

Coastal masculinities as intertextuality: reading *MP: The Life of Michael Peterson*

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Abstract

In the postwar evolution of white Australian masculinities, the icon of the well-tanned surfer emerged as an alternative to the rural ideal of the farmer battling against the harsh and unforgiving landscape. This implicit devaluing of the settler narrative of *terra nullius* across urban Australia coincided with contradictory developments, including the spread of countercultural hippie sentiments, the struggle to establish men's surfing as a profession, and the early development of men's movements that ranged across the conservative-progressive continuum in terms of the gender relations they advocated and critiqued. Friction between these imperatives complicated the relationships between Australian men and their individually configured masculinities. In the socially conservative milieu of white men on the beach competing for access to the best waves, the combative economies of shortboard surfing intensified those pressures. Gendered representations of surfing in literature, primarily focusing on the 2004 Sean Doherty biography *MP: The Life of Michael Peterson*, and other media are examined to explore the

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consequences of these tensions for gendered self-understandings.¹

Keywords: white, Australian, masculinities, shortboard, professional surfing, Michael Peterson, MP, homosociality

A short history: white man, beach, waves and board

Surfing as a mode of white Australian masculinity evolved from British seaside strolling practices of spectatorship into a more dynamic engagement with the ocean provided by the postwar rise of the surf lifesaving movement.² Men who loved the ocean but were bored by the structured activities of surf clubs and their competitions could choose to explore the alternative lifestyles that emerged during the period of Vietnam War draft dodging.³ It is no small irony that the pacifist sentiments that informed these various forms of coastal masculinities in the sixties and seventies were accompanied by what is commonly called the development of surfboard design. Strictly speaking, Australian surfboard shapers and manufacturers were actually refining peacetime applications of World War II military technology.⁴

The relaxed lines of soul surfing on longboards as an expression of freedom from the pressures of social expectations and narrow gender norms were replaced by the more frenetic approach of rip, tear and lacerate that was made possible by shorter boards.⁵ Instead of a relaxed blending with the power of the wave and highlighting its beauty during the final seconds of its existence, the rise of professional surfing helped institutionalize an approach that emphasized the power of the manoeuvres being executed in the most

critical sections of the wave.⁶

Consuming MP as text: grommet homosociality

The power of Michael Peterson as a shortboard surfer was magnified by the surfing texts and practices of the seventies and eighties, and these representations and actions coalesced to produce a network of interest, a more diffuse conceptual discourse about him, among a generation of surfers who had no direct contact with him. Once surf media and emerging fan practices transformed Michael Peterson (the boy from Coolangatta) into MP (the text), he was both the subject of our beachside talks and the inspiration and yardstick for what we were trying to mimic in the water.⁷ Over time MP became an ideal that snagged and structured our schoolboy imagination of what it meant to be a surfer.⁸ As we consumed surfing texts that fed into how we created the sociality of our surfing practices, the idea of MP triggered emotional responses of awe, envy and bewilderment in grommets: how does he do it? And so consistently!⁹

Knowing first hand the power of the printed surfing media back in the eighties to shape how boy-surfers going through puberty (grommets) understood what their masculinity could and should be, reading the Doherty biography a few decades later unleashes all sorts of pleasures: geographic recognition (Up the coast? Yeah, been there, surfed that ... too bad I never made any take-off on the suck up, could only handle the shoulder on my backhand, haha!); reconfiguring that geographic recognition as emotional landmarks (yeah, went up to Burleigh with Bat and we stayed with two Sydney chicks in a tent for the weekend, unreal ...); and realizing that the tenuous creation of my surfer identity as a smokescreen for general

adolescent insecurity would have been much more difficult without the gendered images and stereotypes being conveniently provided by surf journalism accounts of the formation of professional surfing.

Take it from me, the adolescent privileges of being a male, white and heterosexual inside the narrow chauvinistic surfing subculture of east coast Australia in the seventies adds up to a paralyzing mash-up of nothings. No sense of how to negotiate the gaps between what I was feeling and life out there as revealed in the magazines where larger than local life heroes make the impossible look effortless, no real idea of how to structure a meaningful relationships with my self, my surfing friends and girls, and little ambition beyond maximizing time spent surfing without adequate sunscreen protection.¹⁰ That such a superabundance of shortcomings feeds into the adolescent desperation to cobble together a pastiche of an identity from whatever is close at hand really comes home when Sean Doherty finishes his Author's Note with 'But, like telling a kid there's no Santa Claus, we can't go and take all the myth out of the MP story now, can we?'¹¹

The schoolboy intensity with which we compulsively re-read and earnestly discussed the articles in surfing magazines like *Tracks* would be familiar to most graduate students today. Unlike candidates for higher degrees, although we were intoxicated with the pleasures of identifying with a narrow set of texts, we were blind to how those texts operated as power. Habitual binge reading of surfing media was doing more than mind-shaping us as aspiring watermen. We were unconsciously internalizing heterosexual norms and gendered codes for what was appropriate as conduct and desire for white teenage boys at the beach.¹² Grovelling around at the bottom of the food chain, as we aligned ourselves with the narrow intolerances that

characterized the beer and meat pie end of the masculinity spectrum we could not recognize that we were both enforcers and victims of surfing chauvinism. On the east coast of Australia in the seventies, the default gender of a surfer was male and I did not notice the invisibility of women who surfed in our favourite magazines that we so fervently devoured.¹³

We were naïve end-users of an ideology that dictated surfing men ought to be fearless and competitive in the water, arrogant towards those who didn't surf, and distantly disdainful of women because we preferred the bland certainties of the homosocial enclave of our beach.¹⁴ Stumbling around just south of Byron Bay, we were slightly offstage somewhere in the historic background of the emergence of professional surfing.¹⁵ At a time when the sub-cultural matrix of the cult of surfing personality was intersecting with the rise of celebrity culture as a dominant mode of surf journalism, what insecure white adolescent surfers needed was something to identify with, someone exceptional and iconic to conceal the gaps in our identities: MP.

CultStud 312-2 Gendering the Nation

Representations of Gender in Sporting Literature: Mid Term Paper (minimum limit 5,000 words, maximum limit 7,000 words)¹⁶

Critique the biography of a prominent white Australian sportsman. The successful student will outline their investments in that particular biography, summarize the structure of the book in sufficient detail to render the texture, rhythm and trajectories of the lived life comprehensible to an uninformed reader, and examine the ethics of the biographer.

If necessary, please refer to the work of Lois W. Banner on biography:

At its best, biography, like history, is based on archival research, interweaves historical categories and methodologies, reflects current political and theoretical concerns, and raises complex issues of truth and proof. (Banner, 2009, p. 580)

It might also be useful to keep in mind that ‘cultural politics are most easily examined as well as empathetically imagined in the individual life.’ (Margadant, 2000, p. 7).

Additional credit is possible for students who survey the cultural practices surrounding that particular sport. Footnotes are not necessary but please include in-text references (author, date, page number).

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My Story

Before my father went to prison for a crime his mother committed, he loved to surf. He still reckons the day he heard that I had stood up on my first wave at Greenmount was one of his better memories. He was even more stoked because I was the first girl in my school to surf. When he was at school forty years back, that whole waterman idea of multiple maritime disciplines had not really come over the horizon yet and surfers were chauvinist about a lot more things than gender. For example, the mode of surfing: any kneeboarder was looked down on as a ‘cripple’ because they were too dopey to stand up like a man. The location of surfing was a set of rules about who and where: localism was the public and aggressive display of coastal masculinity as the ‘my wave’ possessive ownership. Back in the day of such intolerances, girls were not really allowed to surf.

Once I was hooked on surfing, my father educated me by telling me all the beach stories he grew up on. Michael Peterson was one of those legends,

and his house was a few bus stops from my grandmother's old style Queenslander, one of those iconic houses on stilts that are so cool in the summer heat.

My reason for disclosing this biographical information about myself is to emphasise that the Sean Doherty biography *MP: The Life of Michael Peterson* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2004) is more than a mere book to a second generation surfer from the same postcode. (And no, unlike some of the Maroubra crew publicizing themselves in their 2007 documentary *Bra Boys: Blood is Thicker than Water*, I have not branded myself as a local by have my postcode inked on the nape of my neck.)

The first-hand experience and historical record of Michael Peterson (1952-2012) as a professional surfer, and his subsequent representation in primary surfing texts (*MP Untold: The Lost Stories of an Australian Surfing Legend*, the follow-up biography Doherty published in 2015 and surf flicks like *Morning of the Earth*) and secondary texts for more general audiences (the 2011 Malcom Knox novel *The Life: A Novel*) are not confined to the 340 pages of the Doherty biography. Down at the pub, local pride took a minor hit when a book about the all-time Kirra identity advertises itself with cover blurb that appeals to the category of the nation: 'The incredible story of Australian surfing's cult hero.'

How surfers read

Insiders are prone to making grandiose claims about their tacit knowledge privileging them with deeper ways of knowing that are denied to other consumers of texts (Polyani, 1967, pp. 1-5; Jones, 2014, p. 222). This, however, is not a claim I make for myself. As a member of the community and line-

up where Peterson lived and surfed what I can say is that the experience of reading the Doherty account of that life in all its typical and absolutely unique features is complicatedly visceral. This mode of reading is not deeper but it is different because it is both a more corporeal reading experience than non-surfers can imagine and it is a consumption of text that is driven by the ebb and flow of desire and lack. Any surfer would love to be able to do what Peterson could do but nearly all of us lack the necessary talent and the ability to sustain that with a dedicated focus. When Michael Polanyi says ‘we can know more than we can tell’ (Polanyi, 1967, p.1), most surfers would admit to knowing more about surfing than what they can actually do. Michael Peterson was different because once he left high school everything he knew was incorporated into his mission of making himself not just a better surfer but the *best* surfer.

As insiders, locals are prone to making grandiose claims about our exclusive right to enjoy and protect our home beach. Back on land, local pride can do strange things to readers of surf biographies. On the one hand, down at the pub everyone is stoked that there is a great page-turning account of someone we all worshipped as we were learning to stand up and turn, but most blokes are not really impressed by the cocky showboating of printing ‘National Bestseller’ on the cover of the Doherty biography.

In noting how the surfing subculture enshrines insider status, Stranger proposes a three part structure that operates around beaches: local *bands* are small circles of surfers who know each other; at a more regional level, *tribes* are the relevant organization; and the idea of the surfing *nation* is held together by the stoke, those warm fuzzy feelings we all feel after catching a wave (Stranger, 2011). This wave-riding brotherhood was the basis for

the warm welcome Hawaiian surfers extended to Australian surfers in the seventies.

Surfers are intensely tribal creatures at all of these three levels, despite all the energies invested in our appearing spontaneous and individual as we respond to the moment-by-moment opportunities of the ocean. As one of the gang writing for the surfing nation, Doherty knows that our mob look like they are radical out on the water but surprisingly the hierarchal community often enforces narrow and conservative norms that limit what can be said and done on land and in the water. The passion for waves is a given: we all love the buzz of pushing out against the waves as the necessary toil for those precious moments of reward when we glide back towards the sand. We all appreciate the logic of not wasting a wave but many of us disagree about whether the who and how of the riding adds up to it being a wasted wave or not.

More bluntly, Doherty's intended audience of surfers are possessed, obsessed by the sea. This condition of assigning absolute priority to a particular combination of tide, swell and wind conditions is not monopolised by high school grommets angling to wag a few classes. Like the old putdown says, once the swell is up, Australian surfers are suddenly allergic to the idea of work. None of us can work when the waves are on, even in an iron lung ...

Reading accounts of how Michael Peterson took waves apart resonates with our measure of private corporeal memories, just-add-water muscle memories of agony and ecstasy. These templates then inform the stories we tell about our time in the water. If you have grown up surfing the same waves as him on the Gold Coast, the intoxication of identification has been hardwired into your progress towards surfing competence. Our relative lack of ability fires

up the desire to emulate and identify with what Michael Peterson made look like the future, sped up for our present consumption. We understand what he did with something other than imagination. Reading the Michael Peterson literature unleashed these embodied memories that are amalgamated into what we might call the inner surfer, the phenomenon of not needing to be on a board or even at the beach to ride waves. I'm pretty sure my father unleashed his inner surfer each night after lock up.

Plot as summary: the devil is in the details

In the three hundred and forty page MP biography, sixteen chapters are preceded by a Foreword and Author's Note, and followed by Acknowledgements. Strictly speaking, there are fifteen chapters, followed by 'Tributes: Words for the King', nine additional pages that Doherty included to map out the impact of MP on the development of competitive and shortboard surfing in the words of nineteen surfing personalities and local identities. These comments are an endorsement that validates the integrity of the Doherty narrative and their presence emphasizes the status of Doherty as an insider with access to the elite athletes of Australian surfing. Writers use the genre of biography as one possible narrative form for outlining a range of intended meanings to a certain audience of readers about the life of a third party. Doherty charts the interaction between the trajectories of pleasures of surfing, drugs and women, and how, over time, that matrix was in turn influenced by mental health issues. Counterpointing these dynamic instabilities is family: the unconditional love, financial and emotional support and physical presence of his mother Joan; and his little brother Tom is an accomplished spinner of yarns who appears as the

perennial punching bag and occasional fall guy for big brother Michael.

Generally speaking, the pleasures of reading biographies include the uncertainty of not knowing ‘whether we are judging the biography, assessing the biographer, evaluating the style and form, or passing judgement on the life of the central character.’ (Possing, 2017, p. 8) Of these four possibilities for readers, Doherty appears most concerned with the reputation of his subject and the possibility of inappropriate glorification. In the Author’s Note, Doherty cautions readers against celebrating the volume and variety of drug use of Michael Peterson. Doherty adopts the stance of realistic acknowledgement by noting ‘Mick is a hero with some very obvious flaws.’ (Doherty, 2007, p. xii)

This biography incorporates written and oral sources. The archive that Doherty has researched tends to be Australian surfing magazines (primarily *Tracks* and *Surfing World*) of the seventies and eighties and more recently, local newspapers of the east coast. It is, however the generally humorous tone of the anecdotes that drive the narrative forwards and through the selection of those tales Doherty is able to connect with his primary intended audience of white Australian men who surf. Applying the criteria of truth and proof to these stories inside the Doherty narrative requires framing them with this warning: ‘Some are amazingly true, others are twisted truth, and others are just plain bullshit.’ (Doherty, 2007, p. x)

One of the challenges that Doherty as biographer faced was the typical problem of subjects not being able to resist the tendency to present themselves in the best light. Doherty was a diligent cross-checker who verified tall tales with multiple sources and relevant documents. However, in the case of interviewing Michael Peterson, this issue of truth and proof

becomes more complex because of a history of drug use and mental health conditions appeared to have some influence on his communication style. In the course of researching the book, Doherty became accustomed to the nuances of the non-verbal communication of Michael Peterson. These insights into when the facts do not mesh with what Michael Peterson says are shared in the Doherty account: 'Even today Mick still contends that, technically, he was there. "Nah, nah, I went to all the presentations," he says cagily, suddenly looking around the room, a telltale sign that what he's told you may not be 100 per cent bankable.' (Doherty, 2007, p. 198)

The chapters typically start with a thematic overview that provides a context for the individual activities of Michael Peterson. By placing the achievements, emotions and challenges of Peterson within the surf culture of the day, Doherty provides contextual information that structures a wry enjoyment for male readers of the more nuanced behaviour of Michael Peterson as a surf larrikin. Against the background of cultural politics of east coast surfing in the seventies and eighties, the anecdotes and reported activities of the life of Michael Peterson in and out of the water highlight the intensity that Peterson demanded of himself as a surfer.

This strategy of contextualizing is strongest in the first ten chapters when the surfing development and achievements are framed by a localized history. As an example of the cultural politics of Australian surfing in the seventies and eighties, the first ten chapters emphasize how Michael Peterson was able to extend the boundaries of what was thought possible. The remaining five chapters have a more explicitly individual focus as the mental health issues increasingly limit his ability to perform in the water.

When examining sport-centred narratives, if we 'focus on ethical tensions

in texts and reading, ethical criticism raises questions about greater good, minimizing harm, other respecting care, veracity, fairness, justice, and other issues in order to reveal moral flaws in narratives as both aesthetic defects and as culturally problematic.’ (Werner, 2013, p. 194) What the Doherty narrative has done for the greater good of Australian surfing is fleshed out an individualized history, underpinning the story as an example of the triumph of the collective will of the Petersons. Instead of a narrow focus on those legendary tube rides at Kirra and *that* cutback immortalized by movie stills from *Morning of the Earth*, specific subcultural icons that are so enshrined in our national surfing consciousness that they remain immediately identifiable as Michael Peterson even today, this one volume consolidates the achievements of a career best characterized by competitive dominance. The Doherty narrative is carefully respectful of the reputations of other surfers as it provides an accurate representation of the conditions of coastal masculinities in Australian surfing subculture in the seventies and eighties. Instead of a narrow focus that exclusively valorizes what happened on the waves (which the chauvinism of surfing typically demands), readers are presented with a more informative portrait. Doherty shows how the support of Joan was the one stern constant in the life of Michael Peterson. It is testament to the care Doherty exercised throughout the project that Joan revealed unpalatable family truths to him that she had concealed for decades. Doherty then sensitively handles those details in the narrative.

In terms of the value for the narrative of Australian surfing history, the Doherty biography can be read as an informative prequel to the *Bustin’ Down the Door* surf documentary that chronicles the roles played by Wayne ‘Rabbit’ (aka Bugs) Batholomew, Peter Townend (aka PT), Mark Richards

(aka MR), and Ian Cairns (Cairnsy) in the professionalization of surfing in Hawaiian contests.

In Chapter One, 'Storm boy', Doherty leads with a device that highlights how this life story we are about to read is not a tale of certainty and pre-determined destiny: an anecdotal account of how the future surfer almost drowned in a river before the age of two. The conception of Michael is explained by a brief mention of how Joan was pack-raped by three men at the age of nineteen. The rest of the chapter details the troubled domestic situation of Joan as a sometime single mother with an on-again off-again abusive spouse, including an account of how one drunken beating caused her to prematurely deliver her daughter who died a few hours later. The grandfather of Joan died almost at the same time so the two funerals were held on the same day at Nudgee Cemetry. Peeling prawns was a major source of income for Joan as she raised two sons. Doherty finishes the chapter with the family starting to live at Coolangatta Road, Tweed Heads, in 1965 after Joan successfully divorced her deadbeat husband.

In Chapter Two, 'Disneyland by the sea', Doherty describes the hand-to-mouth existence of Coolangatta life in the pre-high rise era. The narrative moves along with the goal of demonstrating that Michael Peterson was obsessed by surfing and was driven by the urge to become the best surfer in the world.

Doherty does this by laying out all the pieces of the puzzle that were necessary to complete the final picture of Michael Peterson as evolving into the surfing icon MP.

Living ten minutes from the easy to ride waves of Coolangatta, Michael and Tom joined the Greenmount Surf Lifesaving Club early in primary

school. Club membership gave them access to lockers and hot showers at the beach, as well as the chance to compete in club events. When they worked for a surfboard hire business, their wages were typically returned to their employer as hiring fees because they could not afford to buy their own boards. Michael and Tom also took mid-week advantage of the boards that Brisbane surfers left in the Club House at the end of each weekend, and Michael had a routine of publicly blaming Tom if the boards were ever damaged. The deputy principal of Coolangatta Primary School tried to remedy the classroom inattention of Michael by offering to take him surfing every day after school.

Michael would arrive at school with his board, store it on the roof racks of the car of the deputy and wait for classes to end. The family priest Father Anderson was the surfer who won the 1969 senior men's Australian Title and he willingly took Mick and Tommy off to the beach regularly. Michael went to Miami High School, later the first school in Australia to permit surfing as a school sport, where the principal was also a surfer. Checking the surf was part of his commute and when the waves were on, his truancy was tolerated. Mick had a part time job at one of the surfboard factories across the road from Miami High School. The combination of his long hair and perfectly ironed uniform, fastidious personal hygiene habits, surfing ability and status as a shaper gave him more attention than what was comfortable for his loner personality. He was so shy it was almost impossible for him to actually talk to the female students who were obviously infatuated with him. In Chapter Three, 'The shape of things to come', Doherty starts with the Peterson family moving from Coolangatta Road, Tweed Heads, to an old house called the Bluebird in Tweed Street, Coolangatta in September 1967.

Not only was it five minutes closer to the beach, Mick and Tommy sleeping out on the verandah meant they could sneak off for early morning sessions without waking Joan, Dot or Denice up.

Fifteen year old Michael had put posters of surfer Nat Young all over the house and the downstairs area became a surfboard factory where older longboards and dinged boards were cut down and/or recycled.

Given the rivalry between Snapper Rocks and Kirra board riding clubs, cheap access to boards became crucial for schoolboys gunning it in the heat of daily riding and regular formal competitions. In the case of Mick however, the board was something that had to be understood as part of his improvement as a surfer. His interest in model airplanes gave him a precise attention to detail. Joan initially refused to buy him a new board but said if he won the 1968 Greenmount Surf Lifesaving Club Championship she would. Michael unleashed an unstoppable competitive drive and won, so Joan paid \$118 to keep her promise. In 1968 he won the junior club championship for his first time and later left Miami High School. He was the family breadwinner, earning \$16 a week as a bricklayer's labourer during the day when the Gold Coast was being developed as a tourist destination and then shaping surfboards at night at the Hohensee Factory opposite Miami High School. He placed third in the 1969 Queensland Titles, junior division, and started shaping full time at the Larkin factory in Kirra. Some elements that Mick was exploring became part of mainstream surfing design.

In Chapter Four, 'Blood brothers', Doherty maps how the relationship between Michael and Tom developed in the surfing and drug subcultures of Coolangatta in the early seventies. It was the usual spectacle of masculinity unbound, and the level of aggression between Mick and Tommy as they

fought for waves was a source of entertainment for other local surfers. Doherty includes a few stories that generate either a chuckle or a shake of the head as he shows how Tommy, as the younger brother, assumed it was his responsibility to mess with Mick's head every day of the year. Occasionally events escalated beyond trying to whack each other with sticks: Mick once started shooting a .303 shotgun at a loose surfboard after the rider had wiped out. Joan, Dot and Denice moved out of Bellbird early in 1971, and around that time Michael bought a car which gave him a substantial mobility that meant more than just surfing at different beaches. After the ocean, the first love of fifteen year old Michael was Diane Dawson, a seventeen year old Newcastle ballet dancer. After two weeks of silently staring at her down at The Patch nightclub, Michael appeared one night outside the local cinema on a mini-bike, wearing pyjamas and a helmet. He walked up to Diane, got hold of her hand, led her into the cinema foyer, bought two tickets and took her inside where he sat her down and started kissing her ... all without saying a single word. A pattern developed where Michael would stay with her family down in Newcastle for two week stints as a silent lodger. After more than a year of driving up and down the Pacific Highway, Michael mustered up a sentence and told her it was about time she came to live in Queensland. Or it was over. Diane left her profitable ballet school and moved up to briefly live with her younger sister, before moving into Bellbird with Michael and Tommy. At Bellbird, both Diane and her sister Lynette felt that that a ghost had been touching their hair. Diane felt something repeatedly touch her hair when she was ironing clothes in a room that Joan had populated with religious icons. Lynette was convinced that a ghost had been sitting on her bed and gently touching her hair as she slept: Lynette woke Diane and

Michael as she ran screaming into their bedroom.

With the steadying influence of Joan gone from Bellbird, dope became a standard part of every day as surfers routinely treated the upstairs section of Bellbird as a party venue and the downstairs area as a surfboard factory. Smoking a couple of joints before getting in the water became an element of the surfing ritual for Michael, regardless of whether it was free surfing or a contest because every time Michael went in the ocean, it was a contest. He had no surfing heroes, just a shortlist of who he was going to beat next.

Mick won the junior division of the 1970 Bells Beach Easter Contest, wearing just board shorts and a long sleeve wetsuit vest, despite the brisk conditions of late March in the Southern Ocean of Victoria.

Although the 1970 Australian National Titles were held in Coolangatta where he had a considerable home ground advantage, he placed third. Although he was becoming well known as a competitive surfer, the police were becoming interested for a different reason.

In Chapter Five, 'Local god', Doherty highlights three factors that were crucial to the development of the distinctive surfing style of Michael: location, the seasonal weather cycles of the early seventies, and the increasingly competitive world of Gold Coast surfers. The perfect peeling waves of Kirra were made possible by the arrival of five cyclones a year just at the time when Michael was refining the relationship between his surfing and his surfboards. Shy boy that he was, Mick loved being way back in the barrel of these waves because no one could see him in there, they could only hear him whistling them a warning not to get in his way. These tropical storms steadily generated lines of pure joy that were devoured by the competitive crews of the Kirra Surfriders and Windansea clubs. Under these

conditions Michael was able to leave the comfort of his Kirra home break and ride with the same absolute confidence in front of hostile local surfers intent on defending their break and protecting their reputations: his eight second tube ride on his first wave at Burleigh creamed the Windansea crew psychologically.

The surf media industry was still an underground operation with magazines like *Tracks* being printed on crappy paper and then being eagerly devoured by grommets like my father and his classmates from October 1970. The demographic for *Surfing World* was less-counterculture and it was printed on higher quality stock but was too expensive for grommets to buy every issue. The epic tube rides that were possible at Gold Coast point breaks were featured in these publications and surfing films like *Morning of the Earth*. During twelve weeks of classic Kirra barrels that were rarely below shoulder height, the director of that film, Albe Falzon, filmed Mick in action in February 1971. When Joan drove Mick up from Tweed Heads for the Gold Coast premiere at Miami High School on January 10 1972, he was overwhelmed by the crowd. He was able to get out of the car but his reluctance to be the centre of attention made it impossible for him to go in and watch the film. Mick insisted that Joan drive him home.

Morning of the Earth developed a cult following in America and Michael became a public surfing figure. His performance in the film gave him a status that was higher than his Australian surfing seniors and he was no longer merely a local hot rider. Although he had a national presence, in the early seventies he was still not the legendary surf star MP yet and was actually having trouble paying the rent on Bluebird.

Michael and Patty (a sixteen year old girl from Cronulla who Mick met

at the 1971 Bells Easter contest had moved up to the Gold Coast as his girlfriend), and Tom moved into a house with Joan, Dot and Denice on the Pacific Highway in South Tweed Heads. Living under the scrutiny of Joan meant that any efforts to home grow exotic refreshment were bound to end in failure. Tommy, however, was started to shoot up heroin and Mick was adding acid (LSD) and psychedelic mushrooms to dope as his pre-surf warmup.

In Chapter Six, 'Better get a lawyer, son', Doherty chronicles the targeting of the surfing community by the Coolangatta police who concentrated on prosecuting high-profile surfers for possession of marijuana.

When Michael was arrested on 24 January 1972 and charged the following day with the possession and supply of a dangerous drug, it was Joan who paid the \$500 fine, instead of having Michael endure three months of jail time. The success of the Coolangatta police in severely reducing the supply of marijuana available on local beaches created a serious vacuum that would later be filled by something whiter and much more destructive. The criminal conviction of Michael assumed a different meaning in the rough and tumble politics leading up to the selection of the 1972 Australian Titles contenders. In a heated meeting, the chaos that erupted when it was suggested that Michael was not suitable as a representative of Queensland was silenced by Joan. She asked anyone who had not smoked marijuana to stand up, and when supporters of Paul Neilsen, the Windansea club member who was 1971 Australian champion who failed to qualify for the 1972 Queensland Titles final and was therefore unable to enter the 1972 Australian Titles, started to stand up, there was even more disruption in the meeting. In the final vote, it was not Michael, but Billy Grant, who was pushed aside to ensure that

Neilsen would have a chance to defend his 1972 Australian Title.

After winning the 1972 Australian Title at the beach break of Narrabeen, Michael was featured on the cover of the June issue of *Tracks*. One month later, an intense display of full-on power surfing by Mick at Burleigh right in front of his former idol Nat Young demonstrated that Nat's time as the most dominant force in Australian surfing was over.

In Chapter Seven, 'The big pond', Doherty chronicles the escapades of Michael leaving Australia to compete in the 1972 World Surfing Championships in San Diego, before escaping to Hawaii. Leaving Australia on 25 September 1972 was not difficult but getting into America with a drug conviction that had been big news was a major obstacle. Although Mick travelled on a passport with the Philips surname, the maiden name of Joan, because that was the name on his birth certificate, he competed as Michael Peterson. Surfing was experimenting with the idea of going corporate, and the national surfing team of Australia had a uniform: green trousers, yellow shirts and green ties. Mick apparently did not get the memo about team visuals and turned up in a velour suit with extremely wide lapels. When Mick checked in at the San Diego Travelodge, his reputation had preceded him, thanks to the Super 8 water footage of him surfing in and around the barrel in the twenty eight minute film *Dogs run free*. Gil Scrine's first film was an underground favourite with Californian surfers because such tube riding was impossible on their longboards, and once everyone knew which Travelodge room Mick was staying in, each morning there would be a pile of drugs left outside his door from admiring fans. This would be the first and last time that the San Diego Travelodge hosted a surfing contest. In the first heat, Mick treated California longboard legend Corky Carroll like

some old guy back at Snapper Rocks in Queensland and consistently stole waves from him by paddling his short board fast enough to get to the inside position. After the heat, Mick was aiming for a quick getaway in a car. The Doherty account suggests that as Corky was trying to pull Mick out of the car through the half down window, Hawaiian surfer Keone Downing quietly suggested that Corky keep his hands to himself if he wanted the freedom to surf on the North Shore. (Corky Carroll later disputed this version of events with an attitude of downplaying the tension by saying that he advanced and Mick did not. However, the Doherty version has Mick coming second in a heat of five competitors and advancing to the second round.) Mick was eliminated in the second round at Oceanside when only one judge saw him take off and get a five second tube ride, before annihilating the second half of the wave. Australian judge Claw Warbrick gave Mick nineteen out of twenty, when the other judges, who apparently missed the tube ride part of the wave, scored no higher than thirteen. At a time when most surfers in the contest did not know how to get covered up in the barrel, the Warbrick score was disallowed and Mick was out of the competition. A chance meeting with Victorian surfer Greg Strickland gave Mick and Wayne 'Rabbit' Bartholomew the idea of leaving the knee-high slop of California and heading for real waves in Hawaii. Rabbit ended up landing by himself in Honolulu because the switchblade knife that Mick had in the pocket of his leather jacket resulted in him being detained in the San Diego airport. Mick refused to even say his own name and was released six hours later.

Rabbit was checking every flight from San Diego and finally Mick appeared. They had nowhere to stay and Rabbit paid \$56 for their cab to Rocky Point. Like a pair of brothers, they slept under palm trees and surfed their brains

out while subsisting on bananas and paw-paw scrounged from beachfront gardens. One rainy night, they slept on the verandah of an A-frame house. Early the next morning surfer Owl Chapman came out onto his verandah smoking a joint and spotted them. They were made to feel welcome and were introduced to the waves of Hawaii. (My father tells me that this story of how easy it was to enjoy Hawaii got a lot of attention during lunchtime discussions in the playground.) Rabbit stayed in Hawaii until late October but Mick returned to Coolangatta in January 1973 because he was very adept at writing letters to Joan and asking for money. (Little note to Doherty: typo on page 123 has the date as 1972 ...)

In Chapter Eight, 'Hawaiian daze', Doherty marks the end of the innocent friendships of Mick with Wayne Bartholomew and Peter Townend (PT). Once Rabbit turned eighteen and was eligible to compete in the Open Division that Mick had been dominating, for Mick it became a relationship premised on rivalry. Later, when Rabbit tried to collect the Mick share of the \$56 Rocky Point cab fare, friction increased. In the case of the tension between Mick and Peter Townend, it was surf club politics that became the battleground. Snapper Rocks Club had wound down in the late sixties, and there had been many defections to the Kirra Surfriders Club. Townend was the president of the Kirra club and at an extraordinary meeting there was an election for the Club President position. Mick was playing hardball *and* trying something softer. While a number of people were trying to intimidate anyone thinking about voting against Mick, he was silent in the shadows at first, before handing out joints as encouragement to persuade voters. Mick won the close election and one drunken evening sometime later PT proposed resurrecting the Snapper Rocks Club. The Coolangatta scene was

split between Mick and the already smooth operating of Townend who had the scrapbooks of his newspaper clippings as evidence to prove that he was interested in professionalizing surfing. Just one week later, Mick resigned as President. Mick won \$1,000 dollars at the 1973 Rip Curl Bells Beach Pro but finished third, behind Richard Harvey and Peter Townend in the May 1973 Australia Titles at Margaret River after being penalised for dropping in. Back on the Gold Coast, a series of strong southerly swells generated waves up to 15 feet at Kirra and the sandbank configuration made the wave feel like Sunset in Hawaii. Mick and Tommy flew to Honolulu on 3 November 1973, and Mick provided the in-flight entertainment by lighting up a joint, which he generously shared around. When Honolulu Airport and Customs staff inspected the luggage of Mick, they found his surfboard repair kit, consisting of flammable items such as acetone and fibreglass resin. After Michael spent \$100 buying a unregistered and uninsured car from a friend, he was ticketed by the police on the way to the beach. At a time when Hawaiian resentment against foreign surfers aggressively trying to take more than their fair share of waves was growing, Mick was doing too much hassling for waves.

Once he realised that was the case, he tried to behave himself as he surfed Backdoor and Sunset, earning the respect of notable local surfers. As 1972 Australian Champion he was admitted to the 1973 Smirnoff and Hang Ten contests but not the Duke Kahanamoku International. He surfed Laniakea well during the first heat of the Smirnoff but he was late entering the water: Tommy left Mick's board on the beach and went off picking psychedelic mushrooms. When the Hawaiian cowboys spotted the trespasser, Tommy had to hide until they left. When Tommy finally made it back to the beach,

Mick was frantic. He could not find his board and the heat had already started. Later, everything was put on hold for six days until Mick could find his aviator sunglasses. One week after Tommy had returned home there was a letter from Mick that contained some exotic herbal refreshment, asking for more money so he could stay in Hawaii.

Mick surfed well in the Hang Ten contest at Sunset in early February, winning the best wave of the contest award by stalling under the lip and getting tubed there like it was Kirra. The best wave prize was a 175 cc Kawasaki motorbike that he promptly sold and for finishing seventh, Mick won \$67. After the Hang Ten his self-confidence may have clouded his judgement because he made the mistake of dropping in on Ben Aipa at Velzyland. Ben rewarded this appalling lack of common sense and surf etiquette by punching the fin out of Mick's board and giving him a left hook to the side of the head. Owl Chapman tried to intervene on behalf of Michael but the beating continued. When Mick wrote to Joan requesting not more money to stay surfing in paradise, but enough money to buy a plane ticket, the letter referred to the beating and the possibility of him having to go to a Hawaiian hospital for a broken leg. Joan spent \$446 in early February to get Mick on a Qantas flight back home in time for the Queensland Titles. When Michael came back from Hawaii without being a contest winner and having been physically beaten, it was obvious to his girlfriend Patty that the mental health issues were reducing his capacity for sensitivity and accepting affection.

Chapter Nine, 'The winning machine', provides the details of how Mick dominated the Australian contest scene in 1974. There was a certain ferocity in his take what he wanted attitude which applied to surfing, drugs and

women. His contest technique was an unpredictable sequence of random oscillations between the physically intimidating verbal aggression directed at Rabbit prior to the 1974 Kirra Pro-Am and a now you see me, now you don't trademark move of suddenly appearing in the water at the Ripcurl/Amco Bells Beach, unleashing a devastating performance that flattened opponents before vanishing from sight.

Quietly ingesting drugs out of public view remained an integral component of the winning formula. As he became famous, even more women found him attractive but the way Mick dealt with women was blunt. A few decades before public debates about what constitutes consensus in intimate matters, anecdotal accounts suggests that creeping in through an open bedroom window was the Mick definition of foreplay.

Marital and relationship status had no meaning for him, unless it was the strategic option of having sex with the girlfriend of a competition rival as a means of acquiring a psychological edge. After losing the 1974 Queensland Titles to Rabbit, Mick took home \$4100 dollars after winning Bells and the 2SM Coca-Cola Surfabout in May 1974. In the mid-seventies that was enough for a house deposit but Mick paid back his mother for all of her support by buying her a new lounge suite. When Michael won the 1974 Australian Titles at Burleigh, one of his tube rides scored a perfect twenty out of twenty.

Having won Bells, the Surfabout and the Australian Titles, the shy Mick had reluctantly become a media figure: MP. When MP was 22 and had opened his own surf shop featuring his boards, a newspaper speculated that he would be the first surfer in Australia to become a millionaire. When the MP take-all attitude was applied to the cash register, it severely limited the opportunity for business partner Paul Hallas to grow the business. Joan

bought the business off him for a thousand dollars. Even with Joan as the boss, MP would disappear when the swell was running. It was the death knell of the business once MP routinely delegated the shaping of boards to relative newcomers Peter Harris and Craig Sands, sanding their names off the shaped blanks and replacing it with his name before the boards were glassed and sold as the genuine item.

When MP went to Hawaii for the third time, the massive swells hitting Kirra in late winter had given him plenty of time to prepare for the heavier conditions of Hawaii. Although his free surfing was very impressive, again he finished seventh in the Hang Ten contest at Sunset. At the same time, his rivals Rabbit and PT were starting to get some success.

Chapter Ten, 'The bells tolls', continues the account of the domination MP held over Australian surfing contests in 1975. He took first place and \$2000 at the Pa Bendall Memorial Contest. Tommy and MP had been sharing the same board, the Fangtail, all through the contest. But when they both ended up in the same semi-final, MP continued to ride the Fangtail. After losing the 1973 and 1974 Queensland Titles to Rabbit, MP unleashed the surprise appearance routine to get safely out the back of Kirra when Rabbit, PT and the other competitors were flattened by a fifteen foot closeout set as they were paddling out from Greenmount Point. Joan was becoming increasingly concerned about Michael so she drove Michael and Tommy down to Bells. Joan had booked a house for five days but when they arrived at Torquay, Michael refused to let her stay in the house. She was forced to sleep in the car because MP had organised a squad of people to roll joints in the house. When Michael and Tommy realised that there was no wood for the fire, they asked her to drive down to Anglesea buy them some firewood. The

phenomenal paddling speed of MP was one part of his victory at the 1975 Bells Beach contest. Although Shaun Tomson from South Africa had lead the first three rounds and was one thousand points ahead of MP, Michael caught more than 10 waves and won by a margin of two hundred points. MP won \$2000 but the fine print on the conditions of entry included a clause about the winner must attend the presentation ceremony to receive the prize money. When MP was nowhere to be found near the beachside television cameras, Rip Curl co-founder and MP sponsor Doug "Claw" Warbrick made an executive decision that angered the TV crew and rescheduled the ceremony for later that night at the Torquay Hotel. MP appeared for the presentation, removed his trademark sunglasses and made a articulate speech before going to a separate room for an extended TV interview. After his Bells Beach victory, he finished ninth in the 1975 Coke Surfabout and he was disqualified from the 1975 Australian Titles for arriving late. With these defeats, his paranoid sense of the conspiracies against him became stronger. Back at Coolongatta, the police success in reducing the availability of marijuana created a vacuum which allowed Cronulla surfers to introduce heroin to the Coolangatta crew. MP was a user but his discomfort with needles meant he was only snorting heroin, not shooting it up. In the heroin world, his name was Reg. A whole generation of surfers were affected by heroin, and that allowed the legends of MP, Rabbit and PT to live on because it was two generations of surfers later that athletes of the calibre of Mick Fanning, Joel Parkinson and Dean Morrison emerged. The conspicuous deaths of previously healthy young surfers caught the attention of the Coolangatta police and MP was obviously under their surveillance.

Chapter Eleven, 'Shadow man', charts the rise of the schizophrenic

behaviour of MP against his absence from the Hawaiian contests of the 1975-1976 winter. The Fred Hemmings invitation for MP to compete in the Smirnoff World Pro-Am was mistakenly sent by seemail and arrived one day after the contest began.

Australian surfers like Mark Richards, who MP had repeatedly crushed in competitions, were winning in Hawaii. MP went to Piha in New Zealand for the week starting 3 Jan 1976 and won \$1500 at the Amco/Radio Hauraki Pro. Back in Australia, he won the Kirra Pro-Am, finished eleventh at Bells Beach, earned \$762.50 for finishing second in the Allan Oke Memorial contest held on Phillip Island, finished eighth in the Surfabout, and won the Mattara in Newcastle. Emotionally he was becoming increasingly withdrawn at a time when his social relationships were being sacrificed because he developed a pattern of lying, cheating and stealing as a means of funding his \$40 a day heroin habit. Although MP was no longer the unstoppable force who could silently psych out his opponents with a glance, he was invited to compete in the Smirnoff World Pro-Am and the Duke Kahanamoku Invitational and progressed as far as the semi-final in both contests. The World Title won by Peter Townend, and although MP had not competed in all the events he finished in seventh place in the world.

Chapter Twelve, 'The human cannonball', outlines the various psychological tactics MP used in the lead-up to the Stubbies Surf Classic and his post-Stubbies antics with Hawaiian resident Owl Chapman as they drove to Phillip Island to compete in another contest. Before the Stubbies contest MP staged ferocious displays of the speed and power of his surfing to instil fear into other competitors who were hoping to take the \$5000 first prize. In both the Pa Bendall Memorial Contest and the Chris Douglas Memorial,

MP advanced to the finals but simply failed to appear, leaving Rabbit Bartholomew wondering what was going to happen in the Stubbies. (Another little note to Doherty: typo on page 236, Douglas is missing the g ...) Every morning of the contest, MP would free surf, taking off the deepest and riding waves that would stop other other riders. Once the contest heats started, MP would disappear for some exotic refreshment and quietly analyse the other competitors. The semi-final showdown between MP and Rabbit was too close to call and the decision in favour of MP remains controversial. After MP was called three times over the public address system to register at the official desk for the final, he was found almost comatose in his car. Once in the waves, the just-add-water magic came into play and MP beat Mark Richards. Joan drove Michael down the Gold Coast Highway to The Playroom at Tallebudgera for the presentation ceremony but when she went to get out of the car, Michael shouted at her to let her know she was not going to be attending. With the master of ceremonies being former wrestler and consummate showman Lord Tallyho Blears, the media impact of the Stubbies went mainstream. When MP was awarded the *Caltex-Telegraph* Sportsman of the Month award, he refused to attend the ceremony. (Quick question for Doherty: on page 243, should the *Caltex-Telegraph* award be the *Mirror-Caltex* award?) After the Stubbies, MP finished ninth in the Alan Oke Pro Comp contest and was rated second in the world. (A note to Doherty: MP is listed as finishing eighth in the Oke here http://www.surfresearch.com.au/0000h_contests.html) Despite his poor performance at Bells Beach and not competing in other world tour events, MP was still ranked seventeenth in the world in 1977. The top sixteen surfers were automatically invited to compete in all pro tour contests.

Chapter Thirteen, 'Chasing the dragon', outlines how drug use saw MP withdraw from competitive surfing when the international success of Rabbit, PT and Mark Richards was moving them towards winning World Titles. In September 1978, *Tracks* published a letter from MP explaining his lack of interest in winning another contest.

MP made the sort of surfing trips to the hills of Thailand that were a common cover for addicts wanting to smuggle pure heroin into Australia. Sometimes the trips were made without Joan even realizing where he had gone. MP apparently knew being a drug mule was not really his style but he wasn't smart enough to resist trying to post himself some heroin. Although his shaping skills was still a source of cash even after his own business had folded, an eight day shaping stint in Japan in July 1978 was his last international trip. MP was resorting to the common tricks of smack addicts looking to finance their next hit with petty theft. Police attention to the contents of the MP mailbox resulted in a conviction for two drug related offences and the fine of \$1400 was a welcome alternative to going to jail. When MP was a suspect in the fatal shooting of a man returning home after celebrating New Year's Eve, the back of his head was repeatedly introduced to a freely swinging phone book as part of the sophisticated interrogation techniques that had become popular up that way. MP had a 1966 Falcon that he had taken the liberty of registering in the name of his brother, so Tommy was liable for all of the speeding tickets MP was fond of collecting in his nomadic adventures. Although MP continued to surf in those quiet areas where it was easy enough to get heroin, the distant solitude of windsurfing, shaping windsurfers for Merimbula Sailboards and several attempts to detoxify also took more of his time and attention. There are

several accounts of the end of MP as a surfer. Some Sydney surfers tend to cite the May 1980 arrival of Simon Anderson at Dee Why Point with a new thruster board when MP was out being photographed by Peter Crawford as the beginning of the end. Despite surfing with all the intensity of his contest era performances, once he saw Simon Anderson on the rocks with the new thruster design, MP did not wait to catch a wave, he simply paddled in and disappeared. The last time Rabbit saw MP surf was in 1981 in big Kirra barrels, and although MP had lost his trademark cutback, he was still more than competent at hiding inside those Kirra tubes.

Chapter Fourteen, 'Four walls', records the movement of MP in and out of certain institutions as his behaviour became increasingly erratic. Although Joan happily married Don Watt in September 1981, their life was often disrupted by the mental health of Michael. On Good Friday 1983, the then-vegetarian Michael took all the meat from out of the refrigerator because it was contaminated and dumped it in the garbage before pouring tomato sauce over the meat. This was not an April Fool's Day prank and the police were called but a Tweed Hospital doctor released Michael because he had nothing wrong with him.

Joan disagreed. On 9 August 1983, Michael was asleep in his car when a siren from a police car traveling in the opposite direction woke him. Mistakenly thinking he was being pursued, Michael unleashed a formidable display of driving that finished with a roadblock of fifteen police vehicles across Storey Bridge. Michael was put in a holding cell overnight and transferred to Boggo Jail the following morning where he was held on remand until his 28 October trial. The 11 September 1983 edition of Brisbane's *Sunday Mail* featured Joan using the interview as an opportunity to publicly ask for

appropriate treatment for his mental health. Although Joan contacted her local political representative and her request was conveyed to the Prisons Minister who passed the matter onto the Justice Minister, Michael was sentenced to one year and nine months of imprisonment with hard labour. Finally on Christmas Day 1983 Michael was transferred to Wacol Prison Hospital. After being diagnosed as schizophrenic, Michael was prescribed Mellaril and voluntarily consented to a course of electric shock therapy. He was initially prescribed five treatments of electric shock therapy but this was stopped after the second treatment. After two years as a security patient at Wacol Prison Hospital, Joan and Don tried to meet the challenges having Michael live with them in between his moves from one institution to another: six weeks at a supervised care facility of Southport Hospital, one month of observation and treatment in Brisbane at the Princess Alexandra Hospital, three months at the Tweed River Valley Fellowship hostel in Cunningham Street (Tweeds Heads), down to Lismore to the Richmond Clinic of St. Vincent's Hospital, and two years at the Tweed River Valley Fellowship hostel in Sunshine Avenue (Tweeds Heads). Two days after Don Watts died of a heart attack in May 2000, the Fellowship hostel called Joan, asking her to take Michael home.

Chapter Fifteen, 'The second coming', records the details of the routines that structure life for Michael from 2000 onwards in South Tweed Heads. Doherty reports the progress Michael has made while living in a Housing Commission flat with Joan, including the occasional expression of concern for sibling health.

Joan accepted an April 1992 award for Michael down in Torquay, acknowledging the contribution MP made to surfing with his induction into

the Australian Surfing Hall of Fame. Doherty emphasizes the achievement of Michael actually appearing on stage, without the customary protection of his aviator sunglasses, after walking through a guard of honour at the 2003 Australian Surfing Hall of Fame. Joan and Dot worked with the Kirra Surfriders club to establish the MP Classic surf contest as a charity event in February 2002, raising almost \$10,000 for local facilities for people with mental health conditions. The friendships Michael had with Rabbit and PT are back in place and they are photographed together for the local paper for the first time in three decades. Michael is a regular spectator at the Quiksilver Pro, and the next generation of surfing champions from Coolangatta, Mick Fanning, Joel Parkinson and Dean Morrison, are big MP fans who benefit from having the occasional chat with him. These mild niceties of respect are the scale of success in the world of Michael Peterson. Although Doherty presents himself as someone fishing for a movie deal of his own, when he compares MP with two famous schizophrenics who had Hollywood present its version of their stories, pianist David Helfgott (*Shine*) and mathematician John Forbes Nash Jr (*A Beautiful Mind*), Doherty presents Michael Peterson as a modest hero. Michael Peterson is a victim who not only tenaciously survived mental sickness during a time when even health professionals could not make accurate diagnoses or offer effective courses of treatment, but he also fought to overcome a decade of drug addiction.

(It is testament to the balanced presentation of the MP life out of the water as being sustained by family that my postscript to what Doherty has written is that Joan deserves to have her own story written large too.)

**Biographer bio, or assessing the biographer by evaluating his style
and associates**

The frontispiece of the MP biography features a black and white photograph of Sean Doherty in three-quarter profile, looking away from the camera. Although the biography of the biographer is written in the third person, it is not hard to imagine that the first draft was written by Doherty, the editor of *Tracks* from 2000-2008, himself: he ‘contracted the salt water virus at an early age challenging the treacherous straighthanders of Burgess Beach.’ After leading with the metaphor of surfing as an infection, Doherty keeps the tongue-in-cheek momentum going. Waves are typically left handers (when the surfer is sitting in the surf facing towards the shore, a left hander breaks towards her left hand side) or right handers (when the surfer is sitting in the surf facing towards the shore, a right hander breaks towards her right hand side) so straighthanders are closeouts. But no ordinary closeouts, *treacherous* closeouts. A quick look at Burgess Beach on Google Earth suggests that this short stretch of sand is unlikely to be a swell magnet for anything decent, so again, this is the voice of white Australian maleness, self-confidently comfortable in his own self-deprecation. This neat blend of masculine self-criticism and humour suggests we are in the presence of a blokey sensibility, that roughly unshaven flavour we recognise from ‘the surfers’ bible’ *Tracks* magazine.

Tracks magazine has played a significant role in constructing the beach as the gendered space of privilege where men are authorized to be active and women are permitted to be seen. Men were expected to perform and it was the duty of women to watch the men in action as the women in turn were scrutinized by the gaze of white men. The role assigned to women was the

passive spectacle who actively spectates.

This gendered binary of do-er and view-ee is, like the beach itself, a zone of contestation. On the question of whether media representations of Australian surfing are inherently misogynistic, since being established in 1970, *Tracks* has had fourteen men as editors. No women. More recently, in March 2014 thirteen year old Olive Bowers wrote an open letter to the editor of *Tracks* complaining, not about exclusionary hiring practices, but about the consistent representation of women as partially clothed sex objects and not surfers: ‘These images create a culture in which boys, men and even girls reading your magazine will think that all girls are valued for is their appearance.’

I heard that when *Tracks* was being read by my father back in the seventies, the masthead copy included the phrase ‘Next best thing to being inside’. This is a surfing sentiment, pure and simple, because we all love getting tubed. By 2017, such global appeals to the joy of surfing have been seriously bloked and/or bogan-ed down: ‘Next best thing to a coupla tinnies’. There is a clear gender inflection at work here that alienates women readers, despite the response of *Tracks* editor Luke Kennedy to the March 2014 letter of Olive Bowers that outlined his contribution to raising the profile of women surfers through his written articles. In his defense, he argued that the influence of his mother as a Maroubra surfer was crucial to his learning to surf.

Although the Kennedy response spends five lines acknowledging the visual sexism in *Tracks* as a demographic and commercial inevitability, it is important to address its historical depth of sexualizing women and the extent to which the magazine encourages the women as eye-candy mentality as a means of generating advertising revenue from companies such as the

Brut line of men's grooming and fragrance products.

When Bowers wrote to Kennedy, three of the four sections of the Girls webpage were premised on sexualizing women: Vixens, Poster Girls, Miss Bintang and Videos. The Poster Girls page invites readers to 'WARM UP YOUR DESKTOP WITH THE HOTTEST BRUT MISS TRACKS POSTER GIRLS.'

The Miss Bintang section started in 2012 when *Tracks* publicized a beauty contest initially sponsored by Crazy Sexy Cool, Bintang and Vodka O: 'Each year bikini babes from around Australia battle it out to be crowned The Bintang Miss Sunset Coast winner.' Although the Girls page of the website now features article such as 'Yeah Chicks! Celebrating International Women's Day And The rise female surfing' (8 March 2016) and 'Sexy Surfer Girls What's wrong with the sexualization of female surfers' (2 November 2015), the bulk of the content is as Olive Bowers says 'semi-naked, non surfing girls.' For example, 'Bottoms Up This week's Femme is a homage to the female form.' (17 April 2013) What Bowers does not comment on is the dominance of white, blond women and the absence of women of colour or women with physical disabilities.

The first time a woman appeared on a *Tracks* cover was issue number 54. There were two images. At the top was a perfectly peeling right, a real decent size. Below that image of an unriden wave that left us free to imagine how we might ride such a wave was a photograph of a woman, facing away from the camera and wearing a bikini. As a tabloid sized magazine, *Tracks* was typically folded in half and put in the display rack of newsagents. The male readers would feel a little stoked from seeing the perfect wave on issue number 54, grab the magazine off the rack and feel something different as they unfolded the magazine and saw the bottom half of the cover.

The next time a woman appeared on the cover it was *Tracks* issue number 69 in 1976. It was the winner of the first professional surfing contest for women, the 1974 Smirnoff Pro champion Laura Blears walking down to the water in her bikini, carrying her Lightning Bolt surfboard. She looks happy and the diagonal composition of her body and her board forming an X across the cover captures and expresses her powerful presence.

On the cover of *Tracks* issue number 73, superimposed over the image of a kneeboarder was a black and white photograph framed from a low angle that emphasised the breasts of the woman. The clothing of her scanty top was, however, highlighted in red, as was the body copy identifying the theme of the issue: Bounce into Summer.

Tracks issue number 76 was the first time the cover image did not exploit women. It featured a colour picture of indigenous Hawaiians, including a woman in the foreground, wearing traditional dress.

In the first 84 issues of *Tracks*, despite the presence of women who were competent surfers on the professional circuit, there were no cover shots of women actually surfing. Further, the blokey flavour of the Bounce into Summer theme in *Tracks* issue number 73 is developed by the cover copy of *Tracks* issue number 83: 'WAVES AND WOODIES Tracks on Wheels: sin-bins, shaggin' wagons, four-be-fours, kombis, campers.' Sin-bins and shaggin' wagons reference sexual practices performed in beachside carpark. The four-be-fours is a man-speak neologism that derives from the manly trade of carpentry with its specialist measurements of beams of wood and is an alternative pronunciation of the standard four *by* fours.

Given the persistent pervasiveness of this gendered ideology, the Kennedy justification for the visual sexism in *Tracks* is underwhelming. Even women

of the generation of the mother of Kennedy would recognize the intended purpose of women in sexually suggestive poses on websites entitled Vixens, Poster Girls and Miss Bintang has nothing to do with surfing. The images posted on the Vixens, Poster Girls and Miss Bintang pages of the *Tracks* website are evidence of adolescent inadequacy, male insecurity and an inability to relate to young women as actual people in a manner that is not instrumental or exploitive.

More recently, however, there has been some improvement in how *Tracks* presents women. Of the twelve issues published in 2015, *Tracks* issue number 532 featured a cover shot of Steph Gilmore, six-time Women's ASP World Tour champion, doing a nice top turn on a righthander when she was surfing in Mexico.

The biography of the biographer continues with too much information about himself, and this Bounce into Summer predilection resonates with the cover of *Tracks* issue number 54: he 'plans to one day own his own island populated by a race of large-breasted Amazonian women.' He is, however, a domesticated family man who lives with 'his fiancée Simone (who's not so keen on the whole deal with the island), and his two daughters, Lux and Kiki.' Once his daughters get a little older, perhaps they won't be so keen on reading about Dad's proclivities.

Given that this assignment requires a critique the biography of a prominent white Australian sportsman with the option of making some comments about the relevant social practices, it should be noted that in the contested zone of gender relations at the beach, one of the classic symptoms of adolescent male insecurity is the excess of synonyms for young women (chicks, honeys, gunnies, whatever). Although these gendered elements of

the surfing lexicon are absent from the Doherty account, it is regrettably necessary to include the final paragraph of the Doherty Acknowledgements: ‘A special *muchos gracias* and all my love goes out to my foxy brown girl, Simone, for putting up with the spoilt-brat artist who took over my body at certain stages during the writing of this book.’ (Doherty, 2007, p. 331) Is this a ‘If thine eye offend thee’ scenario, or does the combination of possession (my), sexualization (foxy), ethnic profiling (brown) and the infantilization of a woman about to marry into a relationship with two daughters (girl) add up to an objectionable endorsement of unreconstructed masculinity?

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FEEDBACK

CultStud 312-2 Gendering the Nation

Representations of Gender in Sporting Literature: Mid Term Paper

Your attention to the cultural practices of surfing is compelling, well done. You have, however, to a certain extent, side-stepped the critique of the biography element of the assignment. Most students dealt with the world of the biography subject directly but your approach was to target the biographer by using the presence of *Tracks* on his CV. Your survey of visual sexism in publications like *Tracks* works as evidence that supports the 2014 Olive Bowers critique of that magazine. In fairness to the editors, their editorial stance has been progressive on the environment and other political issues. *Tracks* was anti-apartheid as early as 1971 and the South African government classified *Tracks* as a banned publication during the eighties. They must have been doing something right in terms of race but, as you suggest, they were on the wrong side of history when it came to gender, and they had no sense of humour about sexual orientation. This gendered

bias was amplified once *Tracks* went online.

Instead of taking the guilt by association approach, by which I mean your assigning blame to the magazine generally by not identifying how the magazine evolved with each editor, your attention to the visual tone of that magazine during the nine years when Doherty was actually editor perhaps would have been more powerful. At the least that analysis would have been explicitly relevant to this assignment, and you could have used the evidence you present in that section as warrants for your attention to the politics of his language of address in his Acknowledgements.

More importantly, it would have been fairer to him and it would have allowed you to do a more thorough interrogation of the Kennedy response to the Olive Bowers letter, calibrating the differences in visual sexism tendencies between the two editors. In the course of that comparison, you may have discovered something that allowed you to develop a line of critique of the biography itself ... (You did not mention the August 1976 issue of *Tracks* that featured Paul 'Smelly' Neilsen and Rabbit surfing nude and what sort of discourses were used to frame reader responses.)

The summary section of your paper is very thorough but you would be well advised to play closer attention to the maximum word limit. Having already seen the publicity for the sequel, I understand that one of the challenges facing Doherty was the impossibility of rendering the life of Michael Peterson in one volume but I did not expect that anxiety to be reproduced in your assignment. Too much summary results in too little analysis. Analysis should be supported by summary, not dominated by paraphrase.

Certain aspects of your paper were underwritten. Signposting, marking

the structure of your argument, is always appreciated. As a general note, perhaps a more explicit style of writing might be more appropriate. It is in your interest to occasionally unpack key concepts and identify their relevance to the question at hand.

In future, you should perhaps not assume too much of your reader's prior knowledge. Terms such as *larrikin* do evolve over time and as a consequence have several nuances, so it would be helpful to be clearer about which meaning is most relevant. When I asked a colleague to quickly flip through the MP bio and chose what she thought was an authentic *larrikin* moment in the Doherty narrative, she chose this anecdote told by Tommy:

Mick and I used to walk down the road from my grandmother's, and there used to be this Streets ice-cream factory. When no one was there on the weekend, Mick'd shove me through a window and I'd throw out the ice-creams, then pop out through this small door. We had it wired. Out behind our backyard there was a huge car-wrecking yard. My grandmother had a black lab-collie cross. His name was Bluey. Well Mick and I used to throw him over the fence into the wrecking yard, which had two big German shepherd guard dogs. We'd be sitting there and you could hear it was on over the fence. Bluey would crawl back under the fence panting with bark off him, and we'd say to him, "How'd you go Bluey? Did ya kick their arses?" (Doherty, 2007, p. 9)

As a Newtown feminist teaching Marxist history, the interest in property and class should be expected, but I never thought a vegetarian would think it was amusing to pit one pet against two guard dogs. Her sense of humour might have something to do with how she refuses to be defined by

stereotypes or it could be the idea of the underdog that she likes. Anyway, for me, although the Australian disrespect of English authority was a key element of the early conception of larrikin as a mode of behaviour for Australian men and women up to the end of the nineteenth century, the idea of practical jokes and playful revenge as both humour and a masculine performance of territory marking appear to be more relevant in the seventies. It is no secret that my preference is for pungent vulgarity and this tale reeks larrikin:

Vanya Sheraseff, one of the Peterson boys' best mates, would often come down from Brisbane and sleep in the shaping bay on a green army hammock. He'd bring his own resin, but would find that Mick and Tom had knocked it off as rent on the hammock: 'I used to get pissed off 'cause I tried to hide it from 'em. Anyway, I got fed up with it, so I did a shit in a tin and wrote "full of resin" on the lid, knowing Tommy wouldn't be able to resist it. Next thing Tommy's down there and he pulls out this tin and you just heard this bloodcurdling scream ... the smell alone nearly blew the house off its stumps.' (Doherty, 2007, p. 36)

Although you critique gendered practices of representation in surfing publications and the margins of the biography, namely its Author's Note and Acknowledgements, you could have made some acknowledgement of the tone of the writing of the biography as doing more than just being blokey. Given that you are a surfer, I was surprised that you didn't utilize the insights of DC Green to position the writing of Doherty in the wider traditions of surf journalism and explore how that defines the range of how surfing is represented. Speaking in Indonesia in 2001, DC Green explains

why he admired the early writing of Phil Jarratt:

To me Jarratt was the epitome of the naughty Australian larrikin. The story he did for *Tracks* on the first Stubbies contest was a lurid look behind the scenes of professional surfing, full of sex, drugs, rock ‘n’ roll and overeating, with Jarratt’s memory cells scattered across the pages.

In years since, a lot of people have tried to pull that sort of gonzo off again, but most have done it gratuitously, trying to get away with unrestrained reference to booze and drugs and that sort of thing without its working towards a certain theme. But incredible debauchery was what the Stubbies was all about, and Jarratt captured that brilliantly.

Now it’s like there are two styles of surf journalism – an American style and an Australian style. The Australian style’s much looser and more gonzo, while the American style strives towards a *watermanly*, soulful, ‘what-is-the-true-meaning-of-surfing?’ sort of thing. And I guess watermanliness is good to a point, but when you’ve got a whole magazine full of it, sometimes you want to reach for the ralph bucket. Surfing’s not *just* about spiritualism and soulfulness and respecting nature and other people. It’s also about naughtiness and uncouthness and recklessness. (Alex Leonard, ‘The Interview: DC Green’, unpaginated pdf)

Clearly, there is no shortage of such misconduct reported in the Doherty biography. If you had taken one or two examples of close reading as analysis, you could have easily shown how Doherty was catering to the tastes of his intended subcultural audience of men by taking some of the rough edges off

gonzo writing and making a quick shout out to the US/Canadian comedy duo who built their routines around exotic refreshment:

South Tweed at the time was loose collection of houses and acreages. And although the house was small, the backyard was a paddock with long grass. Within weeks of the Peterson boys moving back in with their mother, there was plenty more 'foliage' growing in the back paddock. Cheech and Chong National Park was soon declared open (just not to the public.) As canny as Mick and Tommy thought they were, there was no way they were going to get away with it for long ... and it wasn't the local coppers they were worrying about. ... If Joan was in a blue uniform she would have made the streets of Coolangatta drug-free within a week. ... [S]he could smell a lit joint inside a lead safe on the bottom of the ocean. (Doherty, 2007, pp. 89, 301)

Where would Australian surf journalism be without the occasional and modest application of hyperbole, like that final sentence?

You could have also paid more attention to the literature inside the field of surfing. The Tim Baker critique of editors who allow their surfing magazines to have more than 50% advertising is well known, and it would have been useful for your analysis of visual sexism in *Tracks* because it emphasizes how the tyranny of the visual dominates the written articles. This is the assumption behind his praise of photographers:

Yet it is their art that provides the basic building block of the surf media and the entire industry marketing machine. That is - the memorable image. It is what matters most about surf magazines and what etches itself most deeply in our memory banks, what inspires us

to travel or want to surf better or to try and live adventurous lives.
(Tim Baker, 'An Open Letter to the Surf Magazine Editors of the
World', 21 September 2010)

This argument for the centrality of the visual is what motivates the Olive Bowers critique.

Given your general interest in the formation of the category of gender, in terms of critiquing the biography, one possible angle you could have taken with the narrative was to address how Doherty presents sexual relationships. Chapter 4 would be an obvious starting point to examine his strategies of narrative framing. Consider the story of Robbie Gill:

The big thing about going out with Michael was watching the girls trying to pick him up. This one time we were down at The Patch and I said to Tommy, "Look over my left shoulder. Is that girl over there in front of Michael lifting up her skirt?" And Tommy looks over and goes, "Yeah, she's got somethin' for Mick, I think. She's lifting her skirt up with no reggies on." He's got sheilas flocking off him everywhere, and there's me and Tommy ... the ugly ducklings.
(Doherty, 2007, p. 58)

Given your obvious intention to identify a history of gendered bias in *Tracks* magazine, I am surprised that you did not bring that momentum to bear on material like this in the biography narrative itself. (Most students are too young to understand the contracted rhyming slang that refers to a seventies TV personality, Reg Grundy, as a synonym for undies.)

Closely reading the paragraph that starts 'Girls were queuing up to sleep with him' would be a useful frame for identifying the absence of legal expressions (unlawful entry, positive consent, etc) in the following

paragraph where Doherty renders the account of Kris Booth, when suddenly confronted by the presence of an unknown man waking her, using the repetition of “Fuck off” and “Get out” as a retort to MP whispering “Come on, it’ll be great ... come on, you want me ... come on” (Doherty, 2007, p. 158).

Another possible point of gender critique could have been the emotional, social and physical costs to young men of being an insider member of the surfing subculture. On the costs of associated with masculinity in team sports, the relevant course reading is Eric Anderson, ‘“I Used to Think Women Were Weak”: Orthodox Masculinity, Gender Segregation, and Sport’, *Sociological Forum*, vol. 23, no. 2 (2008), pp. 257-280.

You could have argued that the conventional pressures to conform to Australian masculine norms that structure gender relations as hierarchical, with masculinity being privileged over femininity, and the tendency among men to rank themselves are all intensified by beach homosociality. In the hierarchical world of coastal masculinities, coercion and competition can become lethal forces that young men wield against themselves. Billy Grant explains the logical premises of the flock mentality that resulted in a generation of Coolangatta surfers being consumed by heroin: First, MP is cool. Second, MP does smack. Therefore, smack is cool. So let’s do what MP does ... (Doherty, 2007, p. 206)

The following comment from Rabbit may have been useful if you were interested in arguing that the Australian surfing subculture occasionally fell victim to its own demands for masculine excess.

Surfers as a tribe were total test pilots, 'cause we were living the dream of freedom. We were the most adventurous and the most

macho and were coming in after six hours a day of surfing thinking we were doing better than the guys sitting in the pub for six hours a day. We thought we were bulletproof and there was no way this shit could hurt us. We were so wrong. (Doherty, 2007, p. 210)

Recollections of this sort would be important if you were to examine how the central business of Australian surfing subculture is the creation of different types of men, as a precursor to ranking these cultural distinctions in terms of their authenticity as coastal masculinity and outlining the costs that insider membership demands.

Requiem for Michael Peterson (1952-2012): the persistence of MP

Nothing will be beautiful that does not suggest the existence of an ideal, superterrestrial order—harmonious and logical—that, as if stained by an original sin, also possesses the drop of poison, the hint of incoherence, the grain of sand that derails the whole system. Or, conversely, only this sediment or this poison will be beautiful, provided a drop of the ideal illuminates it. Thus beauty—by definition a function of an autodestruction and a self-renewal—will sometimes appear as tranquility haunted by a potential storm, and sometimes as a frenzy that checks itself and seeks to contain the inner tempest behind an impassive mask.¹⁷

When the ashes of Michael Peterson were returned to the waters of Kirra in a memorial paddle-out attended by hundreds of surfers on 16 April 2012, his mother Joan said 'He is the blueprint of surfing and he has left his print behind.' Members of the family made speeches and the words of Joan were read out at the memorial service officiated over by the local Catholic

priest: 'Many people will have hoped in their hearts that Michael will return to his beloved Kirra, well, today he has. To my son who rode Snapper, Rainbow Bay, Greenmount and his favourite Kirra, we salute you. God bless and rest in peace, gone surfing.' Rabbit also spoke: 'You know, when Michael came into surfing in this town, I mean, he really did put the town on the map by being Coolangatta's first Australian Champion surfer. And, ah, Michael really became the King of Kirra there on these amazing surfboards coming out of the Joe Larkin factory.'¹⁸

On 28 February 2014, Joan, Tommy and Gold Coast Mayor Tom Tate unveiled the Michael Peterson Memorial at the end of the Kirra groyne.¹⁹ Recognizing that MP was an important presence in the Bring Back Kirra campaign, the unveiling also marked the council intention to restore Kirra Groyne to its 1972 length. Sculptor Phillip Piperides had rendered Kirra as a left breaking wave and had Michael surfing left foot forward. Joan laughed it off with 'Well I guess in heaven they're all goofies!'²⁰ The success of the Bring Back Kirra campaign was consolidated on 8 March 2016, when 16 kilometres of coastline from Burleigh Heads to Snapper Rocks was officially designated as a World Surfing Reserve (WSR) by Mayor Tom Tate. After the unveiling, the plaque was installed opposite the anatomically correct, right foot forward, Michael Peterson monument.²¹

The persistence of Michael Peterson is not contained by these official endorsements and material remnants which weave the MP narrative into wider discourses of urban development and global leisure practices. One summary of the ultimate Michael Peterson achievement might be the Rabbit acknowledgement that 'He's a survivor, man, a full on survivor.'²² For Australian surfers of that generation where the default gender of surfers

was almost a collective male enclave, the presence of MP was a key marker in the landscape of our movement into manhood, our individual growth into surfing competence and the wider professionalization of what we loved doing best.

In the pre-internet era, our imagination and identification with heroes enshrined by the then infant surfing media were the cutting edge of technologies of the grommet self. With mainstream corporate marketers pimping the joy of riding waves, more people from demographics outside the category of single, able-bodied young men are learning to surf, SUP and kitesurf. Over the long term, the competitive pressures on access to quality waves will increase and this anxiety is feeding into a demand for adventure and discovery that is driving the development of surfing as cultural tourism.²³

The virtual arena of SNS is another sphere that intensifies expectation of performance as even amateur surfers increasingly document themselves with wearable and water-resistant cameras of increasing sophistication.²⁴ Today boys armed with the latest and smallest toys refine their self-scrutiny of the surfing self, as they are also subject to real time scrutiny of their surfing self by surfing others. For decades during the twentieth century, these two sets of the male gaze have been the constants of being in the water at many breaks around the world. In the intersection of these two vectors, the norms, practices and ideals of coastal masculinities have been shaped. With the rise of various forms of men's movements, moments of beach conflict are being recognized as opportunities to establish healthy mentoring relationships. There is a modest but slowly growing awareness that the physical, emotional and social costs of buying into aggressive styles

of localism is a dysfunctional mode of coastal masculinity.

In the same way that Australian surfers born in the fifties and sixties were socialized into a form of masculinity that is gradually being reconstructed in the interests of including a more accepting tolerance as a marker of masculine confidence, twenty-first century surfers have internalized their compact devices to the extent that it shapes how they interact with waves. The edited outcomes of these self-fashionings are then available online. These days the possibility of around the clock consumption of these representations of your surfing self is a fact of online life. This is the panopticon of surfing.

MP anticipated this excess of visual pressure that has somehow now become part of the pleasures of the surfing economy. In the age before VHS, he had a history of not attending surfing films. The charm of tube riding for MP was 'no one can see me.'²⁵

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This paper is the second in an ongoing series addressing coastal masculinities. The first paper, 'Maritime masculinities: a localized history of waterman discourse' was a largely auto-ethnographical reflection on the waterman discourse in eastern Australia from the seventies onwards. The following paper addresses how *A Life* by Malcolm Knox draws on and extends the Doherty biography of Michael Peterson.

Endnotes

¹ Although the first edition was published in 2004, this paper was written while referring to the 2007 edition.

Sean Doherty, *MP: The Life of Michael Peterson*, (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2007).

This paper has fictocritical elements. While the bodies of work of Stephen Muecke and Michael Taussig are important for me as general points of orientation, the 2005 concern of Katrina Schlunke with narrative densities as a means of freeing the position of the author from a single perspective and the multiple genres of 2007 'Slight Anthropologies' of Gabrielle Lorraine Fletcher are more specifically relevant to this project.

Gabrielle Loraine Fletcher, 'Slight Anthropologies', *Cultural Studies Review*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2007), pp. 1-19.

Stephen Muecke, *No Road (bitumen all the way)*, (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1997).

Stephen Muecke, *Joe in the Andamans and other fictocritical stories* (Sydney: Local Consumption Publications, 2008).

Katrina M. Schlunke, *Bluff Rock: Autobiography of a Massacre* (Fremantle: Fremantle Press, 2005), pp. xi-xii: 'Narratives of narratives, narratives on narratives and narrator and narrative co-mingling so that there is no single home for the writing self.'

Michael Taussig, *The Magic of the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,

1977).

- ² For the shift from the Australian bush to the beach as the site privileging white masculinity, see Colleen McGloin, 'Surfing nation(s) - Surfing country(s)', PhD thesis, School of Social Sciences, Media and Communications, University of Wollongong (2005).

<http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/316>

For a survey of hedonism in the national character, see Douglas Booth, *Australian Beach Cultures: The History of Sun, Sand and Surf* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012).

For the evolution of beach-going practices from the nineteenth century conduct of promenading to the twentieth century masculinization of the white gaze in lifesaving movement, see Cameron White, 'Representing the Nation: Australian Masculinity on the Beach at Cronulla', in Selvaraj Velayutham and Amanda Wise (eds), *Everyday Multiculturalism Conference Proceedings*, Macquarie University 28-29 September 2006, (Sydney: Centre for Research on Social Inclusion, Macquarie University, 2007), pp. 3-6.

http://www.crsi.mq.edu.au/publications/conference_proceedings/

For the tension between the fun and games of healthy blokes doing community service and the authoritarian structure and military-styled sense of duty that framed those homosocial practices, see Garry Browne O'Byrne, 'Making the Legend Coogee Surf Life Saving Club in the 1950s', *Australian Quarterly*, vol. 78, no. 6 (2006), pp. 13-21, 40.

- ³ Aileen Moreton-Robinson offers an indigenous account of how the beach figures in the white imaginary: 'The production of the beach as a white possession is both fantasy and reality within the Australian imagination and is tied to a beach culture encompassing pleasure, leisure, and national pride that developed during modernity through the embodied performance of white masculinity.' (Moreton-Robinson, 2015, p. 46)

Colleen McGloin, 'Aboriginal surfing: reinstating culture and country', *International Journal of the Humanities*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2006), pp. 93-99.

Mark Thornley, 'Surfing the Dreamtime with Australia's Vibe Tribe', in Mark Thornley, Veda Dante and Peter Wilson (eds.), *Action Guide: Surfing Australia* (Clarendon: Tuttle Publishing, 2003), pp. 327-343.

On the wider social challenges to received notions of masculinity from the 1970s, onwards see the 2007 PhD thesis of Spase Karoski, p. 5: 'These include the emergence of the women's movement and increased participation of women in the workforce, new technological developments and changes in industrial relations as well as changes to the Family Law Act.'

Spase Karoski, 'Men on the move: the politics of the men's movement', PhD thesis, School of Social Sciences, Media and Communication, University of Wollongong Thesis Collection, (2007).

<http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/687>

For an American account of the foundational mythology of surfing as socially rebellious, including the mischief between Californian surfers and US Marines, see Tanis Thorne, 'Legends of the Surfer Subculture: Part One', *Western Folklore*, vol. 35, no. 3 (1976a), pp. 209-217.

Tanis Thorne, 'Legends of the Surfer Subculture: Part Two', *Western Folklore*, vol. 35, no. 4 (1976b), pp. 270-280.

For an alternative to the surfers as deadbeats trope, it is time to acknowledge that surfing was used as cultural diplomacy by Australian surfer Peter Drouyn in China in 1985. Australian surfer Rob DeBelle wrote a criticism of El Salvador that *Tracks* published in 1977, and in 1986 the then two time world champion Australian Tom Carroll boycotted South African surfing contests. See Scott Laderman, 'Reds, Revolutionaries, and Racists: Surfing, Travel, and Diplomacy in the Reagan Era', in Heather L. Dichter and Andrew L. Johns (eds) *Diplomatic Games: Sport, Statecraft, and International Relations since 1945* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), pp. 409-430.

⁴ Peter Westwick and Peter Neushul, *The World in the Curl: An Unconventional History of Surfing* (New York: Crown/Archetype, 2013). More concisely, see Casey Rentz: 'During the second world war, the Germans had a secret formula

for fibreglass – used to make fast, lightweight boats – which British intelligence stole and handed on to American manufacturers. By the 1960s, fibreglass and its ingredients had been co-opted to make things like surfboards, cars and artworks.’

‘Fiddling with fibreglass’, *New Scientist*, 14 September 2011

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg21128302-100-fiddling-with-fibreglass/>

- ⁵ For an account of the pleasures of longboard life, Gordon Waitt and Ryan Frazer, ‘“The vibe” and “the glide”: surfing through the voices of longboarders’, *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 36, no. 3 (2012), pp. 327-343.

For an analysis of how the professionalization of surfing was premised on opposing the inherently uselessness of surfing to material economies of accumulation because of its anti-authoritarian subculture, see Kevin Fisher, ‘Economies of Loss and Questions of Style in Contemporary Surf Subcultures’, *Junctures*, no. 4 (2005), pp. 13-21.

For an analysis of the economic value of surfing to the Gold Coast economy, see N. Lazarow, ‘Using Observed Market Expenditure to Estimate the Value of Recreational Surfing to the Gold Coast, Australia’, *Journal of Coastal Research*, Special Issue no. 56, Proceedings of the 10th International Coastal Symposium ICS 2009, vol. II (2009), pp. 1130-1134.

For a shaper’s perspective on shortboard development, see Bob McTavish, *Stoked!* (Sydney: Hyams Publishing, 2009) and his *More stoked!* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2013).

- ⁶ For an analysis of soul surfing discourse as highlighting the performance aspects of surfing as art and spiritual activity, see Bron Taylor, ‘Surfing into Spirituality and a New, Aquatic Nature Religion’, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, vol. 75, no. 4 (2007), pp. 923- 951. For an account of how territorial and aggressively misogynistic Australian surfers can be, refer to Colleen McGloin, ‘Surfing nation (s) - Surfing country(s)’, PhD thesis, School of Social Sciences, Media and Communications, University of Wollongong (2005).

<http://ro.uow.edu.au/theses/316>

For a nuanced presentation of broader Australian national identity in short

fiction and photography as a transformation that includes an acknowledgement of indigeneity, see Adam Shoemaker, *A sea change: Australian writing and photography* (Sydney: Sydney Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games, 1998).

⁷ For an account of the verbal pleasures of male bonding between sessions, see Gordon Waitt and Andrew Warren, ' "Talking shit over a brew after a good session with your mates": surfing, space and masculinity', *Australian Geographer*, vol. 39, no. 3 (2008), pp. 353-365.

⁸ For an account of the physics of surfing, see Takeshi Sugimoto, 'How to Ride a Wave: Mechanics of Surfing', *SIAM Review*, vol. 40, no. 2 (1998), pp. 341-343. For a more corporeal account, see Clifton Evers, 'How to surf', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, vol. 30, no. 3. (2006), pp. 229-243. For an account of the intimate pleasures of the places where MP surfed, see Clifton Evers, "'The Point": surfing, geography and a sensual life of men and masculinity on the Gold Coast, Australia', *Social and Cultural Geography*, vol. 10, no. 8 (2009), pp. 893-908. For a technical assessment of waves, including Burleigh and Kirra, that accounts for their difficulty, see James A. Hutt, Kerry P. Black and Shaw T. Mead, 'Classification of Surf Breaks in Relation to Surfing Skill', *Journal of Coastal Research*, Special Issue (Natural and Artificial Reefs for Surfing and Coastal Protection), no. 29 (2001), pp. 66-81.

⁹ These responses were from that time of innocence when even if we could have read about Michael Peterson snorting smack, we would have had no real idea of how that was different from Tommy Peterson shooting up.

¹⁰ These issues of how to establish a healthy relationship with oneself and others are thoroughly addressed by Clifton Evers, *Notes for a Young Surfer* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2010).

¹¹ Doherty, 2007, p. xii.

¹² At Ballina High School in the late seventies, there were the Boys and the Poofs. The Boys all surfed. Anyone boy who did not surf was automatically a Poof, regardless of his sexual orientation. The Boys versus the Poofs was a convenient way to organize lunchtime water fights at school. For a more complex taxonomy of secondary masculinities in Perth, see Wayne Martino, 'Cool Boys', 'Party Animals', 'Squids' and

'Poofters': Interrogating the Dynamics and Politics of Adolescent Masculinities in School', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, vol. 20, no. 2 (1999), pp. 239-263.

Although there were a few Ballina High schoolgirls who rode bodyboards in the mid-seventies, in our year there was one girl who competently rode a shortboard and was an accomplished competitive swimmer. My favourite memory of Dale as a surfer was one day out at Lennox Point. It was a solid six foot easy, and I was shitting tacks every time a set came through. Dale was behind me as I was scratching my wave to safety and although she would barely punch through the lip of each set wave, she would always smile as the offshore spray rained down as if to say 'Well, made it through that one!' No matter how many times I saw the contrast between my panic and her ease, my dominant emotion in big waves was fear.

¹³ 'Female voices are notoriously rare and difficult to capture in surfing histories, magazines, films, photographs, and other media. ... My own blog, *Making Friends with the Neighbours*, is female-focused and completely within my editorial control in terms of what is published and whether or not comments are moderated. The aim of the site was to build a body of resources about women's surfing and to publish writing that engages with some of the experiences women have in surfing, as well as the issues they face.' Rebecca Olive, 'Interactivity, Blogs, and the Ethics of Doing Sport History', in Gary Osmond and Murray G. Phillips (eds), *Sport History in the Digital Era* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2015), p. 170. For an account of the networks and experiences of American women who surf, see Krista Comer, *Surfer Girls in the New World Order* (Durham and London: Duke University Press: 2010).

Douglas Booth, 'From Bikinis to Boardshorts: *Wahines* and the Paradoxes of Surfing Culture', *Journal of Sport History*, vol. 28, no. 1 (2001), pp. 3-22.

Rebecca Olive, '“Making friends with the neighbours”: Blogging as a research method', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, no. 16 (2013), pp. 71-84.

Rebecca Olive has also written about the lack of representation of women in surf publications "The Ninth Wave—No Girls Allowed?" <http://kurungabaa.net/2011/03/21/the-ninth-wave-no-girls-allowed> For changes in the reader

demographic of surfing magazines in Australia, see Margaret Henderson, 'A shifting line up: men, women, and *Tracks* surfing magazine', *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, vol. 15, no. 3 (2001), pp. 319-332.

For an example of how the gender critique of *Tracks* surfing magazine was reported in mainstream print media, see <http://www.smh.com.au/sport/olive-bowers-hits-out-at-surfer-sexism-20140329-35qei.html>

¹⁴ For an account of the complex manoeuvres performed in the service of white homosociality, ranging from hyper-rigid (homophobic) to hyper-fluid (operating outside a natural hetero/homo binary), see Chapter 4, entitled 'Average Dudes, Casual Encounters: White Homosociality and Heterosexual Authenticity', in Jane Ward, *Not Gay: Sex between Straight White Men* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), pp. 119-152.

¹⁵ For a mapping of the intolerances of localism, see Clifton Evers, 'Locals only!', in Selvaraj Velayutham and Amanda Wise (eds), *Everyday Multiculturalism Conference Proceedings*, Macquarie University 28-29 September 2006 (Sydney: Centre for Research on Social Inclusion, Macquarie University, 2007). http://www.crsi.mq.edu.au/publications/conference_proceedings/

For an account of the insider knowledges of locals, see Clifton Evers, 'The Cronulla race riots: safety maps on an Australian beach', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 107, no. 2 (2008), pp. 411-429.

For an account of how urban sprawl, increasing population pressures, and gentrification are affecting long time resident-surfers in Coastal City (SoCal), see Christopher T. Daskalos, 'Locals Only! The Impact of Modernity on a Local Surfing Context', *Sociological Perspectives*, vol. 50, no. 1 (2007), pp. 155-173. For a documentary overview of how surfers from Australia and South Africa were implicated in the early efforts to professionalize surfing, see Jeremy Gosch, (director), *Bustin' down the door* (Los Angeles: Fresh and Smoked, 2009).

¹⁶ Given that the history of Australian shortboard surfing in the seventies and the eighties is a somewhat acquired taste, this lengthy summary of the Michael Peterson biography is included for the benefit of readers unfamiliar with details of that period

and the content of the Doherty publication. Readers who know something of the MP tale could easily read down as far as the beginning of the fifteen chapter summaries in the 'Plot as summary: the devil is in the details' section, before continuing to read from the 'Biographer bio, or assessing the biographer by evaluating his style and associates' section.

¹⁷ The quotation continues: 'But beauty always will occur between these two poles acting as living forces: on the one hand (the right one) there will be the element of immortal loveliness, sovereign, sculpted; on the other (the left hand)—on misfortune's side—will be the sinister element, with the accident, and sin. Like all mythic translations of our inner structure that move us because they enlighten us about ourselves at the same time that they resolve our contradictions in one single accord, beauty will take on the allure in theoretical reflections not so much of a conflagration as of ambiguous strife, an entangling, or better, a tangency—the coupling of the straight line and the curve, the marriage of the rule and its exception. However, this very figure of tangency will turn out to be only an ideal limit, never actually reached, and all aesthetic emotion—or approximation of beauty—ultimately grafts itself onto the blank represented by the sinister element in its most elevated form: obligatory incompleteness, void which we seek in vain to fill, gap opened onto our perdition.' Michel Leiris and Ann Smock, 'The Bullfight as Mirror', *October*, vol. 63 (1993), p. 26.

¹⁸ Audio transcript from 'MP Paddle Out Memorial Day' uploaded by Reg Prasad
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0ovP6uPvH4>

¹⁹ 'Michael Peterson Memorial',
<http://www.goldcoast.qld.gov.au/the-goldcoast/michael-peterson-memorial-21204.html>

²⁰ Luke Kennedy, 'Michael Peterson rides switch-foot at Kirra Lefts',
<http://www.tracksmag.com.au/news/mp-memorial-424555>
Kirra is world famous as a right hand point break and MP rides natural (left foot forward) not goofy (right foot forward).

²¹ Save The Waves Coalition, 'Gold Coast Officially Designated as 8th World Surfing Reserve',

<http://www.savethewaves.org/gold-coast-officially-dedicated-as-8th-world-surfing-reserve/>

²² Doherty, 2007, p. 316.

²³ Carl Cater and Paul Cloke, 'Bodies in Action: The Performativity of Adventure Tourism', *Anthropology Today*, vol. 23, no. 6 (2007), pp. 13-16.

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Patrícia Reis and João Paulo Jorge, 'Surf tourism: segmentation by motivation and destination choice', *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Tourism Recreation*, 7th to 9th November 2012, (Peniche: ESTM, 2012).

²⁴ Clifton Evers, 'Masculinity, sport and mobile phones: A case study of surfing', in Gerard Goggin and Larissa Hjorth (eds), *Routledge Companion to Mobile Media* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 375-384.

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²⁵ Doherty, 2007, p. 71.