

The Skin of Modernity: Primitivism and Tattooing in Literature

by

Matthew L. Oches

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Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Susan Y Najita, Co-Chair
Associate Professor Andrea Patricia Zemgulys, Co-Chair
Professor Stuart Kirsch
Associate Professor Joshua L Miller

DEDICATION

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Chapter I: Introduction

With the increased prevalence of Euro-American tattooing, it has become standard in both academic and popular writing to mention, at least in passing, the etymological source of tattoo, which occurred during the *Endeavour's* stay at Tahiti in 1769. The word derives from *tatau*, which in Tahitian and other Pacific languages signifies the practice of tattooing. However, the impact of the cultural exchange of tattooing extends far beyond neologisms. Interactions between Euro-Americans and Pacific Islanders facilitated the expansion of western tattooing practices, as well as how this form of body modification has been understood and represented. A genealogy of tattooing discourses, characterized by notions of knowledge production and primitivism, stretches from 1769 to the present day. An examination of this discursive trajectory – its continuities, discontinuities, and innovations – indicates how Euro-American tattooing is inextricably linked with the Pacific. This project places modernist literature in a global context through the demonstration that early-20th century representations of tattooing are the result of exchanges between Europeans and Pacific Islanders. It calls attention to overlooked or under-examined histories of encounter and exchange, and how these interactions contribute to the narrative of western modernity. The tattoo in modernist literature, and the genealogy tracing how its representations were produced, expands the contexts, histories, and forms of primitivist discourse. The disarticulation of tattooing practices from the Pacific not only informs the history of Euro-American body modification; it also inflects and facilitates 20th century understandings of the “modern” and the “primitive,” of modernity and primitivism.

Tattooing and Modernist Primitivism

In her essay “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown,” Virginia Woolf attempts to locate temporally a cultural shift that she thinks ought to be reflected in new forms of modern fiction. She advances the assertion, “to the effect that on or about December, 1910, human character changed” (194). One event that occurred during this month in London was an exhibition organized by Roger Fry, “Manet and the Post-Impressionists,” that featured many examples of primitivism in modern art, including works by Gauguin, Matisse, and Picasso. Fry’s exhibition represents an early example of modernism’s engagement with primitivist discourse, as well as “the English debut of the primitive in high culture” (Torgovnick 85). Primitivism was established in art history and criticism almost three decades later with Robert Goldwater’s *Primitivism in Modern Art* (1938). But primitivism is not merely a form of appropriation in which writers and artists borrow formal qualities or projected thematic elements from African and Oceanic works. It is also a discursive structure, produced through cross-cultural interactions, that is utilized as justification for colonial extraction, imperial projects, and the civilizing mission, the same activities that opened the space for artistic appropriation. This wider discursive field, the imbalanced power relations and interactions between the “modern” and the “primitive,” exists within the orbit of change that Woolf identifies.

The role of primitivist discourse in Euro-American modernist art and literature, usually understood as forms of artistic inspiration, has long been in the narrative of the “modern.” Within the overarching project of consciously breaking away from 19th-century art, literature, conventions, and morals and refashioning the human subject and its representation in an age of rapid technological innovation, certain peoples and cultures were discursively constructed as the “primitive” contrast to the “modern” – a 20th century version of the civilized/savage binary.

Primitivism is a western discourse that, utilizing reified conceptions of non-western cultures as savage, underdeveloped, sexually promiscuous, more in touch with nature, or free of modern problems, among others, “functions variously as an idealized nostalgia for the past, as a threat of the foreign, or as a potential representation of difference or connection” (McGarrity 2). As Marianna Torgovnick states in *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (1990), “the primitive can be, has been, will be (?) – whatever Euro-Americans want it to be” (9).¹

Primitivism is an intensely malleable discourse that relies upon spatial disjuncture – the physical, geographical distance between the metropole and its colonial sites - and temporal discontinuity - the separation of the vague, infinite past or eternal stasis of the “primitive” from the modern time of “civilization.”

The various misunderstandings, misrepresentations, and appropriations of primitivism within modernist art and literature have received due critical attention.² From Picasso’s African masks, Gertrude Stein’s “Melanctha,” D.H. Lawrence’s search for primal vitality, Roger Fry’s elevation of African sculpture,³ to the idealized past of the Celtic Revival, to name a few prominent examples, scholars have discussed how primitivism was employed in modernism’s (re)production of itself. The body modification practice of tattooing is a pervasive, common art form that is referenced in literature, and its representation can be understood through the structures of primitivism. Tattooing as a specifically embodied instance of primitivism represents productive intersections of “civilized” and “savage.” The body provides an integral nexus in many instances of modernist primitivism because its seeming naturalness can function as a

¹ My use of “Euro-American” comes from Torgovnick: “*Euro-Americans* denotes Europeans, Americans of European ancestry, and others of European ancestry who may be citizens of countries outside Europe” (253n19).

² For example: Clifford (1988), Torgovnick (1990), Barkan (1995), McGarrity and Culleton (2009).

³ See “The Art of the Bushmen” and “Negro Sculpture” from *Vision and Design* (1920).

vehicle for the temporal and spatial displacements the discourse uses to cover the fissures and cracks of western civilization. The body has been employed as a naturalized connection to an idealized “primitive” culture to highlight the mechanized, soulless side of modernity; its specular markers, such as race, gender performance, and modification practices, have been utilized in arguments for the west’s teleological supremacy; the body and its presentation have been interpreted as irrefutable signs of savagery, as justification for violence, colonial appropriation, and the civilizing mission.

Situating the embodied culture of tattooing as an aspect of modernism’s engagement with primitivism further exposes the problematic temporalities encoded within the concepts of the “modern” and the “primitive.” Robert Goldwater writes, “Primitivism presupposes the primitive” (252). It can also be said that modernism presupposes the modern. These statements must be qualified further: primitivist discourse presupposes that certain peoples and cultures have been forced into the discursive position of the “primitive” in an attempt to separate and control them temporally, spatially, and culturally.⁴ And modernism presupposes the production of certain cultures as the “modern” present of a linear progression, even if that modernity is defined through rupture. The “denial of coevalness” that Johannes Fabian identified within anthropology is not exclusive to that discipline; it is a persistent tendency within Euro-American thought (31).⁵ The embodied syncretism of tattooing as a “savage” or “primitive” practice that is incorporated within the “civilized” or “modern” Euro-American subject unites different constructed notions of temporality within one body; it also collapses the strenuously protected spatial distance. These disparate temporalities structure, support, and justify colonial discourses and practices. The

⁴ Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush write in the “Introduction” to *Prehistories of the Future*, “As for ‘primitives,’ they never existed. Only Western ‘primitivism’ did” (2).

⁵ As Fabian states, “*Primitive* being essentially a temporal concept, is a category, not an object, of Western thought” (18, emphasis in original).

tattooing genealogy I trace contributes to the destabilization of the teleological progression of modernity because it demonstrates how the “primitive” tattoo is a constitutive aspect of the “modern” period and subjectivity. Rather than a mere destabilization or facile reversal of binarized relations, tattooing represents a disruption of an entire web of discursive structures.

The syncretic image of the tattooed western subject in literature represents a distinct aspect of primitivism, for the mark of the “primitive” is incorporated within the skin of the “modern” subject. Rather than a formal appropriation, such as Picasso’s use of African masks for two of the figures in *Les Femmes d’Alger*, tattooing is a unique form of primitivist fascination, as “savage” and “civilized” are not juxtaposed merely as collage-like images but are brought into perilous proximity through their literal embodiment. Their boundaries are compromised through the process of tattooing itself. The tattooed body in modernist literature registers anxieties about civilization on the “surface” of the body; but, at the same time, primitivism, through the tattoo, figuratively enables a sometimes problematic racial, national, and sexual mobility, an indeterminacy for the western subject. Tattooing highlights the malleability of the body when represented through primitivist discourse, as the tattoo can resignify the specular signs of race, nationality, gender, and sexuality that body is made to emit.

The representation of tattooed bodies in modernist literature is different from more canonical examples of modernist primitivism, such as Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922), Picasso’s *Portrait of Gertrude Stein* (1906), and Lawrence’s *The Plumed Serpent* (1926), because of its specifically embodied, embedded, specular, and indelible nature. Recent work on the role of the primitive in modernist literature has not included the representation of the tattooed body. However, tattooing appears in the literary production of numerous writers associated with different aspects of modernism: *Mafarka the Futurist: An African Novel* (1909) by Filippo-

Tommaso Marinetti, *The Tattooed Countess* (1924) by Carl Van Vechten, *Orlando* (1928) by Virginia Woolf, *1919* (1932) by John Dos Passos, *Nightwood* (1936) by Djuna Barnes, and *Ulysses* (1922) by James Joyce. Tattooing also appears in other cultural productions of the early 20th century, such as the tattooed man and woman of the sideshow, the Marx Brothers films *Duck Soup* (1933) and *At the Circus* (1939), Albert Parry's sociological and psychoanalytic study *Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art* (1933), the criminological work of Cesare Lombroso, and the writings of the architect Adolf Loos. A tattoo is not an African mask that can be removed at will; it is not a verbal language that can be appropriated as a conduit through which the Euro-American writer bewails the bankruptcy of western civilization; it cannot be reduced to a dark mirror that exposes the horror undergirding capitalist exploitation. The tattoo itself is permanent, indelible, inalienable and yet dynamic; it is literally embedded within the skin of the tattooed subject. The social practice of tattooing, however, can be exchanged or appropriated.

Cultural Exchange and Appropriation

Tracing the discursive sources of the representation of tattooing in the modernist period to the 19th century or the Victorian period is insufficient because 20th century tattooing discourses are the result of a longer historical trajectory. James Cook's first Pacific voyage on the *Endeavour* (1768-1771) represents the initial European-Pacific cultural exchange of tattooing. The discourses surrounding this cultural exchange, especially those relating to primitivism, race, knowledge production, sexuality, and class, tend to be minimized or erased in discussions of later cultural representations of tattooing in the west. This creates an artificial split between evocations of tattooing as a practice of racial or cultural alterity and the later explicit production of tattooing as a marker of lower-class status. It also attempts to relegate Pacific tattooing to a vague pre-contact, and thus non-historical, past.

Primitivist discourse operates through temporal and spatial displacements. The specific discourses that accrue around the tattooed body in the modernist period should be approached within the context of the Pacific-European cultural exchange to work against and repair these discontinuities. In order to indicate the parameters of the range of fantasy within primitivism, I specifically examine the historical and theoretical conditions that facilitated the production of primitivist discourses about the tattooed body, as well as the discursive continuities between the cultural exchange of tattooing and subsequent Euro-American representations of the tattooed body. This longer historical trajectory locates Pacific tattooing practices within a particular cultural and historical context, which works to recontextualize and historicize the atemporal nature of primitivist evocations of indigenous tattooing. The genealogy I trace here demonstrates that discourses about tattooing possess remarkable continuities, as well as innovations and discontinuities, through the past 250 years, especially with respect to primitivism, sexuality, class, race, and criminality.

The collection *Tattoo: Bodies, Art and Exchange in the Pacific and the West* (2005), edited by Nicholas Thomas, Anna Cole, and Bronwen Douglas, is the first scholarly book to discuss at length the cultural exchange of tattooing in the Pacific and the effects of this exchange in both the Pacific Islands and the west. While not denying the discontinuous presence of tattooing practices in Europe, such as the body modifications of the Picts, Roman punitive tattooing, and the Jerusalem cross,⁶ the authors of *Tattoo* emphasize the importance of the cultural exchange, its corporeal effects, and the discourses it helped shape, beginning with Cook's voyages. *Tattoo* responds to the arguments in the collection *Written on the Body: The Tattoo in European and American History* (2000), edited by Jane Caplan. This earlier volume

⁶ See Mark Gustafson, "The Tattoo in the Later Roman Empire and Beyond" and Juliet Fleming, "The Renaissance Tattoo" in *Written on the Body*.

does not view the cultural exchange of tattooing in the Pacific as the reintroduction or reinvigoration of the practice, despite the increased visibility of tattooing after 1769. The critical perspective of the volume emphasizes earlier forms of European body modification: “it also seems clear that Europeans learned neither the technique nor the imagery of tattooing from Polynesian societies, but drew on local practices that existed well before the eighteenth century, whether these were indigenous or imported” (Caplan xx). In his “Introduction” to *Tattoo*, Nicholas Thomas states, “The contributors to this book would not dispute the claim that ‘the evidence supports neither continuity nor importation alone, but rather a process of convergence and reinforcement’” (12). Within this context, the position of *Tattoo* is that Pacific-European “interactions are fundamental to our understandings of Western tattooing, and the role of cross-cultural interactions in shaping or influencing European body arts over the last two hundred years” (10).

Although the connections between cultural exchange, primitivism, and modernist art and literature lie outside the scope of *Tattoo*, Nicholas Thomas evokes the specter of modernist primitivism in his “Introduction.” While discussing a chapter about the New Zealand pakeha artist Tony Fomison receiving a Samoan *tatau*,⁷ Thomas states, “In some ways it is odd that so singular a form of ‘primitive’ art should not have attracted the attention of the early twentieth-century modernists who notoriously gained inspiration from African and Oceanic arts” (27). In this dissertation, I take up Thomas’ challenge to examine the ways that modernist authors *were* drawn to representations of tattooing, and that primitivist discourses stretching back to the cultural exchange in the 18th century inform the manners in which the tattooed body was represented. At the end of his “Introduction,” Thomas discusses how focusing on the more

⁷ Brunt 123-144.

famous examples of modernist primitivism can obscure other instances of exchange and appropriation:

The privileged status of now over-cited instances such as Picasso's *Demoiselles* has meant that many, many other exemplifications of European-African and European-Pacific (among other cross-cultural) histories of mutual representation, colonization, appropriation, reappropriation and exchange have been passed over. Yet those neglected histories may have as much or even a good deal more to tell us about art, culture and politics in the colonial and post-colonial epochs.

(Thomas 29)

My project seeks to respond to this assertion by situating the representation of tattooing in modernist literature as equally illustrative of the fissures in modernity as canonical examples of modernist primitivism, such as Picasso's or Gauguin's primitivist works, Eliot's verbal appropriations in *The Waste Land*, Freud's conflation of children, neurotics, and "primitives" in *Totem and Taboo* (1912), and Stein's colonization of African-American speech and bodies in "Melanctha." This project also seeks to expand the intersections between Pacific and modernist studies past more prominent texts, such as Gauguin's primitivist paintings and London's Pacific stories, to include overlooked histories and representations of exchange and appropriation between Euro-Americans and Pacific Islanders.

This project exists within, and attempts to expand in different directions, a critical genealogy described in the collection *Pacific Rim Modernisms* (2009). In "A Rim with a View: Orientalism, Geography, and the Historiography of Modernism," Steven Yao writes, "by highlighting the historical articulation of canonical Euro-American modernism, as well as the extent to which that articulation in large measure took place precisely by means of an

engagement with different particular Asian cultural traditions, this most recently emergent approach to modernist Orientalism delineates a more reciprocal interaction between East and West” (12). My project examines interactions between Euro-American modernism and an Oceanic cultural practice, Pacific Islander tattooing, which shifts the critical focus past canonical examples, such as Pound’s use of Chinese characters that Yao discusses. The historical and discursive trajectory I trace here further expands the temporal and geographic boundaries of modernity.

Tattooing is routinely neglected in discussions of primitivism, perhaps because of its inextricable connection to a human subject and its dependence upon the body’s biological existence. As opposed to African and Oceanic objects that were displayed in museums as “primitive” art or ethnographic specimens, which is how Euro-American artists gained exposure to and inspiration from such objects, tattooing usually does not appear in museums outside tattooing instruments and occasional ethnographic photographs. However, the tattooed heads of Maori people have appeared in Euro-American museums. In contrast to masks and sculpted figures, Goldwater writes, “Body-painting, so integral a part of primitive man’s ritual environment, necessarily remained unseen and ignored” (226). Temporary painting of the body and indelible tattooing would both fall into Goldwater’s category. But tattooing has appeared textually, pictorially, and corporeally in the west since Cook’s first Pacific voyage – in written descriptions of Pacific customs, in drawings, paintings, and engravings, and on the bodies of Euro-Americans. By viewing the Pacific-European exchange of tattooing as an important factor in western discourses about tattooing, as well as understanding Pacific tattooing as a vibrant and living culture of the body that was not destroyed by colonialism, we can examine how tattooing was far from ignored. In fact, it contributes to the production of the “primitive.”

Juniper Ellis's *Tattooing the World: Pacific Designs in Print and Skin* (2008) is the first book about both Pacific tattooing practices and Euro-American and Pacific Islander literature. Ellis details the continuation of the practice after contact with the west and the under-represented role of the tattooing of women, as well as the representation of tattooing in the works of contemporary Pacific authors.⁸ *Tattooing the World* does not, however, discuss the contact zone, the cultural exchange of tattooing, primitivism, or how Euro-American tattooing discourses were formed. In a brief discussion of exchange practices in the context of James O'Connell, the first person to display his tattooed body for profit in America, Ellis writes, "the Pacific signifier loses specificity and gains speculative meaning as it moves into other parts of the world" (50). What were these meanings? Were they speculative, or did they derive from encounter and exchange? What discourses shaped tattooing outside the Pacific? How did these meanings enter literary evocations of tattooing? This project addresses these issues by focusing on the disarticulation of tattooing from its Pacific context and how the representation of this movement was informed by the imperial discourse of primitivism.

Placing the tattooed body in the context of the cultural exchange and its discursive traces calls attention to the necessity of understanding primitivism and its effects within a wider discursive field, as a more expansive structure or tool of knowledge production. The uneasy proximity of constructed notions of "savagery" and "civility" on one body with which contemporary Euro-American tattooing began at Tahiti in 1769 indicates that primitivism should not be narrowly defined as a form of cross-cultural or intracultural idealization and

⁸ For the tattooing of women in *Tattooing the World*, see the chapter "Transfer of Desire: Engendering Sexuality," pages 162-192. The works of Pacific literature discussed by Ellis include Albert Wendt's "The Cross of Soot" (from *Flying Fox in a Freedom Tree and Other Stories* [1988]), Sia Figiel's *They Who Do Not Grieve* (1999), Alan Duff's *Once Were Warriors* (1990), and Epeli Hau'ofa's *Kisses in the Nederends* (1987).

appropriation. While idealization of Pacific sociality factored into the cultural exchange, tattooing was still produced as the “mark of the savage,” a derogatory representation that persisted well into the 20th century. In *Primitivism, Science, and the Irish Revival* (2004), Sinéad Garrigan Mattar separates the use of the figure of the “primitive” into two related but different discourses: “Just as there is a history of the idealization of the primitive (primitivism) reaching back to antiquity, so there is a history of the denigration of the primitive, for the purpose not of criticizing the status quo, but of justifying its continuance” (10). This artificial split obfuscates the condition that idealization and denigration of the “primitive,” which I term “laudatory primitivism” and “denunciatory primitivism” respectively, are both almost constantly made to operate upon the same object. The peoples and cultures forced into the position of the “primitive” are “noble savages” whose dignity and connection to the natural world should be emulated, as well as savage, violent cannibals who should be civilized. As Torgovnick writes, “Western idealization of the primitive has been as damaging as any other Western version and often conceals more pejorative views” (122). There are at least two sides to the primitivist coin. The tattooed body exists somewhere in the space between laudatory and denunciatory primitivism.

Writing and Embodiment

The social practice of tattooing is the process of applying ink or pigment to human skin in an indelible manner; the design or image produced by this operation is the tattoo itself. While the tattoo appears to rest on the outermost part of the body - the skin - the pigment actually sits within the dermis. The tattoo is thus within the skin, not a “surface” phenomenon but a sign embedded within the body of the human subject that is nevertheless visible. This rather material description of tattooing exposes the discrepancy in the surface/depth interpretation that is

commonly employed in Euro-American tattooing discourses, in which the tattoo on the “surface” of the body has a direct or mimetic connection to an inner depth, character, or essence.⁹ This notion of a depth personality is as much a constructed category as the production of the skin as the surface of the body. Both poles of the binary require each other. Exclusively privileging the skin, the surface, at the expense of the depth or inalterable essence - the production of the human subject as a series of surface effects and libidinal excitations - does not and cannot eradicate the depth; the depth merely becomes the negated or subordinated term of the binary. Elizabeth Grosz writes, “All the effects of depth and interiority can be explained in terms of the inscriptions and transformations of the subject’s corporeal surface” (vii). While I agree with the centrality of the body in Grosz’s formulation of subjectivity, her utilization of the Möbius strip, despite its torsion and three-dimensionality, relies upon and supports the notion of the skin as the surface of the body. Tattooing exposes how the production of subjectivity as a surface phenomenon still mobilizes the false dichotomy of surface/depth.

The privileging of the depth or essence in Euro-American discourse plays an operative role within western interpretations of tattooing by allowing the tattoo as a “superficial” sign to be denigrated. This aspect of tattooing discourse is directly related to primitivism and the production of tattooing as a “savage” practice; this can be discerned in the argument of the “Savages” chapter from Alphonso Lingis’ *Excesses: Eros and Culture* (1983). Lingis unabashedly employs the term “savage” in opposition to an assumed Euro-American audience, though it is unclear what cultures or peoples he considers “savage.” He denies not only discursive terrain to the “savage” but also does not allow that such people possess semiotic systems or even the ability to produce signification: “What we are dealing with is inscription.

⁹ For the notion of depth subjectivity within tattooing discourses, see Sullivan 4.

Where writings, graphics, is not inscriptions on clay tablets, bark or papyrus, but in flesh and blood, and also where it is not historical, narrative. Where it is not significant, not a matter of marks whose role is to signify, to efface themselves before the meaning, or ideality, or logos. For here the signs count: they *hurt*” (23, emphasis in original). Lingis claims that “We civilized ones” find this tattooing “puerile and shallow. The savage fixing his identity on his skin. Our identity is inward, it is our functional integrity as machines to produce a certain civilized, that is, coded, type of actions” (43). This argument operates through a binarized conflation that relates surfaces to savagery, depth to civilization. For Lingis, “savage tattooing” can neither produce nor enter into narrative forms. However, the application of the tattoo, which entails the sensation of physical pain that Lingis views as paramount, is an event that becomes integrated into the narratives of both the individual subject and the community.

Every tattoo, no matter the time period, geographical location, culture, and style in which it is produced – from antiquity to yesterday, at any location, Tahitian, Samoan, Maori, American, British, Burmese, Japanese, and so on – is a sign that produces and possesses meaning. They are not confined by phonocentrism or logocentrism, as Lingis suggests. Whether a naturalized image, an abstract or geometrical design, a representation of a human face, or a linguistic sign, every tattoo is a signification, although the meaning of the design may not always be legible, interpretable, or understandable for everyone. For example, early explorers, visitors, and imperialists in the Pacific Islands were aware that the inhabitants’ tattoos expressed meaning, usually about the social person, but the distinct significations were generally opaque for Euro-Americans. Of course, tattoos of words, increasingly common in contemporary Euro-American tattooing though their history stretches back at least to sailors tattooed in the Pacific during the late 18th century, are not thus silent, but the majority of tattoos are images, not words. How can

we understand this form of body modification? Is it an inscription? It is writing? If it does not sit on the “surface” of the body, where does it exist?

The comparison between tattooing and writing is standard and prevalent; tattooing is commonly and popularly understood as a form of body writing in contemporary discourse. During early interactions between Pacific Islanders and Euro-Americans, the similarities between tattooing and linguistic writing on paper as forms of meaning and knowledge production were operative, but Pacific Islanders mostly produced this metaphorical comparison. Europeans usually interpreted tattooing through notions of painting, marking, staining, or clothing, which does not allow tattooing to attain the level of language or writing. By not granting the dignity of writing to tattooing, Euro-Americans also (predictably) denied discursive terrain to the “savage.” Of Tahitian tattooing, Cook writes, “This practice is universal among them, and is called tat-tow, a term which they afterwards applied to letters when they saw us write, being themselves perfectly illiterate” (*Journal* 44).¹⁰ James F. O’Connell, who was tattooed at Ponape of the Caroline Islands in Micronesia during the 1830s, claims in his *A Residence of Eleven Years in New Holland and the Caroline Islands* (1836) that the Pohnpeians “supposed printing was the English method of tattooing” (109-10). He relates an anecdote in which some women remove the leaves from his books and fashion them into dresses: “The wearers imagined themselves connected with the English chiefs while thus wearing the white man’s tattoo” (110). When a rain shower destroys the garments, O’Connell states, “They were very much chagrined at this, and protested that the white man’s tattoo was good for nothing, it

¹⁰ Anne Salmond provides another example of this from the *Endeavour*: “And when [Joseph] Banks sat down with Tupaia to write down place names around the coast on a chart of the island, recording them in this new form of *tatau* (or tattoo – as the islanders called writing when they first saw it), this seems yet another way of asserting *mana* or control over the island” (*Aphrodite’s Island* 197). Also see 318.

would not stand. That the islanders' tattoo will stand, my body is witness" (110). In addition to the distinction between indelible tattoos and impermanent printed matter, these examples indicate that Pacific Islanders understood European writing as a form of meaning production similar to their utilization of tattooing. This does not mean that they saw tattooing and writing as functioning in exactly the same manner; rather, they interpreted European writing through their own systems of knowledge production.

The western conception of tattooing as body-writing, especially within the genealogy of discourses beginning with the cultural exchange of the practice, risks denying the specificity of Pacific forms of meaning production by subordinating tattoo designs to the logic of written phonetic language. Writing and tattooing, whether practiced in the pre-contact Pacific, the contemporary Pacific, Europe, America, or elsewhere, are not equivalent forms of meaning and knowledge production. However, understanding tattooing as existing within an expansive definition of writing works against narrow imperial demarcations of writing and language.¹¹ In a discussion of proper names and classificatory difference from *Of Grammatology* (1967), Derrida argues, "all societies capable of producing, that is to say of obliterating, their proper names, and of bringing classificatory difference into play, practice writing in general. No reality or concept would therefore correspond to the expression 'society without writing'" (109). Juniper Ellis builds on Derrida's argument by positing, "by extension, people who practice tattoo create writing in a general sense" (15). Ellis's argument appears in a discussion of O'Connell's

¹¹ In *Queequeg's Coffin: Indigenous Literacies and Early American Literature* (2012), Birgit Brander Rasmussen discusses the importance of understanding non-western systems of signification, such as Pacific tattooing, as forms of writing: "The ways in which literary scholars have constructed their object – and abject – of inquiry remain deeply entangled with the history of European imperialism. As long as literary scholars continue to think about writing predominantly as the alphabetic system used by Europeans, we uphold that legacy by defining other forms of recording knowledge and narrative out of existence" (Rasmussen 3).

description of Pohnpeian tattooing in a chapter of ethnographic information from his memoir. O'Connell's comparison of tattoo designs to ideograms is an example of knowledge production about the Pacific being mediated through a different orientalism: "I never learned to read their marks, but imagine they must be something like the system of the Chinese" (153). The tattoo decenters and frustrates the expected oral/aural split of language because of its silent graphicity. The Euro-American in the Pacific cannot speak or hear the significations of the tattoo, but is nevertheless at least partially aware that these bodily inscriptions signify social standing, genealogy, and gender.¹²

The theoretical position that the human subject is produced through the inscription of the body by institutions or discourses also conceives the skin as a text or writing surface. The body is frequently seen as the passive medium of this inscription, though a level of agency or volition is sometimes granted to the subject. Although the notion of the body as an inscriptive surface operates through the metaphorical comparison between skin and the page or text, between ink or pigment and the specular signs of sex, gender, sexuality, class, race, and so on that the body is made to emit, the inscription is often removed from this figurative realm and made literal and actual: the body is *literally* written upon, the body is *literally* inscribed.¹³ The too easy elision of tattooing and writing would appear to provide the most appropriate paradigm for this bodily inscription, but the volitional nature of most tattooing (punitive or forced tattooing represents a small, albeit traumatic, fraction of Euro-American body modification history) does not match the rather passive agency of such subject formation. It seems that the reluctance of Euro-American

¹² As Ellis warns of Pacific body modification, "Tattoo is an analogue to language and forms a vital means of signification; but it is not reducible to writing, and the patterns exceed any lexicon" (12).

¹³ For example, Elizabeth Grosz explicitly argues for this move away from metaphor: "processes of bodily inscription must be understood as literal and constitutive" (137).

discourse consistently to grant tattooing the status of a semiotic system also contributes to this. While I would agree that the human subject is at least partially produced through the power of institutions and discursive structures, tattooing indicates an incongruity within the notion of writing or inscription for subject formations.

In the Pacific, particularly the archipelagoes that have been termed “Polynesia,” the process of undergoing the tattooing operation prepares the person for the pain of life and service to the community. In his essay “Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body,” Samoan novelist Albert Wendt writes, “Clothed not to cover your nakedness but to show you are ready for life, for adulthood and service to your community, that you have triumphed over physical pain and are now ready to face the demands of life” (400).¹⁴ Tattooing traditions vary across the Pacific and across time; the designs and their specific significations differ throughout Oceania. While I do not want to suggest that local variations in tattooing traditions, designs, and significations are not important and worthy of rigorous study, in the context of this project, it seems useful to develop a general definition of Pacific tattooing that can be juxtaposed with Euro-American discourses derived from the cultural exchange. Wendt discusses Samoan *tatau* and *malu* (male and female tattooing, respectively), but his characterization of the social role of tattooing seems applicable, as a general model, throughout the Pacific.¹⁵ Instead of emphasizing the presence of the tattoo within the skin, Wendt focuses more on the disruption of the body’s boundary and the blood

¹⁴ As Wendt warns, the connotations of clothing do not necessarily relate to notions of decoration or adornment: “In many Pacific cultures, body decoration and adornment is considered clothing. We have to be careful about those terms though because much of what has been considered ‘decoration’ or ‘adornment’ by outsiders has to do with identity (individual-aiga-group), status, age, religious beliefs, relationships to other art forms and the community and not to do with prettying yourself” (400). “Aiga” is defined in the glossary of Albert Wendt’s novel *Leaves of the Banyan Tree* (1979) as “family, extended family” (415).

¹⁵ Tattooing occurs at Tonga, Fiji, Samoa, The Society Islands, Mangareva, the Marquesas, Cook Islands, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Hawaii, Rapanui, among others. For specific information about these tattooing traditions, see Gell’s *Wrapping in Images*.

involved in the tattooing operation itself.¹⁶ This view of tattooing as an inscription on both skin and blood allows us to understand the tattoo as a specular sign that results from the disruption of the body's boundaries, an intense refashioning of the body and the social person. Wendt stresses the textuality and narrativization of the human subject through tattooing that Lingis denies:

In a deep psychological, mythological, symbolic way, tatauing is the act of printing or scripting a genealogical-spiritual-philosophical text on the blood, of testing to see if it can bear the pain of being in a human body, of storying it, giving it human design, shape, form, and identity yet risking all of that if the tatauing results in your bleeding to death. (Wendt 409)

The role of ritual here is key, as the tattooing operation risked death, yet the movement through this process contributes significantly to the form of the social person. The operation involves many people, including the tattooist, his assistants, and the relatives of the person being tattooed, who support the patient through the painful operation; it can be understood as a communal event. Surviving the operation shows that the person can handle the pain and challenges of life; they now know what they can do and what their limits are. The tattoo itself continually resignifies this triumph and this ability to overcome the obstacles of life. The tattooing operation helps produce the social person, but this is neither Foucauldian subject formation nor Althusserian interpellation.

Euro-American tattooing exists within a genealogy that is significantly structured by the cultural exchange at Tahiti in 1769 and various (mis)readings of the role of tattooing in social

¹⁶ “Our [Samoan] words for blood are *toto*, *eleele*, and *palapala*. (*Toto* can also mean to plant.) *Eleele* and *palapala* are also our terms for earth, soil, mud. We are therefore made of earth. Our blood, which keeps us alive, is earth. So when you are tatauing the blood, the self, you are reconnecting it to the earth, reaffirming that you are the earth, genetically and genealogically” (Wendt 409).

reproduction. Rather than a form of phonetic or linguistic writing, rather than a system of graphics, rather than an external representation of internal essence, Euro-American tattooing is a cultural practice that produces an embodied semiotic system. It cannot be reduced to lexicography or alphabetic notation; it is not merely images, designs, or ornamentation that do not produce significations. I refer to it as a semiotic system because all tattooing creates signs that are able to be interpreted.¹⁷ It is specifically embodied because the human body is its main medium of transmission and presentation. With tattooing, the body is not written upon; its form and specular appearance are indelibly altered through the inclusion of visible signs within the skin. While there is no path fully outside the surface/depth binary, tattooing reconfigures our understanding of the surface and depth with respect to the body and the subject. The tattoo does not reside within the depths of the body, but nor is it on the surface. It exists within the body while nevertheless remaining always visible for other subjects. It is neither an inner representation pulled out to the surface nor an external sign that is projected onto the body. The Euro-American tattoo as an embodied semiotic system is a cultural sign that is incorporated within the body of the human subject.

Modernist Literature

It is as an embodied semiotic system that tattooing enters Euro-American literature through primitivist appropriation. The difference in medium between the human body and written representation on paper is roughly congruous with and operates as an analogue to the more (in)famous examples of modernist primitivism. The African and Oceanic objects that were

¹⁷ My use of semiotics is neither a specifically Saussurian nor Barthesian definition, though both Saussure and Barthes influence my thinking. I understand semiotics as operating within a wider field than Saussure's linguistic work, though not in the same context as Barthes' work, in *Mythologies* for example. I do not want to objectify and distance the designs and meanings of tattooing. Rather, I am arguing for tattooing as a system of meaning and knowledge production that is unique because of its reliance upon the human body for its transmission and interpretation.

interpreted as “primitive art” and utilized as inspirational forms by Euro-American painters were three-dimensional objects – mostly sculptures and masks – whose form and design were incorporated within two-dimensional representational and abstract paintings. These objects were appropriated as a means to “solve” problems of composition or design within modernist Euro-American art. The shift in medium matches and supports the movement across cultures, geographical locations, and constructed notions of temporality and “civilization.” Although more Euro-Americans were being tattooed during the early 20th century than previously, the representation of the tattooed body for the most part did not find expression in visual media during the modernist period.¹⁸ There is the exception of the display of the tattooed body in circuses, sideshows, and freak shows, but that is a presentation, not (re)presentation, of tattooing that is dependent upon the physical proximity of the tattooed subject. Rather than visually representing the tattooed body, Europeans and Americans wrote about tattooing. Similar to artists who appropriated African and Oceanic objects for their formal qualities, authors appropriated tattooing because of its status as a semiotic system of knowledge production, whether this status was explicitly acknowledged or not.

The different manners in which literary authors represent tattooing and the tattooed body draw upon and are embedded within the genealogy of discourses that I trace back to the cultural exchange of the practice.¹⁹ Modernist authors specifically utilized the tattooed body as a

¹⁸ For tattooing in visual media, specifically tattoo contests, advertising, and photography, from the mid-20th century to the early-21st century in America, see *Tattoos in American Visual Culture* (2007) by Mindy Fenske.

¹⁹ My understanding of the relationship between Euro-American modernist writing and ideas about tattooing derived from the cultural exchange possesses a similar structure to Simon Gikandi’s description of the interaction between modernism and colonized peoples: “modernism represents perhaps the most intense and unprecedented site of encounter between the institutions of European cultural production and the cultural practices of colonized peoples....the relationship between the institution of modernism and these other cultural spaces is not, as was

primitivist vehicle. The tattoo inflects the issues of modernity and imperialism through its discursive connections to understandings of race, nationality, gender, and sexuality. The modernist texts all share the assumption that tattooing operates as an embodied semiotic system. Marinetti's *Mafarka the Futurist* exemplifies the production of tattooing as a "primitive" form of signification that is incompatible with modernity. Van Vechten's *The Tattooed Countess* mobilizes class-based tattooing, the comparison to clothing, and the notion of depth personality. The verbal cataloguing, both in song and in spiel, of the designs on the bodies of tattooed performers appears in various modernist cultural productions, including Dos Passos' *1919*, the films of the Marx Brothers, and *Nightwood*. Joyce incorporated the sexualized signs that proliferate around tattooing in his representation of the sailor D.B. Murphy. A brief overview of these texts indicates an index of Euro-American tattooing discourses.

Mafarka the Futurist is an early example of the modern primitivist representation of tattooing as an embodied semiotic system. Mafarka's arms are "tattooed with birds," and his body has a "snakish patterning" (7, 8). He makes reference to "warriors with arms tattooed with lizards" and twice identifies people through their tattoos (76).²⁰ The most pertinent reference to tattooing in the novel, however, appears in the chapter "The Futurist Address" as Mafarka informs his followers that he is leaving them to fashion his "son." He represents tattooing as an archaic practice that cannot signify his new futurist aspirations and glorification of violence:

the case in earlier periods of European art, decorative: it is dynamic, dialectical, and constitutive of the field of European and American culture" (421). Tattooing in modernist literature moves away from earlier literary representations structured through the ethnographic description of Pacific cultural practices, such as Melville's *Typee*, to a primitivist appropriation that employs the tattoo as a means of knowledge production while simultaneously representing the discursive structures of Euro-American interpretations of tattooing.

²⁰ "By their tattoos, Mafarka recognized two of his best captains" (24). Also: "By the vermilion feathers flaming in his tousled hair, and by the countless strings of shells clattering over his coal-black body, tattooed with blue moons, Mafarka knew him at once as one of the generals in the negro army" (38).

Abdullah, would you have me stamp my will on the heart of my people by aping those stupid tattooists who patiently draw symbolic figures on the skin, carefully pricking the outline using a piece of shell with saw's teeth cut into it? Would you have me...spend my days using a cruel hammer to batter with all my strength at crude principles?...No, no, I'm not a tattooist, nor a wood engraver! The only thing I love is blood spurting under my axe's furious blows, and I wouldn't know how to inset the colour of my thoughts into a wound if I had to pound them, thin them, and use a fine brush! (Marinetti 142, ellipses in original)

He rejects tattooing as an insufficiently modernist and futurist method of signification and knowledge production; nor is it violent enough for Mafarka. Instead of the Euro-American electric machine, the implements described signal tattooing as a “primitive” practice. Mafarka compares his thoughts and principles to the tattoo pigment, but believes that they would become “thin” if their transmission and representation occurred through the embodied semiosis of tattooing.

The Tattooed Countess: A Romantic Novel with a Happy Ending by Carl Van Vechten mainly utilizes tattooing discourses related to fashion and class. The Countess – Ella – is a widow who returns in 1897 to her hometown in Iowa after twenty years in Europe. She has a tattoo, “a curious emblem,” on her left forearm above the wrist: “a skull, pricked in black, on which a blue butterfly perched, while a fluttering phylactery beneath bore the motto: Que sais-je? [What do I know?]” (2). After her sister mentions the tattoo, the Countess “recalled the day she had submitted to the torture, as an additional bond which bound her to Tony,” with whom she had a disastrous affair that precipitated her return to Iowa (42). Her sister Lou, who is concerned about the tattoo's easy exposure, asks, “Why were you tattooed? Is it fin de siècle?” (43). The

Countess quips, “Why, no, Lou; it’s eternal” (43). This joke about the indelible nature of tattooing, which displays how notions of temporality cluster around representations of tattoos, relies upon the temporal marker *fin de siècle* and the inhabitants of the town using this phrase to mean fashionable.²¹ Much of the tension surrounding the Countess’ tattoo relates to class connotations attached to tattooing – the bourgeois inhabitants of the town interpret tattooing as a lower class or aristocratic practice, one that does not fit with middle-class respectability. This class discourse is closely connected to notions of surfaces and depth personality: “The Countess reminded herself that in any case she did not care what happened amongst these provincials who had so much regard for surfaces, but who all wore hidden scars. I am tattooed on my arm while they are tattooed on their hearts, she realized with a smile” (162). This conflation of tattooing and emotional trauma or scarring indicates that the tattoo is understood as the visual sign of an important, essential aspect or event of the subject’s life. The class dynamics of the novel signal that this embodied semiosis of depth personality exists outside the ken of the bourgeoisie.

Viewing the extensive tattoos of a sideshow performer was not, however, beyond the experience of the middle class. The popular early-20th century entertainment venues of the circus and sideshow frequently included tattooed performers, most of whom were women. In “Newsreel XXXVII” from *1919*, John Dos Passos includes a few stanzas from a song about a tattooed lady, “The Tattooed Lady” or “Oh That Tattooed French Lady,” which is an anonymous parody of “My Home in Tennessee.”²² This woman, likely a tattooed circus performer, has the Royal Flying Corps on her jaw, the Union Jack on her back, battleships on her hips, and the King’s Own Guard running down her spine (344). This cataloguing of tattoos on a woman’s

²¹ “I suppose it’s [wearing make-up] quite *fin de siècle* there (it took Ella some days to learn that Lou used this popular phrase as a synonym for fashionable) but nobody here would understand” (33).

²² Trombold 314. See also Parry 68-9.

body, as well as the performance of tattooed ladies in circuses and sideshows, is a sexualized representation that operates through the exposure of skin necessary to view the tattoos. The designs reflect the patriotic tenor of much early-20th century Euro-American tattooing. Dos Passos' inclusion of this song relates to the popularity of tattooed ladies and songs celebrating them.

The most famous such song is likely "Lydia the Tattooed Lady," written by Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg and first performed by Groucho Marx in the 1939 Marx Brothers film *At the Circus*. Groucho begins the song by stating, "My life was wrapped around the circus. Her name was Lydia," which indicates that she was a tattooed performer (*At the Circus*). He claims he met Lydia at the 1900 world's fair. In the film, he is holding a *carte de visite* of Lydia; rather than a photograph, it is a drawing. Like the tattooed lady from Dos Passos, Lydia has patriotic tattoos: the American flag, the painting "Washington Crossing the Delaware," and Andrew Jackson. Her other tattoos include the Battle of Waterloo, the Wreck of the Hesperus, Kankakee IL, Paris, Niagara, Alcatraz, Treasure Island, Nijinsky, and her Social Security number. There is also a reference to Lady Godiva, "but with her pajamas on," which offers and denies the representation of female nudity – the same sexualized specularly that structured the performance of tattooed ladies. Lydia also has a tattoo of an unspecified work by Picasso. Most importantly, however, she is referred to as an encyclopedia three times, which is rhymed with Lydia, and Groucho twice claims, "You can learn a lot from Lydia" (*At the Circus*). Her tattoos seem encyclopedic, as they relate to geography, American and European history, literature, art, dance, and recent developments in government. This notion that the heavily tattooed body presents such an array of information and that it functions as an educational tool relies on the production of tattooing as

embodied system of knowledge production. The tattooed circus performer is not simply a “human picture gallery”²³ but a textualized body that transmits meaning and knowledge.

It is thus as a verbalized cataloguing of the tattoos of a physically absent tattooed performer that tattooing appears in one of my main examples of the modern primitivist representation of the tattooed body, *Nightwood* by Djuna Barnes. Dr. Matthew O’Connor describes the racialized and sexualized full-body tattoos of Nikka, a circus performer of African descent, for dinner party guests in the first chapter. This long description, delivered in the style of the sideshow talker’s spiel, provides the central example in the novel of what I term “freak show discourse.” Nikka’s tattoos resignify and resist the racial and sexual discourses projected onto his body by Euro-Americans. My other main modernist text is the “Eumaeus” episode of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, particularly the tattoos of the sailor D.B. Murphy and the tattooing discourses that cluster around him. “Eumaeus” positions not only Murphy’s tattoos as signs of potentially queer sexuality, but represents the tattooing operation itself as a homosexual experience. Joyce also includes tattooing discourses related to mariners, class divisions, and criminality. I have chosen to focus chapters on Barnes and Joyce, rather than the above examples, because these authors represent multiple aspects of tattooing discourse, including the sideshow, knowledge production, racialization, sexuality, class, and criminality – the very elements of Euro-American tattooing discourses I trace back to the cultural exchange and the early 19th century. Barnes and Joyce also exemplify the structure of modern primitivist appropriation of tattooing that is roughly analogous to the appropriation of African and Oceanic objects because the written representation of the tattooed body opens a space for literary invention and experimentation. The verbal pyrotechnics of Dr. O’Connor begin with and are

²³ Albert Parry writes, “in the American circus lingo this expression, ‘the picture-gallery,’ is firmly entrenched, applied to any tattooed man or woman” (62).

structured by his representation of Nikka's tattoos, and the tattooed body is an integral element of Joyce's clichéd cataloguing and representation of unstable identity in "Eumaeus."

The narrative of my project begins with "Cultural Exchange and the Formation of Euro-American Tattooing Discourses," which examines James Cook's first Pacific voyage on the *Endeavour* (1768-1771) and the cultural exchange of tattooing that occurred at Tahiti in 1769 during his stay there. Through an analysis of the conditions of the voyage and the description of tattooing from Cook's journal, I argue that the cultural exchange was structured by a primitivist idealization of Tahitian sociality, the production of orientalist knowledge, and the fetishistic cathexis of the tattoo to cover the lack of knowledge. I trace a genealogical continuity of Euro-American tattooing discourses from this historical moment through three influential western interpretations of the tattooed body – anthropological, psychological, and criminological. Primitivism and orientalism provide discursive structures for these interpretations, such as the encoding of distinct knowledge in the tattoo from psychology and the comparison between "savages" and criminals that supports the criminological stance on tattooing. This chapter also examines the roles of sailors, with a particular focus on the *Bounty* mutiny, in Euro-American tattooing discourses relating to class, criminality, and primitivism. Especially because of William Bligh's inclusion of tattooing in his lists of the mutineers and his argument that primitivist idealization of Tahiti caused the mutiny, the tattoos of the mutineers helped facilitate primitivist and criminological discourses about tattooing. Class structured the form of idealization and the types of tattoo designs among the *Bounty* crew. This chapter ends with a discussion of beachcombers, Euro-American men who lived with Pacific Island communities and received tattoos as a means of integration.

“‘A hideous object to look upon’: The Tattooed Body in *Typee*” continues the analysis of beachcomber tattoos by positioning Herman Melville’s first novel, which was based on his own experiences in the Marquesas, as a beachcomber narrative, as well as an early example of the primitivist representation of Pacific tattooing in literature. I examine *Typee* in the context of narratives written by two beachcombers, Edward Robarts and Jean Cabri, who also lived in the Marquesas, about forty years before Melville, and their representations of tattooing. Melville’s narrator Tommo positions his text as a contribution to the Euro-American imperial archive on the Pacific that reconfigures naval and missionary writings into a literary narrative through intertextual citation. Tommo produces the inhabitants of Taipivai as objects of knowledge by representing cannibalism and tattooing as markers of “civilization”; the former is never seen but constantly expected, and the latter is constantly visible but never acceded to. The representation of Marquesan tattooing relates to notions of class, the figure of the “noble savage,” homoeroticism, gender instability, textualized knowledge production, and cultural captivity. In this light, I demonstrate that the novel depicts Pacific tattooing as an incomprehensible system of signification. Tommo attempts to exert textual control over a system of meaning he does not understand by establishing tattooing as a “savage” method of representation that must be strenuously rejected by the imperial Euro-American agent of “civilization.” The production of tattooing as an embodied semiotic system undergirds the novel’s representation of tattooing, but this discourse is applied to the Pacific tattoo, not western body modification. Marquesan tattooing is positioned as a dangerously encompassing semiotic system that can overwhelm Euro-American significations.

Some returned beachcombers displayed their tattooed bodies for profit in Europe and America; they were the forerunners of the presentation of the tattooed bodies in circuses and

sideshows during the late-19th and early-20th centuries. It is thus through the sideshow that my project enters the modernist period with the subsequent chapter, “Imagined Genealogies: The Sideshow of *Nightwood*.” I argue that freak show discourse and the repeated comparisons of characters to sideshow performers represent an integral aspect of the discursive structure of *Nightwood*, pushing against the novel’s essentialist notions of race, gender, and sexuality. I define “freak show discourse” as the tension between the essentialization of bodily difference in the sideshow and the performative construction of the “freak” identity. Through the sideshow, the characters of *Nightwood* employ imagined genealogies, counternarratives in which they are not contained by restrictive notions of race, heredity, sex/gender, and sexuality. Barnes’ representation of freak show discourse, specifically the debasement of the disabled body and the performance of “savagery,” can be traced to two newspaper articles she wrote in the 1910s about Coney Island in which she discusses the resort’s sideshow. O’Connor conjures three sideshow performers through his oral spiels: Nikka, Mademoiselle Basquette, and the ossified man. Nikka’s tattoos represent an active, volitional resistance to and resignification of primitivist discourses projected onto the racially marked body, particularly relating to hypersexuality, fears of miscegenation, and “savagery.” Through the production of the tattooed body as a means of knowledge production, as well as the indelible nature of tattooing, Nikka’s body is the site/cite of a self-conscious appropriation of Euro-American discourses inscribed within the skin that refutes the racialized and sexualized discourses of the exotic or noble savage projected onto him. The narrative voice depicts Felix Volkbein and his imaginary Austrian barony through the aggrandized mode of presentation from the sideshow, and O’Connor compares him to the figure of the “legless wonder.” I argue that Robin Vote’s queer sexuality and gender indeterminacy are filtered through a naturalized primitivism that stretches back to the precultural, which is set in the

context of the sideshow, as she is compared to the ossified man. Dr. O'Connor takes on the role of the sideshow talker and represents his gender and sexuality through the figure of the bearded lady. By citing the history and discursive tension of the sideshow, *Nightwood* opens the representational space for these imagined genealogies.

The next chapter, "Within the Skin: Primitivism, Homosexuality, and Class in the 'Eumaeus' Episode of *Ulysses*," examines the intersections of tattooing, queer sexuality, and primitivist discourse in the representation of the sailor D.B. Murphy. The inaccuracies and evasions in Murphy's stories function as (re)presentations of the disregard for specificity within primitivism – distinct geographical locations and cultural practices of indigenous peoples are subordinated to the function of marking difference from and a supposed inferiority to the civilization of the colonizer. This indeterminacy is intimately connected with the ambivalent sexualized signs that proliferate around and on Murphy. Rather than a couple of tattoo designs on the sailor produced as signs of queer desire, the tattooing operation itself – the process of applying indelible images to human skin – is coded in "Eumaeus" as a homosexual experience. This interpretation of tattooing appears in Albert Parry's sociological and psychoanalytic work *Tattoo* from 1933. I argue that, at the historical moment that *Ulysses* occurs – June 16, 1904 – this homoerotic discourse about tattooing was in the process of its formation; Joyce thus represents this connection between tattooing and queer sexuality in an ambivalent manner, though silence and evasion. Criminological and class discourses about tattooing also cluster around Murphy. I demonstrate the primitivist structures and assumptions of these interpretations of tattooing through an analysis of writings by Cesare Lombroso and Parry. The role of tattooing in "Eumaeus" and how Joyce links it with primitivism, homosexuality, and class indicates the manner in which human skin is erected and maintained as a false barrier that supports imperial

discourse, rigid class divisions, and heteronormativity. Tattooing exposes these as social constructions that produce the skin, the specular “surface” of the human body, as a false barrier.

The last chapter, “Negative Space,” returns the dissertation to the Pacific through an analysis of Albert Wendt’s novel *The Mango’s Kiss* (2003) and the “contemporary tribal” tattoo style of Leo Zulueta. *The Mango’s Kiss* follows a Samoan family from the 19th century into the 20th. I pay particular attention to the chapter “A Tatau for an April Fool,” which depicts the white beachcomber-turned-trader Barker receiving a full Samoan *tatau*. Wendt represents a Pacific perspective – one that is multivocal and shifting – of the tattooing of Euro-Americans in the Pacific and its role in social integration. Rather than a marker of cultural inclusion, the contemporary western body modification movement known as “modern primitivism” understands non-western tattooing, mostly Pacific tattooing, as a repository of designs freely available for appropriation by Euro-Americans. Leo Zulueta, the originator of the neo-tribal style, positions Pacific tattooing as the inspiration for his own tattoo designs. Through an analysis of Zulueta’s work and ideas, I examine the relationship between appropriation, knowledge production, and notions of appreciation or awareness. The specular syncretism of Euro-Americans with tattoos inspired by Pacific traditions is the current iteration of the genealogy of tattooing discourses that began with the *Endeavour* crew at Tahiti. Both primitivism and the Pacific remain operative in contemporary tattooing practices.

This project positions the representation of the tattooed body in modernist literature as an aspect of modernism’s engagement – its participation in as well as its facilitation and critique of – with the discourse of primitivism. The embodied and indelible condition of tattooing can reconfigure how modernist temporality is understood, as well as the relationship between Euro-American modernist artists and authors and modernity’s “others.” Through tattooing, the

fragmented and exploded temporality of modernity can exist in multiple forms on and within the same body, subjectivity, and text. Primitivist appropriation is the structure that allows seemingly incongruous signs of time, geography, race, gender, sexuality, and culture to inflect and compromise each other. No instance of appropriation exists without its evasions, elisions, disavowals, contestations, repossessions, history, and genealogy. This dissertation traces such narratives.

Chapter II: Cultural Exchange and the Formation of Euro-American Tattooing Discourses

The term “cultural exchange” as a description of the interactions between the *Endeavour* crew and their Tahitian hosts during 1769 does not indicate a symmetrical exchange of material goods. While the Europeans likely provided the Tahitian tattooists some form of recompense for the application of the tattoos, what the crew received was both material – the indelible designs within the skin – and cultural – the reintroduction of a form of body modification during contact between two cultures. The latter can be understood as cultural because Euro-American tattooing since this historical event has been structured by the discourses and conditions that facilitated the tattooing of the *Endeavour* crew. Throughout this project, I expose and analyze these connections, most of which have frequently been obfuscated in discussions of Euro-American tattooing. The term “cultural exchange” signals the intense force these interactions had on the social practice of body modification in the west. Because the Tahitians made a choice to tattoo the members of the *Endeavour*, the term exchange seems more accurate than appropriation. However, the primitivist evocations that shape how Euro-American writers have handled Pacific tattooing indicate that structures of cultural appropriation are operative in discussions of body modification. I use both cultural exchange and appropriation to refer to the disarticulation of tattooing from a Pacific context with the understanding that these terms are contested and partially overlapping.

Contemporary Euro-American tattooing discourses exist within a genealogy that begins with the events of 1769. The *Endeavour*'s three-month stay, during which the Tahitians defined, controlled, and inscribed the extent to which the Europeans were allowed entry into, and

knowledge of, their social institutions, produced syncretic bodily presentations through the incorporation of Pacific tattooing within European skin. The Pacific tattoo was grafted onto Euro-American culture and conceptions of the body. Because of the remarkable continuity of tattooing discourses, and because of the indelible nature of the tattoo, I theorize the tattoo as a trace that always resignifies its transmission, and the conditions that facilitated this movement, from the Pacific Islands to Europe and America. As such, the western tattoo always retains the trace of orientalist claims to knowledge, primitivist appropriation, destabilization of the civilized/savage binary, capitalist-driven imperialism, and the enlightenment mission of the *Endeavour*. The tattoo as a trace is carried not only through contemporary Europe and America, but even through its representation in modernism. This project follows the tattoo as trace through its discursive genealogy from 1769 to the present moment.

Exchange/Appropriation: Primitivism, Orientalism, and Fetishization

Europeans commented on Pacific tattooing over one hundred fifty years before Cook's first voyage. In 1595 at Fatu Hiva in the Marquesas, the Portuguese-born Spanish navigator Pedro Fernandez de Quiros recorded the first European encounter with Pacific tattooing. He described the tattooed Marquesans: "They all came naked, without any part covered; their faces and bodies in patterns of a blue colour, painted with fish and other patterns."¹ In 1690, the English traveler William Dampier purchased a half-share in "Jeoly" or Giolo, a man from Miangis, an isolated island due east of southern Mindanao.² Dampier brought him to England, where he displayed Giolo's tattooed body for profit (Douglas 34). Outside these brief episodes,

¹ Quoted in: Douglas 33.

² Mindanao is the southernmost island of the Philippines, so this example exists outside Polynesia and even the Pacific Island geography, in its area studies definition. At the same time, this example suggests the artificial and arbitrary nature of these boundaries.

however, scholars have yet to uncover other representations of Pacific tattooing in European writing, if they do exist, until the voyages of “discovery” in the late 18th century.

One of the most commonly cited reasons for viewing the *Endeavour* voyage as the reinvigoration and recontextualization of a historically discontinuous practice is the etymological derivation of the word tattoo. Tattoo and related words derive from the Tahitian *tatau*, which means to strike, mark, or tattoo (Thomas 7). *Tatau* is not an exclusively Tahitian word, however, as it is used in other Pacific languages to describe tattooing. For example, *tatau* is the Samoan word for male tattooing.³ By reducing the exchange of tattooing to etymology, however, the effects of contact, orientalism, and primitivism can be erased from analyses of western discourses on tattooing. This also allows for both the social institution of Pacific tattooing and the class component of the western practice to be naturalized, obscuring the living culture of Pacific Islanders and the historical process that produced the tattoos which were read by westerners as “class Other.”

“Tattooing” or “tattowing” first appeared in English print in 1771, in the anonymous book, attributed to James Magra, *A Journal of the Voyage Round the World (Tattoo 227n3)*. This neologism can be understood as signaling that the western practice of tattooing likely derived more from contact with the Pacific Islands than from older European forms of body modification: “‘Mark’d’ was one of the contemporary terms used to describe permanent inscriptions on the body prior to the introduction of the word ‘tattoo’ as a direct consequence of the Cook voyages” (*Tattoo 231n7*). The first publication of Cook’s description of Tahitian tattooing, in a truncated form, appeared in *An Account of the Voyages (1773)*. This volume was compiled by John Hawkesworth from the journals onboard the *Endeavour* and other ships, which

³ In the essay “Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body,” Samoan novelist Albert Wendt provides a list of the various meanings and valences of *tatau*, page 401.

were appropriated by the Admiralty upon return.⁴ A shift in terms, however, does not necessarily entail that Euro-American tattooing after the *Endeavour* voyage is distinct from a historically discontinuous European practice.

Cook's full description of Tahitian tattooing in his *Endeavour* journal neither compares the Pacific social institution to a mariner tradition of body modification nor describes the operation as marking or staining. This lack of comparison to European standards, a routine rhetorical move in writings on the Pacific from the time period, signals that tattooing was most likely understood as a novel form of body modification. Cook's description of tattooing appears in the section "Person of the Natives," which follows the entry for 13 July 1769, three months after the *Endeavour* reached Tahiti. The aspects of the physical bodies of Tahitians discussed here are skin color, hair, hygiene, the use of coconut oil, skin diseases (including a possible form of leprosy), tattoo designs and operation, and clothing. As such, the first extended European description of Pacific tattooing was surrounded by early textual instances of two prevalent western discourses about the Pacific, namely the figure of the "dying Polynesian" and the comparison of tattooing to clothing.⁵ Through this contextualization, Cook represents Tahitian

⁴ For a discussion of Hawkesworth and the compilation *An Account of the Voyages*, see "The Unfortunate Compiler" in *Exploration & Exchange* 72-91.

⁵ Cook's two paragraphs about tattooing are preceded by the following description of skin diseases: "The inhabitants of this island are troubled with a sort of leprosy, or scab all over their bodies. I have seen men, women, and children, but not many, who have had this distemper to that degree as not to be able to walk. This distemper, I believe, runs in families, because I have seen both mother and child have it" (Cook 26). The supposition that the disease "runs in families" relates to western myths of the "dying Polynesian," in which the causes of disease and depopulation are located within Pacific Islander communities, rather than in the infectious diseases brought to the islands on Euro-American ships.

tattooing as a novel practice that sits uncomfortably somewhere between skin diseases and clothing, between abjection and proper covering.⁶

The description of Tahitian tattoo designs and the operation itself in Cook's *Endeavour* journal refers to "tattoo" as a method of indelibly painting the body and focuses on the diversity of images and gendered differences. Cook's representation of Tahitian tattooing is as follows:

Both sexes paint their bodies, *tattoo*, as it is called in their language. This is done by inlaying the colour of black under their skins, in such a manner as to be indelible. Some have ill-designed figures of men, birds, or dogs; the women generally have this figure Z simply on every joint of their fingers and toes; the men have it likewise, and both have other figures, such as circles, crescents, etc., which they have on their arms and legs; in short, they are so various in the application of these figures that both the quantity and situation of them seem to depend entirely upon the humour of each individual, yet all agree in having their buttocks covered with a deep black. Over this most have arches drawn one over another as high as their short ribs, which are near a quarter of an inch broad. These arches seem to be their great pride, as both men and women show them with great pleasure.

Their method of tattooing I shall now describe. The colour they use is lamp black, prepared from the smoke of a kind of oily nut, used by them instead of

⁶ In an analysis of discourses of disease and degeneracy, specifically in the context of Jack London's Pacific stories, Rod Edmond discusses the connections between leprosy and Pacific perspectives on tattooing. He utilizes the protective integument reading of tattoos, which I will discuss later in the context of Alfred Gell's *Wrapping in Images* (1993): "Leprosy can be seen as the opposite of tattooing. If tattooing strengthens the skin then leprosy weakens it until it disintegrates. By reinforcing the skin, tattooing encloses and multiplies the person. Leprosy, on the other hand, unwraps the body, strips away its social identity, makes an outside of its inside, and anticipates death through premature decomposition" (Edmond 205).

candles. The instrument for pricking it under the skin is made of very thin flat pieces of bone or shell, from a quarter of an inch to an inch and a half broad, according to the purpose it is to be used for, and about an inch and a half long. One end is cut into sharp teeth, and the other fastened to a handle. The teeth are dipped into black liquor, and then drove, by quick, sharp blows struck upon the handle with a stick for that purpose, into the skin so deep that every stroke is followed with a small quantity of blood. The part so marked remains sore for some days before it heals. As this is a painful operation, especially the tattowing their buttocks, it is performed but once in their lifetimes; it is never done until they are twelve or fourteen years of age. (Cook 26-7)

Besides a couple specific designs, Cook does not perceive coherence and social or ritual significance in Tahitian tattooing. He does not seem to have much esteem for the artistry of tattooing, as the only adjective pertaining to a qualitative description of the tattoos themselves is “ill-designed.” Instead of understanding the prevalence of tattooing in Tahiti as indicating its role in social relations and the life cycle, Cook interprets this body modification as a form of personal, volitional embellishment, which the proximity to the description of clothing reinforces. Also, the placement of this passage directly after the description of blemishes could lead to comparisons between infectious diseases and tattooing. This view of tattooing as a cultural disease, which I will discuss later in this chapter, appears in Alfred Gell’s anthropological study *Wrapping in Images: Tattooing in Polynesia* (1993). The apparently “great pleasure” with which Tahitians display tattoos on their backsides, and presumably elsewhere on the body, anticipates the performative potential of the tattooed body in the west, which was realized in the 19th and

early-20th centuries when Euro-American men and women began to display their tattoos in circuses and sideshows for profit.

Cook's extended description of Tahitian tattooing is couched in ethnographic detail (it seems as if Cook measured the tattooing implements himself), but there is no explicit comparison to European practices of body modification. The placement of this passage, bracketed by descriptions of skin disease and clothing, however, indicates a discursive category through which this novel practice of body modification was likely interpreted by members of the *Endeavour*. The supposition that tattooing represents a form of individual, volitional bodily embellishment and ornamentation akin to clothing seems to have been operative at this time, as tattooing soon became an important aspect of individual mariner's bodily self-presentation.

The tattoo fashion developed throughout the hierarchy of the ship, including the gentleman naturalist Joseph Banks,⁷ though not Cook himself. In Banks' *Endeavour* journal, he uses Cook's text as the basis of an account of Tahitian tattooing that incorporates his own observations. At the end of a description of different tattoo designs, Banks writes, "in short they have an infinite diversity of figures in which they place this mark and some of them we were told had significations but this we never learnt to our satisfaction" (335). Joined with the bewilderment signaled by the phrase "infinite diversity" is the assumption that the tattoo signifies, that it operates as a semiotic system. At this moment of contact and exchange, the Europeans are not able to discern what the tattoo designs mean. After describing the pain a

⁷ "Joseph Banks, who obtained a tattoo in Tahiti, was perhaps the original tattooed aristocrat" (Gell 22). Sydney Parkinson, an artist on the voyage, was also tattooed. Parkinson writes, "The natives are accustomed to mark themselves in a very singular manner, which they call tataowing. . . . Mr. Stainsby, myself, and some others of our company, underwent the operation, and had our arms marked: the stain left in the skin, which cannot be effaced without destroying it, is of a lively bluish purple, similar to that made upon the skin by gun-powder" (25). Robert Stainsby was an able seaman.

fourteen year-old girl experienced while undergoing the tattoo operation on her buttocks, Banks writes, “What can be a sufficient inducement to suffer so much pain is difficult to say; not one Indian (tho I have askd hundreds) would ever give me the least reason for it; possibly superstition may have something to do with it, nothing else in my opinion could be a sufficient cause for so apparently absurd a custom” (336-7). In an example of indigenous agency that Banks reduces to superstition, the Tahitians define and limit the information about tattooing that the members of the *Endeavour* can reproduce as textual knowledge. The tattoo Banks received seems to be an attempt to understand or experience, in the form of his own body, a custom he could not explain through writing.

As a result of the *Endeavour* voyage of 1768-1771, Pacific tattooing not only entered western consciousness, but also entered social practices, textual representation, and the skin of westerners. Tattooing became a convention among sailors that persisted into at least the 19th century. A coherent and widespread culture of mariner tattooing did not exist before 1769:

It is now broadly accepted that British sailors were already engaging in voluntary⁸ tattooing in the second half of the eighteenth century, although evidence of this practice remains sparse. Records from the Marine Society and “description books” used to identify employees in London shipyards just after the middle of the eighteenth century, for example, reported occasional cases of boys and men “mark’d” with their initials or names on their hand, wrist or arm. (White 73)

As with European tattooing in general at the time, mariner body modification was not a highly visible or widely practiced method of embodied representation. A historically discontinuous

⁸ The body modification practices discussed in this project are restricted to voluntary, non-punitive tattooing. For tattooing in a punitive context, see: Jones, C.P., “Stigma and Tattoo” and Gustafson, Mark, “The Tattoo in the Later Roman Empire and Beyond” in *Written on the Body*.

European tattooing tradition seems to have dwindled almost to the point of invisibility by the time of the *Endeavour*'s voyage.

While etymology and expanded textual representation cannot explain why the members of the *Endeavour* were more interested in and engaged with Tahitian tattooing than earlier European visitors, it does signal a higher degree of attention paid to the specific forms of social institutions in the Pacific. Prior references to tattooing, such as those by Pedro Fernandez de Quiros, Wallis, and Bougainville, likened the practice to painting. This analogy is still present in Cook's account, but he does make it clear that the operation is performed "in such a manner as to be indelible" (Cook 27). While we can observe an increased interest in Tahitian body modification practices during Cook's voyage in terms of the textual (re)presentation of tattooing for the European reading public, this cannot explain the specifically embodied engagement that occurred during the *Endeavour*'s three month stay at Tahiti. As Nicholas Thomas points out, Cook's "voyages represent stereotypically enlightened ventures, driven as they were by a restless, curious, secular natural history. But so too were his immediate predecessors, Wallis and Bougainville" (17).⁹ Cook's first visit to Tahiti in the *Endeavour* occurred only two years after initial contact. How can we account for the increased commentary on Tahitian tattooing, as well as numerous European men receiving tattoos? What conditions can be understood as facilitating the cultural exchange of tattooing that failed to materialize during the two previous European encounters with Tahitian body modification practices?

⁹ In 1767, the English ship the *Dolphin*, commanded by Samuel Wallis, made first European contact with Tahiti; the following year, the French captain Louis-Antoine de Bougainville of the *Boudeuse* also stopped at Tahiti in the course of his circumnavigation. Both men, as well as members of their expeditions, wrote about tattooing, but not extensively; there is no record that any Europeans were tattooed during these voyages. See Thomas "Introduction" 17.

Because of the commission to record the transit of Venus across the sun, the *Endeavour* stopped at Tahiti far longer than either Wallis or Bougainville, who “were both preoccupied by the need to obtain fresh supplies and ensure the security of ships and crews....Wallis used extreme force to suppress Tahitian assaults on the ship” (Douglas 36). Since the Tahitian’s first contact with Europeans was characterized by violent interaction, the local reaction to the *Endeavor* can be viewed as a different strategy of dealing with the European intruders:

They could entertain them, barter with them, extract goods from them, and otherwise use them, to bolster their own prestige and power, in local political struggles. Therefore, those visitors who came after Wallis met with what they considered friendliness and benevolence; the hospitality and generosity were real, but were also certainly *interested*. For the first time during any Pacific encounter, Cook and his crew were invited to enter into Tahitian sociality. (Thomas 17-8, emphasis in original)

The intimacy this strategic accommodation produced, coupled with the unprecedented stay of three months, resulted in the Europeans being welcomed into Tahitian social institutions, such as *taio* (bond friendships) and name-exchange. The tattooing of the crew itself could not materialize without the volition of the Tahitian community and its tattoo artists.¹⁰ This was not pure hospitality, but rather an attempt to establish the terms on which Europeans could gain entry into Tahitian social institutions, an entry the Europeans in some ways demanded by their continued presence.

¹⁰ This interpretation of Tahitian interaction with European visitors bears close resemblance to the manner in which Pacific communities later attempted to socialize and integrate beachcombers (Euro-American men, usually sailors who jumped ship or escaped convicts, who lived in the Pacific Islands for various times, ranging from a few weeks or months to decades).

Considering the high level of intimacy between the Europeans and Tahitians,¹¹ the members of the *Endeavour* may have understood their hosts as true friends,¹² yet they had received distinct instructions about how to interact with Pacific Islanders. When the *Endeavour* anchored at Matavai Bay for the first time on April 13, 1769, Cook posted guidelines for interaction with Tahitians. This notice “effectively publicized the section of his secret Admiralty Instructions most directly applicable to the scene of contact: the instructions on friendship formation and trade” (Smith 61). This section of the secret instructions runs:

You are to endeavour by all proper means to cultivate a friendship with the Natives, presenting them such Trifles as may be acceptable to them, exchanging with them Provisions (of which there is great Plenty) such of the Merchandize you have been directed to provide, as they may value, and showing them every kind of Civility and regard. But as Captn Wallis has represented the Island to be very populous, and the Natives (as well there as at the other Islands which he visited) to be rather treacherous than otherwise you are to be Cautious not to let your self be surprised by them, but to be Constantly on your guard against any accident. (Cook, quoted in Smith 4)

These instructions contain the seeds of several European discourses about the Pacific that were developing at the time, including the infantilization that assumes European “trifles” will be of

¹¹ “Notoriously, many of the European men enjoyed sex with local women. But, equally or more consequentially, they also slept on shore, very often in the houses of Tahitians; they ate with them; they toured with them; they tried to speak Tahitian; they witnessed entertainments such as dances and boxing matches, as well as many other quotidian practices; they showed Tahitians around the ship; they playfully compared their persons, their goods and their habits; and nearly all the visitors underwent the ritual of name-exchange, forming one-to-one *taio* partnerships or friendship contracts with locals” (Thomas 18).

¹² For friendships between Pacific Islanders and Europeans during the late 18th century, see: Smith (2010).

high value to the islanders; the image of Pacific islands as places so superabundant that cultivation is unnecessary; and the “savage” treachery of which visitors must always be wary. Similarly striking is the assumption that the voyage’s interaction with Tahitians will be structured by the concepts of friendship and exchange. The Admiralty could not anticipate, however, the level of intimacy this friendship would attain, nor that exchange would entail more than European trifles and Tahitian provisions. Tattooing is not a handful of nails, red feathers, a hog, or a basket of breadfruit.

The tattooing of Europeans at Tahiti during the *Endeavour*’s stay occurred as a result of a confluence of circumstances; the actual decision to get tattooed, however, was not recorded: “Precisely why the Europeans sought tattoos, or acceded to requests that they were tattooed, is not documented for any of the participants in Cook’s first voyage” (Thomas 18). The acquisitive aspect of the *Endeavour*’s voyage, characterized by “the pervasive and episodically obsessive interest in collecting ethnographic specimens, which common sailors participated in as vigorously as the natural historians,” might have facilitated the desire on the part of individual sailors to privatize something from the voyage, to obtain a distinctive souvenir from the Pacific (19). While the connection between tattooing and personal incorporation of the voyage seems plausible, the “relevance of collecting to tattooing breaks down at the point we consider the prospect of reselling the collected thing” (19).¹³ If we view collecting not solely in terms of economic use or exchange value, but also as a method of claiming and producing knowledge about a culture, how can we understand the motivations behind this incorporation?

¹³ Since this episode represents the cultural exchange of tattooing, the possibility of Euro-Americans earning money by displaying their tattooed bodies at home did not exist yet. During the 19th century, the exhibition of the tattooed body became a regular means of earning a living for returned beachcombers who had been tattooed in the Pacific. See Werner 11-25.

Tattooing at Tahiti in 1769 produced various interpretations, reworkings, and appropriations. The tattoos received by members of the *Endeavour* were not uniform: “Some Cook voyage participants were certainly tattooed with Tahitian designs, but many others simply had Tahitian tattooists inscribe names, dates or European motifs upon their skin” (Thomas 21). The collecting, natural history aspect of the voyage can be understood as establishing the groundwork of a nascent Pacific archive for the use and benefit of Euro-American subjects. By framing the sailors’ incorporation of tattooing as receiving its impetus from the enlightened, ethnographic mission of the *Endeavour*’s voyage, the cultural exchange of tattooing appears to have functioned along two related axes, orientalism and primitivism.¹⁴ While not of the same geographical location and imperialist archive that Said discussed, as Paul Lyons argues, “The theoretical category of archive...would seem to enable an analysis of the ongoing traditions of imagining Oceania as another variety of Orientalism” (Lyons 35).¹⁵ Said’s general characterization of Orientalism runs:

It is rather a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts; it is an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction...but also of a whole series of “interests” which...it not only creates but also maintains; it is, rather than expresses, a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to

¹⁴ For a different reading of the relationship between orientalism and primitivism that links them through waste, nationhood, and racialized femininity in the context of Josephine Baker, see Cheng 149-150.

¹⁵ In *American Pacificism* (2006), Paul Lyons discusses the limitations of “Orientalism” within a Pacific context: “For one thing, given the centuries-long and ongoing displacement of Oceanian priorities and history by discourses about the Orient, and the tendency of the study of Orientalism to stretch right over the Pacific, the term ‘Orientalism’ seems inappropriate, laden with geographical associations that historically marginalize Oceania under the rubric of the Orient” (36). My use of the term refers to the western process and discourse of knowledge production, rather than the actual examples Said analyzed (hence the lack of capitalization).

incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw, but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power. (Said 12)

We can detect a desire to understand the radically different culture of the (tattooed) body found in the Pacific in the large number of men who wrote about tattooing. The common sailor on the *Endeavour* did not have the representational means to produce, disseminate, and display various categories of knowledge; his orientalist interest in Tahitian sociality was indelibly inscribed within his skin. Since the initial cultural exchange, tattooing in the west has been represented both textually and corporeally.

This specifically embodied form of knowledge production can help reconfigure how we understand orientalism and the “texts” through which it is discursively disseminated. If a lower-class sailor can collect and claim knowledge about Tahiti through tattooing, and if a naturalist can produce knowledge about plants, animals, and social customs through written works while also receiving a tattoo, who owns the knowledge produced by the voyages of “discovery”? Can the Euro-American body indelibly altered by Tahitian tattooing be an orientalist text that contributes to the discursive construction of the Pacific Islands? What if the mariner tattoo was a means of resisting the official and aristocratic modes of knowledge production associated with the officers of the *Endeavour*? Unlike the texts written by Cook, Banks, and Parkinson, the Admiralty could not appropriate tattooed skin.¹⁶ The absence of actual tattooed bodies in the

¹⁶ In the context of the *Bounty* mutiny, Greg Dening discusses the constraints of ship life: “the essence of a sailor’s existence was to be utterly without space he could call his own, to have all his possessions calculated narrowly, to be a totally public man to his peers and to be totally public to superiors who could muster him twice daily at his quarters” (*Mr. Bligh’s Bad Language*)

official record of the voyage indicates the exceptional nature of the tattoo as a claim to knowledge. At the same time, the “Other” painfully, indelibly inscribed this “knowledge” of Tahiti within the skin of the Euro-Americans, which collapses the spatial distance between the orientalist and the object of study. This incorporation as a *claim* to knowledge compromises the objectivity and distance of the orientalist.

Especially considering the importance of this cultural exchange in global tattooing practices, these tattooed bodies should be understood as integral aspects of Euro-American claims to knowledge about Oceania. While orientalist knowledge is the realm of elite producers, such as Banks and Cook, the claim to knowledge is not restricted by class divisions; nor is it restricted to scholarly and political texts and artistic productions. Just as knowledge is constructed and produced about bodies, bodies themselves can appropriate and claim different categories of “knowledge,” regardless of class.

The primitivist discourses on tattooing that developed in the 19th century, including savagery, inherent degeneracy, and criminality, had not already solidified at this historical moment. The *Endeavour*'s stay occurred during a period characterized more by the laudatory aspect of primitivism, before “hardening attitudes to Polynesian ‘savages,’ who had initially inspired excesses of primitivist idealization but whose notorious series of lethal assaults on European navigators during the 1770s and ‘80s provoked an increasingly racialized disgust” (Douglas 35). Given the extent to which Europeans were allowed to enter into Tahitian sociality, it seems that the primitivist motivation to be tattooed derived from an idealization of Pacific life characterized by superabundance, lack of work, and sexual availability. At this time, it appears that the idealized body of the “noble savage” could be a tattooed body. This primitivist

81). These conditions relate to the members of the *Endeavour* wishing to privatize an aspect of the voyage.

incorporation was undergirded by an orientalist claim to knowledge concerning Tahitian social life. While the primitivist evocation of Pacific Islanders shifted away from an atemporal idealization toward a discourse of savagery used to justify colonial appropriation, an implicit assertion that the Euro-American subject possesses distinct, positive information about the Pacific remains.¹⁷

The orientalist *claim* to knowledge concerning Tahitian sociality that undergirds the primitivist appropriation of tattooing attempts to compensate for the absence of knowledge on the part of the Euro-Americans, but it cannot cover or erase this lack. While the Europeans were allowed unprecedented entry into Tahitian sociality in 1769, the Tahitians only let them in partially; they controlled the level of intimacy and the information transmitted. If primitivism exposes the cracks and fissures of the appropriating culture, rather than concealing them, and if orientalist claims to knowledge represent an inability to possess full knowledge, then the tattoos received by members of the *Endeavor* function as inscriptions that hide the absence of knowledge. As such, the tattoo is a fetish object that attempts to cover over a lack of knowledge. My understanding of the tattoo as fetish synthesizes William Pietz's and Jean Baudrillard's writings on the fetish.

In a series of articles,¹⁸ which argue that the idea of the fetish "originated in the cross-cultural spaces of the coast of West Africa during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,"

¹⁷ Euro-American discourses about the Pacific have never been univocal. Much like the simultaneous horror and fascination Euro-Americans expressed when encountering Pacific tattooing, discourses of idealization and savagery coexist in an uneasy relation. For discourses on the Pacific, see Edmond (1997), Lyons (2006).

¹⁸ Pietz, William. "The Problem of the Fetish, I." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 9 (1985): 5-17. Pietz, William. "The Problem of the Fetish, II: The Origin of the Fetish." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 13 (1987): 23-45. Pietz, William. "The Problem of the Fetish, IIIa: Bosman's Guinea and the Enlightenment Theory of Fetishism." *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 16 (1988): 105-124.

William Pietz identifies four fundamental aspects of the idea of the fetish: historicization, territorialization, reification, and personalization (Pietz 5). The radical historicity of the fetish is structured by singularity and repetition: “arising in a singular event fixing together otherwise heterogeneous elements, the identity and power of the fetish consists in its enduring capacity to repeat this singular process of fixation, along with the resultant effect” (23). Territorialization refers to the irreducible materiality of the fetish object, “whether in the form of a geographical locality, a marked site on the surface of the human body, or a medium of inscription or configuration defined by some portable or wearable thing” (12). The reification of the fetish object produces its social value: “the institutionalized or routinized codes of social value between which a given fetish provides a determinate structure of mediation” (15). Personalization indicates the “active relation of the fetish to the living body of an individual,” as well as the “intensely personal response from individuals” the fetish evokes (23, 12). The cultural exchange of tattooing at Tahiti, and the western body modification practice that developed, seems to align well with this characterization of the fetish, as these tattoos were produced during a cross-cultural interaction, were indelible inscriptions at fixed locations on the human body, and facilitated the elaboration of social value between heterogeneous cultures.

Despite the greater potential for violence the Europeans possessed through the gun and the cannon, the Tahitians’ strategic hospitality produced a situation in which invasive western “civilization” depended upon a “savage” society for food, shelter, and information. The boundary of this partial entrance into Tahitian sociality was indelibly inscribed within the mariners’ skin. The tattoo functions as a fetish object because its marking of Euro-American bodies can be understood as an incorporation that attempts to magically ward off the sense of dependency and powerlessness that western “civilization” experienced at Tahiti in 1769. By

subjecting themselves to the violence of the tattooist's implements, the members of the *Endeavour* were attempting to resignify the power or ascendancy the Tahitians possessed in this context. In addition to interpreting certain aspects of Tahitian social life through the lens of primitivist idealization, the appropriation of tattooing can be understood as a fetishistic disavowal of western civilization's lack of ascendancy through the literal incorporation of the specular signifier of Tahitian social life. Just as the members of the *Endeavor* disavowed their dependence upon Pacific Islanders through primitivist idealization and fetishized tattooing, so too have subsequent western discourses on tattooing obfuscated the Pacific context of the cultural exchange.¹⁹

The tattoo as fetish object also attempts to cover over the gap between the orientalist *claim* to knowledge and the absence of this knowledge. The fetishistic desire for the "Orient" (or the Pacific Islands under the aegis of an orientalist discourse that, through spatial disjuncture, stretches across the Pacific) is the marker of one who does not know, but wants to know. The claim to knowledge signified by the tattoo is always already just that, a claim. Since the cultural exchange of tattooing occurred at the same historical moment as the beginning of the imperial, orientalist archive on the Pacific Islands, tattooing opens the space for an articulation of the relationship between fetish objects and orientalism. The fetish functions as that which exposes the myth of orientalism, namely that one can know the orient. As an inscription tied to knowledge production, the tattoo as fetish bears resemblance to Jean Baudrillard's discussion of fetishism, while still retaining the distinct historical components of the fetish identified by William Pietz.

¹⁹ The next two sections of this chapter will discuss the obfuscation of the effects of contact and exchange in western discourses on tattooing, specifically in the context of Margo DeMello's *Bodies of Inscription* (2000) and Nikki Sullivan's *Tattooed Bodies* (2001).

Baudrillard's analysis of Marx's concept of commodity fetishism, "Fetishism and Ideology: The Semiological Reduction," argues that the force of objects does not relate to the abstract benefits promised by commodity fetishism, such as health or happiness, but rather, that the fascination with objects results from a desire for the generalized code of signs: "It is a fetishism of the signifier....It is not the passion (whether of objects or subjects) for substances that speaks in fetishism, it is the *passion for the code*" (92, emphasis in original). Baudrillard positions the function of fetishism as "not the sanctification of a certain object, or value....It is the sanctification of the system as such, of the commodity as system" (92). As Pietz states in "Fetishism and Materialism: The Limits of Theory in Marx" from *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse* (1993), Baudrillard's essential move in his essay "was to collapse the distinction between exchange value and use value, developed in the abstract discussion of the commodity form in *Capital's* opening pages, with Saussure's distinction between the signifier and the signified" (123). This reduction equates the relationship between material production and the exchange values of commodities with the relationship between the signified and the meaning-effects of signifiers. This move allows Baudrillard to evacuate materiality from the fetish object: "fetishism is actually attached to the sign object, the object eviscerated of its substance and history, and reduced to the state of marking a difference, epitomizing a whole system of differences" (93). The removal of materiality characterizes semiological discussions of fetishism; Pietz writes, "The problem with the semiological reading of fetishism...whether in its Baudrillardian, Derridean, or Lacanian variants – is that it eliminates from Marxian analysis that materialism which most distinguishes it" ("Fetishism and Materialism" 119). While retaining the assertion that fetishism marks a desire for the code or the signifier, the use of the idea of the fetish in this project does not deny the historical and material production and existence of the

fetish object, as delineated by Pietz. The tattoo as fetish is an inscription of a material sign within the skin of a human subject, produced by specialized labor within specific cultures (or during cross-cultural interactions) at a distinct time and place.²⁰ Euro-American tattooing has been understood as an embodied semiotic system since the cultural exchange. The role of tattooing in the Pacific, which will be discussed in the next section, does not align with the theories of fetishism delineated here, but western tattooing can be understood through the idea of the fetish.

The fetishistic cathexis of the tattoo at the historical moment of its cultural exchange reveals an intense desire to possess distinct knowledge about the Pacific, particularly Tahiti. The code or signifier, in Baudrillard's terminology, that was desired through the incorporation of Pacific tattooing within European skin was Tahitian social structures. Primitivist idealization, here characterized by overabundance, lack of work, and sexual availability, also structured the appropriation of tattooing. The tattoo as fetish breaches the boundaries between the social classes of the *Endeavour* with respect to who owns the "knowledge," blurring the distinction between the elite knowledge-producers, such as Cook, who textually (re)presented Pacific tattooing for the European reading public, and the lower-class sailors who claimed knowledge through the literal bodily incorporation of tattooing. As a fetish object, the tattoo attempts to disavow the inability to possess and produce orientalist knowledge by strenuously asserting a primitivist understanding of, and identification with, Tahitian social life. The fetishized tattoo thus mediates the interaction between orientalism and primitivism by establishing them as mutually reinforcing: primitivist appropriation implies an orientalist claim to knowledge, and the accuracy of the knowledge is asserted by the primitivist decision to incorporate bodily the sign object to which that knowledge, here Tahitian sociality, is reduced. The tattoo as a fetish object

²⁰ The commoditized aspect of the tattoo as fetish was produced during the early 19th century when Euro-American subjects began displaying their tattooed bodies for profit.

incorporated within the skins of members of the *Endeavour* attempts to magically ward off the inability to possess knowledge and the utter lack of ascendancy western “civilization” had at the moment of the cultural exchange of tattooing.²¹

Entanglement: Pacific and Euro-American Tattooing Discourses

The cultural movement of tattooing practices from the Pacific to Europe and America involved an intense disarticulation of the social meanings and the art form itself. Accounts of tattooing in the west usually at least mention the etymological derivation of tattoo or the cultural exchange, only to jump quickly to the class component of body modification in 20th-century America without examining possible historical and discursive connections or continuities.²² This produces an artificial, naturalized split between discourses on Pacific and Euro-American tattooing.²³ The historical and discursive trajectory I argue for here repairs these elisions by

²¹ As Baudrillard delineates, the discourse of fetishism as “primitive” religion tends to revert back to those who propagate it: “The term ‘fetishism’ almost has a life of its own. Instead of functioning as a metalanguage for the magical thinking of others, it turns against those who use it, and surreptitiously exposes their own magical thinking” (Baudrillard 90). For the elaboration of the idea of the fetish into a theory of “primitive” religion, see: Pietz (1988).

²² For example, in *Bodies of Inscription: A Cultural History of the Modern Tattoo Community* (2000), Margo DeMello’s brief discussion of the exchange of tattooing in the Pacific attempts to separate discourses on Pacific tattooing from those in the west: “tattooing in this early colonial phase was paradoxical. Tattooed natives were seen as little more than savages, and they were brought to Europe and later the United States as exotic displays. Yet the practice of tattooing was removed from its exotic context and ultimately became a deeply ingrained part of North American working-class life. The origins of this transition can be found in the lifestyles of sailors and what this represented to many working-class men back home: adventure, travel, exotic lands and peoples, and a free spirit. Sailors and later carnies were the middlemen through which the tattoo was transformed from a mark of primitivism to a mark of adventure” (49). In addition to implying that Pacific tattooing itself disappeared after contact with the west, this passage attempts to naturalize how tattooing became a marker of class. This valorization of “working-class” tattooing puts the Pacific tattoo under erasure. Also, DeMello’s analysis seems to assume that an interest in “exotic lands and peoples” has no connection to primitivism.

²³ The severing of the conditions of the cultural exchange from discussions of contemporary Euro-American tattooing also appears in sociology. In *Customizing the Body: The Art and Culture of Tattooing* (1989/2008), Clinton Sanders writes, “The modern history of western/European tattooing begins with the exploratory voyages of Captain James Cook and his

displaying the intimate links between Euro-American conceptions of tattooing and primitivist discourse. Through an analysis of Alfred Gell's *Wrapping in Images: Tattooing in Polynesia*, which is, as Juniper Ellis writes, the "leading contemporary anthropological book on Pacific Islands tattooing" (138), I demonstrate how standard discourses about tattooing derived from the cultural exchange influence accounts of Pacific tattooing.

Tattooing was not practiced everywhere in the Pacific, nor was it identical in any two archipelagoes. The tattooing traditions I discuss throughout this dissertation – mainly Tahitian, Samoan, and Marquesan – are practiced at archipelagos that fall into the section of the Pacific that has been described as the Polynesian triangle, though Micronesian tattooing appears in the sections about James O'Connell and Leo Zulueta, and Melanesian tattooing appears in Loos' reference to Papua. I am loath to employ the term "Polynesia" because of the problematic nature of the division of the Pacific into Polynesia ("many islands"), Melanesia ("black islands"), and Micronesia ("little islands"). In "The Force of Ethnology: Origins and Significance of the Melanesia/Polynesia Division," Nicholas Thomas discusses how, in the late-18th and early-19th centuries, the general distinction between decentralized, egalitarian societies in Melanesia and hierarchal chiefdoms in Polynesia was supported by the notion of social evolution and

encounters with tribal tattooing in the South Pacific" (14). However, Sanders locates current pejorative views on tattooing in the volitional choices of what he terms "deviant" groups. He writes, "tattooing has had a long history of association with socially disvalued groups. The negative social definition of tattooing is, however, largely derived from its voluntary use by members of deviant or marginal groups as a symbolic boundary-maintaining mechanism. Professional criminals, outlaw bikers, users of illegal drugs, prostitutes, those who identify with 'punk' culture, and other members of counter-conventional subcultures commonly receive tattoos that symbolize their membership and demonstrate their indelible commitment to the group" (30). This analysis obfuscates the historical conditions that opened the representational space for the tattoo to be appropriated for such boundary maintenance. Euro-American discourse associated pejorative interpretations of tattooing with some of the groups Sanders identifies before the tattoo was voluntarily adopted for group identification.

racialization discourse.²⁴ In 20th-century anthropological discourse, Thomas writes, “the distinction has retained an ‘ethnological’ character in the sense that dominant social attributes are above all features of regional ‘cultures’ (which happen to correspond with apparent racial types)” (34). The more acceptable phrase “Pacific Islands” tends to privilege Polynesia over Melanesia and Micronesia. Although the nature of my project necessitates some general statements about “Pacific” tattooing, I use the names of specific archipelagoes and regions whenever possible.

Gell’s comparative study *Wrapping in Images* attempts to reconstruct the social role of tattooing in the precontact eastern Pacific. He argues that tattooing played a distinctive role in social reproduction. In general, tattooing institutions related to “a certain frame of social classification, a certain notion of person,” and “were often directly articulated to the life-cycle” (8). The process of tattooing prepared the person and her/his body to be an active member of society, to be able to endure the hardships of life. In this way, the tattoos themselves provided a protective integument in addition to the skin.²⁵ Gell’s general depiction of Pacific tattooing institutions bears some resemblance to Albert Wendt’s description of Samoan *tatau* and *malu* in his essay “Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body.”²⁶

²⁴ In a later work, *Islanders* (2010), Thomas further discusses how Dumont d’Urville’s racialized distinctions structured the division: “Juxtaposing ‘Polynesians’ with ‘Melanesians’ was to make a category error, like opposing the people of Norfolk with the English. If all such terms are inventions, and often contentious ones, it would have been more sound to understand Polynesians as a sub-group of an Oceanic population, which also included Island Melanesians. What underpinned d’Urville’s distinction was not a serious comparative anthropology but a racist aesthetic, a response to colour, augmented by an aesthetic of political form, which privileged what appeared to be centralized government over more localized forms of leadership” (*Islanders* 143).

²⁵ The phrase for the full-body suit worn by Marquesan men, *te pahu tiki*, translates as “wrapping in images.” This provides Gell with his title, as well as the clearest example of the protective integument reading of tattooing.

²⁶ See my “Introduction” for Wendt’s characterization of tattooing.

The theoretical underpinning of Gell's *Wrapping in Images* derives from Didier Anzieu's *The Skin Ego: A Psychoanalytic Approach to the Self* (1985/1989). Anzieu grounds his psychoanalytic argument on the double-sidedness of skin and the in utero process of invagination that many of the organs, including the cortex, of the fetus undergo. He views the skin as an enveloping sac that responds to both psychic and corporeal needs:

The development of a Skin Ego is a response to the need for a narcissistic envelope and guarantees the psychical apparatus a sure and continuous sense of basic well-being....By Skin Ego, I mean a mental image of which the Ego of the child makes use during the early phases of its development to represent itself as an Ego containing psychical contents, on the basis of its experience of the surface of the body. (Anzieu 39-40)

Anzieu understands the skin ego as fulfilling nine functions, which are maintenance, containment, protection, individuation, intersensoriality, support of sexual excitation, libidinal recharging, registration, and self-destruction (96-113). The body modification practice of tattooing and its relation to skin is not discussed in *The Skin Ego*. Gell does, however, derive his basic schema of tattooing from Anzieu, despite remaining skeptical about the psychoanalytic context (Gell 31).

Applying these nine functions of skin to tattooing seems illustrative because it could highlight how body modification, and tattooing specifically, can structure the relationship between an individual psyche and its body. Gell's schema for tattooing emphasizes the double-sidedness of skin and its position as a conduit or mediator for a continual movement between inside and outside: "And what tattooing reveals...is an inside which comes from the outside, which has been applied externally prior to being absorbed into the interior. The basic schema of

tattooing is thus definable as the exteriorization of the interior which is simultaneously the interiorization of the exterior” (38-9). This basic schema for all tattooing, however, decontextualizes the cultural relations that factor into the decision to be tattooed and what the inscriptions signify.

The cultural exchange of tattooing is not analyzed at length in *Wrapping in Images*, but Gell does acknowledge that this produced two distinct body modification practices that appear to be still intertwined. After signaling the etymological derivation of the word tattoo, Gell states, “It is consequently impossible to make any clear distinction between western ideas about tattooing which derive from educated perceptions of the practice as characteristic of the ‘ethnic Other’ – the tattooed native – versus perceptions of tattooing as a stigma of the ‘class Other’ – i.e. the tattooed sailor or the tattooed criminal” (10). I contend that this overlap of discourses about Pacific and Euro-American tattooing derives from the representational force of the cultural exchange at Tahiti in 1769.

Gell identifies the pathologization of tattooed subjects as one aspect of the entanglement of Pacific and Euro-American tattooing. Although Pacific tattooing could not be considered subcultural,²⁷ Gell writes, “it is perfectly possible that the lifestyle and values associated with subcultural tattooing in the West continue to be associated with the practice, the only difference being that these are now socially dominant, constituting the majority culture and no longer the minority one. In other words, these are societies which are dominated by criminals, soldiers, and prostitutes, not societies which repress them” (Gell 19). This pathologization, which functions through spatial and temporal discontinuities, displaces the marginalized status of the practice in

²⁷ As Ellis writes, “None of the societies that create Pacific tattoo...treat the designs as aberrant, much less pathological; instead, the patterns designate maturity, which includes but does not fetishize gender and sexuality” (Ellis 28).

the west back onto precontact Pacific Islanders, which locates the source of contemporary discourses in Pacific communities themselves, rather than in western appropriation.

Gell's discourse of degeneracy operates through similar displacements by framing the presence of tattooing as signs of social illness. While excluding exchange from the discussion, Gell depicts the global distribution of tattooing practices as a contagion: "Tattooing does indeed have a pattern of occurrence, when considered comparatively, which resembles the uneven, but at the same time predictable, incidence of an illness" (Gell 20). This linking of tattooing and illness can be traced to the discourses of disease and degeneracy in the Pacific that, like the exchange of tattooing, begin with Cook's voyages. Gell's comparison of tattooing to an illness also retains the traces of the implicit connection between Tahitian tattooing and degenerative skin diseases from Cook's *Endeavour* journal.

The healthy/diseased binary that has been applied to the Pacific by western imperial discourse is illustrative of the ambivalence of orientalist claims to knowledge, shuttling between seemingly incompatible axes in order to obfuscate the actual causes of depopulation: "At the heart of the European paradise of the South Pacific, therefore, a counter-discourse of the diseased Pacific began almost simultaneously" (Edmond 194). Like primitivist discourses, the concept of the "dying Polynesian" originated in the west and was displaced onto the Pacific, attempting to obscure the fact that the diseases that led to depopulation in the Pacific were introduced by Euro-Americans. Rod Edmond frames this teleological narrative as employed for imperial justification, as well as being indicative of western civilization's fear of its own extinction: "There was an overdetermined European cultural investment in this myth of the dying Polynesian. It legitimated many different kinds of incursion into the Pacific, from imperialist dispossession to romantic or primitivist appropriation" (14-5). I argue that the temporal

displacement in which Pacific Islanders and their social institutions are relegated to a vague, infinite past that is strenuously separated from a western teleological present is also illustrative of the primitivism that runs through discourses on tattooing.²⁸ Whether the primitivism is an appropriation based on idealization or is a denial based on demonization or essentialized difference, temporal discontinuity preserves the west's belief in its teleological supremacy.

To work against primitivist formations, Pacific tattooing needs to be understood as a socially integrated practice that remained alive despite colonial and missionary attempts to eradicate it.²⁹ While the prevalence and distinct social roles of tattooing varied across the archipelagoes of the Pacific, and while attempts to extinguish it varied as well, the practice never disappeared completely. As Albert Wendt explains, tattooing was an important site of resistance against colonial and missionary incursion:

The tatau and malu are not just beautiful decoration, they are scripts-texts-testimonies to do with relationships, order, form, and so on. And when they were threatened with extinction by colonialism, Samoa was one of the few places where tatauing refused to die. Tatau became defiant texts or scripts of nationalism and identity. Much of the indigenous was never colonized, tamed, or erased. And much that we now consider indigenous and post-colonial are colonial constructs (e.g., the Church). (403)

²⁸ The denial of the living cultures and traditions of the Pacific continues in writing on tattoos. In the "Epilogue 2008" to the revised and expanded edition of *Customizing the Body*, Sanders, with D. Angus Vail, writes, "Gell's work is especially notable in that it offers careful and complete documentation of cultural practices in cultures that, for all intents and purposes, no longer exist" (181).

²⁹ For a discussion of missionary attempts to extinguish tattooing and resistance at the Society Islands and Samoa, see: D'Alleva, Anne. "Christian Skins: *Tatau* and the Evangelization of the Society Islands and Samoa" in *Tattoo*, 90-108.

Euro-American discourses on tattooing, whether applied to Pacific or Euro-American tattooing, are constructed categories that do not relate to the lived cultures of Pacific Islanders. Rather, they are indicative of the conditions that facilitated the cultural exchange: capitalist-driven imperialism, enlightenment natural history, orientalist claims to knowledge, primitivist idealization, strategic integration, dependence, and fetishization. Representations of tattooing that mobilize such discourses, or that exclude the Pacific entirely, put the lived cultures, experiences, and histories of Pacific Islanders, including defiant resistance to colonial and missionary attempts to destroy integral social institutions, under erasure.

Tattooing Discourses: Psychology and Criminology

Since the 19th century, psychological and criminological discourses have coded how tattooing and specifically the tattooed body were understood in the west. In both readings, tattoos are viewed as discernible signs of the deviance, abnormality, or illness of the subject of tattooing. Nikki Sullivan's *Tattooed Bodies: Subjectivity, Textuality, Ethics, and Pleasure* (2001) analyzes how the tattooed body has been understood in the west, as well as outlines the different manners in which it potentially could be viewed within a contemporary western context. Sullivan's analysis mobilizes an understanding of the body, particularly the tattooed body, derived from a Foucauldian approach: "the body-subject is both an agent and effect of systems of power/knowledge that, in and through the processes of inscription, morphologically (re)write and (re)read bodies in accordance with normative values and conventions" (4). When analyzing the embodied culture of Euro-American tattooing, however, Foucault's model of the body possesses two important shortcomings. Although the body-subject is both an agent and effect of power, the tattooed body and the tattooed subject become stripped of volition and agency in this conception. The Foucauldian body fits theoretically with the distinct circumstance of punitive tattooing, but

voluntary tattooing exposes the greater realm of volitional choices for the human subject within structures of power/knowledge. Also, considering the longer trajectory of tattooing discourses within structures of imperialism that I am tracing here, Foucault's historical blindspots render his understanding of the body insufficient. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's discussion of Foucault in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" is applicable: "What remains useful in Foucault is the mechanics of disciplinarization and institutionalization, the constitution, as it were, of the colonizer. Foucault does not relate it to any version, early or late, proto- or post-, of imperialism" (Spivak 90). A full understanding of how tattooing has been represented as a practice signifying otherness, savagery, mental illness, criminal disposition, orientalist knowledge, primitivist idealization or demonization, and so on, cannot be achieved without attending to the imperial discourses that surrounded the cultural exchange of the practice in the Pacific Islands in the late 18th century.

The psychological reading of the tattooed body pathologizes the subject of tattooing by situating body modification as a specular marker of deviance, abnormality, or mental illness. Sullivan looks at psychological studies from the 1950s to the 1980s as the most salient and representative examples, but it is important to note that this discourse does not require a fully-formed psychological institution to be operative. Rather, the psychiatric discipline codified and institutionalized previous discursive formations. In Sullivan's analysis, the psychological discourses on tattooing "are founded on a depth model of the subject that assumes a distinction between inside and outside, self and other" (Sullivan 20). This allows the analyst, or Sullivan's "dermal diagnostician," to interpret tattoos as signs of the internal "truth" of the subject of tattooing. Coupled with this depth model is the assumption that "the tattoo is a form of nonverbal communication" (21). The psychological discourse also encompasses the pleasure and ethical stance of the analyst. The pleasure of Sullivan's dermal diagnostician "could be said to be

experienced in and through the production of knowledge as truth. . . . In other words, pleasure is understood implicitly as a normalizing process in these accounts of the subject in/of tattooing” (22). Ethics can be considered operative here in that the analyst positions “the tattooed other as unethical,” which can lead to the belief that “the tattooed other must be rehabilitated or quarantined” as a threat to moral order (22).³⁰ I argue that these perspectives followed from the western discourse on tattooing that began in the late 18th century. Viewing the tattoo as a nonverbal communication of an internal “truth” allowed Europeans to interpret the tattoos of Pacific Islanders as signifiers of the character and form of the societies they encountered. To situate tattooing as a fetish object that both asserts primitivist identification and disavows the absence of orientalist knowledge requires a belief in the potential legibility of the tattoo, though not necessarily as a form of writing, interpreted through western modes of representation.

The criminological discourse on tattooing operates under assumptions of essentialism and direct, mimetic correspondence between internal state and external appearance, similar to the pathologization of tattooing. This discourse was heavily influenced by the late-19th century Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso. The criminological stance Lombroso developed assumed that the criminal subject, whether she/he has already committed a crime or not, was identifiable by certain physical traits. These specular markers, which include tattooing, were interpreted by Lombroso as undeniable signs of innate, hereditary criminality, which he framed as a “primitive” or atavistic ontology. Sullivan summarizes his stance: “Lombroso claimed that the criminal was

³⁰ This developmental narrative applied to the pathologized subject of tattooing bears resemblance to the discourse of infantilization through which missionaries viewed Pacific Islanders during the 19th century: “The reconceptualization of the savage as child-like was packed with implication. A whole developmental language which came to be applied to childhood in the nineteenth century was also extended to savagery. Like children, savages can grow, mature and become civilized. The other, whether child or savage, can become like us” (Edmond 110-111).

identifiable by regressive features such as a small skull or large jaws and secondary characteristics such as tattoos, all of which signify atavism, and a retarded developmental association between criminals and species of a ‘lower order’” (24). This characterization of “criminal man” functions through temporal and spatial displacements. The tattooed criminal is viewed as an atavistic mentality lodged within a modern body, yet the exterior of that body betrays the internal, “primitive” disposition.

In *Criminal Man* (1876),³¹ Lombroso argues that tattooing represents a link between “savages” and Euro-American criminals through his theory of atavism, which in this context seems synonymous with primitivism. He begins his chapter on tattoos by stating, “One of the most singular characteristics of primitive men and those who still live in a state of nature is the frequency with which they undergo tattooing. This operation, which has both its surgical and aesthetic aspects, derives its name from an Oceanic language” (58). The reference to etymology indicates that the “primitive men” Lombroso has in mind are Pacific Islanders. He claims that in Italy tattooing “occurs only among the lower classes – peasants, sailors, workers, shepherds, soldiers, and even more frequently among criminals” (58). The aristocratic fashion for tattooing is absent from this list, but in a later essay, “The Savage Origin of Tattooing,”³² Lombroso argues against upper-class tattooing by repurposing his argument from *Criminal Man*. The temporal and spatial discontinuities of primitivism provide the discursive structure for Lombroso’s criminological interpretation of tattooing: “Tattoos function as pictographs for criminals as they do for savages. Apart from atavism, it is impossible to find another explanation for the custom of tattooing” (239).

³¹ Lombroso published five editions of *Criminal Man* with new material in each edition: 1876, 1878, 1884, 1889, and 1896-7. The tattooing chapter appeared in all five editions.

³² I discuss this essay at length in my chapter on the “Eumaeus” episode of *Ulysses*, “Within the Skin.”

This stance, and its reliance upon primitivist representations of the inhabitants of the Pacific, has wide cultural currency and application. In his 1908 essay “Ornament and Crime,” the modernist Austrian architect Adolf Loos utilizes the criminological discourse about tattooing in his argument against the use of ornamentation. He relies upon a model of teleological development that mobilizes a form of temporal discontinuity similar to Lombroso’s theory of atavism: “the evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornamentation from objects of everyday use” (167). One of his main examples of atavistic ornamentation is tattooing in Papua, which is part of Melanesia: “The Papuan covers his skin with tattoos, his boat, his oars, in short everything he can lay his hands on. He is no criminal. The modern person who tattoos himself is either a criminal or a degenerate. There are prisons in which eighty percent of the inmates have tattoos. People with tattoos not in prison are either latent criminals or degenerate aristocrats” (167). He also claims, “What is natural in the Papuan or the child is a sign of degeneracy in the modern adult” (167). The tattooed subject is relegated to a “primitive” and thus non-modern temporality, as well as infantilized. Loos’ essay indicates the force and prevalence of the criminological discourse during the modernist period. His initial example of the “criminality” of ornamentation combines both the criminological interpretation of Euro-American tattooing and a blatantly primitivist representation of Pacific, specifically Melanesian, tattooing.

Both the psychological and criminological discourses on tattooing retain traces of the cultural exchange at Tahiti in 1769. The pathologization of tattooing recapitulates orientalist claims to knowledge and fetishization through the assumption that distinct knowledge is accessible through the tattoo, and the criminalization illustrates the temporal and spatial

discontinuities of primitivism through its positioning of the tattoo as a specular marker of a “primitive” mentality within a “modern” body.

The *Bounty* Mutiny: Tattooing, Primitivism, and Criminality

Fletcher Christian led a mutiny against William Bligh’s command of HMAV *Bounty* on the morning of April 28, 1789. Only a few weeks after leaving Tahiti, where the crew had collected 1,015 breadfruit plants for transportation to the West Indies as a cheap source of food for plantation slaves, the majority of the able seamen and some of the officers took control of the ship in a bloodless rebellion. Bligh and eighteen men loyal to him were cast adrift in the ship’s launch. Although numerous theories in fiction and nonfiction have been advanced about the *true* cause of the mutiny,³³ this event cannot be reduced to one element of the voyage. A confluence of circumstances – such as Bligh’s abusive language, the five months spent at Tahiti, the small size of the ship, the delay in the Admiralty sending Bligh his sailing orders, and the lack of marines – not only precipitated the mutiny, but also allowed it to be executed. Almost all of the mutineers were tattooed while at Tahiti, but these body modifications tend to be minimized or obfuscated in representations of the mutiny. However, the two lists of the mutineers Bligh wrote include whether, to what extent, and in some cases where and with what designs each man was tattooed. These lists produce a strong correspondence between tattooing, criminality, and rejection of western civilization. Coming only twenty years after the initial Pacific-European cultural exchange of tattooing at Tahiti the *Endeavour* voyage, the mutineers’ tattoos helped facilitate primitivist and criminological discourses about tattooing in the west.

Lieutenant William Bligh was master of the *Resolution* during Cook’s third and final voyage and was present at Kealakekua Bay when Cook died. Instead of spending three months at

³³ For the immense amount of material about the *Bounty* mutiny, see: Maxton (2008).

Tahiti for astronomical observation, Bligh was there for five months to collect breadfruit. The *Bounty*'s mission, proposed by Joseph Banks - who was tattooed at Tahiti during the *Endeavour*'s voyage - was to transport breadfruit from Tahiti to the West Indies to provide a cheap source of food in the diet of plantation slaves. Bligh himself understood this mission as the first practical application of the "knowledge" procured by previous voyages of "discovery" to the Pacific: "The object of all the former voyages to the South Seas...has been the advancement of science, and the increase of knowledge. This voyage may be reckoned the first, the intention of which has been to derive benefit from those distant discoveries" (*A Voyage to the South Seas* 5). The mission of the *Bounty* attempted to bolster the institution of slavery through an explicitly capitalist, imperial utilization of the "knowledge" produced by the voyages of Cook and others.

The men who mutinied against Bligh's command of the *Bounty* were not average sailors who returned to Europe and America with tattoos obtained in the Pacific. Only ten of the twenty-five who stayed on the *Bounty* ever returned to England; two of these ten were not tattooed. Nine settled on Pitcairn and never left that island; two died at Tahiti during the eighteen months between the failed settlement at Tubuai and the arrival of the *Pandora* to bring them back to England for court martial; four died when the *Pandora* wrecked on the Great Barrier Reef. Some of the tattoos received at Tahiti were European names, dates, or motifs (such as hearts, darts, and stars), which became common designs of the 19th-century mariner tradition of tattooing. Others were Tahitian designs, which were the types of tattoos received by Euro-Americans in the Pacific to help facilitate their integration into a specific community. Coming only twenty years after the initial cultural exchange of tattooing, both types of designs could be read as signs of an attempted, at least partial integration into Pacific Islander life because the "savage" practice of tattooing was indelibly inscribed within "civilized" skin.

Rather than a specular, corporeal phenomenon, the *Bounty* mutineers' tattoos were produced textually for the British public, in two very similar documents written by Bligh himself. These are the two lists and physical descriptions of the mutineers. No record is extant that details whether any of the eighteen men who joined Bligh in the launch were tattooed; Bligh himself was not tattooed. Because the mutiny was a spontaneous, chaotic affair in which loyalties were unclear and shifting, the lists reinforce the artificial split between the ship and the launch. As Greg Denning states, "Being on the ship and not the launch did not necessarily make one group guilty and the other not" (*Mr. Bligh's Bad Language* 43). Bligh's lists, however, produce staying on the ship and having tattoos as signs of criminality. The first list was written in the *Bounty's* launch and comprises part of Bligh's log of the voyage to Timor. The second was drawn up at Batavia (Jakarta), and copies were sent to different colonial administrators to aid in apprehending the mutineers. Bligh also included it as the fifth of the fifteen documents that he published as "An Answer to Certain Assertions" (1794) in which he defended himself against accusations in Edward Christian's "Appendix" (1794).³⁴ This second list especially relates to the primitivist and criminological discourses about tattooing because it was the only primary document published at the time that catalogued the tattooing of the *Bounty* crew.

The silence and obfuscation surrounding these tattoos outside Bligh's lists of the mutineers, which are essentially descriptions of wanted men for identification and apprehension, signals that submitting to the tattooing operation at Tahiti became a sign of criminality in the wake of the mutiny. Bligh does not mention tattooing at all in *A Narrative of the Mutiny* (1790),

³⁴ The transcription and facsimile of the list written in the launch can be found in *The Bligh Notebook* (1987), pages 213-8 and 331-6, respectively. The second list can be found in *Awake, Bold Bligh!* (1989), pages 84-6 and in the collection *The Bounty Mutiny* (2001), pages 162-5. Edward Christian's "Appendix," Bligh's "An Answer to Certain Assertions," and Christian's "A Short Reply to Captain Bligh's Answer" (1795) are reprinted in *The Bounty Mutiny* (2001).

and the three passages in his expanded *A Voyage to the South Seas* (1792) that mention tattooing are all concerned with the body modifications of Pacific Islanders.³⁵ Edward Christian does not discuss tattooing in the two documents he published in defense of his brother. James Morrison, the boatswain's mate who was found guilty by the court martial but was subsequently pardoned, provides a rather detailed ethnographic account of Tahitian tattooing in the only other extant first-hand account of the mutiny besides Bligh's; however, he is silent about the tattooing of the *Bounty* crew, including his own tattoos.³⁶

In the two lists, Bligh implicitly associates a high level of tattooing with guilt in the mutiny. There are subtle differences between the two documents with respect to tattooing, which are partially attributable to the circumstances in which they were composed. The list from the log of the launch's voyage seems to have been compiled solely from Bligh's personal memory, while the second version written at Batavia was a more collective effort. At the end of the list in "An Answer to Certain Assertions," Bligh includes the following note: "This description was made out from the recollection of the persons with me, who were best acquainted with their private marks" (*Bounty Mutiny* 165). The first document was composed in a schematic list form, while the second was written in more standard prose. Both documents detail height, complexion, and hair color; the "private marks" include scars, deformities, and the placement and design of tattoos. Bligh's descriptions of the mutineers' tattoos indicate the growing prevalence of body modification among mariners: "in his inclusion of tattoos for crew identification purposes, Bligh unknowingly pre-empted a trend that emerged in the navy over the coming decades and became formalized practice by the 1830s" (White 75). I argue that Bligh can also be considered a

³⁵ The three passages that mention tattooing in Bligh's *A Voyage to the South Seas* can be found on pages 75, 144, and 148.

³⁶ For Morrison's descriptions of Tahitian tattooing, see *Mutiny and Aftermath* (2013), 245-7 and 260.

forerunner of the criminological interpretation of tattooing, which views tattoos as specular signs of a criminal disposition.

In Bligh's first list of the mutineers, tattooing is not mentioned in the descriptions of six men: John Mills, Henry Hilbrant, John Williams, Michael Byrne, Thomas McIntosh, and Charles Norman. Bligh claimed that four of the men who stayed on the ship "are deserving of mercy being detained against their inclination": he identifies these as Byrne, McIntosh, Norman, and Joseph Coleman (*Bligh Notebook* 218). All four were acquitted by the court martial. Bligh describes at least one specific tattoo design on the bodies of eight men: Fletcher Christian, George Stewart, Peter Heywood, Edward Young, James Morrison, John Millward, Thomas Ellison, and Joseph Coleman. Bligh signals that the remaining eleven men were tattooed, sometimes detailing the extent and placement of the body modifications: Charles Churchill, Matthew Thompson, William McCoy, Matthew Quintal, John Sumner, Thomas Burkitt, Isaac Martin, William Muspratt, Alexander Smith (aka John Adams), Richard Skinner, and William Brown. For these men, less detailed descriptions, such as "very much tatowed" and "tatowed in several places," appear multiple times. The three found guilty by the court martial and hanged – Millward, Burkitt, and Ellison – were all tattooed.

The differences between the first and second lists of the mutineers with respect to tattooing are indicative of the correspondence between body modification, guilt in the mutiny, and idealization of the Pacific Islands that Bligh implicitly traces between these documents and what he believed to be the cause of the mutiny. The entries about tattooing are different for six of the twenty-five men who did not join Bligh in the launch. The descriptions of tattooing for William McCoy and William Muspratt were expanded. In the first list, Bligh states that McCoy "is Tatowed," and describes Muspratt as "Tatowed" (*BN* 215, 216). Respectively, these entries

become “is tatowed in different parts of his body” and “is tatowed in several places of his body” (*Bounty Mutiny* 163, 164). Muspratt was found guilty by the court martial but won a reprieve and eventual pardon on a legal technicality. Three of the men for whom tattooing was not mentioned in the first list – Henry Hilbrant, John Williams, and Thomas McIntosh – are now marked as having been tattooed at Tahiti. Both Williams and McIntosh are described as “is tatowed,” and Hilbrant is “tatowed in several places” (*Bounty Mutiny* 164). It is notable that McIntosh, acquitted by the court martial, was one of the four “deserving of mercy.” The description of the tattoo on Joseph Coleman, another of the men Bligh believed to be innocent, is actually shorter in the second list. While the original description states, “A Heart Tatowed on One of his Arms and 5777,” the second list omits the numerals (*BN* 217). Coleman was the armorer of the *Bounty* and had been an able seaman during Cook’s third voyage to the Pacific. As Caroline Alexander notes, “the date beneath, ‘5-7-77,’ suggests that this was a souvenir from his first Pacific voyage, when he – and William Bligh – had been at Tongatapu en route to Tahiti” (Alexander 250). By omitting this date in the published version, Bligh implicitly represents Coleman as having been tattooed in 1788-9, though it appears that the armorer did not receive another tattoo during the *Bounty*’s stay at Tahiti. Even the tattoos of men whom Bligh knew to be loyal to him – Coleman was detained by the mutineers because of his skills as an armorer – become signs of a potentially criminal disposition, or perhaps signs of passive complicity in the criminal act of mutiny.

Some men received tattoos that appear to be souvenirs, commemorating their visit to Tahiti. For example, Edward Young had on his right arm “a Heart & Dart through it with E..Y underneath and the date of the year 1788 or 1789,” and Thomas Ellison “Has got his Name tatowed on his Right Arm and dated October 25th 1788,” which was the day the *Bounty* sighted Tahiti (*BN* 213, 217). Others requested specifically British designs from the Tahitian tattooists.

Peter Heywood “on the Right Leg is tattowed The Three legs of Man as that coin is,” and James Morrison had “a Garter round his Left leg with the Motto of Honi Soit Qui Mal y Pense,” which is the motto of the Order of the Garter – “Shame on him who evil thinks” (213, 214). Both Morrison and Heywood received pardons. Bligh describes one explicitly Tahitian design, on the body of John Millward, who was hanged: “is marked the Pit of the Stomach with a Taoomy [*taumi*] or Breastplate of Otaheite” (214). Christian, George Stewart, and Matthew Quintal are all described as “tated on the backside.” This indicates that they had undergone traditional male tattooing in Tahiti, which included a black area covering the buttocks with arches curving over the lower back. These tattoos signal more strenuous attempts to integrate into Tahitian sociality than European motifs. Other men who are described by Bligh as extensively tattooed may also have received Tahitian designs.

Although he does not explicitly connect them, Bligh describes one common tattoo design and placement on the bodies of four men: Christian, Stewart, Morrison, and Isaac Martin all had a star tattooed on the left chest. They may have followed a group of messmates from Cook’s second Pacific voyage who also all had a star on the left chest. These tattoos were inspired by the *‘aroi*, “a society of orators, priests, navigators, travelling performers, and famed lovers. These men and women were dedicated to ‘Oro [god of fertility and war], each grade having its distinctive tattoos and special garments” (*Aphrodite’s Island* 28).³⁷ These tattoos of both Cook’s men and the four *Bounty* mutineers combine British and Tahitian significations. As Anne Salmond explains, these star tattoos could represent “the star of St George, one of the insignia of the Order of the Garter, the highest honour in Britain, but at the same time, evoking the large spot or bar tattooed on the left chests of senior *‘aroi*” (*Bligh* 178). The tattoos of the *Bounty*

³⁷ For *aroi* grades and the corresponding tattoo designs and body placements, see Gell 146-158.

mutineers signal partial knowledge and integration into Tahitian social structures, as well as an appropriation of Tahitian tattooing as a means to express identification with the Pacific through syncretic bodily presentation.

Whether the mutiny is viewed as an act of piracy, a bit of enlightenment heroism, or an early example of primitivist idealization, Bligh's physical descriptions, combined with his explanation of the mutiny, situate tattooing as the specular marker of a rejection of western culture and of an idealized, primitivist appropriation of Tahitian sociality. His representation of the mutiny in both *A Narrative of the Mutiny* and *A Voyage to the South Seas* are nearly identical, with a few changes in diction.³⁸ In the first published account, *A Narrative*, Bligh identifies primitivist idealization as the cause of the mutiny:

It will very naturally be asked, what could be the reason for such a revolt? in answer to which, I can only conjecture that the mutineers had assured themselves of a more happy life among the Otaheiteans, than they could possibly have in England; which, joined to some female connections, have most probably been the principal cause of the whole transaction...they imagined it in their power to fix themselves in the midst of plenty, on the finest island in the world, where they need not labour, and where the allurements of dissipation are beyond anything that can be conceived. (*Narrative* 9-10)

This explanation is very similar to two letters Bligh wrote at Batavia in October 1789; he wrote to Duncan Campbell, his uncle by marriage and former employer in the West Indian merchant service, and Joseph Banks, who was responsible for Bligh's appointment on the *Bounty*. Bligh

³⁸ See *A Narrative of the Mutiny* 9-10 and *A Voyage to the South Seas* 162-3.

also identifies the possibility of a happier life in Tahiti and sexuality in the two letters.³⁹ The discourses about the Pacific that Bligh believes to have inspired a level of primitivist idealization sufficient to induce a mutiny are superabundance, lack of work, and sexual availability. Bligh also claims that, “The chiefs were so much attached to our people, that they rather encouraged their stay among them than otherwise, and even made them promises of large possessions” (9). The reported cheer of the mutineers – “Huzza for Otaheite” – reinforces the importance of primitivist idealization for Bligh (7). In the letter to his patron Banks, Bligh answers his own question about the cause of the mutiny in a different manner: “In Answer to which I have only to give a description of Otaheite, which has every allurements both to luxury and ease, and is the Paradise of the World” (*Awake, Bold Bligh!* 35).⁴⁰ This statement indicates that both the crew and the commander of the *Bounty* perceived Tahiti through the lens of laudatory primitivism.

While Bligh’s identification of primitivist idealization certainly contributes to his attempts to divert blame from himself, it should not be discarded as an important factor leading up to the mutiny. The congruence between published documents and private correspondences – many phrases and sentences reappear verbatim – supports this. At the same time, Bligh excludes the aspect of the *Bounty*’s voyage that opened the space for the crew to consider whether they could have happier lives in Tahiti: the five months spent on shore. These five months were unprecedented: “It was the most extended period of authorized cross-cultural contact yet experienced between Europeans and Pacific islanders” (*E&E* 120). These five months were also unplanned. Because of the Admiralty’s delay in sending Bligh his sailing orders, the *Bounty* arrived at Tahiti at the end of October 1788, “near the outset of the western monsoon season,

³⁹ See *Awake, Bold Bligh!* 26 for the letter to Campbell, 31 and 35 for Banks.

⁴⁰ The letter to Banks seems to be the only document in which Bligh identifies the lack of marines on the *Bounty* as a contributing factor in the mutiny: “If I Had been equipped with more Officers & Marines the piracy could never had happened” (*Awake, Bold Bligh!* 31).

which ran from November to April....as he had been directed to return by the Endeavor Straits, Bligh knew he had to await the eastern monsoon, which would begin at the end of April or early May” (Alexander 107). Without this delay, the *Bounty* would have only been at Tahiti a few weeks: “By the last days of November [1788], Bligh already had a full cargo of breadfruit plants in pots at the shore camp” (*Bligh* 161). These five months allowed the crew members to form friendships and sexual relations, integrate partially into Tahitian sociality, and receive tattoos, some quite extensively.

The acquisition of tattoos and the strategic decision to gain acceptance and integration seem to have been intimately connected for the *Bounty* crew, which is indicated in a document written by Peter Heywood. In a letter to his mother from August 15, 1792 he composed while imprisoned on the *Hector* at Portsmouth, Heywood explains his tattoos as a means of facilitating social interactions at Tahiti: “I was tattooed, not to gratify my own desire, but their’s [Tahitians, sic], for it was my constant Endeavour to acquiesce in any little Custom which I thought would be agreeable to them, though painful in the Process, provided I gained by it their Friendship and Esteem” (Heywood 88). He positions the absence of tattoos as a specular sign of non-integration into Tahitian sociality: “The more a Man or Woman there is tattooed, the more they are respected, and a Person who has none of those Marks is looked upon as bearing a most indignant Badge of Disgrace, and considered as a mere Outcast of Society” (88). Under the aegis of primitivist idealization, Heywood’s account represents the tattoo as the indelible sign of a volitional attempt to integrate into the social structures of Tahiti.

The different tattoo designs and motifs received by members of the *Bounty* indicate that the identification with and integration into Tahitian customs and social structures operated along two mains lines of projected similarity, both related to class positions. If Bligh is correct about

the promise of “large possessions,” this could have been a powerful inducement for the lower-class able seamen. Bligh mostly spent his time with the Pomare family, specifically Tu, the paramount chief of the island and Bligh’s *taio* (bond friend), and his wife ‘Itia. At the same time, “the *Bounty*’s petty officers also took *taio* among the chiefs and were given ‘wives’ from their families, the status of these women mirroring their own ranks on board the ship” (*Aphrodite’s Island* 456). It is likely that the “wives” and *taio* of the able seamen shared roughly analogous class positions. Bligh did not describe the tattoos of Fletcher Christian in great detail: “Star tattooed on the left breast and tattooed on the backside” (*BN* 213). We do know, however, that Christian had “adopted a full Tahitian tattoo, rather than a composite of British and local cultural symbols,” though the star sits somewhere between English and Tahitian cultural signs (Smith 256). Almost all of the able seamen stayed on the ship, as did some of the officers, including Christian, who was master’s mate and promoted to acting lieutenant by Bligh during the outward voyage, and Peter Heywood, Edward Young, and George Stewart, who were midshipmen. Bligh describes both Christian and Heywood as “of a respectable family in the north of England,” and Stewart as “a young man of creditable parents” (*Narrative* 8). While Heywood had a British design on his leg, he is also described by Bligh as “very much tattooed,” which likely included Tahitian motifs (*BN* 213). When Heywood and Stewart swam out to the *Pandora* and surrendered themselves, “they were so tanned and heavily tattooed that at first the crew mistook them for Tahitians” (*Bligh* 397). It is important to note that, like the *Endeavour*’s crew, none of the *Bounty*’s crew could have been tattooed without the consent of Tahitian tattooists, if not the community at large.

The tattoos of the *Bounty* mutineers can be understood as mediating class divisions, particularly between Christian and the lower-class mutineers. Christian’s full Tahitian tattoo

signifies a different type of engagement with and integration into Tahitian sociality than tattoos of names or dates, as well as bodies that bore both European and Tahitian designs. Edward Christian, who was attempting to exonerate his brother, identifies a naturalized aristocratic standing as that which drew the Tahitians and Fletcher to each other:

There is no country in the world, where the notions of aristocracy and family pride are carried higher than at Otaheite; and it is a remarkable circumstance, that the Chiefs are naturally distinguished by taller persons, and more open and intelligent countenances, than the people of inferior condition; hence these are the principal qualities by which the natives estimate the gentility of strangers; and Christian was so great a favorite with them, that according to the words of one person, “They adored the very ground he trod upon.” (*Bounty Mutiny* 143)

Despite Bligh’s pejorative depiction of Christian’s physical characteristics, “bow legged” and “subject to violent perspiration & particularly in His hands so that he soils anything he handles,” this passage structures the relationship between Christian and his Tahitian hosts through a naturalized aristocracy in which physical characteristics signify social standing (*BN* 213). As Vanessa Smith states, Edward Christian “sees a natural aristocracy as uniting Christian with the Tahitian noble savage” (260). This naturalized connection becomes specular and indelible through the cultural practice of tattooing. An implicit acceptance of class divisions partially structured the form of primitivism that led many members of the *Bounty* to be tattooed, as well as the different designs they received.

Two types of primitivist identification based on social class can be discerned in the tattooing of the *Bounty* mutineers, identification with the “noble savage” and with the racial “Other.” Fletcher Christian’s full Tahitian tattoo indicates a primitivist identification with the

figure of the “noble savage,” which is accomplished through the naturalization and expansion of the British class system. The inclusion of both European and Tahitian tattoo designs on the bodies of common sailors represents an identification with the racial “Other” on the part of the class “Other.” The tattooing of European names, dates, and motifs by Tahitian artists reinforces the crewmembers’ connection to their home culture while drawing a projected line of similarity between themselves and non-aristocratic Tahitians. These tattoos imbue lower-class status with positive connotations through the primitivist identification with “common” Tahitian subjects. This ostensibly rejects the very class divisions that structure the form of idealization. The adoption of indigenous designs represents a more strenuous attempt at integration because they do not produce specular references to British culture. Fletcher Christian’s identification with the “noble savage” through his full Tahitian tattoo seems to be a rejection of western civilization and his aristocratic standing, but this class-based identification ensures that Christian still retains the cultural authority and ascendancy of an aristocrat.

Primitivist idealization appears to dissolve class divisions among the mutineers through the specular marker of the tattoo, but this idealization was structured by class position, as differences in designs indicate. The disjuncture in the crewmembers seemingly only identifying with what they perceived as their Tahitian class equivalent, which would appear to preserve the divisions of the British class system, is covered over by the fetishistic cathexis of tattooing. The shared attempt to integrate into Tahitian social structures through variable, uneven appropriations of tattooing obfuscates the maintenance of class divisions. The connection between class and primitivist identification within the tattooing of the *Bounty* mutineers seems to naturalize class divisions because an image related to a certain class position becomes indelibly fixed at a specific site on the body, which serves to essentialize a condition that has no natural or inevitable

connection to the body. The mutineers' tattoos not only facilitated primitivist and criminological interpretations of tattooing, but also contributed to the production of the tattoo as a bodily sign indicative of class.

Sailors and Beachcombers

Because of the popularity of Cook's three voyages and the conditions of his death at Hawaii in 1779, as well as the notoriety of the *Bounty* mutiny, there was a wide dissemination of textual representations of the voyages, Pacific Islanders, their customs (including tattooing), and Cook's death during the late-18th and early-19th centuries.⁴¹ In addition to representations of Pacific Islander tattooing produced for the reading publics of Europe and America, the common sailors who received tattoos in the Pacific during this period returned with bodies that physically, specularly represented travel to the Pacific, orientalist claims to knowledge, and a primitivist refashioning of body modification, as well as the imperial project undergirding these experiences. These men, along with the beachcombers who lived in Pacific Island communities for extended periods of time, helped facilitate the movement of tattooing in the west from a practice associated with "primitive" people to a marker of class or subcultural status. The (re)presentation of tattooing in the west has occurred both textually and corporeally.

The disarticulation of the body modification practice of tattooing from the Pacific was not solely a movement from tattoos that signified maturity and community belonging to tattoos of a singular, individual register. Late-18th and early-19th century sailors, the first Euro-American group to adopt tattooing as an important aspect of their bodily self-presentations, received tattoos

⁴¹ For representations of Cook's voyages and death in writing, theater, and painting, see "Killing the God: the Afterlife of Cook's Death" from Rod Edmond's *Representing the South Pacific* (1997), pages 23-62. For Cook's death at Hawaii, see Gananath Obeyesekere's *The Apotheosis of James Cook: European Mythmaking in the Pacific* (1992) and Marshall Sahlins' *How "Natives" Think: About Captain Cook, for Example* (1995).

in the Pacific that expressed individual, personal history and identity, such as inscriptions that recorded a sailor's first encounter with Pacific islands, as well as tattoos that expressed collective relations. The tattoos of the *Bounty* mutineers are an example of this. It seems likely that "exposure to tattooing practices in the Pacific Islands contributed to sailors' understanding of the potential for tattoos to express collective relationships, which lead to their imitation of this practice" (White 74). The continued primitivist appropriation of tattooing after the cultural exchange resulted in a practice that utilized European and Pacific motifs to signify both the personal and the collective.

These early mariner tattoos, inscribed by Pacific tattooists, were requested in order to express personal history or group experience, but their field of signification widened when ships returned these newly marked bodies to Europe and America. These tattoos signaled travel to the Pacific and an implicit claim to knowledge concerning the society from which it was obtained. At the same time, they also retained traces of discourses about Pacific Islanders, including savagery, sexual permissiveness, and inherent degeneracy, that contributed to the imperial archive. By adopting Pacific tattooing, whether the tattoos themselves were Euro-American, Pacific, or syncretic, and incorporating it within their skins, these sailors' bodily self-presentations contained the indelible specular marker of the "savagery" and lack of "civilization" associated with Pacific Islanders. Because of the permanent nature of tattooing, these Euro-American bodies inscribed with Pacific tattooing actively, continually destabilize the civilized/savage binary. The literal incorporation of the "mark of the savage" seems structured by a primitivist appropriation that utilizes the tattoo as a fetish object. Of course, primitivism, and fetishism, always exposes the cracks and fissures of the appropriating culture, rather than concealing them. What did these tattooed bodies signify about western culture and civilization?

Outside figures such as Joseph Banks and Fletcher Christian and the brief 19th-century upper-class and aristocratic fashion, tattooing in the west has been coded as a marker of lower or working class status, especially in the US. The dominant discourses about tattooing from psychology, criminology, and cultural studies tend to naturalize the adoption of tattooing as a class marker by obfuscating its source in the Pacific, imperialism, and primitivism. However, the tattooed bodies of sailors and beachcombers, produced by a primitivist relationship with Pacific Islanders, facilitated the displacements that attempted to put the Pacific under erasure while still utilizing aspects of the imperial discourses that the west produced. When these sailors returned to Europe and America, their bodies were newly inscribed with marks of “savagery,” but their home cultures had already marked their bodies with a class status based on the work they performed. The tattoo is produced as a sign indicative of class, with an implicit comparison to racialized “savagery,” by displacing the most troublesome connotations of a Euro-American with Pacific tattooing, such as racial difference and destabilization of the civilized/savage binary, onto class.⁴² These displacements and partial erasures signal that primitivism, as a western discourse that utilizes aspects of other cultures to represent the west to itself, helped bridge the gap between racialized, “savage” tattooing and western “class” tattooing.

The tattoos of late-18th and early-19th century Euro-American sailors were marks of mobility, geographical mobility but class immobility, that signaled travel and interaction with the “primitive,” and this movement was made feasible by western imperialism, class divisions, and

⁴² Europeans read class divisions into Pacific tattooing even before the cultural exchange. In 1768 Louis de Bougainville understood tattooing as indicating class: “As for indications of social difference, I believe (and this is not a joke) that the first one, the one that distinguishes free men from slaves, is that free men have their buttocks painted. Then the amount of paint on the buttocks and other parts of the body, the beard and moustaches, the length of the nails, hair hanging down or gather up over the head, these nuances distinguish, I believe, the various degrees” (Bougainville 64).

the capitalist system. In the same manner as the lower-class *Bounty* mutineers, the internalization of the “mark of savagery” draws an imaginary line of similarity between lower-class Euro-American sailors, the class “Other,” and Pacific Islanders, the ethnic or racial “Other.” Coming from this primitivist position, these tattooed bodies can be understood as resignifying lower-class status through the identification with the racial “Other.” Western imperialism, motivated by the expansion of the capitalist system of production, sends out ships populated by those considered the dregs of society on voyages of “discovery,” but these lower-class men continue to return with Pacific tattooing within their skin. Opposed to Pacific Islanders who traveled to Europe and America during the period, whose tattoos could be read as aesthetically pleasing as well as a specular reinforcement of inherent savagery, these sailors’ syncretic bodies threw the imperial project and capitalist social structures into question. These bodies undercut the perceived strength and validity of western civilization because mere contact with Pacific Islanders prompts lower-class men to radically alter their bodily presentations with indelible inscriptions that are figured as representations of “savagery.” This displacement of racial difference and notions of “savagery” onto class attempts to put not only the Pacific, but also western imperialism under erasure. The continual, implicit resignification these sailors’ bodies represent is thus naturalized as a marker of class, which allows subsequent discourses on tattooing to exclude the Pacific and histories of imperialism, colonialism, and depopulation from representations of western body modification.

If the tattooed bodies of Euro-American sailors registered an implicit, continual resignification of imperialism, capitalism, and class divisions, then the tattooed bodies of

beachcombers signaled an explicit rejection of western civilization.⁴³ Beachcombers were European and American men who lived in the Pacific Islands for various periods of time, ranging from a few weeks to months or even decades. Beachcomber narratives will be discussed in the next chapter, in which I position Melville's *Typee* as an early example of the literary representation of Pacific tattooing. 19th-century mariner tattooing was voluntary, usually composed of Euro-American motifs, and registered a lower-class resignification of western culture; beachcomber tattooing was also voluntary, but its rejection was more explicit, and the designs were Tahitian, Samoan, Maori, Hawaiian, Tongan, Fijian, and Marquesan, among others. Beachcomber tattoos "were interpreted by other Europeans as physical symbols of their transgression from and rejection of the values of their native culture" (White 86). This figure mainly existed during the first half of the 19th century; the conditions that facilitated individual Euro-American men living within Pacific Island communities preceded the establishment of colonial settlements.⁴⁴ Beachcombers were usually sailors who jumped ship or escaped convicts, though some defected from the missionary ranks.⁴⁵

The beachcomber in the Pacific existed within a liminal cultural space, for his survival depended on an apparent rejection of his home culture, as well as the necessity of at least partial

⁴³ I.C. Campbell's *"Gone Native" in Polynesia: Captivity Narratives and Experiences from the South Pacific* (1998) is the only book that focuses exclusively on the figure of the beachcomber. Campbell emphasizes the experiential over the textual or discursive.

⁴⁴ Increasing imperial intrusion into the Pacific reduced the possibility of a beachcomber living singly at the sufferance of a Pacific Islander community: "With the arrival of missions and more regular contacts, the stereotypically wild and disreputable beachcomber was subsequently displaced by the more domesticated types of the settler or resident trader" (*Exploration & Exchange* 119-120).

⁴⁵ George Vason, who was one of the missionaries sent by the London Missionary Society to Tonga on the *Duff* in 1797, quickly became a beachcomber: "Instead of succeeding in converting the Tongans by word and example to the Christian faith, Vason become a convert to their lifestyle. He adopted Tongan dress and had his body tattooed, became the proprietor of a prosperous estate, and participated in the civil wars that commenced in Tonga in 1799" (*Exploration & Exchange* 156).

integration into the specific Pacific community. Greg Denning describes this liminality: “Beachcombers were those who crossed beaches alone. They crossed the beach without the supports that made their own world real into other worlds that were well-established and self-sufficient. They were strangers in their new societies and scandals to their old” (*Islands and Beaches* 129). These men did not enjoy the reassurance of a ship anchored in a bay, for they had rejected shipboard culture, its divisions and hierarchies. The tattoos they received were not indelible “souvenirs” from the Pacific, nor were they European motifs or dates. Beachcomber tattoos were indigenous designs that created syncretic bodily presentations that, through primitivist refashioning, destabilized the civilized/savage binary.

Both beachcombers and their Pacific Islander hosts utilized tattooing as a strategy of controlling and managing this unique situation, especially the problem of integration. By folding these Euro-Americans into social institutions and discursive formations, such as tattooing, marriage, eating societies, and warfare, Pacific Islander communities could attempt to secure the loyalty and services of beachcombers with different technological knowledge: “Alliances with prestigious foreigners and their guns might not be easily controlled or monopolized, but when they could be, there was a new potential in indigenous politics. Tribal autonomy, reciprocity, rivalry and competition could be supplanted by centralization, dominance, even exploitation” (*Islanders* 21). The relationship between a beachcomber and the community with which he attempted to live would be structured by the skills, knowledge, and needs of both parties. From the perspective of the beachcombers, some level of integration and service was necessary to remain within their chosen societies: “Beachcombers acted as interpreters and go-betweeners with European ships.... Those skilled in the use and maintenance of firearms often became head warriors and privileged chiefly attendants, adopting tattoos to camouflage physical difference

and marrying into their communities” (*Exploration & Exchange* 119). If these beachcombers returned to their home cultures, the actions and practices that ensured their safety and facilitated their integration into the Pacific Islands hindered their reacceptance into European or American societies. Tattoos received while living as a beachcomber could serve as a fetishized representation of a rejection of western civilization in favor of the “savagery” of the Pacific.

The tattooed beachcomber was an object of horror and fascination.⁴⁶ James F. O’Connell, who identified himself as Irish and was likely the first person to display his tattoos in the US for profit, received a full body tattoo while living at Ponape in the Caroline Islands of Micronesia in the 1830s. The same tattoo that allowed him to integrate into Pohnpeian society produced far different reactions in New York: “it is reported that on the streets women and children screamed in horror when they met him, and ministers inveighed from the pulpit that unborn children would bear his markings if pregnant women viewed them” (O’Connell 43).⁴⁷ This reaction to the tattooed beachcomber utilizes the theory of maternal impression in its anxious response to tattooing: “Until the late eighteenth century, the concept of maternal impression, which held that pregnant women had the ability to imprint their unspoken fears and desires onto the fetal body, was a legitimate medical theory” (Adams 187). This concept existed into the 19th century in the context of the freak show, which included the display of the tattooed body: “The very sight of a

⁴⁶ Since the cultural exchange, tattooing has been seen as a signifier of savagery: “Tattoos represented for the white spectator an instant signifier of the savage otherness of the inhabitants of the South Seas, and the practice was increasingly deployed in colonial literature as an immediately visible example of the exotic primitivity of the Pacific ‘savages’” (Werner 11). The tattooed beachcomber was understood as embracing Pacific “savagery” over western “civilization”: “To have ‘gone native’ was the mark of degeneration, an act of a man who turned his back on progress, enlightenment, civilization, order, law, and morality and preferred a life of savagery, immorality, paganism, and lawlessness. This was not only personal decadence; it was an affront and a challenge to the ethos of Western society, which assumed and asserted a moral and existential superiority over savagery or life in the ‘state of nature’” (Campbell 4).

⁴⁷ From the “Introduction” by Saul H. Riesenberg to James F. O’Connell’s *A Residence of Eleven Years in New Holland and the Caroline Islands* (1836/1972).

freak might be enough to deform the gestating fetus. Likewise, the freak's abnormality was regularly described as the consequence of a trauma experienced by the pregnant mother" (Adams 198). The specular bodily syncretism of the tattooed beachcomber produced such anxious responses that the acquisition of culturally specific body modification was naturalized through a misogynist representation of women as excessively emotional and defined by the reproductive function. In many cases, the tattooed beachcomber "was forced to make a life as an exhibited freak,"⁴⁸ although this was not the only path available upon return (Werner 21).⁴⁹

The Pacific tattoo inscribed within Euro-American skin retained the primitivist discourses the west applied to Pacific Islanders, including savagery, teleological underdevelopment, and degeneracy, but the syncretism of this bodily presentation required a redeployment of these discourses. Compared to mariner tattooing, the indigenous motifs of the beachcomber produced more troubling specular markers. In addition to destabilizing the civilized/savage binary and resignifying class divisions, imperialism, and capitalism, these tattoos actively questioned the western-constructed categories of race and ethnicity: "A 'white' body, indelibly inscribed and transformed by a 'savage' text, created in the minds of the European public a sense of unease and confusion that ultimately led to the common perception of beachcombers – and especially tattooed beachcombers – as untrustworthy rogues" (Werner 11). While this figure reinforced the imperialist assertion of the importance of specular difference, the tattooed beachcomber, through primitivist syncretism, destabilized the categories of civilized, savage, race, and nationality that

⁴⁸ The exhibition of the tattooed body in 19th early 20th centuries will be discussed at greater length in the chapter on Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood*. The following provide information on the display of tattooed bodies in circuses and carnivals: Bogdan (1988), Garland Thomson (1996), Nickell (2005), Osterud (2009), Mifflin (2013).

⁴⁹ George Vason, the missionary turned beachcomber, returned to England where "despite his full tattoo, he became a member of respectable society, at first responsible for a workhouse, then governor of Nottingham gaol. He married, attended a Baptist church, and was considered a liberal man" (*Islanders* 43).

rely on such visual markers. The resignification of capitalism, imperialism, and class divisions that the beachcomber's integration into Pacific communities signified is reduced to the dangerous, "savage" tattoo.

Some returned beachcombers wrote and published narratives of their experiences in the Pacific as a method of profiting from their body modification, as the process of tattooing usually factored into these accounts.⁵⁰ These narratives generally represent the decision to be tattooed as made under the coercion of the host community. Because tattooing was usually tied to social reproduction, maturity, and community belonging, beachcombers' "socially *unintegrated* bodies were an overt and constant transgression of cultural norms. In contrast, by becoming tattooed through accepted ritualistic processes, a...more coherent position could be established for them" (White 80, emphasis in original). Considering the highly vulnerable position of the beachcomber,⁵¹ tattooing was likely encouraged strongly by Pacific Islanders and accepted by Euro-Americans as a survival strategy. It seems probable that "a process of negotiation and resistance regarding the process of tattooing is likely to have characterized some encounters" (White 83). Many of the published narratives, however, represent tattooing as coerced, against the will of the Euro-American beachcomber.⁵² For example, James O'Connell claims that,

⁵⁰ Not many beachcombers wrote narratives of their experiences upon return: "A tiny minority wrote their memoirs or had them ghost-written by an interested patron. Some of these were published at the time to feed the market for sensational and exotic literature, but several of them lay unpublished for decades until discovered and published by editors who realized their historic or humanist value" (Campbell 27). For an annotated bibliography of extant beachcomber narratives, see Maude 170-177.

⁵¹ As with the cultural exchange of tattooing, "civilization" did not possess ascendancy in these situations: "During this early contact period, the balance of power with respect to lone individuals or small groups of men isolated from the security of their ships lay firmly with the indigenous population" (White 79).

⁵² At the Melville and the Pacific Conference at Lahaina, Maui, June 3-7 2003, Keone Nunes, a contemporary Hawaiian tattoo artist, discussed the physical impossibility of forcible tattooing: "Nunes pointed out the absurdity of such claims: as a practicing tattoo artist using traditional

although his companion George convinced the female tattoo artists not to continue his operation past the initial stages, he was not granted such an option: “they made gestures that I *must* stand it – there was no escape” (115, emphasis in original). O’Connell refers to the women who tattooed him at Ponape in Micronesia as “executioner” and “savage printers” (114, 115). It seems that “the depiction in a number of beachcomber narratives of the adoption of tattoos as an outcome of pressure from indigenous communities was an attempt by returning ‘transgressors’ to play down their own personal volition in an attempt to avoid alienating their readership” (White 87).⁵³ Generically, these texts can be considered versions of the captivity narrative. Because of the indelible nature of tattooing and the continual resignification this type of inscription registers, the removal of culpability for body modifications on the part of the beachcomber softens the rejection of Euro-American culture the incorporation of the Pacific tattoo could signify upon return.

Returned beachcombers who wrote about their time living with Pacific Islander communities textually (re)presented the Pacific, tattooing, and the tattooed body to the west in a manner different from figures such as Joseph Banks or James Cook, especially considering that the Admiralty appropriated all the journals onboard from Cook’s voyages. Moving from a collective experience, filtered through a single subjectivity that does not belong to the lower

implements, Nunes can testify that the intricate and precise designs of Oceanic tattoo can never be achieved without the full cooperation of the tattooed. An individual who returns from the Pacific with a beautifully executed tattoo cannot claim to have been worked upon against his or her will” (“Oceanic Tattoo” 296).

⁵³ For example, the obfuscation of the acquisition of his tattoos by the beachcomber John Rutherford has been exposed by the incompatibility of his claims. Rutherford “asserted that the markings on his face and body were a result of his being forcibly tattooed over a period of four hours while being held down by several members of the Maori community among whom he lived for ten years. Since the varied motifs are indigenous to several different island groups in the Pacific, and the *moko*, or Maori tattooing, borne by Rutherford on his face is usually carried out over a much longer period, his claims have been largely discredited” (White 87).

class, that is always connected with a ship, a mission, and return to a home culture, beachcomber narratives do not possess the temporal, spatial, and cultural points of reference a text compiled from Cook's journals would have. These narratives were produced from journals composed in the Pacific or from memory afterwards; they incorporated elements of captivity narratives, as well as the Crusoe myth.⁵⁴ As Vanessa Smith notes, within beachcomber and missionary narratives, "the mention of Crusoe authorises these accounts as texts, linking the productions of little or unknown authors with the first novel of the English canon, and with English cultural mythology" (63). *Typee*, Melville's first novel, contains just such an authorizing reference when Tommo describes, "Robinson Crusoe could not have been more startled at the footprint in the sand than we were at this unwelcome discovery" (44). Within the discursive structure of Euro-American textual and corporeal representations of the tattooed body since the cultural exchange in 1769, beachcomber narratives can be considered "the first popular literary representations of Indigenous tattooing" (Werner 12). While these narratives would contain the type of ethnographic descriptions one would expect from a captain or natural historian, they are also selective (re)presentations of experience as a literary narrative.

Beachcomber narratives contribute to the textual representation of Pacific tattooing, and the western body modification practice that derived from the cultural exchange, which began with journals and accounts of voyages that formed the imperial archive about the Pacific. Still utilizing an orientalist production of knowledge and a primitivism that vacillates between idealization and demonization, these beachcomber narratives open up the space within the

⁵⁴ For a discussion of the resonance of the Crusoe myth in beachcomber narratives, see: Smith (1996) 62-77. Smith identifies the elements from Defoe's novel that reappear in different forms in beachcomber texts, which include "the reappropriation of Western goods to peripheral purposes, the introduction of technology to the indigenous Other, the attempt to produce a written record from limited materials, the re-encounter with the agents of 'civilisation,' the rescue and return" (63).

archive for the literary (re)presentation of Pacific Islanders, and their tattooing, within a diegetic structure. They illustrate how appropriation and primitivism function in western discourses on tattooing. Pacific tattooing and Pacific designs are textually represented to a greater degree when Euro-Americans begin to accept the “mark of the savage” into their skins more frequently, but this incorporation destabilizes notions of civilization and racial difference and their relation to specular bodily presentation. Culpability or responsibility for the incorporation of Pacific tattooing is shifted away from the Euro-American subject. This obfuscates the conditions that allowed the beachcomber to encounter and attempt to live with Pacific Islanders, namely capitalist-driven western imperialism. The recontextualization of the decision to be tattooed and the operation itself as coercive or forced in beachcomber narratives, as well as the stories some men told when displaying their tattooed bodies, exemplify the anxiety produced by the figure of the tattooed beachcomber with respect to notions of civilization and race, among others. This literary reimagining functions through the same displacements and discontinuities of primitivist discourse that structure other western discourses about the Pacific Islands, such as depopulation and the notion of the diseased or dying Pacific.

Primitivism subordinates the tattoo to the power and effects of the colonizer, but the displacements that structure the discourse open gaps and produce excesses; the tattoo does not quite fit. The “savagery” of the marks – their fetishized embodiment – fails to obfuscate the conditions of the cultural exchange. The texts, both cultural and literary, that represent tattooing add into these voids further displacements, discontinuities, and innovations to the discursive trajectory I trace in this chapter. These responses to the buried but integral history of Euro-American tattooing branch out in sinuous directions, but the trace of 1769 remains inscribed within the skin.

Chapter III: “A hideous object to look upon”: The Tattooed Body in *Typee*

most of them were shocked, shocked that someone recognized them doing what they usually did: Peeping-Tomming for a past, an illusion long dead, long buried in museums of their own making.
-Sia Figiel, *Where We Once Belonged*

At the end of Herman Melville’s first novel, *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (1846), the narrator Tommo flees the Taipi valley on Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas because of his double fear of being eaten and being tattooed. In the course of his “escape,” Tommo dashes the Marquesan character Mow-Mow in the throat with a boathook: “I saw him rise to the surface in the wake of the boat, and never shall I forget the ferocious expression of his countenance” (252). Earlier in the novel, Tommo describes Mow-Mow’s “frightful expression” as the result of a recent face wound and “his hideously tattooed face, already deformed by the loss of an eye” (236). Toward the beginning of *Omoo* (1847), which continues the narrator’s “adventures,” Tommo encounters a tattooed white man, a beachcomber, at Hanamenu, a bay on Hiva Oa in the Marquesas. A few days after joining the whaling ship *Julia*, Tommo comes face to face with the syncretic bodily presentation from which he has just fled, killing a man in the process. The initial description of the beachcomber Lem Hardy runs: “a renegado from Christendom and humanity – a white man, in the South Sea girdle, and tattooed in the face. A broad blue band stretched across his face from ear to ear, and on his forehead was the taper figure of a blue shark, nothing but fins from head to tail” (31). These brief episodes, centered around Melville’s fictionalization of his own beachcomber experience on Nuku Hiva, are early examples of the representation of the tattooed body in literature informed by primitivist discourse. Pacific tattooing itself is figured as a hideous deformation, and the tattooing of a Euro-American subject in the Pacific, although

structured by primitivist idealization, seems to transform the white man into another species. Lem Hardy did not just reject his culture, country, and religion in Tommo's eyes; he is no longer a human being.

Tommo frames Pacific tattooing as hideous; this characterization seems consistent with his repeated application of the epithets "savages," "heathens," and "cannibals" to Marquesans. Tattooing is utilized as a specular signifier of the "savagery" of the Taipi. The tattooed body becomes a text that comments upon nationality, race, the civilized/savage binary, and religion. Tattooing in *Typee* is also related to gender and sexuality. This representation of Pacific tattooing and the tattooed body follows a western discourse that began with the cultural exchange of tattooing at Tahiti in 1769 during James Cook's first voyage. For Tommo, a Euro-American with Pacific tattooing incorporated within his skin is even more debased than the Marquesans because of the rejection of western civilization and Christianity in favor of "heathen savagery." Because of Tommo's belief that the inhabitants of Taipivai were holding him captive and were going to coerce him into receiving a face tattoo, Lem Hardy is especially terrifying: "Some of us gazed upon this man with a feeling akin to horror, no ways abated when informed that he had voluntarily submitted to this embellishment of his countenance. What an impress! Far worse than Cain's – *his* was perhaps a wrinkle, or a freckle, which some of our modern cosmetics might have effaced; but the blue shark was a mark indelible" (*Omoo* 31, emphasis in original). In this context, the biblical mark of Cain signals an implicit racialization of tattooing, as well as framing the tattooed Euro-American as an exile from his home culture. In comparison to Hardy's tattoos, Tommo assumes that Cain's mark would have been so small that cosmetics could have concealed it. Why are the Pacific tattoos of a Euro-American beachcomber "far worse" than the indelible mark of the first biblical murderer?

Typee is an expanded, fictionalized account of Melville's beachcomber experience in the Taipi valley, one that includes ethnographic information culled from various sources.¹ The only depiction of the tattooing operation itself in *Typee* is a brief scene in which Karky the tattoo artist is touching up the faded tattooing of an elderly Nuku Hivan. The narrator and Melville's stand-in, Tommo, refuses to be tattooed, despite persistent entreaties. Although the novel represents a failed cultural exchange and a failed integration, the specular marker of the tattoo is consistently utilized as indicating levels of "civilization." Tommo produces the inhabitants of the Taipi valley as objects of western knowledge through the use of cannibalism and tattooing as markers of civilization;² the former is never seen but constantly expected, and the latter is constantly visible but never acceded to. His double fear of being eaten and being tattooed registers the primitivist anxieties that accrue around the tattooed body. Both endanger the boundaries of the Euro-American body. Cannibalism threatens the body's biological existence, and tattooing threatens the body's social existence, upon return to the home culture. Although Tommo is not tattooed, the novel (re)presents the cluster of discourses about Pacific tattooing that were circulating at the time.

Melville's *Typee* is an early example of the primitivist representation of Pacific tattooing in literature,³ not only because the novel establishes the use of tattooing to reflect and comment

¹ The three main texts from which Melville drew are: Captain David Porter, *Journal of a Cruise Made to the Pacific Ocean in the U.S. Frigate Essex, in the Years 1812, 1813, and 1814* (1815); Charles S. Stewart, *A Visit to the South Seas, in the U.S. Ship Vicennes, 1829-1830* (1831); William Ellis, *Polynesian Researches* (1833). For Melville's time in the Pacific and the sources he utilized in writing *Typee*, see: Anderson (1939), Herbert (1980), and Heflin (2004).

² For an excellent discussion of the representation of cannibalism in *Typee* and how it relates to notions of fear and visibility, see the chapter "Lines of fright: Fear, perception, performance, and the 'seen' of cannibalism in Charles Wilkes's *Narrative* and Herman Melville's *Typee*" in *American Pacificism* 72-96.

³ *Typee* represents the first literary narrative written about the Marquesas: "Although the encounter narratives of sailors were readily available, only two accounts of dwelling among the

upon issues of modernity, imperialism, race, and nationality, but also because of the syncretic nature of the text itself.⁴ Melville's beachcomber experience is temporally expanded and fictionalized to a greater extent than other beachcomber memoirs, and the narrative is repeatedly interrupted by ethnographic descriptions of Marquesan life. This results in two different narrative voices, which Rod Edmond characterizes as "the philosophical voice" that critiques Euro-American civilization through a primitivist comparison to Marquesan culture as the "state of nature," and Tommo's "travelling empirical voice which puts these ideas under pressure and is unable, finally, to confirm them" (96). This separation of the narrative voice represents the failed integration, and the failed tattooing, of the beachcomber. The two narrative voices textually perform a version of the syncretism to which Tommo cannot accede. Within the sections of the novel that utilize a laudatory primitivist discourse to question Euro-American culture, specifically the methods of western imperialism and missionary activity but ultimately not the overall validity of the "civilizing mission," the terms "civilized" and "savage" remain operative, as Tommo merely effects a facile reversal of the binary. As Paul Lyons states, "*Typee* is itself part of colonialism" (96). This syncretic text remains trapped within the civilized/savage dichotomy, for Tommo's fear of tattooing and cannibalism as well as his violent "escape" from Nuku Hiva emphatically reassert the distinct separation and imperial definitions of civilization and savagery.

Marquesans had been written before Melville's; the LMS missionary William Pascoe Crook's account of 1797-1799, and Edward Roberts' Marquesan journal of 1798-1806: but neither had been published. There was no fiction about the Marquesas" (Farrier 119).

⁴ This textual syncretism operates on multiple levels: "*Typee*, Herman Melville's quasi-autobiographical 'peep at Polynesian life,' ... is generally taken as inaugurating both a touristic, escapist tradition of literary perceptions of Oceania and a subversive, anti-imperialist tradition; that the two books are in fact one suggests linkages between touristic perception and imperialism" (Lyons 76).

Beachcomber Narratives: Robarts and Cabri in the Marquesas

The specular, bodily syncretism of the returned beachcomber is textually represented through the displacements that structure the narrativization of the tattooing process. The primitivist rejection of western civilization through the Pacific tattoo is doubled by the textual rejection of culpability. The narrative of Edward Robarts, who deserted the whaler *New Euphrates* and lived on Tahuata and Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas⁵ from 1798 to 1806, and a booklet written under the direction of Jean Cabri, another beachcomber who also lived in the Marquesas from 1796 to 1804,⁶ represent two divergent methods of textually representing the integration of Pacific tattooing within Euro-American skin.

The Marquesan Journal of Edward Robarts 1797-1824, edited by Greg Dening, was not published until 1974, but Robarts was described by both Adam Krusenstern and Georg Langsdorff, the commander and naturalist of the Russian ship *Nadezhda*, respectively. The members of the *Nadezhda* initially mistook Robarts for a Marquesan, the cause for which Robarts describes: “My beard was very long; it covered my breast, for I had not been shaved for about 3 years. My skin [was] tanned with the sun. No one on board thought but that I was a native” (129-130). Krusenstern states that Robarts “was almost entirely naked, having only a narrow girdle tied round his middle, and was tattooed [sic] on the breast” (“Extract” 6-7). Robarts does not simply fail to mention the presence of a Pacific tattoo on his chest; he also obfuscates its potential visibility by claiming that a lengthy beard covered his chest. While acknowledging that

⁵ The Marquesas was the name given to the archipelago by Europeans: “*Henua’ enata*, the people’s long-standing name for their islands, means *the land of men*, or *the land of the people*; Enata is the name for the *people* who live in these islands” (Ellis 137, emphasis in original). I use both Marquesan and Enata to refer to the people of this archipelago.

⁶ The exact date when Cabri began residing in the Pacific is unknown, but “he probably arrived in the Marquesas about the middle of 1796, before Crook [LMS missionary William Pascoe Crook] or Robarts. Krusenstern, who took him back to Europe in 1804, says he had been in the Marquesas 10 years, and Kabris himself says nine” (Terrell 102).

he appeared to be a Nuku Hivan to European eyes, he emphasizes the effects of the sun on skin tone and the lack of European manufactured goods, such as razors, in the Marquesas over visual markers of culture, specifically the clothing and tattooing described by Krusenstern. Robarts' obfuscation of the tattoo he received while living as a beachcomber is not restricted to his representation of interactions with the *Nadezhda*; at no point in his narrative does he mention that he obtained a tattoo: "he is wholly silent about the matter in his rather exculpatory memoir" (Gell 208). We do know, however, that Robarts received a tattoo as a survival strategy against starvation.⁷

This obfuscation functions with and through the representations of the other European beachcomber living on Nuku Hiva at the time, the Frenchman Jean Cabri. Both Robarts and Cabri performed normal beachcomber functions during the ten days in 1804 the Russian expedition was at Nuku Hiva, acting as pilots, interpreters, and informants. Langsdorff relied on Cabri more as an informant, and Krusenstern Robarts.⁸ In contrast with Robarts, Cabri had integrated far more fully into Marquesan culture: "He was extensively tattooed, was apparently accepted into the chiefly class, joined in battles against other islands and other tribes, and married twice" (Terrell 102). His body modification included a facial tattoo, and he had

⁷ As Greg Denning states, "He [Robarts] had himself tattooed with a special design across his chest. The tattoo gave him entry into a small *tapu* group that surrounded Keatonui [*haka'iki* of Taiohae] and it gave him the right to share their food" (*Islands and Beaches* 113-4). Juniper Ellis claims that, "According to his [Robarts'] narrative, he resisted acquiring a tattoo until he realized that it could allow him entry into a feasting society, and therefore gain him food in times of famine" (Ellis 156). This does not appear in the text of Robarts' narrative; rather, it is reported by Langsdorff.

⁸ As Langsdorff explains, "The first part of Captain von Krusenstern's trip has already appeared in print. His interesting remarks are, in part, different from mine. The apparent cause is that he has used Roberts more as an informant, and I, in contrast, used Cabri" (64). Langsdorff believed that Cabri had integrated more fully into Marquesan society: "He was so very much like the savages that I can say I found only very little difference between his habits, way of living and thinking and those of the natives" (63).

apparently almost forgotten his native French. In a discussion of tattooing on Nuku Hiva, Langsdorff describes the tattoos of his beachcomber informants:

Our interpreter, Cabri, who had been tattooed poorly and irregularly all over his body (by a quack),⁹ had gotten a blackish-blue (tattooed) eye on one such occasion. Roberts had only a small square about six zolls [inches] long and four zolls wide tattooed on his chest. He assured us that he would never have submitted to being adorned with a cuirass if the famine the previous year had not forced him to become one of the 26 guests accepted by Katanuah [Keatonui] (the headman in the Tiohai [Taiohae] Valley) and fed, thus saving their lives.
(Langsdorff 78-9)

Despite being far less tattooed than Cabri, Robarts insists that he would not have submitted to the tattooist's implements had famine not threatened his life. Instead of attributing his Enata tattoo to the coercion of Pacific Islanders who held him in captivity, he locates the coercive agent within the vicissitudes of nature, a famine brought on by the failure of the breadfruit crop. As with the arrival of the *Nadezhda*, Robarts' tattoo is absent from his narrativization of the 1803 famine. He attempts to obfuscate his further integration into Enata culture and his tattoo by attributing his survival to piety: "I have felt the pains of hunger severely, but providence, ever good, gave me fortitude to bear my lot thro all scenes of life" (121).¹⁰ While Robarts will call attention to

⁹ As Anderson delineates, much of the information concerning tattooing in Melville's *Omoo*, specifically chapter eight, "The Tattooers of La Dominica [Hiva Oa]," is incorrect, such as the supposition that there were gradations with respect to skill among tattooists (indicated by the word "quack") and seems derived from Langsdorff's text. See Anderson 149-156; Langsdorff 75-9; *Omoo* 34-37.

¹⁰ This passage from Robarts' journal also touches upon elements of the captivity narrative. In a discussion of the representation of savagery in James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* and Melville's *Typee*, Anna Krauthammer references "the pattern of the earlier captivity

Cabri's tattoos,¹¹ his strenuous textual disavowal of his own, relatively small, tattoo seems to indicate that, even among beachcombers, a greater level of tattooing, especially a facial tattoo, represented a further step away from Euro-American "civilization" and toward Pacific "savagery."

Robarts claims that Cabri "proved to be a very bad person not worth notice" and that he was "a very bad and treacherous villain" (68, 99). When Robarts moved from Tahuata to Nuku Hiva in late 1799 or early 1800, Cabri was already living on the latter island: "Cabri had gone to live among the Taipi and, perhaps for that reason, Robarts decided to live with the Teii at Taiohae" (Denig 111). The heavily tattooed Cabri represents a divergent method of handling the anomalous position of the beachcomber from that of Melville, who did not submit to tattooing, as both men seem to have lived with the Taipi. Upon boarding the *Nadezhda*, Robarts quickly warned the Russians against his tattooed nemesis. Krusenstern states, "This Frenchman he described as his bitterest enemy, who omitted nothing to blacken him in the eyes of the king and islanders, and had often, he added, made attempts against his life" (*Voyages* 111).

Krusenstern believes this rivalry is the product of "the innate hatred between the French and English" extending itself to new colonial outposts (111). Capitalist-driven imperialism created the opportunity for Robarts and Cabri to live as beachcombers in the Pacific, but their apparent mutual enmity seems to have derived from uneven participation in Enata cultural practices, such as tattooing, that further destabilized the tenuous categories of race and "civilization" that attempted to justify western colonial incursion, rather than a strict adherence to historical

narratives in which the white captive through faith and whatever vestiges of civilization survive, escapes captivity and returns to the white world" (26).

¹¹ The following episode begins the chapter titled "Nukuhiva" of Robarts' narrative: "I slept on shore. I was a little surprizd when a person took me by the hand. I lookt at him, but did not Know him. The face was tattooed all over [and this] disguised the features. When he spoke, I drew my hand from him. I Knew him to be the french boy" (97).

national hatred. Opposed to Robarts' silence and obfuscation with respect to tattooing, Cabri's relationship with Enata body modification seems to represent a primitivist identification with the "savage other."

While there are different versions of the event,¹² it appears that the Russians accidentally removed Cabri from Nuku Hiva when they left the island. Cabri spent the rest of his life unsuccessfully trying to return to the Pacific. His livelihood seems almost entirely derived from the skills and specular bodily presentation he received in the Marquesas: "Both in Moscow and in St Petersburg he gave stage performances exhibiting his tattoos and doing 'the dances of the savages,' and made a strong impression as a 'curiosity.' For some time he taught swimming to the Russian cadets at Cronstadt" (Terrell 105). When he returned to France, "he showed off his tattoos and Marquesan dances to raise money to live, and to put by for his journey. But he did not prosper, the crowd being more interested in fat ladies and three-headed calves" (105). When Cabri died in 1822 at Valenciennes, "There had been some talk of preserving his unique skin, and so the authorities had him buried between two other corpses, one above, one below, to deter body-snatchers" (105). Apparently, the local museum wished "to make his contribution to science more permanent by tanning his tattooed skin" (Denning 113). Cabri was an early example of a returned tattooed beachcomber displaying his syncretic skin for profit. His story illustrates how an attempted orientalist production of knowledge pertaining to tattooed Pacific Islanders

¹² Cabri, Krusenstern, and Langsdorff all present different versions: "Worsening weather forced the *Nadeshda* to made [sic] a run for the sea, and Krusenstern says Kabris was simply forgotten. Langsdorff says everyone was occupied with the safety of the ship and they could not give him a boat or even a plank to get to land. Kabris even later claimed he had swum out to help the Russians, who were in difficulties, but they had refused to help him ashore when the danger had passed. Another version of Kabris's booklet quoted by O'Reilly states the Krusenstern got him drunk over dinner and put to sea while he was asleep" (Terrell 104). Terrell's article contains a translation of one of the booklets Cabri had written under his direction in 1817 about his time in the Marquesas.

also extended to Euro-Americans tattooed in the Pacific; the specular presentation of his tattooed skin seems to have been considered an unintended contribution to Euro-American “knowledge” about the Pacific.

Melville lived in Taipivai at Nuku Hiva approximately forty years after Robarts and Cabri; these early beachcombers’ responses to Enata tattooing and the texts they left behind can be read with and against Melville’s literary representation of the tattooed body. Conspicuously absent from both Robarts’ narrative and Cabri’s booklet¹³ is Tommo’s assertion that the entire valley joined in the chorus of “annoying requests” that he submit to tattooing (*Typee* 220). Robarts appears not to have encountered coercive pressure, and it seems that Cabri understood to some extent why tattooing was encouraged and acceded to the operation with little or no resistance: “the quaitenouiy [Keatonui] urged us to be tattooed all over, which these people regard as a mark of manhood....After the ceremony, which made us belong to the tribe, we each chose a wife and were married according to the islanders’ custom” (Cabri, quoted in Terrell 108-9). Elements of coercion or captivity are absent from Cabri’s representation of the tattooing operation, as well as Tommo’s anxious fear that submitting to Enata tattooing will result in him “being rendered hideous for life” (*Typee* 218). Positioned between the silence and obfuscation of Robarts’ text and Cabri’s primitivist identification, Melville’s literary reimagining of tattooing and the beachcomber experience indexes Euro-American responses to and textual representations of Pacific tattooing. Tommo depicts tattooing as a hideous deformation that engages with notions of class, sexuality, race, and knowledge production. He situates tattooing as the trigger of the

¹³ “True and Historical Summary of the stay of Joseph Kabris, native of Bordeaux, in the Mendoza Islands, Pacific Ocean, latitude 10°S, longitude about 240°” (Paris 1817), written for Mr J. Kabris by Mr A.F. Dulys, Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale, mf Canberra, Australian National University, Dept of Pacific and Southeast Asian History. Translation in Terrell, pages 106-112.

captivity narrative, as the novel's spell of laudatory, idealized primitivism is broken by the prospect of the beachcomber being tattooed.

Entering the Archive

The initial description of the Marquesas in *Typee* indicates that Melville/Tommo encounters the Pacific specifically through the Euro-American imperial archive that utilizes aspects of orientalism and primitivism to (re)present textually the Pacific, and that the narrative will place slight pressure on these representations from within these discursive formations. This description, a series of disconnected images, appears when it is decided the *Dolly* will land at Nuku Hiva but before the whaler arrives. The images Tommo uses to define the Marquesas are not produced through empirical observation, but rather are representations culled from texts: “The Marquesas! What strange visions of outlandish things does the very name spirit up! Naked houris – cannibal banquets – groves of cocoa-nut – coral reefs – tatoed [sic] chiefs – and bamboo temples; sunny valleys planted with bread-fruit trees – carved canoes dancing on the flashing blue waters – savage woodlands guarded by horrible idols – *heathenish rites and human sacrifices*” (5, emphasis in original). The adjectives “strange” and “outlandish,” as well as the use of “spirit” as a verb indicate that for Tommo the Marquesas possess a certain unreality, that the islands exist not only on the edge of empire, but also on the fringe of Euro-American imagination. The disconnected images can be understood as produced partially through primitivist discourse, in which specific geographical locations and practices of indigenous peoples are subordinated to the function of marking difference from and an implied inferiority to “civilization.” This cluster of images also represents the ways in which the Pacific Islands were produced as objects of orientalist knowledge, with emphasis on certain cultural practices, specifically cannibalism and tattooing. The first “strange vision” that Tommo supplies, the

“Naked houris,” however, signals that the novel enters the Euro-American discursive archive about Pacific islands through the aegis of an orientalist knowledge production that stretches over the Pacific, again subordinating specificity to a mere marker of difference. Tommo’s “houris,” figures from Muslim cosmogony, have no connection to the culture and peoples of the Marquesas, yet this orientalizing representation structures the first “peep at Polynesian life” offered by the novel.

Guided by a displaced orientalist production of knowledge and the texts written by previous Euro-Americans traveling to the Pacific on the currents of colonial expansion, Tommo’s literary text explicitly enters the imperial archive through this citing of primitivist (re)presentations of the Pacific Islands. Similar to the simultaneous horror and fascination Euro-Americans expressed when first encountering tattooed Pacific bodies, Tommo is both disturbed by and driven towards Nuku Hiva: “Such were the strangely jumbled anticipations that haunted me during our passage from the cruising ground. I felt an irresistible curiosity to see those islands which the olden voyagers had so glowingly described” (5). This tension between the haunting, seemingly unreal or supernatural textual representations of the Pacific and Tommo’s empirical observations provides the discursive basis for the sections of laudatory primitivism in *Typee*. While the tension placed upon citationality leads Tommo to question certain aspects of imperial discourse, such as the designation of the term “savage,” his critiques emerge from within primitivist discourse. The touristic, Edenic representation of the Marquesas is structured by standard discourses about the Pacific that have been operative at least since the cultural exchange of tattooing, specifically the lack of necessity for work, superabundance, and a certain

passivity of the colonial “Other.”¹⁴ The space between textual representation and perception that produces the anxious, overdetermined parodies of colonial discourse in *Typee* exists fully within primitivist discourse; the facile reversal of the civilized/savage binary is undone as Tommo’s fear of cannibalism and tattooing returns and his representation of Pacific Islanders collapses back into the images produced by the “olden voyagers.”¹⁵

After establishing that his text emerges from within the imperial archive on the Pacific, Tommo gives a brief overview of Euro-American contact and interaction with the inhabitants of the Marquesas, with particular emphasis on discovery, the whaling industry, and missionary activity. He mentions the three texts from which his account will derive information, Captain David Porter’s *Journal of a Cruise Made to the Pacific Ocean* (1815), of which he denies reading knowledge,¹⁶ and two missionary texts, Charles Stewart’s *A Visit to the South Seas*

¹⁴ As an example of the primitivist discourses of lack of work and superabundance, Tommo’s reflection upon “the wide difference between the extreme of savage and civilized life” that follows the homoerotic description of Kory-Kory lighting a fire refers to children in Taipivai receiving a “cannibal education” and eating “that food which the children of a Polynesian father, without troubling their parent, pluck from the branches of every tree around them” (112). Also, Tommo explicitly depicts the inhabitants of the Taipi valley as flattened, unthinking, and undifferentiated subjects: “With them there hardly appeared to be any difference of opinion upon any subject whatever. They all thought and acted alike” (203).

¹⁵ The (re)presentation of the imperial archive on the Pacific in *Typee* produces a temporary distancing from previous texts, but the depiction of cannibalism slides back towards these citations: “*Typee* is full of minor, nervous, slippery parodies that place all mention of cannibalism in conspicuous scare quotes, but often collapse toward their sources, sometimes unconsciously (given the sometimes random raiding of the archive)” (Lyons 89-90). Tattooing, however, is never in scare quotes because it is constantly visible; the cultural practice among the Taipi is not under question. Tommo’s representation of shifts back to the archive because of the possibility of undergoing tattooing himself.

¹⁶ As scholars since Anderson (1939) have demonstrated, Melville relied heavily upon Porter’s *Journal*. For example, in his description of religion on Nuku Hiva, Porter states, “In religion these people are mere children; their morais are their baby-houses, and their gods are their dolls” (119). Utilizing similar diction, Tommo also represents religious ritual in a derogatory, infantilizing manner: “The whole of these proceedings were like those of a parcel of children playing with dolls and baby houses” (176). Melville’s general representation of the Taipi can be understood as a citation of Porter: “By being Porter’s enemy the Taipi became a savage,

(1831) and William Ellis' *Polynesian Researches* (1833). While scholars have revealed many of the sources for the intertextual citations in *Typee*, the manner in which Melville modifies a citation from Porter concerning tattooing has not been fully explicated. Early in his stay on Nuku Hiva, Tommo describes five old Taipi men, whom he calls "hideous old wretches, on whose decrepit forms time and tattooing seemed to have obliterated every trace of humanity" (*Typee* 92). Tommo states that the men's bodies present "a uniform dull green color – the hue which the tattooing gradually assumes as the individual advances in age" (92). He describes their skin as having a "frightful scaly appearance," which he compares to both "dusty specimens of verde-antique" and "the overlapping plaits on the flank of a rhinoceros" (92). This description of the appearance of the full-body tattooing of old Marquesan men is singular in two respects. As Juniper Ellis notes, "Melville's, it would appear, is the only description that suggests that Marquesan tattooing produces this color [green]; others comment on the blue or black pigment of the adorned skin" (144). Also, there is no other textual source that claims extensive tattooing can result in scaly skin.

As Mary Bercaw Edwards delineates in *Cannibal Old Me* (2009), the most likely source for the depiction of these old men in *Typee* derives from the physical description of Keatonui (referred to as Gattenewa) in Porter's *Journal of a Cruise*: "The scaly appearance of the 'five hideous old wretches' in *Typee* (92) reflects that of Gattanewa [sic], the leader of the Teii in Porter" (Edwards 18). Porter racializes Keatonui based on his extensive tattooing, but does not refer to him as an animal or past the bounds of the human: "his [Keatonui's] face and body were

treacherous, sullen group of warriors whose ferocity was a compliment to those who defeated them. Their valley, by the same association, was sinister and foreboding. . . . Herman Melville, who read David Porter closely, would enlarge the experience of his own short three weeks stay among the Taipi with Porter's image of the 'Typee,' and Aoe [foreigners] enjoyed this vision of the savage for a hundred years and more" (*Islands and Beaches* 28).

as black as a negro's, from the quantity of tattooing, which entirely covered them, and his skin was rough, and appeared to be peeling off in scales, from the quantity of kava (an intoxicating root) in which he had indulged himself" (Porter 84).¹⁷ Porter's identification of kava consumption as the cause of Keatonui's skin condition, a state of scaly exfoliation, seems accurate: "This affliction is in fact one documented side effect of chronic kava consumption. Very heavy drinking may cause skin lesions and drying of the skin, producing an advanced exanthema of itchy urticarial patches" (*Kava: The Pacific Drug* 60). Tommo conflates the effects of extensive tattooing and heavy consumption of kava but entirely excludes kava, erroneously attributing a scaly exfoliation to tattooing.¹⁸ While he sidesteps Porter's racialization of Pacific tattooing, this obfuscating conflation allows him to represent the cultural practice of tattooing as eventually removing Pacific Islanders from humanity. This citation of Porter indicates how Tommo appropriates and alters the imperial archive on the Pacific to match his representational ends, here depicting the cultural practice of tattooing as a process through which the "savage" is removed from the low end of a developmental human teleology to the realm of wild beasts.

¹⁷ While Edwards is correct in identifying this passage as Melville's source, her discussion of this citation obfuscates aspects of both Porter's and Melville's texts. She states that "The appearance of blackness caused by heavy tattooing depicted by Porter is also described in Stewart and Langsdorff," but does not mention that Melville converts this racialization into the color green (18-9). Also, her quotation of Porter cuts off before the mention of kava, the cause of the scaly appearance, implicitly validating Melville's erroneous representation of tattooing.

¹⁸ Two 20th century texts, Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall's *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1932) and Frederick O'Brien's *Atolls of the Sun* (1922), claim that tattooing and kava produce scaly, green skin. In *Mutiny*, there is a description of "a famous warrior named Poino, whose recent excesses in drinking the *ava* [kava] had nearly cost him his life. He lay on a pile of mats, scarcely able to move, his skin scaling off and green as verdigris" (103). O'Brien describes the physical appearance of an old tattoo artist on Fatu Hiva: "The designs upon his face and body were a strange green, the verde antique which the *ama* [candle-nut] ink becomes on the flesh of the confirmed *kava* drinker" (347). Considering that both texts use the same term as Tommo (verde-antique, verdigris), these seem to be textual citations that conflate Porter and Melville. There is also the possibility that scaly exfoliations produced by kava consumption over tattooed skin could make the pigment appear green, though this would not explain Tommo's attribution of the color green solely to tattooing.

Tommo concludes the first chapter of *Typee* with two anecdotes that exist outside his narrative of desertion and beachcomber life, the “Adventure of the Missionary’s Wife Among the Savages” and “Characteristic Anecdote of the Queen of Nukuhiva.”¹⁹ These two episodes, both of which revolve around the exposure of a woman’s body, can be understood as structuring the manner in which encounter, cultural exchange, colonial relations, and the tattooed body are represented in *Typee*. Although these episodes are not drawn specifically from beachcomber experience, the power relations represented in them are reminiscent of early scenes of contact and exchange, such as at Tahiti in 1769, and of beachcomber narratives, in which Euro-American “civilization” does not possess ascendancy over Pacific Islander culture. Both scenes involve instances of indigenous power and imperial agents, specifically missionaries and the French military, retreating from unexpected and embarrassing situations.

The missionary’s wife, brought to the Marquesas by a husband “believing much in the efficacy of female influence” is initially represented through the standard colonial trope in which Euro-Americans assume indigenous people view white skin as a divine attribute; Tommo states that the islanders “seemed inclined to regard it as some new divinity” (*Typee* 6). Her voluminous clothing is understood as a deception by the islanders, and “they sought to pierce the sacred veil of calico in which it was enshrined, and in the gratification of their curiosity so far overstepped the limits of good breeding, as deeply to offend the lady’s sense of decorum” (6). Once her sex was ascertained, “she was stripped of her garments, and given to understand that she could no longer carry on her deceits with impunity” (6-7). The couple returns to the mission station at Tahiti because “the gentle dame was not sufficiently evangelised to endure this” (7). Although this episode relates to the lack of authority the cultural imperialism of Christian missionaries

¹⁹ The titles for these brief episodes come from the table of contents of *Typee*. Both anecdotes were cut from the American Revised edition (*Typee* 314n6.18).

possessed,²⁰ it is far from simply a precursor to Tommo's later diatribes against missionary activity in the Pacific (but not the overall civilizing mission). This episode is explicitly coupled with the "Characteristic Anecdote of the Queen of Nukuhiva," in which a Marquesan woman voluntarily displays her tattooed body instead of the involuntary denuding of the missionary's wife. These two episodes partially structure the representations of clothing, ornamentation, and the tattooed body within Tommo's beachcomber narrative.

The visit of the "king and queen" of Nuku Hiva, the historical Temoana and Vae Kehu respectively,²¹ upon an American man-of-war concludes the first chapter but occurs "between two and three years after the adventures recorded in this volume" (*Typee* 7). Temoana and Vae Kehu did visit the naval ship *United States* in October 1843, about "sixteen months after the French established a formal claim to the island" ("Island Queens" 168). As it is represented in the novel, the episode occurs after its historical moment, which extends the length of time of the French colonial presence.²² The tension and attempted humor of the anecdote revolves around

²⁰ As Juniper Ellis states, after the missionary's wife is denuded, "she no longer has the authority to insist upon the importance of covering the body, in keeping with the sexual modesty and restraint mandated by Victorian and Christian culture. Her nakedness represents, beyond her physical discomfort, the retreat of successive Christian missions from the islands" ("Island Queens" 165).

²¹ As Juniper Ellis delineates, the titles and authority of Temoana and Vae Kehu were produced by both Marquesan genealogies and interaction with French colonialism: "In Nuku Hiva, the historical queen was Vae Kehu, wife of Temoana. Vae Kehu, daughter of a Taipi chief, inherited traditional power and, when she married King Temoana, acquired imported status as the queen. Temoana's rule, too, was both inherited according to time-honored traditions and altered by his associations with the French. His grandfather was descended from three or four chiefly lines, and Temoana inherited *haka'iki* status – traditional authority – as a paramount chief. When the French arrived and made Temoana a king, his title changed, but his role as king was founded on his chiefly authority" ("Island Queens" 167). Temoana's grandfather was Keatonui, the chief to whom Edward Robarts attached himself as a survival strategy during the famine of 1803.

²² This expansion of time can be understood as an element of Tommo's critique of French colonial practices: "The event, as *Typee* depicts it, takes place two or three years after the French had annexed the Marquesas. Melville's telling of the story lengthens the time the French colonial

the syncretic bodily presentations that were produced by interaction and exchange between Euro-American colonialists and Marquesans. The level of “civilization” which Temoana and Vae Kehu had achieved is supposed to be displayed by their adoption of royal ceremonial comportment and European dress. Temoana’s clothing seems to have been chosen partially to obfuscate aspects of his bodily presentation that emit Marquesan cultural signs: “His majesty was arrayed in a magnificent military uniform, stiff with gold lace and embroidery, while his shaven crown was concealed by a huge chapeau bras, waving with ostrich plumes” (*Typee* 7). While the French could hide his hairstyle, European clothing cannot conceal facial tattooing: “There was one slight blemish, however, in his appearance. A broad patch of tattooing [sic] stretched completely across his face, in a line with his eyes, making him look as if he wore a huge pair of goggles” (7-8). The attempted humorous understatement in this description, “one slight blemish,” represents the first instance of derogation of tattooing in *Typee*, a trend that runs throughout the novel. The specular syncretism of Temoana - Marquesan tattooing and European clothing - can be understood as another version of the bodily syncretism, and potential liminality, that tattooing could produce for Tommo but from which the beachcomber ultimately flees. The exposure of the tattooed body of Vae Kehu despite her European garb, however, induces the French to flee the scene they carefully constructed.

Tommo explicitly links the exposed bodies of the missionary woman and Vae Kehu through the trope of Euro-American feminine modesty: “Not thus shy of exhibiting her charms was the Island Queen herself, the beauteous wife of Mowanna, the king of Nukuheva” (*Typee* 7). Before she discloses parts of her body concealed by the “gaudy tissue of scarlet cloth” provided by the French, Tommo describes the tattooing visible on her legs: “embellished with spiral

officials have had to ‘civilize’ the royal couple, thereby emphasizing how ineffectual their attempts have been” (“Island Queens” 168).

tattooing, and somewhat resembling two miniature Trajan's columns" (8). Although her tattooing is depicted as an embellishment akin to ornamentation, the design itself seems to be praised through the comparison to Trajan's triumphal column, around which a bas relief depicting the war between the Romans and Dacians spirals, though the comparison to an object from antiquity preserves the temporal displacement of primitivism. This metaphor implies that Tommo understands to some extent the connection between Pacific tattooing and narrative. The figuration of tattooing as sculpture is unique in the novel, however, as Tommo's usual metaphor for tattooing is representational painting.²³

The exposure of tattoo designs on parts of Vae Kehu's body covered by European garb immediately follows the Marquesan woman's admiration of the tattoos of an old sailor. The tattoo designs of this man are not described, nor are they seen as hideous deformations. His extensive tattooing is also compared to artwork, again not body artwork, from the ancient world: "an old *salt*, whose bare arms and feet, and exposed breast were covered in as many inscriptions in India ink as the lid of an Egyptian sarcophagus" (*Typee* 8, emphasis in original). In a manner similar to the missionary woman, the sailor's body is exposed, though not completely disrobed, by a Marquesan character: "pulling further open the bosom of his duck frock, and rolling up the leg of his wide trowsers, she gazed with admiration at the bright blue and vermilion pricking, thus disclosed to view" (8). Opposed to the voluminous calico, which was understood as deceitful by the islanders, the sailor's tattoos are not viewed simply as ornamentation by Vae Kehu but as a form of body modification through which her own person is also signified. It seems probable that at least some of the mariner's tattoo designs were obtained in the Pacific.

²³ Tommo relies heavily upon the painterly comparison in passages dealing with Karky the tattoo artist, claiming Karky's vehement desire to tattoo him exhibited the Marquesan's "painter's enthusiasm" (219). Styles of tattooing are also represented as artistic movements, with reference to "the old masters of the Typee school" (218).

The connection between these figures is structured by the syncretic bodily presentation produced by the combination of Pacific tattooing and European clothing. This similarity through syncretism between the lower-class Euro-American sailor and the Marquesan woman of chiefly descent cuts across notions of nationality, race, and class. Tommo's narrative begins with a doubled representation of the bodily syncretism that tattooing could produce in him, but from which he, like the "polite Gauls," flees (8).

Vae Kehu resignifies this syncretism by literally throwing off the European clothing provided by the French to exhibit more of her tattoo designs for the benefit of the tattooed mariner: "all at once, the royal lady, eager to display the hieroglyphics on her own sweet form, bent forward for a moment, and turning sharply round, threw up the skirts of her mantle, and revealed a sight from which the aghast Frenchmen retreated precipitately, and tumbling into their boat, fled the scene of so shocking a catastrophe" (*Typee* 8). Considering that this episode occurs at the beginning of formal French colonial presence on Nuku Hiva, Vae Kehu's exposure of her tattoos represents Marquesan resistance to Euro-American imperial expansion that explicitly utilizes Pacific systems of signification. Tommo does not derogate Vae Kehu's tattoos,²⁴ and he seems to enjoy the joke played on the French.²⁵ There is also the possibility that the French were not running away because of her tattooing but because Vae Kehu exposed her backside as an insult to the colonial authorities. Tattooing is a site/cite of resistance and autonomy. The

²⁴ It seems that Vae Kehu might have been the only Marquesan woman who could have utilized her tattooing in the manner described. As Juniper Ellis delineates, "The historical Vae Kehu's girdle circled her loins or lower back in an elaborate design documented by the American anthropologist Willowdean Chatterson Handy" ("Island Queens" 167). See Handy, *Tattooing in the Marquesas*, plate XV. "Like Handy's studies, Alfred Gell's more recent review of scholarship on Marquesan tattoos suggests that, with the exception of Vae Kehu, women were not tattooed on the back" ("Island Queens" 179n5).

²⁵ As Ellis discusses, Tommo seems to locate the tattoo on her buttocks through the puns on "aghast" and "catastrophe," which leads to the joke that "the Island Queen reveals that those attempting to exert colonial power make asses of themselves" ("Island Queens" 167).

repetition of flight in these episodes creates textual distance between the flight of two groups of colonial agents, missionaries and the military, and the beachcomber Tommo's violent fleeing from Nuku Hiva. These flights all revolve around anxieties relating to the body: Euro-American sexual propriety, the tattooed Pacific Islander, and the double fear of cannibalism and tattooing.

These episodes inform the representation of missionaries, colonial intrusion, clothing, and tattooing within Tommo's beachcomber narrative.²⁶ The gendered representation of tattooing in the novel, in which the body modifications of Enata men are savage and hideous, and those of Enata women, particularly Fayaway, are minimalized, rationalized, and not derogated seems established in this anecdote. Because the first chapter lies outside Tommo's beachcomber narrative, however, the representation of the cultural exchange of tattooing, of the inclusion of Pacific tattooing within Euro-American skin, in these early episodes is not structured by the displacements and obfuscation typical of beachcomber narratives. As with the citational pressure the novel places upon the imperial archive from a primitivist position, the discursive representation of the tattooed body in *Typee* exists within the space between textual citation and perception, in the liminal space created by the interaction between the Euro-American beachcomber and his Taipi hosts.

The representation of the inhabitants of Nuku Hiva, and specifically the Taipi, as inveterate cannibals and tattooists who desire to rupture the boundaries of and resignify Euro-American bodies begins before Tommo crosses the beach. While the *Dolly* is still in the harbor, Tommo reflects upon the supposed "savage" character of the Marquesans through a primitivist

²⁶ Juniper Ellis writes, "All of the following events – indeed, the story itself – are read politically and narratively in relation to these paired stories of women. The queen's tattoo scene appears in the first chapter of *Typee* but chronologically closes the story" ("Island Queens" 168). I understand these anecdotes as possessing a more circumscribed role because they appear outside the beachcomber narrative, though the structure of flight does indicate Tommo's eventual "escape."

reversal of the civilized/savage binary, calling attention to the power and violence of naming: “Thus it is that they whom we denominate ‘savages’ are made to deserve the title” (*Typee* 26).²⁷ The term savage represents a point of tension between the different narrative voices of Tommo, as this assertion must be weighed against the repeated, and casual, reference to Marquesans as “savages,” “heathens,” and “barbarians” throughout the novel. Tommo’s method of citation discloses one of the textual sources of his representation of the Taipi as irreclaimable cannibals, specifically his erroneous assertion that “the word ‘Typee’ signifies in the Marquesan dialect a lover of human flesh” (24). This act of naming comes from David Porter: “Melville writes of the Taipi, erroneously following Porter (who follows Columbus’s mistranslation of a tribal name into a practice)” (Lyons 93). Tommo’s text is complicit in the very act of naming that it critiques, for both narrative voices emerge from within primitivist discourse.

With the admonition Captain Vangs²⁸ of the *Dolly* gives his crew prior to granting them shore liberty, the elements of the imperial archive and primitivist discourse previously cited enter Tommo’s beachcomber narrative. The table of contents refers to this speech as “A Specimen of Nautical Oratory,” which implies that admonitions concerning cannibalism, tattooing, and desertion were normal practice for Euro-American captains in the Pacific. Vangs’ warning cites the experiences, and disappearances, of previous ships’ crews: “if those tattooed scoundrels get you a little ways back into their valleys, they’ll nab you – that you may be certain of. Plenty of white men have gone ashore here and never been seen any more” (*Typee* 34). Vangs references a

²⁷ Tommo claims that Euro-American travelers and voyagers “have discovered heathens and barbarians, whom by horrible cruelties they have exasperated into savages” (27). This argument relies on an orientalist passivity of the colonial “Other,” as well as the imperial discourse of fatal impact. Tommo refers to Pacific Islander hospitality as “Fatal embrace!” (26).

²⁸ Captain Vangs is most likely based on Captain Valentine Pease, Jr. of the *Acushnet*, Melville’s first whaling ship, from which he deserted. For information pertaining to Pease, the crew and the articles of the *Acushnet*, see Heflin 18-36.

ship named *Dido*, whose shore watch was supposedly cannibalized by the Nuku Hivans, with only three men returning to the ship, “and one with his face damaged for life, for the cursed heathens tattooed a broad patch clean across his figure-head” (34). Although most of the crew dismiss Vangs as “a lying old son of a sea-cook,”²⁹ and Tommo and Toby’s plan for desertion was already in place, this speech opens the textual space for Tommo’s beachcomber narrative by foregrounding the representations of Pacific Islanders that his text will question and put under citational pressure (34). This speech narrativizes the series of disconnected, orientalizing images with which Tommo began his representation of the Marquesas. The assumption that the lost sailors of a fictitious ship were killed and cannibalized by Nuku Hivans catalyzes the aspect of the narrative that is constantly on watch for the “ocular proof”³⁰ of cannibalism. Tommo’s belief towards the end of the novel that he saw “the disordered members of a human skeleton, the bones still fresh with moisture, and with particles of flesh clinging to them here and there!” satisfies the narrative expectation of witnessing cannibalism that is established before Tommo sets foot on Nuku Hiva (238). Melville himself did not witness such a sight during his four weeks in the Taipi valley: “Mr. Melville would not have been willing to call his old Typee entertainers ‘man-devouring,’ as he has stated that whatever might have been his suspicions, he never had evidence that it was the custom of the tribe. (Elizabeth Melville’s correction of an article by Mary L.D. Ferris in *Bulletin of the Society of American Authors*, Sept 1901)” (quoted

²⁹ Valentine Pease, the father of Valentine Pease, Jr., was himself a whaling captain. Two brothers of Pease, Jr., Henry Pease II and Tristram Daggett Pease, were both masters of whaling ships when the *Acushnet* was being fitted-out for its first voyage (Heflin 18).

³⁰ The phrase “ocular proof” from *Othello* was often utilized in Euro-American discourses about cannibalism. Like the handkerchief planted by Iago, the anxious desire to witness cannibalism (or see the dismembered corpse of someone cannibalized) and provide such textual ocular proof might “be said to indicate that he does not *discover* his ‘cause,’ but that the illusion of that cause was awaiting his arrival” (Sanborn 6, emphasis in original). For a meticulous overview of cannibal discourse, see the chapter “In the Wake of the *Resolution*: The Post-Enlightenment Discourse on Cannibalism” from Geoffrey Sanborn’s *The Sign of the Cannibal*, 21-73.

in Leyda 1.137).³¹ While cannibalism was anxiously expected but never seen, Pacific tattooing was a constantly visible threat.

Marquesan Tattooing

The representation of the tattooed bodies of Marquesan characters in *Typee* follows the discursive vacillation, shuttling between laudatory and denunciatory primitivism, of the novel itself. The tattooing of certain Marquesans is described in some detail and is not simply denigrated as “savage,” as Mehevi and Marnoo are represented as idealized (tattooed) noble savages, Fayaway’s tattoos are minimalized and rationalized, and Tommo understands Kory-Kory’s tattooed body through notions of captivity and knowledge production. The body modifications of unnamed or ancillary characters, however, remain irreclaimably the “mark of the savage.”

Consistent with the Euro-American tendency to read class and rank into Pacific tattooing, Tommo represents the tattooing of Marquesan characters who appear to possess some social distinction, specifically Mehevi and Marnoo, as a reiteration and reinforcement of their supposed nobility. The tattooed bodies of Marquesans of chiefly lineage are not, however, all depicted as examples of the “noble savage,” as the descriptions of Temoana (“one slight blemish”) and Mow-Mow (“hideously tattooed face”) demonstrate (*Typee* 7, 236). Certain words reappear in Tommo’s descriptions of Enata tattooing regardless of the supposed class position of the subject, such as grotesque, hideous, and blemish. The tattoos of the chief Mehevi, whom Tommo represents through the trope of the noble savage, are described as existing in “grotesque variety,”

³¹ As Paul Lyons notes, this assertion that Melville did not witness evidence of cannibalism “has been conveniently overlooked by nearly the entire Melville industry” (89). For example, in *Cannibal Old Me: Spoken Sources in Melville’s Early Works* (2009), Mary Bercaw Edwards argues that Melville borrowed the “discovery” of cannibalized remains from Porter but does not question its historical validity, stating that in the Marquesas cannibalism “was the inescapable factor” (21).

and Kory-Kory, who is assigned the task of tending to Tommo, is said to possess a “grotesquely-tattooed form” (78, 134). Despite these adjectival similarities, which signal how tattooing is textually distanced from the Euro-American subject and relegated to the “primitive” Pacific Islander, Tommo believes the choice of designs and the quality of the tattooing operates along class divisions: “In the decoration of the chiefs it seems to be necessary to exercise the most elaborate penciling; while some of the inferior natives look as if they had been daubed over indiscriminately with a house-painter’s brush” (220). Such wide disparity with respect to designs and the skill of tattooists is not corroborated by any anthropological source and seems derived from Langsdorff’s account.³² Melville, though enlisted on a whaler as an able seaman, was “the son of an impoverished gentry family” (Frank 52). This elevated class position is extended to both Toby and Tommo: “Toby, like myself, had evidently moved in a different sphere of life, and his conversation at times betrayed this” (*Typee* 32). The representation of the (tattooed) noble savage body can be understood as operating along the same lines as Fletcher Christian’s primitivist identification with the Tahitian “noble savage.”

Tommo’s elevation of this figure finds its complement in his racialized, primitivist praise of the Marquesans over other Pacific Islanders based on physical properties, mainly skin color: “the dark-hued Hawaiians [sic] and the woolly-headed Feegees [sic] are immeasurably inferior to them. The distinguishing characteristic of the Marquesan islanders, and that which at once strikes you, is the European cast of their features – a peculiarity seldom observable among uncivilized people” (*Typee* 184). Race is not represented as a fixed category in *Omoo* and *Typee*, especially with respect to tattooing, for either Euro-Americans or Pacific Islanders. In *Omoo*, Tommo refers

³² Langsdorff claims that “The poorer islanders...have themselves tattooed by beginners or amateurs whose work is not particularly of special merit. Even a stranger can very soon recognize examples of it” (77).

to the facial tattoo of the beachcomber Lem Hardy as “Far worse than Cain’s,” which signals that racialized discourses and their specular signifiers could be obtained, altering the “race” of Euro-Americans (31). In *Typee*, Tommo speculates as to whether an infant boy was the son of Mehevi, “whom I should certainly have believed to have been the father, were it not that the little fellow had no triangle on his face – but on second thoughts, tattooing is not hereditary” (190). This odd naturalization, which seems like a masculine version of the concept of maternal impression, is quickly dismissed, reaffirming tattooing as a cultural practice. This momentary slippage reveals Tommo’s anxieties relating to tattooing, as he attempts to naturalize the practice, thus exempting his body (and face) from the potentiality of tattooing. If the Pacific tattoo is present within the skin at birth, Tommo himself cannot be tattooed, but, of course, this assertion is untenable. Tattooing for Tommo can both reiterate the “racial” characteristics of Pacific Islanders and resignify and redefine the race of Euro-Americans.

Tommo’s representation of the (tattooed) noble savage tends to venerate the supposed nobility of the character’s physical form, as if he did not possess extensive tattooing, as well as delivering qualified praise of the tattooed body. Mehevi, the chief with whom Tommo appears to exchange names and who extends hospitality to the American beachcombers, is the first example of this.³³ The paragraph representing his tattooing, which appears during the second scene in which he is involved, comes after two full paragraphs of physical description that do not mention tattooing. This textual delay in the representation of the tattooed body can be understood as an attempt to temporarily obfuscate the dangerous significations of Pacific tattooing. After describing Mehevi’s clothing and jewelry, Tommo states, “the elaborated tattooing displayed on

³³ Tommo explicitly refers to Mehevi through this trope a few days after arriving in Taipivai: “On the afternoon of the day I took my first bath in the valley, we received another visit from Mehevi. The noble savage seemed to be in the same pleasant mood, and was quite as cordial in his manner as before” (90).

every noble limb” was the most remarkable physical aspect of the “splendid islander” (*Typee* 78). Tommo grants the most textual space to a description of Mehevi’s facial tattoo, a large triangle,³⁴ which he claims was “the most simple and remarkable of all these ornaments” (78). Tommo believes that, through the proportions of Mehevi’s body and the comparatively simple design of his facial tattoo, he can read and typify the text of this body: “The warrior, from the excellence of his physical proportions, might certainly have been regarded as one of Nature’s noblemen, and the lines drawn upon his face may possibly have denoted his exalted rank” (78). The tattooing on the rest of Mehevi’s body, however, presents an unreadable yet excessively signified text to the beachcomber: “All imaginable lines and curves and figures were delineated over his whole body, and in their grotesque variety and infinite profusion I could only compare them to the crowded groupings of quaint patterns we sometimes see in costly pieces of lacework” (78). Although the individual designs that compose this noble (tattooed) body are illegible to Tommo, he asserts the perceived excess of this bodily presentation. The designs themselves are said to exist in “grotesque variety,” which creates distance between Euro-American and Pacific Islander visual cultures.³⁵ The phrase “infinite profusion” signals how Tommo perceives Pacific tattooing as an excessive and encompassing system. The tattooed body of Mehevi is so bewildering that an infinity of images seems to exist upon it; or, the designs seem to somehow extend past the skin itself. Tommo anxiously represents Pacific tattooing as able to resignify the body past the boundaries of the body. The metaphor of lacework, a standard comparison between Pacific tattooing and Euro-American clothing (which Tommo represents as

³⁴ Later in the novel, this facial tattoo is one of the design options offered to Tommo: “or if, like a true courtier, I chose to model my style on that of royalty, I might wear a sort of freemason badge upon my countenance in the shape of a mystic triangle” (220). Tommo seems to conflate political and religious duties under the sign of Mehevi’s triangular facial tattoo.

³⁵ For more extended discussions of the resonances of the word “grotesque” with respect to tattooing in *Typee*, see: Ellis 150-1, Putzi 26-7, and Cassuto 168-203.

directed by the tattooing itself, another example of primitivist displacement), relieves some of the anxiety surrounding this tattooed body by attempting to control the dangerous, excessive Pacific tattoo through citation of other (re)presentations of tattooing. The qualifications of the lacework, “costly pieces” composed of “quaint patterns,” relate to the textual ambivalence that accrues around the tattooed noble savage. “Quaint,” which implies that the designs are standard, easily recognizable, and not of high artistic merit, attempts to familiarize, and to denigrate, tattooing for the Euro-American reading public; “costly” reinforces Mehevi’s aristocratic standing “as one of Nature’s noblemen.”

This passage should be read in conjunction with the first appearance of Mehevi in the novel, the night Tommo and Toby arrive in Taipivai. Mehevi’s body modifications are not mentioned in this scene; tattooing is erased from his body. Rather than being unable to decipher Pacific tattooing, Tommo becomes anxious because he cannot read Mehevi’s facial expression. Since he learns very little of the language during his time as a beachcomber, a condition he freely and frequently admits,³⁶ throughout the novel he attempts to read the bodies, facial expressions, gesticulations, and tattooing of his Taipi hosts. Before the question of “Typee or Happar?” (which, in this novel, seems to be a question of whose text is cited) is resolved, Mehevi sits across from Tommo, “looking at me with a rigidity of aspect under which I absolutely quailed. He never once opened his lips, but maintained his severe expression of countenance, without turning his face aside for a single moment. Never before had I been subjected to so strange and steady a glance; it revealed nothing of the mind of the savage, but it appeared to be reading my own” (*Typee* 71). This steady gaze unnerves Tommo not only because he cannot decipher the

³⁶ For example, Tommo cannot understand Mehevi’s resistance to Tommo’s desire to break the *tapu* against women riding in canoes so Fayaway can ride with him in the (imaginary) lake: “But all he said failed to convince me: partly, perhaps, because I could not comprehend a word that he uttered” (*Typee* 133).

meaning behind it, but also because he cannot exert textual control over Mehevi, save the use of the term “savage.” Rather, as Mehevi seems to be reading his mind, Tommo feels himself slipping under the representational control of the Taipi, which would culminate in his submission to the tattooing operation. The depiction of Mehevi as a (tattooed) noble savage can be understood as Tommo’s uneasy, anxious resistance to the seemingly encompassing representational force of Marquesan cultural signs, here facial expressions signifying nothing and tattooing signifying a bewildering excess.

The representation of Marnoo, whose tattooed body is also filtered through the trope of the noble savage, receives its impetus from different elements than that of Mehevi, as Marnoo does not have a facial tattoo (“His cheek was of a feminine softness, and his face was free from the least blemish of tattooing”), and he can speak some English (*Typee* 136). Tommo highlights “the matchless symmetry of his form,” states that “his unclad limbs were beautifully formed,” and claims that Marnoo could be the model “for the statue of the Polynesian Apollo” (136). While Tommo perceives Taipi tattooing as an assemblage of disconnected motifs, the tattoos of Marnoo, who enjoys a *tapu* privilege that allows him to travel to the different bays and valleys of Nuku Hiva with impunity, are represented as constituting a whole-body design: “the rest of his body was all drawn over with fanciful figures, which – unlike the unconnected sketching usual among these natives – appeared to have been executed with some general design” (136). The text of the tattooed body of Marnoo seems to be at least somewhat legible to Tommo, as he does not represent the amalgamation of motifs as grotesque. Tommo does, however, use language similar to his description of Mehevi: “Upon his [Marnoo’s] breast, arms and legs, were exhibited an infinite variety of figures” (136). He describes one tattoo design, “the slender, tapering, and diamond-checked shaft of the beautiful ‘artu’ tree” that runs along Marnoo’s spine, which

Tommo views as “the best specimen of the Fine Arts I had yet seen in Typee” (136).³⁷ Rather than the bewildering excess of Mehevi’s body, the tattooing of Marnoo is highly sexualized, as he appears to have a phallus inscribed on his back. Tommo grants Marnoo high praise with respect to his physical proportions, tattooing, and oratory eloquence; he invests Marnoo with the phallic plenitude that the beachcomber, unable to communicate and entirely dependent upon the Taipi, does not possess. When Marnoo initially ignores Tommo’s presence, the beachcomber states, “Had the belle of the season, in the pride of her beauty and power, been cut in a place of public resort by some supercilious exquisite, she could not have felt greater indignation than I did at this unexpected slight” (136). The scene is shaded with homoeroticism, and Tommo responds to Marnoo’s tattooed, sexualized body by gendering himself as an upper-class Euro-American woman.

Marnoo’s transgressive, homoerotic (tattooed) “noble savage” body complements the eroticized description of Fayaway’s tattooing; both characters provide Tommo with the representational space to express homoerotic desire. In the Marquesas, tattooing operated according to gender: “Facial tattoos, chest tattoos, and the solid fields of pigment that could almost obscure the initial underlying patterns were specific to men. Women wore tattoos on the hands and arms, as well as the feet and ankles; many of these tattoo motifs appear in men’s designs as well” (Ellis 175). Tommo does not explicitly denigrate the designs inscribed on Fayaway’s body, perhaps because she, like Marnoo, does not have a facial tattoo, nor can an “infinite profusion” of designs be said to exist on her body. He still refers to tattoo artists as “practitioners of this barbarous art,” however, and reluctantly admits that “the beauteous form of

³⁷ The discrepancy between Marnoo’s tattooing and that of the other Marquesan characters seems to have no textual basis: “He [Marnoo] is also a figure of sheer fantasy whose body markings bear no relation to any ethnographic accounts of Marquesan tattooing, unlike other descriptions of tattooing in *Typee* which are consistent with such accounts” (Edmond 91-2).

Fayaway” was not exempt from “the hideous blemish of tattooing” (*Typee* 86). While utilizing the same general language applied to the tattooed bodies of Mow-Mow, Temoana, and other men, Tommo tries to minimize Fayaway’s tattooing further: “Three minute dots, no bigger than pin-heads, decorated either lip, and at a little distance were not at all discernible” (86). He attempts to put the Pacific tattoo under erasure. Upon her shoulder, Fayaway also has “two parallel lines half an inch apart, and perhaps three inches in length, the interval being filled with delicately executed figures,” which Tommo states “always reminded me of those stripes of gold lace worn by officers in undress, and which are in lieu of epaulettes to denote their rank” (86). Similar to Tommo’s feminization of himself when in the presence of Marnoo, this metaphor implicitly genders Fayaway as a male, Euro-American military officer. The representation of the tattooed body of Fayaway has been described as “creating a heterosexual eroticism to set against Marnoo’s homosexual allure” (Edmond 92). The dichotomy is not so neat, however, for the depiction of these tattooed bodies elicits momentary gender instability. Tommo quickly attempts to reassert the heterosexual basis of his relationship with Fayaway: “the audacious hand which had gone so far in its desecrating work stopping short, apparently wanting the heart to proceed” (*Typee* 86-7). The representation of Fayaway’s tattoos indicates how Euro-American discourses on tattooing were gendered: “In Melville’s nineteenth-century America, tattooing was indeed a ‘masculine sign,’ one that usually marked men as sailors, sometimes marked them as lower class, but *always* marked them as male” (Putzi 26, emphasis in original). Tommo rationalizes Fayaway’s tattooing, and by extension the tattooing of all the young Taipi women,³⁸ through an

³⁸ Tommo’s description of Fayaway’s body and tattooing is another instance of his tendency to flatten Marquesan characters into an undifferentiated mass: “the description I have given of her will in some measure apply to nearly all the youthful portion of her sex in the valley” (87).

assumption that heterosexual men would not be attracted to heavily tattooed women, presumably because their bodies would too closely resemble those of men.

The tattooed body of Kory-Kory, the Marquesan character assigned to tend to the beachcomber during his stay in the valley, is also sexualized through homoeroticism, especially in the scene “Kory-Kory strikes a Light à la Typee,” in which Tommo describes the process of Kory-Kory lighting a fire with language suggestive of masturbation. The tattoos themselves, however, are represented through two different vehicles: his facial tattoos are connected to the notion of cultural captivity, and the rest of his body is represented as a textualized, orientalist knowledge production. After describing a house in Taipivai, Tommo proceeds “to sketch the inmates,” which establishes his representation of Marquesans as captives of their own culture (*Typee* 82). Kory-Kory, whom Tommo claims was “a hideous object to look upon,” has three horizontal stripes of tattooing that run across his face and various designs over the rest of his body (83). Tommo states that his facial tattooing “always reminded me of those unhappy wretches whom I have sometimes observed gazing out sentimentally from behind the grated bars of a prison window” (83). In the critical literature, “It has been suggested that Tommo’s connection of the tattooed lines in Kory-Kory’s face with a barred prison window indicates his own perceived captivity” (Frank 55). However, this metaphor is also projected onto the beachcomber’s Taipi hosts. Tommo represents Marquesan culture as a form of captivity and Marquesans themselves as prisoners. Tattooing, especially the facial tattoo, is made to be the outward representation of this cultural captivity. Considering the indelible nature of tattooing, Tommo understands this form of “imprisonment” as a life sentence. The captivity aspect of the beachcomber narrative partially receives its impetus from this perceived cultural captivity, which requires a belief in the passivity of the “savage Other.” This discourse of cultural captivity that

begins with Kory-Kory's facial tattoo is expanded in the course of Tommo's description of the system of *tapu*, which immediately follows his refusal to be tattooed: "The savage, in short, lives in the continual observance of its [*tapu*'s] dictates, which guide and control every action of his being" (221). If Tommo were to receive a facial tattoo, he believes he would permanently become a captive of Marquesan culture, forever "a hideous object to look upon."

Pacific tattooing would not only "imprison" Tommo within Marquesan society as a syncretic figure, but it would also transform him into an object of knowledge under the authorizing gaze of the Euro-American agent of colonial discourse, the position to which he relegates Marquesans. Tommo depicts the tattooing on Kory-Kory's body, to whom he refers as "my savage valet," in a manner similar to the representation of Mehevi and Marnoo's bodies: "covered all over with representations of birds and fishes, and a variety of most unaccountable-looking creatures, suggested to me the idea of a pictorial museum of natural history, or an illustrated copy of 'Goldsmith's Animated Nature'" (*Typee* 83). While the designs do not seem to extend past the skin, the phrase "unaccountable-looking creatures" indicates that the motifs appear supernatural or beyond the limits of Euro-American imagination, which links Kory-Kory's body with the series of disconnected images that began the representation of the Marquesas in the novel. Tommo textualizes Kory-Kory's body (but without placing tattooing on the same level as written language) through the comparison to "an illustrated copy of Goldsmith's Animated Nature" and violently re-spatializes his tattooed body as a museum, metaphorically flaying Kory-Kory's skin and putting it on display. This recalls the failed project to preserve the tattooed skin of Jean Cabri for the sake of scientific knowledge. Both figurations represent the body inscribed by Pacific tattooing as a site of orientalist knowledge production, as if the beachcomber could "read" Marquesan views on natural history by studying Kory-Kory's

skin. These metaphors, as well as the bewildering excess that Tommo perceives on other tattooed bodies, represent a fetishistic disavowal of the beachcomber's inability to understand Pacific tattooing, as well as his immobility and reliance upon Kory-Kory's for all of his needs, by asserting the tattooed body as a site/cite of orientalist knowledge production. The representation of Kory-Kory's tattooed body through these metaphors of prisons, museums, and textuality partially structure Tommo's anxious refusal to be tattooed, for the submission to the tattooing operation, especially the facial tattoo, would signal for Tommo a life-long captivity under the sign of the Pacific tattoo as an orientalist object of knowledge.

Failed Exchange, Violence

The representation of Enata tattooing in *Typee* indicates a convoluted index of the ways in which Euro-Americans in the Pacific attempted to understand and represent tattooing. The assertion that a Euro-American with Pacific tattooing on his face would be damaged for life is first indicated by Vangs' speech and expanded by Tommo's descriptions of Enata tattooing. When Karky the tattoo artist expresses his desire to tattoo Tommo's face, the beachcomber echoes the warning of the captain whose ship he deserted:³⁹ "in some luckless hour I should be disfigured in such a manner as never more to have the *face* to return to my countrymen, even should an opportunity offer" (*Typee* 219, emphasis in original). The prospect of receiving a facial tattoo, at which Tommo balks, reinvigorates the captivity narrative and increases his desire to "escape" Taipivai.⁴⁰ As facial tattooing cannot be covered by clothing, indelible inscriptions on

³⁹ Tommo (Melville) and Toby (Richard Tobias Greene) were not the first men to desert the *Acushnet*: "Herman Melville and Richard T. Greene, deserting together at Nukuhiva, were the fourth and fifth members of the crew successfully to jump ship" (Heflin 29).

⁴⁰ *Typee* represents a variation on the captivity narrative because of the primitivist representation of the Marquesas as islands of dream-like unreality: "Tommo's account of his stay with the *Typee* is a captivity narrative, though of an odd kind. Life there conforms to most of the

that part of the body are the most dangerous, for Pacific tattoos were supposed to represent the savagery of the human subject on whose form they were imprinted.

The fear that Pacific Islanders had an intense, almost uncontrollable desire to tattoo Euro-Americans can be understood as the product of an anxiety that Pacific tattoos could both alter and potentially overwhelm Euro-American cultural signs. Tommo represents Pacific Islander tattooing as an (incomprehensible) semiotic system that consistently emits cultural signs alien to western “civilization.” The textual representation of the destabilization of the civilized/savage binary that this syncretic bodily presentation could produce is especially anxious. The fear of the power of the Pacific signifier carries with it the fear that the western signifier cannot encompass this different system of signification. The utilization of orientalist and primitivist discourses establishes Pacific tattooing as an object of knowledge that is distanced temporally, spatially, and culturally from Euro-American systems of signification. As Pacific Islander tattooing seemed to represent more than colonial agents, missionaries, and beachcombers could comprehend (which, of course, it did), its textual representation can be understood as a fetishistic disavowal of the inability of western systems of power/knowledge to encompass it. By textually denigrating the designs, assigning the term “savage” to those who practice it, and representing Pacific tattooing as incompatible with Euro-American skin, western writers attempt to control textually the dangerous form of signification that this practice of body modification seemed to represent to them.

The beachcomber narrative of captivity and coerced tattooing removes culpability from the tattooed beachcomber (or attempts to explain his violent “escape,” as is the case with

archetypes of the romantic dream of islands. It is a world untouched by civilization, without work or time or seasons” (Edmond 87).

Tommo), and it also attempts to shift the violence of its textual (mis)representation of tattooing to the Enata. This primitivist displacement informs both the representation of the cultural exchange of tattooing and the representation of the tattooed Marquesan body in *Typee*, as Tommo attempts to exert textual control over a system of signification he does not understand by establishing tattooing in his literary narrative as a “savage” method of representation that must be strenuously rejected by the imperial Euro-American agent of “civilization.” He represents Pacific tattooing as a dangerous, powerful force of resignification, as a semiotic system that can overwhelm and encompass the agent of “civilization,” relegating Euro-American textuality to the same dependent position as the (potentially) syncretic body of the beachcomber. Tommo attempts to magically ward off this sense of dependence through his fetishized representation of tattooing as cultural captivity, a primitivist displacement that attempts to project the sense of powerlessness and dependency that defines the position of the beachcomber onto his Pacific Islander hosts.

The textual control Tommo tries to maintain over the tattooed body splits along the fissures of his representation when Karky the tattoo artist opens the possibility that the Marquesans could control and represent Tommo through the inscription of his skin as text. The failed cultural exchange of tattooing in *Typee* represents a refusal to submit to a projected “cultural captivity” that would be continually signified through the indelible tattoo, a refusal to become an object of orientalist knowledge production to other Euro-Americans upon return. Tommo refers to this when he exclaims, “What an object he [Karky] would have made of me!” (219). Through tattooing Tommo would become the type of object of knowledge that Jean Cabri was, on display corporeally and textually. As Leonard Cassuto writes, “Tommo fears being imprisoned inside the narrative of a freak show exhibit pamphlet...he fears being catalogued and

characterized by scientists of his day (whose judgments were prominently featured in such pamphlets)” (Cassuto 185).⁴¹ In resistance to the narrative of “going native,” the potential resignification through tattooing reinvigorates the captivity narrative that had faded to the background during the novel’s middle section of laudatory primitivism.

When Tommo and Kory-Kory happen upon Karky touching up the faded tattooing of an old man,⁴² Tommo delves into the ethnographic description of Pacific tattooing, specifically the implements and pigment,⁴³ that he did not provide earlier in the narrative. As this scene introduces the possibility of the beachcomber himself being tattooed, this textual delay can be understood as an attempt to exert a different form of representational control over Marquesan tattooing through citation of the tradition of ethnographic knowledge production about Pacific tattooing that began with Cook’s first voyage. The episode titles for this chapter (30) indicate this shift in the form of textual control Tommo attempts to exert over tattooing; the first two episodes relate to Karky and his desire to tattoo the beachcomber: “A Professor of the Fine Arts” and “His Persecutions.” The third creates an equivalence between the two aspects of Marquesan culture

⁴¹ While I find Cassuto’s argument from *The Inhuman Race* compelling because of the notion of captivity and the connection to the freak show through Cabri, my argument indicates that tattooing would also produce Tommo’s body itself as a text of orientalized knowledge.

⁴² As Anderson has noted, such an encounter with a tattoo artist at work could not have occurred: “Melville’s account of coming upon his artist at work in the midst of a thicket seems to be totally without foundation: the operation was always performed indoors, in a special *tapu* house” (459-460n67).

⁴³ Tommo states that the pigment “is prepared by mixing with a vegetable juice the ashes of the ‘armor,’ or candle-nut, always preserved for the purpose” (217). Euro-American textual representations of the tattooing operation state that the ashes or soot of the candle-nut were used for the pigment, but only *Typee* and the booklet written under Jean Cabri’s direction claim that vegetable juice was used; every other description lists water as the solvent (see Handy 10). Cabri describes the tattooing operation: “An islander performed this ceremony upon us, and for the purpose he used several kinds of tools for making regular pricks, made of bamboo or fish bones, with extremely sharp ends, grooved on one side to take the juice of a plant. This juice was inserted between the skin and the flesh by means of punctures, and gives all the patterns a blue colour similar to indigo” (Cabri, quoted in Terrell 108).

that were constantly present and visible to Tommo but remained inscrutable: “Something About Tattooing and Tabooing.” The supposition that tattooing was connected to the Marquesan “religion” of *tapu* reinforces the notion of cultural captivity from the description of Kory-Kory’s body, as this positions tattooing as the specular signifier of the unconditional submission to the “thrice mysterious taboo” (*Typee* 177).⁴⁴ While Tommo’s representation of the tattooed bodies of Marquesan characters include citations of certain discourses relating to the Pacific, such as the figure of the noble savage and the comparison of tattooing to clothing, the possibility of the beachcomber submitting to tattooing involves a shift to the (imagined) scientific objectivity of ethnographic discourse.

Tommo’s claim that the Taipi wished to make a religious convert of him through tattooing indicates an anxious blind spot in the beachcomber’s ethnographic gaze, a trend that runs throughout the novel: “The avoidance of speculation about confessions and denials, or even the reasons for his own ‘captivity,’ betray a willful ignorance about indigenous agency and colonial resistance” (Lyons 95). Tommo does not speculate about the motivations behind what Pacific Islanders say about cannibalism. Paul Lyons argues that the discourse of cannibalism was utilized as resistance against colonial intrusion: “maybe the *enata* encourage *ao* (strangers) to read denials as confessions, since at this historical moment, when France was establishing its colonial grip, being considered avid cannibals was decided on as an effective deterrent” (95).⁴⁵

⁴⁴ There is little that is mysterious about *tapu* and its connection with the Taipi’s treatment of Tommo in the novel. Mehevi weaves a band of grass around Tommo’s wrist and “pronounced me ‘Taboo’” (222). Like a pipe that has the a “similar badge” around it, “Tommo ‘belongs’ to Mehevi, who has extended to him the protective and proprietary mantle of his personal taboo. The more important point is that everyone else in the valley is entirely aware this is so, and Tommo will find doors opening and closing in relation to a sign he cannot read but that has always determined how he stands in relation to his surroundings” (Calder 33).

⁴⁵ Denigrating a rival tribe to Euro-Americans could also be considered a method of securing trade. In *Journal of a Cruise of the United States Schooner Dolphin among the Islands of the*

Tommo does not seem to understand that his “captivity” is a form of strategic hospitality on the part of the Taipi to extract information and services from a Euro-American in their struggle against the French colonial forces. As Greg Dening writes, “Enata owned beachcombers as they owned their muskets and their clothes....If they thought they might be leaving, they kept them away from the ships” (137). Mehevi “was never weary of interrogating” Tommo and Toby about “the late proceedings of the ‘Franee,’” or French, but the beachcombers provide little information (*Typee* 79). When Tommo informs Mehevi that he cannot repair an old musket, “Mehevi regarded me, for a moment, as if he half suspected I was some inferior sort of white man” (185). As Tommo’s ignorance of the Marquesan language would make him a poor interpreter, it seems that the only function he could fulfill was that of a performer. He shadow boxes “with an imaginary enemy” and sings: “I was now promoted to the place of court-minstrel, in which capacity I was afterwards perpetually called upon to officiate” (228).⁴⁶ This willful ignorance with respect to Taipi agency can be understood as another primitivist displacement, in which the dependency, lack of knowledge, and circumscribed realm of action of the beachcomber is shifted to the Pacific Islander community.⁴⁷

Pacific Ocean (1831), Hiram Paulding states: “They belonged to different tribes, the Typee and Happah; and were mutually trying to prejudice us against the tribe to which they did not belong, in order to induce us to anchor in their own bay” (34).

⁴⁶ Tommo’s performances recall the dance James O’Connell performed upon first arriving at Ponape. O’Connell claims that tattooing and this performance helped secure a societal position for himself: “I have no doubt that in my heels was found the attraction which led the chief to select me from among my comrades” (109).

⁴⁷ In addition to the absence of any speculation concerning resistance to colonial incursion, despite Nuku Hiva having just been claimed by the French, Tommo displaces his own ignorance about Taipi culture onto the Taipi themselves: “I am free to confess my almost entire inability to gratify any curiosity that may be felt with regard to the theology of the valley. I doubt whether the inhabitants could do so themselves. They are either too lazy or too sensible to worry themselves about abstract points of religious belief” (171).

The various metaphors through which Tommo attempts to control Karky reveal the anxious textual gaps of the ethnographic gaze, as the beachcomber cannot settle on one register through which to represent the tattooist. Tommo calls him an artist multiple times; his desire to tattoo Tommo is expressed with “a painter’s enthusiasm,” and the skin of the man being tattooed, on which Karky was “touching up the works of some of the old masters of the Typee school,” becomes a “human canvas” (*Typee* 219, 218). Karky is also referred to as a “tormentor,” and the man being tattooed is called his “victim,” which shades this volitional act with the notions of captivity and coercion (217, 218). The appearance Karky presents when at work is described as “for all the world like a stone-cutter with mallet and chisel,” and his demeanor recalls “a heart as callous as that of an army surgeon” (217, 218). He chants as he works, “tapping away the while as merrily as a woodpecker” (218). Karky’s instruments are compared to “that display of cruel-looking mother-of-pearl-handled things which one see in the velvet-lined cases at the elbow of a dentist” (218). Tommo claims that the tattoo artist “would never rest until his diabolical purpose was accomplished” (219). This proliferation of metaphors, mostly Euro-American professions that attempt to familiarize the figure of the tattoo artist, relates to the bewildering excess that Tommo perceives in Marquesan tattooing; the man who can inscribe the body with an “infinite profusion” of designs that seem to extend past the skin appears himself to present multiple aspects and figures. The absence of a comparison to writing or textuality among these metaphors signals a tacit denial, in the face of the possibility of being tattooed, that Pacific tattooing could represent a semiotic system that is able to encompass and resignify the body of the Euro-American beachcomber.

The possibility of submitting his body to the tattoo artist’s instruments is explicitly thrust in Tommo’s face. Karky communicates his desire to inscribe the beachcomber by pantomiming

the tattoo operation: “grasping his implements, he flourished them about in fearful vicinity to my face, going through an imaginary performance of his art” (*Typee* 218). If this flourishing was meant to frighten the beachcomber, Karky’s purpose was accomplished; Tommo’s reaction is consistent with the representation of facial tattooing throughout the novel: “Horried at the bare thought of being rendered hideous for life if the wretch were to execute his purpose upon me” (218). The use of “execute” implies that the inclusion of the Pacific tattoo would produce a social death, especially upon return to the home culture, for the Euro-American beachcomber. Tommo’s fear of the threat to the specular markers of race and nationality that a facial tattoo proposes is so intense that, despite his primitivist representation of tattooing, he offers both of his arms as a compromise: “shuddering at the ruin he might inflict on my figure-head, I now endeavored to draw off his attention from it, and holding out my arm in a fit of desperation, signed to him to commence operations” (219). Tommo echoes Vangs’ warning about the inveterate cannibal and tattooing propensities of Pacific Islanders through the internal textual citation of the metaphor of a sailor’s face as the figure-head of a ship, which completes the narrative expectation produced by Vangs’ speech with respect to tattooing.

The interactions between Tommo and Mehevi concerning the beachcomber’s potential tattooing indicate that the Pacific tattoo would produce a position within Taipivai for Tommo, as the inscriptions would place him “within Marquesan hierarchies” (Ellis 147). The third time Mehevi requests him to submit to tattooing, Tommo states, “I plainly perceived that something must be done, or my visage was ruined for ever; I therefore screwed up my courage to the sticking point, and declared my willingness to have both arms tattooed from just above the wrist to the shoulder” (*Typee* 220). This is the second time Tommo offers his arms in exchange for his face, but the compromise is rejected, as Mehevi “intimated that as a thing of course my face was

first to undergo the operation” (220). In the Marquesas, the tattooing of the male youths occurred as follows: “Tattooing was performed collectively upon a cohort of young males, at a ceremony (*koina pahu tiki*) under the patronage of a chief, who would mount the ceremony for his first-born son and presumptive heir [*opou*], who became the principal tattooing patient of the ceremony” (Gell 197). The tattooing of the *opou* and the supporters (*ka 'ioi*) began at opposite ends of the body: “while the tattooing of the *opou* began with the feet and legs, and proceeded up the body, towards the head, the tattooing of the supporters [*ka 'ioi*] began with the tattooing of the mouth and face, and proceeded downwards from there” (Gell 198). The order Mehevi insists upon indicates that tattooing would create a socially legible position for Tommo, as the engrafting of the tattoo on his flesh as a “genealogical-spiritual-philosophical text” would locate him within Taipi social structures and genealogies (Wendt 409).

The prospect of being tattooed breaks the spell of the primitivist vision of the Marquesas as Edenic, which opens the textual space for the captivity narrative, defined early in the novel through the double threat of tattooing and cannibalism, to forcefully reassert itself. The trope of coerced tattooing within beachcomber narratives is touched upon here, but it remains a potentiality only expressed through verbal requests: “seeing my unconquerable repugnance, he [Mehevi] ceased to importune me” (*Typee* 220). While other inhabitants of Taipivai still encourage Tommo to be tattooed (“Hardly a day passed but I was subject to their annoying requests”), the element of physical coercion, present in James O’Connell’s narrative for example, is here absent (220). The continued presence of tattooing as a potentiality, however, is utilized as a catalyst for the teleological “escape” from the captivity narrative: “at last my existence became a burden to me; the pleasures I had previously enjoyed no longer afforded me delight, and all my former desire to escape from the valley now revived with additional force” (220). The indelible

nature of the tattoo makes the Marquesans' captivity intentions clear. Two chapters after meeting Karky, with a chapter of disconnected ethnographic observations in between, Tommo claims that, "From the time of my casual encounter with Karky the artist, my life was one of absolute wretchedness" (231). Although the "behavior of the islanders towards me was as kind as ever," Tommo still states, "I began bitterly to feel the state of captivity in which I was held" (231). While tattooing reinvigorates the captivity narrative, Tommo quickly includes the "ocular proof" of cannibalism, which he claims was the "last horrid revelation," to round out the narrative expectation established at the beginning of the novel (238). Both cannibalism and tattooing represent a final possession of Tommo by the Taipi.

Undergoing the tattooing operation in Taipivai would preclude return to his home culture for Tommo because his body would be indelibly inscribed with the "mark of the savage," which would signal him as an object of knowledge for other Euro-Americans and as a potential cannibal. He sees the Taipi as threatening his bodily boundaries: they will either kill and consume him or integrate him into their community through tattooing, which would place Tommo in the role of the "cannibal." What could not be confirmed visually, the practice of cannibalism, would become hypervisible and indelible through the Pacific tattoo as the sign of the cannibal. If he returned to his home culture with Enata tattoos, especially on his face, Tommo could not maintain textual ethnographic control over Marquesan culture, for his own body would become a site of knowledge production about the Pacific. This potential loss of textual and corporeal control is strenuously, violently rejected in the course of Tommo's "escape" from Taipivai when he pierces Mow-Mow in the throat, an organ of speech, with a boathook. This attack is the "single act of on-stage violence" in the novel (Lyons 96). Rather than allow his skin to be opened and marked with Pacific tattooing by Karky's tools of bone and wood, Tommo

opens a hole in Mow-Mow's throat with a metal boathook: "exerting all my strength, I dashed the boat-hook at him. It struck him just below the throat, and forced him downwards" (252). As an early primitivist representation of Pacific tattooing in literature, *Typee* rejects the tattoo as a form of writing and as a "genealogical-spiritual-philosophical text" by attempting to silence Pacific speech and to erase the dangerous significations of Enata tattooing.

Chapter IV: Imagined Genealogies: The Sideshow of *Nightwood*

As they went up the darkened street, Felix felt himself turning scarlet. "Is he really a Count?" he asked.
"Herr Gott!" said the Duchess. "Am I what I say? Are you? Is the doctor?"
--Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood*

T.S. Eliot scatters negations throughout his halting, almost apologetic introduction to Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood* (1936). He claims that *Nightwood* "is not simply a collection of individual portraits," that it "is not a psychopathic study" and "not a philosophical treatise" (xx-xxii). The most detailed negation Eliot offers, which he seems to believe is the most dangerous, relates to his characterization of the novel as dealing not with particulars but with universal, undifferentiated human misery: "To regard this group of people as a horrid sideshow of freaks is not only to miss the point, but to confirm our wills and harden our hearts in an inveterate sin of pride" (xxii). Although the word "freak" does not appear in the novel, numerous critics have pushed against Eliot's assertion by foregrounding the importance of circuses, sideshows, freak shows, and their performers to *Nightwood*,¹ the manner in which the history and discourse of the freak show inform the representation of the characters and the discursive structure of the novel, however, has yet to be fully delineated.² Through an analysis of Barnes' journalism pertaining to

¹ For example, see: Blyn, Robin. "Nightwood's Freak Dandies: Decadence in the 1930s." *Modernism/Modernity* 15.3 (2008): 503-526. Bombaci, Nancy. "Heredity, Transvestism, and the Limits of Self-Fashioning in *Nightwood*." *Freaks in Late Modernist American Culture: Nathanael West, Djuna Barnes, Tod Browning, and Carson McCullers*. New York: Peter Lang, 2006. 65-80. Marcus, Jane. "Laughing at Leviticus: *Nightwood* as Woman's Circus Epic." *Hearts of Darkness: White Women Write Race*. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2004. 86-118. Parsons, Deborah L. "Women in the Circus of Modernity: Djuna Barnes and *Nightwood*." *Women: A Cultural Review* 9.3 (1998): 266-277. Winkiel, Laura. "Circuses and Spectacles: Public Culture in *Nightwood*." *Journal of Modern Literature* 21.1 (1997): 7-28.

² There is a tradition in *Nightwood* criticism that approaches the novel from the Bakhtinian model of the carnival, rather than the freak show. As Robin Blyn states in "From Stage to Page:

sideshow at Coney Island, cultural studies dealing with freak shows, and the social construction of certain “freak” performers mentioned in the novel, I propose that freak show discourse and the repeated comparisons of characters to sideshow performers represent a site of tension within the discursive structure of *Nightwood*, pushing against the novel’s essentialist notions of race, heredity, gender, and sexuality. Just as sideshow performers and their talkers created narratives and adopted titles to enhance the performance, such as the “torture” of the tattooed man or woman, the maternal impression explanation for limbless people, and the stage name General Tom Thumb, the characters of *Nightwood* employ imagined genealogies, counternarratives in which they are not contained by restrictive notions of race, heredity, sex/gender, and sexuality.

Nightwood discursively (re)presents the freak show early on in the first chapter, “Bow Down,” during the party thrown by Count Onatorio Altamonte. This scene establishes the importance of freak show discourse, sideshow performers, and the talker’s spiel in the novel. When Baron Felix and Frau Mann (the Duchess of Broadback) arrive, Doctor O’Connor is entertaining the guests in the host’s absence. The trapeze artist Frau Mann opens up representational space in the novel for body modification and gender indeterminacy. The narrator tells us, she “seemed to have a skin that was the pattern of her costume,” which indicates an extensive tattoo; she also “was as unsexed as a doll” (*Nightwood* 16). Her specular appearance reminds O’Connor of Nikka, a tattooed circus performer whom he characterizes as “the nigger who used to fight the bear in the *Cirque de Paris*” (19). O’Connor launches into a primitivist cataloguing of Nikka’s tattoos in the style of a sideshow talker’s spiel, luridly describing for the

Franz Kafka, Djuna Barnes, and Modernism’s Freak Fictions,” “the freak show is antithetical to the carnival in precisely the same way that spectacle is to Bakhtin’s novel: the freak show relies on the distance and distinction between actors and spectators that the carnival so aggressively denies” (136).

assembled audience the tattooed body of this “freak.” He conjures Nikka through his oral spiel, as the circus performer is not physically present. Nikka’s tattoos, which cover his entire body, are an amalgamation of racialized Euro-American discourses about Africans. His tattoos include “an angel from Chartres” on his stomach, which refers to the infantilization of Africans as angelic and docile, “a beautiful caravel in full sail” on his chest, which indicates the slave trade, and the name “Desdemona” on his penis, which relates to hypersexuality ascribed to Africans and fears of miscegenation (19). Nikka’s tattoos are a self-conscious appropriation and resignification of these racial discourses; using his body as a site of textual knowledge production, Nikka resists the Euro-American discourses projected onto him through the specular, indelible nature of tattooing. This scene ties together many of the freak show elements present in the novel, including the primitivist display of Africans as “racial freaks,” the tattooed man of the sideshow, the talker’s oral spiel, gender indeterminacy, and the assumption of aristocratic titles by Baron Felix and the Duchess of Broadback.

My use of the term “freak” and the positioning of the freak show in this chapter derives from both Robert Bogdan’s *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (1988) and Rachel Adams’ *Sideshow U.S.A.: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination* (2001). The presentation of human beings as “freaks” within sideshows, dime museums, and circuses functions as a theatrical performance with certain conventions that relies on a stylized repetition akin to Butlerian gender performance. Bogdan highlights the historical, theatrical aspect of the freak show: “The onstage freak is something else offstage. ‘Freak’ is a state of mind, a set of practices, a way of thinking about and presenting people. It is the enactment of a tradition, the performance of a stylized presentation” (Bogdan 3). As Adams delineates, this theatrical performance is undergirded by an iterated performance of the “freak” identity: “freak

is not an inherent quality but an identity realized through gesture, costume, and staging. Following Judith Butler's description of gendered performance, freak might also be conceived as 'an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts' Freak shows are guided by the assumption that *freak* is an essence, the basis for a comforting fiction that there is a permanent, qualitative difference between deviance and normality" (Adams 6, emphasis in original).³ I position this tension within the freak show between its essentializing narratives and the socially constructed role of the "freak" as my interpretive framework for the imagined genealogies of *Nightwood*.⁴ From the assumption of titles by both the Volkbeins and the circus performers, the representation of Nikka, a tattooed man who also wrestles a bear, Doctor O'Connor's comparisons of Felix to Mademoiselle Basquette, a woman without legs, and of Robin to the ossified man at Coney Island,⁵ to the doctor's cross-dressing and desire for normative femininity, I argue that *Nightwood* cites the history and discursive structure of the sideshow as a means to

³ The quote from Butler that Adams uses here is from: Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*. Ed. Sue-Ellen Case. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1990. 270-282.

⁴ In *The Freak-Garde* (2013), Robin Blyn's interpretive model for the freak show also relies on tension, but from a different perspective. While I approach the sideshow from its discursive structures, Blyn uses what she calls an "aesthetic of indeterminacy" (xxvii). She writes, "a study of the extant verbal and visual artifacts of the freak show suggests that, in the name of curiosity and the profits that could be derived from it, freak display often developed as a contest between visual and verbal assertions, between tableau and spiel" (xxvi). Of *Nightwood*, Blyn argues, "Barnes's novel mobilizes the freak show aesthetic of indeterminacy accomplished in the interplay of the visual art of tableau and the verbal art of spiel" (96). In "From Stage to Page: Franz Kafka, Djuna Barnes, and Modernism's Freak Fictions," Robin Blyn discusses the narrator's and O'Connor's utilization of the spiel and its relation to spectacle and theatrical tableaux. She does not frame O'Connor as one of the performers. I do not find this framework useful for *Nightwood* because most of the sideshow performers do not physically appear; there is no accompanying tableau because their representation is all spiel. The discursive tension I identify in the freak show, however, functions within both the verbal and visual.

⁵ The paralyzed or ossified man was performed by "people with cerebral palsy or other conditions that left them with stiff joints and atrophied muscles" (Bogdan 229).

represent the characters' aporetic relationships with essentialist notions of race, gender, and sexuality.

The modern American freak show - the exhibition of the extraordinary body for profit - is generally positioned as beginning in 1841 with the opening of P.T. Barnum's American Museum in New York and extending through the modernist period, though the institution in altered forms still exists.⁶ Methods of presentation shifted over time with the increased medicalization of disability. In her "Introduction" to the collection *Freakery* (1996), Rosemarie Garland Thomson charts this shift: "As scientific explanation eclipsed religious mystery to become the authoritative cultural narrative of modernity, the exceptional body began increasingly to be represented in terms of pathology, and the monstrous body moved from the freak show stage into the medical theater" (Garland Thomson 2).⁷ The genealogy of freak show discourse in the modern period follows this spatial and discursive movement: "the prodigious monster transforms into the pathological terata; what was once sought after as revelation becomes pursued as entertainment; what aroused awe now inspires horror; what was taken as a portent shifts to a site of progress. In brief, wonder becomes error" (3). *Nightwood* parodically references this general shift in the freak

⁶ For the history of the American freak show, see Bogdan's *Freak Show* (1988), *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body* (1996) edited by Rosemarie Garland Thomson, and *Staging Stigma: A Critical Examination of the American Freak Show* (2008) by Michael C. Chemers. For the representation of freak shows in modernist literature, see *Freaks in Late Modernist American Culture* (2006) by Nancy Bombaci, *Freak Shows and the Modern American Imagination* (2006) by Thomas Fahy, and *The Freak-Garde: Extraordinary Bodies and Revolutionary Art in America* (2013) by Robin Blyn.

⁷ As Michael Chemers explains, disability scholars resist the medicalization of disability for three general reasons: "first, it reduces the complex lives of persons with disabilities to a set of symptoms that dehumanizes them and subjects them to invasive and often deleterious medical procedures.... The second reason for resisting the medicalization of disability is that it casts disability as a priori a 'bad' thing, an obstacle to normalcy to be overcome, rather than as a natural facet of the human condition. Finally and perhaps most perniciously, pathologizing disability nurtures the trope of pity that frames almost all modern discourses about disability, a patronizing attitude that damages the ability of persons with disabilities to participate in mainstream American society" (Chemers 104-5).

show through the positioning of O'Connor, an unlicensed gynecologist, as a sideshow talker in the modern period who refuses to represent the "freak" body through medical discourse.⁸

The freak identity and performance were produced by four interconnected methods of representation that can be understood as narrative forms: the oral spiel delivered by the sideshow talker, fabricated textual accounts, the staging and performance of the "freak," and drawings or photographs of the performer (Garland Thomson 7). As Rachel Adams delineates, the "freak" role was the product of fictional narratives: "Freaks are not produced by their inherent differences from us, but by the way their particularities are figured as narratives of unique and intractable alterity. These fictions are not simply the sensationalistic products of exploitative showmen or crude public taste; they are equally the province of the erudite men of science" (56). The circus and its performers provide narrative spaces and occasions for characters to come in contact with each other in *Nightwood*. Felix meets Doctor O'Connor and Nora Flood while attending a party with the trapeze artist Frau Mann, and his friendship with the doctor allows him to meet Robin Vote. Nora does advance publicity for the Denckman Circus, and it is there she meets Robin. Far from simply providing the diegetic spaces for the catalyzation of the narrative, however, circuses, sideshows, their conventions and performers inform the representation of the main characters and their interactions with each other, opening representational avenues for their imagined genealogies.

While Doctor Matthew O'Connor can productively be understood as a parodic psychoanalyst or as a Tiresian figure,⁹ his descriptions of sideshow performers, his

⁸ O'Connor does occasionally reference his cultural authority as a doctor. For example, during the cocktail party scene, he relates affective states to aspects of human anatomy: "I, as a medical man, know in what pocket a man keeps his heart and soul, and in what jostle of the liver, kidneys and genitalia these pockets are pilfered. There is no pure sorrow. Why? It is bedfellow to lungs, lights, bones, guts and gall!" (*Nightwood* 25).

characterization as a man of magic when he palms a hundred franc note from Robin's nightstand, and his depiction of himself as the bearded lady cast him simultaneously as the sideshow talker and as one of the exhibits. He takes on the role of the talker, whose "job was to attract the crowd, to grab attention with their modulating voices and slick talk," immediately upon entering the novel with his extended, primitivist description of Nikka's tattoos (Bogdan 94). The narrative voice describes O'Connor's method of oration as if the doctor were trying to convince people to surrender a dime for entrance to the sideshow: "he got his audience by the simple device of pronouncing at the top of his voice (at such moments as irritable and possessive as a maddened woman's) some of the more boggish and biting of the shorter early Saxon verbs" (*Nightwood* 18). Both the narrative voice and O'Connor produce freak show discourse in *Nightwood*. The narrator utilizes aspects of freak show discourse in the representation of Baron Felix, Frau Mann, and Robin Vote; O'Connor conjures three "freak" performers, Nikka, Mademoiselle Basquette, and the ossified man, through his oral spiel, as well as referencing himself as the bearded lady. Approaching the doctor from the position of the freak show exposes the discursive basis of O'Connor's views about queer desire and disjunctions between sex and gender. Ed Madden states, "O'Connor's claims are simultaneously essentializing and performative; they are claims made against nature through the language of the natural" (Madden 194). I argue that this tension in O'Connor's ideas about gender and sexuality is produced through the distinct cultural discourse of the freak show.

⁹ For O'Connor as a parody of Freud and sexologists, see Marcus 97-118. For a discussion of O'Connor as a Tiresian figure, see: Madden 176-217.

Robin Vote, the mostly silent figure around whom the narrative of *Nightwood* appears to move, is repeatedly represented through the register of beasts or animals.¹⁰ In addition to exploring the distinction between the human and the animal,¹¹ the representation of Robin relies on a certain form of primitivist discourse, which I refer to as “naturalized primitivism.” From her first appearance in the novel, in which “she seemed to lie in a jungle trapped in a drawing room,” Robin is represented through temporal discontinuity, and through a spatial discontinuity that associates certain physical spaces with points on a teleological development, a disjuncture that here stretches back to the precultural (*Nightwood* 38). Robin is “the infected carrier of the past,” but this past time is not located within any specific culture or geographic location (41). As Karen Kaivola states in “The ‘beast turning human’: Constructions of the ‘Primitive’ in *Nightwood*,” “Robin is associated with an imagined primitive, precultural past from which we’ve all descended” (175). The primitivism attached to Robin is usually associated with lesbian identity; for example, Kaivola views her as the “lesbian Other.” Jen-yi Hsu, in “Sapphic Primitivism in Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood*,” claims that “Robin’s primitivism lies in her lesbian sexuality” (39). This primitivism is not, however, solely linked to lesbian desire, nor does it only stem from the idea of the precultural. Immediately before his comparison of Robin to the ossified man, O’Connor utilizes naturalized primitivism to characterize her, explicitly linking the primitivist representation of Robin with the novel’s freak show discourse: “Robin was outside the ‘human

¹⁰ For critical discussions of the role of the animal and its relation to the human in *Nightwood*, see: Schiesari 28-37, Rohman 57-84.

¹¹ Barnes wrote about the line between the human and the animal in the context of the circus in one of her journalism pieces, “Djuna Barnes Probes the Souls of Jungle Folk at the Hippodrome Circus” [*New York Press*, February 14, 1915] (*New York* 190-7). This characterization of Robin could also be understood as implicitly referencing a sideshow convention of displaying people as a cross between human and animal, such as Grady Stiles or “Lobster Boy,” who had ectrodactyly, and Stephan Bibrowski or “Lionel the Lion-Faced Man,” who suffered from hypertrichosis.

type’ – a wild thing caught in a woman’s skin, monstrously alone, monstrously vain; like the paralysed man in Coney Island” (*Nightwood* 155). The primitivist representation of Robin through freak show discourse relates to queer desire and disjunctures in the forced congruence of the sex/gender binary.¹²

The section of “Bow Down” that occurs at Count Altamonte’s party is central to the operation and employment of primitivism and freak show discourse in *Nightwood*; the description of Nikka’s tattoos includes and is surrounded by objectifying and teleological representations of primitivism, gender instability, non-normative sexuality, and sideshow conventions and language. The (re)presentation of Nikka’s tattooed body as a “freak” body is produced from the tension between essentialization and the construction of the “freak” role through iterated performances; this tension also guides the different meanings O’Connor and Nikka attach to the tattoos. The textual basis for this discursive structure of *Nightwood* can be located in the newspaper articles Djuna Barnes wrote about Coney Island. While the link between the Coney Island journalism and *Nightwood* has been touched upon, critics have not positioned it as integral to *Nightwood*’s discursive and narrative structure.¹³ These articles

¹² See Adams’ discussion of the convergences between the terms freak and queer in her chapter “‘A Mixture of Delicious and Freak’: The Queer Fiction of Carson McCullers” in *Sideshow U.S.A.*, pages 89-111. These terms can be productive when discussing the display of the extraordinary body: “*Queer* and *freak* are terms that counter the binary logic of the sexual and racial division staged at the freak show” (109-10, emphasis in original). Adams does not discuss the effects of primitivist discourse on these terms. For the interchangeability of freak and queer during the 1930s and 1940s, see Adams 93. Primitivism was a constituent aspect of the construction of certain “freak” performances, such as the display of Fijians as “cannibals” (Bogdan 178-187) and William Henry Johnson, who performed as a missing link under the name Zip or “What is It?” (Bogdan 134-142).

¹³ For example, Nancy Levine positions the freak show and Barnes’ journalism as tangential to the novel’s structure: “*Nightwood* is proof that Barnes absorbed, retained, and used what she has seen as a newspaper writer. The most obvious echo from her past is that collection of circus performers with suggestive names – the trapeze artist Frau Mann, known onstage as the

indicate her interaction with, as well as her (re)presentation of, the spatial conventions of the sideshow, the talker's oral spiel, the production of "racial freaks," and the performance of "savagery."

Coney Island

While Djuna Barnes worked as a journalist in New York during the 1910s, she published four articles concerning Coney Island. Two of these articles include sections about the sideshow: "If Noise Were Forbidden at Coney Island, a Lot of People Would Lose Their Jobs" (*New York Press*, June 7, 1914) and "Surcease in Hurry and Whirl – On the Restless Surf at Coney" (*New York Morning Telegraph Sunday Magazine*, July 15, 1917).¹⁴ Critical discussions of Barnes' journalism that mention these articles and the passages about the freak show tend to focus on the position Barnes herself occupies, the role of the spectacle, and issues of commodification.¹⁵ These articles have yet to be positioned as informing the presence of freak show discourse in *Nightwood*. The sideshow is an important aspect of the resort's history: "Coney Island became a center for freak shows. During the period 1910-1940 no single place in the world had more human oddities on display" (Bogdan 56). Barnes provides a (re)presentation of a sideshow talker's display of a man with a hole in his navel and the ossified man, as well as a description of

'Duchess of Broadback' – whose presence on the novel's periphery caused some early reviewers to label the book 'a sideshow of freaks,' to T.S. Eliot's dismay" (34).

¹⁴ The other two articles Barnes wrote about Coney Island are "The People and the Sea; How They Get Together" (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 10, 1913) and "The Tingling, Tangling Tango as 'Tis Tripped at Coney Isle" (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 31, 1913). All four articles are reproduced in: Barnes, Djuna. *New York*. Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1989.

¹⁵ For example, Nancy Bombaci, in the chapter "'Well of course, I Used to be Absolutely Gorgeous, Dear': The Female Interviewer as Subject/Object in Djuna Barnes's Journalism," pages 49-64, from her *Freaks in Late Modernist American Culture*, discusses the roles of the female fetishist and the "freakish *flaneur*." Also, Alex Goody in *Modernist Articulations: A Cultural Study of Djuna Barnes, Mina Loy and Gertrude Stein* (2007) approaches the Coney Island articles through the issues of the spectacle and mass culture in the section "Spectacular, Spectacular: Barnes writes New York," pages 88-94.

a “savage” display performed by Somali Islanders. In *Nightwood*, O’Connor compares Robin specifically to “the paralysed man in Coney Island” and he describes the tattooed body of Nikka, who also wrestles a bear while wearing only a loincloth in a display of sexualized “savagery” (155). In addition to providing intertexts for these passages from *Nightwood*, Barnes’ Coney Island journalism produces a framework for her interaction with and utilization of freak show discourse; I position these articles as integral to my reading of the function of the freak show in *Nightwood*.¹⁶

In “If Noise Were Forbidden at Coney Island, a Lot of People Would Lose Their Jobs,” Barnes provides a short (re)presentation of a sideshow talker (“Step right in!”) and describes how a giant (who is “six feet seven”) grifts patrons with a test of strength (146). However, her representation of race at Coney Island and within the sideshow specifically is more indicative of Barnes’ interaction with and employment of freak show discourse. Barnes states, “Perhaps the best of Coney is not its showy side after all – not the part that has a nigger thrusting his head through a canvas loop to taunt the money out of place...and the sideshow with its fat lady and human enigma” but “that little dim, ivy-grown beer garden” frequented by Germans (145). It is not the photographers, Japanese lanterns, ice cream, and merry-go-rounds. While the inclusion of the sideshow and a couple of its stock performers as part of the “showy side” of Coney Island is to be expected, this list begins with a “game” in which it appears Euro-Americans pay money to throw objects at an African American, which seems more sadistic than showy. Barnes’ use of the racial epithet “nigger” signals her participation in racialized discourses in America. The only

¹⁶ In “From Stage to Page: Franz Kafka, Djuna Barnes, and Modernism’s Freak Fictions,” Robin Blyn claims, “Between her early journalism and *Nightwood*, however, Barnes’s depiction of the freak transforms, relocating the freak’s power specifically in his spectacle” (146). My project demonstrates that rather than undergoing a transformation, Barnes’ conception and use of the freak show does not differ dramatically between her journalism and *Nightwood*; this is displayed in her (re)presentation of freak show discourse in the novel.

description of a sideshow performance in this article, a “savage” display by Somali Islanders, indicates her handling of race specifically in the context of the freak show; it also provides an intertext for the description of Nikka’s tattoos.

In the course of her movement through Coney Island, Barnes is drawn to the display of “savage” African identity by the sounds of the performance: “I heard emanating from one of the sideshows a noise that was half between a melody and a regret. There were also inside some torrid-zone war cries and a glimpse of some turbans” (“If Noise Were Forbidden” 147). In addition to the specular cultural signifier of the turban, the “exotic” character of this performance is signaled by the “torrid-zone war cries,” a description that is predicated on a standard belief that geographical location directly informs cultural forms and character. The display of non-western people represented a major aspect of freak shows in America, constituting what Robert Bogdan refers to as the “exotic mode.” This type of exhibit “was not intended as a cross-cultural experience to provide patrons with real knowledge of the ways of life and thinking of a foreign group of people” (Bogdan 177). Freak show displays that emphasized the “savagery” of the people on stage, usually Africans or Pacific Islanders, constructed these representations through iterated performances based on vocalizations, gesture, and costume: “‘Wild men’ or ‘savages’ might grunt or pace the stage, snarling, growling, and letting off warrior screams. Dress might include a loincloth, a string of bones around the neck, and, in a few cases, chains – allegedly to protect the audience from the beast before them” (105). Attributing non-western origins to people with developmental disabilities within the freak show was another aspect of the sideshow’s primitivism; for example, Hiram and Barney Davis, brothers from Ohio who were of small stature and subnormal intellectual functioning, had a long career performing as the “Wild Men of Borneo” (Bogdan 121-127). Primitivist discourse directly informs the display of

“savagery” in freak shows, for this representation relies on temporal and spatial discontinuities, such as equating geographical distance with evolutionary or teleological “distance,” and obfuscating of the Euro-American origins of the roles, and discursive underpinnings, Africans, Pacific Islanders, and others performed on the sideshow stage.¹⁷

The depiction of the Somali Islanders’ performance by Barnes is indicative of her interaction with the freak show and its discursive structure. While employing aspects of the language and occupying positions within the discursive framework of the freak show, Barnes places slight pressure on these representations by exposing the performative nature of the “freak” identity. In *Nightwood*, characters utilize this discursive tension to push against essentializing narratives, creating their imagined genealogies. Instead of a Euro-American sideshow talker, the “savage” display is directed by one of the performers, though he does not seem to speak: “The Somali orator started beating up bad incentives on a stretched goat skin or something” (“If Noise Were Forbidden” 147). The war cries heard from outside the tent are complemented by the “bad incentives,” and the drum supposedly made of a goat skin signals the show as a performance of “primitive” ritual or dance. While she still uses the language of and occupies positions carved out by primitivist discourse, Barnes’ continued description of this display signals her awareness of the performativity of the Somali Islanders’ actions: “about fifteen chocolate-colored savages started whooping and dancing – not our kind of dancing. It was a dance between an Indian war dance, like the ones you see in a motion picture, and a movement all their own” (147). Barnes initially seems to be (re)presenting the standard discourses being acted out through the word “savage,” the comparison of the Africans’ skin tone to chocolate, and by positioning the

¹⁷ The production of non-westerners as freaks can be understood as a performance that sprang from and also reinforced pre-existing Euro-American discourses: “Through costuming, staging, advertising pictures, and ‘true life’ booklets, showmen fabricated a conception of ‘natives’ that accurately captured – or, rather, reflected – what they were to U.S. citizens” (Bogdan 199).

performance as an ethnographic display of intractable difference. Her characterization of the dancing begins to place pressure on these representations by exposing their apparently derivative performativity. If the performance of a Native American “war dance” in the context of early American cinema can be understood as a primitivist (re)presentation, then the Somali Islanders’ dance seems partially to be a citation of such films, presumably to make the “savage” display more legible to American audiences. This comparison can be understood as illustrative of how primitivism operates, as cultural specificities and geographical locations are subordinated to marking difference from, and supposed inferiority to, Euro-American culture. At the same time, the performers retain “a movement all their own” that does not conform to the Euro-American conception of the “savage.” Barnes displays how this racialized performance extends past the frame, revealing the constructed nature of the performed “primitive.”

Although she still considers the performers “savages,” Barnes does not seem to view this display as an accurate or “authentic” representation of African cultural forms; she indicates how the “savagery” is constituted for an audience. This primitivist display involves pantomime battles: “a good many spears, which they occasionally threw at one another or at the crowd, or sometimes at a target which, in spite of the fact that they never do anything else, they never hit in the right place” (“If Noise Were Forbidden” 148). Barnes again signals the constructed nature of this “ethnographic” display, but without stating that it is a primitivist (re)presentation of African identity in the service of reinforcing and validating pernicious Euro-American discourses about race, and the practices these discourses support. After the staged battle, the performance ends on a more sedate note: “Then they showed us how they cleaned their teeth, how they nursed their babies, and how they chewed gum. The last exhibit was rather the best of all” (148). Barnes appears to enjoy this because the representation of cultural difference does not rely on

overdetermined performances of the Euro-American concept of “savagery.” As Barnes leaves this sideshow performance, she states, “I told my companion that I did not think much of this. But he said he did; he said it explained a lot of things” (148). Although Barnes clearly agrees with or conforms to certain aspects of this primitivist display, she places slight textual pressure on these essentialist discourses by calling attention to their socially constructed, performative nature. Her companion (whoever this person is), however, seems to be the ideal audience member for the Somali Islanders’ sideshow display, for his belief that “it explained a lot of things” is precisely what the display of racial or cultural difference within the context of the freak show hoped to achieve – to “explain” why Africans, Pacific Islanders, and others were “inferior” to Euro-Americans through a stylized performance of certain aspects of primitivist discourse.¹⁸ Barnes’ approach to the construction of “racial Others” as “freaks” within the performative space of the sideshow informs her representation of the production of the disabled body into a “freak” body in both “Surcease in Hurry and Whirl” and *Nightwood*.

Barnes begins “Surcease,” her second Coney Island sideshow article, with a character sketch of a woman who reminds her of the seaside resort. This unnamed woman is positioned as existing between the two ends of multiple binaries; she was born on a border “between two countries, Russia and Poland,” her “blood, like her birth, stood midway between two races, Jewish and Norwegian,” and her mind existed between “sanity and insanity” (275). Although this woman appears to be a syncretic figure similar to Felix Volkbein (or a combination of Felix and his son Guido), she does not share his affinity for the circus. She is said to have agreed when

¹⁸ In *American Carnival: Seeing and Reading American Culture* (2001), Phillip McGowan states, “Freighted with racial and possibly eugenicist readings of nonwhiteness, Barnes does not see the point of this; her companion does, but this is left unexplained as an unmediated item of white knowledge concerning the place and practices of racial and cultural Others” (McGowan 56). Considering Barnes’ somewhat critical assessment of the performance, it seems more likely that she sees the point but does not agree with the manner in which it was presented.

a friend claimed “that people ceased to amuse themselves, relying instead on the amusement offered them by watching the forced antics of a paid individual who supplied this personal loss” (277). Although many different amusements could have been experienced at Coney Island at the time, it seems likely that Barnes is referring to the sideshow, as the only other example of “forced antics” described in the article is an old man dancing accompanied by a pianist. In a manner similar to her representation of the Somali Islanders’ “savage” display, Barnes positions the “forced antics of a paid individual,” here a sideshow “freak,” as a performance that extends past the borders of its own construction.

The progression of “Surcease in Hurry and Whirl” is predicated on the physical movements of Barnes herself, as she takes the ferry to Coney Island, walks through the resort, meets friends, rides the Ferris wheel, and waits for the ferry back. It is not the spiel of the sideshow talker (Barnes refers to this figure as “the demonstrator”) that draws the journalist to the sideshow, but rather the banner line of posters advertising the different “freaks” displayed within the sideshow, or “ten in one”: “A sideshow attracts the attention. Great posters of THE FATTEST FAT LADY, THE OSSIFIED MAN, THE SNAKE CHARMER, and that unfortunate fellow who has legs like whips and who is advertised as THE CIGARETTE FIEND” (279).¹⁹ Her approach to the people displayed as “freaks” combines pity and the assurance, through a spatial metaphor, that they are in their proper place: “You look down upon these people as from the top of an abyss; they are at the bottom of despair and of life” (279). This metaphor may have been suggested by a spatial convention of sideshows, the pitshow, “in which one human oddity would be displayed for the price of admission. Many of these had an audience walkway around a center pit where the exhibit performed” (Bogdan 45-6). The (re)presentation of sideshows within

¹⁹ For a historical overview of the banner line used by sideshows, see Nickell 53-61.

Barnes' newspaper articles tends to replicate certain aspects of freak show discourse, such as the essentialization that deems the sideshow the "natural" place for the disabled or extraordinary body.²⁰

Barnes' depiction of the talker exhibiting a couple performers in "Surcease" calls attention to the conventions that guide the construction of the "freak" role. While Barnes herself may not have been familiar with the precise terminology and history of the sideshow, her newspaper articles display an awareness of the elements constituting the "freak" performance. The talker first exhibits a young man with a hole in his navel, the result of a mine accident, by spinning him around with his cane: "he touches the nearest freak on the shoulder and begins turning him around as if this turning were all that the unfortunate had been born for" ("Surcease" 279). This is the only time Barnes uses the word "freak" in her journalism about Coney Island.²¹ This movement appears to reference the categorization of performers within sideshows, which distinguished between "made freaks," such as tattooed people, and "born freaks," who were "people with real physical anomalies who came by their condition naturally. While this category includes people who developed their uniqueness later in life, central are people who had an abnormality at birth" (Bogdan 8). The previous article's section on the sideshow dealt with the construction of Africans as "racial freaks" in the "exotic mode"; Barnes' treatment of the man with a hole in his navel and the ossified man in "Surcease" calls attention to the "aggrandized

²⁰ Phillip McGowan writes, "Barnes figures the exhibited 'freaks' as symbols of debased humanity in an era of modern achievement" (57). The pit reinforces this representation.

²¹ Although P.T. Barnum and his American Museum in New York, opened in 1841, are generally positioned as initiating the modern American freak show, Barnum did not refer to the people he presented as freaks: "Barnum was never known, either in his public or private correspondence, to use the term 'freak' except negatively, as in 1884 when he exhibited the 'Royal Mascots of the Court of Mandalay,' an extraordinarily hirsute family, and insisted (Darwinistically) that 'they are not freaks or monstrosities but the incredible results of fundamental continuous natural laws'" (Chemers 68).

mode” of presentation. In Bogdan’s definition, the aggrandized mode “emphasized how, with the exception of the particular physical, mental, or behavioral condition, the freak was an upstanding, high-status person with talents of a conventional and socially prestigious nature” (108). Performers whose exhibitions utilized the aggrandized mode included dwarfs, midgets, conjoined twins, limbless people, and bearded ladies. The exotic and aggrandized modes of presentation were not mutually exclusive; performers’ presentations could shift over the course of their careers or include elements of both.²²

Barnes’ account here of the aggrandized mode of presentation touches upon an aspect of freak show discourse that was produced by the performers themselves, the counternarrative of peculiarity as eminence. The talker’s display of the man with the hole in his navel links disability with expensive commodities: “He begins to enumerate this man’s misfortunes as though they were a row of precious beads” (“Surcease” 279). In the presentation of the ossified man, this jewelry becomes literal: “The man has a mirror about his neck, and from time to time he looks at himself as he lies there, moving his mouth, because this is all he can do. Many rings with pale blue stones adorn his strange, flexible fingers, and now and again he kisses the side of a cigar pierced by a long stick” (279). The discursive resignification of “peculiarity as eminence” can be traced historically to the “Revolt of the Freaks” that occurred in 1899 when the Barnum and Bailey Circus was in London.²³ The sideshow performers went on strike because they objected to the use of the word “freak” on a sign directing patrons to the sideshow; the term the performers decided upon was “prodigies.” This pushed against the medicalization and pathologization of disability, the shift “from wonder to error” that threatened but did not end the freak show, by

²² For a brief overview of the complexity of the exotic and aggrandized modes of presentation, see Bogdan 114-6.

²³ For an historical overview of the “Revolt of the Freaks,” see Chemers 97-101.

utilizing its language and logic: “By appropriating the term [prodigies] here, the freaks invoke the same science to generate a ‘narrative of peculiarity as eminence,’ citing Darwin’s principle that random variation was a necessary function for the survival of a species and, therefore, that any particular trait cannot be definitively said to be injurious or advantageous without the perspective of much time” (Chemers 99).²⁴ The discursive and representational tension within the freak show relates both to the competing impulses of essentialization and the performative construction of the “freak” role and to the manner in which the performers themselves actively resisted injurious discourses by reframing them from within.

These two Coney Island articles include the two main components of the modern American freak show, the display of non-western people as “racial freaks” through the performance of “savagery” in the exotic mode and the display of the disabled or anomalous body in the aggrandized mode. Barnes’ approach to and handling of the sideshow simultaneously utilizes pernicious discursive aspects of freak show performances (the primitivism and racial underpinnings that guide “savage” displays, viewing the disabled body as debased) and exposes the constructed and performative aspects of the “freak” role. The utilization of freak show discourse in *Nightwood*, informed and structured by these Coney Island newspaper articles, can thus be understood as a narrative (re)presentation of the discursive tension of the sideshow, redeployed as a means for the characters to construct their imagined genealogies, counternarratives in which they are not restricted by heredity, sex/gender, or race.

Race and Heredity: “We may all be nature’s noblemen”

Before Baron Felix Volkbein and the Duchess of Broadback (Frau Mann) arrive at the party thrown by Count Onatorio Altamonte in Berlin during the first chapter of *Nightwood*,

²⁴ For a discussion of Darwin’s impact on the freak show and its discursive structure, see the chapter “Enlightenment and Wonder” in *Staging Stigma* by Michael Chemers, 57-83.

“Bow Down,” the narrator depicts these two characters through freak show discourse, mainly through the aggrandized mode of presentation.²⁵ Felix’s father Guido, an Italian Jew, successfully adopted an imaginary Austrian barony by appropriating “a bit of heraldry long since in decline beneath the papal frown” as the Volkbein field and by using “reproductions of two intrepid and ancient actors” as his “claim to father and mother” (*Nightwood* 8-10). Although Guido died before Felix was born and Hedvig “named him Felix, thrust him from her, and died,” Felix continues this pretense to an aristocratic title (3). The narrator frames his affinity for the circus as structured by a desire for nobility or aristocracy: “Early in life Felix had insinuated himself into the pageantry of the circus and the theatre. In some way they linked his emotions to the higher and unattainable pageantry of kings and queens” (13). The narrator explicitly connects Felix’s barony with the assumption of imaginary titles by circus and sideshow performers: “The people of this world, with desires utterly divergent from his own, had also seized on titles for a purpose” (14). The description of the titled performers utilizes aspects of freak show discourse in a manner similar to the Coney Island articles.²⁶

The primitivism of the sideshow and the debasement of the performers through the spatial metaphor of the pit from “Surcease in Hurry and Whirl” reappears in the narrator’s characterization of Princess Nadja, the Duchess of Broadback, and other circus performers as “gaudy, cheap cuts from the beast life, immensely capable of that great disquiet called entertainment” (*Nightwood* 14). The narrator’s explanation for the assumption of titles continues

²⁵ For a discussion of the representation of the Volkbeins as guided specifically by the freak show’s use of theatrical tableaux in the aggrandized mode of presentation, see Blyn’s “From Stage to Page: Franz Kafka, Djuna Barnes, and Modernism’s Freak Fictions,” 148-151.

²⁶ I examine the representation of race and heredity with respect to Felix from this sideshow perspective, rather than as the representation of Judaism and the relationship between the figures of the Jew and the Christian, as such an argument would be outside the scope of this project. For a discussion of the representation of Jewishness in *Nightwood*, see: Trubowitz 71-93, Hanrahan 32-49, Altman 160-171.

this denigration while displaying an awareness of the conventions of the sideshow: “They took titles merely to dazzle boys about town, to make their public life (and it was all they had) mysterious and perplexing, knowing well that skill is never so amazing as when it seems inappropriate. Felix clung to his title to dazzle his own estrangement. It brought them together” (14). Performers did not assume titles simply to dazzle boys about town, but as an aspect of their public performance and persona. The narrator here assumes the normative position of the sideshow audience, which the talker vocalized, by viewing the sideshow performer as completely subsumed by the public “freak” identity. The concept of inappropriate skill references another aspect of the aggrandized mode. One type of aggrandized-status performance “involved doing tasks that one might assume could not be done by a person with that particular disability....The emphasis was on how the person compensated for the disability” (Bogdan 109). The first passage in *Nightwood* directly dealing with freak show discourse reproduces the structure from the Coney Island articles; from within a pernicious, debasing discourse, the performativity of the sideshow role opens the representational space for the production of imagined genealogies.

The Volkbein adoption of a nonexistent Austrian barony can be understood as an imagined genealogy akin to the aggrandized mode of presentation in the freak show because both counternarratives push against the essentializing tenets of discourses that attempt to define the normative body. The Volkbeins as the “racial Other” do not represent themselves through the exotic mode; rather, they resignify racialization by casting themselves as prodigies in the aggrandized mode. The narrative voice represents the Volkbein pretense to a barony in a derogatory manner, describing Guido’s imagined genealogy as the “saddest and most futile gesture” in his attempt “to span the impossible gap” (*Nightwood* 5). Guido is said to have experienced “racial memories,” which seem to be mainly composed of the persecution of Jews at

the hands of Christians (4-5). He purchased portraits “of two intrepid and ancient actors” that he claimed were his parents because “he had been sure that he would need an alibi for the blood” (10). Felix’s continuation of the imagined genealogy created by his father, whom he never met, is located in his body and his blood: “Guido had prepared out of his own heart for his coming child a heart, fashioned on his own preoccupation, the remorseless homage to nobility . . . It had made Guido, as it was to make his son, heavy with impermissible blood” (5). The Volkbein adoption of a barony resists an essentializing discourse that attempts to define and to restrict the Jew through his body and his “blood.”

Doctor O’Connor continues the “freak” representation of the Volkbeins, specifically Felix, while having a drink with Frau Mann after leaving Count Altamonte’s party at the end of “Bow Down.” His comparison of Felix to Mademoiselle Basquette, whom he conjures through his talker’s spiel, also relies on the aggrandized mode of presentation while attempting to define the “legless wonder” through her disability, the Jew through his “blood.” O’Connor states, “There is something missing and whole about the Baron Felix – damned from the waist up, which reminds me of Mademoiselle Basquette, who was damned from the waist down, a girl without legs, built like a medieval abuse” (*Nightwood* 29). The tension between “missing” and “whole” here relates to the perception of the disabled body as experiencing a lack and to the performance of “legless wonders” in the freak show. The presentation of people with missing limbs in the aggrandized mode focused on the “freak” executing quotidian tasks; these performers were considered “wonders” because “they violated people’s expectations of what they could do” (Bogdan 212). The positioning of Mademoiselle Basquette in this manner is indicated by O’Connor wishing “to give her a present for what of her was missing” and his reaction to her desire for pearls: “Imagine, and the other half of her still in God’s bag of tricks!

Don't tell me that what was missing had not taught her the value of what was present"

(*Nightwood* 29-30).²⁷ This comparison and the characterization of missing and whole retains the representational space for Felix's imagined genealogy (O'Connor refers to him as Baron Felix) while still describing Felix's body as experiencing a lack or disability, produced by the "Jewish blood" that has been made to define him since birth.

In addition to adopting a title (the Duchess of Broadback) in the aggrandized mode like Baron Felix, the trapeze artist Frau Mann appears to have employed her circus profession and costume as the basis for a body modification that further reflects the gender instability, or non-binarized gender, indicated by her name. The design and shape of Frau Mann's costume has melded with her skin, which recalls the standard comparison of tattooing to clothing: "She seemed to have a skin that was the pattern of her costume: a bodice of lozenges, red and yellow, low in the back and ruffled over and under the arms, faded with the reek of her three-a-day control, red tights, laced boots – one somehow felt they ran through her as the design runs through hard holiday candies" (*Nightwood* 16). This odd form of body modification seems to be the circus persona subsuming the body and identity of the trapeze artist, but the narrator's continued description of Frau Mann's body indicates that the relationship between the costume and her skin relates to sex and gender: "The stuff of the tights was no longer a covering, it was herself; the span of the tightly stitched crotch was so much her own flesh that she was as unsexed as a doll. The needle that had made one the property of the child made the other the property of no man" (16). While the initial description of Frau Mann's body implies that her apparent body modification could be considered a matter of perception ("She seemed to have," "one somehow

²⁷ O'Connor uses this phrase when discussing Robin with Felix in "Where the Tree Falls," which furthers links Robin with the sideshow: "She [Robin] was always holding God's bag of tricks upside down" (*Nightwood* 120).

felt”), the figuration of the “tightly stitched crotch” posits a direct correspondence between her and her costume: “it was herself.” The narrator’s claim that her costume and its intimate relationship to her body, framed by the figure of the doll, made her “the property of no man” could position the doll as a figure related to female homosexuality, a concept that is later pursued by Nora and O’Connor.²⁸ Also, the phrase “as unsexed as a doll” relates to her position outside the gender binary’s forced congruence of sex and gender, as the word “unsexed” implies a decoupling of biological sex and gender.

The representation of aristocratic titles and Frau Mann’s body modification continues with Doctor O’Connor’s initial speech act in *Nightwood*, which links them through primitivist discourse. This confluence leads to the description of Nikka’s tattoos in a modified form of a sideshow talker’s spiel. As Baron Felix and the Duchess of Broadback enter the party, O’Connor is speaking to everyone present: “We may all be nature’s noblemen...but think of the stories that do not amount to much!” (*Nightwood* 18). While this introductory statement leads to a differentiation between history and legend and between Jews and Christians, the phrase “nature’s noblemen” references a figure created by primitivist discourse, the “noble savage.”²⁹ Baron Felix is initially heartened by O’Connor’s words, as this naturalization of nobility or aristocracy would appear to authorize or legitimize his imagined genealogy of an Austrian barony. Frau Mann agrees with O’Connor’s exegesis of history and legend, expressing her approval in German: “*Ja! das ist ganz richtig* [Yes, this is quite right]” (18). Her appearance, rather than her words, attract O’Connor’s attention: “He merely turned his large eyes upon her and having done so noticed her

²⁸ For a discussion of inversion, the third sex, and the doll in *Nightwood*, see Harris 63-95.

²⁹ This is the same phrase Tommo in *Typee* uses in his conflation of tattooing and rank in his description of Mehevi: “The warrior, from the excellence of his physical proportions, might certainly be regarded as one of Nature’s noblemen, and the lines drawn on his face may possibly have denoted his exalted rank” (*Typee* 78).

and her attire for the first time, which, bringing suddenly to his mind something forgotten but comparable, sent him into a burst of laughter, exclaiming, ‘Well, but God works in mysterious ways to bring things up in my mind! Now I am thinking of Nikka, the nigger who used to fight the bear in the *Cirque de Paris*’” (18-9). The comparison between the trapeze costume of Frau Mann and the head to heel tattoos of Nikka reaffirms the notion of her specular body presentation as a novel form of body modification. O’Connor’s highly sexualized, primitivist description of Nikka’s tattoos complements the representation of Frau Mann’s modified body as relating to her ambiguous sexuality and gender identity. His use of the racial epithet “nigger” signals O’Connor’s complicity with racialized discourses. The primitivist representation of Nikka in the midst of a “savage” performance links this scene with Barnes’ description of the Somali Islanders’ performance from her Coney Island article “If Noise Were Forbidden.”

The amalgamation of incompatible primitivist discourses within Nikka’s skin indicates the constructed nature of Euro-American projections onto the African body. The uneasy proximity of these discourses on Nikka’s body produces a resignification of racial discourse. By using the tattoo, which was positioned as a mark of degeneracy or savagery, to (re)present the different aspects of racialized discourse, Nikka employs the discursive tools of Euro-American culture and his own body as a site of textual knowledge production to perform, within the space of the circus, his resistance to being interpellated in such a manner. His body modification can appropriate and resignify racialized discourses because of the specular and indelible nature of tattooing, as well as the production of tattooing as an embodied semiotic system. Nikka’s tattoos change his physical appearance, literally altering the specular signs of “race” in a manner similar to Euro-Americans who displayed their tattooed bodies during the 19th century, such as James O’Connell. Instead of specular syncretism produced by the uneasy proximity of constructed

notions of “civility” and “savagery,” Nikka self-consciously appropriates the notion of tattooing as a “savage” practice to resist other aspects of “savagery” projected onto him by Euro-American culture. By incorporating bodily, through tattooing, racialized discourses relating to infantilization, hypersexuality, and abjection, Nikka re-marks his already “marked” body. Tattooing is a site of resistance and autonomy.

Before O’Connor begins his description of Nikka’s tattoos, his spiel locates Nikka in the arena of the circus, though the bear-wrestling is not described.³⁰ Nikka himself does not physically appear in the novel (O’Connor’s description occurs in Berlin in 1920, and Nikka performed in Paris some time before this); this passage (re)presents the sideshow talker’s spiel, but with the “freak” absent.³¹ While O’Connor conjures Nikka through the oral spiel, the scene still retains some of the spatial conventions of the freak show. In his role of the sideshow talker, O’Connor luridly describes the “savage” tattoos on Nikka’s body to an audience of over ten people; the other passages in which he delivers oral spiels describing “freak” performers are one-on-one conversations.³² Although the narrator does not describe them, Frau Mann tells Felix that Count Altamonte might have “the living statues” at his party; during the scene, she “was telling a very stout man something about the living statues” (*Nightwood* 16, 22). If we can assume that this means the living statues were present, then there were people holding themselves rigidly still

³⁰ The characterization of Nikka’s performance as composed of the display of the tattooed body and the bear wrestling seems historically accurate in a broad sense. In *Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art as Practised Among the Natives of the United States* (1933), Albert Parry (his “natives” are white Americans) states that by the turn of the 20th century, tattooed men and women had to expand their performances: “By this time it was not enough for a tattooed man or woman to sit or stand idly and draw the stares of the admission-payers. A tattooed performer had to perform” (Parry 65).

³¹ For a reading of O’Connor’s description of Nikka as queer ekphrasis, see: Glavey 759-763.

³² When O’Connor compares Felix to Mademoiselle Basquette, he is having a drink with Frau Mann at Heinrich’s café (29-31). When he compares Robin to the ossified man in the chapter “Go Down, Matthew,” he is speaking with Nora in her apartment (155).

in the poses of classic sculptures or *tableaux vivants* throughout the duration of the scene. While “freak” performers did not have to remain motionless, they generally performed within the same space; this is reflected in another term for the sideshow, the “ten in one,” which “derives from the fact that in the sideshow a number of attractions – often more than ten – can be seen for one price” (Bogdan 45). With O’Connor as the talker, Count Altamonte’s party partially replicates the spatial conventions of the sideshow within the tight space of a drawing room.

Perhaps because he is physically absent and because of the racialized nature of the tattoos described, some critics have viewed Nikka and his relationship to his own tattoos as passive, as if he did not choose his own body modification, as if Euro-American culture literally tattooed him without his consent. For example, Sarah Henstra frames Nikka’s body as a mimesis of subjection by utilizing a Foucauldian model of the body as produced by and within discourse: “Matthew’s detailed description of the tattoos traces how the desire of the other is etched painfully across the surface of the body, so that the subject produced by that desire comes literally to embody or signify the terms of its own production” (Henstra 135). While his body and his skin would already have been “marked” by Euro-American culture through racialized discourses, Nikka’s tattooing should be understood as a volitional act that itself comments on the discourse of exoticization.³³ The representation of Nikka contains elements of coercion, such as the exoticism forced onto him by Euro-American primitivist discourse, and an overt critique of this coercion through his tattoos. The fabricated narrative of coerced tattooing or “tattoo torture” has been an integral aspect of the display of the tattooed body since James O’Connell instituted it in the

³³ Nikka’s volition in his body modification tends to be denied: “Nikka in *Nightwood* is like a convict in Kafka’s *In The Penal Colony*, whose body has been tattooed by the infernal machine which tattoos each criminal with the text of the law he has infringed” (Marcus 93). In addition to framing Nikka’s tattoos as somehow punitive instead of volitional, this analogy does not work because the convicts from “In the Penal Colony” are not technically tattooed as no pigment is inserted into their skin.

1830s. The “civilized” status of the tattooed Euro-American was asserted despite the incorporation of the “savage” tattoo through the narrative of coerced body modification. O’Connor asserts his own civility by placing Nikka in the position of the tattooed “savage.” The (re)presentation of Nikka’s tattoos, delivered through O’Connor’s oral spiel, is mediated through the earlier primitivist representation of the tattooed body as the sign of the “savage.” The construction of tattooing as a “savage” practice continues to be circulated through the notion of freakishness, which the narrative of coerced tattooing supports. Denying Nikka’s volition with respect to his tattooing sunders the discursive link between O’Connor’s primitivist description of Nikka’s tattooed body and the primitivist representations of tattooing that were produced by the conditions of the cultural exchange of tattooing. In addition to moving Nikka outside the context of the circus and the history of the display of the tattooed body, viewing him as passive reframes the physical impossibility of coerced tattooing from a projection of “savagery” onto Pacific Islanders to a projection of both “savagery” and “passivity” onto Africans.

O’Connor’s internalization and (re)presentation of Euro-American discourses about race structure his description of the tattoos, which is evident in the contextualization of Nikka within the performative space of the circus. In addition to O’Connor’s use of the epithet “nigger,” his framing of this “freak” performance establishes the registers through which he (re)presents the tattooed body, specifically the African tattooed body: “There he was, crouching all over the arena without a stitch on, except an ill-concealed loin-cloth all abulge as if with a deep-sea catch, tattooed from head to heel with all the *ameublement* of depravity! Garlanded with rosebuds and hackwork of the devil – was he a sight to see!” (*Nightwood* 19). Within this primitivist display of “savagery,” O’Connor represents Nikka through the projection of hypersexuality, and its attendant large sexual organ, onto the black male. By citing sexualized discourses about race and

reproducing the sideshow's reliance on visibility ("was he a sight to see!"), O'Connor's oral spiel opens the representational space for the articulation of his desire for Nikka. O'Connor's gaze of desire is mediated through the primitivist representation of tattooing as the mark of the "savage," as well as the sideshow's attempted legitimization of an uninterrupted gaze structured by the distinct separation of "normalcy" and "freakishness." This contextualization of Nikka within the circus links the criminological and pathological discourses that view tattooing as a mark of depravity or degeneracy with racialized primitivism.

O'Connor's description of the tattoos themselves continues this discursive structure, but he signals his awareness of the racialized discourses that guide his (re)presentation of a "savage" performance. O'Connor utilizes the discursive tension within the freak show to put slight pressure on essentializing narratives, which reproduces the representational framework of the Somali Islanders' performance: "Though he couldn't have done a thing (and I know what I am talking about in spite of all that has been said about the black boys) if you had stood him in a gig-mill for a week, though (it's said) at a stretch it spelled Desdemona" (*Nightwood* 19).³⁴ Similar to Barnes' contextualization of the "savage" display at the Coney Island sideshow as not accurate or "authentic," O'Connor refers to the constructed nature of racialized discourses, here the lascivious hypersexuality projected onto Africans, only to appoint himself an authority on the sexuality of black men. He implies that Nikka is impotent,³⁵ which negates the potential danger to Euro-American culture (and women) of the African phallus, and claims that if Nikka could

³⁴ It is also possible that Nikka named his sexual organ Desdemona: "The pun on the word *spell* suggests that his penis is *named* Desdemona, as O'Connor's penis is *named* Tiny O'Toole" (Marcus 90, emphasis in original).

³⁵ As Laura Winkiel states, "O'Connor confides to his audience that Nikka is impotent around women and that he could not perform in a gig-mill where young women work" (21) The "gig-mill is a textile factory in which the naps or interstices of the weave are pulled up, thereby fracturing the smoothness of the fabric and exposing the loose ends" (21n34). This passage could also suggest "that Nikka's sexual interest lies elsewhere, probably with men" (21).

achieve an erection, the tattoo on his penis would spell the name “Desdemona.” This tattoo functions as an appropriation of the sexualized discourses projected onto Nikka, here driven by fears of miscegenation and the violently “savage” sexuality of Africans; literally inscribed within the skin of his sexual organ, this tattoo signals Nikka’s resistance to Euro-American discourses about race that attempt to define and control his body and his sexuality. Nikka’s body is the site/cite of a self-conscious appropriation of Euro-American racial discourses inscribed within the skin through the process of tattooing that refutes the racialized and sexualized discourses of the exotic or noble savage projected onto him.

Many of the tattoos on Nikka’s body that O’Connor describes represent other aspects of racialized Euro-American discourses. Despite O’Connor’s textual control over this representation (Nikka is not present to refute anything he says), Nikka’s volition in utilizing his body as a site of knowledge production that speaks back to Euro-American racial discourses pushes against the frame in which O’Connor attempts to restrict him. These tattoos also operate through a similar structure of appropriation and resignification that relies on the physical, specular, and indelible nature of tattooing. O’Connor continues his primitivist cataloguing of the tattoos:

Well then, over his belly was an angel from Chartres; on each buttock, half public, half private, a quotation from the book of magic, a confirmation of the Jansenist theory, I’m sorry to say and here to say it. Across his knees, I give you my word, “I” on one and on the other “can,” put those together! Across his chest, beneath a beautiful caravel in full sail, two clasped hands, the wrist bones fretted with point lace. On each bosom an arrow-speared heart, each with different initials but with equal drops of blood. (*Nightwood* 19)

The angel tattoo can be understood as referring to the infantilization of Africans as angelic and docile; the tattoos on his buttocks relates to the representation of “primitive” cultures as controlled by superstition; the caravel seems to indicate the slave trade.³⁶ The heart tattoos are standard representations of lost loves. The “I can” tattoo could relate to his supposed impotence, but it could also signal Nikka’s assurance that he can attempt to resignify racialized discourses through tattooing. O’Connor provides longer descriptions of two other tattoos, both of which are lexical descriptions of excrement. Through circumlocution, he describes a tattoo of the French word “*merde*,” or “shit”: “running into the arm-pit, all down one side, the word said by Prince Arthur Tudor...so wholly epigrammatic and in no way befitting the great and noble British Empire” (19). His description of the second excrement tattoo signals the performative aspect of his sideshow talker’s role, as he references the structure of doubt built into the freak show. Even O’Connor does not believe the tattoos of the “freak” he has conjured for the party guests: “Over his *dos*, believe it or not and I shouldn’t, a terse account in early monkish script – called by some people indecent, by others Gothic – of the really deplorable condition of Paris before hygiene was introduced, and nature had its way up to the knees” (20).³⁷ These tattoos can be understood as referencing the designation of the racially marked body as an abject body. By tattooing *merde* and a description of urban excrement on his body, Nikka symbolically closes his “abject” body with a doubly parodic suture – the mark of the “savage” representing his supposedly (racially) abjected status.

³⁶ The general decoding of these three tattoos, but not the larger argument pertaining to Nikka, is indebted to Jane Marcus’ “Laughing at Leviticus,” page 90. Marcus approaches *Nightwood* from the Bakhtinian conception of the carnival. Her handling of the cultural practice of tattooing differs from this project, as Marcus positions tattooing as a practice that “marks the return of the repressed savage and unconscious desire” (93).

³⁷ See Marcus 91 for a discussion of the resonances of *merde* in the novel.

The discursive tension between essentialization and performative construction within the freak show provides the representational space in *Nightwood* for this resignification.

Approaching Nikka and his relationship with his own tattoos from the cultural site of the freak show and the history of display of the tattooed body opens the critical space for understanding his tattoos as an imagined genealogy. Although O'Connor conjures Nikka through the oral spiel, the doctor does not retain complete textual control over Nikka and his body. From his position within freak show discourse, O'Connor attempts to deny this imagined genealogy, but Nikka's one reported speech act also resignifies the interpretation of the tattoo as the mark of the "savage." He ends his description of the tattoos by allowing Nikka to speak: "I asked him why all this barbarity; he answered he loved beauty and would have it about him" (*Nightwood* 20). Nikka resists racialized primitivism through his tattooing, resignifying barbarity into beauty, as well as claiming control over Euro-American "knowledge" "about him."

Gender, Sexuality, and Primitivism

O'Connor's sexuality, gender, and cross-dressing expand the novel's use of freak show discourse in its depiction of non-normative sexuality. Alternating between the roles of sideshow talker and "freak" performer, his discussion of gender and queer sexuality cites the discursive tension of the freak show, specifically its presentation of gender indeterminacy, through his identification as a bearded lady. His discussion of his desired gender is an imagined genealogy that seems to anticipate the idea of gender as performance.

After he wakes up Robin by throwing water in her face at the *Hôtel Récamier*, O'Connor takes on the role of the sideshow magician as Felix watches him apply some of Robin's make-up on himself and steal a hundred francs. O'Connor is referred to as a "dumbfounder" and "man of magic" who is attempting to perpetuate a hoax (*Nightwood* 39). In addition to placing O'Connor

in another sideshow role and foreshadowing his cross-dressing, the manner in which he applies the make-up indicates the discursive formations that will appear later when he expresses his desire to be a woman. Felix is aware that O'Connor's movements were "for the purpose of snatching a few drops from a perfume bottle picked up from the night table; of dusting his darkly bristled chin with a puff, and drawing a line of rouge across his lips, his upper lip compressed on his lower, in order to have it seem that their sudden embellishment was a visitation of nature" (39). Operating from a position in which gender could be conceived as performative and not determined by sex, indicated by a man using the "feminine" puff and rouge, O'Connor attempts to adopt a specular marker of femininity as if it were not culturally constructed as incongruous with his sex, as if it were "natural." Felix witnesses this action and the narrator frames it as a hoax, which seems to uphold the gender binary by denying an admixture of masculine and feminine in one person. However, O'Connor employs the discursive tension of this passage, an explicit gender performance that utilizes essentialist notions of sex and gender, later in the novel when he expresses his desire for normative femininity.

When Nora enters O'Connor's apartment at three in the morning at the beginning of "Watchman, What of the Night?," Matthew is cross-dressed in "a woman's flannel nightgown," make-up, and a wig, "having expected someone else" (*Nightwood* 85, 86). Before he removes the wig and pulls up the bed sheet, Nora experiences the full effect of his cross-dressing: "The doctor's head, with its over-large black eyes, its full gun-metal cheeks and chin, was framed in the golden semi-circle of a wig with long pendent curls that touched his shoulders, and falling back against the pillow, turned up the shadowy interior of their cylinders. He was heavily rouged and his lashes painted" (85). Nora interprets Matthew's appearance through childhood fairy tales: "God, children know something they can't tell; they like Red Riding Hood and the wolf in

bed!” (145).³⁸ The narrator emphasizes the specular syncretism of O’Connor here, playing his masculine facial features against the markers of femininity that cannot fully disguise his sexed body.³⁹ This syncretism - feminine clothing and secondary sex characteristics on a masculine-sexed body - leads O’Connor to declare later in this conversation with Nora, “It [seeing Robin and Jenny together] was more than a boy like me (who am the last woman left in this world, though I am the bearded lady) could bear” (107). Pushing against the sex/gender system while still employing essentialist discourses, O’Connor believes himself in possession of “true” womanhood. As Andrea Harris writes, “the ‘last woman’ suggests that he alone retains some vestige of true femininity compared to those who are anatomically female” (77). O’Connor frames himself as a bearded lady because of specular, gendered syncretism and the manner in which they were presented in the freak show. Bogdan writes, “except for the beards, these women represented the quintessence of refined respectable womanhood. They were typically pictured striking feminine poses in elegant surroundings, wearing fashionable dresses and with their hair done in the latest style. . . . For those who had husbands, and most did, a favorite photographic prop was their spouse” (224).⁴⁰ While the presence of a masculine secondary sex

³⁸ For a discussion of Barnes’ work in the context of fairy tales, see the chapter “Djuna Barnes: Wolves in Sheep’s Clothing,” pages 115-153 in *Red Riding Hood and the Wolf in Bed: Modernism’s Fairy Tales* (2006) by Ann Martin.

³⁹ My approach to the representation of cross-dressing in *Nightwood* is partially guided by Judith Butler’s arguments about drag (which is a certain type of cross-dressing performance) from *Gender Trouble*: “As much as drag creates a unified picture of ‘woman’ (what its critics often oppose), it also reveals the distinctness of those aspects of gendered experience which are falsely naturalized as a unity through the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence. *In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency*” (Butler 187, emphasis in original). O’Connor’s cross-dressing achieves such denaturalization within the discursive structure of the freak show.

⁴⁰ As Michael Chemers explains, the designation of a beard as a masculine secondary sex characteristic is itself a social construction: “A beard is almost always read, in our society, as a secondary sexual characteristic exclusive to males, but this is a great misconception. In fact, millions of women are capable of growing facial hair” (124).

characteristic on a biologically female body would appear to disrupt the forced congruence of sex and gender, the performance of normative femininity as guided by an essentialist discourse of the sexed body reaffirms the belief in (sexual) anatomy as destiny. The figure of the bearded lady provides the representational space for O'Connor's imagined genealogy through this discursive tension; his gender identification and desire to inhabit a female body utilizes similar essentializing discourses about femininity, inflated with hyperbole.

In his conversations with Nora, O'Connor explicitly laments the incongruity between his anatomical sex and his gender identity; when describing the body and life he wishes he possessed, O'Connor focuses on secondary sex characteristics, reproduction, and heterosexual relationships. He believes he should have been born a biological woman, but with rather exaggerated features: "and am I to blame if I've turned up this time as I shouldn't have been, when it was a high soprano I wanted, and deep corn curls to my bum, with a womb as big as the king's kettle, and a bosom as high as the bowsprit of a fishing schooner? And what do I get but a face on me like an old child's bottom – is that a happiness, do you think?" (*Nightwood* 97). His fantasy of being a woman is structured by hyperbolic representations of the female body in which the features he does not possess become superlative – the highest voice, the longest hair, the largest womb, and the highest bosom. On the next page, he reframes his wish to be a woman by emphasizing reproduction, domesticity, and heterosexuality: "no matter what I may be doing, in my heart is the wish for children and knitting. God, I never asked better than to boil some good man's potatoes and toss up a child for him every ninth months by the calendar. Is it my fault that my only fireside is the outhouse?" (98). O'Connor's body is the nexus of both his most fervent desire and his disqualification; he wishes to be a biological, heterosexual woman who performs domestic tasks and produces children, but his masculine sexed body is an impossible

barrier. He reframes the *pissoirs* (public male urinals) as his domestic space. O'Connor's desire for normative femininity centered around the heterosexual family also connects him with freak show discourse, specifically the aggrandized mode of presentation. Many performers, including bearded ladies, used the aggrandized mode to represent the normativity of the "freak's" family life. Bogdan writes, "Such aggrandizement was also accomplished by emphasizing the normalcy of the freak's spouse, children, and family life. Many of the photographic portraits that exhibits sold show them with their families against a sitting-room backdrop with stuffed chairs and other symbols of middle-class status" (109). O'Connor wishes he could exist within, and be contained by, the bearded lady's "freak" performance of heteronormative, feminine domesticity.

Nightwood's freak show discourse utilizes naturalized primitivism to represent Robin Vote, another of the novel's "freaks." She is repeatedly figured through the register of beasts or animals, from the early description of her as a "beast turning human," her interaction with the lioness at the Denckman circus immediately before meeting Nora, to her infamous exchange with Nora's dog in "The Possessed" (*Nightwood* 41). In the context of freak show discourse, some of these characterizations, such as O'Connor's statement that her temples were "like those of young beasts cutting horns, as if they were sleeping eyes," recall the primitivism of the display of "missing links," but Robin is not represented through explicitly racialized discourse (143). These representations are informed by a discourse of naturalized primitivism, which stretches back to the precultural, that is applied to Robin from her initial appearance in the novel. By reaching back to the concept of the "precultural," naturalized primitivism attempts to obfuscate the condition that primitivism itself is a product of culture, of "civilization." Nora frames Robin as a repository of humanity's primitivist memories: "In her, past time records, and past time is relative to us all" (166). The malleability of the primitivism attached to Robin leads Felix, Nora,

and Jenny to attempt to mold her into the shape each desires. Robin's body is positioned at the nexus of a primitivist connection to the earth: "The perfume her body exhaled was of the quality of that earth-flesh, fungi, which smells of captured dampness and yet is so dry....Her flesh was the texture of plant life, and beneath it one sensed a frame, broad, porous, and sleep-worn, as if sleep were a decay fishing her beneath the visible surface" (38). In the context of the interchangeability of freak and queer in the 1930s and 1940s, Rachel Adams posits specular body presentation as linking the two terms: "*freak* describes the allegedly unnatural condition of homosexuality, an affliction that is immediately visible in the subject's appearance and personal demeanor. Like a sideshow curiosity, the homosexual's deviance is prominently displayed on the surface of the body" (93). Rather than a direct correspondence between internal state and external appearance, between queer desire and specular "freakishness," however, the representation of Robin's queer desire is produced through the connection between naturalized primitivism and "freak" performance.

The representation of queer desire and disjunctures in the sex/gender system in *Nightwood* rely on temporal and spatial discontinuities, from Robin's unconscious entrance into the novel to O'Connor's imagined genealogies, such as his supposition that "In the old days I was possibly a girl in Marseilles thumping the dock with a sailor" (97).⁴¹ The genders of Robin and O'Connor can be understood as indeterminate compounds of masculine and feminine, displayed in O'Connor's cross-dressing and the characterization of Robin as "a tall girl with the body of a boy" and "a girl who resembles a boy" (*Nightwood* 50, 145).⁴² The primitivist

⁴¹ In "Go Down, Matthew," O'Connor represents Robin as "the eternal momentary," another primitivist description of her that references the supposed stasis of "primitive" cultures (135).

⁴² Andrea Harris describes the genders of Matthew and Robin: "These characters, who typify the difficulties of those whose gender identities are compound and multiple, struggle with the

indeterminacy of Robin's body is spatially represented in "La Somnambule" by the "exotic" set in which she appears to lie unconscious: "Like a painting by the *douanier* Rousseau, she seemed to lie in a jungle trapped in a drawing room (in the apprehension of which the walls have made their escape), thrown in among the carnivorous flowers as their ration; the set, the property of an unseen *dompteur*, half lord, half promoter" (38). This tableau recalls the photographs of performers sold at sideshows, highly staged images whose sets "ranged from jungle terrain to Victorian parlors" (Bogdan 13).⁴³ Combining the extremes of freak show *carte de visite* sets, this image of Robin presents her as a "primitive" whose temporal distance from the "modern," as produced by a model of teleological human development, is invoked by the spatial discontinuity of a jungle in a drawing room. The retreating walls of the drawing room indicate that "civilization" can never hope to contain through discourse the people it attempts to fashion into "primitives" or "savages."

The temporal displacement through which the narrator represents Robin, who "carried the quality of the 'way back' as animals do," relies on an evolutionary model that appears to allow other people partial access to ancestors common to all humanity (*Nightwood* 44). The primitivism applied to Robin produces about her body a trace of past time: "Sometimes one meets a woman who is beast turning human. Such a person's every movement will reduce to an image of a forgotten experience; a mirage of an eternal wedding cast on the racial memory" (41).⁴⁴ Robin's atavistic connection to the past is alternately represented through the beast/human

culturally constructed meanings attached both to their sexed bodies and to their gender identification" (74).

⁴³ For a discussion of this description of Robin as an exotic freak show tableau, see Blyn, "Modernism's Freak Fictions," 151-3.

⁴⁴ It seems that the "race" implied by the phrase "racial memory" in this context would be the "human race," but this is complicated by the narrator stating on the same page that Felix was "racially incapable of abandon" (41). While the representation of Robin mostly stems from

vehicle and a conception of “primitive” humanity: “Such a woman is the infected carrier of the past; before her the structure of our head and jaws ache – we feel that we could eat her, she who is eaten death returning, for only then do we put our face close to the blood on the lips of our forefathers” (41). The narrator posits an evolutionary model of human genealogy as a series of cannibal encounters, as Robin is figured as a reanimated body, cannibalized in the “primitive” past, whose re-cannibalization in the present moment by an ambiguous “we” would provide access to the “primitive” forefathers of humanity, who are also cast as cannibals. The malleable primitivism through which Robin is represented alternates between a naturalized connection to the earth, a comparison to beasts or animals, and an atavistic reversion from the “primitive” past of humanity. In all, her body becomes a conduit that appears to provide access for other people to different conceptions of the “primitive.”

In the chapter “Go Down, Matthew,” O’Connor, in his role of sideshow talker, locates Robin’s primitivism specifically within the freak show. After Nora tells him of the time she “had struck her [Robin’s] sleep away” and implores him to “say something,” Matthew compares Robin to the ossified man (*Nightwood* 154). This is the only passage in which a figure from Barnes’ Coney Island articles explicitly enters the novel: “Robin was outside the ‘human type’ – a wild thing caught in a woman’s skin, monstrously alone, monstrously vain; like the paralysed man in Coney Island (take away a man’s conformity and you take away his remedy) who had to lie on his back in a box, but the box was lined with velvet, his fingers jeweled with stones, and suspended over him where he could never take his eyes off, a sky-blue mounted mirror, for he wanted to enjoy his own ‘difference’” (155). Before the description of the ossified man,

naturalized primitivism, ambiguous references to race appear around her. For example, in “Where the Tree Falls,” O’Connor and Felix’s discussion of Robin includes the doctor using the phrase “our faulty racial memory” (126).

O'Connor links the primitivist representation of Robin with the freak show through the phrase "monstrously alone, monstrously vain."⁴⁵ As Garland Thomson explains, the progression of words applied to the extraordinary body began with "the word *monster* – perhaps the earliest and most enduring name for the singular body" (3, emphasis in original).⁴⁶ Dr. O'Connor parodies the "scientific" explanations espoused in the freak show by utilizing older forms and terms, rather than those expected of a modern medical doctor. Nora also frames her connection with Robin through the trope of pity that runs through freak show discourse: "What part of monstrosity am I that I am always crying at its side!" (*Nightwood* 151). The focus on vanity in the description of the ossified man seems to reference the conception of homosexuality as produced by narcissism. Nora also references the theory of homosexuality, here specifically lesbian desire, as narcissism when she says to O'Connor, "a woman is yourself, caught as you turn in a panic; on her mouth you kiss your own" (152). The description of the ossified man expands upon his portrait in "Surcease in Hurry and Whirl" by more explicitly emphasizing the aggrandized mode of presentation.

Robin's refusal to be interpellated as wife and mother,⁴⁷ her sexual desire for women, and her ambiguous gender identification all place her outside the forced congruence of the sex/gender system and heteronormativity.⁴⁸ Robin's gender and sexuality mark her as a

⁴⁵ For a discussion of performative reading and the textual production of Robin as a monster, see: Sturm 249-69.

⁴⁶ The use of "freak" to describe the extraordinary body began at about the same time as the modern American freak show: "Not until 1847 does the word [freak] become synonymous with human corporeal anomaly" (Garland Thomson 4).

⁴⁷ According to Andrea Harris, Robin's rejection of motherhood signals a disjuncture between her sex and her gender: "Robin rejects the necessity of the link between motherhood and femaleness because maternity is not an expression of her gender identity.... Maternity becomes a means by which Robin understands her distance from femininity" (Harris 75).

⁴⁸ I use Judith Butler's definition of gender identity as "a relationship among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire" (*Gender Trouble* 24).

“primitive freak,” temporally and spatially displaced. The naturalized primitivist discourse that guides the figuration of Robin Vote by both the narrator and O’Connor can be understood as a (re)presentation of the discontinuity between her biological sex and gender as a “freakish” sexual ontology. The temporal and spatial discontinuities of her primitivist representation replicate her sundering of the deterministic link between sexual anatomy and gender. The discursive tension of the freak show is here (re)presented as the aporetic relationship between the essentializing impulse of the forced congruence of the sex/gender binary and a naturalized primitivist discourse that opens a representational space for queer sexuality and indeterminate, compound genders.

However, Robin cannot be contained within her primitive “freak” representation. Just as the retreating walls of her initial appearance in the novel cannot enclose her, the primitivism employed by Felix, Jenny, and Nora cannot contain Robin’s gender and sexuality. Although the novel’s freak show discourse partially produces her representation, she could never be a marketable “freak.” While O’Connor would likely perform the feminine normativity of the bearded lady, Robin does not remain within the sideshow frame of the “primitive” set or the ossified man’s box. The discursive tension of the sideshow always contains an excess that exposes its performative construction. The “freak” occupies this space of slippage within the sideshow tent to induce customers into paying the entrance fee. Robin resists the commoditized aspect of the sideshow – the production and performance of specular bodily difference as a commodity. Both Robin’s interactions with a doll and her exchange with Nora’s dog indicate her resistance to her sideshow contextualization.

One of the avenues through which Nora attempts to contain Robin within a “normative” lesbian relationship is through the gift of the commoditized object of a doll. When Nora tells O’Connor about visiting Jenny and confronting her with being Robin’s mistress, she describes

how the presence in Jenny's apartment of a doll Robin had given her was unsettling. Nora positions the doll as a precursor of death when given to a child, which relates to the infantilization applied to Robin,⁴⁹ as well as the surrogate child in a relationship between two women: "We give death to a child when we give it a doll – it's the effigy and the shroud; when a woman gives it to a woman, it is the life they cannot have, it is their child, sacred and profane" (*Nightwood* 151). She refers to her and Robin's doll as "our child" (156). A doll lacks sexual anatomy but is rigorously gendered; Robin and Nora's doll is coded as feminine. Earlier in the novel, Robin had held her and Felix's son Guido as if she were about to kill him: "holding the child high in her hand as if she were about to dash it down, but she brought it down gently" (52). This posture is repeated with the doll: "holding the doll she had given us – 'our child' – high above her head, as if she would cast it down, a look of fury on her face" (156). These potential actions are completed when Robin destroys the doll, which Nora narrates for O'Connor: "She picked up the doll and hurled it to the floor and put her foot on it, crushing her heel into it; and then, as I came crying behind her, she kicked it, its china head all in dust, its skirt shivering and stiff, whirling over and over across the floor" (157). This destruction is Robin's rejection of the queer relationship seemingly built on normative structures – the doll as child, Nora as mother, and Robin in the masculine role – within which Nora attempts to contain her.⁵⁰

O'Connor reformulates this conception of the doll as a child in a relationship between two women by positioning the doll as a figure for the homosexual, either male or female. He

⁴⁹ For example, in the same conversation with O'Connor, Nora states, "Sometimes...she would sit at home all day, looking out of the window or playing with her toys, trains, and animals and cars to wind up, and dolls and marbles and soldiers" (156). Also, in the church from "The Possessed," there are flowers and toys in front of the altar Robin fashions (178).

⁵⁰ This is one manner in which Robin resists these structures. She also infantilizes herself and elevates Nora within her maternal role. O'Connor refers to this when he says to Nora, "You almost caught hold of her, but she put you cleverly away by making you the Madonna" (155).

describes the physical appearance of the doll as a queer subject: “The blessed face! It should be seen only in profile, otherwise it is observed to be the identical cleaved halves of sexless misgiving!” (*Nightwood* 157). This description connects the doll with one of Felix’s first impressions of Robin: “as if this girl were the converging halves of a broken fate, setting face, in sleep, toward itself in time” (41). The face of the doll producing “sexless misgiving” indicates that this figuration should be read in conjunction with the narrator’s description of Frau Mann “as unsexed as a doll” (16). With the doll positioned as a figure of non-binarized gender and queer sexuality, the words “unsexed” and “sexless” can be understood as negations of the essentialization of the sex/gender system. There is a congruence between the comparison of Frau Mann to a doll, which relates to her sideshow costume as a novel form of body modification akin to tattooing, and O’Connor’s conception of queer sexuality, which is a reformulation of Nora’s discussion of the doll. This indicates that Robin’s destruction of the doll relates both to her rejection of Nora’s attempted restriction within seemingly normative structures and the sideshow representation that attempts to contain her anti-teleological, devolutionary sexuality and ontology.

In “The Possessed,” Robin’s sexualized interaction with Nora’s dog is her final resistance to sideshow interpellation. After moving to New York with Jenny, she begins to wander again, slowly moving toward Nora while sleeping in the woods or decayed chapels. Nora’s dog leads her to the church on her estate where Robin has fashioned an altar with a Madonna in front of it. From the doorjamb she watches Robin go down on all fours and act dog-like. Robin backs the terrified dog into a corner and strikes it in the side. Robin and Nora’s dog seem to engage sexually; their interaction is, at the least, sexualized: “He ran this way and that, low down in his throat crying, and she grinning and crying with him; crying in shorter and shorter spaces, moving

head to head, until she gave up, lying out, her hands beside her, her face turned and weeping; and the dog too gave up then, and lay down, his eyes bloodshot, his head flat along her knees” (*Nightwood* 180). Within the primitivism and animal metaphors applied to her, Robin’s actions here seem to represent her partial transformation into a beast. While this could be operative, *Nightwood’s* freak show discourse suggests a different interpretation of the novel’s conclusion. Robin uses the presentations and narratives of the sideshow to demonstrate that she is far outside such constructed displays of anomaly or abnormality. One of the “explanations” offered about sideshow performers was a hybridity theory. Bogdan writes, “This theory posited that certain malformations were the result of crossbreeding man with beast. The comparisons showmen made between exhibits’ malformations and certain animal structures (‘the seal man,’ for instance) also implied a biological link” (106).⁵¹ Robin does not accept interpellation through the sideshow; she demonstrates its inability to contain her by enacting the transgressive secret the sideshow hints produced the performer on stage. Her interaction with Nora’s dog is a performance of this supposed genesis that concretizes the construction of the sideshow’s essentialization. She narrativizes the tension of freak show discourse.

The characters of *Nightwood* constitute a sideshow of “freaks” because of the novel’s utilization of the discursive tension of the freak show, developed in the Coney Island articles, but this method of representation does not make them “horrid” as T.S. Eliot thought. The history of the American freak show, however, is rather disturbing, from the depiction of Africans and Pacific Islanders as “racial freaks,” the display of microcephalics as “pinheads,” the stigma applied to disability, to the rigid definition of the normative body. These often exploitative performances displayed racial, sexual, and physical “difference” to the American public through

⁵¹ I use Bogdan’s description of the hybridity theory while remaining uncomfortable with the term “malformation.”

the fiction that the “freak” role represented essential, intractable alterity. By citing the history and discursive tension of the freak show, *Nightwood* opens the representational space for imagined genealogies. From within pernicious, debasing discourses that attempt to define and regulate the racially and sexually normative body, the novel produces counternarratives that gesture toward the social construction of race and the performativity of gender.

Chapter V: Within the Skin: Primitivism, Homosexuality, and Class in the “Eumaeus” Episode
of *Ulysses*

Within the compendium of clichés and worn out phrases that comprise the “Eumaeus” episode of *Ulysses* (1922), a triangulation of discourses relating to primitivism, homosexuality, and tattooing clusters around the voluble sailor D.B Murphy. While the lines of intersection between body modification and queer desire in the episode have been traced,¹ the effects and structures of primitivist discourse tend to be silently passed over or seen as spurious ethnography. The inaccuracies in Murphy’s stories, such as his apparent ignorance of Gibraltar and the conflation of coastal Peruvians and land-locked Bolivians, usually contribute to readings of the sailor as an unreliable narrator or a fraud who has never sailed around the world. “Eumaeus” is an episode that represents the ambivalent, shifting, and uncertain nature of identity and experience, which indicates that instead of searching for positivist factuality in Murphy’s stories, the structures and discursive underpinnings of the primitivist positions laid out by the sailor should be examined. What if we view Murphy’s colonial clichés, inaccuracies, elisions, and evasions as productive of Joyce’s engagement with primitivist discourse?

The tall tales Murphy spins about his sea-faring adventures possess a similar structure to the mistaken identities and inaccurate information that run throughout the episode, as the discrepancies uncovered by numerous critics, following Bloom’s cue of “Sherlockholmesing him

¹ See Levine 277-300, Lamos 242-53.

up,” demonstrate (16.831).² Rather than relating to Murphy as a writer figure/forged, a textual double for Joyce, or to the possibility that the sailor is a fraud, however, Murphy’s stories function as (re)presentations of the operation of certain forms of primitivist discourse. Specific geographical locations and cultural practices of indigenous people are subordinated to the function of marking difference from and a supposed inferiority to the civilization of the colonizer. Bloom remains anxiously, suspiciously wary of Murphy throughout the episode; he appears to be the only person in the cabman’s shelter who listens to the sailor’s stories with skepticism. Murphy’s tales about sea voyages, Peruvians (or Bolivians), murder in Italy, and being tattooed at Odessa, however, seem to inspire primitivist trains of thought in Bloom, such as his rather standard assertion that “climate accounts for character” and his assumption about the sexual licentiousness of “savages in the cannibal islands” (880, 1211). Murphy can never seem to match western representations of cultural practices with the appropriate geographical locations, displaying the disregard for geographical specificity that structures primitivism, while Bloom rigorously maintains a mimetic relationship between geography and levels of “civilization.”

Although Stuart Gilbert lists the nerves as the organ for the “Eumaeus” episode, the anus or anality seems more accurate.³ The homoerotic valence of D.B. Murphy’s interactions with Leopold Bloom and Stephan Dedalus consistently overlaps and inflects the homosocial space of the cabman’s shelter.⁴ Indeterminate signs of potentially queer sexuality and homoeroticism proliferate over the course of the episode, usually in relation to Murphy. Colleen Lamos claims, “the crux of his [Murphy’s] mystery lies not in his salty yarns but in his obscure sexuality”

² All quotations from *Ulysses* are from the Gabler edition. Citations indicate the episode number and lines number; 16.831 is the “Eumaeus” episode, line 831.

³ Gilbert 349-68. See Levine 289 and Lawrence 370 for the anal fixations in “Eumaeus.”

⁴ As Colleen Lamos notes, “The cabman’s shelter, while serving as a refuge for men during the night, may also be – and the uncertainty is precisely the point – a site of homosexual cruising and political subversion” (Lamos 245).

(Lamos 247). Rather, I argue that the indeterminacy of Murphy's stories, the primitivist lack of specificity in them, and the ambiguously sexualized signs around and on the sailor are intimately connected. Bloom's suspicions about the sailor stem partially from the errors and discrepancies in the tall tales; the text simultaneously mobilizes the sexualized indeterminacy surrounding Murphy to suggest the indeterminate status of Bloom's potential homoerotic desire for Stephan. The oblique competition that undergirds the interactions between Murphy and Bloom relates not only to inaccurate information and Bloom viewing this working-class man as a bad character from his firmly bourgeois position, but also to the attentions of the rather intoxicated young man.

The specific tattoo designs on Murphy's chest (an anchor, the number 16, the tattoo artist Antonio's "sideface" self-portrait) and his silences and evasions when asked questions about them tend to be interpreted as signs of his potential homosexuality, or more properly, homoerotic or queer desire (the question "Is he homosexual?" is immaterial). While his suggestive responses about the tattoos and the tattooing operation seem to point in this direction, the critical literature about the tattoo designs themselves overstates their importance as signs of queer desire. This is partially the result of the entry for the number 16 in Don Gifford's *"Ulysses" Annotated*, which states, "In European slang and numerology the number sixteen meant homosexuality," but does not provide a source for this intriguing piece of information (544).⁵ As Jennifer Levine states, this claim "has been remarkably difficult to confirm" (297n12). I share Levine's reticence in insisting upon this specific connection. While still related to potentially queer connotations of the actual tattoo designs, tattooing itself – the operation of applying indelible images to human skin – is coded as a homosexual experience in the "Eumaeus" episode. This is not a random association by Joyce, as he includes many discourses about tattooing circulating at the beginning

⁵ Stuart Gilbert claims that the numerals 6 and 16 represented different sexual positions in Neapolitan slang (364).

of the 20th century, such as mariner body modification, the tattoo as identification, the tattoo as masculine sign, the upper class or aristocratic fashion for tattoos, and the criminological interpretation. Both primitivist discourse and the sexualized interpretation of tattooing structure the representation of class-based and criminalized tattoos in “Eumaeus.” Published eleven years after *Ulysses*, Albert Parry’s *Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art as Practised Among the Natives of the United States* (1933) elucidates the connections between these different aspects of tattooing discourse that are hinted at in “Eumaeus.” If Parry is accurate in his estimation of his own work, the book *Tattoo* is “the first of its kind,” namely a cultural study of tattooing (xi). He traces connections between primitivism, criminality, class, gender, and sexuality in tattooing discourses; Parry argues that Euro-American tattooing is a primitive or atavistic practice with a sexualized aspect, specifically as a form of homosexual experience. I will attempt to show how popular understandings of tattooing, as represented, for example, in Parry, allow us to trace the interaction between primitivism, tattooing, and homosexuality that Joyce weaves throughout “Eumaeus.”

Primitivism and Place

Why is Leopold Bloom so anxiously suspicious of D.B. Murphy? Why does no one else in the cabman’s shelter, though referred to collectively as “Messrs the greenhorns” by the episode’s narrative voice, seem to notice the obvious discrepancies in the sailor’s stories (16.482)? Why does Bloom appear protective of Stephan in the presence of Murphy? The overlapping, indeterminate valences of the homosocial and the homoerotic certainly factor into this, but the potentially queer sexuality of the episode does not exist in isolation – it is informed and inflected by primitivism and discourses about tattooing. Although Bloom can detect errors in Murphy’s tales by approaching them from a position of deductive, positivist knowledge,

Bloom's own internalizations of primitivism and standard discourses about tattooing are scattered throughout the episode. The connections between primitivism and place in the episode – the linking of cultural practices with geographical location – demonstrate the lack of concern for specificity in primitivist discourse as well as how geography can be produced as a culturally deterministic factor.⁶

After his performance of another Simon Dedalus (not Stephan's father) shooting two eggs over his shoulder and discussing his hometown of Carrigaloe and his wife, whom he has not seen for seven years, D.B. Murphy produces two important documents: his discharge papers and the colonial postcard. He arrived back in Ireland on the *Rosevean*, the ship Stephan saw that morning at the end of "Proteus" and that is identified by name and cargo in "Wandering Rocks" (3.503-5, 10.1098-9). The discharge papers identify him as "A.B.S." – an able-bodied seaman or able seaman. This designation means Murphy is a common sailor, a lower-class laborer whose body is marked by the work he performs. His body doubly marked by tattooing signals him as belonging to two groups with whom tattooing was strongly associated, mariners and the working class.

⁶ My argument about primitivist discourse in this episode shares similarities with Andrew Gibson's discussion of language in "Mingle Mangle or Gallimaufry: 'Eumaeus'" from *Joyce's Revenge* (2002), pages 207-26. Gibson states, "'Eumaeus' does not accept the terms and conditions the colonizer attaches to the use of his language. It is not bound by his rules. But nor does it opt for the political narrowness and unreality of categorical rejection. It is a glorious, wicked, delighted perversion of language (and a concept of 'propriety') that Joyce nevertheless takes to be an unalterable, historical given. It is thus that 'Eumaeus' forms part of his titanic struggle with colonial, Irish history" (219). Gibson approaches the episode from a specifically Irish context; while British colonization of Ireland certainly impacts the episode, I argue for "Eumaeus" as a more generalized representation of primitivism and colonial discourse. Restricting the episode to Ireland obfuscates the larger context of colonization in which Joyce operates. But, "Eumaeus" is a (re)presentation of how these discourses operate that is not necessarily a critique. As I demonstrate throughout this chapter, Joyce's exposure of social constructions relating to primitivism, class, and sexuality indicates that language in "Eumaeus" is not an "historical given." It is historically produced and malleable.

Murphy's discharge papers lead to questions about the places he has encountered while sailing around the world; both a jarvey in the shelter and Murphy himself frame these interactions outside Ireland and England as "queer." After Murphy lists different places he has been - the Red Sea, China, the Americas, Stockholm, the Black Sea, the Dardanelles, Russia - a jarvey says, "You seen queer sights, don't be talking" (16.464). Apparently in agreement with this assessment, Murphy responds, "I seen queer things too, ups and downs" (465-6). As with the use of "gay" and "fag" in the episode,⁷ it appears that Joyce is deliberately playing with the shift in meaning in these terms to a specifically sexualized context, another example of the intense ambivalence of signification in "Eumaeus." As Colleen Lamos notes, the term queer "has for centuries denoted a 'strange, odd, peculiar' person 'of questionable character, suspicious, dubious,' used especially in Ireland and in nautical contexts" (Lamos 318n20). The mobilization of "queer" in this context thus links Ireland, mariner traditions, and non-normative sexuality.

After imitating a crocodile biting the fluke off an anchor by exaggeratedly biting down on his quid of tobacco, Murphy passes around a commercially produced colonial postcard as proof of one of the "queer" things he has seen, supposedly cannibalism in South America: "And I seen maneaters in Peru that eats corpses and the livers of horses. Look here. Here they are. A friend of mine sent me" (16.470-1). In addition to the disconnect between Murphy signaling Peru and the postcard reading "*Choza de Indios. Beni, Bolivia*," he claims the postcard was sent to him, not

⁷ In addition to the term "queer" in this passage, the word "gay" appears twice in the episode. When reading about Dignam's funeral in the newspaper, Bloom thinks that it "was anything but a gay sendoff" (16.1247). When thinking about a young man named O'Callaghan, Bloom mentions "other gay doings when rotto" (1187). "Fag" usually appears in reference to Stephan being drunk and tired: "all together too fagged out" and "fagged out" (189, 1706). When Bloom tries to convince Stephan not to walk to Sandycove, he states, "Simply fag out there for nothing" (251). After returning from his outdoor micturition, Murphy was "picking up the scent of the fagend of the song," which includes a line about "beef as salt as Lot's wife's arse" (971, 980).

purchased by him during his travels as a mariner (474).⁸ The image displays women filtered through the colonial gaze: “a group of savage women in striped loincloths, squatted, blinking, suckling, frowning, sleeping amid a swarm of infants (there must have been quite a score of them) outside some primitive shanties of osier” (475-8). This description delivered by the narrative voice strips the image of specificity – the elements out of place that are supposed to signal Murphy’s fraudulence – by producing the people through primitivist tropes: the women are “savage” and therefore in no way “civilized,” the material products in the image are “primitive” and thus not technologically sophisticated in a western sense, and the numerous children are a “swarm,” which attempts to dehumanize them and their progenitors.

Rather than depicting an actual or staged instance of cannibalism, the sought after and feared “ocular proof,” the colonial postcard implies the practice through its primitivist, touristic framing. As Jennifer Levine writes, the postcard in this scene represents a convergence of racialized and sexualized discourses: “Here the gaze of misogyny, overlapped with the gaze of racism, translates the stereotype of a woman feeding her young into the spectacle of a woman savagely feeding *on* her young” (Levine 293, emphasis in original). However, the image also contains the implication that the babies are savagely feeding on the women; the “maneaters” may be the children. Murphy’s continued description of these projected cannibals (the women or the babies), apparently for the edification of the men in the shelter, introduces gendered indeterminacy: “Cuts off their diddies when they can’t bear no more children. See them sitting

⁸ In the context of Murphy’s narrative abilities, it has been argued that “His power is so acute that he can produce a commercially produced postcard as corroborating evidence for his *personal* story and have it be accepted by all present as valid proof of his claims” (Wilson 294, emphasis in original). This condition is not actually surprising because postcards are frequently utilized as proof of having-been-there. The discrepancy here is between sending and receiving. Murphy is claiming his friend’s travels as his own through the narrative built around the postcard. The acceptance of his story has less to do with the sailor’s narrative abilities than the prevalence and force of primitivism – what “everyone knows” already about “savages.”

there stark ballocknaked eating a dead horse's liver raw" (16.480-1). Murphy combines a female secondary sex characteristic, reproduction, and male sexual anatomy on the bodies of the women. This sexual conflation reflects the cultural conflation of Peruvian and Bolivians. The "savagery" of the assumed cannibalism is reinforced by the women's removal of their own breasts to protect themselves from their "cannibalistic" children.

Murphy offers up the postcard and his narrative about cannibalism for consumption by the other men. Passing around the postcard of "savage" women in the cabman's shelter follows "a time-honored, homosocial ritual of men exchanging women" that Bloom participates in later by showing Stephan a photo of Molly (Lamos 249). However, the colonial postcard produces the space for male homosocial bonding through primitivism instead of sexuality. While Stephan is expected by Bloom to find Molly's "heaving *embonpoint*" attractive, Murphy does not display the postcard so that the other men may be aroused by the women (16.1468). Rather, it is their abjection of the women that facilitates their homosociality. The touristic gaze displaces the sexualized gaze. With the indeterminately queer signs that proliferate around the sailor, this displacement indicates that Murphy offers up not only the postcard and his narratives for the men's consumption but also his own body.

The postcard does not confirm Murphy's claims about having seen such a "queer" sight, but the image and his stories do confirm his understanding of and participation in primitivism. The postcard serves as "proof" of his travels because the amalgamation of primitivist tropes that surrounds it matches the position of the colonial gaze that structures the image. Cultural specificity is overshadowed, and rendered immaterial, by the broad signifiers of "savagery" and "cannibalism." Malek Alloula writes, "The postcard is everywhere, covering all the colonial space, immediately available to the tourist, the soldier, the colonist. It is at once their poetry and

their glory captured for ages; it is also their pseudoknowledge of the colony” (4). The constructed image of the postcard is produced as factual, as “knowledge” about the colonized. The image and Murphy’s discussion of it demonstrate the circular, self-affirming logic of the colonial postcard – “savages” really are like *this*. The sailor narrativizes the discrepancies and elisions of primitivist discourse.

When the postcard reaches Bloom, the text rather than the image induces his short impression of a detective. It is addressed to “*Tarjeta Postal, Señor A Boudin, Galeria Becche, Santiago, Chile*. There was no message evidently, as he took particular notice” (16.489-90). As Jennifer Levine explains, the name and address are “linguistically improbable. The sequence begins and ends by flagging ‘Spanishness.’ Yet the name ‘Boudin’ is not just typically French; it is impossible in Spanish....Similarly ‘Becche,’ its double ‘cc’ followed by ‘h,’ disallows it as Spanish but marks it as Italian” (283). Whether or not Bloom is aware of this conflation of Romance languages, the different names and the postcard lead him to think more about travel, specifically tourist travel, than about Murphy’s potential fraudulence: “having detected a discrepancy between his name...and the fictitious addressee of the missive which made him nourish some suspicions of our friend’s *bona fides* nevertheless it reminded him in a way of a longcherished plan he meant to one day realise some Wednesday or Saturday of travelling to London *via* long sea not to say that he had ever travelled extensively to any great extent” (16.494-501). The sailor quickly drops from Bloom’s mind as he thinks about travelling to London, scoping out a potential concert tour along the way that would include Molly, the lack of travelling opportunities for average people, and tourist options in Ireland. Bloom laments, “the man in the street...was debarred from seeing more of the world they lived in instead of being always and ever cooped up” (16.540-3). Bloom concludes that “uptodate tourist travelling was as

yet merely in its infancy,” the progress of tourism following in the wake of colonial expansion (564). While Bloom does not mention any locations besides London and Ireland, his long rumination on tourism demonstrates the similar structures between the colonial gaze and the touristic gaze because these thoughts immediately follow the primitivist representation of Bolivians in Murphy’s postcard.

This method of representing the structure of primitivist discourse, particularly its subordination of specificity to a marker of difference and “inferiority,” is not exclusive to “Eumaeus” in *Ulysses*. A fictitious skit from the *United Irishman* read out by the Citizen in “Cyclops” utilizes inaccurate labels and incongruous descriptions alongside generalized primitivist tropes to represent a visit to England by an African leader. It is appropriate that the Citizen, modeled after Michael Cusack, delivers this representation of primitivist discourse. Cusack founded the Gaelic Athletic Association in 1884; this organization, which attempted to revive Irish sports, is an example the internalized primitivism of the Celtic Revival. The GAA looked to Ireland’s past for strength to resist British imperialism, and Cusack “worked to athleticize an Ireland he found emasculated and impoverished by colonialism” (Culleton 217).⁹ This laudatory or idealized primitivism attempted to resist primitivist tropes applied to the Irish by the British, which were similar in structure to the discourses projected onto other colonized peoples.¹⁰ In an indirect manner, this passage thus displays both idealized and denunciatory

⁹ Claire A. Culleton describes the primitivism that surrounds Joyce’s representation of the Citizen: “The primitivism evident in the Citizen’s nostalgia for the glories of ancient Irish athletics and mythical athletes, a primitivism encoded in the way he mourns and eulogizes them, challenges not only the virtues of overdetermined, gigantic athleticism extolled by Cusack and his organization, but also critiques the exacting demands of typical GAA injunctions” (223).

¹⁰ In a discussion about the similarities of images of “primitiveness” employed in colonial discourse, Sinéad Garrigan Mattar states, “This was nowhere more the case than in Ireland, where for centuries English accounts of the natives had focused on the supposed savageries of their manners and customs. Sexual lewdness and promiscuity, violence, laziness, and

primitivism, but through the (re)presentation of the disregard for specificity, the lines of similarity between the Irish and colonized Africans are artificially severed.

The Citizen is prompted to read out the article when someone references the visit of a “Zulu chief,” although the newspaper does not label him as such (12.1510). The “skit” describes the visit of “His Majesty the Alaki of Abeakuta...to tender to His Majesty the heartfelt thanks of British traders for the facilities afforded them in his dominions” (12.1515-17). As Gifford notes, “Abeakuta was a province in western Nigeria; the Alaki was the equivalent of the sultan of a small state. He was not a Zulu” (Gifford 365).¹¹ This discrepancy operates in a similar manner to Murphy’s confusion of Peruvians and Bolivians. The Alaki, who is called a “dusky potentate,” is said to treasure an illuminated bible given to him “by the white chief woman, the great squaw Victoria” (12.1518-9, 1524-5). In addition to illustrating the link between colonial expansion and missionary activity, this passage includes explicit racialization. From the Alaki’s perspective, the late queen is depicted through stereotypical language associated with Native Americans, not Africans. The Alaki here appropriates the colonial practice of labeling all non-Europeans as “Indians.” He turns the geo-discursive displacement of representations of cannibalism, tattooing, and other “savage” practices constructed by the colonizer against the Empress of India. The Alaki then drinks a toast “from the skull of his immediate predecessor in the dynasty of Kakachakachak” and executes “a charming old Abeakutic wardance, in the course of which he swallowed several knives and forks” (12.1527-8, 1531-2). The passage ends with a representation of African “savagery” and the Alaki performing a “wardance” that is trivialized and projected into the past through the description “charming old.” This is cast as an

unconvertible paganism were all variously portrayed as examples of the excesses of a race whom it was England’s duty to rein in and reign over” (Garrigan Mattar 11).

¹¹ Gifford notes that the *United Irishman* did print skits like this, but not this specific one. Also, the Alaki was visiting England in the summer of 1904 (Gifford 365).

ethnographic performance that appears to mobilize the history of the sideshow with the inclusion of swallowing cutlery.

While D.B. Murphy employs different primitivist tropes with abandon, Leopold Bloom in “Eumaeus” rigorously, and rather explicitly, maintains the mimetic link between geographical location and cultural or national characteristics through a discourse of climate and types. Murphy’s stories occur in different parts of the world, but Bloom focuses on Europe, particularly Italy and Spain. The altercation involving Italians haggling over money that Bloom and Stephan hear as they enter the cabman’s shelter initiates Bloom’s discussion of types, while Murphy’s tall tales seem to inspire a different but related strain of primitivist discourse in Bloom. After detecting discrepancies in Murphy’s stories by approaching them from a position of positivist factuality, Bloom overcompensates by attempting to demonstrate a direct, causal relationship between place and type. As he says to Stephan, “I for one certainly believe that climate accounts for character” (16.880).

Bloom produces the Italians and Spanish as types whose national characteristics are determined by climate, by living in what could be considered the south of Europe. He refers to the “southern glamour” that he feels surrounds the Italian language, “those love vendettas of the south,” and the “passionate abandon of the south” (16.353, 1061, 1409-10). After Murphy’s story about a fatal stabbing in Trieste, Bloom thinks, “that stab in the back touch was quite in keeping with those italianos,” whom he describes as “icecreamers and friers in the fish way” (875-7). He also seems to believe that Italians hunt and eat domestic cats. He repeatedly refers to his wife Molly, who is from Gibraltar, as a “Spanish type,” which he describes as, “Quite dark, regular brunette, black” (879). His persistence in producing Molly as fitting a “Spanish type” allows Bloom to show Stephan a professional photograph of his wife. Although usually juxtaposed with

Murphy passing around his colonial postcard, these two actions operate through different racialized discourses – unspecified primitivism and rigorously maintained typification. Murphy lets the postcard make the rounds of the cabman’s shelter, but Bloom only shows the picture of Molly to Stephan. Within the more generalized homosocial ritual of men exchanging women, Bloom attempts to use Molly to mediate his homosocial bonding with Stephan.

Bloom’s discussion of climate and character is not surprising in itself, as this is a rather standard primitivist discourse. In relation to Murphy’s utilization of primitivism and the indeterminately queer signs that cluster around the sailor, however, Bloom’s reaction takes a different cast. The lack of specificity in Murphy’s stories becomes intertwined with the ambiguous sexuality that surrounds him. Bloom’s desire for strict accuracy and mimetic relations between character and place attempts to ward off Murphy’s sexualized indeterminacy, which, for Bloom, blurs the false barrier erected between the homosocial and the homoerotic in relations between men. As Eve Sedgwick states, “To draw the ‘homosocial’ back into the orbit of desire, of the potentially erotic... is to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual – a continuum whose visibility, for men, in our society, is radically disrupted” (*Between Men* 1-2).¹² Murphy’s potentially queer sexuality, performed in the homosocial space of the cabman’s shelter, removes or blurs the false barrier for Bloom; he can see the continuum linking his homosocial bonding with Stephan Dedalus with his potential

¹² Sedgwick traces an intersection between imperial discourse and homosexuality in *Between Men* that is similar to my argument about the connection between primitivist discourse, climate, character, and homoeroticism in “Eumaeus.” See 182-4. In a discussion of Sir Richard Burton’s conclusions about male homosexuality in the “Terminal Essay” of his *Thousand Nights and a Night*, Sedgwick states, “the most exploratory of Victorians drew the borders of male homosexual culture to include exclusively, and almost exhaustively, the Mediterranean and the economically exploitable Third World” (*Between Men* 183).

homoerotic desire for the younger man.¹³ If Bloom's anxiety derives from a fear of being thought homosexual, his interactions with Murphy stem from homosexual panic.¹⁴ His actions do not necessarily reestablish the false barrier, however, as he creates opportunities to make physical contact with Stephan and convinces him to accompany him to 7 Eccles Street, where they engage in a pissing contest in "Ithaca." The element that draws attention to the false barrier between the homosocial and the homoerotic is not the specific tattoo designs on Murphy's chest, but the very fact that he is tattooed.

Tattooing as a (Homo)sexual Experience

As Bloom passes the postcard on to Stephan, Murphy continues telling stories to all present, jumping from China to Italy before asking for his documents back. His short narrative about China ends with the only use of a racialized epithet in the episode: "Cooks rats in your soup, he appetisingly added, the chinks does" (16.573). It seems that outright racialization is not met with the same curiosity as unspecified primitivism by the men in the shelter: "Possibly perceiving an expression of dubiosity on their faces the globetrotter went on, adhering to his adventures" (574-5). While brandishing his own knife, Murphy describes witnessing a murder at Trieste, Italy in which a man was stabbed in the back: "Chuk! It went into his back up to the butt" (582). In addition to the phallic signification of the knife, this description relates to the

¹³ The narrative voice suggestively refers to this potential homoerotic desire: "The queer suddenly things he popped out with attracted the elder man who was several years the other's senior" (16.1567-8).

¹⁴ Colleen Lamos sees homosexual panic operating in "Eumaeus," not at a personal level but discursively: "this fear is not reducible to the personal anxiety of any particular character but operates on the discursive level to disrupt the certainty of sexual identity and obscure the objects of desire. The proliferation of the signs of homosexuality in 'Eumaeus' thus signifies not a determinate sexual orientation but the indeterminacy of homophobia" (248). While indeterminacy structures the representation of sexuality, Bloom is the only person in the cabman's shelter who is suspicious of Murphy. For Eve Sedgwick's discussion of homosexual panic, see *Between Men* 83-96, *Epistemology of the Closet* 19-21 and 182-212.

episode's focus on the anus and homoeroticism through the ambivalence around the word "butt" in this context and the physical act of penetration.¹⁵ The phallic and potentially homoerotic valences of this murder story should be read in conjunction with the passages about Murphy's tattoos because what he says and performs here ("That's a good bit of steel, repeated he, examining his formidable *stiletto*") can help elucidate one of his elisions, usually passed over in the critical literature, when asked questions about his tattoos (585, emphasis in original).

Discourses about tattooing cluster around Murphy's exposure of his tattoos and proliferate over the course of the episode. His next performative narration derives from the tattoos on his chest to include the tattoo artist Antonio and his violent death. After answering a question about his son's age in an uncomfortable manner, Murphy opens his shirt to scratch his chest "on which was to be seen an image tattooed in blue Chinese ink intended to represent an anchor" (16.667-9). While the other two tattoos are more singular designs, this anchor is a traditional mariner tattoo. After noticing the men in the cabman's shelter looking at the anchor tattoo, Murphy opens his shirt more "so that on top of the timehonoured symbol of the mariner's hope and rest they had a full view of the figure 16 and a young man's sideface looking frowningly rather" (16.674-6). This action displays the exhibitionism commonly associated with the tattooed body, which the narrative voice signals when Murphy rather needlessly identifies his tattoos as such: "Tattoo, the exhibitor explained" (677). Instead of using his sea tales to gain and control the attention of the other men, Murphy positions his own body as the object of their gazes, shifting the focus away from the bodies of the "savage" women of the postcard. He also includes the absent body of Antonio in this orbit, both through the self-portrait tattoo and the description of the artist's death. Murphy's tattoos reconfigure the rituals of homosocial exchange

¹⁵ For discussions of the anal fixation and "bottoms" of "Eumaeus," see Lawrence 370-1 and Levine 289-90.

in the episode; rather than the colonial postcard or the professional photograph of Molly, his own tattooed body as text becomes the medium through which male bonding is performed.

The specifically homoerotic or queer connotations of these tattoos are usually located in the number 16,¹⁶ Murphy's silence about the meaning of the number, and his repeated identification of Antonio as a Greek. As stated earlier, too much emphasis should not be placed on the potentially queer connotations of the 16 tattoo because Gifford's annotation has not been confirmed. Murphy's lack of verbal response to the question about this tattoo does, however, seem to suggest that it contains a queer valence: "with some sort of a half smile for a brief duration only in the direction of the questioner about the number" (16.697-9). As Hugh Kenner notes, "Antonio is as plausible a name for a Greek as Dedalus for an Irishman" (Kenner 130). Colleen Lamos suggests that Antonio's "emphatic Greekness has to do with nonracial characteristics associated with the number sixteen" (Lamos 250). While I would agree that the insistence on the tattoo artist's Greekness relates to his sexuality rather than his ethnicity, this connotation is not necessarily confirmed by the numeric tattoo, if 16 indeed referred to homosexuality generally. Murphy's identification of Antonio as Greek certainly links to Buck Mulligan's warning to Stephan about Bloom: "O, I fear me, he is Grecker than the Greeks" (9.614-5). The cliché about the "Greek vice" that mobilizes these passages may be flattened as a representation of a general homosexual relationship, but it always contains within its orbit of signification a relationship between an older man and a younger man. This is the pederastic-

¹⁶ For the importance of the number 16 to *Ulysses* within "Eumaeus," "Circe," and "Ithaca" and specifically to the relationality between Bloom and Stephan, see Levine 286-9.

pedagogic model, the type of relationship referred to in the phrase “the love that dare not speak its name” that Oscar Wilde defended in his first criminal trial.¹⁷

The condition that Antonio was the tattoo artist who inscribed Murphy’s chest provides a strong link in the connection between tattooing and homosexuality that critics have identified, though the actual tattooing operation has not been discussed in this context. Murphy’s silence about the numeric tattoo and his half smile in the direction of the questioner is frequently highlighted, but there is another question that he does not answer that also relates to the representation of sexuality in the episode. After Murphy exposes all three tattoos and identifies Antonio both as the artist and as a “Greek,” the first question someone asks him relates not to the tattoo designs themselves but to the process of their application: “Did it hurt much doing it? one asked the sailor” (16.680). Instead of answering this question, Murphy prepares to demonstrate his ability to change the expression of the portrait tattoo by grabbing the skin around it. The question certainly relates to the physical sensations of undergoing the tattooing operation, which always involves some pain no matter the method used or the part of the body inscribed. It is a rather standard inquiry posed to people with tattoos by those without such body modifications. Why does Murphy not answer this question about pain? When placed in context with the question about the numeric tattoo, the phallic imagery, and the anal fixations scattered throughout the episode, the question about pain appears to relate both to the tattooing operation and to penetrative sex between two men. As with Murphy’s other silences and elisions and the half smile he flashes, the conflation of tattooing and non-normative sexuality here is operative because of the ambiguity and indeterminacy that surround and structure it.

¹⁷ For an analysis of Wilde’s defense of the pederastic model, see Foldy, *The Trials of Oscar Wilde*, 117-122.

The “Eumaeus” episode implicitly codes the tattooing operation itself, not just one or two of the specific designs on Murphy’s chest, as a form of homoerotic experience. As mentioned earlier, Albert Parry argues that the tattooing operation is a form of homosexual experience. This linking of tattooing and homosexuality is an example of the proliferation of discourse about sex in the 19th century that Foucault examines in his argument against the repression hypothesis.¹⁸ At the historical moment that *Ulysses* occurs – June 16, 1904 – the homosexualized discourse about tattooing was in the process of its formation. In a similar manner to primitivism in the episode, the ambivalent, multifarious depiction of this interpretation of tattooing through silence and evasion is a (re)presentation of the state of the discourse. The open but oblique secret of homosexuality in “Eumaeus,” especially as it is represented through tattooing, exemplifies Foucault’s understanding of the production of sexuality: “What is peculiar to modern societies, in fact, is not that they consigned sex to a shadow existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it *ad infinitum*, while exploiting it as *the secret*” (Foucault 35, emphasis in original). “Eumaeus” hints at the sexualized elements of tattooing with an indeterminate but knowing wink.

In *Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art as Practised Among the Natives of the United States*, Parry initially approaches tattooing through primitivist discourse, repeatedly claiming that tattooed people are unaware of their “true” motivations for body modification. He relies on the projection of unconscious drives or desires, which he occasionally relates to elements of psychoanalytic theory, most often what he refers to as the “castration complex.” Parry begins his study with a short summary of the interpretation of tattooing by Cesare Lombroso, the Italian criminologist largely responsible for the criminological understanding of tattoos: “Professor

¹⁸ See *History of Sexuality Volume 1* 3-49.

Lombroso wrote that people of the modern age and civilized countries tattoo themselves in an atavistic reversion to their primitive criminal type. But only a small portion of the tattooed today are criminals or even semi-criminals. And primitiveness does not necessarily involve crime. With these qualifications we may accept Lombroso's theory of atavism as an important point" (Parry 1). Although he disassociates criminality from atavism, Parry still views tattooing as a "primitive" practice that represents a temporal reversion, based on a model of teleological human development, when inscribed within the skin of a person considered "modern" and "civilized."

Parry circumvents the troubling proximity of markers of both "savagery" and "civility" on one body through recourse to dreams. He locates Lombroso's conception of primitivism in dreams: "atavism *is* here, in tattooing. Man's dreams are his leaps back to the primitive, to his childhood, to his past of untold ages. Tattooing is mostly the recording of dreams, whether or not the tattooed are aware of it" (Parry 2, emphasis in original). He then links primitivism and sexuality in tattooing through dreams, claiming that most dreams represent the "repressed sexual world fighting its way to the surface. Thus we should expect that tattooing, the recording of dreams, would be of decidedly sexual character" (2). Rather than immediately discussing tattoo designs of an obviously sexual nature, such as naked women, Parry first describes the tattooing operation as a sexual experience: "The very process of tattooing is essentially sexual. There are the long, sharp needles. There is the liquid poured into the pricked skin. There are the two participants of the act, one active, the other passive. There is the curious marriage of pleasure and pain" (2). Although the analogy may require it, Parry seems to detect a rather high level of violence in sexual intercourse. The electric tattooing needles are understood as phallic; the ink itself is compared to semen, which seems to position the "pricked skin," wherever on the body,

as comparable to a vagina or anus; the active/passive and pleasure/pain binaries encode distinct power relations within the tattooing operation.

Parry was far from alone in understanding the tattooing operation as a sexual experience. This interpretation of tattooing as a sexualized penetration directly affected a 1920s gang-rape case in Boston that Parry discusses. The prosecutor desisted from pressing charges when he discovered that the defendant had a butterfly tattoo on her leg: “Though technically a virgin before the rape, the girl was, in effect, accused of being a person of previous sexual experience – because of her tattoo” (Parry 4). The sexualization of the tattooing operation is not a discursive formation that has no material effects in the world; in this example, it allowed rapists to avoid conviction. Also, as Juniper Ellis states, “By this reasoning, moreover, it would not be possible to rape a sexually experienced woman” (Ellis 163).¹⁹ Through metonymic substitution, a woman’s skin over her entire body becomes analogous to the vagina. Regardless of the specific tattoo design - a butterfly, a heart, an anchor, the number 16 - the very act of undergoing the tattooing operation could be understood as a sexual experience during the early 20th century.

Perhaps because most of the tattoo artists in Europe and America were men, with the notable exceptions of Maud Wagner, Mildred Hull, Jessie Knight, Ruth Weyland, Nell Bowen, and “other circus women [who] moonlighted as tattooists or became full time artists,” Parry frequently discusses the “homosexual character of tattooing” in the context of men’s tattooing (Mifflin 31, Parry 21).²⁰ He claims that tattooing is a “form of homosexual experience” (22). The implication is that men who submit to the tattooing operation “are homosexual or seek at the least a homosexual experience” (Ellis 163). In addition to the sexualized act of receiving a tattoo,

¹⁹ For other examples of sexuality read into western tattooing, see Ellis 162-4.

²⁰ For an overview of early 20th century Euro-American female tattoo artists, see Mifflin 30-42, Osterud 26.

Parry claims that “Tattoos openly admitting and even extolling their perversion are more frequent among male homosexuals” (26-7). If Parry’s statement is accurate (he provides only one decontextualized example and frames queer sexuality as “perversion”), and if the number 16 did indicate homosexuality, then Murphy’s tattoo might be such a sign, though an oblique one. Considering the highly sexualized interpretation of the tattooing operation itself, however, the determinate status of the numeric tattoo would only serve to reinforce the general signification of “queerness” that any tattoo on Murphy’s body could be made to emit.

Similar to the male-dominated space of the cabman’s shelter, the tattoo parlor in the early 20th century can be understood as a public homosocial space in which the rituals of male bonding, with their implicit valence of homoeroticism, were performed. A group of young men collectively receiving tattoos, perhaps the same or similar design, is an example of such bonding rituals. In the context of a young man who said that his tattoo “was done in company with a crowd who ‘sort of forced me into it,’” Parry claims, “It was almost a seduction and it is from this implied homosexual seduction that the ego of the average young man recoils” (34). The ambiguity in this statement – it is unclear whether Parry thinks the young man was “seduced” by the crowd or by the tattoo artist – indicates the overlapping and non-exclusive valences of homosocial bonding and homoerotic desire that undergird Parry’s argument for the (homo)sexualized discourse about tattooing.

In most instances, however, Parry locates the non-normative sexuality or eroticism of the tattooing operation in the physical relationality between the tattoo artist and the person being tattooed. In an attempt to link reported guilt about tattoos, the psychoanalytic castration

anxiety,²¹ and anger expressed by fathers when their sons are tattooed, Parry states, “In the first place the tattooer is an older man who through the symbolized needle and tattooing fluid enters into a suggestive relationship with the youth” (Parry 35).²² The tattooing needle/phallus and ink/semen analogy reappears, but it is now cast as specifically homoerotic and with a distinct age difference between the two participants. The skin is again produced as a sexualized barrier; when another man crosses this socially constructed boundary, the action becomes a penetration. Parry does not necessarily view the “passive” subject, the person being tattooed, as possessing full volition: “The fathers are incensed not at the barbarism of the operation but, however little they suspect it, at the homosexual, seductive elements of it. Darkly they feel as if the tattooers had raped their sons” (36). The primitivist understanding of tattooing, signaled by the term “barbarism,” remains intimately connected with this sexualized, homoerotic discourse.

This interpretation of the tattooing operation indicates an intense anxiety about the breaching of the body’s boundaries. Much of Parry’s argument about sexuality is structured through quotations and examples from Walter Bromberg, whose published work about sexuality and tattooing appeared in 1935.²³ It seems that Parry and Bromberg worked in tandem to a certain extent, as Bromberg’s research was conducted in 1933, the year Parry published *Tattoo*.²⁴

²¹ In his discussion of the “castration complex,” Parry eventually relies on the overdetermination of his sexualized interpretation: “tattooing is too shot through with the symbolism of sexuality to have no relation to the unconscious fear that is represented in every man by the castration complex” (Parry 37).

²² Bromberg states, “Another instance of the activity of the homosexual factor is expressed in the very symbolism of the tattooing needle and the fluid, the infliction of pain by an older man (i.e., the tattooer)” (229).

²³ Bromberg, Walter. “Psychological Motives for Tattooing.” *Archives of Neurology and Psychiatry* 33 (1935): 228-32.

²⁴ Despite the numerous quotations from Bromberg in *Tattoo*, he does not appear in Parry’s bibliography. Bromberg’s “Psychological Motives in Tattooing” was published in *Archives of Neurology and Psychiatry* in 1935 as one of many articles under the heading “New York Academy of Medicine, Section of Neurology and Psychiatry and Section of Dermatology and

Bromberg heavily stresses the “homosexual” motivation in male tattooing, discussing the expression of “latent homosexual feelings in tattooing” and the “eroticization of the skin through tattooing” (Bromberg 229, 231). For Parry and Bromberg, tattooing becomes a sexualized penetration by establishing the skin, usually “male” skin, as a false barrier that should not be breached or pierced from a masculine, heteronormative position. Parry and Bromberg view those who allow their skin to be “penetrated” by anatomical penises or symbolic phalluses as feminized, which is interpreted as “homosexual” desire in a man, though the tattoo artist seems to remain masculine because his body is not penetrated. Queerness and femininity are associated with passivity. Skin is erected here as a false barrier that attempts to maintain sexualized and gendered difference as defined by patriarchy and heteronormativity.

I argue that the homoerotic interpretation of tattooing relies on the distinction between the male and female sexed bodies that Elizabeth Grosz delineates in *Volatile Bodies* (1994). As Grosz writes, the phallicization of the male body is a process “of subordinating the rest of the body to the valorized functioning of the penis” (200-1). Opposed to this male body, the female body is associated with flow and seepage. This distinction supports Claudia Benthien’s argument that, “in terms of cultural history (in torture, medicine, and sexual crimes), the skin of the woman is pierced while that of the man is stripped off,” which is structured by “the narcissistic male fantasy of an invulnerable, impenetrable, phallic body” (Benthien 93, 136). This construction of the sexed skin, the “surface” and boundary of the body, undergirds the coding of the tattooing operation as a penetration. Grosz writes, “Perhaps it is not after all flow in itself that a certain

Syphilis, Joint Meeting, April 10, 1934” (221). It is a publication of a paper delivered at a conference. The article ends with the following note: “(The slides of tattoo designs which are demonstrated were taken from a book by Albert Parry [Tattoo, New York, Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1933])” (Bromberg 232). These conditions and Parry’s reliance on Bromberg with respect to the homosexualized interpretation of tattooing leads me to conclude that their works rather directly informed each other.

phallicized masculinity abhors but the idea that flow moves or can move in two-way or indeterminate directions that elicits horror, the possibility of being not only an active agent in the transmission of flow but also a passive receptacle” (201). For Parry and Bromberg, men who submit to the tattooing operation no longer possess phallicized skin because they open their bodies to the flow of the tattoo ink/semen. The anxious maintenance of phallicized masculinity asserts itself so forcefully that it overrides the mechanics of the tattooing operation. With the electric tattoo machine, the method Parry and Bromberg discuss, the needles do not penetrate the body; it is more accurate to say they scrape the skin.

The sexuality that Albert Parry positions as operative in tattooing is represented through silence, evasion, and incomplete phrases in “Eumaeus.” After Murphy is asked the suggestive question about the pain involved in tattooing, the narrative voice states, “That worthy, however, was busily engaged in collecting round the. Someway in his. Squeezing or” (16. 681-2).

Although it is eventually clear that the sailor can pull the skin around Antonio’s “sideface” tattoo to produce different facial expressions, these half sentences elicit momentary indeterminacy with respect to what Murphy is collecting or squeezing. By juxtaposing the identification of Antonio as Greek, the question about penetrative pain, and these ambiguous actions, the text implies an indeterminate correlation between tattooing and homoeroticism, specifically between two men. It seems that Bloom understands the tattooing operation as breaching a sexualized barrier, for it is consistent with his general relationship with skin. As Maud Ellmann writes, “It is his reluctance to break skin that inhibits Bloom from sexual intercourse, because he fears the act of penetration as a rupture of the bodily envelope” (Ellmann 165). Antonio inscribed a representation of his own face on Murphy’s chest, which seems to signal an intimate relationship between them, similar to someone having a tattoo of the name of his or her lover. The combination of the

tattooing operation encoded as a homoerotic experience defined through the act of penetration and the insistence on “Greekness” produces the action of Antonio tattooing Murphy as a cipher for penetrative sex between two men. Murphy’s tattooed body, circulated among the men in the cabman’s shelter, functions both as the medium of male bonding rituals and as the indeterminate sign and site of the continuum linking homosocial desire and homoerotic desire.

Class and Criminality

The tattoo exhibition scene and other passages in “Eumaeus” include aspects of tattooing discourses in addition to the (homo)sexualized interpretation. The connections between tattooing and gender, mariner traditions, class divisions, criminality, and identification appear in the episode. Although tattoos are indelible marks at specific sites on the human body, the manipulation of Antonio’s “sideface” demonstrates that tattoos are not static images but dynamic inscriptions that can shift in both specular appearance and signification. While Antonio’s baseline (tattooed) expression is “frowningly rather,” Murphy can alter it by pulling or moving the skin around it: “There he is cursing the mate. And there he is now, he added, the same fellow, pulling the skin with his fingers, some special knack evidently, and he laughing at a yarn” (16.683-5). Ariela Freedman states, “The tattoo, this indelible marking on the skin, is notable both for its plasticity and its open-endedness” (Freedman 464). As Murphy is manipulating the tattoo of Antonio, he sighs while “looking down on his manly chest” (690). His chest is “manly” precisely because it bears tattoos. Although more women were being tattooed during the late-19th and early-20th centuries, the tattoo was still usually gendered as a masculine sign.²⁵ Just before the prostitute walks away from the shelter, she was “viewing with evident amusement the group

²⁵ In a discussion of Melville and tattooing, Jennifer Putzi writes, “tattooing was indeed a ‘masculine sign,’ one that usually marked men as sailors, sometimes marked them as lower class, but *always* marked them as male” (Putzi 26, italics in original).

of gazers round skipper Murphy's nautical chest" (725-6). As sailors were the first group to return to Europe and America from the Pacific with tattoos, the association between mariners and tattooing in the west has been operative since the cultural exchange. Murphy's anchor tattoo, his "nautical chest," reinforces this connection.

If Joyce consulted the entry for "Tattooing" in the Eleventh Edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1911), he would have read descriptions of tattooing among Arabs, Native Americans, Fijians, Inuit, Marquesans, Maori, Ainu, and Japanese. Through an assumption of teleological cultural development, the entry codes tattooing as a "savage" practice: "Though the word is Polynesian, the custom appears to have been almost universal, but tends to disappear before the spread of civilization" (451). Euro-American tattooing practices are not mentioned until the last paragraph: "Under the influence of civilization tattooing is losing its ethnological character, and has become, in Europe at least, an eccentricity of soldiers and sailors and of many among the lower and often criminal classes of great cities" (452). The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* obfuscates aristocratic tattooing, restricting the practice to the urban lower class. Through its overview of "primitive" tattooing and the reference to Euro-American criminality, the entry alludes to the discursive structure of the criminological interpretation of tattooing.²⁶

During one of his suspicious glances at Murphy, Leopold Bloom interprets the sailor's specular appearance through a criminological stance that implicitly mobilizes Cesare Lombroso's connection between tattoos and criminality. As Nikki Sullivan writes, "Lombroso claimed that the criminal was identifiable by regressive features such as a small skull or large jaws and secondary characteristics such as tattoos, all of which signify atavism, and a retarded

²⁶ This connection is further reinforced by the two suggestions for further reading at the end of the entry: *Les Tatouages* (1881) by the French criminologist Alexandre Lacassagne and *Moko or Maori Tattooing* (1896) by Horatio Gordon Robley.

developmental association between criminals and species of a ‘lower order’” (Sullivan 24). It seems that Bloom attempts to detect positive signs of Murphy’s potential fraudulence or criminality since first entering the cabman’s shelter: “He had been meantime taking stock of the individual in front of him and Sherlockholmesing him up ever since he clapped eyes on him” (16.830-1). Instead of analyzing the discrepancies in the stories and postcard, he conjectures that Murphy himself committed the murder at Trieste through an analysis of the sailor’s specular appearance. Bloom assumes that Murphy has been in jail: “there was something spurious in the cut of his jib that suggested a jail delivery and it required no violent stretch of imagination to associate such a weirdlooking specimen with the oakum and treadmill fraternity” (832-5). Because this passage appears after the tattoo exhibition scene, the specular appearance that Bloom utilizes to cast Murphy as a criminal would include the tattoos on his chest. The sailor is described as a “weirdlooking specimen,” as an object to be studied with scientific detachment; he is placed under the observation of a normalizing gaze that attempts to produce knowledge about him. The nautical metaphor in this passage – “something spurious in the cut of his jib” – indicates that an element of Murphy’s specular appearance relating to his mariner profession is interpreted as a sign of criminality. This clichéd phrase partially obfuscates the tattoos as the source of Bloom’s anxiety and suspicion through the reference to a part of a sailing vessel; at the same time, it obliquely indicates the tattoos as the “spurious” element through the association of tattooing with mariners. Bloom’s conjecture about Murphy and prison functions in and through the criminological stance that views tattoos as signs of the “criminal,” the exterior of the body representing an essentialized, interior disposition.

Later in the episode, Bloom correlates sexuality, the aristocratic or upper-class tattoo fashion, and primitivism through a loose chain of association. Bloom thinks of a person named

O'Callaghan whose "mad vagaries" and "gay doings when rotto" led to him being "spirited away by a few friends...so as not to be made amenable under section two of the criminal law amendment act" (16.1187, 1191-3). As Weldon Thornton has noted, there is potential confusion here between section eleven of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, under which Oscar Wilde was convicted, and section two, which "deals with attempts to draw any woman or girl into unlawful carnal connection, or attempts to procure women for sexual purposes" (Thornton 448). The ambiguity about what form of sexuality O'Callaghan was practicing exists because "some type fonts, more common in British typography, make it impossible to distinguish between the numerals for roman numeral two and arabic numeral eleven" (Thornton 447). The potentially queer valence between these two numbers leads Bloom to perform some troubling arithmetic:

Briefly, putting two and two together, six sixteen which he pointedly turned a deaf ear to, Antonio and so forth, jockeys and esthetes and the tattoo which was all the go in the seventies or thereabouts even in the house of lords because early in life the occupant of the throne, then heir apparent, the other members of the upper ten and other high personages simply following in the footsteps of the head of state, he reflected about the errors of notorieties and crowned heads running counter to morality such as the Cornwall case a number of years before under their veneer in a way scarcely intended by nature. (16.1195-1203)

Bloom attempts to ignore the homoerotic interpretation of the tattooing operation, signaled by the inclusion of two of Murphy's tattoos, by quickly moving to the late 19th-century aristocratic fashion for tattooing. Sexuality still lurks behind these class-based body modifications. The "Cornwall case" could refer to an 1870 divorce suit in which Edward VII, then Duke of Cornwall, was called to the witness stand; Edward VII is the tattooed crown of whom Bloom

thinks. It could also allude to an 1883 case in which “two officials in Dublin Castle, named Cornwall and French were publically involved in an extensive homosexual circle.”²⁷ Tattooing becomes associated with actions “running counter to morality” and “scarcely intended by nature” through the shift from aristocratic tattooing to the “Cornwall case,” which, like the criminal amendment reference, could relate to queer sexuality.

This indeterminate link between aristocratic tattooing and non-normative sexuality can be discerned in the title of an article written by R.J. Stephen for *Harmsworth's Magazine* in 1898: “Tattooed Royalty. Queer Stories of a Queer Craze.”²⁸ Stephen lists the names of tattooed royalty, discusses the procedure and cost of tattooing, and provides descriptions of different tattoos. The majority of the photographs included in the article display examples of Japanese tattooing. Stephen seems to have garnered most of his information from the London tattoo artist Tom Riley; he refers to him as “Professor Riley” and repeatedly lauds the quality of his work. Racialized discourse appears in the article; Stephen claims, “The skill of the tattoo artist, to be realised properly and fairly, must be seen in beautiful colours on a white skin – work which is amazing” (473). This statement combines the movement of tattooing practices from cultures with darker skin tones and the association of lighter skin tones with elevated class status in its claim of high aesthetic value. Sexuality, however, is not discussed explicitly. It only appears indirectly in anecdotes about different tattoos, such as men who requested the words “deceived” or “traitress” tattooed under names of female lovers. There is also an anecdote about an English actress who had the initials “F.V.” converted to “E.W.” – her former fiancé and eventual

²⁷ Gifford 551, quoting: *The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde*. Ed. H Montgomery Hyde. New York: University Books, 1956. 382.

²⁸ Stephen, R.J. “Tattooed Royalty. Queer Stories of a Queer Craze.” *Harmsworth's Magazine* 1 (1898-9): 472-5.

husband apparently having rather conveniently similar initials (473).²⁹ These are examples of apparent infidelity in heterosexual relationships. The iteration of “queer” in the title, however, cannot be ignored, for it implicitly codes both the tattoos themselves and the fashion of royal and aristocratic tattooing as somehow mobilizing non-normative sexuality. The representation of tattooing, here specifically upper-class tattooing, as potentially queer in “Eumaeus” replicates the state of this discursive formation at the turn of the 20th century.

Bloom’s thoughts about the connection between sexual propriety and modes of dress lead to a primitivist representation of Pacific Islanders that relates to the association of sexuality, class tattooing, and primitivism in the passage. He draws a distinction between structures of sexual interaction in Europe and a place that is implicitly coded as the Pacific Islands: “she unbuttoned his and then he untied her, mind the pin, whereas savages in the cannibal islands, say, at ninety degrees in the shade not caring a continental” (16.1210-2). This comparison operates through the civilized/savage binary and standard Euro-American discourses about the Pacific, namely the overdetermined focus on the practice of “cannibalism” and the discourse of sexual availability and impropriety. Through the association of potentially queer sexuality, class-based tattooing, and primitivist discourse, this passage recalls Murphy’s colonial postcard and the exhibition of his tattoos.

²⁹ It is notable that Albert Parry indirectly garnered information from Stephen. Although R.J. Stephen’s article is not mentioned at all in *Tattoo*, many descriptions of the same tattoos appear in both works. Compare Parry 15-6 with Stephen 473 for the deceived, traitress, and initial tattoos. Parry does not provide citations for these anecdotes, but he does quote an article from the *New York Tribune* of May 28, 1899 that gives a description of a locomotive tattoo on the arm of a railroad worker (106). This newspaper article reprinted parts of Stephen’s article, giving credit to *Harmsworth’s Magazine* but not the author. It includes the above anecdotes. The *Tribune* changed the title to “Tattooed Royalty. Distinguished People Who Have Undergone Personal Decoration with the Needle.” The exclusion of “queer” apparently did not deter Parry from his (homo)sexualized interpretation of tattooing.

Similar to his interpretation of the sailor's tattoos as markers of lower-class status and criminality, Bloom's representation of the tattooing of aristocracy or royalty derives from a firmly bourgeois position. At this time, tattooing mostly seems to have been practiced by the working class and aristocracy: "tattooing as a phenomenon [was] way beyond the ken of the respectable middle classes" (Bradley 147). Bloom as a bourgeois subject approaches class-based tattooing from a position outside its embodied practice and culture. His conception of the skin as a bodily envelope also contributes to his representation of class tattooing. As Claudia Benthien delineates, the bourgeois body "is a strictly demarcated entity with an impenetrable, smooth façade. The surface of this closed body is thus marked by two-dimensionality" (38). This flat representation of human skin as the boundary of the self supports the interpretation of specular appearance as indicative of race, class, and gender.³⁰ Bloom's understanding of the bourgeois skin as an impenetrable surface allows him to read working class and aristocratic tattoos as signs relating to class status and sexuality, as well as preserving his own bourgeois body from participation in this embodied culture.

As Bloom indicates, members of European royalty initiated the upper class tattooing fashion, expanded by "other members of the upper ten and other high personages" (16.1199-1200). He refers obliquely to Edward VII receiving a tattoo in 1862 while heir apparent. As the English tattoo artist George Burchett states, "The King had acquired his first tattoo when, as Prince of Wales, he was visiting Jerusalem on the Grand Tour....The Prince chose a design incorporating the Cross of Jerusalem, which Souwan ['the famous Levantine tattooist'] duly tattooed on his forearm" (Burchett 100). Later in the 19th century, it seems that a number of

³⁰ Benthien positions this flat bourgeois skin as making the surface of the body legible: "Only when the collective imagination came to look on skin as such a two-dimensional and linear boundary surface was it possible to read the body for its individual physiognomy, its attributed race, and its spontaneous sensations and sensory expressions, as well as its diseases" (39).

European royalty were first tattooed when serving as officers in the navy early in their 20s: “The British, Russian, German and Scandinavian heirs apparent, dukes, princes and princesses were tattooed mostly while they were junketing in their respective navies” (Parry 91).³¹ For example, Edward VII’s son George V “acquired his first tattoo in early youth, when serving as a midshipman aboard H.M.S *Bacchante*” (Burchett 102). In 1881 George and his brother Prince Albert, who was also serving as a midshipman, stopped at Japan: “During their five-day shore leave, the two princes visited the studio of Horichō [a famous Japanese tattoo artist at Yokohama], where George had a dragon tattooed on his arm” (Guth 150). This dragon tattoo is a metonymic representation of Japanese culture that also relates to British mythology through the allusion to St. George. Burchett claims, “it was the wish of King Edward VII that his sons should acquire some small adornment from the hand of the great Japanese master” (Burchett 51).

The tattoo artist Horichō provides a link to Bloom through Frederick Diodati Thompson’s *In the Track of the Sun: Readings from the Diary of a Globe Trotter* (1893), which sits on Bloom’s bookshelf (17.1395-6). Horichō tattooed Thompson while the traveler was in Yokohama; he received a dragon design on his arm, which is the same type of tattoo and placement that George V received.³² With respect to Japanese tattooing, Thompson states, “Tattooing in Japan is a fine art. To the native it is now forbidden by law, but many foreigners, especially titled Englishmen, have specimens of dragons, serpents, and other strange designs worked on their arms and bodies by F.M. Harichiyo, who stands at the head of his profession in

³¹ For a list of European royalty and aristocrats who were tattooed during the late 19th century, see Parry 98.

³² This is how Thompson described being tattooed: “After tiffin I went to the studio of F.M Harichiyo and selected a design of a dragon to be tattooed on my arm. He began operations at 2 P.M. and continued working rapidly until 1 A.M., with an intermission of only one hour for dinner – ten hours of steady work from high daylight until past midnight. It was very painful, as each puncture of the skin brought blood; but the result was most satisfactory. Tuesday I spent in resting quietly, and recuperating from the effects of the tattooing” (Thompson 46).

Yokohama” (Thompson 23). The acquisition of tattoos at Japan during the late-19th century was characterized by travel and aristocracy, with an appreciation of these body modifications as an art form. In contrast to his linking of place and cultural forms while in the cabman’s shelter, in “Calypso” Bloom thinks, “Probably not a bit like it really. Kind of stuff you read: in the track of the sun” (4.99-100).³³

Upper-class tattooing retains within its orbit of signification the mariner discourse as well as the Euro-American association of tattooing with contact and interaction with cultures in the Pacific. As Christine Guth states, “Before the 1880s, Europeans associated tattooing primarily with the South Seas, India, and Burma,” but through increased contact with Japan “the practice became firmly associated with an eroticized stereotype of Japan” (Guth 152). Within the historical trajectory of Euro-Americans receiving tattoos at the Pacific Islands during the late-18th and early-19th centuries, the aristocratic tattoo also incorporates the embodied culture of Japan,³⁴ specifically through an orientalist representation. These tattoos acquired by European aristocracy destabilize orientalism because the discourse appears embedded within the body of the orientalist. The tattoo becomes a part of him, which collapses the spatial and geographic separation of the west and the Orient.

The discursive formations that undergird the connections in “Eumaeus” between class-based tattooing and primitivism can be traced in the argument of Cesare Lombroso’s article “The Savage Origin of Tattooing,”³⁵ though he does not discuss sexuality explicitly. The argument

³³ For an analysis of Bloom’s relationship to travel writing with a particular focus on *In the Track of the Sun*, see Mottolose 91-111.

³⁴ For an overview of the tattooing of Euro-Americans at Japan during the late 19th century, with a particular focus on Charles Longfellow, the son of poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, see Guth 142-159.

³⁵ Lombroso, Cesare. “The Savage Origin of Tattooing.” *Appleton’s Popular Science Monthly* 48 (November 1895-April 1896): 793-803.

that tattooing is a “primitive” practice that distinguishes “savages” and “criminals” is delineated in response to the worrisome development with which Lombroso anxiously begins: “I have been told that the fashion of tattooing the arm exists among women of prominence in London society” (Lombroso 793). The detailing of tattoos on criminals he has examined and a quick survey of tattooing practices in cultures he considers “savage” comprise the majority of the article.³⁶ The primitivist comparison between “savages” and “criminals” structurally requires a model of temporal discontinuity to link these marked but disparate bodies: “But the primary, chief cause that has spread this custom among us is in my opinion atavism....Tattooing is, in fact, one of the essential characteristics of primitive man, and of men who still live in the savage state” (800). He pursues this primitivist connection in the service of arguing against the aristocratic fashion for tattooing, particularly among women. Lombroso’s concerns about feminine tattooing seem mobilized through the implicit understanding of the tattooing operation as a sexual experience. As the “savage” and “criminal” argument exists within the bookends of gendered and class-based tattooing,³⁷ Lombroso associates tattooing not only with criminality and “savagery” but also with lower or working class status.

The practice of tattooing among royalty and the aristocracy is troubling for Lombroso because it appears to destabilize the naturalized, essentialized barriers erected between classes and to allow “savagery” entrance into “civilization.” Lombroso utilizes an elemental metaphor to link “primitive” people and the lower classes, which include but are not restricted to criminals, of “civilized” cultures:

³⁶ Lombroso posits a direct link between “savagery” and tattooing: “I do not believe there is a single savage people that does not tattoo more or less” (Lombroso 801).

³⁷ Lombroso ends his article with an apostrophe to “fashion” that warns against allowing tattoos to become acceptable, particularly among women: “O Fashion! You are very frivolous; you have caused many complaints against the most beautiful half of the human race! But you have not come to this, and I believe you will not be permitted to come to it” (803).

Nothing is more natural than to see a usage so widespread among savages and prehistoric peoples reappear in classes which, as the deep-sea bottoms retain the same temperature, have preserved the customs and superstitions, even to the hymns, of the primitive peoples, and who have, like them, violent passions, a blunted sensibility, a puerile vanity, long-standing habits of inaction, and very often nudity. There, indeed, among savages, are the principal models of this curious custom. (Lombroso 802)

Although Lombroso is explicitly discussing tattoo practices among criminals in Europe, this naturalized metaphor, operating through a standard primitivist form of temporal discontinuity, seems to cast a wider net. The reference to “classes” indicates that, although Lombroso utilizes the tattooing of “savages” and “criminals” as the most disturbing examples to argue against feminine and upper-class tattooing, he also implicitly associates tattooing with lower or working class status. Lombroso’s attempt to maintain the borders between classes easily discernible and “natural” through specular appearance is indicated by his abhorrence of even suggesting tattooing among the upper classes: “when the attempt is made to introduce it [tattooing] into the respectable world, we feel a genuine disgust, if not for those who practice it, for those who suggest it, and who must have something atavistic and savage in their hearts” (803). The odd differentiation here between people who advocate for tattooing and those who actually incorporate it into their bodies seems mobilized by the sexualized interpretation of the tattooing operation; the suggestion of tattooing to women may be an invitation to promiscuity. This differentiation also signals that Lombroso may see something positive in aristocratic tattooing – those who practice it may contribute to the naturalization and solidification of class barriers.

Both working class tattoos, such as the anchor Murphy bears on his chest, and aristocratic or royal tattoos, such as family crests, can appear to maintain and naturalize class divisions, though with different motivations and from different positions of power. To take the example of the anchor, this tattoo not only signals Murphy's class status – he is a common, able-bodied sailor – but also specifically signals the occupational form that his labor assumes. Such class-based tattoos create a sense of occupational or class solidarity while also serving to strengthen and reinforce the boundaries erected between classes. Because a tattoo immediately becomes an aspect of the bearer's specular appearance through the process of its application, the body then appears to assume, in this example, an indelible mark of the socially constructed notion of class difference. Class-based tattoos seem to naturalize class divisions because an image representing a certain class position becomes fixed at a specific site on the body, which serves to essentialize a condition that has no “natural” or inevitable connection to the body. As the 19th-century aristocratic and royal fashion for tattooing maintained class divisions from a greater position of power, these tattoos attempted to retain cultural and economic ascendancy, rather than signaling potential resistance. Aristocratic tattoos did not relate to occupational solidarity; they reinforced the naturalization that structures the privilege of being born into a position of social and economic power.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Albert Parry locates primitivism in upper-class tattooing, both the royal form and the tattoos of the wealthy in America, again divested of Lombroso's discourse of criminality. This primitivism operates on two different levels: an intra-cultural appropriation across class divisions and a cross-cultural identification based on roughly analogous class positions. Of European royalty tattooed while serving in the navy, Parry claims, “They acquired epidermal dragons and flags in imitation of the seamen surrounding them. They wished to prove

that they were good sports and brave sailors of royal blood” (Parry 91). While potentially operating through identification with the “class Other,” these tattoos attempt to maintain a cultural ascendancy that is located in the body through the essentialization of class, the “royal blood.” Rather than anchors, hearts, or nautical stars, the designs relate to nationality, interactions with other cultures, probably Japan through the reductive metonymy of the dragon, and markers of social status.³⁸ Parry signals that these tattoos do not operate through identification, however, but through appropriation:

When the ruling classes go in for tattooing they are perfectly aware of the fact that slum-dwellers, toughs, sailors, and other plebs constitute the majority of the tattoo-fans in the all the civilized countries. But they are not at all repulsed by this consideration. On the contrary, it is the subconscious desire of the upper class to borrow the primitive strength of the lower class. (92)

Although Parry does not mobilize the theory of criminality, this passage is implicitly structured through Lombroso’s comparison between members of “primitive” cultures and the lower classes of “civilized” cultures. It is an example of internalized primitivism, in which an element of a single culture is invested with attributes of “primitiveness” that are alternately to be reviled, feared, admired, and appropriated.

Parry’s argument retains the exchange and appropriation of tattooing at the Pacific Islands within its orbit of signification. He does not obfuscate the identification with the Pacific lurking behind this class-based appropriation: “Members of the royalty and nobility of the

³⁸ As Parry states, “Faithful to their sovereign, the English nobility took up tattooing on an imperial scale. Besides the dragons, the coats-of-arms, the five-pound notes, and pictures of fox hunts in full cry, they ordered upon their skin the emblems of their clubs and regiments, also representations of flowers after which the ladies of their hearts were named (Rose, Lily, Violet, etc.)” (Parry 97-8). Bloom also represents the tattooing of the English nobility as an imitation or following of the crown.

continent followed the royal and noble islanders” (Parry 98). The mimetic structure of this sentence juxtaposes geographical distinctions between large landmasses and islands and the tattooed “noble savage” and the tattooed, noble member of “civilization.” Parry references a *New York Times* article from January 30, 1880 titled “Tattooing,” which argues that this primitivist idealization of the “noble savage” is operative in aristocratic tattooing (96). This article, which is structured by the erroneous story that the two British princes had arrows tattooed on their noses (rather than the designs later executed by Horichō), claims,

Man in a state of nature, or, in other words, in a savage state, tattoos [sic] himself, and the noble savage has latterly been the ideal of aesthetic England....The practice of tattooing, being a purely savage custom, suggests to the aesthetic Englishman the wild, free life of the isles of the ‘sun-down seas,’ and hence to be tattooed is to put one’s self in sympathy with Nature, and to protest against the sickly conventionalities of civilization.³⁹

Although the cultural exchange of tattooing at the Pacific Islands was mainly associated with lower-class status (with the notable exception of Sir Joseph Banks), the focus on the “noble savage” legitimizes aristocratic tattooing because it naturalizes the tattoo as an indelible sign of nobility no matter the specific culture as long as it has a hierarchical structure. While Parry includes both idealization of the Pacific and appropriation through internalized primitivism, this *Times* article obfuscates lower-class Euro-American tattooing through its focus on a primitivist vision of the Pacific as the inspiration for aristocratic tattooing.

The final reference to tattooing in “Eumaeus,” which also occurs in Bloom’s mind, ties together class, criminality, and identification by tattooing through the famous Tichborne case.

³⁹ “Tattooing.” *New York Times* 30 January 1880: 4.

When the conversation in the cabman's shelter turns to Charles Parnell, his downfall, his relationship with Kitty O'Shea, and the theory that his coffin was full of stones and he would one day return, Bloom thinks, for the first time, about picking up Parnell's hat. After the type in the *United Irishman* was broken up, Bloom "handed him his hat when it was knocked off and he said *Thank you*" (16.1335-6, emphasis in original). He then turns to the potential reappearance of Parnell and its attendant difficulties:

Still as regards return. You were a lucky dog if they didn't set the terrier at you directly you got back. Then a lot of shillyshally usually followed. Tom for and Dick and Harry against. And then, number one, you came up against the man in possession and had to produce your credentials like the claimant in the Tichborne case, Roger Charles Tichborne, *Bella* was the boat's name to the best of his recollection he, the heir, went down in as the evidence went to show and there was a tattoo mark too in Indian ink, lord Bellew was it, as he might very easily have picked up the details from some pal on board the ship and then, when got up to tally with the description given, introduce himself with: *Excuse me, my name is So and So* or some such commonplace remark. (16.1339-49, emphasis in original)

Perhaps surprisingly in an episode filled with unsure or confused identities, from the jarvey who looks like Henry Campbell to Corley's unclear genealogy, Bloom represents the Tichborne case in a roughly accurate manner, though the jumbled syntax appears to equate the Claimant with Sir Roger Tichborne. Although ostensibly about accurate identification through tattooing,⁴⁰ the role

⁴⁰ Parry's discussion of the Tichborne case approaches it from the notion of identification. It is one of the numerous examples utilized against the idea that identification is a "true" motivation for being tattooed. See Parry 111-121. He claims that Sir Roger's mother "raised the boy as a sissified dandy" and that "To prove to the herd his hardy manliness he acquired tattoos" (113). Rohan McWilliam states, "The young Roger was infantilised by his mother to an extreme, being

of the tattoo evidence in the Tichborne case relates to class divisions and how tattooing can both maintain and complicate the barriers erected between classes.

The undisputed Sir Roger (1829-54) was assumed dead in 1854 after the ship *Bella* was never seen again, though his mother refused to believe that he had died. In 1862, his father Sir James Tichborne died and the baronetcy passed to Roger's brother Alfred, who himself passed in 1866; his wife was pregnant with their only son, who became the next baronet. In 1867, a butcher who had been living in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales appeared in England claiming that he was Roger Tichborne, though there was little physical resemblance, especially with respect to weight (the Claimant was quite corpulent while the undisputed Roger was waifish). The civil trial, which lasted 102 days in court, ended when Lord Bellew, a schoolmate of Roger's, gave the tattoo evidence: "He said that, as a boy, he had tattooed a heart crossed with an anchor on Roger's inner left arm – marks that the Claimant did not possess" (McWilliam 52).⁴¹ Bellew had also tattooed Roger's initials – R.C.T. – on this arm (198). Opposed to the public space of the tattoo parlor, these tattoos were likely produced in private. As the first electric tattoo machine was patented in 1891 by Samuel O'Reilly, Lord Bellew would have used hand tools to

forced to wear frocks until he was twelve" (9). Parry is presumably referring to this element of Roger's youth, though the actual motivation for the tattoos is unclear. Parry's representation of Tichborne and use of the phrase "sissified dandy" indicates the paranoid heterosexualism that undergirds his discussion of sexuality and tattooing.

⁴¹ For a study of the Tichborne trials, see Rowan McWilliam, *The Tichborne Claimant: A Victorian Sensation* (2007). McWilliam discusses the background of the case on pages 5-33; the civil trial 35-52; the criminal trial 83-111. During the criminal trial, Bellew had to admit that "his memory of the tattoo was imperfect. It turned out that, when approached by the Tichborne's solicitor, he was unsure which arm of Roger's he had tattooed or indeed what the tattoo illustrated" (McWilliam 96). Rather bizarrely, the claimant's attorney for the criminal trial, Edward Kenealy, "pursued at length a theory that Roger had not been tattooed at all but had been marked with a blue pencil, producing an image on the skin that eventually faded" (99-100).

produce the tattoos through the puncture method.⁴² After the tattoo evidence, the jury declared that they did not need to hear any more witnesses, and the Claimant's attorney moved for a non-suit. The judge, however, concluded that the jury's statement was a decision in favor of the Tichborne family; the Claimant was therefore guilty of perjury and a criminal trial ensued. The Claimant was found guilty in this trial, which lasted 188 days in court, and served fourteen years in prison. The Claimant was most likely Arthur Orton, a butcher from Wapping who had immigrated to Australia during the 1850s for unclear reasons.⁴³

When Lord Bellew tattooed Sir Roger Tichborne, the royal and aristocratic fashion for tattooing had not become widely popular; Edward VII had yet to be tattooed. Tichborne's tattoos could easily be interpreted as signs of the working class or criminals, which is how some of his family members seem to have responded.⁴⁴ As Rowan McWilliam states, "The tattoo was another area where aristocratic and working-class society met. It was this curious fusion that propelled Tichbornism" (McWilliam 199). The role of the tattoo evidence indicates the uneven and complex relationship between tattooing and class divisions. One aristocrat supposedly tattooed another aristocrat with standard mariner designs, the heart and anchor, and an explicitly identifying design, the initials. Because the Claimant did not possess these tattoos, his quest to rise from the working class into the aristocracy was thwarted; he became a criminal partially because he was not tattooed. The class dynamics of the Tichborne movement operated in a

⁴² Margo DeMello writes, "Until the 1890s, tattoos were still administered by hand (using methods borrowed from the Polynesians), a process that was time-consuming and costly. Then in 1891 'Professor' Samuel O'Reilly patented the first electric tattoo machine in New York, based on the perforating pen invented by Thomas Edison" (50).

⁴³ As McWilliam states, "The bulk of the evidence suggests that the Claimant was Arthur Orton, and that he was guilty as charged" (277).

⁴⁴ This is an example of the response of the Tichborne family: "When Roger showed off his tattoos, the response of relatives was shock that he had done something that reeked of low life. Mrs Nagle [an aunt], on seeing his tattoos, exclaimed, 'Oh, how horrid. It's like a common soldier.' Roger apparently laughed and offered to tattoo her" (McWilliam 199).

similar manner: “It was a working-class and largely anti-aristocratic movement, to assist a man [to] become a member of the aristocracy” (McWilliam 231). Although cutting across all classes, public support for the Claimant was mostly working class.⁴⁵ The resistance to the tattoo evidence from the working class can be discerned from soubriquets applied to small, anonymous donations to the Claimant between the civil and criminal trials, such as, “Seven workmen who do not believe the tattoos,” “C.M., no faith in his L’s Tattooing,” “Three who fear the A.G. [Attorney General] has Tattoo on the brain,” and “Did Lord Bellew dream of the tattoo marks?” (McWilliam 62-3). In a contemporary ballad about the case, Bellew was referred to as “Lord Tattoo” (225). There seems to be resistance from the working class to the utilization of the tattoo, usually associated with lower-class status, to disallow a working-class man entry into the aristocracy. The tattoo maintains the barriers erected between classes. For those who believed in the Claimant’s legitimacy, “His appeal was one of a nobleman who had descended amongst the common people and been purified by the experience” (McWilliam 82). There also is an element of the internalized, class-based primitivism in Tichbornism that Albert Parry located within the aristocratic fashion for tattooing.

False Barriers

While the Claimant’s audacious attempt to inherit the Tichborne estates certainly points to the performativity that informs social interactions and class position,⁴⁶ the prominence of tattooing in the case indicates how skin is socially constructed as a false barrier that structures and maintains divisions based on notions of class, race, and gender. My understanding of skin as a “false barrier” shares similarities with the notion of “race” as a social construction in which

⁴⁵ See McWilliam 53-82.

⁴⁶ Rohan McWilliam interprets the Claimant’s performativity through a theatrical metaphor: “He was an actor who had stumbled on a secret – that social life is dependent on performance: to be an aristocrat you only have to pretend to be one” (277).

cultural or national characteristics are made to be identifiable through the specular appearance and coloration of skin. It is “false” precisely because it is a social construction projected onto the body. The production of skin, the “surface” of the human body, as a barrier has material effects, for it supports racialized discourse, segregation, and rigid class divisions. Through naturalization, human skin can be positioned as the barrier between an internalized, essentialized interior and an external specular appearance that mimetically reflects a “true” disposition, nature, or character. The criminological and primitivist discourses about tattooing rely on this understanding of skin. Like the depth model of subjectivity,⁴⁷ these are social constructions projected onto the human body. The interaction between skin and ink in tattooing elucidates this notion of a false barrier. Through different processes, indelible ink is inserted within human skin; although the ink rests within the skin itself, the specular nature of tattooing seems to indicate the opposite – that the tattoo is on the surface of the skin because it dominates that piece of skin through the permanent alteration of its coloration. The externalization of a “natural” internal state, such as aristocratic standing through family crest tattoos or working-class status through mariner tattoos, becomes an element of a “surface” specular appearance, thus providing a naturalized barrier on the body that supports the socially constructed notion of class divisions.

But this is a false barrier, and not only because of the incongruity of the depth model that projects an external social construction into the body and then forces it out onto the body. This naturalization also supports a static representation of tattoos themselves that constructs another

⁴⁷ As Nikki Sullivan argues, the psychological, criminological, and counter-cultural discourses about tattooing share “a reliance on a depth model of subjectivity that assumes a distinction, and simultaneously a causal connection, between interiority and exteriority, mind and body. In each case the body is seen simply as an inscriptive surface, the significance of which lies in its ability to provide access to that which grounds it... The body comes to matter in these accounts only insofar as its carnal specificity or materiality is veiled over in and through the extraction of abstract and essentially immaterial truths” (4).

false barrier between the tattoo ink and the skin. Tattoos do not simply rest on top of the skin as self-contained and distinct units; there is a symbiotic relationship between the ink and the unmarked skin next to and around it that produces the tattoo. The design is the result of the interaction between the parts of the skin altered by the inclusion of the tattoo ink and the negative space, the untattooed skin, around and within the tattoo. For example, Murphy's anchor tattoo is produced through the interaction between the lines and curves made by the tattooing operation and the unmarked space around and adjacent to the ink. Many tattoo designs include negative space within themselves. The tattoo of Sir Roger's initials, R.C.T., structurally requires the negative space within the letter "R," as does Murphy's tattoo of the numeral 16. This is also true of Antonio's "sideface" self-portrait. Most likely, the tattoo would be composed of black lines that define Antonio's profile and facial features, but the aspects of the image that would represent his "skin" would be unmarked, would be Murphy's unmarked skin within the marked skin. It is this interaction that allows Murphy to alter the facial expression of "Antonio." Also, tattoo ink is not forever fixed at one location within the skin; as time passes, the ink spreads or bleeds out to a certain extent. The lines created by the tattooing operation are not permanently fixed from that moment.

In his 1912 essay "The Universal Literary Influence of the Renaissance,"⁴⁸ James Joyce traces a shift from soul to surface, from spirit to skin. He presents an anti-teleological argument about literary history that positions the movement from the Renaissance to the modernist period as degeneration, rather than progress. "Shakespeare and Lope de Vega are responsible, to a certain point, for cinematography. The untiring creative force, the hot and lively passionate

⁴⁸ This essay, written in Italian, was part of an examination Joyce took at the University of Padua in April 1912 to become certified as an English teacher in Italy. He also wrote, in English, "The Centenary of Charles Dickens" at the same time. See *James Joyce in Padua* (1977).

temperament, the intense desire to see and sense, and excessive and diffuse curiosity degenerate after three centuries to frenetic sensationalism. We might say indeed that modern man has an epidermis rather than a soul” (*Padua* 21).⁴⁹ The contextualization of cinema is important here, for it indicates that modern film, literature, and culture are all concerned with surfaces, with specifically what can be conveyed through specularly. This is not a rejection of skin, of the “surface” of the body, in favor of the spiritual “depths.” Joyce’s analysis indicates how the exterior of the body is made to emit signs. The skin becomes a legible boundary that forces essentialized traits out onto the surface of the body, converting socially constructed notions about race, class, and gender into naturalized signs that cannot be erased.

The role of tattooing in “Eumaeus” and the manner in which Joyce links it with primitivism, homosexuality, and class helps elucidate a different understanding of Joyce’s representation of skin in *Ulysses*.⁵⁰ He displays how human skin is discursively produced in different contexts. Joyce’s utilization of tattooing, and of discourses about tattooing, in this episode demonstrates how human skin is erected and maintained as a false barrier that supports imperial discourse, rigid class divisions, and heteronormativity. Similar to how Murphy’s stories operate as (re)presentations of the disregard for specificity in primitivist discourse, discussions of tattooing in the episode represent the state of discursive formations about tattooing relating to sexuality and class at the beginning of the 20th century. Joyce does not project an essentialized interiority or disposition into characters that is then forced out onto the exteriors of their bodies.

⁴⁹ In the original Italian, this last sentence reads: “Si potrebbe dire infatti dell'uomo moderno che ha un'epidermide invece di un'anima” (*Padua* 15).

⁵⁰ Maud Ellmann and Ariela Freedman have recently demonstrated the importance of skin in *Ulysses*. In the chapter “Skinscapes in *Ulysses*,” pages 151-66, from her book *Nets of Modernism* (2010), Ellmann provides an overview of skin in the novel, with a particular focus on psychoanalysis and the “Lotus Eaters” episode. In her article “Skindeep *Ulysses*,” Freedman positions Joyce as an epidermist in the context of early-20th century dermatology.

There is no “natural” relationship between “surface” and “depth” here because he does not employ the depth model of subjectivity. However, Joyce’s critical acuity does not necessarily amount to a critique. “Eumaeus” displays the discrepancies and errors that structure primitivist discourse, the eroticization of human skin that undergirds the (homo)sexualized interpretation of tattooing, and the naturalization and maintenance of the divisions erected between classes. Tattooing exposes these as social constructions that produce the skin, the specular “surface” of the human body, as a false barrier.

Chapter VI: Negative Space

In “Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body” Albert Wendt discusses the application of Samoan *tatau* and *malu* to Euro-American bodies. He writes, “many non-Samoans have been tataued. It is incorrect to think that you cannot be tataued unless you are Samoan or connected by blood and title to Samoan aiga” (408). Within this openness, there is a large and indeterminate space between cultural exchange and cultural appropriation. Earlier in his essay, Wendt states, “Beachcombers, sailors, Peace Corps volunteers, and so forth have been tataued. In the novel I’ve been working on for the last fifteen years, one of the main characters, the English beachcomber Barker, gets himself tataued” (401). This novel is *The Mango’s Kiss* (2003).¹ After examining the genealogy of Euro-American tattooing discourses back to the cultural exchange and the representation of the tattooed body in modernist literature, I return to the Pacific through Wendt’s novel and the “neo-tribal” style of tattooing in order to investigate the intersections between the Pacific, cultural exchange, primitivism, and contemporary tattooing practices.

Barker’s *Tatau*

The Mango’s Kiss is a family epic that follows Peleiupu and her parents, Mautu and Lalaga, from the early 1880s to the early 1920s. The novel examines and revolves around different forms of cultural contact, exchange, and syncretism – the interaction between missionary-introduced Christianity and pre-contact forms of Samoan religion, Barker and his *tatau*, the entrance into capitalist structures, the children of European and Samoan parents, and

¹ For an analysis of tattooing in Wendt’s “The Cross of Soot” from *Flying-Fox in a Freedom Tree* (1974), see “*Tatau and Malu: Vital Signs in Contemporary Samoan Literature*” from Juniper Ellis’ *Tattooing the World*.

the variable application of the terms “civilized” and “savage.” The establishment of colonial structures occurred later at Samoa than at other Pacific archipelagos – sustained interactions began in the 1830s as opposed to the late 1760s at Tahiti. The power relations between Barker and the inhabitants of the village of Satoa share similarities with the beachcombers I discussed earlier in this project, such as the *Bounty* mutineers at Tahiti in the 1790s and Herman Melville at Nuku Hiva in the 1840s, but the adoption of Christianity in the village of Satoa provides another element of syncretism in this beachcomber narrative. Although Barker ran a small store in the village, married a Satoan woman, had children with her, and was able to speak Samoan, his acceptance and integration into the social structures of Satoa do not appear complete until he receives a full *tatau*. Barker’s tattooing is not only guided by the discursive structures Euro-Americans have used to interpret and understand this form of body modification. The novel represents Pacific perspectives on tattooing and its application to Euro-American bodies. The Satoan response to Barker’s *tatau* also mobilizes stereotypes about beachcombers produced by the west.

The Mango’s Kiss persistently represents the malleability of the civilized/savage binary. The inhabitants of Satoa usually consider their culture, characterized by *fa’a Samoa* [Samoan way of doing things, Samoan way of life] social relations combined with elements of Christianity, to be highly civilized, while the atheist beachcomber Barker is frequently referred to as savage. Poto, Barker’s wife, and Mautu, his best friend, both agree that the beachcomber is a “palagi [foreigner, European] savage” (70). During a conversation with Leonard Roland Stenson (a cipher for Robert Louis Stevenson), Barker describes a general Samoan perception of Europeans: “They also consider us uncivilised, barbaric, terribly stupid, clumsy, cruel and very, very ungodly” (91). From a beachcomber position, Barker himself contributes to this primitivist

depiction of Euro-American culture: “He took huge delight in introducing papalagi technology, ideas, fashion, and fads to Satoa, despite his constant complaints that papalagi civilisation was corrupt and evil and the missionaries were ‘castrating’ the native peoples” (20). Like the passivity required for this castration metaphor, his infantilization of Samoans pushes against his critiques of Europe: “At times they’re like precocious children – willful, capricious, cruel, quick to violent anger. Like children they can also be forgiving, generous, totally without fear or reason” (98). However, Barker’s narrative in the novel is a movement toward acculturation and integration that is specularly and painfully marked by his full *tatau*.

The tattooing of this beachcomber contains additional aspects of cultural exchange than other examples. While Barker is the first European to live in Satoa, which produces the possessive description “our papalagi,” the Satoans had already converted to Christianity through missionary activity while still retaining earlier religious forms.² There were restrictions against tattooing in Samoa - men with tattoos could not become deacons or pastors. As the village pastor, Mautu does not have a *tatau*. The beachcomber’s atheism leads to him being labeled a “pagan”; some Satoan characters seem to interpret tattooing as pagan. Although the novel does not mention the tattoos of Samoan characters, Barker’s *tatau* was done by “Paepaeali’i, the leading tufuga ta-tatau [tattooist] in Satoa, and three of his apprentices,” which indicates that other inhabitants of the village had tattooing (122). The community does not request that Barker receive a *tatau* as a means of integration; he was already useful enough to the village through his

² “Later in her life Peleiupu would observe that her people’s belief in the Christian atua [god], the Holy Spirit, was only the top third of a pyramid that included, in its three-dimensional body and belly, a feared assembly of savage aitu [ghost, spirit], sauali’i [ghost, spirit], sauai [ogre], and the papalagi-introduced ghosts, vampires, Frankensteins, demons, devils, and Satan” (80).

small shop, if still an outsider.³ The beachcomber's reasons for undergoing the tattoo operation are not stated in the novel.

This lack of an explicit reason for receiving the tattoo links Barker's *tatau* with the Satoan Disease,⁴ which he contracts, though he commits suicide before the disease can end his life. In the first chapter of the novel, Peleiupu's younger brother Iakopo contracts the Satoan Disease, but he too does not die from it. Unknown to her family and the village, Peleiupu suffocates him in his sleep to alleviate his suffering (16). There is the supposition that everyone who dies from the Disease "belonged to Satoa, or had decided Satoa was their home, the place in which they wanted to die. No stranger ever contracts our Disease" (139). When it appears that Barker has contracted the Satoan Disease but has not admitted it, Mautu says to Lalaga, "He may be welcoming the Disease as proof that he belongs to us, to Satoa, to this little bit of earth" (146). After his suicide, there is a description of Barker as "the pagan foreigner who'd become so much one of them their Disease had preferred him to anyone else" (154). Barker's contraction of the Satoan Disease functions as a manifestation of his integration into the genealogy of Satoa. There is the implication that the Disease chooses its victims. Perhaps the *tatau* chooses Barker. Perhaps both the Disease and the *tatau* are the embodiments of a selection, of a process of integration that had already occurred before the body bore its manifestation.

Because Barker begins the tattooing operation in secret, his *tatau* is already half finished before Mautu learns about it. After warning Barker about the dangers of receiving a *tatau* ("You

³ "When other matai [titled heads of aiga] pointed to his son-in-law's 'uncivilised ways' Sao excused him by saying, wistfully, 'What do you expect from a papalagi?' Then he said, 'He is useful, though, to our village'" (21).

⁴ The narrative voice states, "Some Satoans believed their Disease had been introduced into their genealogy and lives by a papalagi sailor who'd deserted his ship when it had called in to Satoa for water and fresh provisions. Others believed that a pre-Christian atua had infected a Satoan woman with it" (12).

can die from loss of blood if you have it done too quickly”),⁵ Mautu asks the beachcomber why he has made this decision:

‘Of all people, you should know why. Your father and his father both had tatau.’

‘But that was before we Samoans knew better.’

‘You mean before the missionaries banned the tatau as pagan and evil.’

Barker waited for Mautu to reply; he didn’t. ‘Do you believe it is evil?’ Barker pursued him.

‘It is something from the time before the Light,’ Mautu countered. (123)

This conversation contains cultural syncretism, Euro-American discourses applied to Pacific tattooing, and the uneasy overlay of Euro-American teleological time and Samoan conceptions of temporality.⁶ Mautu’s father and grandfather had both been taulaaitu [priest] of Fatutapu, the atua of his home village of Fagaloto; his grandfather had converted to Christianity “because he wanted Jehovah’s superior technology and mana [power]” while still retaining his role as taulaaitu (199). Barker seems to be referring to Mautu’s close genealogical connection to Samoan cultural forms and practices. Barker relieves the anxiety produced by his line of questioning by turning the interaction between paganism, Christianity, and tattooing into a joke,

⁵ There is dialogue between *The Mango’s Kiss* and Wendt’s tattooing essay. This quote about blood echoes the part of the essay that states the *tatau* is a “genealogical-spiritual-philosophical text” that grants the body and blood “human design, shape, form, and identity yet risking all of that if the tatauing results in your bleeding to death” (409). Mautu tells Barker, “When it is healed, the black tatau will look striking on your white skin,” which also has an intertext from Wendt’s essay (124). He writes, “Fair skin has always been considered ideal for tatau because of the black on white contrast” (401).

⁶ Later in the novel, Mautu explains Samoan conceptions of time to Peleiupu: “The concept of a time before the now and a time ahead of the now, one time moving in a one-dimensional way, was papalagi, he said. For them, time was everywhere, holding the Unity-that-is-All; to change any part of it was to alter the whole; everything, including our dead, was in the ever-moving present, existing now....Papalagi ‘progress’ was a belief that everything improved, got better, as you went forward” (200).

at which Mautu laughs: “History is irony: I am now the pagan and you are the Christian missionary. Or, let’s say, because my *tatau* is only half-finished I’m just half a pagan!” (123-4). Rather than the relatively straightforward syncretism of a beachcomber rejecting Euro-American culture through the adoption of the “savage” Pacific tattoo at an early stage of colonial intrusion, Barker’s tattoo seems to represent both his affinity for what he understands as pre-contact Samoan culture and his place in the Samoa slowly being altered by colonialism and missionaries. The tattoo is a citation of the “past” that signals integration in the present.

Why does the Samoan pastor support the atheist Euro-American beachcomber receiving the *tatau*? What is Mautu’s relationship with the “pastness” of the *tatau* and the genealogy it signifies? Both Barker and Mautu claim that their friendship produces greater understanding and awareness, specifically, I contend, about their respective cultural syncretism. After Stenson dies, Barker tells Peleiupu and Arona, “I was fortunate to meet Stenson and your father. So *tragically* fortunate. Why tragically? Because they opened my heart to who and what I truly am and what I am on this planet and in the universe. To the beautiful futility of it all. And to love – yes, and especially that!” (114, emphasis in original). After Barker commits suicide, Mautu says to Lalaga, “He [Barker] helped show me we should be proud of who and what we were and are. I still admire the missionaries but much of what they preach and teach is arrogant, narrow; not Christian ways but English ways and prejudices. They’ve made many of us ashamed of being Samoan” (161). The similar syntactical structures at the beginnings of these quotes indicate that Barker and Mautu facilitate each other’s cultural and ontological perceptions. Both through his autobiography and his *tatau*, Barker becomes grafted onto the genealogy of Satoa, a genealogy that contains Mautu’s familial connection to Fagaloto and the taulaaitu of Fatutapu.

In a dream Lalaga has, the novel indicates how the overlays of past and present converge at the embodiment of the *tatau*. Lalaga is initially angry that her husband Mautu is helping Barker through the ordeal. Through both Samoan and Christian terms, she views him as a dangerous presence: “Barker was a pagan, a white demon, from the pagan past of England, and now – and she didn’t want to accept it – an *aitu* out of the time of the Darkness before the light, clothed in the most pagan of clothes, the *tatau*” (125). However, that night she has a dream in which Barker, with his full *tatau*, rescues Mautu: “She wept in gratitude as Barker clasped Mautu’s right hand, pulled him up to his feet and around Mautu’s waist and thighs wound his *tatau*, clothing him, covering his nakedness” (125). The atheist Euro-American beachcomber includes the Christian Samoan pastor within the significations of his *tatau*, allowing him to wear the tattooing his position as pastor prohibits. This figurative extension of the tattoo indicates that Barker and Mautu share a genealogical connection, a link that pulls western teleological time into the ever-present and that traverses British and Samoan cultures, as well as Christianity, atheism, and Samoan forms of religion. Rather than positioned as contradictory or antagonistic characters, Mautu and Barker share a friendship is a complementary, reciprocal relationship marked by the *tatau* one of them receives.

The connection between these two men partially guides Lalaga’s response in the dream, which mobilizes the sexuality embedded within Pacific tattooing. After Barker weaves his *tatau* around Mautu, Lalaga “cupped Barker’s genitals in her hands and caressed them until they grew warm and strong. Around her the light sang of her gratitude for the marvelous gift Barker had given her husband” (125). In his essay, Wendt views the design of the male *tatau* – called the *pe’a*, the flying-fox – as a sexualized representation: “If you look at the *tatau* frontally, the male genitals, even with a penis sheath, look like the *pe’a*’s head, and the *tatau* spreading out over the

thighs and up toward the navel and outward looks like its wings outstretched” (402). It is through this sexuality that Lalaga begins to understand and accept Barker’s *tatau* and her husband’s support of the beachcomber.

Like Lalaga, the Satoans’ reaction to Barker’s *tatau* gradually shifts from missionary-inflected interpretations and the civilized/savage binary to acceptance of both the tattoo and the beachcomber himself. This is partially produced by Barker shedding more of his European habits after he recovers from the tattooing operation: “He didn’t wear papalagi clothes anymore, he lived in the fale [Samoan house] instead of the store, he went everywhere barefoot and spoke Samoan most of the time” (129). This cultural transformation induces joking commentary among the Satoans, including the matai:

“Barker, our papalagi, doesn’t want to be a papalagi anymore!” one said.

“No, his lordship is now a tattooed savage who isn’t a palagi or Samoan aristocrat!” another wit remarked.

“...But his *tatau* is exceptional!” a just matai objected.

“It is the beautiful work of Satan, you mean!” A deacon cut the just matai’s justice from under his bare feet. (130)

Similar to Euro-American perceptions of beachcombers, the Pacific tattoo removes Barker from his national and racial categories but cannot fully transform him into a Samoan; he remains caught in a liminal space. Soon after the *tatau* is finished, Peleiupu informs her father that the Satoans still do not see past Barker’s color: “They don’t accept him – they only see him as a papalagi” (131). The jokes about the beachcomber’s syncretism continue when he decides to enroll his children in Lalaga’s and Mautu’s school after barring them from European education for many years. He tells Mautu, “It would be criminal for me to make savages of my children in

a world that is Christian and quickly converting to papalagi ways and diseases....Yes, it would be criminal to leave them to the mercy of the literate, civilized savages from Europe” (132). This chapter of the novel about Barker’s *tatau* (“A Tatau for an April Fool”) ends by stating, “Most Satoans would refer to that surprising day as ‘The Morning the Tattooed British Lord’s Heirs Started to Learn the Alphabet’” (133). However, Barker’s integration and acceptance into Satoa continue, especially after he begins building an *alia* [double canoe]. While the *matai* talk about the *alia*, “Peleiupu listened to their discussion and was convinced the elders now accepted Barker as one of them. Some of them still referred to him as ‘our palagi,’ but it was in jestful admiration” (144-5). Barker himself understands his integration specifically through terms applied to beachcombers: “He had succeeded in ‘going native,’ he was fond of telling visitors; and Mautu kept telling him he now belonged to Satoa” (137). The *tatau* is the specular, indelible sign of this integration.

The novel contrasts Barker with Satoa’s second papalagi,⁷ anthropology professor Mardrek Freemeade, whose name is a portmanteau of the two American anthropologists most associated with Samoa, Margaret Mead and Derek Freeman. Freemeade lives in Satoa to conduct participant observation, but the villagers study him as well: “Though the Satoans tried to appear they were not scrutinising him, they noted his every move and exchanged information about it” (255). Mautu initially assists Freemeade in his observations, but the pastor becomes uncomfortable with the manner in which the anthropologist approaches the Satoans, the objects of his study. He does not find elements of his friend Barker in Freemeade: “Barker had tried to *live* the Satoan way to escape his loneliness; Freemeade was merely studying that way, using what he described as ‘the objective, scientific method.’ Barker had been open to people,

⁷ “‘Professor Freemeade is our second papalagi,’ Sao declared. Mautu glanced at Poto, who seemed upset. ‘I hope this one is not an atheist and a renegade from his culture’” (254).

embracing them for what they were; Freemeade stood apart, watching and not allowing anyone too close” (255-6, emphasis in original). The integration of the tattooed beachcomber highlights the partial, temporary residence of the participant-observer Freemeade.

Mautu is distraught by Freemeade’s sexual encounters with *fa’afafine*, a socially accepted role in Samoa for biological males who take up a feminine social role, and secretly spirits the American out of Satoa for these actions, but he is also angry about Freemeade’s discussion of beachcombers and their children. The professor introduces the word “beachcomber” to Mautu when he states he is interested in studying Poto and her children: “That’s the term given to Europeans who desert their ships or renounce their ways of life to live with the natives” (263). He also describes them as “the rejects and dregs of European civilisation,” which, indeed, is a standard discourse about beachcombers (263). Freemeade depicts the children of beachcombers through racialized discourse: “All around the world, in the colonies, a whole race – or is it, non-race? – of people are being produced by that union of beachcomber and native; they’re called half-castes” (263). Mautu asks if Barker’s and Poto’s children fall into this category: ““Yes, afakasi [part-European],” Freemeade replied. ‘Beings lost between two cultures, and who belong nowhere. Not Caucasian, not Polynesian, but lost – even more rejected than their beachcombing fathers’” (263). This racialized Euro-American discourse espoused by Freemeade further extends the liminality associated with beachcombers. It leaves no space for the very syncretism and cultural exchange that Wendt represents and examines throughout *The Mango’s Kiss*. The novel revolves around the social integration signified by Barker’s *tatau*, the incorporation and indigenization of Christianity in Samoa, the navigation of the Samoan and *papalagi* worlds that characterizes Peleiupu’s life, and the interaction between oral and written narrative.

Barker's *tatau* mediates the interactions between the oral and the written that characterize the different versions of his autobiography. He claims to be the son of a British earl in his fabulous oral narratives of sea-faring adventures, tales that inspire the adventures of Arona, Peleiupu's brother. The narrative voice states that these stories initiate the beachcomber's integration into Satoa: "Through Mautu, Lalaga and their children, that [Barker's] autobiography would become part of the memory-bank and genealogy of Satoa, and seal Barker's right to be 'our papalagi'" (27). As Susan Najita writes, these oral narratives draw upon the imperial archive: "The archive – and the story-telling it inspires – are revealed as reality-constituting discourses. After all, Barker's stories about the world beyond the reef, though told orally, are inspired by the archive" (358). After his death, Barker reveals in the written confession he bequeaths to Mautu and Peleiupu that he was an orphan from London. The oral autobiography emphasizes a primitivist rejection of civilization in favor of "exotic" adventures.⁸ The written version describes the sexualized abuse Barker suffered at the hands of the upper-class and aristocracy; his flight from England follows his murder of the abusive operator of the orphanage. Barker weaves the oral narratives he tells in Samoa and the *tatau* around a body traumatized in England.⁹ Through the oral citation of the imperial archive and the Euro-American production of tattooing as an embodied semiotic system, the *tatau* records in the skin Barker's movements between the Samoan and English cultures, between the oral, the written, and the silent graphicity of the tattoo.

⁸ In a conversation with Stenson that represents another aspect of his oral narrative, Barker indicates that his residence in Samoa is not the result of a primitivist understanding of the Pacific: "I didn't choose to stay here because I'd discovered the South Seas paradise, the El Dorado, the Noble Savage that Europe has been searching for since the Fall. No. I came to trade, to try and make a killing – and the 'noble savages' will cheat you like anyone else" (99).

⁹ This interpretation mobilizes the protective integument reading of tattooing that Gell discusses, which is encapsulated in the Marquesan phrase *te pahu tiki* – wrapping in images.

The genealogical grafting that begins with the oral tales is completed through the embodied semiosis of the *tatau*. The tattooing operation opens Barker's body and refashions his specular appearance and his social person, facilitating and marking his transformation from an English beachcomber to a Satoan. This is neither idealistic self-fashioning nor a primitivist vision of non-western cultures as freely available for appropriation by Euro-Americans. Wendt's representation of Barker's tattooing is part of the historical and literary genealogy of tattooing I trace in this project. However, it does not only stem from the Euro-American discourses derived from the cultural exchange. Rather, Wendt depicts a Pacific perspective – one that is multivocal and shifting – of the tattooing of Euro-Americans in the Pacific and its role in social integration.

“Modern Primitives”

Opposed to the social and cultural integration represented in *The Mango's Kiss*, the contemporary body modification movement known as “modern primitivism” positions Pacific tattooing as a repository of designs for the Euro-American subject. The potential continuities between modernist primitivism and this movement seem to be indicated by the similar terms. Mindy Fenske writes, “In some situations, for instance, the act of modern primitive representation is merely another oppressive and appropriative case of aesthetic modernist primitivism – that is, the artistic practice of appropriating artifacts and artistic practices from primitive cultures and putting them on display as exemplars of ‘tribal’ or ‘primitive’ culture” (139). While there are similarities between modernist primitivism and “modern primitive” practices, I urge against too easy an elision of these two forms of appropriation, especially considering the embodied nature of “modern primitive” appropriation and its exclusive focus on body modification. The volume *Re/Search #12 Modern Primitives: An Investigation of Contemporary Adornment & Ritual* (1989), edited by V. Vale and Andrea Juno, provided the

first expansive definition of the movement, as well as exposed its practices and personalities to the general public.¹⁰ The editors appear to assume that any Euro-American who participates in tattooing, piercing, or scarification is engaged in “modern primitive” activities,¹¹ but it is important to note that not all contemporary tattooing falls into this category.¹² “Modern primitivism” represents a glorified system of the appropriation of non-western practices by Euro-Americans, usually middle-class individuals. It is structured by a laudatory primitivism that views “tribal” cultures as more in touch with nature, communal, and more open to sexual pleasure, a passive and static representation of indigenous peoples, a homogenization of non-western cultures under the banner “primitive” (another example of the lack of specificity in primitivist discourse), and a denigration of contemporary “technological” society. Its rhetoric essentializes both the cultures whose practices are appropriated and the Euro-Americans who self-identify as modern primitives. Fakir Musafar (he took this name from a 19th-century Iranian Sufi), who is credited with coining the term and starting the movement, states, “I think modern primitives are *born*, not made” (Vale and Juno 8, emphasis in original).¹³ The movement mainly

¹⁰ For analyses of “modern primitivism,” see: Fenske (2007), Siorat (2005), Pitts (2003), DeMello (2000), Klesse (2000), Eubanks (1996), Torgovnick (1995).

¹¹ For example, the editors begin their conversation with two different interviewees with the following questions: “Why do you think there’s an upsurge in ‘modern primitive’ activity – piercing, tattooing, scarification?” and “How do you account for the upsurge in ‘modern primitive’ activity – piercing, tattooing, etc?” (92, 164). As Christian Klesse writes, this volume “contains few attempts to analyse Modern Primitive practices on a theoretical level...The analysis of Modern Primitivism’s philosophy and practice does not concern Vale and Juno too much” (17).

¹² See Siorat 205-222.

¹³ As *Modern Primitives* is mostly interviews, the text itself is a transcription of oral conversations. As Fenske writes, “the italics are the interviewer’s addition to the text” (129). She explains in a footnote, “As a matter of form, Vale and Juno’s questions are in italics, which forges a link between italicized text in the interviews and the interviewers’ voice” (177n58). While the editors did add the italics to their interviewees’ speech acts, we do not know what intonations or hand gestures may have suggested the italics, or if the editors used them to highlight their own argumentative purposes.

occupies the laudatory side of the primitivist coin; this positive interpretation of “primitive” cultures attempts to justify the assumption that all indigenous cultures and practices exist mainly (or solely) for the use and appropriation by Euro-Americans.

There is a tendency throughout *Modern Primitives* to refer to indigenous cultures in the past tense, which is a standard primitivist move that relegates these peoples to a vague, infinite past separated from the “modern” present. “Tribal” peoples are assumed to be unable to traverse this constructed gulf, but the contemporary Euro-American moves between the “primitive” and the “modern” with ease. One of the more disturbing aspects of the volume is the assumption that, while indigenous cultures are such past phenomena that they are beyond survival, the “tribal” or “primitive” practices and rituals that can be appropriated are necessary for the survival of the Euro-American subject or the culture at large. For example, David Levi Strauss ends his essay on the history of the words modern and primitive with the following: “The increasing exploration (in one’s own body and mind) of these lost ‘primitive’ practices and techniques looks beyond the Ideology of Progress to a possible, syncretic future. That this heresy is gaining momentum now, at the fin de millennium, signals a shift in terms from *progress* to *survival*” (158, emphasis in original). Also, the last interview in the volume ends with a man who goes by Genesis P-Orridge stating, “That’s why it’s really important to learn from these so-called primitive peoples – it has nothing to do with being hippy-dippy or New Age. The issue is *survival*” (181, emphasis in original). For the most part, the actuality of these cultures is less important to the “modern primitive” than the practices and rituals that they believe they are free to appropriate. As Margo DeMello writes, “For members of the tattoo community who see their tattoos as connecting them to ancient or primitive cultures, the reality of those cultures is not important. Rather, it is the idealized version of primitive cultures – considered closer to nature, in harmony with the

spiritual realm, egalitarian, nonrepressive – that provides the appropriate image” (176). We can say that this idealized primitivist representation is both “appropriate” and appropriative.

The genealogy of tattooing discourses I have traced and analyzed in this project finds its contemporary and explicit expression in “modern primitivism.” Rather than an iteration of early-20th century examples, “modern primitivism” represents a different form of appropriation, especially in the historical obfuscations that structure its justifications. The unexamined assumption in *Modern Primitives* that Euro-Americans with tattooing engage in “modern primitive” activities is produced by the discourses that began to form at Tahiti in 1769. While Pacific cultures repeatedly appear in discussions of “primitive” tattooing, the influence of Pacific tattooing on contemporary Euro-American body modification is represented in the volume as a recent development. DeMello writes, “Through the discourse of modern primitives, the working-class history of tattooing in the United States has essentially been denied and a new history has been created. The new history is based on the histories of non-Western, nonindustrialized people who practice tattooing” (182). While *Modern Primitives* does minimize early- and mid-20th century working-class, mariner, and biker tattooing in its (celebratory) argument that primitivist appropriation expanded the tattoo designs available in Europe and America, this history or genealogy is not new. Rather, both the manner in which working-class tattooing was interpreted and the discursive structure of “modern primitivism” are aspects of the same genealogy of Euro-American tattooing discourses that began in 1769. The denial of the importance of the Pacific for the past 250 years of Euro-American tattooing has been so effective and prevalent that “modern primitive” tattooing derived from Pacific cultures can appear to be a new development.¹⁴

¹⁴ Almost all of the cultures mentioned in *Modern Primitives* that practice tattooing are located in the Pacific – Japan, Samoa, Aotearoa, Marquesas, Borneo, Micronesia, Philippines, Hawaii, and Tahiti.

The editors seem to be unaware of the Pacific-European cultural exchange of tattooing. They even fail to mention the rather standard reference to the etymological derivation of the word tattoo, which simultaneously includes and denies the influence of Pacific tattooing on Euro-American tattooing discourses. In the interview with Dan Thome, who practices the hand tool method in Micronesia, the tattoo artist contrasts “hundreds or thousands of years” of tattooing tradition in Micronesia with Euro-American tattooing: “Whereas in the West – well, our tattoo tradition only goes back a few hundred years, and then you’re with sailors aboard Captain Cook’s ships in the Pacific, who are the ones who re-introduced tattooing to Europe.” Juno responds to this by asking, “What do you mean?” (135). Although the discourses produced by the cultural exchange of tattooing at Tahiti structure the primitivist representation of tattooing, Euro-Americans are able to produce tattooing as a “primitive” practice without reference to or knowledge of this exchange.

Many of the tattoo artists included in *Modern Primitives* describe tattooing as a “primitive” practice or as something that connects people with their “primal” urges or selves.¹⁵ Lyle Tuttle, who tattooed such celebrities as Janis Joplin, Joan Baez, and Peter Fonda, almost echoes Cesare Lombroso exactly, though from a laudatory rather than pejorative position, in his explanation of tattooing: “But the real, basic reason for wanting a tattoo can be expressed in one word: atavism. Atavism, the return to a primitive nature, is what it’s all about” (Vale and Juno 114). Ed Hardy, generally considered the tattoo artist who helped expand the design repertoire

¹⁵ Captain Don: “Man has a primitive instinct to decorate him or herself both temporarily and permanently” (75). Leo Zulueta: “Putting permanent designs on the body is an impulse that’s probably a million years old! And people still have that impulse, even in this technological world” (98). Dan Thome: “They no longer feel linked to thousands of years of evolution; they feel they were *born yesterday* with no tradition or history or values that make sense, and they want something to re-connect them to the *primal selves* they’ve lost touch with, or *never know*” (136, emphasis in original). Charlie Cartwright: “I think everyone *should* be tattooed simply for the experience itself; to just be in touch with primal origins” (150, emphasis in original).

and elevate the artistic status of Euro-American tattooing, states, “tattooing itself is a primitive act; the bottom line is: you’re doing this basic, ancient practice” (51). Hardy advocates for the inclusion of various tattooing styles on one Euro-American body; he considers this “real *American* tattooing – having all these cultures floating next to each other...the most exciting possibility for me as an artist is to do this fusion – be able to make references to different parts of world culture” (54, emphasis in original). This possibility depends on the knowledge produced by the imperial and colonial archives.¹⁶ The laudatory attitude toward appropriating different tattoo designs and syncretically incorporating them into one body is not exclusively American. The Dutch tattoo artist Hanky Panky states, “there are *no limits* now because we are *not primitives* – we can mix whatever we want!” (137-8, emphasis in original). This position requires a representation of “primitive” people as passive and entirely controlled by tradition. However, not every tattoo artist included in the volume consigns indigenous cultures to such a static and solely appropriative representation. For Dan Thome and Leo Zulueta, the continuation of Pacific tattooing traditions forms an integral part of their methods and designs.

Dan Thome understands his role in the tattoo community and his relationship to Pacific tattooing through notions of documentation, both on paper and within human skin. Through the hand tool method, Thome attempts to keep Micronesian tattooing alive: “I felt that maybe I could learn how to do that style of tattooing and perhaps help them preserve their tattoo traditions and history” (Vale and Juno 133). Thome understands the state of Micronesian tattooing through the cultural disruption caused by colonialism and missionaries. He contrasts the contemporary tattoo tastes of young Micronesians with the designs he is attempting to preserve through written

¹⁶ Hardy indirectly references the archive and its role in exposing different designs and styles to tattoo artists: “Because we shouldn’t have to be compartmentalized, and in this day and age with all the information we have – knowing everything we do about all the people and styles and preferences in the world, we ought to be able to live a lot of different lives” (63).

documentation and actual tattooing: “Instead of wanting traditional tattoos, they want brightly colored anchors and naked ladies like they see on sailors. But I think someday they’ll be re-examining their roots and reviving the traditional tattoos. And as long as these old designs are documented, they’re going to be available for future generations” (135). He positions himself as a temporal bridge between pre-contact and future tattooing. This linear time seems to exclude Micronesians, which is evident in the standard primitivist statements he makes in *Modern Primitives*, such as the supposition that Micronesia “had once been like Paradise” and “These people are living out of time” (133, 134). Thome wants to continue the hand tool method in Micronesia on living skin while also documenting the diversity of tattoo designs throughout the region. Both of these actions attempt, in the present, to forge a link between the past and a potential future.

Leo Zulueta and “Contemporary Tribal” Tattooing

Leo Zulueta, who is generally credited in the tattoo community with being the originator of the “tribal,” “neo-tribal,”¹⁷ or the term Zulueta prefers, “contemporary tribal” style,¹⁸ is also concerned with promoting awareness of Pacific tattooing, but his approach relates more to artistic inspiration and research. Zulueta is a Filipino-American who grew up in Hawaii. In his interview from *Modern Primitives*, he partially deflects Vale’s opening statement (“You did a lot to popularize primitive black tattoo designs -”) by describing the ways his tattooing style was

¹⁷ In his preface to the re-release of the five issues of his magazine *Tattootime*, Ed Hardy relates the genesis of these terms. The first issue of *Tattootime* was titled “New Tribalism”: “For our first issue, Leo [Zulueta] and I decided to feature the powerful black graphic work he was so passionate about. As we slaved over this night after night, we tried to come up with a catchy theme title. One night, joking around about Leo’s focus on design traditions from so-called primitive societies, we hit on the name *New Tribalism*. We instantly knew it was perfect.... We joked about how featuring this black work would catch on and become wildly popular – a totally outlandish notion” (4).

¹⁸ Zulueta, Leo. Personal Interview. 18 June 2014.

influenced, especially by Ed Hardy encouraging him to study Pacific “tribal” designs before Zulueta had begun tattooing (Vale and Juno 97). It seems that his research into various Pacific tattooing traditions and designs was conducted mostly through written, printed matter: “I also spent a lot of time hounding used bookstores and collecting old magazines like *National Geographic* which eventually gave me quite a big source of tribal style tattooing. I made a bigger and bigger scrapbook” (97-8). The colonial archive, specifically images produced as “knowledge” about Pacific cultures and their tattooing, provides the basis for Zulueta’s neo-tribal tattoo style. How he utilizes the archive involves forms of artistic inspiration, an understanding of appropriation, and embodied knowledge production.

Although not stated explicitly in the *Modern Primitives* interview, his tattoo work does not represent an exact copying of tattoo designs reproduced in books and magazines. Rather, Pacific tattooing provides the artistic inspiration for his own designs. Zulueta’s tattooing style mostly derives from “Micronesian” designs and work from Borneo, which is part of Indonesia; these examples are outside the “Polynesian” context, though elements from Maori, Tahitian, Marquesan, and Samoan tattooing also influence his style. As a Filipino-American, Zulueta does not have a personal connection to these cultures. In an interview with Margo DeMello, which was incorporated within her *Bodies of Inscription*, Zulueta states, “I’ve never tried to take any of this stuff literally, I try to take it from a symbolic standpoint, because I know that’d be horribly wrong and disrespectful. I try to use the ancient imagery and use it as a springboard to launch into my own thing, which I’ve done over the years. The stuff that I do, mind you, doesn’t have any specific symbolism” (87). The structure of this inspiration shares similarities with the appropriations of modernist primitivism, but Zulueta possesses a more sympathetic attitude and

displays an awareness of the problematic nature of appropriation.¹⁹ In my interview with him, he states, “I certainly hope that my stuff doesn’t offend” (Zulueta). Opposed to the artistic appropriation of African and Oceanic masks and sculptures in Euro-American painting and the literary representation of the embodied semiotic system of tattooing that I have examined in this project, Zulueta’s inspiration from Pacific tattooing does not include movement from three dimensions to two, from skin to paper – the alteration occurs in the tattoo design elements. However, because of the decreased visibility of tattooing in the Pacific (the disruption of “traditional” tattooing), Zulueta’s interactions with and disarticulation of these tattoo designs occurs across media – from the textual imperial archive to human skin. His exposure to Pacific tattooing in the archive provides an analogue to the influence derived from ethnographic specimens in museums by modernist artists, Picasso’s exposure to African masks at the Trocadéro being the exemplar.²⁰

Continuing the visual “knowledge” produced about Pacific tattooing that provides the springboard for his art, Zulueta’s tattoo work appears to participate in an embodied form of knowledge production. Rather than writing books about Pacific tattooing or publishing a collection of images that have influenced his design style, Zulueta claims in *Modern Primitives* that both the bodies of those on whom he tattoos neo-tribal designs and his own body can preserve knowledge or information about Pacific cultures and tattooing. His discussion of the knowledge encoded within “tribal” tattooing mobilizes aspects of laudatory primitivism,

¹⁹ For example, DeMello quotes Zulueta as stating, “I know what in some countries like New Zealand, that would be horribly disrespectful to take a tattoo pattern from the Maori and try to reproduce it today” (88).

²⁰ Virginia Eubanks compares the cultural imperialism of “modern primitivism” to the 1984-5 Museum of Modern Art exhibit “‘Primitivism’ in 20th-century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and Modern,” with a reliance upon James Clifford’s argument about the exhibit from *The Predicament of Culture*.

particularly the supposition that “primitive” cultures possess a more intimate understanding of nature. Zulueta positions the tattoo designs produced in and through the archive as the traces of the knowledge of Pacific cultures that ought to be preserved:

The designs imply a cosmography and knowledge of the powers inherent in ‘nature’ which these ‘primitive’ people knew much more intimately than we do. Their knowledge wasn’t written out in encyclopedia form, and we are left with the *residue* – the symbols of their understanding of the interrelationships, causes and effects in nature. But symbols work by stimulating correspondences and connections on the part of the viewer (and in the case of tattooing, the wearer); it’s a cumulative process which can be educational and thus definitely beneficial...even if we never totally understand the original significance of the symbol or design in question. (Vale and Juno 99, emphasis in original)

In the absence of written, textual information, tattooing becomes the repository of cultural knowledge. Zulueta’s positioning of the symbols of different Pacific tattoo traditions participates in a genealogy of tattooing discourses that includes early European explorers in the Pacific assuming tattoos indicated rank or class and Tommo’s description of Kory-Kory’s tattoos as “a pictorial museum of natural history, or an illustrated copy of ‘Goldsmith’s Animated Nature’” (*Typee* 83). Zulueta does not tattoo the actual Pacific designs he has collected over the years on other people, but rather his own designs inspired by the archival images. The inaccessible “knowledge” potentially encoded within the tattoos, he seems to indicate, can still be passed on for future generations and interpretations through the awareness of Pacific tattooing traditions that his work promotes.

Zulueta also produces his own tattoos as preserving information about Pacific cultures and their knowledge, specifically Micronesia. On his upper arms, Zulueta has “tribal-style flame” tattoos that he designed and Ed Hardy tattooed on him (Vale and Juno 98). He has a large Micronesian back piece that Hardy also executed. In our conversation, Zulueta describes the genesis of his back piece: “I brought a bunch of Xeroxes to Hardy of the original stuff, and you know, I had a couple of sketches of how I wanted it to be, and he just ran with it basically.... One of the first images I ever saw was in *National Geographic* actually, a 1960's *National Geographic* about outer island Micronesia, and after I saw that I was so moved by it that I really knew inherently I would be tattooed like that sooner or later” (Zulueta). The importance of *National Geographic* to the “contemporary tribal” tattoo style is underscored by the stack of issues of the magazine that almost immediately greet one when entering Zulueta’s shop, Spiral Tattoo in Ann Arbor.²¹ *Modern Primitives* includes a photograph of his back piece, as well as a couple drawings with the caption, “Micronesian body tattoos from an early 1900’s article” (98). One of these back tattoos looks very similar to the one on Zulueta, which provides a visual representation of how he has derived inspiration from the archive. A photograph of Zulueta’s back and arms also appears on the cover of the collection *Marks of Civilization: Artistic Transformations of the Human Body* (1988). In *Modern Primitives* he describes his back piece as helping to preserve a style of tattooing as well as potentially possessing “knowledge” that is not yet legible:

all the old men having “primitive”-style tattoos are dead...The last man to have a back piece like mine, who was over 90 years old, passed away a couple years ago.

This is why I really feel strongly about preserving those ancient designs: besides

²¹ When I interviewed Zulueta, Spiral Tattoo was located at 3060 Packard Road. It has since moved to 325 Braun Court in Ann Arbor; the stack of *National Geographic* is longer present.

being original art, they might contain talismans for the future, or perhaps encode some cryptic knowledge that could be valuable or illuminating in some way – who knows? But if they’re not preserved, we’ll never know! (99, ellipsis in original).

The assumption that the tattoo contains and is able to produce knowledge, whether or not this knowledge is “cryptic” or inaccessible to the viewer or to the wearer, derives from the cultural exchange, in which the tattoos attempted to produce orientalist knowledge about Tahiti.

Zulueta’s understanding of the knowledge encoded within tattoos also relies on the interpretation of tattooing as an embodied semiotic system. He seems to understand his own body as a link between “ancient,” discontinued tattooing and a future that may reinvigorate this tradition.

Zulueta does not approach the tattooing operation itself as a means to reconnect with pre-contact Pacific tattooing. In November 1999, the Samoan *tufuga ta-tatau* Su’a Sulu’ape Paulo II, who had tattooed full *tatau* and *malu* on Euro-Americans, organized an international tattoo convention in Western Samoa. Paulo offered to teach the hand tapping method of tattooing to Zulueta and other artists. Zulueta explains: “he was assembling several artists from around the world to basically teach hand tapping to...he had asked myself, Keone Nunes from Hawaii, Mo‘o from Canary Islands, Spain. He’s French, so Paulo’s intent was that Mo‘o would take it back to Tahiti and to French Polynesia...A guy named Captain Caveman. His real name’s Michel [Thieme]. He’s from Holland...he had asked several artists to join him to learn the Samoan hand tapping so they could in turn bring it ‘to their people’ throughout the Pacific” (Zulueta).²² Zulueta did not accept this invitation: “At that point, I had 20 years in the business

²² The quotation marks around “to their people” are Zulueta’s – he said “quote unquote” before the phrase. The list of tattoo artists is partial because he could not remember everyone who was invited to learn from Paulo. Some of the artists Zulueta mentions, however, received the

and I really did not feel comfortable taking on a whole new technique. . . . In all honesty, you know, I always felt that the electric tattoo machine can be quite daunting” (Zulueta). Even for the artists that consented to learn under Paulo, their education about the hand tapping method was not completed by him – Paulo was murdered by his wife, Epifania Sulu‘ape, on November 25, 1999. Although Zulueta locates the genesis of his tattooing style in older images preserved in the archive, his relationship with the “past” is a process of recontextualization, rather than reinvigoration. He insists that his work is a “contemporary version” of indigenous Pacific tattooing (Zulueta). It seems that this focus on the present moment and methods partially facilitated his decision to decline Paulo’s offer to learn hand tapping.

As with Tahiti in 1769, Zulueta’s tattoo work falls somewhere in between exchange and appropriation. His approach to Pacific tattooing is enabled by the interactions between Cook’s crew and the Tahitians. The *Endeavour* crew and subsequent sailors and beachcombers were tattooed by Pacific tattoo artists who made the volitional decision to tattoo these Euro-Americans. This willingness of Pacific Islanders to tattoo Euro-Americans finds its contemporary analogue in Zulueta’s openness in his tattoo work; however, Zulueta is not native to any Polynesian, Micronesian, or Melanesian tradition. He states, “my whole idea has been to just broaden the awareness of the ‘tribal’ tattooing from around the world. . . and just broaden that to include everyone” (Zulueta).²³ This openness, however, tends toward atemporal evocations of indigenous tattooing practices. Zulueta does not interpret his work and his own tattoos through notions of cultural appropriation. In the context of Euro-Americans receiving contemporary

Sulu‘ape title in 2001; they were likely taught by Paulo’s brother, Sulu‘ape Petelo. See *Tatau* 29-30.

²³ Zulueta agrees with Paulo’s decision to tattoo *pe‘a* and *malu* on Europeans: “I personally was a big fan of Paulo’s openness towards sharing the work” (Zulueta).

tribal tattoos based on Pacific designs and the tattoos on his own body, DeMello quotes him as stating,

I feel it's more from an appreciation standpoint...I have a lot of trouble accepting [it] when someone says to me, 'Isn't that kind of contradictory, you have this big Micronesian back piece on you when you're not Micronesian?' Well, let's put it this way, I know for a fact that none of these guys that have the big Micronesian back tattoos are alive. I know this for a fact. (87, ellipsis in original)

Zulueta interprets the Euro-Americans he tattoos as being motivated by cultural appreciation; his own tattoos include this appreciation with an explicit desire to preserve designs for the future.²⁴ When I compared his tattoo work to forms of knowledge production, specifically within the genealogy that begins with the *Endeavour* and the *Bounty*, Zulueta pushed against this interpretation: "More than anything I just wanted to build an awareness" (Zulueta). What is the relationship between knowledge production and awareness?

Zulueta's tattoo work operates through a decontextualization of Pacific tattoo designs, a movement that does not retain culturally specific significations of the design elements. This mining of the archive relies on the production of tattooing as an embodied semiotic system, but it does not attempt to reproduce the same meanings. While his methods mobilize forms and systems of knowledge production about the Pacific, Zulueta's tattoo work does not produce knowledge in a positivist sense. The primitivist lack of specificity in his "contemporary tribal" tattoos, even if he himself is conscious from whence design elements were derived, flattens any

²⁴ The appreciation Zulueta emphasizes shares similarities with Albert Wendt's discussion of non-Samoans receiving *tatau* and *malu*, specifically the artist Tony Fomison and Elsie Bach, a Peace Corp volunteer, both of whom were tattooed by Paulo: "I think that for both Tony and Elsie, the tatau or malu was the bloodletting that allowed them to be connected to Samoa, to aiga, to a culture they admired" (409).

potential “knowledge” into a static representation of the Pacific Islands. The interactions between primitivist discourse and orientalism in Zulueta’s tattooing indicates that contemporary Euro-American tattooing operates through structures similar to those from Tahiti in 1769. The “contemporary tribal” tattoo marks the bearer as someone who does not know, but wants to know; the claim to knowledge remains just that – a claim. Thus, “awareness” of indigenous Pacific tattooing participates in the forms of knowledge production that rely on primitivism’s lack of specificity. The awareness may not extend much past the basic knowledge that certain Pacific cultures exist and practice tattooing.

At the same time, the notion of “contradiction” in the context of people receiving tattoos with designs that derive from cultures not their own is reductive because the inclusion of Pacific designs within Euro-American skin structures and informs the past 250 years of western tattooing. The syncretic bodily presentations that can be produced by tattoo artists like Zulueta could only be considered “contradictory” from a position of essentialization and a belief in cultural purity. This is not to say that the acquisition of such tattoos is not potentially problematic; a Euro-American receiving a tattoo inspired by designs from Borneo from Zulueta could be participating in a cultural appropriation that possesses no aspects of appreciation past what is offered up by the static primitivist representation of the Pacific. The syncretic bodies that Leo Zulueta has produced during his over thirty years of tattooing neo-tribal designs are the contemporary descendants of the *Endeavour* sailors tattooed at Tahiti in 1769, whose marked bodies engendered the present genealogy of Euro-American tattooing discourses.

Many of the discourses attached to tattooing over the past two and a half centuries by Euro-Americans coalesce in the tattoos, body, and ideas of Leo Zulueta. Because he is a tattoo artist, an advocate for the practice, and attempts to increase appreciation for Pacific tattooing, he

does not represent the more blatantly pejorative aspects of tattooing discourse, such as pathologization, criminalization, and the production of the tattoo as “the mark of the savage.” He participates in primitivist discourse, mainly from a laudatory position. His discussion of the inaccessible knowledge encoded within tattooing illustrates the continued prevalence of the assumption that tattoos can transmit (potentially orientalist) knowledge and the production of tattooing as an embodied semiotic system. His specular bodily presentation is syncretic – Micronesian-inspired tattoos and neo-tribal designs on a body already marked by culture as Filipino-American – and his tattoo work produces other forms of syncretism – tattoos inspired by different Pacific cultures on bodies already marked by culture as Euro-American. From James Cook’s voyages, the *Bounty* mutiny, sailors, beachcombers, Herman Melville’s *Typee*, Cesare Lombroso, Albert Parry, Djuna Barnes, James Joyce, and the “Tattoo Renaissance” to Leo Zulueta and contemporary tribalism, primitivist discourse has guided the representation of the tattooed body. Like the tattoo pigment that rests within the skin, primitivism is embedded within Euro-American tattooing discourses. The negative space that structures the tattoo holds the indeterminacy between exchange and appropriation.

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