1]

Neoliberalism has a way of routing the personal drives that stem from this ludic sensibility (an "ethical energetics"[2] as Bennett puts it) into specialized marketplaces and global flows of people, capital, affect, and image. This process shapes racial dynamics that respond to these markets. *Pace* scholars like Robinson and Ramey who see the rise of festival culture as a new aesthetic form, the repertoires of outdoor camping culture they draw from have long histories entangled with the formation of the United States as a project of liberalism and settler colonial White supremacy. These repertoires functioned to aesthetically stylize event grounds (the land itself) in order to serve as bases for

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[1] "And-what is most important-in all these [playful] doings they plainly experience tremendous fun and enjoyment. Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*, London: Routledge (1949 [1944]), 1.

[2] Jane Bennett, "Ethical Energetics", in *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press (2001).

community formations with a territorial sense of the Commons. Indeed, if there is something unique about this moment, which has seen an explosion of the festival industry, it is an intensification of this process as a function of neoliberalism.

Transformational Festivals, finally, are enabled by managing networks of social activity, which echoes Maurizio Lazzarato's definition of a post-Fordist concept of *work:* "the capacity to activate and manage productive cooperation."[3] Studying Transformational Festivals allows us to map the networks of exchange that lie behind this immaterial labor, including the scalar dimensions by which personal desires and drives jump to social abstractions. The particular aesthetic regimes inaugurated by Transformational Festivals are subjectivating assemblages; by linking material and performance culture (say, flow arts and Visionary gallery art) to social dispositions (say, indigenous activism or environmentalism), they form a specific vision of the world that acts as a basis for ethical motivations that extend beyond the event itself. Ethnographic engagement with these aesthetics allows us to think machinically about how such formations come to be.

As scholars like Bennett, Rancière, Maffesoli, and Thornton articulate, aesthetics serve as a basis for social organization, and this has particular value in neoliberal societies that look to markets as bases for establishing and validating social needs. The accelerating variety of boutique events and specialized festival repertoires parallels a social complex in which everyone belongs to a certain subculture or array of subcultures,

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[3] "Immaterial Labor", trans. Paul Colilli and Ed Emery, *Generation Online*, accessed 6 Apr 2019, http://www.generation-online.org/c/fcimmateriallabour3.htm. Original publication in Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt, *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, University of Minnesota Press (1996), pp. 142-157.

which come to form the perceptual bases by which they approach the world. The subjectivating function of festival culture develops and reproduces participation in circuits of capital via niche markets; it also participates in racial projects that extend from those markets, articulating the boundaries of Whiteness (as a variegated concept) and indigeneity as an approximation of absolute cultural difference.

But this intense form of participation is not simply a product of neoliberalism. Camp meetings practiced a creative place-making that tracked along mythological imaginaries based in Protestantism, staged lands that reflected these aesthetics. Though many aspects of such gatherings are similar to those of today, they exemplify how previous repertoires of enchanting performance relied on Judeo-Christian cosmologies, rather than the eastern, indigenous, or pagan ones seen in Transformational Festivals. They were also imbricated in historical processes related to the struggle for control and *meaning* of land during a period of settler colonial expansion; as seen in the educational programming of Chautauqua, and in the conjurings of Spiritualist camp meetings, the presence of indigenous people in embodied, spectral, and fabricated forms underwrote processes of White community formation and their sense of authentic connection to the land they occupied and staged.

This continues today in a remarkably consistent manner—settler colonialism is a structure, not an event. Transformational Festivals racialize through a collective performance of "the people," that relies on mapping cultural otherness; through event production, rituals, and educational programming, they locate certain practices, beliefs, and peoples as fetishistic lines of flight from Western modernity (which gets overcoded

as Whiteness itself). They also produce for a primarily White audience a sense of territorial attachment and localized mythos. Harmony Park's quarter-century history, for instance, exemplifies a longitudinal process of racialized community formation that also builds a sense of stewardship over the venue's land. This presents a troubling erasure and appropriation of indigeneity that threatens to reify nationalist myths of conquest while simultaneously sublimating indigenous culture into an event marketplace.

This also occurs on a transnational scale with festivals like Envision, though it is worth noting that the sheer financial cost to travel to such events—including airfare, tickets, and the increased cost of daily living during tourist experiences—and the privilege of mobility required to attend mark a community with significant privilege. Indeed, if my discussion of destination festivals appeared more sharply critical of the Transformational project than my discussion of Harmony Park, it is because I was rarely forced to confront my own positional privilege in relation to other festivalgoers there—I was confronted with complaints about airlines, personal beefs between participants, and dwindling disposable income, rather than the need for healthcare, a pending felony charge, or stories of suicide that were frequent topics of conversation at Harmony Park. While I have striven to remain attentive to how Whiteness offers uneven access to its privileges, shifting my lens to the transnational forced me to confront the intense stratification of geopolitical privilege. It also forced me to consider how enchantment—which can function as a source of grassroots political power and ideological resistance for marginalized people (including many White people)—can be mobilized by capital to produce operations related to the extraction of culture and the extension of its control over the labor and lives of people on the global periphery. This is not a simple,

unidirectional process of exploitation, but rather a dialogic one that couches the marketization of identity in the guise of a personal choice to participate, rather than an obligation forced by economic imperatives. Destination events position themselves as both spaces for cross-cultural connection forged through transnational networks of creativity that attempt to overcome the logic of nationhood, as well as institutions with the capacity to serve or develop host communities. Envision, for example, offered platforms and complicated modes of participation to Boruca people, initiated environmental and community service operations in Uvita and Dominical, and brought circumscribed economic opportunities to the region; but this also masked the ways in which many people were compelled to participate.

This is central to the way in which exploitation occurs within neoliberalism—through soft means that hide behind the guise of elective participation. Such festivals open spaces and people to transnational markets, for instance, by offering bounded opportunities to control one's image as it circulates globally, and by positing that one's labor will be rewarded in meritocratic proportion to its value. The reality is that those who stand to benefit the most from such arrangements are investors (both event organizers and corporate partners who help develop infrastructure needed to service the event) and tourists (whose participation generates cultural capital that the privilege of mobility allows to be put to work). Furthermore, tourists' social networks track along familiar racial, national, and linguistic lines, guiding commerce towards the people and products that they choose, rather than as a form of remuneration to the labor of host communities (e.g. "fraternal network tourism"). While the enchantment economy has its impulse in a sensibility critical of these colonizing structures, it ultimately offers virtually

unlimited means of expanding the marketization of everything by offering culture up as a curative or redemptive object of consumption.

To close, I would like to consider this project's methodological contribution and potential for future research. One important contribution of this project is offering a way of conducting a speculative genealogy of performance that can be applied to participatory and improvisational forms of postdramatic theatrical production and social formations. The growth of immersion as a style that extends from the arts to diverse commercial and community activities (from restaurants to videogaming) demands ways of articulating throughlines of experience that allow us to map industries predicated on customizing to each and every individual. Each of these chapters offer differing, but interlocking angles of examining a social formation: historiographic, theoretical, geographic, and transnational. I have also attempted to combine an experiential/ethnographic perspective that can nimbly attend to the ludic and improvisatory dimension of festival activity, with a discursive/archival approach that can map how this free play resonates in systems of power. I coupled my consideration of event repertoires with attentiveness to the labor economies that grow around them. This allowed me to approach festivals materially and historically—rather than only phenomenologically—and to track how they have responded to shifting social dynamics, including exigencies of race. Such an approach is necessary for studying immersion because it reveals how organization and control exist within sites paradigmatically premised on freedom of choice.

This work shows particular potential for scholars approaching transnational event formations. I deployed a similar approach, for instance, to a discussion of South Africa's

National Arts Festival, with attention to how racial fault lines in the city of Grahamstown are fed by aesthetic choices made in the construction of civic space.[4] While the National Arts Festival is not Transformational in Leung's sense of the word (and thus could not reasonably be included in this project), it similarly exemplifies the ways that temporary events create enduring and racialized struggles over geographic control and spatial production via regimes of creativity that activate move individual bodies. Future work might apply this methodological contribution to other creative industries that are crossed by transnational financial and migratory currents in order to understand how they work as subjectivating apparatuses that form and respond to global racial dynamics. It might consider, for instance, how a sense of enchantment powers a variety of niche subcultures (from gaming, LARPing, and other hobbyist communities to far-Right chat groups), alerting us to the ways in which our leisurely pursuits form a basis for economic and territorial struggle in neoliberalism.

But this critical perspective, it must be remembered, is not a cynical outlook. This study grew from my own impulse that something special emerged in festival settings that, while thorny and hazardous, spoke to my own pathological investments in creative activity as a wellspring of energy, community, and joy. What drove fire spinners to practice and exhibit their craft with greater care than many professionals applied to careers—with scant promise of a livelihood to emerge from it? What invisible force allowed such creative play with objects that seemingly had little use beyond a child's birthday party? How was it that these "drug communities" could also exist as family

[4] Bryan Schmidt, "Fault Lines, Racial and Aesthetic: The National Arts Festival at Grahamstown," *Theatre Research International*, 43.3 (2019), pp. 318-337.

spaces, and places of healing and recovery? My years of study and involvement in these communities rest on a belief that, despite the thorny and problematic nature of their racial practices, they exist as a source of inspiration and energy for people searching for meaning in lives marked by alienation, anomie, and precarity.

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