

The Archaeology of Burning Man

The Rise and Fall of Black Rock City



CAROLYN L. WHITE

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CAROLYN L. WHITE

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Acknowledgments



One of the ten principles that guide Burning Man is its gift economy. The gift economy is not to be confused with barter economy—rather than exchanging items of equal value, one is supposed to give freely. It's a good thing, because there is no way that I could true-up the imbalance between what I have received and what I have given in the many years I have been studying Burning Man. I have accepted so much from so many that I can only do my best to offer gratitude to those who have freely given me their time, access, information, opinions, resources, good humor, company, photographs, and ideas.

When I first attended Burning Man I was worried about what I would offer as part of the gift economy, but Will Roger Peterson told me that conducting research on Burning Man was a gift to the community. An academic publication hardly seems like much of a present, but it will have to do. In all seriousness, the enthusiastic reaction to the project from Burners, friends, archaeologists, and other scholars gives me hope that an archaeological perspective on Burning Man is something people might want.

To begin, a bit of background. . . . I first heard about Burning Man through my brother-in-law, Rabbi David Seidenberg, over dinner at an Indian restaurant in Somerville, Massachusetts, as I was completing my PhD in Boston. I was intrigued by his experience, surprised by his descriptions of the intensity of the event, and not at all pulled toward attending. When I joined the faculty at the University of Nevada, Reno, I had largely forgotten about its existence. But as I continued to pursue work related to eighteenth-century identity through personal adornment, I was beginning to think about launching a contemporary archaeology project. It took me a little while to realize that the seed had already been planted in my mind.

In 2006, during my first year at UNR, I met David Valentine, an archaeologist from the Bureau of Land Management, who proposed a project to Don Hardesty and me to study Depression-era mining camps in the Black Rock Desert–High Rock Canyon National Conservation Area, just east of the playa. Eager to develop a local project, I began to work with Don, Jessica Smith, and a crew of UNR students. As the air around the 1930s cabin made of railroad ties grew increasingly dusty in the days of early August, Dave attributed it to setup at Burning Man. I asked Dave if it might be possible to visit, and he said he would make it happen.

Several weeks later I took my first visit to Black Rock City with David Valentine. In the intervening period, my brother-in-law had passed through Reno on his way to Burning Man again. I let him borrow my car, which dramatically underscores my ignorance at the time about Burning Man, Black Rock City, and the Black Rock Desert alkali playa. I never completely got the dust out of the interior. At Burning Man I met up with my brother-in-law at Otter's Oasis Camp. We passed food around a circle of new friends, Dave ensconced in a purple shawl and leaning on the hood of my car, which was now acting as a tent stake and tethered to the massive shelter that formed the center of the camp. We toured the city by Bureau of Land Management golf cart, giving rides to other Burners, and attended the temple burn and what remains the single most impressive thing I have seen at Burning Man—the Uchronia burn. Stunned by the organization and structure that lay under the freeform expression and fantastical displays, I decided to study the city as an archaeological site.

After giving it a year of thought I began the project in earnest in 2008, when Deborah Boehm, a new anthropology faculty member, expressed interest in conducting research at Burning Man. We joined forces and met Will Roger Peterson and Metric in Gerlach to discuss the parameters of our research projects. Our discussion that day touched on many aspects of Burning Man that readers will see in these pages: how the city is planned, how it has changed over time, the organizational culture of Burning Man's Department of Public Works, the Ten Principles, the role of researchers, the relationship between Burning Man and the Black Rock–High Rock NCA, Gerlach, theme-camp placement, Leave No Trace, fence day, and many more components of what Peterson called the “grand experiment.” That day we attended the Golden Spike ceremony, where we witnessed the first step in the construction of the city and met many people who would play an important role through the years.

Will has been extraordinarily supportive of the project since I first e-mailed him and every day thereafter. He smoothed the pathway to every participant, staff member, and volunteer. I owe a great debt to his generosity with time, tickets, access, margaritas, conversation, manuscript revisions, and last-minute requests. His vision of Burning Man as presently constituted and as a changing entity informed the shape of my work, and I am grateful for his candid attitude and unwavering commitment to the scientific side of the Burning Man experience.

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Thank you to the Bureau of Land Management, which has been generous in innumerable ways. David Valentine put me in touch with who I needed to know both in Burning Man and in the BLM and supplied me with my first set of goggles and dust mask, his help always supplemented by good humor and vast knowledge. Kathy Ataman has provided years of intellectual and financial support for this project and others through several cooperative research grants. Joey Samuels had a sixth sense for my arrival—somehow he was the first person to greet me almost every time I arrived on the playa. Roger Farschon was generous with initiating the disposition of the artifacts recovered during inspection, and one year after he retired he took me around by golf cart to the inspection sites during the event so I could record the locales in action. Corey Regner, Mark Gingrich, and Mark Pirdle were tremendously helpful and allowed me to interview BLM staff and law enforcement and to use the twelve-mile entrance; they coordinated several ride-alongs as well. Thank you to Carrie Wostal for allowing this anthropologist to ride in her rig; that was a great day.

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Most of this book is about where people live at Burning Man, and this project would not have been possible were it not for the masses of people who welcomed me into their variously half-completed, half-dismantled, and finished homes. I have been consistently amazed by the enthusiasm and generosity of people who gave me tours and allowed me to photograph their spaces, not all of which could be included in the book. Thank you to Izzle, Sizzle, Naked Jim, and Hope from Camp 11:11; Queen Priestess, Panda, Tom, Max, Dr. Jones, Jason, Dani, and Lobelow of the French Quarter; Greg from the A-frames; Melissa and Shannon from Boutique Fantastique; Bobzilla, Mark, Josh, Crista, and Erik from BMIR; Ron, Mary, Cassie, Zack, Eric, Becky, Andrew, Lindsey, Max, Mike, Emalinda, Bill, and Sandy from Jungle Camp; Flipper from the Tahoe Twisted Crew; John-Paul, Phil, and Patricia from Camp Big Pants (thank you for rescuing me from the mud and

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CHAPTER ONE

Black Rock City

A Description of the World



INTRODUCTION

Each August cadres of staff and volunteers begin to construct Black Rock City, a temporary city located in the Black Rock Desert of northwestern Nevada, twelve miles north of Gerlach, a town that greets visitors with a sign that reads “Welcome to Nowhere” (Figure 1.1). Every September tens of thousands of people travel to it, creating the sixth largest population center in the state of Nevada. By mid-September the city is fully dismantled, and by October the land on which the city lay is scrubbed of evidence of its existence. This city is the locus of the Burning Man Archaeology Project.

The image of Burning Man generated for the uninitiated is often derived from popular media. The media portray the event as a massive party or as a declining festival ruined by increasingly wealthy attendees (Bilton 2014). People hear about the event from experiences recounted by Burner (the nickname for event attendees) friends and acquaintances. Burners describe the wild nightlife (Figure 1.2), the strong sense of community, the “do what you want” attitude, along with the emotional surges they experience during the event and the letdown that follows when they return to the “default world.” As of 2019 Burning Man is home to more than 75,000 people for one week. It has tens of thousands of different experiences embedded in its reputation and notoriety.

My view of Burning Man, as an anthropological archaeologist and as someone who has attended Burning Man since 2006, is that it is at once exceptional and ordinary. Black Rock City is an amazing place, crowded with spectacle, and it is a typical city filled with the mundane acts of daily life performed by its participants. I approach Black Rock City in the same way



Figure 1.1. Aerial view of Black Rock City, 2007. Photo by Kyle Harmon.



Figure 1.2. Opulent Temple, one of the large dance camps at Burning Man. Photo by Tristan Savatier.

that I would any other city, by asking: How do I engage the massive scale, the infrastructure, public spaces, private spaces, and the relationship between the built and natural environment? The subjects of study by scholars engaged in examining space, place, and urban environments can be analyzed in Black Rock City. The same facets of urban life present in pre- and postindustrial cities are present in Black Rock City and can be obtained by applying anthropological and archaeological approaches to such space. Although the environment of the ancient Lake Lahontan lakebed is harsh and creativity is stressed in the creation of the camps and the culture of the event, when the social structures and decisions that people make in this city are examined closely, they indeed replicate the decisions that people in other Western idioms make about how they live, eat, interact, and sleep in daily life.

But just as Burning Man is prosaic, there are other components that make it extraordinary as a subject of archaeological interest. Burning Man's short lifespan and its cyclical nature set it apart from other places—it exists for only one week a year, every year. This place, then, provides an accelerated example of the kinds of structures and social situations that humans create for themselves.

Further, Black Rock City offers an unparalleled opportunity to see urban life across scales of both time and space. Each camp is constructed at virtually the same time each year, within a week's span, so it is possible to see the ways that each camp reacts to the same environmental factors, to the identical physical expectations on the playa, and to the source material that exists for Burning Man. At the same time it is possible to trace the changes that a camp makes year after year as the same camps recreate themselves in ways that are similar and different to the way that they set themselves up the previous year.

The creativity and spectacle are also interesting components of life at Burning Man, and they infuse the city with an energy, an aesthetic, and a physicality that are particular to the place. (Figure 1.3 shows a playa art installation.) But in many ways my interest in this side of Burning Man lies less in the visual culture of Black Rock City than in the tactics and strategies that are in play when people voluntarily come together for one week a year for years and years. The unusual physicality of Burning Man helps to visually isolate elements of the city that are just enough out of the ordinary to cause not just me, but an audience, to take notice. But Black Rock City presents a model for understanding place: a place that is unlike any other city but is also just the same.



Figure 1.3. *Portal of Evolution*, by Bryan Tedrick. Playa installation, 2009. Photo by the author.

HISTORY OF BURNING MAN

The Burning Man event began on the summer solstice of 1986 when Larry Harvey, Jerry James, and their two children gathered on Baker Beach in San Francisco and burned an effigy of a man built of wood along with a wooden dog. A number of strangers joined the crowd around the bonfire, in what Harvey has described as “acts of impulsive merger and collective union” (Doherty 2006: 31). The “meaning” of this first event was and remains ambiguous, but it was the feeling of inclusion, community, surprise, and spectacle that propelled them to repeat the event the following year.* In 1987 they burned the effigy

* Readers interested in a comprehensive account of the history of the event are encouraged to read Rachel Bowditch’s *On the Edge of Utopia: Performance and Ritual at Burning Man*. Chapters 1 and 2 provide a detailed account of the history of the organization, the foundation of the event, and the development of Burning Man from its founding to 2005.

again, building a taller (fifteen-foot) man, and once again the feeling of participation and community resulted as more strangers joined the party. They repeated the act the following year, and again it attracted additional strangers to the scene. By 1988 Harvey and James began to publicize the event, and they built a forty-foot-tall man, attracting members of the Cacophony Society (a San Francisco fringe group interested in adventurous mischief). In 1990 the event drew between five and eight hundred people, and the police got involved and threatened to shut it down. In exchange for permission to raise the Man on the beach, Harvey agreed not to burn it (Doherty 2006: 47–48).

The event had outgrown Baker Beach. Members of the Cacophony Society who participated in the Baker Beach event knew that the Black Rock Desert playa provided a place where you could, according to one participant, “sit around and blow stuff up” (Doherty 2006: 48). The first event in the Black Rock Desert was part of the Cacophony Society’s Bad Day at Black Rock Zone Trip #4 (Beale 2007). Larry Harvey, Michael Mikel, John Law, and others hauled the Man to the Black Rock Desert playa on Labor Day weekend in 1990, and they raised and burned him there.

The first playa event was celebrated by about ninety people, and many of the ideas of Burning Man were born: offering gifts, drinking, and bathing in nearby hot springs (Brill 2013; Doherty 2006: 54). The austere and unrelenting environment and the feeling of community somehow transformed this experience into a ritual to which people wanted to return year after year.

The early years were marked by an absence of rules, plenty of target shooting, and an interest in testing the expansive limits of what you could get away with out in the desert. One of the most legendary events was the Drive-By Shooting Range, where one could set up a variety of materials as targets (stuffed animals were favored) and riddle them with bullets while driving at high speeds (Doherty 2006: 65–66). Grand and illicit activities such as fire art and destructive modes of celebration were established early; today they are firmly entrenched as part of Burning Man culture. The first wedding took place in 1992. Art and the participation of artists took hold. A rave camp was attached to the event. Tickets, Porta-Potties, theme camps, costumes, and a gift economy were launched in those initial years.

The population of Black Rock City doubled annually through 1996, when eight thousand people attended, but that year marked a turning point for the event. Increasingly high levels of irresponsible destructiveness (e.g., reckless driving, fire, and other hazards) endangered participants and catalyzed change in the community. By 1996 mounting issues surrounding the scale

and activity within the community necessitated changes. During the next several years guns were outlawed, cars were restricted, city streets were planned, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) worked with the organizers to issue permits for the event and plan for the removal of all traces after it was over. (Doherty 2006 contains a thorough history of the event; the archives at Burningman.org/timeline are also replete with details and first-hand accounts.)

To this point the organization had consisted of three people: Larry Harvey, Michael Mikel, and John Law. The relationship between the three crumbled by 1996, and John Law split from the group, ultimately suing and settling with the organization. (See Weiners 2012 for details about the forging of the initial partnership and its subsequent dissolution.) Harvey convened a new board of directors and created a limited liability corporation. By 1999 the board consisted of six members, all of whom remain today, with the exception of Larry Harvey, who passed away in 2018. The board consisted of Marian Goodell (CEO), Michael Mikel (historian and archivist), Harley Dubois (chief transition officer), Will Roger Peterson (Nevada relations director), Crimson Rose (art transition officer), and Larry Harvey (chief philosophy officer). In the years following this reorganization, the event grew—at first exponentially and then at a manageable pace. The population doubled every year until the mid-aughts and then grew more gradually.

Several important developments that affected the event bear mention here. The basic form of the city was established in 1998, when Rod Garrett designed its footprint for the first time. The core form of the city remains essentially the same since Garrett developed it, although minor changes have been made to accommodate the larger population and to increase communal gathering places across the city (see chapter 3).

In 2004 Harvey codified the Ten Principles, which reflected ideas held since the event's organization, and formalized them as the Burning Man ethos began to spread through the regional network (Burning Man 2013a). The Ten Principles advocate radical inclusion, gifting, decommodification, radical self-reliance, radical self-expression, communal effort, civic responsibility, leaving no trace, participation, and immediacy (Table 1.1). The principles govern much of daily life on and off the playa for the Burning Man organization and Burners alike.

In 2011 the Black Rock LLC created a nonprofit corporation called the Burning Man Project to “facilitate and extend the culture that has issued from the Burning Man event into a larger world” (Burning Man 2012). A

Table 1.1. Burning Man's Ten Principles, established in 2004

RADICAL INCLUSION	Anyone may be a part of Burning Man. We welcome and respect the stranger. No prerequisites exist for participation in our community.
GIFTING	Burning Man is devoted to acts of gift-giving. The value of a gift is unconditional. Gifting does not contemplate a return or an exchange for something of equal value.
DECOMMODIFICATION	In order to preserve the spirit of gifting, our community seeks to create social environments that are unmediated by commercial sponsorships, transactions, or advertising. We stand ready to protect our culture from such exploitation. We resist the substitution of consumption for participatory experience.
RADICAL SELF-RELIANCE	Burning Man encourages the individual to discover, exercise, and rely on his or her inner resources.
RADICAL SELF-EXPRESSION	Radical self-expression arises from the unique gifts of the individual. No one other than the individual or a collaborating group can determine its content. It is offered as a gift to others. In this spirit, the giver should respect the rights and liberties of the recipient.
COMMUNAL EFFORT	Our community values creative cooperation and collaboration. We strive to produce, promote, and protect social networks, public spaces, works of art, and methods of communication that support such interaction.
CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY	We value civil society. Community members who organize events should assume responsibility for public welfare and endeavor to communicate civic responsibilities to participants. They must also assume responsibility for conducting events in accordance with local, state, and federal laws.
LEAVING NO TRACE	Our community respects the environment. We are committed to leaving no physical trace of our activities wherever we gather. We clean up after ourselves and endeavor, whenever possible, to leave such places in a better state than when we found them.
PARTICIPATION	Our community is committed to a radically participatory ethic. We believe that transformative change, whether in the individual or in society, can occur only through the medium of deeply personal participation. We achieve being through doing. Everyone is invited to work. Everyone is invited to play. We make the world real through actions that open the heart.
IMMEDIACY	Immediate experience is, in many ways, the most important touchstone of value in our culture. We seek to overcome barriers that stand between us and a recognition of our inner selves, the reality of those around us, participation in society, and contact with a natural world exceeding human powers. No idea can substitute for this experience.

larger board, composed of people connected with the broader aims of the organization, oversaw the project. In 2014 the LLC was folded into the Burning Man Project, implementing a new layer of management to oversee many of the operations (Burning Man 2014). Additional staff are responsible for the day-to-day operations of Burning Man year-round, and they also head different departments during the event. (A complete list of the departments and staff can be found at burningman.org.)

Today Burning Man is highly organized, managed chaos: the event lays out streets, applies a sort of zoning by assigning lots for theme camps, features a large center camp, allows no commerce, and hosts a very large population. And it continues to grow. In 2008, the first year of the archaeological project, the population topped 49,599 people by official BLM count. In 2009 the population peaked at 43,000, marking the only decrease in population, but in 2010 it rebounded, and 51,454 people populated the city. The event sold out in 2011 with over 53,000 participants and has done so in each succeeding year. In 2012 tickets were sold by lottery in an attempt to create a more equitable distribution system. Over 80,000 people registered for the lottery, although the population cap remained at 53,000 participants. In 2018 the population was capped at 70,000 participants, which grew to 75,000 in 2019.

PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

With this book I join a small but strong set of researchers who have examined Burning Man through a scholarly lens. Most of the Burning Man scholarship strives to convey what it is like to be in the city. All of the scholars view the city through the lens of a particular discipline, including sociology, performance studies, religion, and economics. Each of the lenses offers a different approach to Burning Man, just as scholarship of any urban environment must focus on a slice of that world. Many investigators draw on Victor Turner's research on ritual and pilgrimage, applying his theories to trace the paths by which Burners separate from the mundane world to reach a liminal realm (between the sacred and the profane), by aggregating at Burning Man and living in created *communitas* (Turner 1969). Several of the scholars, however, employ Turner as a springboard from which they define their own viewpoints on liminality, *communitas*, and the role of the pilgrimage, exploring the ways in which the Burning Man experience is both similar to and separate from the journeys described by Turner.

Rachel Bowditch is one scholar who chooses to differentiate the Burner

from Turner's pilgrim. While she acknowledges the importance of Turner's work, she also notes that "pilgrim, partier, or spectator—at Burning Man, the line between 'pilgrim' and 'tourist' is indeed blurred" (23). In *On the Edge of Utopia* Bowditch explores the city through the lens of performance between the years 2001 and 2008. She focuses on ritual and performance and the ways that those strands of life intersect in Black Rock City. Employing theoretical perspectives found in the works of Michel de Certeau (1984) as well as Pearson and Shanks's exploration of theater and archaeology (2001), Bowditch outlines her own experiences at Burning Man and depicts some of the aspects of daily life that are the focus of this volume. For example, she offers a lengthy description of her camp at Burning Man, Asylum Village, including a diagram of its layout (Bowditch 2010: 131–33). She describes the camp as "backstage," in line with her broader interest in the performative aspects of the event. Bowditch depicts Burning Man as a place that is "becoming an artistic, social, and cultural movement of some significance that is creating new paradigms for social interaction and artmaking practices in the United States" (9). While some might argue with such a strong statement of Burning Man's relevance, her comments reflect common sentiments within and outside the Burning Man community.

Sociologist Katherine Chen studied Burning Man in the years between 1998 and 2008, focusing on the administration of Burning Man and the collective's decision-making and volunteerism work, both on and off the playa. Her volume *Enabling Creative Chaos: The Organization Behind the Burning Man Event* (2009) explores how the organization was able to grow dramatically using unorthodox modes of decision making. She details the practices that occur at the highest organizational levels of Burning Man and describes key early decisions made at the top personnel levels in the critical years of 1998–2000, when the growing organization dealt with both under- and over-planning. Most relevant to this volume is the detailed background she provides about the early days of Burning Man. While Chen's research occurred in the offices of Burning Man, her exploration of the work within the organization is reflected in what plays out on the playa.

Lee Gilmore's volume *Theatre in a Crowded Fire: Ritual and Spirituality at Burning Man* (2010) focuses on the performative elements of Burning Man. Gilmore invokes Turner's theories as she characterizes the desert pilgrimage and examines the role of ritual at the event, which she describes as "ritual without dogma." She portrays the ideology enacted at Burning Man as performative and reflexive. A key component of this ritual is the creation

of an ethos that is embraced by Burners and brought back and forth between Burning Man and what Burners call the “default world” (104). In addition to this general overview of Gilmore’s book, several other points bear mention.

First, she also published a DVD with her book that provides visual material to supplement each chapter. Second, as have other scholars, Gilmore traces the thread of performance through numerous physical spaces at Burning Man that readers will see addressed in this volume. She explores the trip to and arrival at the city, the temple, smaller spiritual places as defined by Burners, and the physical space of Media Mecca as a place of narrative production and negotiation. Of course, Gilmore examines these places through the lens of ritual and performance, connecting these experiences to “overarching themes such as spirituality, pilgrimage, transformation, authenticity, otherness, liminality and communities” (2010: 16). In describing Burning Man as a place for individual and collective expression and experience, she also explores the permeability of the boundary between inside and outside Black Rock City as she locates the movement of these ideas to and from the “default world.”

With Mark Van Proyen, Gilmore edited an important early work on Burning Man entitled *AfterBurn: Reflections on Burning Man* (2005) that presents various approaches to the event. This volume captures the work of several scholars who went on to write more fully on Burning Man (e.g., Katherine Chen and Gilmore herself), but it also contains contributions from curators, market researchers, anthropologists, and religious studies scholars. Following an introduction by Gilmore and Van Proyen, the volume explores the world of Burning Man across different areas of study. Erk Davis outlines the different types of “cults” at Burning Man in an attempt to capture the diversity of practices and motivations behind the Burner experience. He presents several “cult” categories—Experience, Intoxicants, Flicker (fire), Juxtapose (“modes of juxtaposition generate many of the well-loved effects of the event: absurdity, instability, irony” [Gilmore and Van Proyen 2005: 31]), and Meaningless Chaos—as a means of describing people’s motivations for attending and participating in Burning Man.

One interesting contribution to the volume is that of market researchers Robert Kozinets and John Sherry. In their exploration of the role of consumption at the event, they capture what is often seen as a contradiction by people from outside Burning Man regarding commerce and the marketplace. They describe their initial interest in Burning Man as one generated out of curiosity: What is the experience of an anticonsumption event? Upon arrival

and in discussions with Burners, they saw that Burning Man is all about consumption. They focus on the Center Camp Café as a place that embodies the contradictions on display surrounding the free market and capitalism at Burning Man. As I note below, the Center Camp Café is one of two places at Burning Man where cash can be exchanged for goods (at least openly—the second is Arctica, the ice venue). Burners can purchase coffee and tea at the café, which is located in Center Camp in the middle of the residential area of the city. Kozinets and Sherry note, “A key to understanding Burning Man is to realize that while it is anticonsumption, with hefty admission prices and frothy cappuccinos for sale it is clearly not anticapitalism” (Gilmore and Van Proyen 2005: 103). Few Burners would disagree with this statement. What is notable in their research, too, is that they describe how Burning Man marks out a boundary between itself and the marketplace by the principle of “No Commerce” and the directive of “Mask the Brands” (covering brand names on the playa). The creation of this boundary allows the community to bond in opposition to a common enemy while making visible a previously invisible market relationship. Kozinets and Sherry describe Burning Man as an important market force, particularly as “the massive expenditures spurred by the event have, in fact, helped it gain local political support, as power follows the money trail leading from Reno right through Gerlach” (99). The impact of Burning Man’s economic footprint in Reno and the Bay Area is an ongoing phenomenon.

Other authors describe art cars (JoAnne Northrup; also see Figure 1.4 in this volume), the idea of Utopia as constituted at Burning Man (Alegra Fortunati), the surrealist nature of the art installations in Black Rock City (Van Proyen), and the role of ritual and community at the temple (Sarah Pike). Using her own experiences in 2001, Pike describes the first temple built at Burning Man by David Best and the inscribed messages and interactions people had with the space that she witnessed. She portrays the temple as a place where Burners address death in ways that contrast with Western death rituals. At the temple people make death visible through their physical interactions (inscribing messages, depositing offerings, praying, writing, dancing, and sitting in the space; Figure 1.5). This mode of confronting death contrasts with standard Western death rituals; at the temple it is made visible, suffering is given attention, people openly admit and mourn loss, and many people also ask for and offer forgiveness.

This short summary of scholarship on Burning Man reviews the research most relevant to my own. In addition to this work, scholars have addressed