

Children of the Tides: Surfing Know-how as Environmental Ethics

Joy Greenberg

The sea holds a magic for those of us who know her. A magic so simple, pure and powerful it works as an unseen force in our souls. We're drawn to her. The spirit of the sea moves in us as we move within her, undulating folds in pursuit of our peace. As surfers, we inherently know this to be so. The sea brings comfort, solace, release and escape. The sea brings healing. The spirit of the sea, for some of us, is the very essence of life (Keith Glendon 2005: 70).

We all come from the sea, but we are not all *of* the sea. Those of us who are—the Children of the Tides—must return to it again and again (Frosty Hesson in *Chasing Mavericks*).

Once I look down over the edge and catch it [the wave], I'll become part of it. And in that moment, I'll know that I'm alive (Jay Moriarity in *Chasing Mavericks*).

Silverstrand



Figure 1: Silverstrand surfers at sunset after a storm, looking west with Anacapa Island in the background.¹

By all rights, Silverstrand—a wedge of sand near Oxnard, California—should not be a surfing beach. The Channel Islands (fig. 1) to the west and south effectively block storm-driven swells from these directions, and until the 1960s there were no beach breaks to hold and form surfable waves from whatever swells managed to come in from the northwest. But what is anathema to surfers was once welcomed by its indigenous former inhabitants, the Chumash Indians, who chose Silverstrand as a place of embarkation for accessing the islands to trade with their inhabitants. The Chumash called this site *hueneme*—meaning half-way or resting place—because it was half-way between the Chumash villages at Mugu and Ventura (fig. 2). *Hueneme* had a further advantage: the Pacific is comparatively calm there, enabling movement between the mainland and the Channel Islands. This benefit led to a seaport and Naval Base being established there.

¹ All photos by the author except where otherwise noted.

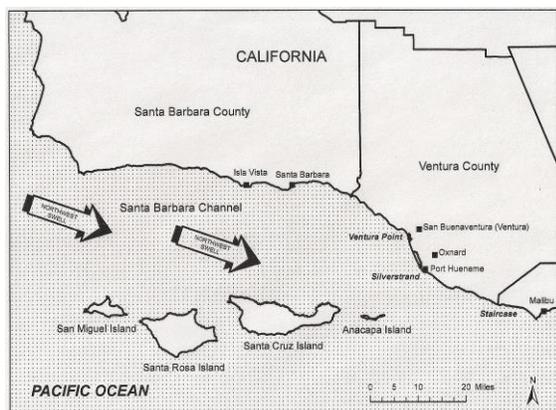


Figure 2: Map showing geographical features of Silverstrand and the offshore Channel Islands that block all but northwestern swells (© 2014 Michelle Blake).

Prior to my Silverstrand sojourn I had not considered how caught up in the surfing ethos I would become. True, I had selected this beach in the hopes of luring my three surfer sons to visit me, but I found myself soon marveling at the way surfers would literally *run* board-in-arm from their cars or bikes to the shoreline during a good swell, as if they might miss that one really spectacular wave if they failed to hustle. I came to sense a vicarious thrill as I observed surfers sprint to the beach, and I became additionally entranced while watching them bob silently on the waves, “staring out to sea like Phrygian sacristans² looking for a sign” (fig. 3), as Tom Wolfe commented in *The Pump House Gang* (25). Such an image caused me to ponder the divine aspects of the ocean and how surfers seem especially attuned to it. For, to excel at surfing, one must be not only physically fit but a good swimmer. And it helps to develop skill forecasting the sea’s vagaries as well. Surfers really *are* oracles—modern day hydromantics who divine meaning from the sea not by dropping pebbles into water and interpreting the rings, but by deciphering the shape, size, and direction of the waves.



Figure 3: Surfers as contemporary sacristans at Staircase (Malibu) scan the horizon.

² Phrygia was the ancient name for the west-central part of Asia Minor that is now Turkey. Priests who oversaw the sacristy—a room in the church used for storing vestments, sacred vessels, and parish records—were known as “sacristans.” Because sacristies could be located in the church tower, sacristans were sometimes afforded panoramic views of the surrounding terrain or—when located near the coastline—of the sea.

Because of its relative lack of waves, Silverstrand was ignored by surfers until jetties were constructed at both southern and northern ends, creating what surfers love to see: steeply peaked and fast-breaking waves. Whether naturally formed underwater reefs or artificial, wave breaks do exactly as their name implies; they interrupt the dynamics of waves, forcing them to “break” or “curl” farther off-shore, lengthening the ride and preventing the waves from breaking too close to the beach. The farther from shore that waves break, the longer—and more fun—the surfer’s ride can sometimes be. Of course, this beneficial outcome for surfing was unintended by the jetties’ builders—Naval Base Ventura County, the third largest port in California, on the west and south sides—and Channel Islands Harbor on the north side. Nevertheless, the jetties have turned out to be serendipitous for surfers at Silverstrand.

Surfing Spirituality

In contemplating the phenomenon of surfing environmentalism, I began to consider the possibility of an innate reverence for water, particularly the sea, among humans. After all, we gestate for nine months in amniotic fluid, and we have evolved, say some scientists, from sea creatures. And even if we are not precisely *from* the sea, we seem to enjoy a strong connection *with* it. If such veneration of the ocean—*mariphilia*, if you will—does indeed exist, might it be an expression of the epiphanic moments surfers claim to experience while riding the waves? Along this line of thought, religion and environmental scholar Bron Taylor devotes a chapter in *Dark Green Religion*, aptly entitled “Surfing Spirituality,” to the ideas

...that there is a mysterious magic in surfing that can only be apprehended directly through the experience; that surfing fosters self-realization; that commercialization of the practice is a defiling act but that even such acts cannot obviate its spiritual power; that surfing can lead to a life characterized by compassion toward other living beings (Taylor 2010: 104).

Surfing spirituality is characterized by Taylor as reflective of “experiences, and the cultural enclaves in which people reflect upon them, [which] foster understandings of nature as powerful, transformative, healing, and sacred” (2010: 104). Moreover, he says that such perceptions “often lead to ethical action in which Mother Nature, and especially its manifestation as Mother Ocean, is considered sacred and worthy of reverent care” (2010: 104). This concept of Mother Ocean “is the heart of surfing spirituality for many—its connection to Mother Ocean understood as a beneficent, personal presence” (2010: 104). Indeed, many “soul surfers,” as adherents to this concept call themselves, “believe that nature in general and Mother Ocean in particular can assist with physical and psychological healing” (Taylor 2010: 119). For them, surfing is therapeutic.

The healing aspect of surfing may be linked to peak psychological experiences that were described in a study by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who used “flow” to designate these experiences that “usually occur when a person’s body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile” (Csikszentmihalyi 1990: 3). For Csikszentmihalyi, flow is “the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost” (Csikszentmihalyi 1990: 4). And insofar as it relieves stress, pleasure is healing.



Figure 4: Greg (l) and Maceo (r) catch a “party” wave.

Csikszentmihalyi’s definition of “flow” coincides with the observations of my surfer sons, who expressed the ineffable, sensual-intellectual experience of surfing spirituality that is further enhanced by what might be termed Surfing Ecological Knowledge (SEK). Greg (fig. 4, 6) describes surfing as a meditative “high” punctuated by euphoria, possibly from a blend of the scent of the sea combined with nostalgia for past enjoyable experiences at the beach. Moreover, water bodies, including the ocean, are thought to produce negative ions, which correlates with pleasant feelings. Because of this, Greg says,

Surfing has now become a year-round ritual for me. I believe that because it is so addictive and more enjoyable than other forms of physical activity/hobbies, it has now become a priority in my life, rather than a summertime hobby (for better or worse). Surfing, like other sports, is a way to escape from day-to-day life and get exercise. However, surfing for me, unlike other sports, is also a means to self-reflect on the day and life in general. I find myself surfing by myself much more than I would in the past, which enables the meditative aspect and is similar to swimming laps. I do not feel this as much running, walking, or playing team sports. It is still great to surf with friends for the comradery and fun, but it is a different experience than surfing alone.

Greg’s description mirrors Csikszentmihalyi’s regarding flow as a state of profound immersion, which Mircea Eliade³ and others refer to as Mythic Time: when he is barreling through the waves, Greg is unaware of the passage of time, which seems to stand still. Mythic Time thus may be thought of as the sense of a never-ending, perpetual present—of *being here now*—an experience that seems individually healing as well as communally bonding, wherein transformation becomes possible. In fact, Greg wears a watch only if time is of the essence while he surfs. Taylor confirms this sensation of “being here now”:

Some of the most dramatic examples of heightened consciousness are what happens perceptually in dangerous situations, especially when a surfer is riding

³ Eliade called it *in illo tempore*: the “mythical and sacred time...the *time of origin*, the time that “floweth not” because it does not participate in profane temporal duration, because it is composed of an *eternal present*” (1987 [1957]: 88, emphasis original).

“in the tube” of a large hollow wave. Such situations intensely focus one’s attention, forcing one to truly “live in the moment” (2010: 117).

Gian (fig. 5) believes that such “heightened consciousness” may have helped him escape a potentially fatal car accident with only a scrape incurred when he had to climb through the car’s ceiling from the back seat to exit the vehicle after it lost a tire on a freeway in the fast lane and rolled several times before coming to rest at the edge of the slow lane. Gian credits his surfer training with helping him to remain alert and quick to react to his situation, possibly saving his life.



Figure 5: Gian catches a wave at Silverstrand, Anacapa (l) and Santa Cruz (r) in background.

Like Mythic Time, “Living in the moment is believed to bring peace, wisdom, and divine purpose” (Taylor 2010: 117). Ultimately, however, surfing simply *feels good*, as Maceo said above. Taylor concluded that all of these factors allow surfing spirituality “to be understood as a form of *dark green religion*, in which sensual experiences constitute its sacred center” (2010: 104, emphasis added).

In addition to surfing in general, being inside the curl of the wave—the tube—is reported to be particularly exhilarating. In describing the experience, South African Shaun Tomson famously said, “Time slows down in the tube” and responding to a question about how he managed to stay calm in the tube, Gerry Lopez replied, “The faster I go out there the slower things seem to happen” (in Warshaw 2003: 345). How riding inside the tube can alter one’s sense of time has also been described by Surfrider co-founder Glenn Hening:

In the tube one has no frame of reference except the cylinder of water spinning above, around, and below you. The only thing in your vision that provides a sense of place is the opening, or mouth of the wave in front of you. What can happen next is truly remarkable: if the wave starts peeling faster than you are surfing, the illusion is created that you are either not moving at all, or are moving backwards. And in relation to your only visual frame of reference, you are. So you can be going at top speed forward, but the sensation can be that you are going backward (Hening and Taylor 2005: 1610).

Hening observed that “from the unique and extraordinary vision while riding inside a perfect wave the mystic kernel of the religious in surfing grows” (Hening and Taylor 2005: 1610). For this reason, “many surfers refer to their surf sessions as ‘going to Church’ or use other religious terminology” to express the spirituality or religiosity of their experiences (Taylor 2007: 943).

Soul Surfers

Originating from a 1963 surf instrumental of the same name by Johnny Fortune⁴, the term “soul surfer” was invented in the sixties to describe someone who surfs for the sheer pleasure of surfing. Unlike big wave surfers (big wavers), winning competitions is not the soul surfer’s main objective; the term rather denotes the *spirituality* of surfing. *Surfer* magazine writer Brad Melekian puts the goal of soul surfers this way:

...to pursue surfing not just as an athletic endeavor or as a sunny day diversion, but to try to glean whatever lessons you can from the practice. It means being aware of your surroundings, and respectful of the people and places that you interact with. It means being patient, mindful, kind, compassionate, understanding, active, thoughtful, faithful, hopeful, gracious, disciplined and... good (Melekian 2005: 115).

Using Melekian’s above definition of “soul surfing,” Surfer Survey responders were asked whether they considered themselves to be Soul Surfers. Gian (fig. 5) replied that “in some ways” he did:

I do it for the relaxation mostly, but I also do it for exercise and other factors. To me, soul surfing is more about your style and approach to the waves. I think I have the more relaxed soul surfer type of style, rather than the very aggressive style that you see in a lot of surfers.

Greg (fig. 4, 6) responded,

To some extent, yes. To me surfing is a metaphor for life; you often cannot control what is thrown at you, but you should always make the most of it. The most important aspect about surfing to me is to enjoy it, be reflective, and not make it competitive, which in my mind sets it apart from other sports. I also identify with many of Melekian’s aspects of a soul surfer (awareness, respect, patience, mindful, active, understanding, thoughtful, and disciplined). However, there are certain aspects of this definition that I am not sure I have ever seen in surfing, such as kindness, compassion, and graciousness.

Using Melekian’s definitions, Hesson and Moriarity, as depicted in *Chasing Mavericks*, could be considered “soul surfers.” Moriarity eloquently articulates this notion again in a voice-over from the closing scene of *Chasing Mavericks*: “Once I look down over the edge and catch it [the wave], I’ll become part of it. And in that moment, I’ll know that I’m alive.” With this Moriarity expressed a sentiment shared by others, including Unitarian seminarian James D. Meacham III:

I’ve heard other soul surfers talk in mystical terms about being one with the wave and feeling as if ... they were no longer spectators in the ocean but part of it. This

⁴ Hear “Soul Surfer” online: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9RAinP26wm8>.

comes, I believe, from the total focus of energy and attention on the one task of surfing. It's absolutely meditative ... Surfing make[s] all the noise of life melt away until it is just a surfer ... and the wave in a perfect synchronous dance of life (1994).

Not surprisingly, Meacham's words reflect beliefs similar to those of Eastern mystical traditions, such as Zen Buddhism and Taoism. In fact, he titled the above sermon "The Tao of Surfing" because the practice, so to speak, of soul surfing mirrors in many ways that of Taoism.

Surfing Ecological Knowledge

I also began to wonder if, by virtue of what we call "surfing ecological knowledge" (SEK), surfers are more aware and concerned about environmental issues. As I surfed the web for answers, it dawned on me that I might have responses to these questions under my own rooftop in the persons of my three sons. As we discussed their aquatic passion, we devised a questionnaire for surfers that began by asking about the surfer's age when the sport was taken up and the background skills brought to it (see Appendix, question 1). Gian's (fig. 5) response was:

I tried surfing off and on starting at the age of 16. I didn't get really passionate about it until my senior year of high school at the age of 18. As seniors, Greg [Gian's twin] and I would get out of school earlier because we had one less course. We would head out to the beach right after school during the spring quarter when we had less homework to do, and this allowed me to go consistently. I finally stood up after maybe two weeks straight of going. All of the components (i.e., paddling, timing, balance) of the sport are challenging; however, the challenge is also what contributes to the drive and passion for surfing. You can always challenge yourself with turns and tricks. There is also the challenge of finding the best wave and the adventure that comes with exploring a new spot. I was well suited for the physical demands of surfing, being an avid water polo player and swimmer in high school. Those sports also made me more comfortable in the water in general. It was scary going out past the break at first. There is always the thought of sharks where we grew up [Central Coast of California] and just the general feeling of uneasiness that comes with not knowing what lurks below. But there is also a spiritual feeling and sense of calm that can come with the ocean that helps you overcome that. There were multiple reasons I learned to surf. It's great exercise. I already loved hiking and it is in some ways an extension of that because you're out in nature, especially the more secluded spots that you have to hike/paddle into. It was a great way to enjoy nature with my brothers too. I still remember the feeling the day I stood up and rode a wave. I have a vivid memory of the event and even the smell of the wax on the board.

Greg's (fig. 4, 6) response to question 1 was:

I started surfing at 15, but I enjoyed boogie boarding since a young child. It took me about a month to feel comfortable standing up on a short board (more challenging to learn on than a long board). I had a background in swimming and

bodyboarding/bodysurfing before surfing, which eased in the transition. I have enjoyed the outdoors from a young age, which also attracted me to surfing. Surfing at first was about going out and getting exercise during the summer, when I had lots of free time, and getting wet when the weather was hot.



Figure 6: Greg catches one at Ventura.

In coining the term “SEK” we channeled Fikret Berkes (1999), who notably dubbed indigenous environmental wisdom such as that displayed by the Chumash fishermen “traditional ecological knowledge” (TEK). TEK is defined by Berkes as

...a cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment ... [that inspires] an ethic of nondominant, respectful human-nature relationship, a *sacred ecology*; ... [shapes] environmental perception; ... [gives] meaning to observations of the environment; ... [and provides] a fundamental lesson ... that worldviews do matter (1999: 8, 163, 14, 182, emphasis added).

Like many others, Berkes derived contemporary environmental problems from human “alienation from nature,” but he believed that indigenous, relational epistemologies could teach a way back (1999: 3). By learning from native peoples who are not alienated in this way, it is possible to develop “an alternative view of ecosystems [as] pulsating with life and spirit, incorporating people who belong to that land and who have a relationship of peaceful coexistence with other beings” (Berkes 1999: 182). I submit that skillful surfing requires an ecological wisdom base similar to Berkes’ concept of TEK, which contributes to a belief by some surfers in a sanctified nature that is expressed through their participation in pro-environmental activities and groups.

Marine Biology

For many soul surfers, the communion they feel with non-human creatures while engaged in their sport is what keeps them returning to the sea again and again. Chris Gallagher believes that soul becomes part of the description

...when a surfer appreciates nature and the true gift of surfing. Much of the satisfaction comes not from a nice turn, but from the journey and the connection made with nature. Dolphins, whales, fish, birds, trees, reefs, sunsets—take these

things away and you strip a perfect wave of its soul (Moriarity and Gallagher 2001: 77).

Such trans-species encounters are considered by many surfers to be equally or even more important to “surfing spirituality” than the dangerous-wave experiences coveted by big wavers (Taylor 2007: 944). When Gian and Greg were asked to describe their most memorable surfing experiences with a marine animal present, Gian (fig. 5) responded:

Hmmmm, I can't think of one moment in particular. There are quite a few where dolphins have played in the surf when I've been out and that is always memorable. It shows that they also enjoy the same feel of riding waves.

Greg (fig. 4, 6) noted:

1. A baby dolphin jumping/surfing nearby at Morro Bay;
2. Baby sea otters squealing in the line-up (the cue-resembling line surfers make while waiting for the best place to take off on a wave) at Shell Beach; and
3. A huge elephant seal swimming beneath me at Sand Dollar beach (Big Sur).

The above accolades indicate a sort of *participation mystique*⁵ in the practice of surfing: Taylor observes that many surfers “develop feelings of communion and kinship with the nonhuman animals they encounter during their practice. These experiences sometimes take on an animistic ethos and lead surfers to activism on behalf of marine ecosystems and particular species” (2010: 104; 2014). This dynamic results from the direct experience surfers may have with marine animals and comprehend

...that these creatures have their own intelligences, ways of life, curiosities, [and] playfulness. ... It can get you thinking metaphysically about where...these waves come from [and] how this fits in with the energies of the universe...in a way that we might call “animistically.” ... People who feel this way feel the responsibility to give back [by expressing] their reverence for nature in political action. ... Increasingly it's about protecting marine ecosystems (Taylor 2014).

Hydromancy: Divining Meaning from the Waves

Hydromancy has been demonstrated in the myths of both the ancient Irish and the Chumash who occupied the Channel Islands off coastal California for millennia. For the Irish, consultation of the waves was another way—an ecological means, one might say—of gaining knowledge, which is arguably a form of Berkes' TEK. For survival often depended on knowing when it was safe to travel in their boats. One Irish tale tells of a young seer who is sent to Scotland to be trained in prophecy. For inspiration, he would go to the sea: “One day the boy walked at the edge of the sea, for the edge of the water was a place of revelation of knowledge for poets, and he heard a sound from the waves, and it was thereupon revealed to him that the

⁵ Lucien Lévy-Bruhl (1985 [1966]) formulated the term *participation mystique* to describe what he believed happens when a subject becomes so immersed in an activity that he or she cannot clearly differentiate self from object in a direct relationship of at least partial identity.

wave was lamenting for his father” (Smyzer quoted in Davidson 1988: 152). The notion of a “message brought by waves is also found in stories of the Irish saints, and the practice of praying at the edge of the sea seems to have continued in Christian tradition,” indicating a syncretism taking place (Davidson 1988: 152). Perhaps this explains the slogan “Pray for Surf.”

Indigenous cultures have long practiced hydromancy because, as with surfing, survival often depended on it. For Pacific Island natives, a certain type of swell signaled a typhoon approaching, and for the Irish, long swells heralded an incoming storm (Carson 1954: 90). For surfers, timing the periods between waves to determine if they are “building” or “dropping” in size is also critical to survival, as eight-year-old Jay Moriarity discovered the hard way in *Chasing Mavericks*: “The more seconds between them—each wave in a set—means it’s [the swell’s] getting bigger.” However, while Jay was rescuing his friend’s dog, he turned his back on the ocean, even though he had just concluded that the swell was building, which should have warned him to be careful. As a result of this disrespect for Mother Ocean, a monster wave engulfed Jay and swept him out to sea, serving as a reminder to be constantly observant with eyes always on the ocean, especially at Maverick’s, both the real and film setting.

Integral to an understanding of swells is that waves all begin as wind. Swells are created in the open ocean and delivered to Silverstrand, an action that starts to the north and west as far as five thousand miles away, off the coast of Japan or the Gulf of Alaska. According to Mark Sponsler, a veteran of surfing Maverick’s and creator of the StormSurf⁶ forecast site, there are other factors, such as “fetch,” involved in predicting swells:

Fetch refers to the distance wind blows across the sea. ...The longer and stronger it blows, the bigger the ocean seas. For instance, 24 hours of a 50-knot wind blowing steadily the same way should give you nice-size seas with a 17-second period [between wave crests] (in McHugh 2006).

“Fetch” is thus a way to measure the energy in the waves. In general, the longer the period between waves, the more powerful are the seas generating them. Another way to measure wave power is amplitude—the height of a swell’s crest above its trough in the ocean. The ideal period should be longer in seconds than the swell is high in feet. A five-to-seven-foot swell with a period of eight or more seconds is considered optimal by my sons for surfing Silverstrand.

Of course, not only surfers depend upon the waves for sustenance; a plethora of non-human beings also crave the shore at Silverstrand. Indeed, the abundance of intertidal life provides constant entertainment. If the pelicans rule the sky here, the alpha-male gulls dominate the mudflats by their constant vying for territory, chasing away any juveniles or females that dare encroach with a raucous *hiyah...hiyah...hiyah*—always startling in its bravado and demanding tone. Dodging the gulls, willets and sanderlings scurry about, digging for mole crabs that burrow just under the sand. Willets converge on the beach *en masse* or sometimes in pairs during low tide, using their bills as combination pitchfork-jackhammers as they scavenge. The sanderlings, however, utilize a different approach to crabbing than the willets: rather than stabbing at the sand with bills open like two-pronged pitchforks, sanderlings keep their bills closed, using them like pokers. As each wave recedes, these tiny birds in the peep sub-family of sandpipers rush with it, jabbing furiously in the ebb, only to be chased farther back by the next flow as if dancing to some choreography known only to them.

⁶ <http://stormsurf.com>

Astromancy: Divining the Wind (Climatology)

Also important to surfers is the wind, divining from its speed, directions, and temperature the wind's effect on the waves. For the wind determines from what direction the swells arrive, which is why favored surf spots tend to have promising conditions only during certain times of the year and why Silverstrand, which faces northwest, is favored during the winter months when storms arrive from this direction. Northwest swells are critical for surfing Silverstrand because they are the only ones that reach the shore—those from the west or south are blocked by the Channel Islands, while those from the north are obstructed by the mainland (fig. 2).

Surfers will often stand on the shore for a while before entering the sea, staring at the wave sets as they roll in, trying to correctly gauge these factors, and knowing that misreading even the slightest detail could result in injury. In this respect, they are present-day astromantics scanning the unpredictable channel for guidance, reading the swells, and hoping for a 'sign' telling them whether and where to paddle out. Just as the Chumash had to learn the language of the sea, so must surfers apprehend the varying colors of the water, the haze of surf breaking on rocks, and the impact of the tide's height or lowness on the waves. Moreover, such knowledge has resisted scientific explanation in that the top experts in oceanography with all their technological resources still don't understand what precisely makes a wave "rideable" and what does not.

The *velocity* of wind also determines the conditions for surfing—or not. Offshore winds are generally beneficial for surfing as they serve to "hold" the wave up as it breaks, creating the famed "barrel" coveted by surfers. On the other hand, when the offshore flow is excessively strong—as can happen during Santa Ana wind conditions in Southern California, the wave may never arch and simply dissolves, leaving nothing to ride but foam. As at Maverick's, Silverstrand's northwest swells are coveted by surfers, but when Santa Anas pummel the coast, surfers eschew these swells because they cause those trying to drop down a wave wall to stall at the top. Astromancy is therefore integral to SEK.

Geography, Geology, Astronomy, Hydrology, Chemistry, and Physics

Understanding the topography of the shore—especially the part that is underwater—is critical for surfers. As a result of its underwater reef, swells coming into Maverick's are "jacked up" even higher than otherwise, contributing to the 20-footers that attract big-wave surfers (McHugh 2006). The distance between the high and low tide lines is also a function of topography. Beaches like Maverick's, which has a relatively steep offshore reef that resembles a staircase or wedge, tend to have a narrower foreshore, or intertidal zone, than those that are flatter, such as Silverstrand's. Tide times and heights are always consulted by surfers who want to know whether the tide is coming in or going out. An incoming tide that is approaching its high mark may not be an optimal time to surf if the shoreline is rocky, as it is on many West Coast beaches.

Nor are tide times necessarily predicted by location, a fact noted by Carson, who seemed especially attracted to the "striking paradox" presented by tides:

The force that set [the waves] in motion is cosmic, lying wholly outside the earth and presumably acting impartially on all parts of the globe, but the nature of the

tide at any particular place is a local matter, with astonishing differences occurring within a very short geographic distance. ...The attractive force of the heavenly bodies sets the water in motion, but how, and how far, and how strongly it will rise depend on such things as the slope of the bottom, the depth of channel, or the width of a bay's entrance (Carson 1954: 119).

This phenomenon is seen throughout California's coastline with beaches separated by short distances often sporting widely variant tide times.

Carson is not alone in speaking to otherworldliness of waves; as Taylor opines, waves enhance the *spiritual* experience of surfing, which is related to "a feeling of belonging and communion with other living things, the earth, and even universe itself, as well as a perception that such connections are transformative and healing" (Taylor 2007: 943). Like Carson, Drew Kampion in *The Book of Waves* (1989) expressed this sense of connection as an experience of cosmic energy:

Everything is waves. The universe of space and matter is charged with energy ... waves of energy. Like echoes of the heartbeat of the absolute being, waves give expression to the divine will. They give form to the universe. ...Waves pass through everything—steel, stone, flesh and blood and water and air and space alike. Waves are the imprint, the signature, not only of life, but of existence itself (Kampion n.d.⁷).

Carson's and Kampion's notions of waves compare with the physics-mysticism concept articulated by Fritjof Capra in *The Tao of Physics* (2000), lending credence to my position that understanding the form and movement of waves constitutes a form of SEK. According to Capra, quantum theory proposes:

At the subatomic level, the solid material objects of classical physics dissolve into wave-like patterns of probabilities. ... [These] subatomic particles have no meaning as isolated entities, but can only be understood as interconnections Quantum theory thus reveals a basic oneness with the universe (2000: 68).

It is therefore not surprising that surfing seems to facilitate such at-one-ment or that surfers proudly display their love of the sport (fig. 7).

Meteorology

Knowledge of weather patterns may not seem critical, but, in fact, it can mean the difference between a spectacular or wasted day of surfing. While it is known that Pacific storms are needed to create the humongous waves at Maverick's, surfing *during* a storm is greatly discouraged because of the pollutants that rainwater runoff washes into the sea. Even so, it was not uncommon during my sojourn at Silverstrand to encounter diehard surfers braving the wind and rain in order to catch a good set.

⁷ Online: http://www.drewkampion.com/Books_by_DK.html.

In *The Surfing Rabbi* (2001), Orthodox Jew Nachum Shifren detailed his experiences as a teen learning how to surf the famed waves of Malibu. Later, while attending college in Hawaii, it became obvious to him while observing Hawaiian surfers that surfing knowledge

...was about watching, listening, feeling, experiencing. The great watermen had a sixth sense about the ocean, currents, swell direction, tide changes, and wind direction. They often charted their successes with weather maps and constant updates from meteorological sources. The window of a swell, the pattern of storms and their speed and movements would yield the most favorable results only at beaches that faced a certain direction. Timing was everything. Not only did you have to be in shape and be daring, you also had to be smart. You didn't just paddle out into big waves. There was a process of understanding wave intervals, their frequency and lulls. ...Timing your water entry with the last wave in the set saved a serious pounding and an exhausting ordeal (Shifren 2001: 45-6).

In other words, it behooves surfers to understand *oceanography*, the relatively recent discipline in which all the above types of ecoknowledge now fit. This “alchemy of wind, tide, swell direction and bottom contour (in addition to numerous other variables) that form superior waves” is what “actually guides” Gian (fig. 5) on his “surf journeys.” Gian claims that a consequence of surfing has been that his

...understanding of the waves and knowledge of the physical rules that govern them has increased greatly. I now use that knowledge to help me find the great rides that bring me back to the same sensation I initially felt when riding a wave. ...I don't feel that my feelings [about surfing] have *changed* as much as they've *evolved*.

Because of all the ecoknowledge they must acquire to be good at their sport, Brendan Buckley claims, “Surfers—as a group, a demographic, sometimes a family and definitely not a tribe—are wildly intelligent. Some of us verge on genius. An established surfer could...very well be the brightest in the room” (2014). His comment has been validated many times in my personal experiences.



Figure 7: License plates seen on trucks in Santa Barbara (left) and Camarillo (right).

SEK in *Chasing Mavericks*

Despite some narrative deficiencies, *Chasing Mavericks* was notable for its ubiquitous SEK, particularly in the beginning scenes during which local surfer Hesson taught young Moriarity how to “survive Maverick’s.” Hesson had studied the waves enough to know that the swells coming in from Japanese storms were the best for surfing and that these only happened

every seven-to-ten years. He also knew that northwest swells created “Giants.” Hesson listened to the Weather Radio obsessively to get precise information about the direction and speed of wind and swells, and he understood meteorology enough to know that El Niño created big waves.

Under Hesson’s tutelage, Moriarity studied the tides and learned about the mile-deep Monterey Trench that lies below the surface of the ocean, significantly influencing swells. Because the Trench is twice as deep as the average off-shore sea depth, Hesson advised that it had “twice the water mass, twice the wave energy, and twice the risk of drowning.” In addition, the Trench features an unusually shaped underwater rock formation, which is ultimately responsible for Maverick’s notorious break. With such geographical knowledge in mind, Hesson prepared Moriarity for the renowned annual contest at Maverick’s by advising him, “Stay low, go fast. ... The biggest treachery lies underneath. ... You gotta triangulate.” Triangulation involves positioning himself between two shore locations: a mushroom-shaped rock and a satellite dish. Triangulation will enable Moriarity to keep track of his location at all times and thus avoid the “treachery...underneath.”

But first of all, Hesson taught Jay the “Four Pillars of a Solid Human Foundation,” which are 1) physical, 2) mental, 3) emotional, and 4) spiritual, demonstrating that SEK, like TEK, involves more than what westerners call “scientific” knowledge. Indeed, Hesson’s Four Pillars loosely relate to the Four Pillars—the four Noble Truths—of Buddhism, not surprising given that many surfers became interested in Zen Buddhism and other Eastern mystical traditions such as Taoism during the sixties and seventies, when many new agers were doing the same.

Surfing and Environmentalism

In addition to its ability to inspire reverence for nature, surfing for some also commands the protection of nature (Taylor 2007: 926). To this end, surfing environmentalist groups began springing up as early as 1961 when “Save our Surf,” the first non-governmental organization to support surfing environmentalism, was founded in Hawai’i’ (Kampion 2003: 161). Formed to stop a development that would have ruined a surfing break, it soon established a wider environmentalist agenda and was followed by other groups such as the Surfrider Foundation.

Surfrider Foundation

During my Silverstrand sojourn I noticed during conversations that some surfers seemed exceptionally aware of environmental concerns disproportionate to their numbers in the general, nonsurfing population. In fact, one of the most visibly environmentalist groups in California is the Surfrider Foundation, which has activated successfully to save several renowned surfing beaches from development (Taylor 2007: 937, 2010; Hening and Taylor 2005).

Surfrider was co-founded in 1984 by Glenn Hening, who was inspired by the sense of belonging to nature and particularly to the sea that surfing inculcated in him (Hening and Taylor 2005: 1610–11). According to Taylor,

This sense of belonging to nature in general and the sea in particular represents an important affective dimension of the surfing experience. When such feeling incubated in the environmental age, it inspired environmentalist values and action among some surfers (Taylor 2007: 937).

Although Surfrider's original goal was to prevent the destruction of Malibu's famed First Point, it eventually added a concern for biodiversity to its mission of "protection and enjoyment of oceans, waves, and beaches through a powerful activist network" (Surfrider 2014).

Along with two surfer-colleagues in 2001, Hening led the founding of the Groundswell Society "for the sake of tending the soul in surfing" (Kampion 2003: 162). By using "soul," Kampion further alludes to the nature spirituality engendered by surfing. Hening sought to promote surfing culture and spirituality through the celebration of "indigenous cultures and their connection to the sea, evoking images of a past and hoped-for paradise in which people would be in harmony with nature" (Taylor 2007: 937; Hening and Taylor 2005). In some ways "soul surfer" has become a ubiquitous term for those surfers who wish to distance themselves from big wavers—surfers who do it for the contests and the extra adrenaline rush that monster waves provide.⁸

Surfers Appreciating Natural Environment

For the past few years the Victoria, BC, environmental group, Surfers Appreciating Natural Environment (SANE) has been working with Coastcare (Department of Sustainability and Environment, Victoria, BC), Parks Victoria and other groups to produce an educational film showcasing the natural beauty at a nearby beach and National Marine Park. By showing how human activities are having a negative impact on the terrestrial and marine environments, the film delivers a number of simple messages outlining how visitors to the beach and NMP can help to protect the environment or become involved in volunteer conservation and marine programs at the local level. SANE was founded in 1988 by a small group of surfers whose slogan was "Don't Destroy What You Came to Enjoy." Their film is intended to be shown to local schools, tourism groups, surf schools, and anyone interested in the natural environment.

The Shadow Side of Surfing

The creation of a modern surfboard is one of the most resolutely non-biodegradable products on earth. It is an act of hostility to the environment. (Wade 2007).

For some commentators, the ultimate paradox of surfing lies in the multi-billion dollar surfing equipment and garment industry that exploded in order to satisfy demand during the '60s and continues today. It is now quite apparent that fiberglass boards and neoprene wetsuits contribute to carbon depletion (Davies 2009; Wade 2007). Henry J.B. Davies points out that "despite surfing's image, there are few better examples of toxicity in practice than modern surfboard manufacture" (2009: 113). Nor has much advance been made since the '60s toward sustainability in the industry, leading *Drift* surfing magazine editor Howard Swanwick to point out that the surf industry has not done much to protect and further itself: "We still rely on a hugely toxic industry, and the media and tour scene jet-sets its way around the globe, paying homage to the carbon gods in the sky" (2007: 148). This dilemma inspired David Holland-Smith

⁸ Jay Moriarity's life experience would seem to contradict the notion that big wavers cannot also be soul surfers.

et al. to interview eight British surfers regarding “their perceptions of the factors that have influenced their engagement in proenvironmental behaviors” (2013: 103). The researchers’ results suggested that the sampled surfers were inspired to participate in proenvironmental behaviors for a variety of reasons, including their observations of environmental degradation such as polluted water (Holland-Smith et al 2013: 103). Yet, although they had personal experiences of the detrimental effects on the environment and their personal health, they were also aware that pursuing their sport required “trade-offs” that have been implicated in damage to the environment (Holland-Smith et al 2013: 103). In fact, when the responding surfers were questioned, they “stated they would be unwilling to give up their sport even at the cost of the environment in which those activities are experienced,” highlighting “a possibly common problem among environmentally minded outdoor enthusiasts: when do personal benefits outweigh the responsibilities of environmental stewardship?” (Holland-Smith 2013: 103).

Also troubling for some are the “territorial feelings and sense of superiority over nonsurfers and less practiced surfers that is common in surf cultures”—that is, its “shadow side”—observed Taylor (2010: 115). All amorphous groups have their negative—or what C.G. Jung would have called “shadow”⁹—sides. This paradox of surfing may be seen in the localism that motivates some surfers to act aggressively toward nonlocals. Gian’s (fig. 5) most memorable surfing experience with a surfer(s) behaving badly “was when a guy kept cutting off (dropping in on) me and Greg. It got really annoying, so I actually cut *him* off. That made him really pissed. He yelled a lot at me, but I stayed relaxed for the most part, and there was no physical altercation.” Greg (fig. 4, 6) says that such bad behavior has happened

...so many times that I can’t list them all here. It all comes down to people being competitive and fighting over finite resources, which is the exact opposite of what I strive for in surfing. I have seen a surfer stab another surfer’s board with his board (County Line), surfers “dropping in” on each other (almost anytime the waves are good), and verbal arguments/collisions in the water (often when the waves are good). Greed and finite resources exist everywhere in life, including surfing.

Gian (fig. 5) believes that the reason for such inappropriate activity is basically

...just territoriality. Waves are a resource, and they’re often a limited resource. It’s just the nature of the beast to fight over resources. Surfers also tend to act in very primal ways. I’m not sure what it is exactly about surfing that evokes it. You’ll even notice that communication becomes more primitive, whether it is enjoyable communication or expression of anger. You hear hoots (when you see a good wave or someone riding a good wave) and grunts (when people are pissed). Almost ape-like.

Rather than locals, however, Maceo (fig. 4, 8) attributes most, if not all, altercations to drug abuse. He bases his opinion on the irrationality he has perceived during such encounters, when a surfer’s antagonistic attitude exceeds what is warranted:

⁹ According to Jung, the shadow is a “personality component usually with a negative sign” (*CW* 11: par. 292).

There was one guy at County Line [a surf spot near the boundary between Ventura and Los Angeles counties] who kept dropping in on my wave.¹⁰ After the fourth or fifth time this happened, I asked him politely to stop. He began swearing at me and actually tried to attack me, to the point that I felt it necessary to swim away from him (personal conversation 2013).

In addition to drug-addled individuals and equally troubling are the surfers and, increasingly, paddle boarders who commandeer the waves without regard to the potential danger imposed on others who might have caught the same wave or are about to. Such wave hogs may or may not be locals; Maceo believes they primarily reflect the sense of entitlement that people in general exhibit in Western culture. Even so, he remains sanguine about surfing. “After all,” he says, “there’s a negative side to everything, no matter how good it may seem” (personal conversation 2013).



Figure 8: Maceo takes Staircase (Malibu) with paddle boarder in background.

Silverstrand Redux

Upon arriving at Silverstrand I began keeping a journal, a great part of which was devoted to the phenomenology of the place (table 1). Without realizing it at the time, I now see that many of my entries recounting mundane facts constitute SEK. I began studying the phenomenological data, such as weather conditions, tidal rotations, and biology. And I started learning the lingo—terms such as “double up” and “cutback” (5-17-05), “360” or “aerial” (11-7-05), and “snap” (11-7-05).

Table 1: Silverstrand Journal

DATE	LOG
5-17-05	Double Ups & Cutbacks; Surfing for Dummies. High tide waves slap the shore making the unmistakable sound of a gargantuan belly flop. Surf louder at high tide. Yesterday I was the only person in the surf. I kept looking to make sure there wasn’t a shark lurking about. Every time a copter flew over I expected them to give me a warning through loudspeakers, but they were hovering because it is Seabee Weekend at the Naval Base, and all manner of weird stuff is flying overhead.

¹⁰ “Dropping in” is surfer lingo for catching the same wave after someone else has claimed it, thereby creating a traffic jam, so to speak, and enhancing the risk of collision and injury.

5-23-05	Surfers in the Hands of an Angry Sea Goddess: 5.5 high tide; 6' waves crashing, blow-back from slight offshore. Sounds: low tide— <i>sh-sh-sh-sh</i> —until it breaks on the natural shelf that's several inches high. Then it slaps—between a spank & clap, as if to warn <i>no entrare!</i> Do not enter! Worst scenario: waves are 6+ ft. when they break on the shelf, becoming “crushers”—don't want to catch these waves. And if the Stranded Beachcomber still doesn't get the hint, she is chased away by a rogue wave that makes a splotch not unlike the sound of a suitcase full of water being thrown on the sand. Okay, she gets the message.
9-21-05	Spotted a dying painted-lady butterfly. Surf's finally up. 12 surfers vying for one wave.
10-23-05	Rogue waves 6-8 ft; string-pull effect; 25-ft ropes of kelp. Alert #1: Coastal Flood Warning; High Surf Advisory for 24 hours; Coastal Hazard Message issued by the National Weather Service; “long period and large Nor' westerly swell moving SE.E. Santa Barbara buoy reported a swell of 7-9 ft with a period of 17 sec. Ventura Harbor reported 8-ft surf. Locally high surf with sets up to 10 ft on west-facing beaches like Silverstrand; strong rip currents and localized beach erosion: “It is extremely dangerous to fish or observe waves from exposed coastal structures or rocks during a high surf condition. Very large waves [rogues] can suddenly sweep across previously dry areas. Swimming or surfing may be dangerous.”
10-26-05	Photographer—long-lensed camera resting on shoulder as he stares out to sea at surfers, all waiting—surfers for the right wave, photographer for the right shot. Sun broke for 5 min.
11-7-05	5-7 ft waves; pods of dolphins doing horizontal surfing and underwater snaps ¹¹ ; saw surfer do 2-360s.
11-15-05	4-6 ft waves, barrels, blowback; full moon, spring tide 6.7 to -9 ft; wind advisory 35 mph, 58 mph gusts.
11-21-05	Spotted a Say's Phoebe on the “no lifeguard on duty” sign.
2-9-06	A Perfect Day at the Beach: 6-8 ft waves “best in the state,” 80-ish degrees, cloudless, slight NW breeze. The Sea Goddess is a trickster: is she a white shell, glass, or rock? She's none of these and all of these—a pseudomorph ¹² . Can't turn your back on her without getting smacked in the butt; black-crowned night heron whistling from roost in rubber tree—3-note call <i>twee-oo-weef</i> .
2-15-06	Wind advisory 30-40 mph W; first time no beach day
2-23/28-06	Neg. low tide.
3-2/3-06	Higher than normal surf, westerly swell, flood warning, 7 ft sets “currently propagating toward Southern California,” E. Pacific storm, 7-9 ft in SB Channel, strong rip currents, swimming and surfing dangerous.
3-7-06	Windy day: Wicked Wind Witch of the West; sounds like my house will blow down; the roof is flapping; WeatherBug says “breezy”—hah! Neg. low tide thru 3-12-06.

While at Silverstrand I occasionally witnessed altercations related to localism, but they were not restricted to surfers. I also discovered that shorebirds aren't the only ones poking the sand and scavenging for seafood at low tide; Silverstrand is famed for its humungous Pismo

¹¹ “Snap” is surfer lingo for a move in which a surfer changes direction while riding the crest of a wave.

¹² A pseudomorph is a form of fossilization in which the internal crystalline structure of the shell or rock changes, but the shape stays same.

clams and has long attracted those hardy enough to pull on hip waders or even wet suits to brave the icy Pacific waters. These beachcombers clam in the most inhospitable of conditions, prodding and probing in their black rubber hip waders.

As I once watched a particular group of scroungers, from behind me I heard the cursing of an enraged local. I had seen this man before; oftentimes he patrolled the beach with a large white cockatoo he called Leviticus on his head. The scruffy pirate-environmentalist, whom I had dubbed One-Armed Walker because of his missing appendage, had taken it upon himself to fight for the rights of those clams unable to speak up for themselves.

“Get ’em all, ya dirty dogs! Eat ’em all up, ya filthy pigs!” mocked the black-bearded Silverstrander while flailing his one arm at the diggers, Leviticus clutching his master’s hair dreds to maintain his balance.

“Yeah, get every last one, ya [bleep]in’ scavengers! Who cares about the clams?” The diggers, however, appeared impervious to the local’s fury. Or perhaps they could not hear his rants over the crashing surf. Whatever the reason, this scene illuminated for me just how much unpleasantness may be tolerated when it is balanced by the healthy benefits bestowed by the sea. Such irony is not inherently negative; for it is within the attempted resolution of paradox that psychic transformation becomes possible. For many surfers confronting the alluring but forbidding sea, it is a transformation into environmental activism. When asked whether surfing had heightened their environmental awareness, commitment, and/or activism, Gian (fig. 5) responded:

I’m not sure if it’s heightened too much, because I feel I’ve always been pretty conscientious about the environment. But I do try to appreciate it as much as I can, and I find myself picking up trash and things on the beach more often.

Greg (fig. 4, 6) replied,

Yes. I did not realize the ocean was so polluted before surfing. ...I don’t think surfing has to mean one thing. It means different things and serves different purposes to different people, and even different things/purposes to myself depending on the situation.

Greg’s comments above highlight the difficulties encountered when totalizing or essentializing any group, including surfers. Some surfers—but not all—credit surfing with “transforming their consciousness,” “promoting spirituality and environmental ethics,” and “facilitating physical healing” (Taylor 2007: 944). Others—but not all—credit surfing with enabling “a sense of connection and belonging to nature in general and the sea in particular [that] produces concomitant reverence toward nature and a corresponding environmentalist ethics” (Taylor 2007: 944). But although many practitioners relate physical, psychological, and spiritual benefits, there are obviously those who bring their own shadow sides to the sport, as described above. Nonetheless, the prevalence of both insiders and outsiders who observe that surfing resembles traditional religions in its mythic narratives, rituals, symbols, and terminology lends credence to the notion proposed herein that surfers generally consider some places, animals, and plants sacred and harbor “convictions regarding what constitutes proper relationships within the community of practitioners as well as with outsiders (human and not)” (Taylor 2007: 944). Examining how and why this happens may ultimately provide guides for helping the general

populace become more attached to their places, more aware of the local ecoknowledge embedded within these places, and more attuned to the precarious environmental position we collectively face.

References

- Abram, David. 1996. *The Spell of the Sensuous* (New York, NY: Vintage).
- Banavage, Meg Elise. 2012. "Phenomenology in a Wetsuit: Understanding Biophilia in Pacific Coastal Environments." Master of Arts Thesis. Royal Roads University, Victoria, BC, Canada.
- Basso, Keith H. 1997. *Wisdom Sits in Places—Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press).
- Berkes, Fikret. 1999. *Sacred Ecology: Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Resource Management* (Philadelphia, PA: Taylor and Francis).
- Buckley, Brendan. 2014. "Are Surfers Smart?," *Surfing Magazine*. Online: <http://www.surfingmagazine.com/magazine/are-surfers-smart/>.
- Capra, Fritjof. 2000. *The Tao of Physics—An Exploration of the Parallels between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (Boston, MA: Shambhala).
- Carson, Rachel. 1954. *The Sea around Us* (New York, NY: Mentor).
- Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. 1990. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (San Francisco: Harper & Row).
- Davidson, H.R. Ellis. 1988. *Myths and Symbols in Pagan Europe. Early Scandinavian and Celtic Religions* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press).
- Davies, Henry J.B. 2009. "Environmental Issues in Surfing – Behaviours and Attitudes", *The Plymouth Student Scientist* 2.1: 108-55.
- Eliade, Mircea. 1987 [1957]. *The Sacred and the Profane—The Nature of Religion* (trans. Willard R. Trask; Orlando, FL: Harcourt).
- Glendon, Keith. 2005. "Chad Compton: The Comeback Kid", *Carbon* 2.1: 70–75.
- Hanson, Curtis, and Michael Apted (dirs.). 2012. *Chasing Mavericks*, 20th Century Fox, DVD.
- Hening, Glenn, and Bron Taylor. 2005. "Surfing," in Bron Taylor (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, 1607–12 (London: Continuum International).
- Holland-Smith, David, Aharon Love, and Ross Lorimer. 2013. "British Surfers and Their Attitudes and Values Toward the Environment," *Ecopsychology*, 5.2: 103-9. doi:10.1089/eco.2013.0020.
- Jung, C.G. 1958. *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, vol. 11 (trans. R.F.C. Hull; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Kampion, Drew. 1989. *The Book of Waves: Form and Beauty on the Ocean* (Santa Barbara, CA: Arpel Graphics/ Surfer Publications).
- . 2003. *Stoked!: A History of Surf Culture* (Salt Lake City, UT: Gibbs Smith).
- . n.d. Online: http://www.drewkampion.com/Books_by_DK.html.
- Lévy-Bruhl, Lucien. 1985 [1966]. *How Natives Think* (trans. Lilian A. Claire; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).
- Meacham, James D. III. 1994. "Tao of Surfing." Online: <http://www.lajollasurf.org/tao.html>.
- McHugh, Paul. 2006. "Pillar Point / Unique conditions swell Mavericks monsters / Rough seabed, wind and sea currents combine to create California's biggest surfing challenge," 7 Feb. Online: <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/PILLAR-POINT-Unique-conditions-swell-Maverick-s-2542018.php>.

- Melekian, Brad. 2005. "Is God a Goofyfoot? If So, Surfing May Be the Next World Religion," *Surfer* 46.3. Online: <http://www.surfermag.com/magazine/archivedissues/godgoofy/index.html>.
- Moriarity, Jay, and Chris Gallagher. 2001. *The Ultimate Guide to Surfing* (London: Lyons).
- Shifren, Nachum. 2001. *Surfing Rabbi: A Kabbalistic Quest for Soul* (Los Angeles: Heaven Ink).
- Surfers Appreciating the Natural Environment (SANE). n.d. Online: <http://www.sanesurfers.org/>.
- Surfrider Foundation. 2014. Online: <http://www.surfrider.org/>.
- Taylor. 2007. "Surfing into Spirituality and a New, Aquatic Nature Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75.4: 923–51.
- . 2010. "Surfing Spirituality," in *Dark Green Religion—Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 103-26.
- . 2014. "On Surfing, Nature, and Spirituality." Rachel Carson Center. Online: <http://www.youtube.com/embed/48-rkcQsREg>.
- Wade, A. 2007. *Surf Nation: In Search of the Fast Lefts and Hollow Rights of Britain and Ireland* (London: Simon & Schuster UK Ltd.).
- Warshaw, Matt. 2003. *The Encyclopedia of Surfing* (New York: Harcourt).
- Wolfe, Tom. 1968. *The Pump House Gang* (New York: Bantam).

Appendix

Surfer Survey

Respondent (first name) _____ Age _____ Years surfing _____ M ___ F ___

1. How old were you when you began surfing? How long did it take you to feel comfortable standing up? What background skills—physical, ecological, psychological, etc.—did you bring to surfing? Describe your feelings about surfing at the time; e.g., did you feel scared, empowered, spiritual, religious, euphoric, and/or other? What made you want to learn to surf?
2. Have your feelings about surfing changed since then? If yes, how so?

Read the following to answer question 3:

Originating from a 1963 surf instrumental of the same name by Johnny Fortune, the term "soul surfer" was coined in the sixties to describe someone who surfs for the sheer pleasure of surfing. Unlike big wave surfers (big wavers), winning competitions is not the soul surfer's main objective; the term rather denotes the *spirituality* of surfing. *Surfer* magazine writer Brad Melekian (2005) puts the goal of soul surfers this way:

...to pursue surfing not just as an athletic endeavor or as a sunny day diversion, but to try to glean whatever lessons you can from the practice. It means being aware of your surroundings, and respectful of the people and places that you interact with. It means being patient, mindful, kind, compassionate, understanding, active, thoughtful, faithful, hopeful, gracious, disciplined and ... good.

3. Using the above definition(s) of “soul surfing,” do you consider yourself a Soul Surfer? Why or why not?
4. Describe your most memorable surfing experience with a marine animal present.
5. Has surfing heightened your environmental awareness, commitment, and/or activism? How so or why not?
6. Describe your most memorable surfing experience, if any, with a surfer(s) behaving badly.
7. What do you think might be the reason for the behavior or activity described in question 6?
8. Have you ever encountered big-wave surfers (“big-wavers”)? If so, describe what you observed. Do you see a difference in attitude between big-wavers and average-wave surfers?
9. Additional comments:

End Notes