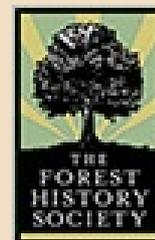


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Arthur C. Clarke and the Limitations of the Ocean as a Frontier

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Abstract

Before World War II, the resources that most Americans imagined using from the ocean were rather limited: fish, transportation, and a site for warfare. After the war, however, the ocean as frontier became a common analogy. With it came the associated belief that the ocean's resources were available at a staggeringly new rate. This article uses the writings and activities of the science fiction author Arthur C. Clarke to explore the analogy of the sea to the western plains of the United States. Clarke, better known for his science fiction stories set in space, wrote extensively about the ocean as a source of food and other material resources, livelihood, inspiration, and insight into human nature. Clarke's personal experiences with the ocean and his writings are valuable tools for analyzing changing cultural conceptions of the ocean. I argue that the frontier analogy for the ocean was, in part, a failure because space came to seem a more promising frontier. Nevertheless, it still had a tremendous impact on how we conceived of and used the sea in the postwar period.

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