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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

SANTA CRUZ

**THE OLD WEST & NEW PACIFIC FRONTIERS:
Surfers & 'The Search' in the American Oceanic Imaginary**

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

LITERATURE

by

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June 2014

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**THE OLD WEST & NEW PACIFIC FRONTIERS:
Surfers & 'The Search' in the American Oceanic Imaginary**

Henry 'Trey' Highton III

ABSTRACT

The alignment of surfers as pioneering mountain men is one I will further interrogate and complicate in this paper. First, by establishing the ethos of the American Frontier and Manifest Destiny in the 'old west'; and then, by demonstrating how as the American Frontier was tamed, the oceanic horizon came to hold a new allure of adventure and endless possibility. I assert that with the sea alone remaining as the only untamed wilderness, the image of the surfer came to supplant the place of the cowboy within the American Imaginary. Because the traditional cowboy aesthetic had been displaced through enclosure and modernization, the icon of the surfer stood forth as the new romantic figure of the American West who continued to grapple with the sublime forces of nature and push back the boundaries of known coastal frontiers, worldwide. I go on to advance an argument about the ability of surfing to 'globalize from below', to evolve from the traditional ethos of the pioneer to the newly-awakened eco-consciousness of the 'bioneer'. Using this framework, I advance surfers' ability to negotiate and transform the liminal space of the beach and surf zone so that it acts as a heterotopic arena within the construct of global capital, one from which surfers can not only pursue their relationship with the natural world in a more conscious and collaborative spirit, but by tapping into and utilizing Rolland's notion of 'oceanic' interconnectivity, can act as role-models and purveyors of these eco-conscious lifeways for world citizenry.

DEDICATION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate this thesis to my wife Anja. Thank you for your patience in dealing with the ebbs and flows of my moods during the completion of this arduous process. Thank you for reminding me to go to surfing, and to take deep breathes.

I would like to recognize the guidance of my reading committee: Professor Rob Wilson, Assoc. Professor Loisa Nygaard, and Assoc. Professor Stacy Kamehiro. I appreciate the critical care which each of you have brought to the many versions of this paper, and for helping me to articulate this thesis as clearly and cogently as possible with my limited skill set. I would also like to recognize the surf-minded scholars whose previous work and perseverance has made my own project possible. I am also deeply thankful for the inspiration and fresh perspectives my undergraduate surf studies students continually supply, many of whom became so engaged with the material, that the “Sea Slugs,” UCSC’s first oceanic environmental organization evolved out of the last course I taught in the Fall of 2013. It has been these hands-on experiences, of both having had the luck and luxury to have been a well-traveled surfer, and getting to impart the lessons I’ve learned on my own (re-)research, spreading oceanic consciousness in both the local and student communities, that enable me to make the boldly optimistic claims that follow.

I would also like to acknowledge the progressiveness of the UCSC Literature Department and the UC Humanities Research Institute, under the leadership of Carla Freccero and David Theo Goldberg respectively. I am fortunate enough to have been generously supported by both institutions thus far, and I look forward to further collaborations concerning the strengthening and structuring of critical surf studies at UC Santa Cruz in the future.

THE OLD WEST & NEW PACIFIC FRONTIERS: Surfers & 'The Search' in the American Oceanic Imaginary

by Henry 'Trey' Highton III

...[in] the Renaissance and its aftermath, what also drove its [Euro-American] people to explore in every direction was the need to fill a great emptiness that had opened up in the cosmology and the sense of self of many Europeans – the lack at the heart of modernity, the origin of its anxiety but also a source of its dynamism and creativity. This emptiness induced the urge to travel, to fill the spatial void with human presence, or to find whatever was imagined to have been lost. It impelled the creation of images to fill the vacant spaces with human features and meanings or to draw the dreamer or traveller towards a world that might be repossessed.

In essence the emptiness remains with us at the beginning of the twenty-first century and still underlies our need to travel and to picture our journeys.

– John Osborne, "Traveling Light: Photography, Travel and Visual Culture"

As a master narrative for this tacit process of identity formation, "Americanization" of citizens implied not so much a stigma or a negation as a utopic self-construction... identifying with the sublimating energies of the nation: some vast landscape such as Niagara Falls or the Western plains... As one such time-honored discourse of "Americanization," the cultural genre of the "American sublime" evolved... to secure a conviction of national empowerment and cultural identity as founded in the illusion of empty space, or a *terra nullus* (as claimed in white Australia to displace aboriginal land rights) ripe for the saturation of Euro-American power and representation.

– Rob Wilson, *Reimagining the American Pacific*

The frontier is the line of most rapid Americanization.

– Frederick Jackson Turner,
"The Significance of the Frontier in American History"

America had many Wests.

– Irwin Unger, *These United States*

Surfers are "always the first to sniff out an untrammelled destination," wrote the *New York Times*. If there was a coast, surfers came. They blazed trails around the world, vastly expanding or even opening the tourism profiles of nations from Morocco to Mauritius. As "countercultural rebels," they were what Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter called "the 'shock troops' of mass tourism."

- Scott Laderman, *Empire in Waves: A Political History of Surfing*

Introduction:

MOUNTAIN MEN, RIDING MOUNTAINS

Every sunset which I witness inspires me with the desire to go to a West as distant and as fair as that into which the sun goes down. He appears to migrate westward daily, and tempt us to follow him. He is the Great Western Pioneer whom the nations follow. We dream all night of those mountain-ridges in the horizon, though they may be of vapor only, which were last gilded by his rays. The island of Atlantis, the islands and gardens of the Hesperides, a sort of terrestrial paradise, appear to have been the Great West of the ancients, enveloped in mystery and poetry. Who has not seen in imagination, when looking into the sunset sky, the gardens of the Hesperides, and the foundation of all those fables?

-- Thoreau, *Walking*, 1862

The realm of the Pacific has held a special place in the Occidental imaginary since the first descriptions of lush, Edenic islands returned with Captain Cook from his wanderings and map-making research in the South Seas looking for the fabled Southern Continent. Thoreau's yearning for the Western horizon, and the paradisiacal possibilities it inherently connotes, distill the American national will for adventure and empire embodied in the notion of Manifest Destiny. This seemingly gravitational pull of the sun on civilization was aided by literary works such as Melville's *Typee* (1846), which worked in the genre of both Captain Cook's journals of the eighteenth century and the adventure books of the late nineteenth century, such as Twain's *Roughing It in the Sandwich Islands: Hawaii in the 1860s* and Stevenson's *In the South Seas* (1896) – tales of pirates, noble savages, cannibalism, promiscuous native women, and perhaps most curious of all, surfing – which Cook himself perceived to be “the most supreme pleasure” imaginable (Warshaw *Zero* 4).

This identification of surfing as a 'savage' practice on the fringes of the known world served to entice the imaginations and wanderlust of those seeking to escape the confines of civilization and eager to search for adventure beyond known frontiers.

Whether figured as a search for the perfect wave or the biggest wave, this notion of 'the search' has become an indispensable part of surf culture – so literally that the Australian-based international surf brand Rip Curl has trademarked 'The Search' as its corporate slogan, exhorting to its consumers to 'Live the Search'. This notion of 'the search' as surf-specific can be most explicitly tied to Bruce Brown's classic film *The Endless Summer* (1966), in which surfers Robert August and Mike Hynson, envisioned as modern intonations of great white hunters, traverse the globe in search of adventure and 'the perfect wave'. (This film is considered of such cultural significance that the Library of Congress selected it for inclusion on its exclusive National Film Registry in 2002.) Realizing Thoreau's desire to follow the sun, *The Endless Summer* conjures Lukacs' 'transcendental homelessness' and foretells Clifford's 'nomadism' in its characters' ability to 'live the search' and follow the summer season around the globe.

[...] *The Endless Summer* invented what has since become surfing's greatest collective dream ['the search']. This dream connects surf spots across the planet in a coherent narrative of potential world belonging, any of them possible "homes" to the surfer who can get there and manage them (Comer 63).

Immortalized in John Van Hammersveld's day-glow poster (Figure 1, which is prominently displayed in New York's MOMA as an icon of Americana), these surfers' silhouettes (Figure 2) have been forever burned into the memory of the pop-culture consciousness, as they head off into the sunset – as if imitating John Wayne in the

final scene of *The Searchers* (1956), as he staggers off into the bright, dusty horizon (Figure 3), now with a surfboard under his arm, coming over the crest of the endless dunes to discover Cape St. Francis – ‘the perfect wave.’ Like the face of Helen, the perfect faces of the waves at Cape St. Francis launched a new era of, and a new form of, surf pilgrimage.

This figuration of solitary surfers alone on the horizon, the alignment of surfers as pioneering mountain men and as new frontier figures, has been suggested by Ormrod (2005) and Comer (2010), and is one I wish to further interrogate and complicate in this paper. I first establish the ethos of the American Frontier and Manifest Destiny in the traditional ‘old west’. I then, by demonstrate how, as the landed American Frontier was tamed and cordoned off through the enclosure movement by the end of the nineteenth century, the oceanic horizon came to hold the new siren song for those whom the West still held an allure of adventure and endless possibility. It is my assertion, that with the sea alone remaining as the only untamed wilderness, the image of the surfer, whose social recognition grew concomitantly during the 1950s and ‘60s with popular nostalgia for the Old West, came to supplant the place of the cowboy within the American Imaginary. Because the traditional cowboy aesthetic had been displaced through enclosure and modernization, the icon of the surfer stood forth as the new romantic figure of the American West who continued to grapple with the sublime forces of nature and push back the boundaries of known coastal frontiers, worldwide – with the “Pacific Ocean [acting] as [a symbol of] temporal destiny ... westward telos ... America’s

Pacific is an extension, temporally and geographically, of the ‘American West’” (Connery “Oceanic” 299).

I am particularly interested in representations of the surfing frontier and how the simulacra of the surf media envision ideals of a vacant, typified, placeless paradise. The entire surf industry propagates itself by manufacturing this paradise, what Ponting (2009) has dubbed the “Nirvanafication” of an oceanic idyll, with perfect waves that are out there, just waiting for the taking. These images have created a hermeneutic circle of desire for adventurous travel and discovery that has become the impetus for surfers to embark on their own “search” — surfari as cultural rite of passage — but at what costs to the land and seascapes the surfers traverse and inhabit?

[...] (O)ne of those great disappointments provided especially to wandering Californians: seeing that what you always took as your easygoing, “no worries” culture has taken root far afield and evolved into something new, and yet not new, a colonialism of cool, *California uber alles*. And it is at about this moment that it dawns on you that “California” has stopped being a point on the map and become a cultural meme, something akin to jazz – a feeling and a slant of light and a lexicon and a collection of symbols that has been shuttled and gassed and re-launched around the globe so many times that it is doing laps (Morris *TSJ*).

Extending the metaphor of surfers as frontiersmen, I will go on to advance an argument that Comer broaches about the ability of surfing to “globalize from below,” to evolve from the traditional ethos of the pioneer to the newly-awakened eco-consciousness of the ‘bioneer’ (Comer 18). This concept of surf-inspired eco-stewardship is complicated with an interwoven notion of surfers as inheritors of an ascetic Beat tradition wherein, “Beatness is an attitude without a country,” akin to what Comer recognizes in “surfing as both a lifestyle and a structure of feeling”

(Wilson *Beatitudes* 26 & Comer 6). Using this framework, I advance surfers' ability to negotiate and transform the liminal space of the beach and surf zone so that it acts as a heterotopic arena within the construct of global capital, one from which surfers not only pursue their relationship with the natural world in a more conscious and collaborative spirit, but by tapping into and utilizing Rolland's notion of "oceanic" interconnectivity, can act as role-models and purveyors of these eco-conscious lifeways for world citizenry.

1) MANIFEST DESTINY & THE FRONTIER ETHOS:

Euro-American Prefigurations

"Westward the course of empire takes its way" — George Berkeley's famous line from the closing quatrain of "On the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America" (1726), expressed the philosophical foundation for the nineteenth-century's mantra of American exceptionalism – Manifest Destiny. In the nineteenth century, Manifest Destiny was the belief that Americans had been ordained by God to act as arbiters of enlightenment, expanding the US territory from the Atlantic to the Pacific, displacing Native Americans and Mexicans under the aegis of divine right through historical might. This teleological belief in displacement enabled the justification of genocidal atrocities as the profane means to a "sacred" end.

As bearers of civilization, Americans established a tenuous frontier to maintain "a symbolic line of division between wilderness and human culture,

backwardness and progress, savagery and civilization” (Limerick 75). This inherent binary structuring in the frontier mentality should make it readily apparent that a frontier is only a frontier from the Euro-American perspective. Those on the “wrong side” were dehumanized, perpetually “Other”-ed, or worse yet, seen as non-entities. By aligning the wilderness and its inhabitants with darkness and removing their subjectivity, American authors, artists, frontiersmen, and politicians urging westward expansion readily justified their means and “linked sublime possession of space to the Manifest Destiny of the national will, as elected to expand and redeem the main continent from shore to shore” (Wilson 73). In this manner, the West acted as a counter-Eden—wherein, instead of casting out the wicked, Americans absorbed and ‘redeemed’ them, converting them to Christianity and capitalism.

With the end of the Indian Wars in 1890, and settlements having become so pervasive throughout the West that a ‘frontier’ no longer existed according to the US Census Bureau, along with the subsequent establishment of National Parks and Forests in 1891, the frontier was declared closed by historian Frederick Jackson Turner in a 1893 paper entitled, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” However, the frontier’s social importance as a defining national characteristic was celebrated, and its loss lamented (Limerick 18).

The frontier had produced pioneer ideals, and pioneer ideals were the key to American character and democracy. Thus, the often-noted anxiety lodged at the center of the Frontier Thesis: if the frontier had ended, as Turner said it had, then what force could keep those crucially American pioneer ideals alive and vital? (Limerick 153)

Theodore Roosevelt (former Colonel of the “Rough Riders” Calvary, who routinely swam nude in the Potomac while serving as President), envisioned the frontiersman

or the cowboy as “an archetype of freedom,” possessing the “stern, manly qualities that are invaluable to a nation” and regarded the closing of the frontier as a cause for alarm at a time when Victorian ideals of the prim and proper were seen to be squelching the last vestiges of masculinity and instinct that remained in modern Western man (Morrisey 41). Roosevelt’s “ideal of ‘the strenuous life’ was based on his sense that essential qualities of masculinity were being lost and that the nation was in danger of growing ‘old and soft and unwilling to endure hardships’” (Limbrick 37).

With the continental frontier officially closed and beginning to crowd on the shores of the Pacific, the wide-open spaces of the oceanic horizon became evermore inviting. The US military’s drive for new points of strategic interest, as always justified under the guise of Manifest Destiny, along with the spread of American ideals, led to the acquisition of Alaska (1867), Hawaii (1898), and the Spanish colonies, including the Philippines and Guam (1898). This broadened the general populace’s awareness of the potential of the Pacific as the new American frontier by the dawn of the 20th Century.

To solidify the Pacific into a terrain of American frontier interest, the discourse of Manifest Destiny had to be extended westward across the waters. By means of this east-to-west continental rhetoric, as Richard Drinson argues in *Facing West*, American[s] ... could “believe the Pacific an empty space, the watery extension of the once-virgin continent, with the isles of the uttermost seas uninhabited, save for childlike counterparts of the once merciless savages” (Wilson *Reimagining* 117).

This notion of the Pacific as an ‘empty space’ served the same function as the Western plains and deserts had during the original frontier era, wherein, “The Pacific became a site in which writers and artists could leave the metropolis, like

Prospero, to act out their subjective 'voyages of self-discovery' ... [a] time-honored cultural genre of Euro-American male fantasy ... taking possession of a remote, mute, eternally feminized Oceania..." (Wilson *Reimagining* 77).

Auden summarizes the distinctive Romantic attitude to the sea as including the desire on the part of the man [sic] of honour and sensibility to leave the land and the city, to voyage to the sea as the true test of masculinity, the realm where the decisive events, the moments of eternal choice occur. To poets such as Byron (in *Childe Harold*) the land was associated with corruption, the sea with purity: 'Man marks the earth with ruin – his control stops with the shore' (in Auden 1951: 25). Thus, through the Romantic imagination the sea becomes a realm of freedom, containing the possibility, through heroic action, of self-realization. ... the two symbolic qualities engendering this sense of freedom, were the sea's seeming boundlessness and seeming irresistibility ... the sea was the only untamed wilderness, an uncontrolled realm of sublime elemental forces (Ford 12).

The romantic idealization of frontier living was envisioned as no longer possible on the tamed continent. Only by venturing out in to unknown, past the Pacific horizon, could these man-making "voyages of self-discovery" still take place.

2) SURFING THE FRONTIER

When cattle trains and barbed wire fences made the life of the cattle-driving and open-range cowboy a thing of the past, and as the appetite for discovery and adventure inherent in the idea of Manifest Destiny remained within the popular imaginary despite the closure of the continental frontier, the nation continued to look west, to "[t]he sea [which] was expected to cure the evils of urban civilization

and correct the ill effects of easy living” (Corbin 62). The subsequent popularization of surfing, by figures of American modernity such as Alexander Hume Ford and Jack London at the turn of the twentieth century, provided a new identity for masculine adventurers who not only sought to commune with nature, but to, “get in and wrestle with the sea,” and to test their mettle against it (London 267). “Men...acted out a scene of bravery: they hoped to emerge as heroes for having faced the staggering blows from the sea, felt the scourging of the salty water, and overcome it victoriously” (Corbin 77). London’s gladiatorial prose in particular, from 1907’s “Riding the South Seas Surf,” aligns the surfer metaphorically as a cowboy breaking a wild stallion, “riding the sea that roars and bellows and cannot shake him from his back” (London 266). For London and his elite, white American cohort, not to have accepted the challenge of the ocean, not to have, “bit the sea’s breaker’s, master them, and ride upon their backs as a king should,” not to have become a surfer, would have been cowardice (London 266). Thus by promoting the sport of surfing to entice tourism to the new territory of Hawaii in the early twentieth century, Ford and London created a popular archetype of heroic masculinity in nature—the frontier surfer—one that drew upon established images and imaginings of the American West frontier. (And vice-versa, for London’s depictions of a surfer riding ‘calm and superb’ a ‘big smoker [that] lifts skyward’ can clearly be seen as a precursory influence on the tall tales of Pecos Bill, which were originally penned for *The Century Magazine* a decade later, in 1917, by Edward O’Reilly — particularly the tale of Pecos Bill lassoing and riding a tornado, ‘calm-like,’ except for the ‘occasional jab with his spurs’ (Schlosser).)

Sam George has argued that ‘all the surf-as-a-lifestyle basic tenets were established in the first two decades [of the twentieth century] and the most prominent – and enduring – of these is ‘romance’, ‘beautiful natural surroundings, danger, physical prowess, escapism’ (George 1999: 149). During surfing’s steady development through the mid-twentieth century such values were overlain with parallel images of a pioneering heroic ... (Ford 30)

The clearest example of this ‘pioneering heroic’ is Bruce Brown’s aforementioned *Endless Summer* (1966), in which Mike Hynson and Robert August literally follow the summer season surfing around the globe. The theme song, performed by The Sandals, has become a nostalgic melody synonymous with surfing’s bygone golden era, “just as ‘Endless Summer’ itself became the sport’s inescapable tagline” (Warshaw *History* 230). Not only does the film end in classic Western genre style, with the hero protagonists riding out into the setting sun, but Brown’s concluding voice-over, which states that, “With enough time and enough money, you could spend the rest of your life following the summer around the world,” was like the shot heard round the world. The film became eponymous with the cult of surf pilgrims and pioneers who would follow Brown’s lead to the ends of the earth, searching, relentlessly, for ‘the perfect wave.’

The Endless Summer revisited beloved places to eulogize them, to say goodbye. Priority access to Malibu was no longer possible. (Does this sound like the basic pathos of western tales: the “virgin” territory spoiled, the old days gone, and the moving on?) Never again would surfers underestimate the vulnerability of their most treasured resource: a perfect break. *The Endless Summer* grieved the loss by establishing a new set of potential places to love (Comer 56).

The Endless Summer left an indelible mark on surf culture as a whole and on every surf film to follow, but perhaps none more so than *The Forgotten Island of Santosha* (1974). Renowned surf scribe and documentary filmmaker Sam George

explains that in terms of surf travel, "*Santosh* played New Testament to *The Endless Summer's* Genesis," fostering a culture that idealized a global notion of 'nomadism' (George 6). In this film by Larry Yates, the search for the perfect wave continues on the fringes of the known surfing world, countering the 'beach blanket boom' that Hollywood surf films such as *Gidget* (1959) and *Beach Blanket Bingo* (1965) (domesticated studio depictions of surf culture that cultivated the 'clean teen' phenomenon of the Cold War era), were having on overcrowding Southern Californian beaches. These Hollywood surf films were domesticated, suburban portrayals of surfing that celebrated the freedom and hedonism associated with surf culture, but only as an adolescent pursuit, and in the end, always served to reinforce established social roles — even the great Kahuna tears down his grass shack and gets a job at the end of filmic version of *Gidget*. In response, *Santosh* was a refutation of the normative 'breadwinner' role for men in society, and in the wake of US draft-dodgers, emphasized a masculine escapism, close to nature, in exotic locales, and ushered in a new sentiment of secrecy. This was done in order to not only protect their own identities, but their new surf break discoveries from their audience, now realized to be a potential invasive force – so much so that they refuse to reveal the name of the locale of their perfect wave discovery, instead referring to it only as 'Santosh.' Yates and his cohort knew well that:

Discovery... invited ruin. In the late 1950s, when the "perfect wave" designation floated above Malibu like a neon sign, surfers were banging off one another in the line-up like heated molecules. To varying degrees, the same would eventually hold true for the Pipeline, Kirra, Jeffreys, Grajagan, and any other spot renowned and cursed as "perfect." For many surfers... the real search for the perfect wave has been less to do with adventure, romance, and the pursuit of new experiences and more with just getting the hell away from what ...

Mickey Dora called “all the surf dopes, ego heroes, rah-rah boys, concessionaires, lifeguards, fags and finks.” Surfers on the road didn’t look for anything in particular different. They wanted Malibu (or Kirra, or Grajagan, etc) without the crowds (Warshaw *History* 38).

More than anything else, *Santosha* embodies the desire of modern Western surfers to play the part of Crusoe, where if they could no longer be discoverers of the land, they can still be the ordinary conquerors of the surf. Empty surf breaks provided a way to make the fantasy true:

Although it is impossible to discover a place for the West more than once, it is possible to playfully imagine yourself the heroic discoverer of an empty beach or point, as long as there is no one else there. The appearance of others, and particularly other Westerners, shatters the illusion that the surfer is conquering empty spaces on the map (Reed 10).

This ideal of isolation in paradise is implicit in Yates’ concluding voice-over that explains, “The forgotten island of Santosha is more than just an island. It’s many islands, and it’s this island earth on which we live. It’s a state of mind, and of being. In a land of forgotten dreams, an island bound by the spirit of the sea, and living within the spirit of man,” while a simple guitar melody liltingly plays and soft, hypnotic voices chant repeatedly to come and ... “look for me.”

Santosha opens with an Arcadian image of two white men in bathing suits and straw hats paddling an indigenous outrigger canoe laden with surfboards down a jungle river. This opening sequence of Western surfers ‘gone native’ is a stark contrast to the aesthetic that Hynson and August embodied in *The Endless Summer*, as they globetrotted wearing black ties and Ray-Bans. As they pass a young nude native boy spearfishing in the shallows, and approach the open ocean, Yates’ voice-over begins:

Somewhere amid the seven oceans and seven continents of earth, there lies the forgotten island of Santosha. An island surrounded by the intense energy and sparkling beauty of her countless ocean waves. A place where exotic, mysterious cultures blend easily together in harmony. An island of happiness and peace, encompassing all that's good from every island on this planet: all the turquoise lagoons, the untouched beaches, and the unriden waves which every waverider has dreamed of. This is the story of our search for Santosha, our journeys through distant oceans, our reflections on journeys past, and our odyssey to find that one place which every wave rider hopes to discover: an island of natural beauty and those perfect unriden waves calling endlessly to those that might hear.

Yates' depiction of Santosha is redolent of Michener's "From the Boundless Deep" in *Hawaii* (1959), in which he describes, "Raw, empty, youthful islands, sleeping in the sun and whipped by rain, they waited" (Wilson *Reimagining* 186). The concept of islands 'waiting' and Siren-like 'waves calling endlessly' serve to entice further exploration into "pleasure peripheries of quasi-Edenic fantasy and recreation" (Wilson *Reimagining* 93) by producing "imaginaries that merge the feminine and the exotic in colonial pleasure zones" (Pritchard 291). The ambiguity of the location, "somewhere amid the seven oceans," has implications for not only the surf culture's ever-expanding oceanic frontier and its potentialities for undiscovered waves, but is also foreboding of the global aspirations of US expansionism and mobile masculinities.

Perhaps most foreboding, is Yates' assertion for the ability of "exotic, mysterious cultures [to] blend easily together in harmony." For one, the notion of discovery completely evades the fact that there are indigenous inhabitants in every surf spot 'discovery' and that *terra nullius* is a historically-laden misnomer that surf explorers have conceivably adopted too quickly and unthinkingly from frontier

rhetoric. As is the case of Oahu's North Shore, the recognized mecca of the surf world:

In the late 1950s and early 1960s Hawaiian surfers rode the dangerous North Shore surf alongside legendary Californians like Greg Noll. However, in a key scene in *Riding Giants* [2004] Noll and his California cohort are depicted as discovering the North Shore in 1957. . . . Life on the North Shore for these exploring Americans was reminiscent of eighteenth-century imaginations of Pacific places – where men enjoyed a Rousseau-like, carefree, noble-savage existence of sleeping under the stars and surviving on fish, papayas, and surf. And similar to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European explorers, these California surfers had “discovered” nothing but a place already occupied by ocean experts (Walker 33).

Although Noll and his contemporaries were able to enjoy their “Rousseau-like” era on the North Shore, it has since become the home to some of the most fiercely protected and localized surf spots in the world. This is not an anomaly. Racial tensions and surf-induced strife had been at home on Hawaii since Alexander Hume Ford began making claims to white men's supremacy in the surf after founding the Outrigger Canoe Club in Waikiki in 1908. Ford's contemporary, and fellow Waikiki surf-booster, Jack London at least acknowledged his role, albeit unabashedly, in “My Hawaiian Aloha” (1916):

The white man is the born looter. And just as the North American Indian was looted of his continent, so was the Hawaiian looted by the white men of his islands. . . . And let this particular *haole* who writes these lines here and now subscribe his joy and gladness in the Hawaiian loot (Wilson *Reimagining* 110, quoting from *Jack London Reports: War Correspondence, Sports Articles and Miscellaneous Writings*, 382-83).

London's alignment of Hawaiians with Native Americans was by no means original thinking, and embracing this typification and flattening of Pacific peoples as ‘savages’ has remained unabated in twentieth century cinematic portrayals. The

most popular line of dialogue in Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979), "Charlie don't surf!" (which became a cultural meme after The Clash's 1980 hit of the same title), is barked by the larger-than-life character of Colonel Kilgore (aptly named), played by Robert Duvall, in a moment of unchecked racial bravado that is a pure distillation of the terra nullius ethos, in which an under utilized landscape is begging to be conquered. Kilgore, blasts classical nineteenth-century composer Richard Wagner from his attack helicopter because "it scares the hell out of the slopes" while decimating a Vietnamese village. He angrily derides the Vietnamese as "goddamn savages" when they manage to take out one of his helicopters via suicide bomber. For as author of *American Pacifism* Paul Lyons has explicated, "when 'they' kill a white man, it is treachery or primitivity surfacing; when whites demolish villages, it is swashbuckling adventure" (Lyons "Pacific" 70).

Col. Kilgore is the ultimate amalgamation of both cowboy and surfer, and represents an unapologetic depiction of surfing's latent militarism, for ...

... modern surfing as we know it is a product of war. World War II and the Southern California military aerospace industry that it spawned gave us the vehicle that has defined the sport for more than six decades: the glassed, polyurethane board. Like a B-24 bomber wing detached and refanged, the longboard and its descendants gave us the means to conquer breaks around the globe (Morris, SJE 1.4).

This notion of the weaponized surfboard is enhanced by Coppola's visual alignment of surfboards holstered to the sides of Kilgore's helicopter, alongside the traditional weaponry. Kilgore is the leader of the Air Cavalry, the same military unit that would have once been responsible for running down Native Americans, had now "cashed in their horses for choppers and gone tear-assing around 'Nam looking for the shit." Beyond the cavalry's historic pedigree, Kilgore's radio call sign is "Big Duke," an

obvious homage to both legendary Western hero John Wayne, and also to legendary Hawaiian surfer Duke Kahanamoku.

Capt. Willard (Martin Sheen) has to use the lure of quality surf to extract air support from Kilgore, and on the eve of their mission, Kilgore has turned the LZ (landing zone) into a bonfire beach party reminiscent of San Onofre (legendary Southern California surf spot whose locals modeled their beach lifestyles after the original Waikiki beach boys), complete with t-bone steaks and beer. Kilgore, wearing a Yater Surfboards t-shirt, sits by the bonfire, playing guitar, joking with his men, and talking about the surf. Excited at the prospect of getting to surf with Lance Johnson, a hotshot SoCal surf star, and a possible six-foot swell, Kilgore angrily derides a subordinate's objection that, "'Charlie's Point' is pretty hairy," declaring flatly – "Charlie don't surf!" "The Pacific mappings charted by the antics of the surfing soldiers – holiday paradise and frontier battle-zone – appear by their nature and organizing tropes to exist in a state of binary opposition" (O'Dwyer 34). This binary opposition becomes apparent, in the case of Kilgore, when the excessive napalm bombing he orders to "clean up" the beach, ends up incinerating the once idyllic palm-covered coastline and blowing out (a wind condition) the waves.

The beaches of the Pacific where the indigenous and Euro-American cultures would meet, in Denning's metahistorical reckoning, remained frontiers, boundaries, and marginal places of disorder, danger, and risk where the interpretive codes could entangle, clash, and (mis)translate across the divide of incommensurable terms... (Wilson *Reimagining* 205).

Gloria Anzaldua, speaking on la frontera, the US-Mexican border, poetically surmises the dynamic of these new frontiers as sites "where the Third World grates up against the first and bleeds" (Limerick 88). Coppola interlaces scenes of

American indulgence and entertainment in the midst of the horror of war, from the USO show featuring Playboy Bunnies, to Lance Johnson tripping on acid during battle and waterskiing behind the river patrol boat, its wake crashing over Vietnamese doing laundry on the banks and overturning a local ferry, to the delight of his crew, while Mick Jagger wails “I can’t get no satisfaction” over the radio, an aural metaphor for the Euro-American appetite for conquest. “That an explicitly touristic promotion of Pacific paradises accelerated during the Vietnam War ... suggests the extent to which tourism blocks from self-knowledge the contexts of its development, its effects on Natives and locals, and the racist principles around which such erasures are organized” (Lyons “Pacific” 62). For Kilgore, the morning slaughter at ‘Charlie’s Point’ is just another day, as evidenced with his soliloquy about napalm and “the smell of victory.” From the ‘death cards’ that he assigns to the VC victims of his attacks, to his preoccupation with finding surf in the midst of battle, the entire Vietnam War seems to be a source of recreation and entertainment for Kilgore, who, bare-chested and unflinching as ordinances explode around him, seems to seriously lament that, “one day this war is going to end.”

Visually, in *Apocalypse Now*, the traditional paradigm of surfers setting off into the sunset has been reversed, as Kilgore and his surfing Air Cavalry are portrayed by Coppola as coming over the horizon with the rising sun towards the camera, an invasive force into a picturesque paradise — the light of dawn aligned with the light of civilization; which Kilgore imports on black wings of death, to the soundtrack of Wagner and the hypnotic whirring of rotor blades (Figure 4).

3) PRODUCING AND CONSUMING PARADISE: **Marketing the Surfer's Search**

A possible extended metaphorical reading of Kilgore's napalming of the shoreline to remove the VC so he can surf in peace, would be the new economic imperialism (indigenous displacement) that is inherent in surf-related real estate and tourism, which is paradoxically believed to be "the last frontier of authenticity" (Strain 8).

MacCannell suggests that this quest for authenticity is a reaction to the alienation that grew out of industrialization and the subsequent fragmentation of modern society. In other words, a fading of a sense of reality and oneness with the world impels the tourist out into the world. Within this search, more so-called primitive societies hold out the greatest promise for reacquainting with that elusive entity known as the real and for reinvigorating perception of one's surroundings ... some type of recovered ability to fully experience reality by way of a return to an earlier stage of life (Strain 3-4).

This disconnect with reality that is inherent in modern capitalist society, foments a "desire for escape from the negativities of urban life, [and] fostered increasing sensibility to marine aesthetics," wherein the Pacific as frontier, and its countless possible Santoshas, become a tangible expression of the substratum — an alternate reality, an elusive lost truth, capable of rejuvenating the proletariat (Ford 11). The unfortunate and inherent paradox in this magnetism to reconnect with the authentic is that, "because the West is very much associated with individualism, it thereby attracts floods and herds and hordes of people sharing the identical ambition to play the part of rugged individualists" on their vacation (Limerick 280).

Utilizing notions of Orwellian double-think, Paul Lyons' *American Pacificism* (2006) historicizes the American image of Oceania as an Occidental "stepping-stone" to Asian markets and achieving global capital, while simultaneously seeking to maintain its paradisiacal aura, its outside-of-time/ahistorical standing, as a site of unspoiled Edenic soul-renewal for civilization-weary Westerners seeking to escape the workaday world.

To sustain an image of island cultures as pastoral alternatives at the same time that the U.S. was extending its colonial, economic, and military investments in the region requires massive double-think ... This involved both an underlying conservative rationalizing that the negative effects of development in Oceania were inevitable, necessary evils (pangs of Islander delivery into modernity) and a conservationist stance toward aspects of Oceania most attractive to tourists (hospitality, erotic freedom, cultural performance, sun and surf) (Lyons *American* 123).

Lyons develops the idea that "tourists cannot really escape civilization because such escape is made possible by the imposition of that civilization upon the area to be escaped into," and that this, "desire to be Crusoe ... is doomed from the start, since the footprint one discovers will increasingly be another tourist's" (Lyons *American* 130). These temporary escapes only serve to entrench these would-be escapee's further into the lifestyles which wear them down, financially forcing their return and reintegration into a capitalist, commodity-driven First World – in the end, it "suggests an underlying commitment to the forces they seek to escape" (Lyons *American* 130).

The movie *City Slickers* provided the best recent example of the pattern: the discontented businessman can't take the city and the rat race anymore; he and his friends head West to a ranch where they take a herd on the trail and find inner strength and peace; the businessman returns, in good spirits, to take up his burdens in the

city. The West works him over and sends him back to the rat race, a restored and revitalized rat (Limerick 278).

In the same style in which the Dude Ranch offers an 'authentic' Western experience for their clientele, surf resorts in exotic locales offer their guests a similar immersive experience, wherein "elites are able to travel to the borders, to the liminal zone between their civilized selves and the exotic Other in search of a fantasyland of the western imaginary" (Pritchard 298). In this 'liminal zone,' beyond Occidental societal norms, tourists engage in "performance [of surfing, riding horses, etc.] as 'transformative practice,' especially in terms of surfing tourists, who make a direct correlation between the different spots they've surfed as definitive of their evolving identities – garnering subcultural capital akin to the notches on a gunslinger's belt (Crouch 12). What most tourists are unable to grasp during their short stays, is that they are not the only ones transformed in this process, and that beyond the walls of the surf resort, their presence has a very real effect on the paradise in which they've come to play.

Costa Rica, for example, once a frontier to surf explorers, has "progressed" from a rural Central American country that has been largely turned into a land of surf resorts and gated communities along its coastlines, where unless the 'Ticos' (native Costa Ricans) are cleaning rooms or serving drinks, they no longer belong — forced to the hinterlands by an explosion in real estate value fueled by an aging demographic of surfers who all want to retire in relative paradise, in what Turner and Ash (1975) describe as the "pleasure periphery." As an exotic surf destination, Costa Rica has become blasé to the hardcore surf traveller looking for a true frontier

experience, but just a few decades ago it may as well have been the edge of the world to the surf media.

This situation is not unique to Costa Rica or Latin America. In Hawaiʻi, the original surfers' paradise, today the ordinary native Hawaiian remains marginalized in a land that has become increasingly hostile towards their existence as it has become more tailored for tourist consumption, where "the subject of right is replaced by the subject of interest" (Selmeczi 69). With average real estate prices five times the national average, Hawaii has seen homelessness double in the last decade, and many native settlements, regarded by their inhabitants as constructive resistance through self-subsistence living, are deemed nothing more than refugee camps by state authorities. Honolulu is prone to "systematic cleansing" in which municipal workers disassemble native tent cities on outlying beaches and push the residents into shelters, or even offer them one-way tickets elsewhere.

In Bali, contemporary surf culture's current focal point, the terraced rice paddies that were once the definitive landmarks of the island are being drained and leveled to make room for unremitting commercial development and private villas – displacing local villages and traditional lifeways. Smog from the traffic in Kuta wafts over the island with shifting winds, and the waves, the original tourist draw to the "Island of the Gods," have become clogged with plastic debris and detritus. The once idyllic setting of a surf spot called 'Dreamland', a remote, picturesque beach on the southeastern Bukit Peninsula, has seen all of the local warongs (restaurant/homestays) that originally catered to surfers bulldozed and razed, to

make room for a massive golf resort and hotel development ominously named “New Kuta Beach” – a foreboding sign of things to come on the “Island of the Gods.”

Despite the day-to-day realities in locales such as Costa Rica, Hawaiʻi, and Bali, you would be hard-pressed to find any coverage of these issues in any mainstream surf media outlet. Beyond editorial silence, what has become a disturbing practice in contemporary surf media, in terms of simulacra and hyper-reality, is the practice of editing photographs to make locations seem more Edenic than they actually are. This would include erasing other surfers and environmental pollutants (background developments, or more literally, trash on the beach) to project an enduring image of the pristine and exotic surf destination, which is the staple of both surf goods and surf travel marketing. Photographers and graphic designers may play coy and maintain they are refining the aesthetics of the image, and simply removing ‘visual noise,’ but as an industry practice, they are creating mirages that fuel an annually multi-billion-dollar industry that essentially has grown men chasing ghosts around the globe. “[T]he aestheticizing gaze is *never* innocent, but ‘always in some sense colonizing the landscape, mastering and portioning, fixing zones and poles, arranging and deepening the scene as object of desire’ (O’Dwyer 35). In the same manner in which female bikini models are ‘touched up,’ creating unrealistic expectations of beauty that in turn have deleterious affects on young women’s self-esteem, so too does the practice of ‘touching up’ waves have far-reaching and unexpected consequences, especially in terms of the carbon footprint that surfers as a subculture are responsible for as they

jet set around the world, continuing their own individual, elusive searches for the actual referent of perfection these photographs have promised.

Barbieri and Sotomayor (2013) found surfers to be extremely mobile, 91% of 135 respondents from a variety of countries had taken a surf trip in the past five years. Of those, 82.1% had taken more than two surf trips; almost 40% had taken more than 10 surf trips, and almost 20% had taken more than 21 surf trips in the past five years (Ponting "Nirvana" 4).

But for all the time, money, and effort these "extremely mobile" surfers dedicate to finding their own Santosha, they are perpetually confounded by the paradox of the prospector, in which "[i]ndependent prospectors race from boom to boom, ironically leaving their antithesis – corporate, industrial mining – in their wake" (Limerick 96). It is a rare surfer who is able to keep his mouth shut about a new discovery, rarer still for that discovery to go undocumented photographically. Although Yates was able to keep the secret about the real Santosha, his film's popularity made its eventual exploitation inevitable, and today it is well known that the wave is located at Tamarin Bay, Mauritius, where the once 'forgotten island' now hosts golf and spa resorts where guests are able to pay to swim with dolphins. This may be a boon for golfers and their families, but lamentable for surfers hoping to relive the experience promised by Yates' film, which is indicative of Baudrillard's notion of simulacra, being, "... a melancholy... historical vision: there was a referent; it has been lost; and this loss is, as in Plato, the equivalent of a moral fall" (Frow 126). For contemporary surfers beginning their own search, the ...

... journey is the construction of a narrative of loss and nostalgia, a cathartic appeasement of Western guilt over "our own filth, thrown in the face of mankind," and a race against time to find the last "untouched" ... [Santoshas] before they are gobbled up by a homogenizing monoculture (Strain 227).

This search then is not only for an elsewhere, but an *else-when*, a simpler time in the past when there were fewer people, more freedom, and the dollar went farther — a possibility that is only now tangible in Third World coastal destinations across the Global South. While surfers, as “the shock troops of mass tourism,” continue to settle the ex-frontier beaches of the Pacific, it is important for surfers to realize that they are complicit in these processes of rampant development, displacement, and economic inequality — that the nature of surfing is travel, and the nature of travel is colonialism (Laderman 56).

The very essence and soul of surfing is travel. The call of the road entices us every time we surf or even think about surfing. Is the peak down the beach better? Is the beach down the road better? Is the country over the ocean better? Every surf magazine we open, every surf film we watch, and every surf brand we buy always seems to return to the same theme: the empty road to perfection.

Of course, this is how it should be. We should be encouraged to chase our dreams. We should be out on the road seeing the world for what it really is. But in so doing, are we destroying the very thing we love? From Rip Curl’s ‘Search’ to Quiksilver’s ‘Crossing’, almost every surf brand has used the untainted ideal of hitting the road in search of virgin waves to sell their products. The cover of every surf magazine seduces us with promises of another journey of discovery to the untrammelled wilderness of this surfing planet. ... We’re [the surf media industry] creating your dreams, sending you off to find Santosha, and in the process destroying it long before you’ve had a chance to bathe in its beauty (Butler 74).

This sentiment was expressed as early as 1973, in an article entitled “CentroAmerica” in *Surfer* magazine, in which Kevin Naughton & Craig Peterson write: “[W]e’ve about used up this paradise and are moving on towards a better land, searching for a perfect wave yet to be discovered, yet to be ridden” (Naughton “Centro” 45). In his 1999 thesis “Waves of Commodification,” Michael Reed intuitively explains, “[p]aradise is something acquired and then ‘used up.’ The real

joy apparently lies in more travel, more exploration, and further fantasies of conquest and adventure ... the comparison to masculine sexual conquests is striking” (Reed 13). This metaphor of surf exploration as sexual conquest works to explain the elevation of untouched, “virgin” surf spots within the subculture, and how the search itself can be framed as a type of twisted Nabokov-ian obsession.

4) FROM PIONEERS TO ‘BIO-NEERS’: Towards an Oceanic Consciousness

The truth is that surf media has increasingly grown alienated from understanding how to represent the places themselves in a true light. A lot of these places aren’t ‘Nirvanic’. Like the Mentawais . . . if you’re a Mentawaian person, its home but it’s not fuckin’ Nirvana. Surfers who do venture into the villages see that. Shit, they can smell it too. Outside their air-conditioned cabin, they can feel it. It chips away at their dream.

(Ponting “Nirvana” 9, quoting ‘Tom’, Surf Magazine Editor, 2004)

Perhaps it is in recognition of this collective Western guilt over socio-economic disparities between surfers’ home countries and their dream destinations that a new brand of surf-inspired eco-stewardship has emerged during the 21st Century thus far. Organizations such as SurfAid International, Waves for Water, & Surfers for Cetaceans are examples of a burgeoning grassroots movement within surfing’s global subculture to give resources back to impoverished destination communities and to protect the marine environment and its inhabitants.

SurfAid International was founded in 2000 by Dr. Dave Jenkins after a 1999 boat trip to the Mentawai Islands off the coast of Sumatra, Indonesia. Jenkins explains:

Late one afternoon, on what I thought would be a harmless tourist venture inland to one of the villages, my beliefs in what is important in life were changed forever. After walking past the graveyard and seeing a lot of very small graves I ended up running a clinic at the chief's request. I was the first doctor ever to visit the village. I saw women and children dying from malaria, malnutrition and inadequate living standards - things that I knew were treatable and, better still, preventable by helping them change behaviors such as basic hygiene and better breastfeeding practices (surfaidinternational.org/foundersstory).

Since its humble inception as a group of 25 friends investing \$25 dollars each, by 2011 SurfAid had an operational budget of over USD \$4 million thanks to large donations from surfwear giants Quiksilver and Billabong (Ponting "Performance" 12) and has just officially been granted NGO status by the Australian government (March 2014). Jenkins' empathy and initiative have saved countless lives in the Mentawai archipelago through malaria programs and the distribution of mosquito nets, improved access to quality drinking water, public health education, and emergency response and recovery programs which have responded to five major natural disasters over the last decade -- the Boxing Day Tsunami (December 2004), Nias Earthquake (March 2005), Mentawai Earthquakes (September 2007), Padang Earthquake (September 2009) and Mentawai Tsunami (October 2010).

Working on the issue of increasing access to clean drinking water, Waves for Water was founded in 2009 by former pro-surfer turned 'guerilla humanitarian' Jon Rose. Rose, like Jenkins, was also on a boat trip in the Mentawai Islands when fate intervened in the form of the 2009 Padang Earthquake. Although he was en route to

deliver water filtration systems to Bali, Rose went to the devastated area of Padang and helped aid workers establish clean water resources to aid in their triage efforts – which again, as with Jenkins, proved to be a life-altering experience. Of that experience, Rose recalls, “Seeing death and destruction on that level changed my life forever. I didn’t just find myself at a crossroads. It was nonnegotiable. My new job is: I’m going to help people” (Dixon 49). Since ’09, Waves for Water, after gaining corporate backing from Hurley surfwear (a subsidiary of sports apparel giant Nike), has been able to expand their operations and outreach on a global scale with projects in Latin America (Brazil, Columbia, Chile, & Haiti), Africa (Ethiopia, Uganda, Liberia, & Sierra Leone), India, the Philippines, and even New York and New Jersey post-Hurricane Sandy. In addition to these efforts on the organizational level, Waves for Water has also developed a Clean Water Courier program that enables individual surfers to raise funds to take water filters with them on their surf trips to distribute to communities in need. For \$50 each, a community filter is able to supply clean water for 100 people for up to five years (wavesforwater.org). Rose hopes that this program will create a literal ripple effect that can tangibly change the quality of life for those in need in wave-rich but infrastructure-poor surfing destinations across the developing world.

What is inspiring about both SurfAid and Waves for Water is their respective founders’ ability to move beyond the standard dynamic of the “boat trip,” in which surfers are shuttled from wave to wave in a cocoon of relative luxury, oblivious to the hardships of the communities ashore. In fact, as Ponting discusses in “Performance, Agency, and Change in Surfing Tourist Space” (2013), throughout the

'90s the surf charter industry actively promoted the myth that it was unsafe for Westerners to go ashore on Sumatra because of the high likelihood of contracting malaria. This myth was perpetuated to discourage land-based surf resorts from developing and then competing for the charter industry's market niche. Jenkins, by ignoring these false warnings and daring to visit the local communities, lifted the veil on the mirage of the Mentawai Islands as the ultimate surfer's paradise. Ponting explains that, "Rather than benevolently disengaging from local communities for fear of corrupting their happy, simple existence, surf tourists increasingly seek interactions with local communities and want to be part of solutions to the issues they face" (Ponting "Performance" 12).

Surf activism, rightly so, is far from landlocked. Surfers for Cetaceans (hereafter referred to as S4C) was co-founded by Australian professional surfer Dave 'Rasta' Rastovich in 2004 after a dolphin saved him from a probable shark attack. S4C works to protect all marine mammals (whom Rasta refers to as 'ocean people') and their environment. Rasta was featured prominently in the award-winning documentary *The Cove* (2009), in which he paddled into the 'killing cove' in Taiji, Japan to try to stop an on-going slaughter of pilot whales, and is the main subject of another documentary entitled *Minds in the Water* (2011), five years in the making, which has followed his evolution from easy going 'free-surfer' to radical eco-activist. He is also the driving force behind Billabong's (his main corporate sponsor) decision to begin a "Recycler Series" of boardshorts that are derived entirely from recycled plastic materials such as single-use water bottles. These

boardshorts won SIMA's (Surf Industry Manufacturer's Association) Environmental Product of the Year Award in both '08 and '09.

These examples of surfer-activists and philanthropy from the surf industry challenge both classic and contemporary stereotypes of surfers as either self-absorbed (Hynson & August in *The Endless Summer*) or too stoned and stoked to know and/or care what is going on in the world around them (Lance Johnson in *Apocalypse Now*; Jeff Spicoli in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* -- the real Spicoli, actor Sean Penn, recruited Jon Rose's help for relief efforts in the aftermath of the 2010 Haiti earthquake.) Again, the figure of Kahuna (from the *Gidget* novels, not the film) can be seen as an early archetype that foreshadows this surprising depth of character in a 'beach bum'.

In *Cher Papa* [1960], Gidget's fictional father, finding that he admires Kahuna against his will, sees Kahuna as a beatnik surfer who at the same time suggests a much older and established figure of Western Civilization: "This bum was no bum at all. He was Diogenes, Lord Byron, and Heathcliff all rolled into one" (Comer 50).

Comer's notion of the "beatnik surfer" is one which resonates now more than ever before – Kerouac's vision of a 'rucksack revolution' having morphed into a barrage of boardbags crisscrossing the globe with ever-increasing frequency – establishing "nomadic linkages" (Wilson "APEC" 394) for surfing as a "liberationist discourse ... [with] an implicit supranational character" (Connery "Ideologies" 175).

There's a getaway rush in traveling from wave-to-wave ... like slipping through the tightening grip of time, or thumbing your nose at a life of dedicated mediocrity and the blind pursuit of dollars. It's an offbeat notion that goes back decades, to when surfers were real fringe-dwellers in the social order. From the start, traveling surfers picked up where the fifties' Beat Generation left off (Naughton "Road" 55).

In the post-*Gidget* '60s, although surfing had become commercially viable and culturally mainstream, hardcore surfers still cling to the notions of escapism that were inherent in the subculture, and with which they justified their disavowal of the Vietnam War and consumer society writ large, by becoming draft-dodgers and drop-outs. It was far more probable to find surfers headed to Mexico (or beyond) than to draft-card burning rallies or any other protest. The world then was a much bigger, more porous place to escape into. Scott Laderman, in *Empire in Waves* (2014) explains that,

... surfers' concerns generally began and ended at the water's edge. For them, what happened on land ... was of little serious concern. The waves were all that mattered. ... Surfers preferred to see themselves as pioneers navigating a world of bountiful waves and always-smiling locals who lived in lands uncomplicated by imperial concerns (Laderman 4).

Today, however, in the modern age of globalization, as Chris Connery notes, "We are said to be witnessing, to mix the temporal and the spatial in the logic of Francis Fukuyama's thesis, the end of space" (Connery "Ideologies" 174). There is no escaping global warming or the acidification of the oceans, let alone rising sea levels (although Australian cartoonist Tony Edward's "Atomic Tube" (Figure 5) and John Carpenter's *Escape From LA* (1996, Figure 6) offer interesting dystopic views of post-apocalyptic surfing potentialities).

Perhaps this is why, at the dawn of the 21st Century, after a decade of squeezing every last drop of marketing out of the Mentawai Islands as a vestigial paradise -- surfing's last great discovery -- until those islands too have become choked with charter boats and their refuse, the new frontiers of eco-conscious lifestyle choices are beginning to gain precedence, and even market share, within

the surf industry. Despite recent discoveries (such as the North Pacific Gyre) and disasters (such as Deepwater Horizon and Fukushima Daiichi), academics such as Comer & Ponting, and more importantly, surfers themselves, believe that surfing as a cultural conduit is capable of spreading eco-consciousness on the global scale needed to avert what seems to be inevitable and catastrophic ecological disaster – in which “surfers’ global play has created millions of new environmentalists” (Comer 127).

Surfing as a globalist trope suggests that the social possibilities generated by the circulation of international capital, new information technologies, and people in transit will prove freeing, much as board surfing is popularly understood to be freeing. Surfing thus constitutes a rhetoric of optimism about the potential of globalization to advance global good (Comer 12).

Since Clark Foam, the world’s largest surfboard blank manufacturer, shut down in 2005, the surfboard itself has been on a path from being derived from a toxic chemical soup to becoming more eco-friendly, utilizing renewable natural materials such wood, agave, bamboo, and even mushrooms – coming full-circle back to its indigenous Hawaiian origins. This ‘greening’ of the surfboard, with new eco-options available within the marketplace, from natural rubber wetsuits to organic and biodegradable surf waxes and sunscreens, and a growing popularity of all things DIY, from customizing your van to be a live-aboard surf-mobile (a modern version of a pioneers’ covered wagon -- a self-contained, mobile abode powered by solar panels and bio-diesel) to building board racks for your beach cruiser, are all a harkening back to surfing’s indigenous Hawaiian roots and the relationship of reciprocity with the land and ocean embodied in the notion of malama ʻāina. In the same manner in which TV cowboys of the ‘50s and ‘60s “provided young baby

boomers with unconfusing heroes and a clear sense of right and wrong” (Limerick 284, quoting Jane and Michael Stern), via the Lone Ranger’s Creed for example (“I believe that all men are created equal and that everyone has within himself the power to make a better world”), the aforementioned surfer activists are offering themselves as positive role models for the next generation of surfers with a global conscience – embodying the creed that, “[t]here is perhaps no graver sin among surfers than environmental insensitivity” (Laderman 142).

Akin to canaries in a coalmine, surfers’ health acts as a litmus test for the overall health of our planet’s oceans, and as such, they are becoming more sensitive to the idea of a belonging to, a oneness with, the ocean and nature in general. Subject to urban runoff, untreated sewage, and other industrial and agricultural effluents such as pesticides, surfers have a personal interest in protecting the oceans; and realizing the interconnectivity of natural cycles and all life, surfers have become some of the most vocal and visible of contemporary eco-activists. The novelist Lawrence Durrell suggests that, “a traveler can reduce a locale to a knowable entity through immersive sensory experience alone. . .” and, “advocates a method of communing with the land through direct experience. Such a mystical effect takes place as a result of a prolonged stay and an openness to total immersion” (Strain 28). Accordingly, surfers, ritually acting out a total ‘immersive sensory experience’, know the ocean in a way that is more intimate and sensual than most casual beach goers can even dream of. This ‘mystical effect’ in the West, what Connery has referred to as “transcendental experience – a spiritual, originary,

mystical, or purifying experience,” has its roots in the rise of romanticism at the end of the 18th Century (Connery “Oceanic” 295).

Percy Bysshe Shelley, for instance, likened swimming to “orgasmic sensations” and Valery, the French poet described swimming as “fornication with the wave.” The sea was also regarded as the nurturer of life. Novalis, a German Romantic, compared the sea with a mother or womb (Ormrod “Endless” 46).

The nuanced erotic and maternal aspects of the human relationship to the ocean has been poetically explored by Thomas Farber’s *On Water* (1994) and *The Face of the Deep* (1998). Marine biologist and ‘neuro-conservationist’ Dr. Wallace J. Nichols’ *Blue Mind* (forthcoming, 2014) explores the ancient idea of nature as medicine and uses neuroscience to explore the psychologically cognitive benefits of being in and around the ocean by exploring the emotional connection, the feeling of awe, generated through Durrell’s aforementioned ‘total immersion’. This immersive/emotive connection is resonant in the belief that “environmentalist action necessitates human connection to the natural world as a precursor” (Comer 3).

... for [Romain] Rolland, the oceanic feeling was “a sensation of ‘eternity,’ a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded – as it were, ‘oceanic.’ . . . One may, he thinks, rightly call oneself religious on the ground of this oceanic feeling alone, even if one rejects every belief and every illusion” (Connery “Oceanic” 289).

Analogous to Emerson’s “waves of God” that “abolish our contritions” (Wilson *Beattitudes* 26-27, quoting Emerson, “Circles,” 1841), Rolland’s ‘oceanic’ feeling evinces a belonging to a universal entity or energy that is derivative of classic tenets of Eastern philosophy that were foundational to the Beat ethic of communion with nature to recharge one’s world-weary soul. This turn away from the material

world -- the city and its trappings -- in favor of immersion in nature is an attribute that the Beats explicitly share with surfers, who literally turn their backs on society every time they paddle out. Kerouac, in the opening of *Dharma Bums* (1958), his memoir-based introduction to Eastern mysticism, exemplifies this connection unpretentiously:

Happy. Just in my swim shorts, barefooted, wild-haired, in the red fire dark, singing, swigging wine, spitting, jumping, running—that's the way to live. All alone and free in the soft sands of the beach by the sigh of the sea out there . . . (Kerouac 7).

Australian filmmaker Albert Falzon directly echoes this sentiment in his introduction to his film *Morning of the Earth* (1972):

It [surfing] shifts your priorities to try to spend more time in those areas that give you the greatest joy and satisfaction ... Keep it really simple: walk along empty beaches, see dolphins and birds flying, go for a swim in a pristine ocean, breathe the air. That's what life is. That's what the planet is giving to us all the time. We think we have to create these other thing to make life better, but life's not better than those things (Falzon, *Morning of the Earth*, 1972).

What is often derided as a 'slacker' mentality among surfers by more traditional members of society (driven by the Puritan work ethic), reflects a conscious choice to be more in tune to the cycles of nature (tides, swells, winds, etc.) than to be beholden to a normative nine-to-five schedule that would preclude them from being available during the ever-shifting, optimal times to surf. At the core of this differentiation, wherein surfers envision, "the blank 'wastes' of the world's seas as spaces that ... released them from the yoke of coercive authority," is a fundamental tension between what is considered valuable – money or freedom (Balasopoulos 142).

The deeper you dive into it, the more you'll realize that global surf culture is still very much a tribe. A brotherhood. An eclectic band of runaway misfits who share one similar, primal passion: the most hyperconscious, out-of-body experience a human being can attain this side of childbirth (Pruett).

By making that choice, by altering one's lifestyle (and that is perhaps the cleanest delineation between "one who surfs" and "a surfer") to ensure dedicated availability to commune with nature, surfers show the same level of commitment as other religious devotees who live an ascetic life. And the more intimate the relationship grows between the surfer and the sea, so too does the intensity of the aforementioned "oceanic" feeling.

If you can become consciously and constantly aware that you are of the Source, that you came from Light and Delight and your ultimate goal is to go back to Light and Delight, then you will have no sense of insecurity. As long as the tiny drop retains its individuality and separateness, it will remain insecure; the waves and surges of the ocean will scare it to death. But when the tiny drop consciously enters into the ocean, it becomes the ocean itself. Then it is no longer afraid of anything (Chinmoy 83).

In the film *Riding Giants* (2004), local Half Moon Bay waterman Jeff Clark refers to this sensation when describing surfing Maverick's, one of the world's most treacherous waves, by himself for fifteen years – how he could "feel the ocean with every fiber of my body" and that "I was a part of it." In this sense, according to Ormrod (quoting Will Wright's *Six Guns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western*):

The surfer is located in a position similar to that of the hero in the classical western ... In the western the wilderness becomes the hero's source of power:

"He [the hero] is an independent and autonomous individual *because* he is part of the land. The strength that makes him unique and necessary to society and the beauty that makes him desirable to the girl are human counterparts to the strength and beauty of the wilderness" (Ormrod "Lemon" 12).

Clark's harnessing of the potential of the "oceanic" feeling, what Chinmoy describes as the ability to "no longer [be] afraid of anything," is what is now necessary from surfers on the global-scale of eco-advocacy and social justice. In this vein, the notion of being "stoked" (consciously enthralled in the present moment and its possibilities) emerges as a contemporary, coterminous signifier of "Beatitude," which "implies the transformative energies generated from this double sense of being happy/holy and ready to make self and world anew" (Wilson *Beatitudes* 5). This "bioneer" surfer figure thus becomes transposed with wandering saints of the past, particularly Saint Christopher (patron saint of all travellers, and thereby surfers as well), and give credence to Kerouac's axiom that, "One man practicing kindness in the wilderness is worth all the temples this world pulls" (Kerouac 106).

CONCLUSION:

SURFING THE CURRENTS OF GLOBAL CAPITAL

It's the edge of the world
And all of western civilization
The sun may rise in the East
At least it settled in a final location
It's understood that Hollywood
Sells Californication

...

Destruction leads to a very rough road
But it also breeds creation
And earthquakes are to a girl's guitar
They're just another good vibration
And tidal waves couldn't save the world
From Californication

- Red Hot Chili Peppers, "Californication," 1999

In the beginning of the industrialization of American surfing, the search was for the perfect wave, and the attention of the surfing world focused on Malibu. The ensuing crowds that ruined Malibu, and most other popular, readily accessible breaks in California, encouraged a new facet of the search to supersede perfection: solitude. As the surfing population continued to exponentially expand and the paths to the world's most popular breaks became more well-worn, realizing the ideal of solitude in perfection became harder and harder to achieve. Some flocked to resorts, such as Tavarua, in Fiji, who have tried to maintain private access to specific waves (the Fijian government revoked this privilege in 2010); others abandoned the traditional notion of paradise altogether, forging new surfing frontiers in cold water exploits, in places like Alaska, Iceland, and Russia – preferring hypothermia to crowds (an endeavor that the invention of the wetsuit in 1952 and advances in material technologies have made increasingly bearable).

Today, the search in surfing has evolved to encompass dimensions beyond the purely personal. Of course, surfing is still a primarily intimate engagement between a person and nature, and as such, can be construed as a selfish, single-minded endeavor. But personal experience (a maturing demographic) and the subcultural ethos of surfing have given the meaning of the search, to some surfers at least, more resonant implications, beyond imagined geographies, into the terrains of conscious living as well – with an emphasis on an oceanic connection to nature. “[S]urfers have usually been in search of much more than perfect waves; they’ve been in pursuit of fundamentally better ways of everyday living ... with relative compatibility with the non-human natural world” (Comer 21). This notion of kinship with the natural world, this surf-induced eco-sensitivity runs deeper than the normative usage concerning conscientious consumer practices and ‘blue-green’ thinking. This oceanic surfers’ consciousness must expansively include the apocalyptic anxieties about ocean acidification and sea-level rise, and about whether or not they will be the last generation of surfers to experience, and have the privilege of playing in, a living ocean.

The surf ... is imagined as a particular kind of territory – a space which is both evanescent and miraculous in its formations but eternal in its rhythmic re-appearance and connections to all other waves and all other water on the planet. These Romantic imaginings of air and water defy the logics and territorial imperatives of land-based cartographies and international political and military determinations. Surfing could free the individual from the suffocating orderliness of the land; the surfer is uniquely placed to access the mystery and primitive pleasures of this essentialized, ‘other’ geography (Lewis *Pure Filth*).

This interconnected ‘other’ geography, and the liminal nature of its beaches and surf zones in particular, are borderlands of portent possibilities, “space[s] of actions and

inter-actions" (Lefebvre 403) -- coastlines envisioned as "local/global faultline[s]" across which "hybrid, relational cultural processes" foment and transpire (Clifford 18 & 176). Pushing the limit of this "oceanic feeling" to an extreme (Connery "Oceanic"), can surfers utilize this sense of belonging to both within nature and the construct of global capitalism to operate there within their lifestyles and beaches as heterotopic spaces, ones in which it may be possible to resist the ecologically apocalyptic trends of global capital (Figure 7)? To achieve this end, is it realistic to believe that surfers may be willing to pay more for products to ensure more environmentally sustainable and humane labor practices for the unseen masses that produce the material means with which they pursue their lives of leisure?

Except for those "rare occasion[s]" when surfers themselves were directly affected, "[p]olitically," Lueras wrote approvingly, "surfing has managed to remain relatively pure and blind to the world's greatest social problems." This association of surfing's purity with its detachment from an inevitably politicized world was, and is, significant. For globally wandering surfers to consider the political realities of the places they visited was to risk polluting the transcendence of the wave-riding experience (Laderman 64).

By remaining 'pure' of the 'polluting' effect that 'political realities' would have on 'the transcendence of the wave-riding experience,' surfers can live in a state of willed ignorance that allows them to continue embarking on boyish adventures of "exotic discovery in a timeless present in which they could play modern-day explorers in a corrupted political world" (Laderman 72). This is the stereotypical gloss and polish of a carefree surfers' life that is marketed as California cool, according to which the truly dedicated surfer (read the truly self-absorbed surfer) has no worries beyond the sun and sand – except perhaps when the next swell will

arrive. (Cue Jeff Spicoli's famous line from *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*: "All I need are some tasty waves, a cool buzz, and I'm fine.")

Although traditionally apolitical, the enlightened, oceanic surfer no longer has any choice but to become an activist, realizing cultural theorist Edward Said's axiom that, "Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography" (Said *Culture and Imperialism* 7). The rapidity with which anthropogenic pollutants have caused changes to the planet has scaled up from a geologic timeframe to a generational one. (In the Maldives, another Indian Ocean archipelago that once enjoyed the surf-media-darling status conferred with the label of paradise, but which is also the lowest lying nation on earth, is so concerned with the rapidity with which the ocean is rising that President Mohamed Nasheed and his cabinet donned scuba gear to hold a staff meeting twenty feet underwater in October 2009, where they signed a resolution calling on all nations to reduce their carbon emissions.) Timothy Leary's mantra, in the longue duree of the '60s, to "turn on, tune in, and drop out," was for surfers always coupled with a return to a more intimate, holistic relationship with nature (as has been consistently depicted within the subculture by Albert Falzon's *Morning of the Earth* in 1972, to Chris Malloy's *Groundswell* in 2013). What was then considered more of an apathetic rejection of Western society writ large, a refusal to participate, has evolved into galvanized resistance and fierce localized protectionism, which in turn has led to organization and political involvement – starting with John Kelly's founding of Save Our Surf on Oahu, Hawaii in 1964, to the worldwide organizations now at play in form of the Surfrider Foundation (founded 1984) and the Save The

Waves Coalition (founded 2001). Leveraging their global networks and resources, both Surfrider and Save The Waves work with and through local, place-based communities, bound by the shared resource of a surf break, to conserve and protect natural coastal resources. This is best demonstrated in the Save The Waves Coalition's "World Surfing Reserves" project, which works with local stewardship councils to help protect world-class surf breaks from pollution and coastal development in order to preserve the environment and its surfing resources for the future enjoyment of generations of surfers to come.

... Henri Lefebvre, whose 1974 study *The Production of Space* aimed to liberate space from both its common status as a pre-existing given and its passive role as a mere backdrop for social action. Lefebvre concluded ... that '[space] has now become something more than theatre, the disinterested stage or setting, of action ... its role is less and less neutral, more and more active, both as instrument and as goal, as means and as end' (Frank 66, quoting Lefebvre 410-411).

Naturally protective of their source of pleasure and solace, the beach and the surf break then are able to serve as both catalyst and reward, 'both as instrument and goal, as means and as end' for the surfing community to become cultural ambassadors for eco-sensitivity on a mass sociological scale across their global network.

Always a path for living the everyday *differently*, surfing implicates lifestyle behaviors in oppositional politics. ... Connections to surf breaks have translated into specific kinds of links to the towns, cities, and ecosystems in which surf breaks are located. Surfers-as-community have found themselves linked, by way of the global subculture, to place-based surfing communities everywhere. In the transnational communities surfers have created, they bring together a loosely organized set of mobile identities and special interests that make up one kind of international civil society that can be brought to bear on specific political struggles over water quality, public health, coastal development, sustainable tourism, humanitarian aid ... [et al.] (Comer 26).

This dialogic nature of the contemporary surfer, caught between a tradition of 'no worries' escapism and the harsh new reality of the inability to escape the reach of anthropogenic ecological devastation, is most cogently revealed in the current marketing agenda of the surf brand Reef – which is concurrently running two campaigns, “Just Passing Through” and “Reef Redemption.” Reef was started in 1984 by Santiago and Fernando Aguerre, a pair of Argentinian brothers who moved to Southern California with \$4,000 working capital, and who, after successfully turning their company in to the world’s #1 sandal brand, sold the company in 2005 for over \$100 million to VF Corporation -- the largest apparel corporation in the world.

Reef is most memorable for using the “Miss Reef” figure as a staple in their formulaic print advertising campaigns, which featured a split-spread that showcased a female model in a thong bikini (buttocks prominently displayed, face always hidden from view, framed with a testosterone-induced target audience in mind) coupled with an action shot of a professional surfer or a pristine surf destination (Figure 8). The product itself remained peripheral, implied even, as total prominence was given to creating an image that sought, successfully so, to distill the desires of the male surfing imaginary en masse. The available female body, whose curves are often conflated with the feminized landscape of an undefined paradise, both become, along with the waves, the fantasized play spaces of the questing male surfer. Reef, able to conjure both lust and wanderlust in their consumers, tapped into the collective dream of the search.

This collective dream, this collective surf consciousness, is something that has been palpable since the inception of subculturally specific surf media, as founder of *Surfer* magazine, John Severson, opined in an early editorial entitled, “Surfing Is . . .” : “... a dream magazine. I saw that right away. The perfect surf, the faraway places... we all dream about the same things” (Ormrod “Endless” 43). PJ Connell, former Director of Marketing for Reef, utilized culturally engrained visual tropes and signifiers to make consumers feel that, “When you look at Reef, you look at a product that’s going to take you somewhere” (reef.com/culture). (The making and selling of a cool-by-association brand image, something that projects all the markers of exclusivity but carries none of its requirements, has been given the thoughtful consideration it deserves in a 2007 article by Hawaiian cultural scholar Kali Fermantez, entitled, “Between The Hui and Da Hui Inc: Incorporating N-oceans of Native Hawaiian Resistance in Oceanic Cultural Studies.”) This notion of a product being able to convey the consumer, in both body and mind, is something that resounds in the brand’s current marketing tagline: “Just Passing Through”. Reef President and CEO Jeff Moore explains:

‘Just Passing Through’ is more the mentality of the Reef modern gypsy. That individual that as they look at where they’re going in their path, they only stay in one area for a short period of time – they’re just passing through . . . and they’re taking Reef alongside them (reef.com/culture).

This motto of ‘just passing through’ is emblematic of surfers’ past ambivalence about the socio-political conditions of whichever Santosha-esque destination they found themselves – wherein, as long as the waves are relatively empty and the beers are relatively cheap, surfers would not be around long enough to be bothered by the

local situation. This seems to fit a brand that produces different styles of sandals that feature bottle openers, flasks, and even hidden 'stash' (ie- drug paraphernalia) pockets in their designs – but begs the question, just what exactly is it a surfer is doing when “they’re taking Reef alongside them”? (The Bali bombings of '02 can be read as an far-right retaliation of the socially liberalizing effects that travelling surfers have had on the local Balinese – the bombs were detonated in nightclubs that catered to cosmopolitan surfers, just blocks off of Kuta Beach.) How can such a clichéd depiction of the carefree 'gypsy' surfer coexist, under the same brand, at the same time as the “Reef Redemption” project?

The “Reef Redemption” campaign implies a recognition of past failings, it implies guilt, but that also corrective measures have been successfully taken. For Reef, this redemption is coming in the form of sourcing raw materials from recycled waste, developing near zero-waste production methods, and sourcing goods from artisan collectives in the developing world, as opposed to sweatshop factories. The use of sweatshop labor and 'race to the bottom' economic tactics has been standard industry praxis since the formalization of the surf industry -- Quiksilver going public in '86 and the formation of SIMA (Surf Industry Manufacturer's Association) in '89 are foundational moments in this transformation from once garage-manufactured to global brand conglomerates. Although the majority of hard goods, the surfboards themselves continue to be made in the First World, in either the U.S. or Australia (the art of hand-crafting a surfboard retains the ability to bestow subcultural clout and cool on the reverential role of the shaper), the soft goods – everything from

wetsuits to t-shirts and sandals – are manufactured in the Third World. In *Empire in Waves* (2014), surf journalist turned academic Scott Laderman explains:

[The surf industry] ... turned from the First World to the Third in search of cheap labor for the assembly of its products. This has created something of a paradox in the surfing imagination, for it has meant the establishment of grossly unbalanced relationships with those same brown-skinned peoples that surfers have romanticized during their numerous global jaunts. It has meant, that is, exploiting the poverty and desperation of those who personify the exotic Other (Laderman 142).

Signifying a break from business as usual, the Reef Redemption project, by sourcing from artisan collectives, is contributing to what Ponting has labeled the “betrayal of the dream of Nirvana,” which “has also led to the inclusion of local communities into the conversation about the future of surf tourism [and the surf industry]... those who were discursively marginalized are now being brought into the center of the surfing ... experience” (Ponting “Performance” 15). Ponting’s ‘betrayal of Nirvana’ requires a preliminary rejection of the terra nullus/empty paradise construct, which has been foundational in both frontier and surf exploration narratives. This recognition of the ‘Other’, a recognition of oneself (the West) in the ‘Other’ (the East) and the simultaneity of shared circumstances within the “complex, expanding and fluid sense of globalization as a contemporary fate,” fosters networks of transoceanic kinship, ones based on reciprocity rather than exploitation (Wilson “APEC” 397). “Reef Redemption is the brand’s stance on employing what we believe to be environmentally-conscious and socially-responsible business practices. We may be just passing through, be we’re not doing it without a conscience” (reef.com/redemption/about). For marketing guru PJ

Connel, the conscious consumer surf market is, “ever-developing, it’s just the next frontier right now” (reef.com/culture).

If this ‘redemptive’ greening of the neo-egalitarian surf industry, as exemplified by Reef, is indicative of how issues of environmental and social justice can alter the landscape of the marketplace once a demand is recognized, it is apparent that all an idea needs to take root is a foothold in the small but powerful segment of the consumer population known in industry-speak as ‘the tastemaker.’

Surfers, whether sponsored or not, served as an important function as what the industry called “image leaders” [or ‘taste-makers’]. For instance, the Australian company Billabong, which with Quiksilver and Rip Curl has for years been considered one of surfing’s “Big Three,” estimated that “board sport fanatics” and “board sport participants” accounted for only 19 percent of its customer base. But, wrote JP Morgan analyst Shaun Cousins, that 19 percent “drive[s] the sales of the remaining 81 percent of customers and hence any loss of interest from the image leaders would have a detrimental impact on sales” (Laderman 149).

So essentially, in terms of not only subcultural capital and the intangible essence of cool, but in hard dollars and cents/sense, this 19% of the surf industry’s consumer base decides which products will or will not succeed. If these tastemakers, via their social media and personal networks, foment a demand for products that represent a choice for social justice, as they have already successfully done for eco-sensitive products (eg Dave Rastavich and Billabong’s Recycler Boardshorts; the Reef Redemption collection), then this ideal of both an environmentally and humanely sustainable surf industry can, and should, be achieved. Like the rudder of a boat, or more fittingly, like the fin of a surfboard, these ‘taste-makers’, although they only account for a small portion of the overall market, are the determinant driving force behind the future course of action of the entire surf industry.

This eco-conscious frontier, this search for oceanic sustainability, is being trail-blazed by figures such as those aforementioned in the 'bio-neers' section, as well as industry-insiders at forward thinking corporations such as Reef and Patagonia, but most notably, by social-media-savvy professional 'free surfers' ('free surfers' make their living through photo incentives with their sponsors, as opposed to competing in contests). Figures such as Liz Clark (who has been solo-sailing around the world since 2006), Kepa Aceiro (who quit the professional qualifying tour to pursue solo surf quests to the furthest corners of the planet), and big-wave waterman Mark Healey (who not only has the bravado to hitch a ride on the back of a great white shark while free-diving, but had the presence of mind to take a 'selfie' while doing so) reveal that in this age of technological interconnectedness, even the most far-flung and feral of surf travelers are mindful of their social media presence (at least those concerned with sponsorship dollars). These 'taste-makers' have proven capable of influencing consumers, and by correlation the market itself, with their eco-sensitive tweets and postings. For despite the exploding number of active participants, the surfing community feels more close-knit and accessible than ever before due to this rise of social media that make it easier to maintain international friendships, of constantly updated surf blogs that supplement the once revered, and now withering, monthly surf magazine, and so forth. This is Edward Said's notion of 'traveling theory' digitized, made instantaneous. This is John Muir in the age of Instagram.

Just as surfing is the only activity with the connotative associations of freedom and searching to come close to a metaphor for the internet, and what one

does with it, perhaps the interconnectedness that the internet enables, modern society's saturation of wifi capabilities, the unseen binding connections to all of the information in the world, and everyone in it, is the greatest substantial (literally) metaphor for Rolland's 'oceanic feeling' – of feeling 'plugged in'. Utilizing the "ocean as optimum space of connectivity" (Connery "NMS" 497), surfers have the potential to keep pushing back from the fringes of landed society, towards a more equitable future between their First World homes and their Third World playgrounds – moving beyond their traditional roles of "cultural ambassadors and grassroots propagandists," to embrace new eco- and socio-cultural sensitivities and responsibilities as "economic missionaries" (Laderman 77 & 79). Instead of only packing water filters and old tee-shirts to give away while travelling abroad, surfers can become more proactive in their daily choices as consumers while at home, by voting with their dollars, and demanding the availability of fair trade goods in the surf market, and beyond.

This subcultural 'turn' towards an enlightened oceanic consciousness is resonant for young consumers because of what Michael Frank calls, its 'performative character':

... declarations of 'turns' are calls to action more than statements of fact. They have a performative character. Once the turn is under way, it functions as an act of empowerment through which a particular discipline – often a formally marginalized one ... is brought to the centre ... acquiring new authority and importance by lending its expertise to the neighboring disciplines (Frank 66).

In the geopolitical context of what has been dubbed by the media as "Obama's Pacific Pivot" and the labeling of the 21st Century as the "Pacific Century," what influence will the 'formally marginalized' subculture of surfing play? The rise of

China as a viable world superpower puts the Pacific Ocean in the role of both Mahanian “great highway” of capitalist exchange, and military buffer between the superpowers of East and West (Connery “Oceanic” 300). And as military and economic strategists, and various think-tanks, weigh the outcomes of various possible futures, they have all overlooked the former Cold War tactic of using surfing as a potential form of ‘soft power’ to change the state through its populace. Since the rise of SEZs in the 1980s and the CCP’s inclusive turn towards capitalism, China has more broadly turned to the oceanic as a space of future potentiality and source of modernization. The rise of surfing in China, which is still in its nascent stage, with the founding of Surfing China in 2008, and contests on Hainan Island and the Qiantang River (also known as the “Silver Dragon” – the largest river tidal bore in the world), is a new take on ‘ping-pong diplomacy,’ which originally fostered greater cooperation and communication between the U.S. and China during the Nixon era.

Today, this push for cultural exchange is being funded by the surf and skate industry, who are eager to tap into China’s 1.3-billion-strong potential consumer base. Mitch Whitaker, GM of Vans Asia explains, “I do think the surf lifestyle has values that the Chinese aspire towards. The key will be how to make surf relevant to a population that has never been exposed to surf” (*Mull Will China Become Surfing’s Next Frontier? – Surfer* – 10/4/12). These ‘lifestyle values’ that are endemic in surfing are also resonant of classic tenets of Confucianism, Zen, and Tao – all principal elements in the writings of Kerouac and other Beats, whose literature is experiencing a concurrent wave of popularity across China and all of Asia,

particularly among its youth, who are able to relate to the Beats explicit turn away from the trappings of consumerism and towards more direct experience in nature. But most explicitly, the idea of freedom that the Beats embodied and that surfing and its subculture (of which skateboarding is a facet) represent, is what is most resonant for China's younger population. In a February 2012 PBS report entitled, "Why China's Youth Find Western Culture Attractive," Hou Xiazhou, a 35-year-old skateboarding resident of Beijing, explains (through a translator) that freedom is what he likes best about Western culture. "I think it's very free. And that really attracts me. Their thoughts are very open-minded and positive." Concerning his cohort of Chinese skaters, Hou discloses that:

The West influences us a great deal. For example, those of us who skateboard now are all learning from the West, from America. We watch how their professional skateboarders practice, and imitate their methods. The way they dress influences how we dress. We imitate how they skateboard. Watching them inspires us to think about how skateboarding should be.

Through magazines, movies, and the internet, Southern California, the traditional home of surf and skate culture, continues to influence would-be participants in terms of practice, fashion, and lifestyle – 'watching them inspires us to think about how ... [it] should be.' As subcultural role models continue to pursue raising an oceanic consciousness, it is apparent that their efforts, and calls for action, are not going unheeded. Promising indications of this influence can be seen on Weibo (China's version of Twitter), where "China's netizens [have] attacked Beijing's government for withholding the truth about air pollution. They reposted and discussed at length the U.S. Embassy's independent air data. In the end, Beijing's government caved and started publishing more pollution stats on its own website"

(McLaughlin). Before censors deleted it, one such post read: “China, please slow down your breakneck pace. Wait for your people. Wait for your soul. Wait for your morals. Wait for your conscience.”

China has paid a high ecological price for its rapid economic advancement: its rivers are choking in industrial effluent and the air quality of its urban centers has become a source of national embarrassment. As the respective governments of both the U.S. and China continue to race for dominant economic and military positioning, the potential for surfing to become a point of common interest, a shared cultural passion, will not only open doors to greater diplomacy, but will foster the oceanic consciousness required to bring this planet back from the brink of ecological catastrophe on which our current capitalist trajectory has us heading.

These necessary lifestyle changes will not be wrought with legislation or diplomacy; only through the immersive experiences in nature, such as surfing (climbing, snowboarding, hiking, et al.), which acts as “a perpetual force of self baptism” (Wilson *Beatitudes* 53), can Rolland’s oceanic feeling of communal belonging be fostered. This transoceanic feeling of interconnectedness, not only to nature, but to one’s fellow man as well, is what American poet Charles Olson was perceiving, in the concluding section of *Call Me Ishmael* (1947), entitled “The conclusion: Pacific Man”: “... where the West returned to East. The Pacific is the end of the UNKNOWN ... END of individual responsible only to himself. Ahab is full stop” (Olson 119). Ahab is clearly metaphorical for the capitalist obsession, which is the amoral drive for profit, regardless of environmental or human costs. With the ‘Pacific as the end of the UNKNOWN’, civilization having pushed as far west as

possible, the frontier mentality, which creates and maintains the “gap between the Occident and Oceania” (Lyons “Pacific” 72), can and must be abandoned. As

Foucault described in “Of Other Spaces” (1986):

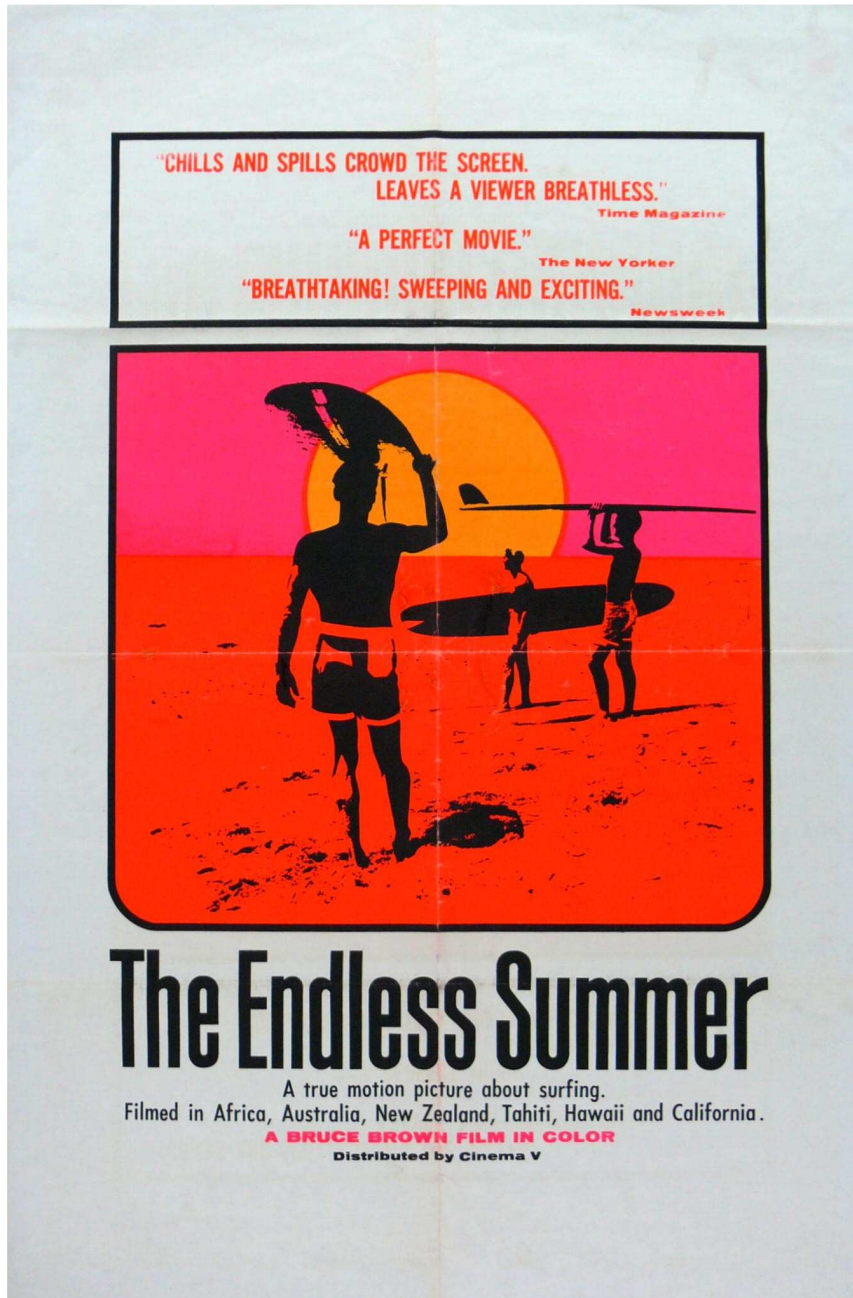
We are in an epoch of simultaneity: We are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is ... that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein (Foucault 22).

This simultaneity, self-evident in circumstances such as global warming, is expressed in the oceanic belonging to nature and the oceanic interconnectivity enabled by the internet and social media, and is indicative of a new “nonteleological cultural studies” in which there is no place for the ‘Other’ (Clifford 29). Through the inclusive fraternal aspect of this oceanic consciousness and of the global surfing community, Olson’s “Pacific Man” may find the resources and allies necessary not to shake off the yoke of global capital, but to work within its confines, reacting fluidly, instinctively . . . with the subtle grace and simplicity of a surfer gliding across a wave of hope, a wave of change.

The Pacific as Last Ocean was the final link, the totalizing telic symbol of the global saturation of capital. The Pacific as locality pulls a large part of the globe back out of the end of history, and might make it imaginable as a place where capital’s hegemony could be *un-imagined*, rather than totalized (Connery “Oceanic” 306).

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1:



John Van Hammersveld's day-glow poster for Bruce Brown's *The Endless Summer* (1964) is now housed in New York City's MOMA, amid other cultural icons of Americana.

Figure 2:



Robert August, Mike Hynson, and Pacific sunset in Bruce Brown's *The Endless Summer* ('64) – widely considered one of the most timeless frames in surfing's cinematic heritage.

Figure 3:



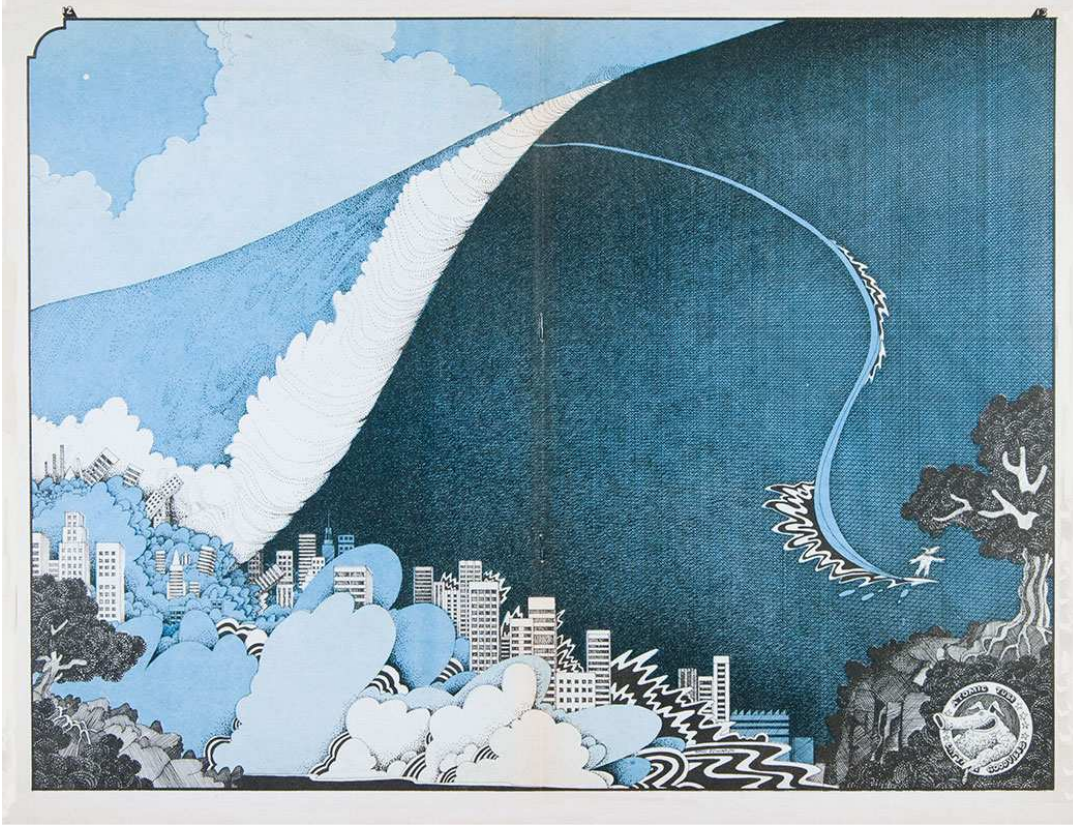
John Wayne turns his back on society, and heads back in to the wilds of the West at the conclusion of John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956).

Figure 4:



Visually, in *Apocalypse Now* (1979), the traditional paradigm of surfers setting off into the sunset has been reversed, as Kilgore and his surfing Air Cavalry are portrayed by Coppola as coming over the horizon with the rising sun towards the camera, an invasive force into a picturesque paradise.

Figure 5:



Tony Edward's "Captain Goodvibes" comics, featuring a misogynistic surfing pig, appeared in Australian surf magazine *Tracks* from 1973 - 1981.

Figure 6:



Snake Plissken (Kurt Russell) surfs an urban tidal wave in John Carpenter's *Escape From L.A.* (1996).

Figure 7:



Banksy visualizes my notion of beaches as heterotopic spaces with this West Bank wall mural in 2005. Very reminiscent of the '68 Paris commune's motto: 'sous les pavés, la plage'.

Figure 8:



Reef, able to conjure both lust and wanderlust in their consumers, tapped into the collective dream of the search.

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