

## Silverstrand: An Ecocritique of Place and Creativity

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### *Introduction*

The sea is a *tabula scriba* whose story is written in the strands, if you know how to read them.

Silverstrand seems a place stuck in the sixties. Cut off from the city of Oxnard, California, in which it is incorporated, by the marina to the north, Port Hueneme Naval Base to the west, and the commercial and navy ports to the south, it has been almost forgotten by Ventura County—an anachronism of the postmodern age. Perhaps for this reason, it attracts surfers seeking great waves, anonymity, or both. Although there is a culture of surf rats—the Silverstrand Locals—who know each other well, they tend to be enigmatic and distrustful of, if not outright hostile toward, outsiders.

Perhaps this explains why I like it. I am the same—a relic of the sixties, who treasures that period as a sort of Golden Age of Dionysian extravagance. Not that I would want to *relive* that period again; I simply wish to *restore* the era's *communitas* that enabled my optimism about the future of humanity.

Silverstrand demonstrates paradoxically that one can be among many without sensing much communal bonding; by the same token, one can be alone here and feel at-one-ment in the cosmos and global community. I discovered just such a tension while beachcombing, an activity that brought to mind the various reveries on walking by diverse writers such as Henry D. Thoreau, eco-artist Hamish Fulton, and ecopsychologist James Hillman.

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