

# men | who surf

CLIFTON EVERS

There are *dynamic features*: if moving forward, climbing, and descending are dynamisms of conceptual personae, then leaping like Kierkegaard, dancing like Nietzsche, and diving like Melville are others for philosophical athletes irreducible to one another. And if today our sports are completely changing, if the old energy-producing activities are giving way to exercises that, on the contrary, insert themselves on existing energetic networks, this is not just a change in type but yet other dynamic features that enter a thought that ‘slides’ with new substances of being, with wave or snow, and turn the thinker into a sort of surfer as conceptual persona: we renounce then the energetic value of the sporting type in order to pick out the pure dynamic difference expressed in a new conceptual persona.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*<sup>1</sup>

The swell is up today as a low-pressure system hisses and spins off New Zealand. The swell has a fair bit of east in it and the wind is ... well there is no wind. After a frustrating drive through traffic—why can’t people understand the surf is up?—I get to Maroubra. Maroubra is one of Sydney’s city beaches. It picks up plenty of swell and even today has a country town vibe about it—although this is changing with increasing gentrification. I am at the southern end of the beach. The swells are stretched out to the horizon. It is a gunmetal grey morning so only a few others stand on the dunes nearby, their jumper hoods pulled over their heads. I shiver from cold and anticipation. Hope the surf is good. The reef off the headland is doing a fair impersonation of a point break as waves peel down its flanks. Looks good. Some twist and hollow out into barrels. Everyone is keen to get one of those.

The sound of a V8 engine echoes through the car park behind us. It's the 'Bra Boys', local boys who have grown up in the area.<sup>2</sup> This is a working-class district that has a reputation for boys who work hard, play hard and can handle themselves (in other words, fight). I am not a local. The Bra Boys step to the middle of the line of surfers on the sand dune. Feet shuffle away. Eyes stay fixed on the surf with the occasional glance at the locals. I go back to my car to get my board. I make sure I lock the car.

Out the back I pick off a few waves. The waves get larger as the swell size and frequency increases. The Bra Boys are picking off most of the good waves. Locals get priority. Paddling for a wave, I get called off by a local, but I take-off anyway. Kicking off at the end of the wave, I stroke towards the take-off area. He paddles past me staring into my eyes. I sit up on my board, grab the rails, tense, and prepare for a possible confrontation. Nothing eventuates. My body relaxes. I take off on another wave and contort my body to fit inside one of those barrels. Dragging my hand and pumping my legs I exit smoothly. A few nods of approval. I paddle with confidence back into the line-up. My next surf session here should be easier. I had given respect by not paddling to the inside take-off position. But I had disrespected a local by taking off on a wave he wanted. Then the respect had shifted again because of my ability. Respect given equals respect gained, but it is not as simple. In the car park, I strip off my rubber wetsuit, limbs askew and without concern for nudity. Later I head down the coast for a relaxed afternoon surf. City surfing involves too many rules and is too much hassle. It's easier to surf alone.

As a surfer, I experience and participate with countless rituals, myths, legends, laws, body modifications, feelings and ideas. Riding a wave is more than an act. To 'become-surfer' is to undergo a complex lived experience of surging relations. My analysis of surfing in this article shows how male bodies surf with tidal flows of relations.<sup>3</sup> That is, how they reckon with varying, confusing, and moving experiences. I want to provide a mapping of male surfing bodies whereby fibreglass meshes with flesh, wax, fear, excitement, economics, sweat, politics, erotica and representations. I map masculinity fuelled by feelings of moving, relational and paddling bodies.

Male surfing bodies are multiple, physical, social and dynamic experiences of activity. Surfers from different regions develop different styles. Gold Coast surfers paddle with powerful strokes and have a relaxed posture when riding. They languidly move with the warm water and the long peeling point waves of Burleigh Heads, Kirra and Currumbin. Bodies are dark brown and hair is lightened from the tropical sun, chests are broad from paddling against the ferocious rips. Surfers saunter in board shorts and thongs with arms hanging loosely. I'm one of the second and third generation 'Goldie' surfers. We are deeply informed and may even have inherited affective bodies attuned to surfing. By affective I am referring to a felt process of connection.<sup>4</sup> Watch a 'born-and-bred Goldie boy' make adjustments to the board



by pushing down of his front foot and leaning on the inside rail so it bites into the wave face as he slides about inside a barrel. You will see him mould his body to fit as if it is instinctive—the waves of this region are very hollow and a lot of time is spent in the water ‘barrel-riding’.

The ways our bodies connect and do things varies among societies, subcultures, and so on.<sup>5</sup> And the techniques we use involve the movement of meaning, power, memory, waves, feelings and discourses. Affective bodies are bodies where we do not know what they can do, they are bodies as multiple, in various states of locomotion, and as feeling—bodies surfing. The Hawaiian surfer Duke Kahanamoku was aware of what surfing bodies could reveal when he claimed that, ‘Observing good surfers is an excellent way to get the hang of things. Study their stance, their foot movement and the general way in which they maintain balance. Watch their coordination, their rhythm, their quick anticipating.’<sup>6</sup> This mapping that registers male surfing bodies as tidal flows of relations offers the opportunity for me to become familiar with masculinity as movement and not as some stable inner essence.<sup>7</sup> This can affect how waves of masculinity come to be lived, what we think of as the male surfer’s body, what feelings are involved with surfing, and how that might help us to figure the ways masculinity is done. Such an approach to mapping masculinity refers to ebbing, vague and passing events that demonstrate a conceptual project that might help to distinguish the possibility (mirroring Deleuze and Guattari’s surfing persona) of a dynamic persona, of a male body that moves and surfs like thought.<sup>8</sup>

The importance of this sort of mapping is the way it moves away from defining male bodies and attempting to ‘fix’ masculinity, as other studies have attempted to do.<sup>9</sup> Such restitutive

masculinity politics do not allow for the diverse practices of masculinity. That is, such politics engages in a panoramic process of defining and positioning male bodies in terms of types of 'masculinities'. This process hides the movement, variation and felt bodies that live passages of masculinity. I do not offer a politics of progression. Rather, what I aim to introduce is a conceptual mapping that can help us negotiate the movement of masculinity as it is done, and recognise ongoing assemblage. Movement is very important to my mapping. Waves are always changing and the water is never still.

Movement is recognition of ongoing assemblage and a refusal to 'sort out' the complexity that 'going surfing' is. 'Each wave ridden is a wave ridden for the first time, each wave a wave ... interpreted afresh.'<sup>10</sup> This complexity is a perception of continuation, of movement. As a surfer I am always part of waves of relations that vary. These waves are relations 'moving on' whereby I feel moments that matter.<sup>11</sup> Feelings are how my body registers moments of relations as they happen. Furthermore, our bodies remember certain moments according to the intensity and duration of what was felt. The feelings feed into new moments influencing how they are experienced. These moments emerge from complex arrangements that are always confusing, as I cannot pin down everything that occurs. The movement is potent in that it is a process of ongoing unsettling that reveals the instability of what is assumed to be stable and immutable.<sup>12</sup> A mapping of movement involves a process of detection; it allows us to recognise new possibilities and unexpected connections with which male bodies engage. This is a politics of creativity and productive belonging rather than of definition and repair.<sup>13</sup>

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Respect for the waves and the ocean, for against them man is nothing. Respect for other surfers; for the man on the inside, for the old timer who has been surfing Sunset for twenty years; respect for the Hawaiians who allow us to ride their waves, respect for the locals at their breaks, respect for the hottest surfers in the line-up. If a surfer intends on surfing the North Shore it is very important that he understands about respect.

Rod Kirsop, *Waves Magazine*.<sup>14</sup>

I carry my board across the dried-up creek over a coarse gravel road and past the bent eucalypt. The farmer asks me, 'What are you doing on my paddock?' 'Going surfing,' I reply. 'Did you shut the gate?' he asks. His hat is off and he scratches his balding head. A kookaburra laughs. 'Yeah mate, no worries,' I answer. As I get to the water's edge I recall my morning surf at Maroubra.

Surfing at Maroubra with the sun on my back, I didn't belong to the local crew. I had to deal with the manoeuvrings of respect. I managed to get some respect by moving out of

the locals' way when checking the surf. Maybe I could have got respect by not moving. I locked my car so they couldn't get in. Didn't trust them. Then, changed in the open, but that was cool, since no-one would have paid any attention. I felt stoked after the surf, even though I'd shared it with some greedy locals who took most of the waves. Wouldn't call them greedy to their face. I am not a good fighter, maybe I'm just a coward.

Many feelings, bodies and social relations drop in at Maroubra. There are various hierarchies, forms of respect, ways to ride, types of waves, affects and emotions that amalgamate at any given point to create moments of surfing that pass. Going surfing and dealing with respect at Maroubra is a moving negotiation, not some hard and fast rule.

Such movement of hierarchies and respect-as-negotiation was revealed to me when I went surfing 'down the coast' as a young surfer. I'd sit in the back of the panel van as we drove south. Black-and-white cows, rolling grass hills and snippets of unmolested bushland drifted by. The inside of the van was plastered with stickers for Survival surf wax, *Line-Up* magazine and Crystal Cylinders surf-wear. We headed down past then rural Byron Bay. A series of beach breaks awaited and it was my first opportunity to sample their delights. We pulled up to a car park. I jumped out with my fluoro pink Zappa board, snug in my yellow Ripcurl wetsuit. It was the 1980s. 'Gaz', the driver of the van, hesitated as a group of guys in black wetsuits with salt-encrusted hair approached. 'What the fuck are you boys doin' here, fuck off!' I looked up at Gaz. I waited for him to punch them in the head. 'What's that poofy little thing you got there, grommet?' one asked. I looked over to their boards, which lay beside an old ute. They were sleek, narrow, and yellowed from over-exposure to the sun. These boards had seen a lot of waves. I stammered something about the board being a 'Zappa', and I got ... laughter. Gaz mumbled apologies and told them we're leaving. 'Bloody oath you're leaving!' We grommies climbed into the car and were driven along the winding road back past black-and-white cows and rolling grass hills to the contested city beaches of the Gold Coast. Reclining on my still dry surfboard I decided never to go surfing with Gaz again as he didn't seem as cool as those 'soul' surfers. Traded my fluoro pink board in for a white one too.<sup>15</sup>

As a developed surfer, I experienced surfing at Maroubra very differently to the way I experienced going surfing down the coast as a twelve-year-old grommet. As a grommet I expected my friend to display the strength and authority I was used to seeing from him. I was not familiar with negotiating respect hierarchies that existed outside of my beach. Ensnared in my own local scene, I did not recognise the alternative waves that assemble when moving. No matter how important Gaz was at our beach, the hierarchy shifted at another; as did the embodiment at Maroubra where different relations of bodies, rules, spaces, beliefs and respect were performed and felt.

Fear, the desire not to destroy the joy of my morning surf with violence, and my awareness that this was 'their' surf-break all washed up on the beach together, leaving popping

foam. The Bra Boys' muscles, tattoos and postures left me in no doubt as to my position in the hierarchy. At least I was higher in the hierarchy than the kooks—beginner surfers—who stood nearby. I could tell they were kooks from their long, wide fun-boards. Such movements of masculinity and idiosyncratic manoeuvres were not so clear to me when I was younger. At Maroubra I read what was going on without thinking about it. I just knew. My surfing habits, feelings and knowledge of equipment have developed over time with such nuance that I can now arrive at any beach and slip smoothly into the line-up.

My body's way of knowing habitually demonstrates the ability of masculinity, bodies and feelings to move and re-assemble: surfacings of hierarchy, joy, disappointment, respect or equipment.<sup>16</sup> This liminal surfacing leads to a proliferation of 'ands'.<sup>17</sup> The liminal zone on the shoreline is where the tide ebbs and flows, at once part of the ocean and part of the land; where surfers cross, crabs dart and waves wash. Here there occurs the slipping, sliding and surfacing of waves assembling somewhere.

Where you go surfing is very important. Some reefs mean a fast-breaking wave and some sandbanks that rise from shallow continental shelves mean the waves caress the beach. So, there are spatial relations that constrain and enable contexts with which surfing bodies surface. In the surf there is assemblage with hydrological concerns. The river and sand at the surf-break of Duranbah produce punchy little wedges. A surfer glides out of the trench of a wave and heads for the lip. The wave twists into a shape allowing an attempt at an aerial. He adjusts his hips, crouches, lines up his shoulders, and launches. Soaring through the air the surfer presses down on the back foot using the wind that pushes back to stabilise the movement with a counter-force. He hovers, hands on rails, trying to arrive at where the wave breaks. The explosion of white water cushions the landing. His body stretches out but the fins fail to grab. Sliding out in front of the wave the board slips and the wave spins him into a 360-degree turn. The boys scream encouragement. It felt good and he paddles back to the take-off spot with chest puffed out. The way space connects and is active with surfing bodies is crucial to any new mapping of surfing bodies. Space is not a mirror or backdrop for reflecting masculinity but male bodies surfacing—it is useful for demonstrating the assembling, moving and relations mapping that I am engaged with.

Coastal car parks provide a good example of relational spaces, surfacing and surfing bodies. The beach car park contains numerous images of muscular bodies moist with the salt water of the ocean. Cold winter winds snatch at my skin. I know not to look at others changing, I show no concern for hiding from a gaze and stretch the wetsuit from my body as sand scatters over the freezing bitumen. At Maroubra I strip off my wetsuit in a space that is configured with ritual, social, historical and bodily lines. I know these with intimacy and often it is as if, as a surfer and a man, I own the car park. Other surfers change into suits

for work while others pull on boardshorts and t-shirts. However, there is protection from homoeroticism for the semi-naked surfer. As Elspeth Probyn describes the gym changing room, there is always ‘a welter of codes about how and where to look, nonetheless strangers dress and undress, wash themselves ... breasts and bums in close proximity’.<sup>18</sup>

Yesterday I surfed at Bondi. The car park at Bondi beach is very different to Maroubra. Bondi is a tourist beach, packed with people in the morning. I change in a side street—you have to pay to park on the beachfront. Using the car door as cover I slip into my boardshorts. A few joggers go by and watch me go through the process. I feel uncomfortable. People lounge in cafes that line the footpath. A guy whistles. I flush, grab my board and run to the beach. Changing in the Bondi car park means you are not so protected by the codes. The large non-surfing populace and the lack of a free beachside cuts into the ‘no looking’ rule and hierarchies of surfing.

When men move with the surf network they become enmeshed in arrangements that branch off, multiply, proliferate, and head elsewhere. Waves mutate, moving the provisional alignment that existed prior to their arrival into numerous smaller waves. There is not movement from one assemblage to another but a multiplicity of assemblages passing and transforming depending on waves being caught or missed.<sup>19</sup>

Surfers are adept at reckoning with such movement and rhizomatic figuring.<sup>20</sup> Indeed it is crucial to surfing. Winds, tides, sandbanks, and swell shape and speed must all come together for good surf to occur. Furthermore, sometimes when I am feeling down a surf can lead to a sense of joy. I might be full of joy so the junky surf can be more than rewarding. It matters whether the sun is bouncing off the waves reflecting the aqua blue of the Pacific Ocean or whether the wind is howling against the cliffs ruining the surf as I paddle out. This is what surfers call fickleness. It is the messy multiplicity of experiencing that is going surfing. But this variation and movement heightens the anticipation, gives unexpected moments of joy, or frustrates me to the extent that I give surfing away only to return once again to the addiction when a new swell arrives or my curtains rustle from a fresh offshore wind. Unpredictability and movement correspond to how I feel as a surfer.

While I’ve described surfing passages, I do not mean that masculinity, male bodies and surfing move freely. There are restrictions, blockage and detours. Each surfer in the hierarchy has the power to dominate and punish those below, who are supposed to obey those above. Punishment and domination can take the form of dropping in, group/local ganging up, physical violence and ostracising. These exercises of power are treated as repressive and associated with sovereignty of the waves and lifestyle. However, another way of approaching the circulation of power with surfing is as a power–knowledge relationship that involves the disciplining of bodies, the development of habits and the production of representations.<sup>21</sup>

Certain knowledge, relations, rules and regulations have developed with surfing and these can come to define how men understand, act and surface as surfers.<sup>22</sup>

As a surfer I police myself according to several laws that have now been engraved on plaques and set up at prominent surfing spots throughout Australia. Experienced surfers know these rules, plaque or no plaque. They form a 'tribal law' for activity in the surf—a surf-rider's code of ethics.

1. Furthest out or who is waiting longest for the wave gets a wave.
2. Furthest inside or closest to the peak [gets the wave].
3. First to their feet or first on the wave [gets the wave].
4. Call, communicate left or right.
5. Do not drop in or snake.
6. Paddle wide using rip.
7. If caught inside stay in the whitewater.
8. Do not throw board in the water.
9. Respect the beach, respect the ocean.
10. Give respect to gain respect.<sup>23</sup>

What seems like a simple set of rules is anything but. These ten rules do not begin to describe the idiosyncracies that you negotiate. Yet they provide an introduction to how knowledge informs power circulation. A beginner would not know what 'snake' or 'drop in' means; he learns this knowledge as it becomes material. It is difficult to categorically explain what 'snaking' or 'dropping in' are, as they vary depending on the situation. But if you do them, you will be left in no doubt as to the inappropriateness of your action. The way you carry a board, the way you dress, your musculature and your feelings are all involved in the movements motivated by powerful waves.

The act of riding the wave has regulations that determine how well you are making your way through the idiosyncratic expectations. On city beaches I surf aggressively because if I don't I will have problems getting waves. There is a 'smashing of lips', a 'carving up' of the wave face, a 'belting' of the end section and an emphasis on 'making the wave'. The approach I emerge with, as a city surfer, is in direct relation to the lived experience of power-knowledge relations that resonate. This kind of aggressive surfing may dominate city beaches but in the country it can occur during crowded summer vacation periods. Yet these moves I partake in vary. Alex Leonard draws attention to this when he explains how surfers:

combine some moves with others, highlight moves, modify moves, transform moves entirely or invent them as though for the first time ... We make use of anaphora (by repeating a bottom turn, over and over, each time differently extending it), dissonance (by ducking for



a tube where none offers itself), metre (by making five moves on each wave, stressing the third move but rhyming the second and fifth).<sup>24</sup>

Power travels and is rhythmic in that it surfaces as differing practices, with differing intensities, at intervals, and within contextual relations.

New surfers may be taught how to surf but the cultural rules are never explained with any clarity. Indeed, it is not possible to clarify rules as the complex movement of them as they surface does not allow it. It is motion and relations I must become familiar with, not the rules. Hence mistakes are common; picking up on the slight variations is difficult and takes time to learn. Every newcomer repeats mistakes made by others, allowing some to torment these transgressors as they themselves have been tormented.<sup>25</sup> A surfer only learns when he 'fucks up'. He may fuck up by checking the surf from a place designated for the Bra Boys, or by not taking off on a wave deemed 'too good to let go'.

While punishment tends to follow transgression of power and epistemic practices of surfing, it can still be meted out to grommets—young surfers—without any obvious transgression. Their emotional and body development is pushed along by certain waves that lift an arm, twist a leg, shock with cold or drag down with fear. Grommets may be 'grommet bashed'. Grommet bashing as a rite of passage is part of learning how to 'become-surfer'. Watch a grommet as he pulls off a footy jumper, stuffs it in his bag, waxes up his board, picks his way across the boulders and hits the waves. Half an hour into the surf and he is frustrated. The pack of older (and larger) surfers is not letting him get any action. A wave spins off and he drops down the face. I can hear someone yelling 'fuck off!' behind him—he has 'dropped in'. He travels for a while in front of the surfer then kicks off. A finger points him in to the beach. He refuses to go. Several of the older surfers paddle over to deal out the punishment. He sees this coming and lashes out. A punch lands a would-be attacker's eye. Fear rushes in as the grommet realises this was a mistake he would come to regret. One by one they land punches on him, the hail of blows numbs his body. One of the surfers grabs his hair and pushes him underwater. He struggles for air. Blackness. He is dragged up onto the beach. 'Stay out of the fucking water, grommet,' a voice says. He doesn't cry or complain. The cut above his lip oozes. He deals with the beating 'like a man'. To do anything else would mean being labelled a 'pussy', a label that would do him no good later. A pussy could never surf here again. If he toughs it out he will. Such grommet bashings keep 'aberrant' rides in check. They infuse bodies with what relations may assemble and what may not.

The young surfer learns his place and moves his way though the hierarchy as he becomes familiar with what the body is expected to do. He becomes a local—a respected resident surfer—and gets to dominate the take-off position. Often locals maintain an ever-present threat of physical pain, not just for grommets but for those not familiar with the required manoeuvrings. Some say recounting such experiences is an over-exaggeration. Even to recount



The secret spot        such assemblages can indicate a certain weakness. However, the pain need-  
n't occur for its influence on assemblage to surface certain relations. Power  
surfaces as blockages, opening up of other assemblages, and as detours that male surfers  
required to negotiate.

As a beginner I came to appreciate and observe in awe the skill levels and physical capabilities of the older surfers. I grew up with negotiations that lead to belonging. At my home break I belong in a way that I don't anywhere else. My local mates with whom I dominate waves make me feel strong, comfortable and in command. We share morning toast, borrow wax under melaleuka trees, talk of waves, sit together in otherwise empty seas, and search for rumoured perfect surf-breaks.

There are palm trees, coral beaches, palm-thatched shacks on stilts and sewerage that swills in gutters. Hairless and scabbed mongrel dogs patrol the central and only street, remarkable for its patched and potholed paving work. The street winds down the edge of an island somewhere in the Indian Ocean—a 'secret spot'. We have just trekked through the thick malaria-infested jungle to get there. The bay sweeps around in a half moon that has been stretched oblong to allow the waves to wrap in perfectly. My body trembles with excitement. A set of waves cracks off the inside reef—six to eight feet and barrelling forever. Hoots. Slaps on the back. A mate looks me straight in the eye and with the utmost intimacy says, 'We did it.' A shiver runs down my spine. We dump our gear and run. Joy is not an appropriate word ... 'stoke' is.

After such adventures I feel very close to my mates. I alone experience affects such as joy, fear, excitement, shame and pride, until with a sideways glance we relay the feelings.



Stoke can fill the air.<sup>26</sup> These relations are resilient and hard to shake. They move The boys  
me as I experience the small surf days at home where I get frustrated with the  
same friends—but in the surf during any good day they rush back, albeit always different-  
ly. They surface with histories that carry residual traces of the adventure shared. We remem-  
ber the feelings from when we travelled together and they feed into what we experience now.

Shame plays an implicit role in policing what sort of male is allowed to enter the hierarchy and what bodies are allowed to develop further. The shame one feels in failing to meet the requirements of certain waves ‘must itself be hidden as an ugly scar is hidden, lest it offends the one who looks’.<sup>27</sup> The shame experienced when I fail to take-off on certain waves or am physically incapable of paddling out forces me to confront my own body and its specific relations. I might be overweight, unfit, not surfing enough, scared of harming my body. Yet, whatever the reason shame burns into how bodies are conceived. Perhaps it makes you train more, surf more or work on overcoming fear. In a discussion of sporting bodies Elspeth Probyn explains that ‘shame refigures the body, and its conceptual possibilities’.<sup>28</sup>

The mirror image of shame is pride and Probyn stresses a consideration of this relation. ‘Pride is dependant on shame; pride is predicated on the—sometimes conscious—denial of its own ostracized corollary, shame.’<sup>29</sup> Pride in surfing indicates that I measure up, that my body and its compartments negotiate the relations, manners and habits ‘correctly’. In the surf others ridicule the boy who hesitates. The boy who grabs a wave before his turn either gets nothing or is hassled so he gets no more. At the bottom of the pecking order, there remain the little waves on the ‘inside’. Pain must become pleasure, fear conquered; otherwise the holy grail of becoming a ‘Waterman’ disappears with the last set. Big wave riding is deified

and the Watermen that do it are considered proud warriors. When someone has matched the image of the Waterman, they walk with chests puffed out, their arms dig deep when paddling, and they are treated with respect. A small wave surfer is a trickster, a 'girl' afraid of the real deal—who should be ashamed. The surfer should reach the point where pain and fear turn to pleasure and pride.

It's morning and I am surfing the outside peak at Deadmans. The ocean is roaring and huge swells pummel the cliffs. I tremble with fear, step to the edge and launch on to the back of a swell as it rolls in. A long paddle and I am out the back. There is only one other surfer out. I sit close to the edge of the break so as not to be caught by clean-up sets—waves that break further out and arrive intermittently during large swells. My board is extra long to enable me to paddle onto the large rollers. The other surfer doesn't sit near the edge and manoeuvres deeper into the 'zone'. A large set of waves looms and it blacks out the horizon. I paddle hard to get over the top. The surfer in the zone does not move but waits for the waves to jack up on the pinnacle of reef. He turns and strokes into one. The wave is a monster and he drops out of the lip, air under his board, and streaks down the face. Behind is an explosion of white water that dwarfs him. The wave ledges, twists and grows as he flies along the face. The surfer pulls into a section where the lip is throwing out. He exits and the crowd on the cliffs scream approval. I paddle in to the shore. It's too big for me. I am ashamed. He is a real Waterman. Later in the car park he walks by the crowd and me with nonchalance. His arms are muscular and his chest is round like a barrel. I am proud to have been there to witness his feats, yet ashamed for paddling in without catching a wave. Next time I will ride one of those monsters like he did.

Shame and pride motivate the body into further relations and surfacings that move and modify. This can mean that you'll take off on waves knowing you'll wipe out, but 'pulling back' would invite ridicule and shame. A ten-foot wave approaches and I dive deep as it rears up in front of me. The lip pitches out, thick and mean. The wave rushes past me and spins me like a rag doll. I am sucked into the black depths. I struggle. Air, I need air! 'Relax,' I tell myself. The wave releases its hold. I shoot upwards. Black, green, bubbles, blue. I look up at the next wave. I take a breath and dive deep again.

Wipe-outs rip at my flesh and contort my body into all sorts of strange positions. My lungs grow. The body becomes used to these assemblages until they come to be noticed less, or even revelled in. The body deals with tumbling after tumbling. The exertion and fear enhances a way of bodily assembling that becomes familiar and addictive. Waves break in uncontrolled fashion. A good surfer rides the unpredictable nature and can paddle out beyond the breakers. He will fall, get hit by a falling lip, and have to struggle through lines of white water and residual swirl. Arms tire, muscles spasm, his chest strains to catch a breath, and he can feel the confused beating of his heart but he won't turn back. Shame, respect and pride motivate.

White water washes, reefs rip, swells sweep, and he has a body that seems more than a body. Each collision becomes another battering he has endured, but that's what makes him worthy of being a surfer. His body becomes trained to participate with the waves. The body, the board, the pride, the reef, the wind and the belonging all pass as men surf with these waves of masculinity.

In this article I have wrestled with trying to map male bodies as flows of relations. This mapping begins to demonstrate that surfing bodies are always multiple and more than flesh and blood. They surface as moving, relational and liminal assemblages of spaces, various-sized swells, politics, power, waves, wipe-outs, stoke, surfboards and so on. The feeling and lived experience of surfing is figured as rhizome whereby any assemblage is impermanent and productive. What we end up with through such mapping is a surfing body that is always in various states of locomotion, a body that feels and is always engaged with other bodies. This mapping of male bodies acknowledges the passages of which masculinity and surfer bodies are part. It is a mapping that stresses the uncontrollable, excessive, irrational, disruptive and active movement of male bodies. It also demonstrates the restrictions, blockages and sealing off that is so much a part of doing masculinity. The mapping suggests there is no underlying masculinity, no masculinities to define or definitive male body, but sets of embodied relations felt and becoming.<sup>30</sup> Positioning the male body tends to subtract movement from the picture and 'catches the body in cultural freeze frame'.<sup>31</sup> The mapping and figuring I have engaged with is the male body as movement and rhizomatic relations. Think surfing male body—think blur. Think the male body in 'its own non-present potential to vary'.<sup>32</sup> My mapping is not in opposition to masculinity, but sets it in motion and unsettles it through an intensification of its own terms—male body that surfs like thought.

The paddle out through the creek has been difficult. The size of the swell this day has turned it into a swirling, whirlpool-infested, moving potential mass. The tail end of my board keeps spinning in circles. I struggle to control it but make it into the line-up. A set stands up. I was watching for it. Intently. Fucked if it was going to slam me on the reef. My heart moves to my throat. Heat rises in my temples when stroking up the wave—it's that big. Although in the water, I sweat. I am scared, yet laugh. I wipe the spittle from my mouth. Shivering and trembling I paddle and take off. Next wave is yours.

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1. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, Verso, London, 1994, p. 71.
2. The 'Bra Boys' are a group of surfers who dominate Maroubra beach. After proving themselves in large waves and fighting, they are permitted to tattoo 'Bra Boy' on the lower or upper back. This is sometimes accompanied with a postcode or small map of the beach. The group has even been portrayed in the media as a 'gang' involved in stand-over tactics, crime and 'bashings'. See 'Boys are Back in Town', *Daily Telegraph*, 28 April 2003, p. 5.
3. By the word 'with' I do not mean 'alongside' but 'part of', implying a relation in which it is difficult to tell where one begins and the other ends.
4. We physiologically feel affects and these highlight bodies as intensive capacities. The psychologist Silvan S. Tomkins identifies eight primary bodily based affects: interest-excitement, enjoyment-joy, surprise-startle, distress-anguish, fear-terror, shame-humiliation, contempt-disgust and anger-rage. Silvan Tomkins, *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness Vol. 1: The Positive Affects*, Springer, New York, 1962 and Silvan Tomkins, *Affect, Imagery, Consciousness Vol. 2: The Negative Affects*, Springer, New York, 1962.
5. Marcel Mauss, *Sociologie et Anthropologie*, Presse Universitaires de France, Paris, 1973.
6. Duke Kahanamoku with Joe Brennan, *Duke Kahanomku's World of Surfing*, Angus and Robertson Publishing, Sydney, 1968, pp. 93–4. In 1915 Duke Kahanamoku introduced surfing to Australia.
7. 'The map is open and connectable in all its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation.' See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, The Athlone Press, London, 1988, p. 12.
8. The events I use to describe surfing and masculinity are singularities. They are multiple, visceral and they move. I understand these singularities in the sense that they are 'turning points, and points of inflection; bottlenecks, knots, foyers, and centres; points of fusion, condensation and boiling ... "sensitive" points'. See Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1990, p. 52.
9. For examples of these studies, see Steve Biddulph, *Manhood: An Action Plan for Changing Men's Lives*, Finch Publishing, Sydney, 1994, and Robert Connell, *The Men and the Boys*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, 2000.
10. Alex Leonard, 'What Surfing Feels Like', unpublished honours thesis, University of New South Wales, 1997, p. 18.
11. 'Going surfing' is participating with passages of masculinity that feel good, feel ashamed, feel proud, feel disgusted etc. When considering rock concerts, Lawrence Grossberg writes that there is always more than musical exchange. There are also bodily, linguistic, feeling and visual movements that help to establish a sonorial economy. It is an economy based on and motivated by affects rather than simply representations. See Lawrence Grossberg, *Dancing in Spite of Myself*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1997, p. 16. When going surfing I feel exchanges and these affective movements are bodies vibrating with rhythms of feelings.
12. Registering the movement undermines myths the surfing male has painted of himself as whole, rational, strong, aggressive etc. Relational movement suggests considering the surfing male as political site that must take into account emotion, irrationality, multiplicity, abjection of the fluid, the grotesque and passivity—attributes traditionally othered as feminine.
13. By this term 'belonging', I am referring to engaging in a type of thinking that Elspeth Probyn describes as inspiring 'a mode of thinking about how people get along, how various forms of belonging are articulated, how individuals conjugate difference into manners of being, and how desires to become are played out in everyday circumstances'. See Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belongings*, Routledge, New York, 1996, p. 5.
14. *Waves Magazine*, Mason Stewart Publishing, Darlinghurst, 1992.
15. Plain white surfboards, black wetsuits, and rural surfing and living are probably the most widely recognised signifiers of the soul-surfing lifestyle. 'Soul' surfers believe that contest-influenced city surfing takes away from what surfing really is—a chance to express yourself and become part of nature. There is a belief that commercialisation of surfing stifles experimentation and makes surfing bland conformism. In opposition to soul surfers, there are competitively inclined surfers who believe waves are about performance. On every beach there exists both soul-surfer and competitive-surfer attitudes and experiences. Soul surfers often lament the explosion of industry and ego in surfing, while more competitively inclined surfers complain not enough is being done by surfing industry, recreational organisations and governing bodies to turn surfing into a world-class sport. This dialectic between competition and soul surfing remains a distinctive theme for surfing in Australia.

16. By speaking of 'surfaces', I do not intend to flatten out social relations. I treat the concept similarly to Elspeth Probyn when she explains thinking in terms of *rendering surface* or *surfacing*, the process by which things become visible and are produced ... as a way of configuring lines of force that compose the social, lines of force that are by their very nature *deeply* material and historical.  
See Probyn, p. 12.
17. Gilles Deleuze clears my use of 'and' up when he explains:  
Godard says everything has two parts, that in a day there's morning and evening, he's not saying it's one or the other ... it's always inbetween, between two things; it's the borderline, there's always a border, a line of flight or flow, only we don't see it ... And yet it's along this line of flight that things come to pass, becomings evolve, revolutions take place.  
See Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1990, pp. 44–5.
18. See Elspeth Probyn, 'Sporting Bodies: Dynamics of Shame and Pride', *Body and Society*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2000, pp. 13–28.
19. This is a multiplicity beyond the merely doubling or multicentering of proliferating subjects ... a multiplicity is not a pluralized notion of identity (identity multiplied by  $n$  locations), but is rather as everchanging, non-totalisable collectivity, an assemblage defined, not by its abiding identity or principle of sameness over time, but through its capacity to undergo permutations and transformations ...  
See Elizabeth Grosz, 'A Thousand Tiny Sexes', in Constantin Boundas and Dorothea Oklowski (eds), *Gilles Deleuze and the Theatre of Philosophy*, Routledge, New York, 1994, p. 192.
20. I'll use the botanic term 'rhizome' to figure the space, movement, bodies and relations that surface. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari introduced this term as a way of conceptualising the varied connections and disconnections of relations that surface with dynamism. A rhizome is a network of multiple-branching roots and shoots with no central axis, no unified point of origin, and no given direction of growth.  
The rhizome is reducible neither to the One nor the multiple ... It is not multiple derived from the One, or to which the One is added ( $n + 1$ ). It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather, directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle ... from which it grows and overflows ... The rhizome operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots ... The rhizome is an acentred, non-hierarchical, non-signifying system.  
See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1987, p. 21.
21. For this reading of power I draw upon the work of Michel Foucault who offers a different way of approaching the circulation of power that denies the sovereign or institutional version of power. Foucault conceptualised power as a complex strategical situation where there are a multiplicity of forceful relations. Foucault discusses the power–knowledge relationship in his work *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, Pantheon, New York, 1980.
22. Foucault notes that when thinking about power he is 'thinking rather of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives'.  
See Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p. 39.
23. *Australian*, 19 June 2000.
24. See Leonard, p. 30.
25. Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, Minneapolis Press, Minneapolis, 1989, p. 306.
26. Mark Cunningham cited in Leonard, p. 30.
27. See Elspeth Probyn, 'Sporting Bodies', p. 22.
28. See Elspeth Probyn, 'Sporting Bodies', p. 12.
29. See Elspeth Probyn, 'Sporting Bodies', p. 25.
30. We do not become 'something'. A line of becoming 'has neither beginning nor end, departure nor arrival, origin nor destination'. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 293.
31. See Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2002, p. 3.
32. See Massumi, p. 4.