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**Curating Inscription: The Legacy of Textual Exhibitions of Tattooing
in Colonial Literature**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

from

University of Wollongong

by

Anne Elizabeth Werner BA

School of English Literatures, Philosophy and Languages

2008

CERTIFICATION

I, Anne Elizabeth Werner, declare that this thesis, submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of English Literatures, Philosophy and Languages, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Anne Elizabeth Werner

25 July 2008

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ABSTRACT

CURATING INSCRIPTION: THE LEGACY OF TEXTUAL EXHIBITIONS OF TATTOOING IN COLONIAL LITERATURE

This thesis argues that the colonial context of the tattoo's reintroduction to the west, and the exhibitionary nature of its cultural presence in the Euro-American public's consciousness, has been mediated and to a degree determined by cultural understandings of processes of exhibition and display. The tattoo's role in performances of Otherness has allowed it to be manipulated and utilized by authors who, I argue, 'curate' their textual artifacts in accordance with the conventions offered by other exhibitionary mediums. The complicated nature of the tattoo's relationship with popular cultural representations of colonialism has meant that the reclamation of traditional tattooing, for many cultures, demands an engagement with the colonial histories of representation illuminated in this thesis.

Selected texts, including Herman Melville's *Typee* and *Omoo*, a number of beachcomber narratives, the narratives surrounding the captivity of Olive Oatman, and contemporary representations of Maori in tourist imagery, are examined in order to expose the colonial history of representations of tattooing and the irreversible impact this history has had upon the west's conception of 'tattoo'. The literary analysis focuses upon the concept of the text as exhibition, and the author as curator, and uses theoretical approaches from museum, performance and tourism studies, including work by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Anne Maxwell, Jane Desmond, Tony Bennett and Dean MacCannell to strengthen and nuance the textual readings.

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I feel that this project has been, above all, a collaboration of sorts, despite the fact that my name appears on the title page. As such, I am honoured to make the following heartfelt acknowledgements:

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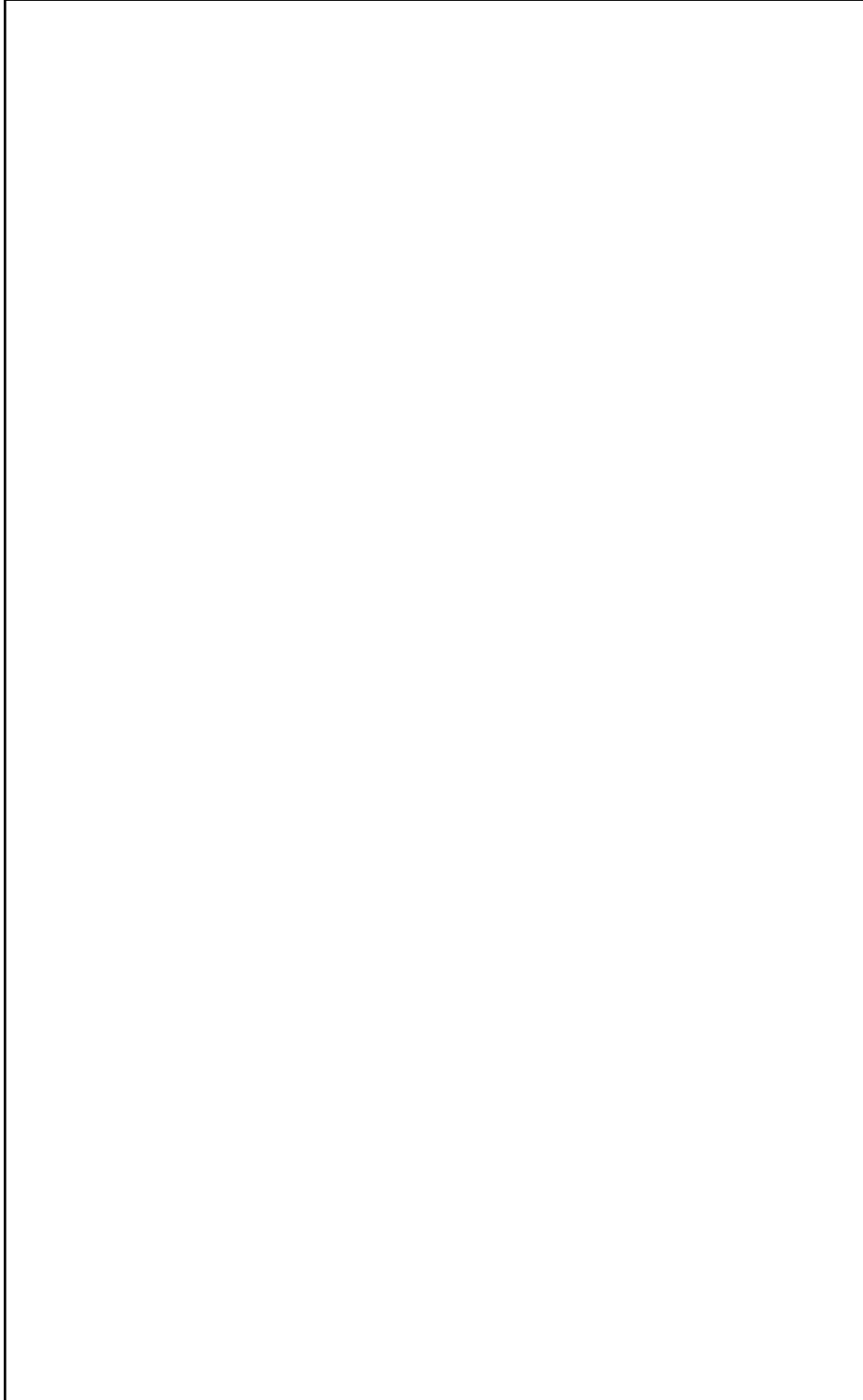
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INTRODUCTION:
CURATING INSCRIPTION



‘Tattoo’ - as we know the word today - is the product of a colonial imaginary founded on performance and exhibition. For 200 years, representations of tattooing in the west have been inextricably and irreversibly informed by spectacularisations of Otherness that have been performed and exhibited in a vast array of cultural mediums. From museums to world’s fairs, from the circus and its sideshow to public educational lectures, tattooed people have been displayed, othered and ultimately objectified in such a manner as to produce a set of meanings and tropes that are still used today in descriptions of colonised people. Beginning with the display of tattooed people who were brought to Europe by explorers to Asia and the Pacific, the public parade of tattooed ‘specimens’ from the colonies places the phenomenon of tattooing within a context of colonial expansion. Moreover, colonial representations of tattooed bodies were explicitly couched within a culture of exhibition, whereby the tattooed subject is objectified and rendered as spectacle. Both of these contexts are still perpetuated in contemporary society by the cultural discourse that surrounds the practice and presence of tattooing.

The ultimate purpose of this thesis is to explore in greater detail the processes by which tattooing - both as a practice and cultural presence - has entered the consciousness of the contemporary west. For the purposes of this thesis, tattooing refers only to the process of injecting ink under the dermis of the skin. Though it has been defined otherwise in other studies, I will follow William Sturtevant’s definition, as given in ‘A Short History of the Strange Custom of Tattooing’. He states, “Tattooing, properly speaking, refers to the introduction of pigment under the skin to produce a permanent or nearly permanent mark” (53). I find this definition to be useful because it clearly distinguishes the practice of tattooing proper from other forms of body modification such as scarification and branding that are sometimes referred to as ‘tattoos’. This definition also distinguishes tattooing from more temporary forms of body art and decoration such as henna ‘tattoos’ and body painting. In this thesis, I pay particular attention to the transgressive and invasive nature of the tattooing process itself, and the ways that this process has actually nuanced comprehensions of the transformative nature of tattoos and tattooing. In light of these issues, a proper regard for Sturtevant’s definition is called for.

Literary representations of tattooing – particularly ‘exotic’ tattooing - have been influenced and framed by the conventions surrounding performative exhibitions of tattooed bodies. In this thesis I argue that the integration of such processes into the west’s cultural consciousness has been inextricably linked to and influenced by colonialism and, explicitly, the closely associated history of objectifying and displaying physically, culturally and racially Other bodies. By examining the way that popular colonial texts acted as a space within which tattooing was ‘performed’ and ‘exhibited’ in alignment with ideological and generic conventions, I will argue for and expose the colonial history that tattoo, as we understand it today, emerged from and is necessarily contextualised by. I believe that the connection between colonialism and the presentation of tattooed bodies is significant because it has an impact on contemporary representation and understanding of tattoos, and has been informed by traditions of exhibition and display, hence my theoretical approach to the texts as carefully curated ‘displays’ of tattooed bodies. My contention is that *tattoo* as created by Cook, was utilised as a tool of colonial and expansionist ideologies throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. This utilisation was enabled by the representation of Indigenous tattooing in a number of popular texts, including those that are the subject of analysis in this thesis, which include a number of beachcomber and captivity narratives, Herman Melville’s early work, and contemporary textual exhibitions of tattooed bodies, including tourist paraphernalia. I argue that the tattoo’s involvement with colonial exploration influenced the way that it is perceived and deployed within these texts, and this in turn has influenced the way that Indigenous tattooing is represented in a contemporary context.

This approach occupies an obvious niche in existing tattoo scholarship, which has to date been primarily concerned with modern sociological readings of contemporary tattooing practice. Despite the connections between colonialism, the re-emergence of tattooing in the west and the history of the tattoo on display, a great deal of scholarship on the topic of tattoos does not address these links in any great detail, the notable exceptions being Nicholas Thomas, Anna Cole and Bronwen Douglas’ anthology, Tattoo: Bodies, Art and Exchange in the Pacific and the West, and Juniper Ellis’ Tattooing the World: Pacific Designs in Print and Skin. Both of these texts provide an important contextualisation for my work, in that they draw attention to the colonial histories I have mentioned above, and Ellis’ book in particular approaches a number of texts, such as Melville’s early novels, which also appear in this thesis.

What my work brings to their foundational discourse, however, is the perspective of exhibition, and a consideration of the literature and other texts from the outlook provided by the fields of museum, tourism, exhibition and freak studies. To identify the colonial threads in the history of tattoo representation in the west is to embark upon an exploration of not only the roots of modern western tattooing, but also its context, and it is the spectacular, performative and exhibitionary context of the tattoo's display that is central to this thesis.

In addition to the scholarship identified above, most other work on tattooing has emerged from the schools of anthropology and cultural studies, with a large proportion of the latter being written from a 'participant observation' standpoint, regarding tattooing only from a western perspective. This approach often assumes that "A tattoo, while social, is of the person: a signature on one's skin" (Blanchard 14) – an outward expression of an intrinsic selfhood that is apparently ahistorical. This, and other sociological areas of tattoo scholarship, pioneered by scholars such as Nikki Sullivan (Tattooed Bodies: Subjectivity, Textuality, Ethics and Pleasure), Victoria Pitts (In the Flesh) and Margo DeMello (Bodies of Inscription: A Cultural History of the Modern Tattoo Community) share very few intersections with my own work, as it is very firmly grounded in a twentieth century, primarily western context. For this reason, most of the existing body of tattoo scholarship does not form a significant part of this thesis, and only informs my work to a limited extent. My concerns here – the *representation* of tattooing in colonial texts, and the establishment of a framework for reading the text as an exhibit – diverge from the existing work to such a degree that I do not consider my work to be comparable with it. Indeed, the limited intersections with the growing body of tattoo scholarship highlight the extent to which my work is not, in fact, about tattoos or tattooing. Rather, I consider my work to be an analysis of the relationship between representation and ideology, using the example of the exhibition of tattooed bodies within colonial texts. The example – the tattooed body – is essentially incidental, in that the general 'text-as-exhibition' framework could be applied theoretically to any artifact that is 'exhibited' within a text. With this said, however, I should also acknowledge the very deliberate and specific reasons that I have chosen the ostensibly 'random' example of tattoos and tattooing as the foci of this analysis. Central to this selection is the rich history of the tattooed body within exhibition and performance, and this history's intersection with colonialism. In addition to this, I find that the concept of the tattoo as a text within a text, or indeed, a text

within an exhibition, is intriguing, and deserves attention. My research in popular and academic literature has revealed that the connections between colonial and contemporary representations of tattooing are significantly under-addressed: this thesis goes some way towards filling this void as well as providing a theoretical framework that allows for a more sensitive reading of ideologically-driven representations of Otherness on a broader scale.

Although a growing number of authors, such as Thomas, Cole, Douglas and Ellis have approached the colonial connections of bodily trade and exhibition with regards to the Indigenously tattooed body, none have as yet approached this subject from the perspective of *textual* exhibition. In my analysis, I position texts as exhibitions in and of themselves, responsible for displaying the artifact – in the context of my thesis, the tattooed body – in terms that are tied to a specific ideological intention. This perspective provides an opportunity to consider the embedded and intertwined histories of literature and display that have simultaneously informed and shaped each other, as well as a globalised imagery of tattooed Others.

A textual analysis of tattooing is useful and valuable because tattoos are, and always have been, a text. They pre-date colonial contact, and in many cases, they represent the writing of a nation, and have played a key role in colonial interactions, treaties, and trade, especially in the Pacific, and in particular, Aotearoa New Zealand, where tattoos, along with other forms such as carving and weaving, acted as the literature and writing of the Maori people. Although the reclamation of this pre-contact literature marks a significant and potent reappraisal and postcolonial response to the experience of colonialism, the wearing of a tattoo is also a performance, a participation in a social language that is determined by context. This point underscores the crux of this thesis: literary texts provide a framework within which tattooed bodies are exhibited, as they perform the function of the exhibition space. A text is an exhibition and the author a curator, embedding his or her exhibit with social meaning that is necessarily linked to ideology. As Robert Rydell writes in World of Fairs, expositions or world's fairs were routinely organised in the United States and several countries throughout Europe “to build support for imperial policies at home and in their colonies” (61). Similarly, Anne Maxwell has argued that the images produced during the “age of high imperialism,” (1850-1915) - live displays of primitive people at exhibitions, and photos that formed part of

the beginnings of the international tourist industry – contributed to white hegemony by exposing the masses to “the spectacle of racial difference” (ix) and making “people of the white Anglo-Saxon nations feel mentally, physically and morally superior to the colonized” (2). The explicit link that Rydell and Maxwell identify between the mass entertainment of the fair and political and ideological propaganda is not dissimilar to the connections between popular literature, such as is discussed in this thesis, and colonial ideology.

Prior to European ‘discovery’ of the islands of the Pacific, the practice of tattooing in Europe had been all but forgotten. Jane Caplan’s Written on the Body, the most important tattoo history to have been published to date, provides a significant counter-argument to the commonly perpetuated misconception that tattooing was brought to Europe from the Pacific by Captain Cook. In fact, the practice of permanently marking the skin by injecting some kind of pigment had been practiced on the continent for centuries, the earliest-known tattooed person being Ötzi the ‘Ice Man’, found in the alps near the border of Austria and Italy in 1991. It is estimated that Ötzi died between 3300 and 3200BC, making him not only the oldest known tattooed specimen, but possibly the oldest known human mummy (Jones 2).

It is patently clear from Caplan’s anthology that Cook was not responsible for ‘discovering’ tattooing. What is interesting about Cook’s voyages to the Pacific and his published journals and accounts of these events, is that he helped *re-introduce* the practice and, significantly, introduced the term *tattoo* to the English language. As C.P. Jones and others have pointed out, Cook’s description of the practice of “tattowing” on Tahiti in 1769 is the first appearance of the word in English (Jones 1). By introducing the term within an explicit context of colonial expansion and exploration, Cook was responsible for embedding the European use of the term within the discourse of colonialism. Within this discourse, tattooing and, perhaps more significantly, tattooed people, took on a meaning that was far more complicated than just a suggestion that the individual in question had permanently marked skin. Though it was not immediate, and Cook was not single-handedly responsible for the meaning that was to emerge, ‘tattoo’ quite quickly came to denote primitivity, savagery and, more generally, Otherness. People in Europe had been injecting ink under their skin for various reasons for centuries – the practice in itself was nothing new. Cook’s invocation of a new term for the

practice, however, as well as a depiction of a different kind of people engaging in the practice – exotic, tawny savages – meant that the new terminology was loaded with racialised, exoticised, and necessarily imperialist overtones.

Perhaps more than his journals, which were not widely published until 1893, Cook's return to Europe, and the introduction to London society of his 'specimen', Omai was responsible for the rapid and broad dispersion of popular knowledge of tattooing. Moreover, their exhibition powerfully suggested the position of tattooed bodies as subjects/objects of a spectacular gaze. Omai was brought to London from Tahiti following Cook's Pacific voyage in 1774, and was immediately accepted by London society as the epitome of the 'Noble Savage'. Though Omai was not the first tattooed Pacific Islander to be exhibited in London¹, his connection to the celebrated explorer meant that he was immensely popular and drew unrivalled attention and acclaim. He was the subject of many and varied literary and artistic representations, including newspaper articles, plays, poems, a portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds² and a falsified 'autobiography', *Narrations d'Omai*. In addition to these representations, ethnographic 'shows' about the South Pacific were popular in London at the time, 'promoting' the 'friendly' Pacific Islands as paradisaical (McCalman).

William Cummings notes how striking it is that Omai's tattoos "were seen as generalized signs of an 'otherness' supposedly common to the entire orient rather than specific to Tahiti or even Polynesia" (9). What Cummings identifies here is the kind of blanket primitivism that the display of tattooed people evoked, and which is a recurrent theme throughout this thesis. Tattooed bodies became interchangeable, and symbolic of a general 'idea' of the kinds of people who might be tattooed. Cummings believes that the exhibition and performance of tattooed people such as Omai and Lee Boo was significant because the corporeality of the

¹ Jeoly, from Meangis near Mindanao, in 1691, Aotourou from Tahiti, in 1769, Timoteitei from the Marquesas in 1799, and Te Pehi Cupe (known in England as Tupai Cupa), a chief from New Zealand in 1820 all visited and were displayed or exhibited in Europe and/or England (Fellowes). The most famous and influential of these early tattooed exhibits however, was Omai, who was brought to London from Tahiti by Captain Cook in 1774. In 1783, Lee Boo from Palau appeared in London. He received a similar reception, and was aggrandized and known as the "Black Prince" (Hezel 75), though he did not garner the same level of popularity as Omai, and, perhaps as a result of this, is not as iconic as his Tahitian counterpart.

² For a detailed analysis of Reynolds' portrait and Omai's reception in London in general, see Harriet Guest's 'Curiously Marked: Tattooing and Gender Difference in Eighteenth-century British Perceptions of the South Pacific'.

displayed individual both gave credence to, and stood independently from, the textual representations that were concurrently popular. The Pacific Islanders' bodies perpetuated images, and perhaps more importantly, ideas, about tattooing within an expansionist context, and in so doing, inhabited the intersection between exhibition and textual representation.

Following the success of Omai in London came a series of ethnographic displays, which continued throughout the latter part of the eighteenth century and provided the stylistic foundation for the exhibitions of Indigenous people in world's fairs, dime museums, circuses and sideshows that perpetuated the situation of the tattoo as an object of spectacle. These exhibitions and displays accounted for much of the general public's exposure to tattooing, and the material that accompanied the exhibition of the tattooed individual – usually in the form of written pamphlets or spoken 'lectures' – created an aura of exotic Otherness that perpetuated the perception of tattooing as a liminal practice. These texts, I argue, were as much an exhibition of the tattooed body as the physical displays themselves, and several exhibitionary tropes were translated from physical displays and performances to their textual accompaniments. In the cases of the beachcomber and captivity narratives addressed in Chapters Two and Three, the narrative acted both as an accompaniment to the exhibition, and as an exhibition in its own right. The authors of these texts engage explicitly with the conventions seen in exhibitions of exoticised Others in a number of performative modes, most notably those related to the ethnographic displays mentioned above, which in turn influenced exhibitions in the nineteenth century's world's fairs, circus, sideshow and museum displays.

In time, such representative methods and structures have influenced the ways that racial and cultural Others are represented in tourism advertising and souvenirs, an industry which is deeply indebted to the kinds of cultural tourism that the world's fairs, exhibitions and circuses popularised. Also as a result of such traditions, all of the primary texts that I examine in this thesis contain a certain degree of ethnographic posturing. That is, they all offer some kind of (at times quasi-scientific) insight into the lives of 'primitive' people. The ethnographic side-notes that are present in these texts can be likened to and aligned with the announcements and pamphlets that accompanied many exhibits of tattooed people. In her analysis of colonial photography and exhibitions, Anne Maxwell suggests that the pseudo-scientific aspects of

display and arrangement allow the exhibited people and cultures to become 'knowable'. In effect, they create what Svetlana Alpers has identified as "the museum effect": "the tendency to isolate something from its world, to offer it up for attentive looking and thus to transform it" (27). Ultimately, this effect allows an adjustment of perception and the imposition of a value system that did not previously operate around the exhibited object. The exhibition of cultural artifacts, extracted and decontextualised, turns them into objects of spectacle. To extract people from their context, to display them (and their cultural effects such as clothing, implements and tattoos) as artifacts or specimens not only objectifies them, but also sets them up within the metonymic capacity that Cummings identifies. In postcolonial societies such as Aotearoa New Zealand, traditions of human display which have both centred around and in turn informed a spectacularisation of tattoos and tattooing, have profoundly affected the ways in which contemporary tattooing practices are exhibited, both within literature and in more traditional performative formats.

My textual selection reflects this thesis' methodological approach, which lies at the intersections of literary history, literary criticism, cultural studies and historical interrogation. The texts discussed in this thesis have been chosen for three primary reasons. Firstly, each text contains a detectable ideological objective. This objective is at times explicit, and at other times it is implicit, and is of interest to me as it is reflective of the objective of exhibition, freak-show and museum curators, whose ideological position, and the ideology of the time, invariably influenced their curatorial style and technique. The texts' colonial contexts, moreover, are foregrounded by such an approach, reiterating the extent to which literature operated as important colonial propaganda. Secondly, the treatment of the tattooed body, whether Indigenous or white, follows a markedly similar pattern to the display of tattooed bodies in the world's fairs and exhibitions discussed in Rydell's and Maxwell's work. In some cases, the texts were accompanied and/or promoted by a corporeal display of tattooed Otherness, and this display served to nuance and highlight the narrative subject's position as an object of spectacle. The third, and perhaps overriding reason behind the selection of the texts is their popularity and influence. Each text has been widely dispersed and read/consumed by a broad audience. Many of the literary texts were best-sellers, and, like the extremely popular exhibitions of Omai in London, played an essential role in the distribution

of imagery and information about tattooing and tattooed people, which undeniably influenced generations of perceptions.

Chapter One provides an introduction to the various modes of display, following on from the exhibitions of Omai and Lee Boo, which inform the curatorial techniques employed by the authors of the texts discussed. I identify a traceable lineage, running through the world's fairs and exhibitions, to the circus side- and freak-show, through the texts discussed in this thesis, and on to contemporary literature and tourist souvenirs, which creates, manages and perpetuates a specific tradition of spectacularly Othering the tattooed body. In this chapter I also address a number of 'narratives of enfreakment' which were utilised by tattooed performers to enhance their performance. These narratives, I argue, contributed to processes of Othering by perpetuating the kinds of stereotypical imagery of colonised people that was popularised by earlier modes of display.

Chapter Two follows from these themes with a discussion of James O'Connell, George Vason, Edward Robarts, Horace Holden and John Rutherford's nineteenth-century beachcomber narratives. Their attitude towards the practice of tattooing, and their descriptions of its effects, are reflective of the influence of the traditions of display discussed in Chapter One. Beachcomber narratives were often the first texts to represent the newly-discovered Pacific Islands to the Euro-American reading public, and the subjects of the narratives – those men who had crossed the boundaries of civilisation and lived, sometimes for many years, amongst 'savages' – capitalised on the public's demand for stories of adventure in barbaric, far-off lands. The lack of contextualising literature meant that these narratives were extremely influential in the perpetuation of certain types of imagery surrounding the distant Pacific and its 'primitive', often tattooed inhabitants.

Each beachcomber narrative discussed in this chapter engages extensively with representations of tattooing and tattooed people. More significantly, however, each beachcomber whose narrative I discuss, was tattooed. Often, upon their return to Europe and/or America (many of them were exhibited on both continents) these men performed their transgressive identity by displaying their tattooed bodies in circuses, sideshows and museums. In these cases, their narratives became narratives of enfreakment, enhancing,

contextualising, and supporting their performances. The beachcombers' spectacularised display – the origin of the immensely popular 'tattooed man' – perpetuated the notion of tattooed bodies as objects of display. More than this, however, the exhibition of Indigenously tattooed white bodies, and the accompanying narratives, which almost invariably framed the tattooing process as a form of torture, entrenched notions of tattooing as a transformative process, which was ultimately perceived as threatening to terms of identity definition.

These threats are quite literally embodied by Olive Oatman, the subject of Chapter Three, whose story brings the process of tattooing into the context of the popular genre of North American captivity narratives. Oatman's narrative was most widely dispersed in the form of a bestselling book, *Captivity of the Oatman Girls* (1857). A significant accompaniment to the book was a lecture tour that spanned the United States, which saw Oatman lecturing on the topic of her captivity, and Reverend Stratton, the editor of her narrative, lecturing on "the present Condition, Traits, Customs and Prospects of the Numerous Tribes on the Pacific Slope, their Antecedents, &c. And the True Position our People and Government should assume towards them" ("Lo! The Indian Captive!" [Broadsheet]). Stratton's presence alongside Oatman's appearance essentially positions both Oatman and her narrative within the broader objective of his anti-Indian stance, and crystallises his use of the narrative for his own agenda. The quasi-scientific/anthropological theme of Stratton's talk lends itself to a comparison with the role of the curator in museum displays. Indeed, Stratton has the same task in 'presenting' Oatman in her narrative that the museum curator has when exhibiting a cultural artifact, and in this chapter I argue that, like the curator of a museum or exhibition, Stratton chose how he wanted Oatman displayed and, to a certain extent through his accompaniment, he chose how she was received. In 'Locating Authenticity' Spencer Crew and James Sims highlight that there is an element of authority in exhibition, especially when accompanied by a brochure or lecture that may affect the 'voice' of the exhibition. Stratton 'created' and essentially 'curated' the travelling exhibition of Olive Oatman, as well as editing her experiences within the text. The authenticity of what Oatman divulges in her own lecture is therefore compromised, as it is mediated by Stratton.

In addition to Stratton's version of the narrative, I also address a number of previously unaddressed texts including personal journals, letters, newspaper accounts and, finally, a

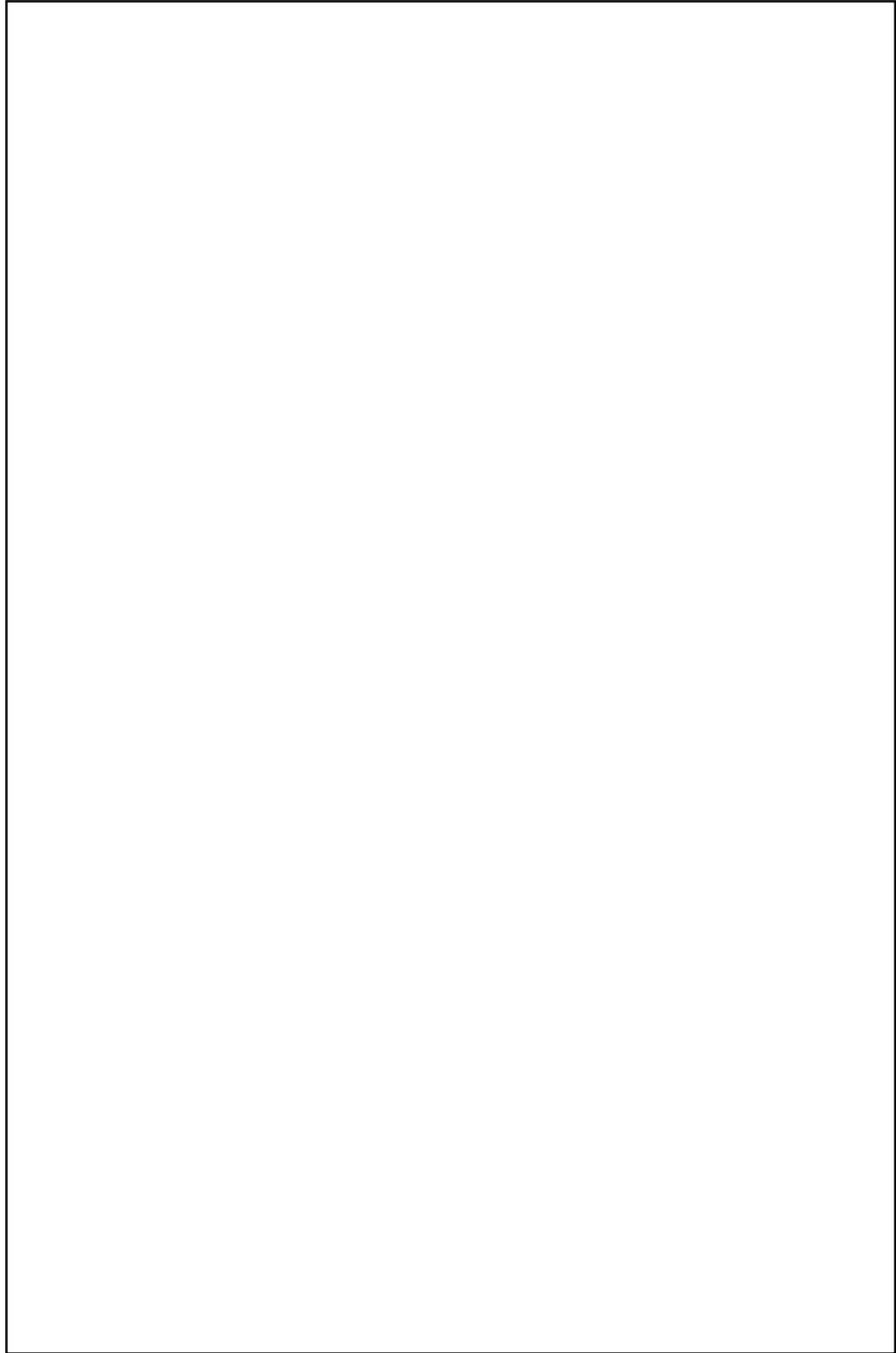
contemporary teen fiction version of the story. In addressing these differing versions of the story, I highlight the power of the curator, by pointing out that a single artifact, in this case, the narrative of a captivity on the North American frontier, can be curated differently depending on the intentions of the author/curator. In turn, this leads to a discussion of the way that authority is created, both in literary texts, and in exhibitions. As Crew and Sims note, “Authenticity is not about factuality or reality. It is about authority. Objects [in the context of this thesis read ‘tattoos’] have no authority; people do. It is people on the exhibition team who must make a judgement about how to tell about the past.” (163).

This judgement is essentially the same as is made by the authors and/or editors of the texts I have chosen to discuss in this thesis, and in Chapter Four I approach Herman Melville’s first major works, Typee (1846) and Omoo (1847), with this in mind. These texts, I argue, present a literary exhibition of tattooed Otherness that engages with tropes, imagery and stereotypes that were developed in the exhibitionary formats following from Omai’s display in London, including the displays and performances of tattooed beachcombers, and on to the World’s Fairs. Yet, unlike these exhibitionary formats, Melville’s texts do not actually engage with an exhibition or display of tattooed corporeal Otherness. Typee and Omoo indicate that exhibitions of racial and cultural Otherness, as signified by the presence and practice of tattooing, became popular in purely literary displays, and no longer interacted with, promoted, or responded to physical exhibitions of Otherness: the literary texts became, in themselves, exhibitionary. A number of factors have influenced the decision to include Melville’s texts here. Not least of all is the undeniable influence his work has had over popular perceptions of the Pacific and Pacific Islander people. As Lyons has pointed out, “no U.S. writer has been more influential than Melville in reflecting and (re)establishing the basic patterns through which Oceania came to be perceived” (American Pacificism 40-41). Additionally, Melville, particularly in Typee and Omoo, draws quite heavily from, and engages with, the traditions of the captivity and beachcomber narratives already discussed in earlier chapters. Essentially, he perpetuates the conventions established by these genres, and blends them with the genre of travel writing, thereby entrenching an image of the spectacular, tattooed Other within perceptions of travel and tourism *in general*.

This blend has profoundly influenced contemporary representations of tattooed bodies, and in the final chapter, I address these legacies as they are reflected in a number of postcolonial Maori texts, and consider ways that images of tattooing and tattooed people have been repossessed and re-appropriated by Indigenous authors and artists in order to both respond to and realign the previous representations. In addition to this consideration, the final chapter also offers an assessment of Aotearoa New Zealand's tourism industry, and its associated proliferation of Maori imagery. Given that cultural tourism is a direct descendant of the world's fairs' ethnographic displays, it is no surprise that a number of similarities are identifiable, which reinforce Otherness via processes of display that find their foundation in binary opposition and stereotypes. This imagery, I suggest, is answerable to the legacies of colonially determined representations, and is certainly, in some cases, constrained by the traditions of display that I have discussed throughout the thesis. Ultimately, I argue that contemporary reclamation of Indigenous tattooing practices and symbolism is dependent upon a recognition of the ways that contemporary perceptions of tattooing, tattoos, and tattooed people have been influenced, and in some way dictated, by the history of ideologically-driven displays of tattooed people.

1:

FREAKIFYING THE TATTOOED EXHIBIT



In the popular 2001 children's book Olivia Saves the Circus, the protagonist Olivia (a young piglet) tells her classmates about her recent trip to the circus. In the story, Olivia is distressed to find that all of the performers are waylaid with ear infections. Luckily though, Olivia

“knows how to do everything”, and takes on each of the circus personas herself, thereby “saving” the circus (Falconer n.p.). Amongst the circus personas that Olivia adopts are: a lion tamer, a tightrope walker, a stilt-walker, juggler, trapeze artist and, interestingly, a tattooed lady. Each of the roles she inhabits involve some kind of mastery – either of her own, or somebody else’s body, and none of the roles are *intrinsic* to Olivia herself (author and illustrator Ian Falconer does not, for example, depict ‘Olivia the siamese twin’). In other words, in none of the circus performances that Olivia enacts is she what Robert Bogdan would term a “born freak” (Freak Show 8). The roles are, for the most part, assumed, temporary, and even contain an element of elitism because of the skill that is involved in their performance. All except for “Olivia the tattooed lady”.

In Falconer’s depiction of this ‘performance’, Olivia is clearly the subject (or object) of a spectral gaze that disconcertingly Others her childlike, piggy frame. Unlike every other illustration in the book, Olivia is, for her performance as the “tattooed lady,” stripped naked, her only props a small platform upon which she stands, and the ‘tattoos’ which she (re)assures the reader are drawn on with a “marker” (Falconer n.p.). Her tattooed body is the only illustration on the seemingly vast, white page, further highlighting her status as the sole focus of the reader’s (or viewer’s) gaze (Fig. 1). The tattoos are typical sailor fare – a hula girl, ship, palm tree, anchor, flags etc.: similar indeed, to the tattoos worn by the most photographed tattooed lady of all time, Betty Broadbent.

What is most striking about this illustration is the way that it encompasses and recreates the atmosphere of spectacle that the tattooed man or woman garnered in the circus or sideshow. Unlike “Olivia the lion tamer” or “Olivia the queen of the trampoline”, Olivia the tattooed

lady is a naked, lonely figure, propless but for her 'tattooed' skin. Indeed,

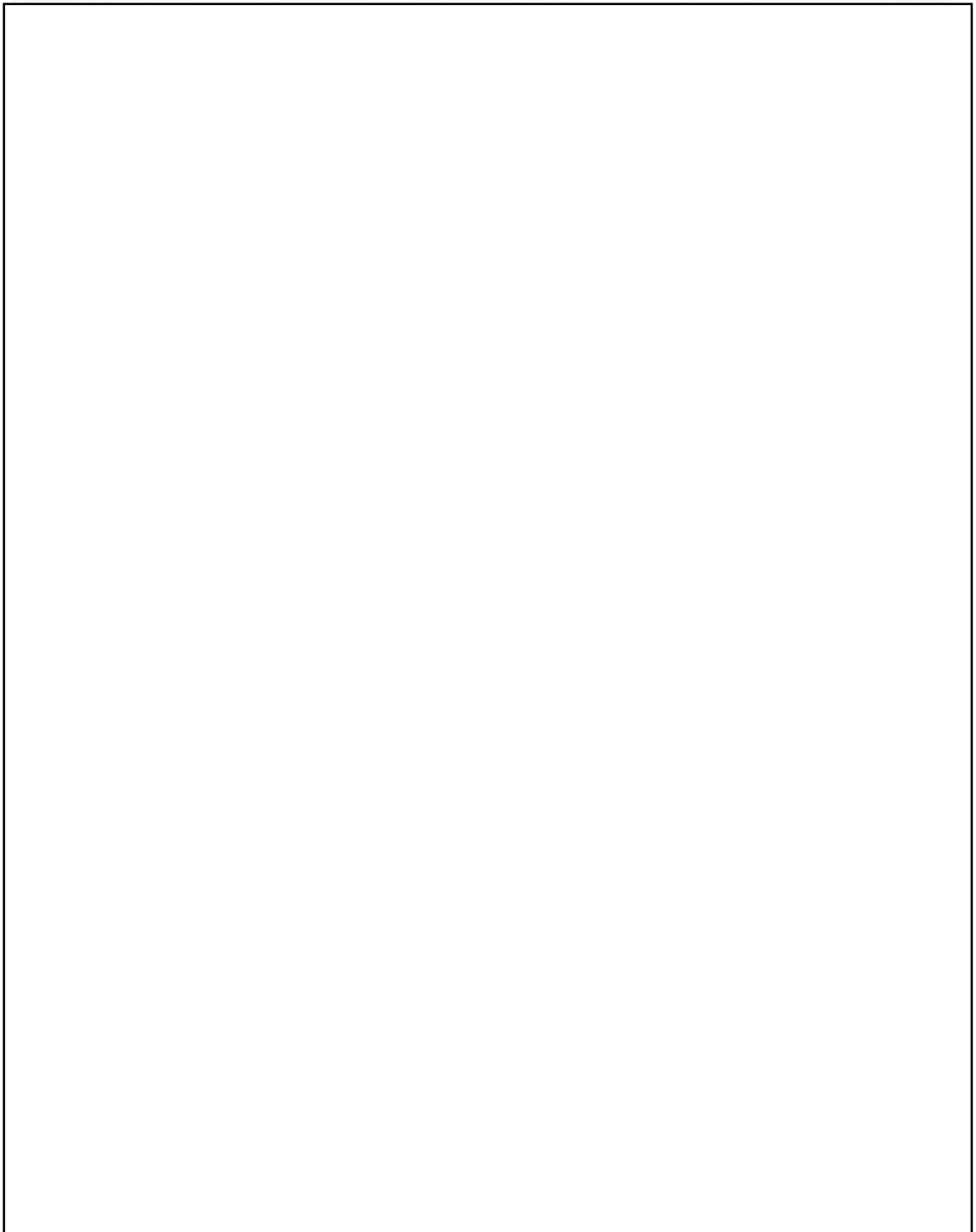


Figure 1: Olivia

given the direct gaze that the tattooed skin demands, the individual behind that skin is to a certain extent erased, thereby completing the process of objectification.

The inclusion of the tattooed lady as a circus identity in a children's book clearly indicates the extent to which the tattooed performer has impressed their 'mark' upon the cultural 'image' of the circus. Similarly, it confirms and asserts the permanency of the tattooed man or woman as a fixture of the circus. Indeed, the image of the tattooed person is as indelible upon the cultural notion of the circus as the tattoos upon his or her skin, and it is not only in children's literature where this is exemplified. Contemporary literary works such as Gabriel Josipovici's play "Dreams of Mrs. Fraser" (1974) and Robert Hayden's poem "The Tattooed Man" similarly connect the tattooed figure not only to the performative and exhibitionary site of the circus/fair, but also to the associated history of colonial processes of cultural appropriation and display. In "Dreams of Mrs. Fraser", Josipovici re-writes the captivity of Eliza Fraser in such a way as to explicitly marry the concepts of captivity, colonialism and the tattooed body, further reinforcing the ideological interdependence of representations of these phenomena. Hayden's poem is also poignantly evocative of the lonely, objectified, and captive experience of many tattooed people who were exhibited, or who exhibited themselves in any number of ways, in any number of contexts. His tattooed man is "silent," yet crying to be loved by the "hundreds" who have

paid to gawk at me -
grotesque outsider whose
unnaturalness
assures them they
are natural, they indeed
belong.
(160-61)

Hayden's tattooed man is a passionate, yet tragically yearning figure, who laments the permanence of the marks that "were my pride," as they render him "alien, / homeless everywhere" and, most painfully, without love. As Fred Fetrow suggests, in Hayden's poem, the tattooed man, as an easily recognisable, almost inherently alienated, freakish figure, "dramatizes the modern plight of alienation" (128).

Similarly, Josipovici's Mrs. Fraser stands naked and alone, but for her tattoos, in a large gilded cage. The announcer, John Redbold "in bright costume, somewhere between nineteenth-century military uniform and Pierrot's dress" calls to the audience "Roll up! Roll up! Only sixpence! Sixpence to see the tattooed lady! Come and hear in her own words the incredible story of her amazing adventures among the man-eating natives of the Australian jungle!" (Josipovici 159). While Redbold's costuming simultaneously evokes colonial-era militarism and clownish joviality, his announcement marries the concepts of tattooing and cannibalism. An element of irony is also at play, as Redbold calls for the audience to hear Fraser's story as told in "her own words," yet Josipovici clearly suggests the generic conventions of the tattooed person's display, and thereby foregrounds the extent to which the "stories of adventure" told by such exhibits, are seldom "in their own words".

As these examples show, cultural images of the tattooed body are almost exclusively associated with a spectacularisation of Otherness that becomes, circularly, the *raison d'être* for the display itself. Moreover, they exemplify the extent to which the tattooed person's enduring cultural presence within the circus translates to a general association with a performative identity. The tattoo's links with colonial exploration, via travellers' journals and the display of tattooed 'specimens' who were brought to Europe and America from the Pacific and parts of Asia, embedded the phenomenon within a discourse that equated the marked body with that of a racial and cultural Other. As a result of this, tattoos have featured heavily and symbolically in performances of racial Otherness.

Key to the theoretical framework that I develop in this thesis are the areas of museum, performance, circus and tourism theory. In this chapter, I outline my use of these, detailing the ways in which each of them intersect with one another, and identify the ways they can be applied to literary text. Specifically, I examine the way that exhibitions and displays are curated and arranged in order to create and maintain notions of racial and cultural Otherness, thus facilitating the exhibitions' ideological function. The exhibition of tattooed

bodies is of primary interest, and I explore in some detail the various modes of presentation that were utilised by the organisers of different presentation formats including ethnographic displays, fairs, circuses and sideshows, and the implications of these types of exhibition.

Also included in this chapter is a survey of some of the narratives that were utilised by tattooed performers in order to enhance the ‘freakery’ of their display. These narratives provide an insight into the way the mode of presentation and the contextualising narrative impacted upon the kinds of meanings produced by various displays. As a result of the intertwined nature and history of museums, sideshows, fairs and exhibitions, I rarely discuss them in isolation, but rather allow them each to emerge and weave through my discussion as is fitting. Robert Bogdan and Tony Bennett have both highlighted the interrelation of the history and format of world’s fairs, circuses and museums. Bennett suggests that the Midway at the Chicago Columbian Exhibition in 1893 was profoundly influenced by museum practices, which in turn provided inspiration for the amusement parks at Coney Island (5). Janet Davis has also indicated significant connections between the world’s fairs and the circus. Similarly, Bogdan points out that although the circuses, world’s fairs, sideshows (a part and extension of the circus) and dime museums did, to a certain extent operate as separate entities, there were also significant overlaps in format, performers, management and culture.

These similarities, intersections and overlaps are fundamental to the way that I position the different formats of presentation in order to read the texts presented in the following chapters. Although they are not interchangeable, since each is distinguished by differing eras, intentions and, to a certain degree, the socio-economic positions of their observers, the similarities between these formats allow some fluidity. Especially with regard to the presentation of tattooed people, both white and non-white, there are virtually no significant differences in the mode of their display. It is useful nonetheless to begin with a discussion of the world’s fairs, and the way that this tradition both informs and is informed by, influences and is influenced by, the forums of the circus, the museum, and tourism.

In Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World’s Fairs, 1851-1939, Paul Greenhalgh points out that “people of empire” made their first appearance at the Crystal Palace in London in 1851. While propagandist entertainment was not, at the

time of the first world's fairs and exhibitions, anything new, the incorporation of a display of actual physical, racial and cultural Otherness under the guise of education was: and it was something that was very quickly diffused into other formats of presentation. Greenhalgh argues that the "strange combinations of carnival and ceremony, of circus and museum, of popularism and elitism" that characterised the world's fairs, were evident from the very first exposition in Paris in 1798 (23). The substantial history of the conflation of these forms, and the crystallisation of the format through the many reincarnations of the event over the ensuing centuries, meant that the peculiar and very specific ideological intentions of the expositions became very well established. While Greenhalgh describes education as a "fetish" of the exhibitions, formulated from an understanding that "if you exposed ideas to an ignorant audience in a language they could understand, you would have influence over them" (19), it was the conflation of the educational with the entertaining that ultimately solidified the political and ideological influence of mass popular entertainment.

According to Greenhalgh, shifts in the mode of presentation were responsible for transforming the display of colonial people from something that was of interest to anthropologists into "something for everyone to gaze at. Here entertainment directly served as imperial/racial propaganda" (42). Bennett has also identified the power of display, writing that museums, world's fairs, and international expositions all exhibited "artifacts and/or persons in a manner calculated to embody and communicate specific cultural meanings and values" (6). According to Bennett, the exhibitions and world's fairs were responsible for the

periodic magnification of power through its excessive display [...] They did so, however, in relation to a network of institutions which provided mechanisms for the permanent display of power. And for a power which was not reduced to periodic effects but which, to the contrary, manifested itself precisely in continually displaying its ability to command, order, and control objects and bodies, living and dead. (66)

The power of the exhibitions and fairs was contingent upon more institutionalised processes and formats of display, such as museums, which as Kaplan points out are "purveyors of ideology and of a downward spread of knowledge to the public" (3). As ideological tools, such processes of display, exhibition and performance can be explicitly connected to

colonialism, and, more specifically, to Cook's 'exhibition' of Omai in 1774. Indeed, Rosemary Poignant claims that the movement of colonialism was paralleled by the social construction of savage Otherness within the show space, that is, the "cultural space that is both a zone of displacement for the performers and a place of spectacle for the onlookers" (7).

Displays of Indigenous people at the world's fairs essentially laid the groundwork for the display of "exotic people" in circuses, side- and freak-shows, ultimately entrenching the idea of the racialised freak (Bogdan Freak Show 48). According to Curtis Hinsley, world's fairs and international expositions were carnivals of the industrial age, the two key foci of the exhibits being industrial successes (machinery, design, technology) and primitive Others, especially those connected with the colonies. The primary objective of the display was to showcase human industry and progress. These exhibitions were held in Europe, Great Britain and the United States throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with the inclusion of ethnographic villages beginning in Paris in 1889. By 1890 two different kinds of human display had been established – human freaks and oddities, and ethnographic displays, which included the recreation of 'native' villages, and often included the display of tattooed bodies. Perhaps not surprisingly, these two modes shared some overlap, mainly resulting from the racist colonial message that formed a large part of the expositions' agenda. Yet Greenhalgh claims that from 1889 to 1914 "it would be no exaggeration to say that as items of display, objects were less interesting than human beings, and through the medium of display, human beings were transformed into objects" (82). Consequently, displays of colonised people, under the guise of ethnography came to "debase and defile non-western cultures in a way barely conceived of before" (Greenhalgh 87), and the concept of the racialised freak was born. In the standard freak show format, where 'pygmies' were displayed alongside 'armless wonders'³, racial difference was aligned with disability and congenital abnormality. The overwhelming popularity of displays featuring tattooed Indigenous people, which peaked with the presence of the Igorot Village at the 1904 world's fair in St. Louis, further highlights this. Ostensibly an 'educational' exhibit, the villagers' popularity was undeniably boosted by the sensationalism that attended the 'villagers' naked and tattooed

³ For a brief historical discussion of the display of 'exotic' people with animals, see Janet Davis pp118-119.

bodies. In turn, such displays provided “a lever for white Americans to position themselves at the apex of evolution” (Maxwell 82). The promotion of racial Otherness as something freaky supported racist and imperialist agendas that pointed to the superiority of whiteness as vindication of their beliefs.

The techniques of display – specifically, the curatorial methods used to arrange human ‘artifacts’ – were easily transferred between the formats of the world’s fairs’ pioneering ethnographic dioramas and the circus side- and freak-show, wherein colonial ideology was normalised under the guise of harmless entertainment. As Davis points out, the nineteenth-century circus, and its associated paraphernalia, such as toys and other souvenirs, often provided modern children with their first impression of ‘exotic’ Others, thereby imprinting colonial power relations into the child’s subconscious long before they were aware of what ‘colonialism’ actually meant (36). As a result, the circus (and the associated Wild West shows that Davis also discusses) held an extraordinarily powerful ideological position, since their messages were disguised and essentially normalised under the mantle of fun entertainment. Yet while the world’s fairs positioned themselves as entertaining, they also emphasised their educational value, and, as a result, museum and other educational institutions’ displays were profoundly influenced by the modes of presentation witnessed at the world’s fairs. The transference of artifacts from museums for display at the world’s fairs, and the reciprocal transference of artifacts gathered for world’s fairs finding their way into museum collections, solidified the connections between the ideological agenda of the world’s fairs and the seemingly more ‘objective’ capacity of the educational institution and museum. While many world’s fair managers saw themselves as ‘curators’ and viewed the fairs themselves as ‘universities’ (Rydell 25), the presence of the fairs’ remnants within museums (and vice versa) provided a more ongoing and ultimately more powerful message, owing to the popularly perceived ‘objectivity’ of the educational institution. As Ivan Karp points out, it is this “alleged innate neutrality of museums and exhibitions [...] that enables them to become instruments of power as well as instruments of education and experience” (14).

The ‘alleged innate neutrality’ that Karp refers to also surrounds many of the texts that I will be looking at in this thesis, and I am interested in pursuing the implications of this reference since it brings attention to the power of the ‘voice’ of the exhibition, which ultimately calls

into question the power of the curator. Bennett's thorough Foucaultian reading of the museum as an institution of power is both influential and compelling. He suggests that museums and expositions provided "periodic magnification of power" by "continually displaying [their] ability to command, order, and control objects and bodies, living or dead" (66). I would like to draw particular attention to the specific power of the curator, who maintains control over the way that artifacts are exhibited, thereby determining the ultimate message that is projected by the display. Even the most 'objective' display is mediated by the beliefs, intentions and perceptions of the curator, not to mention those of the audience. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has noted, an exhibited artifact's meaning is, to some extent, dictated by its abstracted and decontextualised situation within the realms of exhibition and display, where the artifact's meaning, denied of its original context, is determined by the directed recontextualisation provided by the curator. The subtle control that is sustained by the curator can be likened to that of the author, who is similarly responsible for shaping and presenting their 'exhibits' within the text.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's suggestion of "treating the specimen as a document" ("Objects" 390) informs my theoretical position in this regard, and leads me to argue that it is equally valuable to do the opposite, which is to treat the document or text as a specimen or exhibit, and therefore to treat the author/editor as the curator of that specimen. This perspective, as well as a consideration of the history of display that has contextualised and shaped the west's perception of tattooing, informs my approach towards the primary literature. As I have already mentioned, the tattooed body's historical links with processes of display and spectacularisation have impacted upon the ways that tattooing has been imag(in)ed in the west for well over two centuries. Within literature, the performative, spectacular tropes that were established in the formats of early ethnographic displays, museums, world's fairs, and the circus and sideshow are reinscribed, thereby simultaneously reiterating the position of the tattooed body as a spectacularised object, and suggesting the position of the author as similar to that of the exhibition's curator. The value in this kind of treatment of literary texts is to expose the assumed neutrality that allows them to be read as powerful ideological tools. The author/editor, when positioned as curator, is subjected to a level of scrutiny that deliberately and specifically addresses the *way* that the text has been arranged, which in turn highlights the meanings that are generated by the text. Moreover, such a reading places an emphasis on,

and calls attention to, the traditions of display that nuance our readings of what a tattoo ‘means’.

As I mentioned in the introduction, the quasi-anthropological pretext that is identifiable in much of the literature analysed in this thesis plays a significant part in establishing and maintaining the power of the ideological message. It is also responsible for projecting an air of authority. As Karp points out,

Whether the world to be imagined even existed is irrelevant to the display devices that are used. The larger metamessages of ‘authenticity’ and ‘fantasy’ are the product of the overall story spun by the exhibition, and not a product of the specific display forms used in exhibitions and festivals. (281)

In other words, the perceived authenticity of any given exhibition derives not from the way that an exhibition is set up, but rather from the level of authenticity that is broadcast by the exhibition as a whole. The narrative of the exhibition – that is, its “story” – is constructed and maintained by the exhibition’s claims to authenticity.

The anthropological pretext also closely aligns these literary texts with exhibitions, including the displays in circuses and dime museums, which were often accompanied by a ‘lecture’. In these kinds of exhibits, which ranged in content from ‘Siamese twins’ to ‘legless wonders’ to tattooed people, the showman or announcer posed as a professor or doctor, in order to assert the scientific (read: ‘true’) nature of the display. The exhibition of Madame Clofullia, the bearded lady of Switzerland (ca. 1860) for example, was accompanied by doctor’s reports attesting to the fact that she had given birth to two children. These reports, and their ‘undeniable’ medical proof that Clofullia was in fact a woman, were fundamental to the maintenance of authority and ‘truth’ in her display. Museums, as sites of institutionalised power, to a certain extent have this authority ‘built in’. Carol Duncan contends that museums belong to a category of “secular truth” that has the status of “objective or universal knowledge and functions within our society as a higher, authoritative truth”. This category, she argues, “helps to bind the community as a whole into a civic body, identifying its highest values, its proudest memories, and its truest truths” (91). The level of ‘truth’ the museum or sideshow

display suggests, impacts upon the overall authenticity of the exhibit. The inherent (given) ‘truthfulness’ of the exhibition space, and an understanding of the powerful nature of this position, informs my readings of the colonial literary texts I consider here. By considering the literary texts as ‘exhibitions’, the understanding of them as an ideological prospectus is foregrounded.

Of particular concern to this thesis – though I also consider gender, religious, and cultural difference – is the representation of racial difference, and the way that this representation interacts with and at times hinges upon the representation of the tattooed body, in turn reinforcing the perception of the tattooed person as a racialised freak. In order to provide a context for this concern, it is important to consider the positioning and representation – the curating – of racial Otherness within popular live entertainment such as the circus. Much current scholarship of the nineteenth century circus and sideshow has critically considered the implications and outcomes of the kinds of racial displays that were popular until well into the twentieth century. Of particular note here are Linda Frost’s Never One Nation: Freaks, Savages, and Whiteness in U.S. Popular Culture 1850-1877, Rachel Adams’ Sideshow U.S.A: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination and Benjamin Reiss’s The Showman and the Slave. Each of these texts considers, in its own way, the impact that the history of the sideshow has had upon the development of American racial consciousness, and interrogates the degree to which racial displays in popular culture have shaped racialised attitudes in the United States. Part of Adams’ interest lies in the overlap between theory and entertainment that she sees as being responsible for the current new rise of the sideshow, and of freak studies in the humanities. Significantly, she asserts that

[a]lthough they have often been treated as an ephemeral form of amusement, freak shows performed important cultural work by allowing ordinary people to confront, and master, the most extreme and terrifying forms of otherness they could imagine, from exotic dark-skinned people, to victims of war and disease, to ambiguously sexed bodies (2).

Adams’ suggestion of mastery encapsulates the extent to which the racially Othered exhibit provided a mode through which “ordinary people” could define their identity by assuming

(or imagining) control over Other, abjected bodies. Davis suggests that the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century circus was responsible for establishing a conception of identity within the United States via its contribution to the creation of a national mass culture in the United States, which united otherwise disparate people and provided them with a unified cultural experience. This in turn gave them an apparatus for viewing the world, global politics, and other people, whilst also determining the conventions for many future representations of the United States' position within a global culture and economy. Thompson, Fretz, Vaughan and others have also identified the circus and especially the side- and freak-shows as being essential to the establishment and maintenance of national identity. Especially during periods of intense exploration and/or social change, the circus sideshow provided a space within which values and ideologies could be performed and thereby reiterated and maintained.

As most scholars of 'freakery' have shown, the freak show played a significant role in the maintenance of boundaries of identity, while the freaks themselves simultaneously challenged and reinforced the 'normal' viewer's sense of self. In 'Intolerable Ambiguity: Freaks as/at the Limit' Elizabeth Grosz provides an extensive analysis of the problematic and contradictory nature of the freak. Specifically, she interrogates the way that freaks challenge "the corporeal limits of subjectivity," ("Intolerable" 55) and claims that the freak's ambiguity is what ultimately

imperils categories and oppositions to dominant social life... They imperil the very definitions we rely on to classify humans, identities, and sexes — our most fundamental categories of self-definition and boundaries dividing self from otherness. ("Intolerable" 57)

Freaks are feared and problematic because they are liminal figures who have the ability to destroy, or at least destabilise, those boundaries that are in operation to establish norms of selfhood and identity. Grosz argues that the popularity of the freak show illustrates "a fascination with the limits of our own identities as they are witnessed from the outside." She goes on to explain:

The freak confirms the viewer as bounded, belonging to a 'proper' social category. The viewer's horror lies in the recognition that this monstrous being is at the heart of his or

her own identity, for it is all that must be ejected or abjected from self-image to make the bounded, category-obeying self possible. In other words, what is at stake in the subject's dual reaction to the freakish or bizarre individual is its own narcissism, the pleasures and boundaries of its own identity, and the integrity of its received images of self. ("Intolerable" 65)

Self-made freaks are particularly problematic due to the volition of their transgression of "schemes of cultural categorization," (Weinstock 327) and I have quoted Grosz at length because the themes she raises - categories of identity and, more importantly, oppositional and abjected aspects of the self - are recurrent themes for many of the authors whose work is addressed in this thesis. The term self-made freaks, as used by Bogdan, refers to the category of freaks including tattooed people, Circassian beauties, snake charmers and sword swallows, who "acquired their physical oddity for the purposes of exhibition" (Freak Show 234). Although he asserts that "All freaks were creations of the amusement world [since] the freak show and the presentation made people exhibits, not their physiology," (Freak Show 234) he does concede that those freaks with congenital abnormalities can still be categorised as born freaks. Elsewhere, those categorised by Bogdan as self-made freaks have been called "faked or crafted human oddities" (Gerber 58), and a 1934 *New Yorker* article refers to tattooed people as "Synthetic freaks" (Johnston 91). I have chosen to use Bogdan's terminology because he is the more prominent scholar in the field of freak studies⁴. Unlike born freaks who, though they may exercise agency in the decision to be displayed as freaks, ultimately had no control over the situation that allowed them to be 'made' into a freak, self-made freaks on the other hand made a conscious decision to somehow alter, control, or manipulate their corporeal self, and embellish it with their freakifying narrative, in order to obtain employment as a freak. Depending on the way that their exhibit was curated, the self-made freak was able to both reinforce and also to destabilise the status quo.

The vast majority of self-made freaks were white people, many of whom appeared as tattooed men or women. In many of the texts that are addressed in this thesis, the question of racial and cultural identity as it relates to the practice of tattooing is central to the ideological

⁴ For more information on self-made freaks see Bogdan, Freak Show, pp234-266, and Gilbert, 'Totally Tattooed; Self-made Freaks of the Circus and Sideshow'.

arguments that are presented by the texts' curator/authors. The history of racialised displays, and the presence of tattooed bodies in overt displays of Otherness such as freak shows meant that the tattooed white body was a site of contested identities, since the whiteness of the displayed individual conflicted with accepted perceptions of the tattooed body as racially Other. Consequently, the exhibition of tattooed white people proved to be both irresistably intriguing to the viewing public, and categorically problematic. The exhibition of the tattooed white body – usually accompanied by a narrative, pamphlet or lecture that attributed the marks in some way to an encounter with 'savages' – coincided with the development of a new set of connotations surrounding the practice of tattooing. In turn, a new set of meanings evolved, which served to complicate, rather than subsume, earlier, purely racial meanings.

As Greg Dening has shown, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, tattooing was being embraced by sailors who wore tattoos as badges and souvenirs of their voyages to the South Seas. In addition to the already-established racial connotations of tattooing, this new shift towards popularity amongst sailors created a class association. Juliet Fleming, following Alfred Gell, suggests that western notions of tattooing are directly linked to the "overlay of perceptions of tattooing as a 'stigma of the class Other' (the tattooed sailor or criminal) with 'perceptions of the practice as characteristic of the ethnic Other – the tattooed native'" (Fleming 67). Concurrent with the movement towards a class association with tattoos, was the development of theories that pathologised the practice of tattooing, ultimately culminating in Cesare Lombroso's quasi-scientific 'study' of tattooed criminals, which 'scientifically' established these external marks as signifiers of the subject's overt or latent criminal nature. Though Lombroso considered only the tattoos of convicted criminals, and did not analyse any kind of Indigenous tattooing, his theories both complied with and challenged popular perceptions of Indigenous tattooing at a time when various interpretations of the phenomenon were being developed. On one hand, Europeans perceived tattooing as an exotic mark of the noble savage, such as in the case of the Tahitian Omai. On the other hand, and in a school of thought more in keeping with Lombroso's theories, it was perceived as a savage and barbaric act which had no place on a white man's body.

A number of modern scholars, including Caplan and Nikki Sullivan, have argued that Lombroso's work is both under-researched and over-generalised. These interpretations

however, in highlighting the flaws in Lombroso's century-old theories, expose a new set of questions surrounding the way that tattoos are interpreted and read in terms of a social language. As Sullivan points out, the flaw in Lombroso's work is that it fails to address or even consider the socially and culturally determined nature of the categorisation of identity and difference. Sullivan highlights several key considerations that are absent from Lombroso's work, and centres on the suggestion that "our reading and writing of the textual bodies of others may constitute an unconscious reiterative performance of particular codes and practices, rather than an initiative process of the recognition of innate truths" (25).

As I have argued, the Indigenously tattooed bodies of white beachcombers were written and read within the discursive framework that was availed by Cook's re-introduction and framing of the term. What Sullivan suggests here is that tattoos only signify in a broader context of a language of tattooed bodies, where referents are available to generate meaning. Without the referents provided by the originating culture of the tattoos, meanings and interpretations were increasingly garbled by an array of 'authoritative' translations that were invariably informed by ideological intentions, generic conventions and exhibitionary traditions. Moreover, these interpretations were pervasively performative in nature, further reiterating notions of the tattooed body as an object of display. These interpretations in turn created complications and problematised the shifts that occurred in perceptions of the tattoo as it was increasingly worn by white people.

As Caplan explains,

The tattoo's (re)domestication into European popular culture in the course of imperial expansion was thus resisted by dominant interpretations that repositioned it from an exotic exteriority to a pathological interiority (a traverse which also carries some of the anatomical ambiguity of the tattoo itself as both a surface script and an insertion). ("Educating" 102)

The repositioning that Caplan identifies here, as well as the 'anatomical ambiguity' that she mentions, is directly related to the shift that occurred as white sailors embraced the practice. No longer a quaint tradition performed only by 'natives', the tattoo, when practiced by (or

upon) whites, became increasingly symbolic of the transmutable nature of racial and cultural identity. The situation of the tattoo as ‘anatomically ambiguous’ – simultaneously *on*, and *in*, the skin – is key here, and relates to the discussions in this thesis regarding the way that the Indigenously tattooed white person’s re-integration into European or American society is problematised by their tattooed skin. It is in consideration of this re-integration that the truly transformative, liminal nature of the tattoo is most apparent. Wendy Lawton, in her fictionalised account of the captivity of Olive Oatman, who was captured and tattooed by the Mojave in 1851, and whose narratives form the subject of analysis in Chapter Three, astutely articulates this liminality.

She [Olive] didn’t want the tattoo. It meant she would forever be different from her people. She wanted to go home, but if she had the ki-e-chook⁵, she would always be different. She could never live unnoticed with one foot in each world – she would forever be marked as a child of the Mohave. (Lawton 108)

The fictionalised Olive is well aware of the implications the tattoo would have for her ‘white’ identity: essentially, the tattoo would make it impossible for her to ever be white again, not only because her skin would be permanently marked by the indelible ink, but because the liminal boundary of her body – the border of her self – would be transgressed, and thereby transformed. According to Richard Dyer, white skin can be seen as an invisible boundary in that it is taken for granted. He points out that

whites must be seen to be white, yet whiteness as race resides in invisible properties and whiteness as power is maintained by being unseen. To be seen as white is to have one’s corporeality registered, yet true whiteness resides in the non-corporeal. (Dyer 45)

Dyer’s emphasis on the corporeality of the white person is interesting in that tattoos, like other ‘racial’ colouring, bring into focus the existence of the corporeal boundary that is the skin. Early colonial representations of Indigenous tattooing, such as the narratives of Olive Oatman, are not only concerned with the fact that tattooing highlights and transforms the

⁵ Ki-e-chook is the Mojave name for the tattooed marks that Oatman was given during her captivity.

skin, but also that it invades and violates the skin. The act of transgressing and ‘tainting’ the skin-boundary with the tattoo — particularly in the case of a white person being marked by an Indigenous tattoo — brings the boundary into focus, and simultaneously emphasises the vulnerability of that boundary. In emphasising the vulnerability of the boundary, the tattoo also emphasises the vulnerability of the identity that that boundary contains. In the case of Olive Oatman, the liminal transgression not only marks her as ‘non-white’, it is in turn emblematic of her association with the Mojave other, and her (real or imagined) alignment with the perceived enemy that the Native American represented to early settlers in the western United States.

Olive Oatman was not a self-made freak, in that she did not acquire her tattoos in order to make a living by being exhibited. The popularity of her narrative and associated lecture tour however, was responsible for inspiring many tattooed performers who were, in fact, self-made freaks⁶, and whose narratives of enfreakment drew on Oatman’s captivity narrative. In ‘Aztecs, Aborigines, and Ape-people’, Nigel Rothfels identifies the “narrative of enfreakment” as being the most essential part of any kind of freak performance. This kind of storytelling, Rothfels asserts, has always played an important part in “creating the wondrous, monstrous, or historical out of the simply unusual” (169). The narratives of enfreakment employed by tattooed performers, as with other self-made freaks, were in essence the most pivotal part of the performance, since it was the audience’s belief and engagement with this narrative that ensured the intended reception of the tattooed person’s freakery. Yet the concept of a narrative of enfreakment as determining the way a displayed attraction is understood by a variety of audiences does not relate exclusively to the display of bodies in a side- or freak-show.

The narrative of enfreakment, in essentially labelling the exhibited freak, performs the same task as the printed labels that accompany artifacts displayed in a museum, or, for that matter, the plaques that distinguish certain tourist attractions, such as Plymouth Rock in the United States. As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett points out, artifacts in a museum display are set in context via a number of descriptive and explanatory techniques, such as labels, written descriptions,

⁶ Derounian-Stodola and others have argued that Oatman was indeed the prototype for the tattooed lady.

catalogues, pamphlets, lectures and audio guided tours. This type of arrangement, she asserts, exerts “strong cognitive control” over the objects, determining, to a large degree, exactly what the viewer will ‘see’ in any given display (Destination 21). In the context of tourist attractions, the label, or, in Dean MacCannell’s terms, the “marker”⁷, performs an essential function in the designation of any tourist attraction, determining the way that the tourist will interact with and perceive the place, building, site or object in question.

As can be seen from these additional examples, the labelling of an artifact, or in the case of an exhibited freak, the narrative of enfreakment plays an essential role in determining the meaning of the artifact on display. For the first tattooed white people to appear in circuses and sideshows, who made their living by displaying their Indigenously tattooed bodies, the narratives accompanying their display in the form of lectures, pamphlets or books essentially created the meaning and context for their tattoos, and in turn informed the public’s perceptions of what tattoos themselves ‘mean’. Most often, these narratives contained details of adventures and captivity in strange, foreign and/or savage lands, and thereby contributed to public perceptions of tattoos as not only spectacular, but inherently Other. These performers, according to Cassuto, were responsible for bringing “physical anomaly, the racial other, and the racial freak (a nonwhite ‘primitive’) together under the tent” (Cassuto 235).

In his book Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit, Bogdan identifies two distinct modes of presenting freaks – the exotic, and the aggrandised modes. For exhibits presented in the aggrandised mode, “[s]ocial position, achievements, talents, family, and physiology were fabricated, elevated, or exaggerated and then flaunted” (Freak Show 29). General Tom Thumb, P. T. Barnum’s celebrated “midget”, for example, was given a new name, and his place of birth was changed in order to heighten both his social status and the appeal of the performance. The exotic mode, on the other hand, is characterised as a way of packaging and presenting freaks that “appealed to people’s interest in the culturally strange, the primitive, the bestial, the exotic,” (Freak Show 28) by emphasising the alterity and perceived ‘inferiority’ of the people on exhibit (Freak Show 29). Indigenous people – for example, Barnum’s ‘Fijian Man-eaters’ – were most commonly

⁷ For a model of the tourist attraction as an empirical relationship, see MacCannell’s The Tourist, 1999, pp41-48.

presented in the exotic mode, as were tattooed people who, if not Indigenous, were attached to a story of enforced tattooing by ‘primitives’. As Bogdan points out,

Although the presentation and the characteristics of the person exhibited often were congruent, promoters employed much creativity with their tales: “exotic” caucasians might be presented as having lived among or been raised by or tortured by non-Western people following their capture, kidnapping, or being washed ashore after a shipwreck. The standard presentation of ‘human art galleries’ involved tattooing as a torture inflicted on an exhibit by a barbaric people. (Freak Show 112)

The exotic mode, Bogdan argues, was especially popular during periods of increased exploration, expansion, and colonialism, and he points out that “news events provided some of the scripts and descriptions for the presentation of freaks” (“Social” 28). Of course, this is also related to the need to maintain and assert a dominant identity in colonial encounters.

William Fitzgerald, writing for Strand Magazine in 1897, reflected on the political response the sideshow incorporated. “When some important political or other event agitates the great country,’ he writes, “topical side-shows spring up with amazing promptness” (Fitzgerald 409). This is most obviously evident in the preponderance of performers who took their ‘biographies’ from the latest exploratory conquests. Fitzgerald takes note of a man who “told a wonderful tale of imaginary adventures in Hawaii, then the topic of the day” (Fitzgerald 409). This performer’s fictionalised engagement with ‘the topic of the day’ exemplifies the extent to which colonial exploration and ‘discovery’ provided inspiration for many performers’ narratives. Especially for tattooed performers, whose narratives often incorporated scenes of savage captivity and/or encounters with primitive people, the colonial frontiers in both North America and the Pacific provided a rich, topical, and populist source of material. As Adams points out, however, these intersections are not coincidental, since the ongoing search for freaks was linked to and informed by the progress of exploratory, scientific, and missionary expeditions throughout the world. Not only did these phenomenon overlap in practice however, they also overlapped in the discourse of popular culture, with showmen often pitching their exhibits as ‘scientific’, and themselves as ‘doctors’ or ‘professors’. The overlap that Adams illuminates makes even more evident the connection

between the freak show and the furthering of colonialism. Freak shows essentially assisted the colonial agenda by informing the Euro-American public of the ‘savages’ that were being saved and civilised by the colonial missions. Furthermore, “anthropological exhibits at the freak show often provided American Audiences with their primary source of information about the non-Western world” (Adams 28).



Figure 2: Title Page of The Life and Adventures of Capt. Costentenus.

While most tattooed people fitted into and were exhibited within the conventions of the exotic mode, there were overlaps, such as Captain Costentenus, the Greek Prince (ca. 1873). Costentenus' extensive narrative detailed both his experiences amongst savage people, his exotic tattoos, and his time as a pirate, which situated him within the exotic mode,

and also his royal connections, which aligned him with the aggrandised mode, also reflected in his title. Constantenus made his debut at the Vienna World Exposition in 1873, and was also exhibited by G. A. Farini at the Royal Aquarium, Westminster, and Bunnell's museum in New York (Bogdan Freak Show 246–247; The Life and Adventures of Capt. Constantenus). He was variously scrutinised by the public, anthropologists and medical professionals. In addition to the booklet that accompanied his performances, The Life and Adventures of Capt. Constantenus The Tattooed Greek Prince, Constantenus was also the subject of a number of newspaper, magazine and journal articles. In 'Note on the Tattooed Man from Burmah', A. W. Franks gives an account of Constantenus based on two earlier articles from the Medical Journal of November 1871 and the Lancet of February 1872. The article summarises some of the more spectacular, and indeed, exotic, aspects of the story, such as Constantenus' time spent as a pirate, and his captivity amongst "one of the wild tribes of Asia". Franks relates that three of Constantenus' fellow captives were "put to death," though Constantenus "and two others were preserved alive, and literally tattooed all over the body. The operation caused horrible pain, and his two companions died under the treatment" (Franks 228). The torturous tattooing process is depicted as being a custom of the "wild tribes of Asia". This generalised statement reiterates the racial implications of the process of tattooing, which are not related to any kind of geographical specificity, but rather a general notion of Otherness. The exotic nature of the marks themselves is evident when they are compared to "a tightly-worn fabric of rich Turkish stuff" (Franks 230). The "rich Turkish stuff" clearly suggests the exoticism within which the man is clad, and the likening of the Burmese tattoos to the "Turkish" fabric aligns notions of exoticism and orientalism wherein images and imagery become a general "mish-mash" of the Orient (Maxwell 19), with no scientific or geographical accuracy⁸.

The article also questions the truth of Constantenus' story and visage, which seems to be a common concern for people who encountered him. When Constantenus was working with Barnum's circus in Boston between 1878 and 1888, he was 'assessed' by A. T. Sinclair,

⁸ This tendency in the presentation of tattooing is evident in most narratives where 'exotic' tattooing is mentioned, such as those of the beachcomber and captivity narratives discussed elsewhere in this thesis, and is still evident in contemporary representations of Indigenous people from the many Pacific Islands, as is discussed in Chapter Five.

whose article, 'Tattooing: Oriental and Gypsy' appeared in American Anthropologist in 1908. Sinclair writes that he "had long talks with [Constentenus], felt of his arms, legs, body, and did [his] utmost to detect the imposture [he] believed it must be" (372). At the root of Sinclair's doubts was Barnum's reputation for humbug, but the "marvelous story of [Constentenus'] captivity by Tartars with three others, all of whom died under the operation, added to [his] suspicions" (372). It seems that Sinclair's examination and discussions with Constatentenus did allay his concerns that the tattoos were fake, though he concludes that the story was fiction, stating that Constatentenus "evidently had himself tattooed in Burmah for the purpose of exhibition" (372). This statement confirms Constatentenus' status as a self-made freak, and reiterates the extent to which exhibitions of tattooed people were often manufactured and carefully curated in order to fulfil certain criteria dictated by the public demand for displays of Otherness.

Constatentenus was very much a product of the public demand for exotically displayed bodies, and it is quite probable that at least some of his story was fictionalised in order to make his performance more exciting. Bogdan points out inconsistencies in Constatentenus' story, and highlights changes that were made over the years that Constatentenus was displayed, which "reflected changes in the meaning of and expanded interest in the scientific community" (Freak Show 249). Davis similarly suggests that Constatentenus was a "consummate showman" (Davis 180) whose story was altered, and performance manipulated, in order to incorporate developments in popular demand and expectation. Certainly, the mode of his presentation, in nothing but "a breech-cloth, and an immense solitaire diamond ring which flashed as he gracefully and affectedly handled a cigarette" (Sinclair 372) suggests a very deliberate frame, within which Constatentenus was set up as not merely tattooed, but also as distinctly and exotically Other.

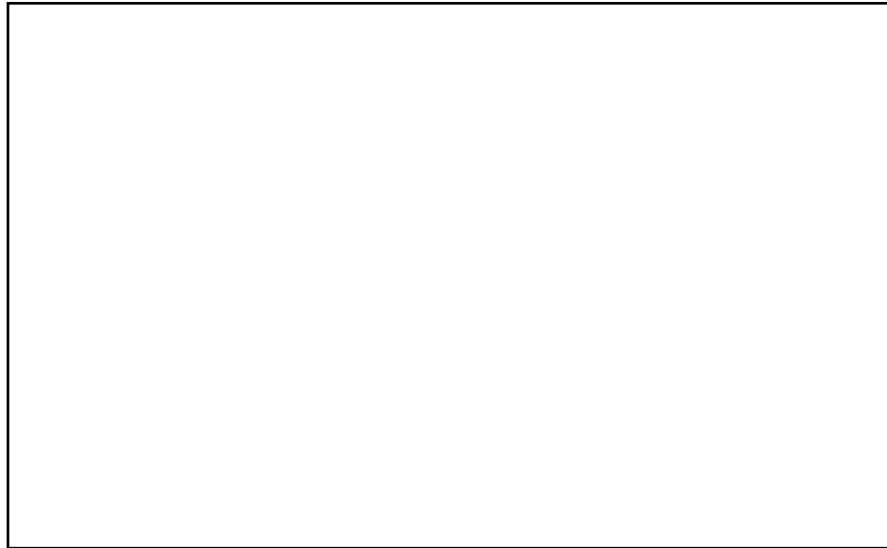


Figure 3: Advertisement for Constantenus, as it appeared in Harper's Weekly in 1877. This is a typically sexualised representation of the tattooing process, which emphasises the enforced nature of the event.

The story of “G. A. Farini’s Tattooed Greek Nobleman” provides an excellent and illuminating example of the way that the tattooed body is curated and ultimately ‘made into’ an exhibit. Although Constantenus’ display contained no overtly ideological imperative (though within his narrative there are strong overtones of racism and xenophobia) it is apparent from these accounts that he was curated in such a way that the viewer’s perception was deliberately directed. While Constantenus’ marks are symbolically Othered within his narrative, and also within his performance, his own racial identity was maintained by the claims that the tattoos were applied by savages as a form of torture. This was one way that tattooed performers attempted to maintain their white identity despite the Othering marks that covered their bodies. What is important to note here is that Constantenus, though presented in both the exotic and the aggrandised modes, was not presented as being racially Other.



Figure 4: Annie Howard. As can be seen from the style of Howard's tattoos, the marks were applied in New York City, not the Pacific Islands, as her narrative of enfreakment claimed.

In response to the popularity of the tattooed performers who were, by the 1880's, well-established in circus sideshows and dime museums, an increasing number of tattooed performers appeared who, although their narratives engaged with tropes of captivity, torture and forced tattooing, had in fact been tattooed in Europe and America, under no such circumstances. Performers such as Constantenus, whose stories were dubious at best, set a precedent for similar sensationalised displays and narratives, and this tradition continues until the 1950s, when the Great Oni was at his prime. Oni traded not only on Omai's name, but

also the associated imagery relating tattooing to primitivism and savagery. These characters' emergence as popular entertainment in the latter part of the nineteenth century is a direct response to the processes and tropes of Othering that had been developed in other displays and exhibitions of tattooed bodies, including many of the literary texts discussed in this thesis. As I have discussed, Cook's reintroduction of tattooing developed an entire discourse of Otherness in regard to permanently marked skin. Tattooing became synonymous with savagery, barbarism and primitivism, not to mention the more nuanced suggestions of transgressed racial identity that was evoked by the tattooed white body. Furthermore, these performers who had not in fact been in contact with the 'savage' cultures that their markings suggested, represent a generic 'Other', thereby entrenching the tattoo's evocation of a 'blanket primitivism' which divorces the marks from their very specific cultural contexts. In the eyes of the viewing public, no other signifier or truth was required to sell a story of captivity and torture: it is this symbolic tattoo – the perceived meaning of the tattoo in general, rather than the design in particular – that forms the point of reference to tattooing in much contemporary postcolonial literature.

According to Bogdan, the 'boom' for tattooed performers came as a result of the gradual medicalisation of congenital abnormalities, which meant that 'freak' displays more frequently came under fire as morally indecent. This in turn created opportunities for 'self-made' freaks, such as tattooed people. Bogdan indicates that a characteristic of these performances by self-made freaks was "bizarre hyperbole," (Freak Show 38) which is apparent in the narratives of enfreakment attached to the tattooed people discussed here. Nora Hildebrandt (ca. 1882) is often credited as being the first heavily tattooed female performer and, although she claimed that the marks were applied whilst under captivity of Sitting Bull, was actually tattooed by her father. The trope of enforced tattooing, or, in Christine Braunberger's term, "tattoo rape" (10), which Hildebrandt and others frequently engaged, was a direct response to the incredible popularity of the narratives of Olive Oatman, who was genuinely tattooed by her Mojave 'captors'. In the poster advertisement for Miss Creola and Miss Alwanda, a pair of nineteenth-century tattooed ladies, the forced tattooing by Indian captors is explicitly illustrated (see bottom left of poster). Their names are distinctly exoticised, emphasising the exotic nature of their experiences, 'Miss Creola' being arrestingly evocative of the associated sexual transgressions that tattooing often suggested. The prefix of 'Miss,' however, reinforces

the women's proper, feminine identities. As Braunberger notes, the scene of enforced tattooing by savage Others depicted on the poster is simultaneously contradicted by the parallel images of the girls' tattoos, which depict wreaths, stars and (U.S.) presidential portraits (11).

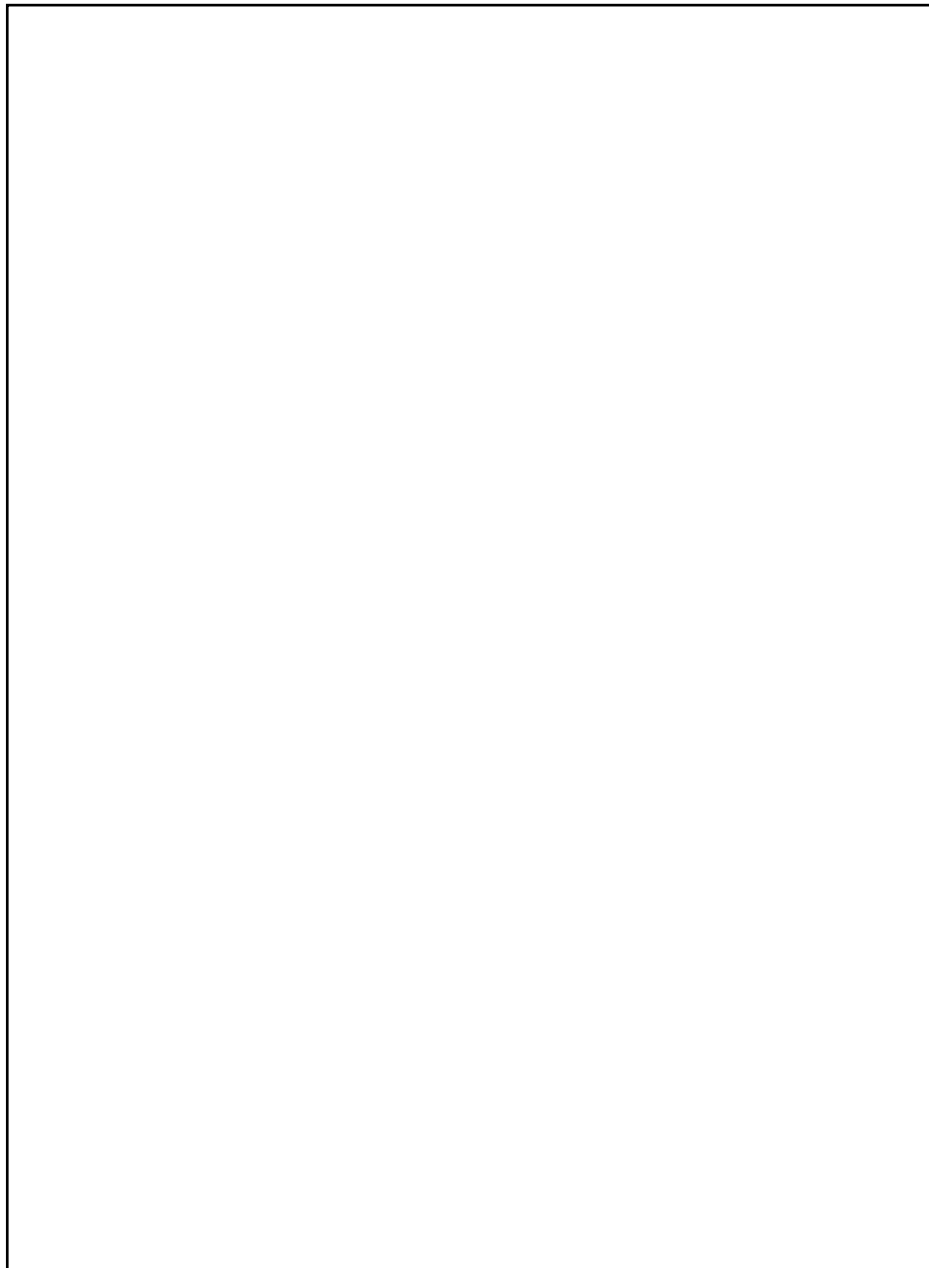


Figure 5: Poster advertisement for Miss Creola and Miss Alwanda.

The proliferation of self-made tattooed freaks continued throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and audiences, whether consciously or not, accepted that tattoos, no matter what the content of the designs, were inherently Other and exotic. The brother-sister team of Annie and Frank Howard (ca. 1891), for example, who were also tattooed by Martin Hildebrandt, claimed to have been tattooed by natives after a shipwreck in the South Pacific. Like Miss Creola and Miss Alwanda however, their tattoos are clearly not Pacific in origin. Similarly, Irene Woodward, 'La Belle Irene' (ca. 1883) was also tattooed by her father, though her audience was "asked to believe that she had acquired her embellishments in a strange and savage land (Texas) as a protection against the unwelcome advances of the natives" (Gilbert 138).

Woodward was, like Captain Costentenus, exhibited at Bunnell's Museum in New York, and, according to the booklet that was sold to accompany her display, she was "the only tattooed female in the world" (Facts Relating to Irene Woodward the Tattooed Lady). This statement is in itself fascinating, since it quite overtly denies the existence of the many cultures throughout the world whose female members were traditionally tattooed. Inherent within this denial is a suggestion that tattooed 'native' women are somehow less than human, and not comparable to Woodward, who is marketed as a tattooed 'lady', with all its attendant associations of refinement and culture. Such assertions of tattooed women's 'ladylike' characteristics were common. Bolton, for example, writing in 1897 about 'Pictures on the Human Skin', refuses to offer even the slightest description of the tattooed women he has seen. While he describes in great detail the designs and locations of the males' tattoos, when it comes to the women, he retreats, saying "but no, we will draw the curtain down and spare them" (434). Bolton's presumably 'gentlemanly' preservation of the tattooed ladies' modesty is somewhat ironic, given the spectacular nature of their occupation, yet it is not at all uncommon.

Davis suggests that showmen were cognisant of the transgressive potential of female circus performers, and so their traditionally female traits – their domesticity, but also their position as objects of titillation – were emphasised in the display and accompanying literature. Woodward's booklet, along with the included "Extracts From the Press," taken from accounts of her in popular newspapers, expresses similar values. In each of these "extracts", a

description of Woodward's tattoos is provided, and each author comments upon both her "pleasing appearance," "delicate features and perfect form" and the "feminine" and "artistic" nature of the tattoos (Facts Relating to Irene Woodward the Tattooed Lady). According to a *New York Times* article which is reproduced in her pamphlet, "Miss Woodward states that she was the daughter of a sailor who began the tattooing when she was but six years of age and finished it when she was twelve". She apparently spent "the greater part of her life in the Western wilds" and "conceived the idea of exhibiting herself after seeing the tattooed Greek [Captain Constantenus] at Denver."

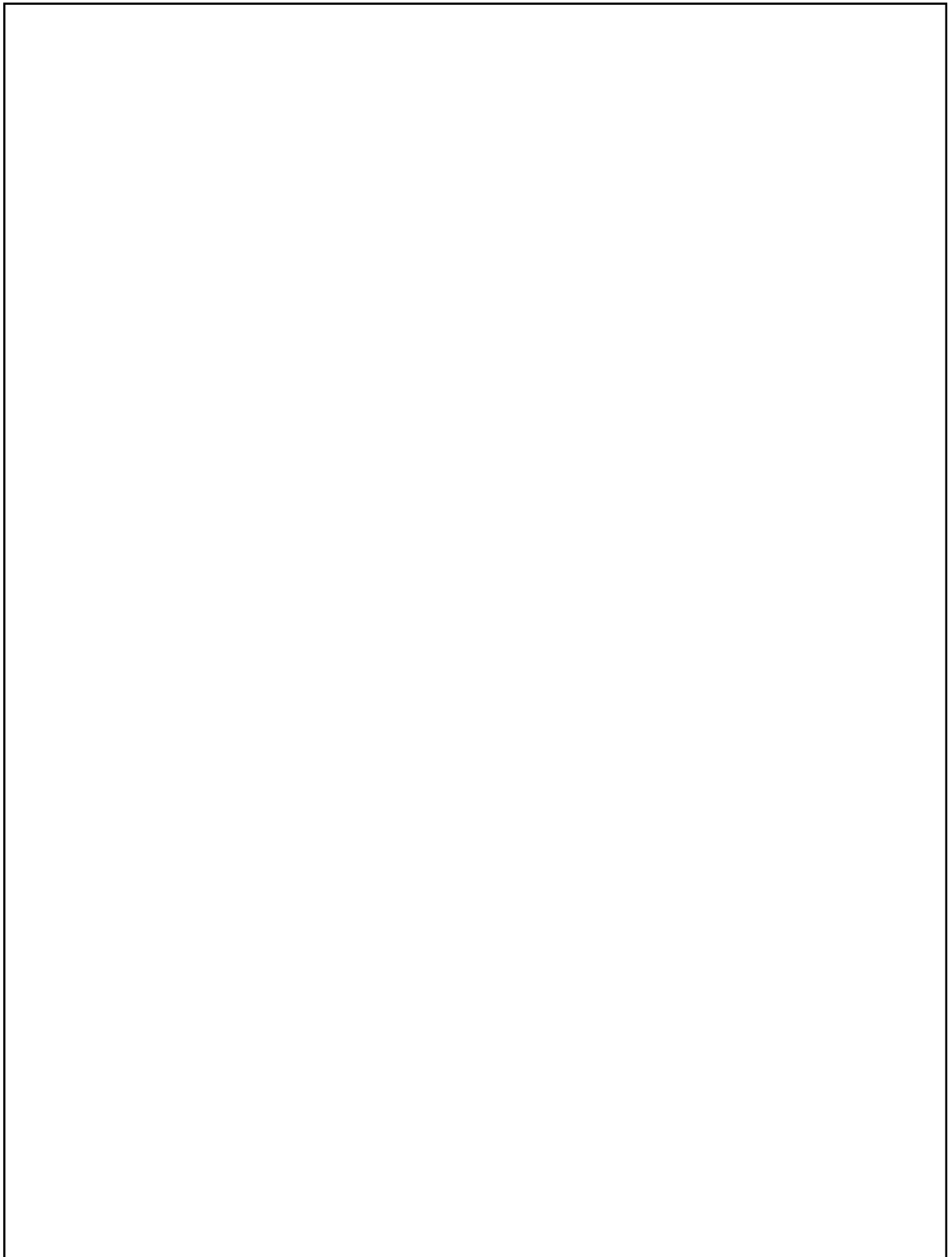


Figure 6: French promotional poster for La Belle Irene

Paramount in these accounts, it seems, is the preservation of Woodward's femininity, vulnerability and modesty. As Bogdan points out, much of the appeal of tattooed ladies lay in the fact that their 'performance' required them to be relatively immodestly dressed, often displaying not only ankles, but knees, thighs and expanses of back and chest. Fitzgerald, writing for Strand magazine in 1897 notes, with some measure of glee, "The etiquette of the sideshow holds a superabundance of clothing highly improper. Freaks must exhibit a good deal of their person in puris naturalibus, so as to do away with any suspicion of humbug" (322). As Davis points out, nudity is very much a socially and culturally constructed notion so, at the turn of the century, any variation on virtually full coverage of the female form could have been construed as 'nude' (85). For the tattooed woman, the 'etiquette' identified by Fitzgerald meant that she could possibly be perceived as 'cheap' - tattooed, but certainly not a lady. It seems that the authors of many tattooed ladies' pamphlets are pre-emptive of the way that a scantily clad woman (Woodward's trunks stopped "an inch or more above the knee") would be perceived when put on display, and so an over-emphasis on traditional femininity is put into play, and descriptions of their origins, social position and domestic capabilities are deployed in an effort to mitigate suggestions that female circus and sideshow performers were merely out-of-control exhibitionists (Davis 93). Woodward's femininity is depicted in her dress, her figure and pleasing appearance, and her modesty, which is linked in the narrative to a suggestion that her tattooing and ultimate display was 'out of her hands'. In Woodward's pamphlet there are repeated references to the fact that she has "never before been exhibited," which serves to simultaneously emphasise the novelty of the display, and Woodward's own "bashfulness" at being displayed. Indeed, it is suggested that Woodward was so reluctant to display her tattooed form that she only took up a contract with the museum after being left destitute when her father and brother died (according to the narrative, her mother had died when she was a young girl).

Woodward's case is an interesting and unique one, in that her narrative steers away from the established trope of captivity that was often employed by tattooed ladies. What is overwhelmingly apparent in her narrative is the emphasis on Woodward's femininity, which in turn ultimately positions her as a maiden in distress. Her tattoos, according to the supplementary texts, were applied in response to the perceived threat of a savage enemy in the Western Wilds, when Woodward was extremely young. The emphasis on these factors

works to direct the viewer's gaze in such a way that Woodward is not seen merely as a scantily (if elaborately) clad young woman, but as a victim of circumstances directly linked to her gender and her race.

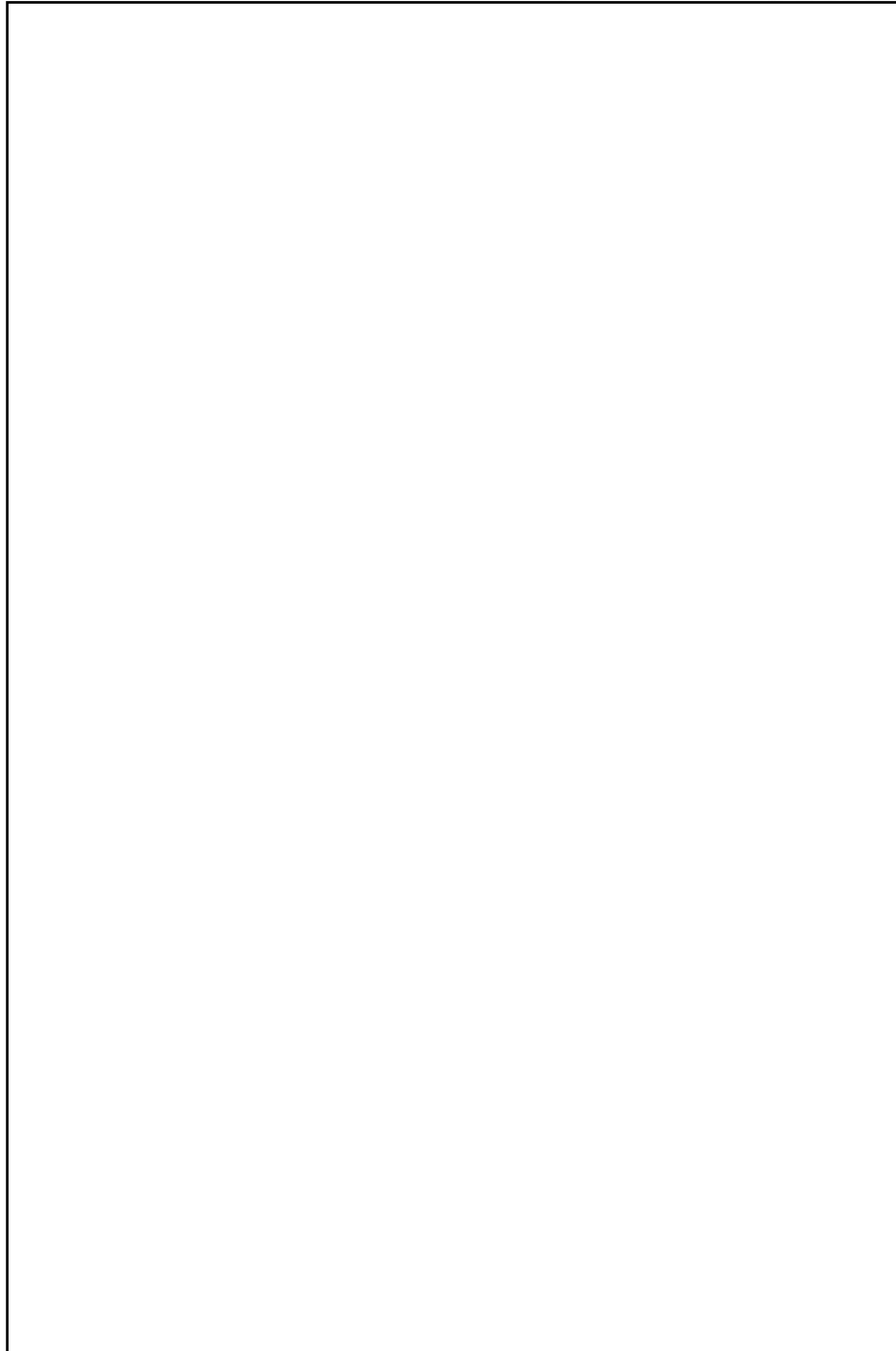
Significantly, however, it was not only white people who were tattooed in a deliberate effort to obtain employment as performers. Many non-white people also saw the potential for tattoos to embellish and/or authenticate their act. In 1901, at Austin and Stone's museum in Boston, Sinclair met an "Indian woman, born in Indian Territory" who was "exhibited as the most artistic and elaborate [tattoo] work of the North American Indian ever done!" (372). This woman told Sinclair that she had been tattooed for the purpose of exhibiting in the circus, and that she and her husband, a juggler, had been very successful. "Her part was to perform Indian jugglers' tricks and also to pose as an Indian prophetess and mind-reader" (373). Sinclair claims that the woman had "clearly" been tattooed by American artists, but traded on her ethnicity and exoticism.

These performers are but a few of the many tattooed people to deliberately seek out a career in the circus. I have included a discussion of the narratives of a small sample of self-made tattooed freaks, in order to illustrate the extent to which their narratives of enfreakment responded to earlier exhibitions of tattooed bodies. These narratives suggest the ways that tattooing evolved as a symbol of Otherness that was linked, in the public imagination, to colonial encounters with 'primitive', 'savage' Others. Perhaps even more significantly than this, however, the narratives of self-made tattooed freaks illustrate the popular perception and comprehension of 'tattoo' as a generic sign of Otherness that was not linked to any concepts of geographical or cultural specificity. Tattoos, no matter how they were applied, essentially authenticated the narratives of performers who, despite the fact that they had never been near the Pacific or the Wild West, marketed themselves as victims of torture at the hands of 'savages'. In this way, the tattooed marks became a kind of authenticating text *in themselves*. This brief survey illuminates the entrenched connection between the display of the tattooed body and the persistent presence of colonial ideology in popular culture, and the continuation of a tradition of exhibiting tattooed bodies that engaged quite overtly with a discourse of racial Othering, exoticism and primitivism. Furthermore, these stories highlight the importance of narrative in the process of curating the racialised – specifically, tattooed –

exhibit. The process of acquisition – the method in which the tattoos were applied, the circumstances, and, not insignificantly, the tattooist responsible – are all fundamental to the way that the exhibit is constructed, and to the meanings that are imparted.

For those on the colonial frontier, the literal and metaphorical vulnerability that the tattoo represented was both disturbing and threatening, and many colonial texts, including the ones discussed in this thesis reflect this. The next chapter addresses the narratives of tattooed beachcombers who returned to Europe and America from the Pacific, and exhibited their tattooed bodies in fairs, circuses and sideshows throughout the nineteenth century. These narratives provide examples of the earliest formats for exhibiting tattooed white people, and they offer a fascinating appraisal of the way that the display of the tattooed body could be adapted to reflect political and ideological meanings that catered to the cultural and historical period of the display.

2:
SAVAGE PRINTERS, APOSTATE FUGITIVES AND UNHEARD-OF
SUFFERINGS



When the first beachcombers started to return to Europe from the Pacific, their Indigenously tattooed bodies were the subject of both fascination and horror. While some exhibited their tattooed bodies in circuses, sideshows, museums and fairs, others published narratives of their experiences, and these narratives cumulatively came to constitute the genre of beachcomber narratives, which had been emerging steadily since the early 1800s. As Cummings points out, the process of tattooing or being tattooed was often a “central trope” (7) in the beachcomber narratives, and in this chapter I look at the way that the narratives informed, emphasised and worked in conjunction with the physical display of the tattooed body. As I showed in the previous chapter, the presentation of tattooed people, both white and non-white, in circuses, sideshows and museums helped to shape public perceptions of tattoos as symbols of a racialised Other. In this chapter, I develop this discussion with a detailed analysis of the narratives of some of the first tattooed white people who were displayed: the beachcombers.

My objective in this chapter is to show that the curating of displays of tattooed beachcombers, both within and without their narratives, contributed to and was complicated by existing notions of what it meant to be tattooed. The long history of the display of tattooed people influenced the mode of presentation within many of these narratives, which engaged with the tropes and conventions that had been set out by prior displays of tattooed people. The exhibitionary elements of the narratives can be attributed not only to the tradition of racialised displays that often included tattooed people, but also to the performative elements of the narratives themselves: that is, most of them interacted with an actual display of the tattooed body as many beachcombers appeared in circuses and sideshows. In light of these connections, I treat the beachcomber narratives of George Vason, Horace Holden, John Rutherford, James O’Connell and Edward Robarts in some detail, explicating their presentation of the practice and presence of tattooing, and analysing the way that this presentation interacts with each beachcomber’s projected sense of self. My intention in this chapter is to broaden the concept of tattooed bodies as artifacts, which are curated and exhibited not only in traditional arenas such as circuses, museums and sideshows, but also within the literary text. This discourse forms the basis of a wider discussion of tattoo representations in later chapters.

My discussion focuses on only those men who returned to Europe wearing *Indigenous* tattoos, prior to the popular adaptation and Europeanisation of tattooing by later sailors. It is important to make this distinction, since the tattoo at this point was still viewed as a symbol of exotic Otherness, and had not yet been co-opted by criminologists such as Cesare Lombroso as a symptom of criminal degeneracy. I am interested in this earlier interpretation – tattoos as the mark of the exotic Other – because I believe that all subsequent interpretations of the tattoo are embedded in and feed off the earlier, colonially determined definition. Additionally, the Indigenous tattoo perfectly highlights the notion of the skin as boundary or border, and the tattoo itself as that which crosses that border, yet simultaneously resides within it. The beachcombers both crossed borders and lived within them, and their tattoos were symbols of the crossing, embodied on and in the corporeal self. As a result of this, re-integration into European and/or American society was problematised by the tattoos they wore, and this is reflected in their narratives by the way that the tattoo is positioned as an inflicted alterity. The perception of the tattoo as “voluntary stigma,” (Sanders 397) whereby the tattooed individual was transformed by the marks into someone (or even some *thing*) racially or culturally Other, meant that the denial of agency with regards to the application of the marks became a common theme within the narratives of beachcombers who attempted to maintain a sense of their ‘original’ identity as a white man.

Stereotypes of the tattooed native savage are, for the most part, perpetuated by the narratives. With regard to the projected images of tattooed white men, however, some attempt is made to re-order the perception of the reader/viewer. Essentially, the narratives contextualised the display of the tattooed beachcomber’s body, and provided a script for the announcer who, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, sometimes posed as a ‘professor’ or ‘doctor’ in an effort to add ‘scientific’ credibility to the act. This quasi-anthropological aspect of the narratives of some beachcombers is of particular interest in this chapter because of the way that it engages with performative and exhibitionary models of displaying tattooed people. Beachcomber narratives respond to early ethnographic displays of tattooed people, such as Omai, and provide a template for the later traditions, which emerged in the latter part of the nineteenth century at world’s fairs and the like. The beachcomber narrative’s protagonist/narrator - or in some cases, the editor - performs the same function as the presence of an announcer or

lecturer, in essence mediating and ‘directing’ the reader/viewer’s response to the beachcomber.

Tattooed beachcombers who returned to their country of origin were often the first tattooed white men that many Europeans and Americans had ever seen, but the familiar representations of tattooed others, be they Native American, Burmese, or Pacific Islander, meant that tattooed *white* men symbolised a problematic straddling of racial identities. A ‘white’ body, indelibly inscribed and transformed by a ‘savage’ system of signification, created in the minds of the European public a sense of unease and confusion that contributed to the common perception of beachcombers — and especially tattooed beachcombers — as untrustworthy rogues.

In Islands and Beaches, Greg Denning defines beachcombers as

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 in their old[...] They confronted, as few other men confront, the relativity of everything that made them what they were: Their values, their judgements, the testimony of their senses. (Islands 129)

Of particular note here is the concept of relativity, the way that previously-accepted social schemas are challenged and disrupted as the beachcomber moves into his liminal position. While Denning identifies values and judgements – the things that “made them what they were” – as examples of the kinds of challenges that the beachcombers faced, the widespread practice of tattooing also presented a significant challenge to many beachcombers’ identities. Representations of tattooing as a transformative process are widespread within the narratives of beachcombers, especially those who were literally faced with it. For many, their fears and concerns are founded in an understanding of the tattoo as being a mark of the savage Other. More interesting, however, is the extent to which the tattoo is also representative of a shift in identity and, on a more basic level, loyalty.

Tattoos are, quite literally, liminal: they are transformative, both symbolically, in that they are often used in maturation/socialisation rituals, such as *amo'a* in Tahiti⁹ and the genealogical *moko* in Aotearoa New Zealand, and physically, since they permanently alter the appearance of the body. Liminality, as Victor Turner reminds us, comes from the French ethnologist and folklorist Arnold van Gennep's term *limen*, which refers to a threshold: the middle stage in a three-part transformative process. This threshold is a no-man's land, where identity and categorisation are, to a certain extent, suspended. Turner writes,

liminality and the phenomena of liminality dissolve all factual and commonsense systems into their components and 'play' with them in ways never found in nature or in custom, at least at the level of direct perception. (25)

For the tattooed beachcomber, the liminal power of the tattoo is problematised to an extraordinary degree by the cultural contingency of the transformative process. That is, the meanings generated by the tattoo within the Indigenous society where the tattoos were applied are not at all translatable to European or American society where the tattoos were ultimately displayed. The dislocation of the tattoo from the social structure that originally generated the mark's meaning results in an erasure of context, allowing the tattoo to be read within an entirely new social and cultural setting. This echoes concerns raised by scholars of museum studies, who point to the problematic nature of the removal and subsequent decontextualisation of ethnographic artifacts intended for display in Western museums. What this dislocation and decontextualisation means for the displayed artifact or item is that meanings can be deliberately manipulated via the mode of presentation. As Tony Bennett explains, an exhibited object has no neutrality, because "the artifact, once placed in a museum, itself becomes, inherently and irretrievably, a rhetorical object. As such, it is just as thickly lacquered with layers of interpretation as any book or film" (146). He goes on to conclude that "The authenticity of the artefact, then, does not vouchsafe its meaning" (147) since it is the mode of presentation and a dependence and interaction with the established order of meaning, as well as the assumed neutrality and authority of the museum, which creates a 'truthful' reality. The artifact, once placed in a museum, becomes a signifier that

⁹ The social uses of tattooing in Tahiti are the subject of Makiko Kuwahara's 2005 book, *Tattoo: An Anthropology*.

derives meaning from the other signifiers around it. Thus, the meaning of any given artifact can be altered depending on how, and with what, it is exhibited. In light of these issues, and Denning's suggestion that the beachcombers faced an acute awareness of the relativity of their identity, the impact of a permanent, culturally defined corporeal script becomes clear, especially when the question of relocation is raised.

The missionary-turned-beachcomber George Vason's Authentic Narrative of Four Years' Residence at Tongataboo (1840) explicitly addresses the extent to which determinants of cultural identity, such as morality, are relative to societal influence. In her article 'A Victorian Tale Adrift in the Pacific', Michelle Elleray suggests that Vason might be understood as an example of "reverse conversion", in that his narrative "is a tale of British civility shipwrecked, no longer anchored in constructions of the British subject as innately civilized, but revealed instead as contingent" (165). For Vason, Christian morality was simply impossible to maintain without the support of his fellow missionaries, and the relativity of his moral and cultural values is challenged almost immediately after his arrival in Tonga. According to Vason, shortly after their arrival, he and his fellow missionaries decide to split up and individually live amongst separate tribes in order to affect greater influence, but this decision proves detrimental to Vason's ambition: "The temptations of my situation," he writes, "uniting with my natural depravity, now no longer restrained by the presence of others, but fostered by all around, gradually corrupted my soul and overcame me" (118). In this passage Vason recognises and acknowledges the power of 'society' in controlling the individual's 'natural depravity', and the influence of 'others' upon the individual's moral behaviour, thereby establishing a moral dialectic between 'good' and 'savage' ways of life, the outcome of which is determined by societal influences. Vason writes that during his time amongst the Tongans he "disgraced [his] character as a Christian. The remembrance of this has caused me bitter remorse, and often fills me, still, with deep contrition, shame, and self-abhorrence" (118-19). The projected and highlighted relativity of Christian moral values, in combination with Vason's exaggerated and repeated remorse for the transgressions made during his sojourn with the Tongans, actually work to restore the perception of Vason as a respectable Christian. Walter Neil Gunson, a historian of Pacific missions, considers Vason's return to society, and his subsequent, symbolic return to civilisation, as his "second conversion," and asserts that Vason "ended his earthly career as the very respectable governor of Nottingham Gaol and a

convert to Baptist principles” (Gunson 154). Gunson’s assurance of Vason’s ‘respectability’ and return to ‘Baptist principles’, re-enforces the sentiments of the editor of Vason’s journal, James Orange, who maintains Vason’s respectability and trustworthiness, despite his lapse in faith. By drawing attention to the relativity of systems of social order, Vason essentially asserts that the transgressions he makes – most notably his marriage and tattooing – are not, in fact, voluntarily undertaken, thereby preventing the reading of his tattooed body as a symbol of degeneracy.

The denial of agency that emerges in Vason’s narrative is an overarching theme in most beachcomber narratives that profoundly influences the way that tattoos and the tattoo process are depicted, and in turn exposes a set of assumptions and presuppositions about how the reading public are going to respond to certain ‘transgressions,’ such as tattooing. Ultimately, the display of the tattooed body within the text is mediated by the curatorial power of the author or editor of the text with the explicit intention of establishing the tattoo as an inflicted, never voluntary, stigma. I understand this dilemma to be a response to the established tradition of the exhibition of the tattooed body, which had very firmly entrenched the image of the tattooed body as racially Other, savage and primitive. The beachcomber’s refusal to admit his volition in the tattooing process can therefore be viewed as an attempt to negotiate an identity for a tattooed, white body that is separate (though in its reactivity, connected) to the established images of the tattooed body already in existence. Additionally, the at times relentless impulse to perpetuate this image can be seen as a response to the conventions and perceptions of the beachcomber narrative as a genre.

As I. C. Campbell notes, in Europe “the term [beachcomber] generally had connotations of opprobrium because a man who chose to ‘live among natives’ was not merely an emigrant; he was regarded in European society as a renegade” (4). Campbell’s terminology here is similar to that used by E. H. Maude, one of the first scholars to extensively consider and analyse the collection of beachcomber narratives as a genre. Maude writes that in Europe, “The beachcomber was regarded as a *renegade* from civilization who, in all probability from the basest motives, had voluntarily renounced his heritage to revert to primitive savagery” (276; emphasis added). The idea that these men had somehow crossed an invisible line between ‘us’ and ‘them’, “renouncing” their identity, and becoming ‘renegades’ from white society, is a

pervasive one in beachcomber literature and later, more popular texts such as Melville's Typee and Omoo.

Tattooed beachcombers, more than their un-marked counterparts, embodied this border-crossing in an even more literal sense, since their corporeal boundary had been transgressed by the Indigenous tattoo. The permanence of the marks often evoked for the white reader or spectator a sense that the tattooed white man had somehow made a *commitment* to an Other society. As Campbell points out, tattooing often functioned as an “important channel of assimilation” for the beachcomber. Problematically, however

Contemporary observers had both a fascination and a horror of the tattooed white man, regarding the native tattoo as a sign of extreme degradation and depravity. Nothing else seemed to symbolize so evocatively the extent to which a white man had ‘let himself go’ or ‘sunk’ than having his skin marked in the manner of ‘savages’. (99)

For tattooed beachcombers, this popular attitude created a contradiction in their identity — the tattoos that they had received as a means of integrating into native Oceanic societies, meant that they were unable to fully *re-integrate* back into their own European culture. As Campbell points out, “Returning and fitting back in turned out to be more difficult than might be expected and, in many cases, appears to have been more difficult than the adaption to Polynesian life had been” (99). Hence, tattooed beachcombers were compelled to defend their marks, usually by asserting their lack of agency in the process.

For beachcombers who made a living from the display of their tattoos and/or the publication of their narrative upon their return to Europe or America, this was an advantage, since the tropes of captivity and torture that facilitated their denial of agency were also exciting and compelling for the general public. Several beachcombers reveal within their narratives some understanding of the way that their stories would be marketed. James O’Connell, for example, spent his childhood in and around the circus, where his mother was an equestrian and his father a costumer, so presumably had at least some awareness of showmanship, and an understanding of the necessity of marketing a performance appropriately. O’Connell states outright that “This work is not prepared for a New South Wales market” (34), thus

making it clear that he intends his work to be read by people ‘back home’, as opposed to those in the colonies. As Frank Lestringant points out, the removed, almost abstract nature of “the Island” means that it is able to operate as a site of “circumscribed fantasies” (143). By extension, the (dis)location of the Island gave writers an opportunity to exoticise and embellish their experiences, situating and providing as the focus of their narratives the ‘savagery’ that the Islands allegedly contained. An awareness of his intended readership therefore allows O’Connell scope for embellishment and fabrication, since he assumes that his readers will have no first-hand knowledge of life in the colonies.

The editor of the 1972 edition of O’Connell’s journal, Saul Riesenber, suggests that O’Connell may have been a “pathological liar” because his information about the island, people and customs “is so patently and flagrantly wrong” (5). In ‘The Tattooed Irishman,’ his exhaustively thorough historical interrogation of O’Connell’s narrative, Riesenber claims that most descriptions of O’Connell’s early life are “pure fabrication” (2), and it is suggested that the reason for his dubiously accounted beginnings may have been to cover up a convict past. His portrayal of nine months living with Indigenous Australians is doubtful, and a shipmate of O’Connell’s claims that even the shipwreck — a pivotal event in the text that lays the foundation for the rest of the narrative on Ponape — did not in fact occur, but that O’Connell deserted the ship - like a true beachcomber.

The fact that many of the fabricated events in O’Connell’s story are well-established tropes of South Sea adventure stories, explorers’ accounts and, even though he attempted to distance himself from them, beachcomber narratives, supports the contention that O’Connell was aware of the need to engage with familiar tropes and popular demand. Significant events in the text are easily recognisable from these kind of genres: the ship that is wrecked off the Caroline Islands is controlled by a “drunken, stupid sot” (102); O’Connell is forcefully tattooed; he is constantly surrounded by threats of cannibalism; he is unwittingly married to the chief’s daughter; and Indigenous characters are stereotypically represented as Maidens, Chiefs, or Warriors. In light of this, it seems likely that O’Connell’s marketing savvy was behind his ‘embellishment’ of such events. His engagement with the aforementioned tropes

suggests that O'Connell has constructed his narrative in such a way as to project a populist account of his experiences, and that his narrative has been accordingly constrained by the demands provided by popular conventions.

Cummings notes that few beachcombers, if any,

truly crossed cultural boundaries and came to live as did their Polynesian hosts, though many later capitalized on the presumption that they had accomplished precisely this. For beachcombers, tattoos became permanent reminders of their experiences and an ever-present prompt to tell stories about exotic peoples and customs in distant lands.
(7)

Such an indelible 'prompt' inscribed upon the corporeal border meant that reintegration was intrinsically linked to constant re-enactment of the border crossing. The return crossing is therefore suspended, never able to be completed on account of this constant reminder. James O'Connell, for example, sustained an almost twenty-year career by displaying, re-enacting and indeed performing the liminal position that his Indigenous tattoos created for him. After a residence of approximately a decade on the island of Ponape, O'Connell and his "shadow," George, were taken by the *Spy* of Salem, and deposited in prison in Manila for being pirates and trouble-makers. When finally freed from Manila, they made their way to Macao, via Canton, where they were objects of curiosity because of their tattoos, presumably providing O'Connell with the inspiration for his future employment.

O'Connell arrived in New York in 1835 via Halifax, Canada, and was employed almost immediately with the Lion Circus as the first tattooed man to be exhibited in the United States. Here, the ringmaster "had a rare story [about O'Connell], of the torture inflicted by savages doing the work of tattooing" (Esse Forrester O'Brien, quoted in S. Riesenberg 33). The "rare story" told by the ringmaster, served to contextualise the display of O'Connell's tattooed body, situating the marks as the result of the torturous intentions of the savage Ponapeans. The two most prominent features of his performances at fairs and circuses around the United States were the exhibition of his tattoos — a relatively novel thing at that

point in time — and a rendition of the Irish jig that allegedly saved his life. O’Connell’s performances perfectly embodied the liminal position of the beachcomber: his skin was inscribed with an “alien aesthetic” (Smith 47), a visible and permanent signifier of the boundaries he had crossed and the ‘primitive’ society that he infiltrated. At the same time however, viewers were regaled by his performance of an Irish jig, a recognisably western form of performative expression, which visibly asserted his western identity.

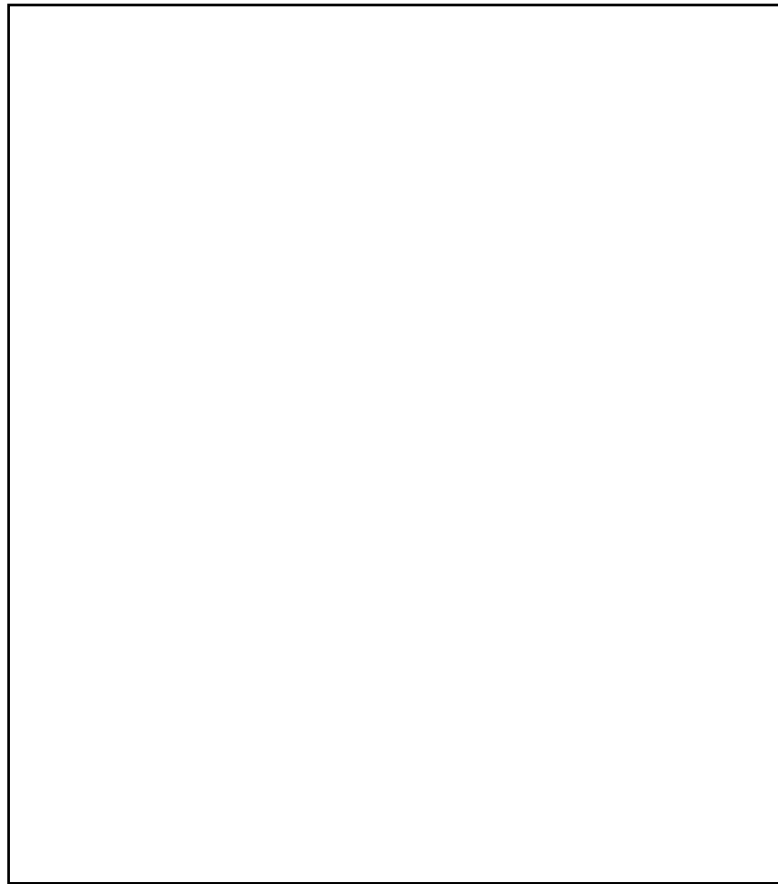


Figure 7: James O'Connell performing an Irish jig. Ponapean tattoos are visible on his exposed arms.

In *Residence*, O’Connell claims that the fortuitously timed performance of an Irish jig diverted his captors’ attention enough to save him from being killed. Riesenberg points out that it is possible that this account was fabricated. Regardless of its foundation in fact, however, the dance features prominently in his narrative and in subsequent circus

appearances, and provides a contrast to his tattooed body that perfectly encapsulates the kind of dual identity that the beachcombers represented. O'Connell's dance shows his influence over the "savages," who are so enamoured and perhaps 'fooled' by this jig that they spare his life. In addition to its narrative function, the dance also supplements O'Connell's circus act, substantiating his exhibition and transforming it from a mere display of his tattooed body, into a performance of his life-saving and, perhaps more importantly, symbolically patriotic dance. He writes, "I have no doubt that in my heels was found the attraction which led the chief to select me from among my comrades" (110). As a motif within the narrative and the performance, the jig serves to reassert O'Connell's Irish identity and therefore his difference from the Ponapeans. These efforts, however are complicated by his Indigenously tattooed body. The transgression of the beachcomber's corporeal boundary by the Indigenous tattoo facilitated a suspension of identity that was compounded by the conflicting visual signifiers of his varying cultural and racial affiliations. Marked and coloured by the Indigenous 'text' of the tattoo, these men were no longer fully 'white'. They were Othered, not only by their experiences, but also by the permanent and immediately visible symbol of them. O'Connell's repeated performances of the Irish jig for his Euro-American audiences works as an attempt to efface the symbolic transgression represented by the tattoos.

Elleray articulates this problematic meshing of visual identities in her analysis of Vason's narrative. She points out that "the tatatau, or Tongan tattoo, marks [Vason's] acceptance of Tongan cultural norms and, in its indelibility, his commitment to ongoing residence in the islands" (166). Elleray's observation implies that it is the permanence of the tattoo that may have presented problems for the white observer. It represents a "commitment" to another culture, and therefore a forsaking of one's native culture, since there was a pervasive either/or mentality regarding racial and cultural affiliation: "Just as the beachcomber confounds boundaries between the civilized and the savage, so does tattooing see the erasure of the skin as a fixed boundary, a sentient frontier" (173).

Separate from the problematising of the beachcombers' *re*-integration, however, is the extent to which the beachcomber's initial integration into Oceanic society necessitated the procedure. For many beachcombers, Indigenous tattooing was central to the confirmation

and affirmation of their status within the tribe they had joined. Barnet Burns, an Englishman who settled in New Zealand in about 1831, claims to have allowed himself to be tattooed “as it would be of service to me” (Bentley 4), and he received a Maori facial tattoo or *moko* that indicated his assimilation. Similarly, Edward Robarts, who voluntarily left his ship in the Marquesas Islands in 1797, reluctantly allowed himself to become tattooed as a matter of survival. The Marquesans amongst whom Robarts resided tattooed extensively, and most Marquesans were heavily tattooed with symbols of initiation, status and familial affiliation. Despite his twenty-two-year residence in the Islands, Robarts received only one tattoo, which Denning describes as a “meal ticket” (Beach Crossings 308) because the tattoo symbolised Robarts’ membership into an elite group that afforded him food in a time of famine.

Like Burns’s *moko*, Robarts’ mark symbolised his acceptance into a group that ensured his survival, but it also signified a compromise of identity and autonomy. This compromise, and the unease it may have created for Robarts is indicated in his narrative by his unusual treatment of the subject of tattooing. Unlike other beachcombers who published their narratives in the nineteenth century, Robarts does not comment extensively on his own or others’ tattoos. He makes no mention of his own tattoo throughout his journal, and details of this mark come only from others’ descriptions of him. Adam Johann von Krusenstern, the Russian explorer who visited the Marquesas and published his account in 1805, provides a description of Robarts, the “light coloured person” who met them on arrival: “We soon found out that he was an Englishman, who had already spent five years in the island; he was almost entirely naked, having only a narrow girdle tied round his middle, and was tattooed on the breast” (6-7). The fact that Robarts does not describe his tattoo(s) suggests that his relationship to these marks was problematic: this is more clearly evident from his treatment of tattooed bodies elsewhere in the text.

While other voyagers to the Marquesas could not help but comment extensively on the heavily tattooed Indigenous inhabitants of the Islands, Robarts remains incongruously silent on the topic. Even in his otherwise comprehensive anthropological observations and descriptions, no comment is made. Tellingly, Robarts’ most detailed accounts of tattooing are

made in reference to his descriptions of another Marquesan beachcomber, Joseph Kabris.¹⁰ In these descriptions, he displays an attitude of fear and abhorrence towards the tattooed white man, whom he considers to be hideously transformed.

¹⁰ Kabris is alternatively spelt Kabri, Cabris and Cabri, and his first name has also been noted as Jean. I have used the spelling found in the pamphlet published to accompany his performances, which is referenced in Greg Denning's Beach Crossings (31).

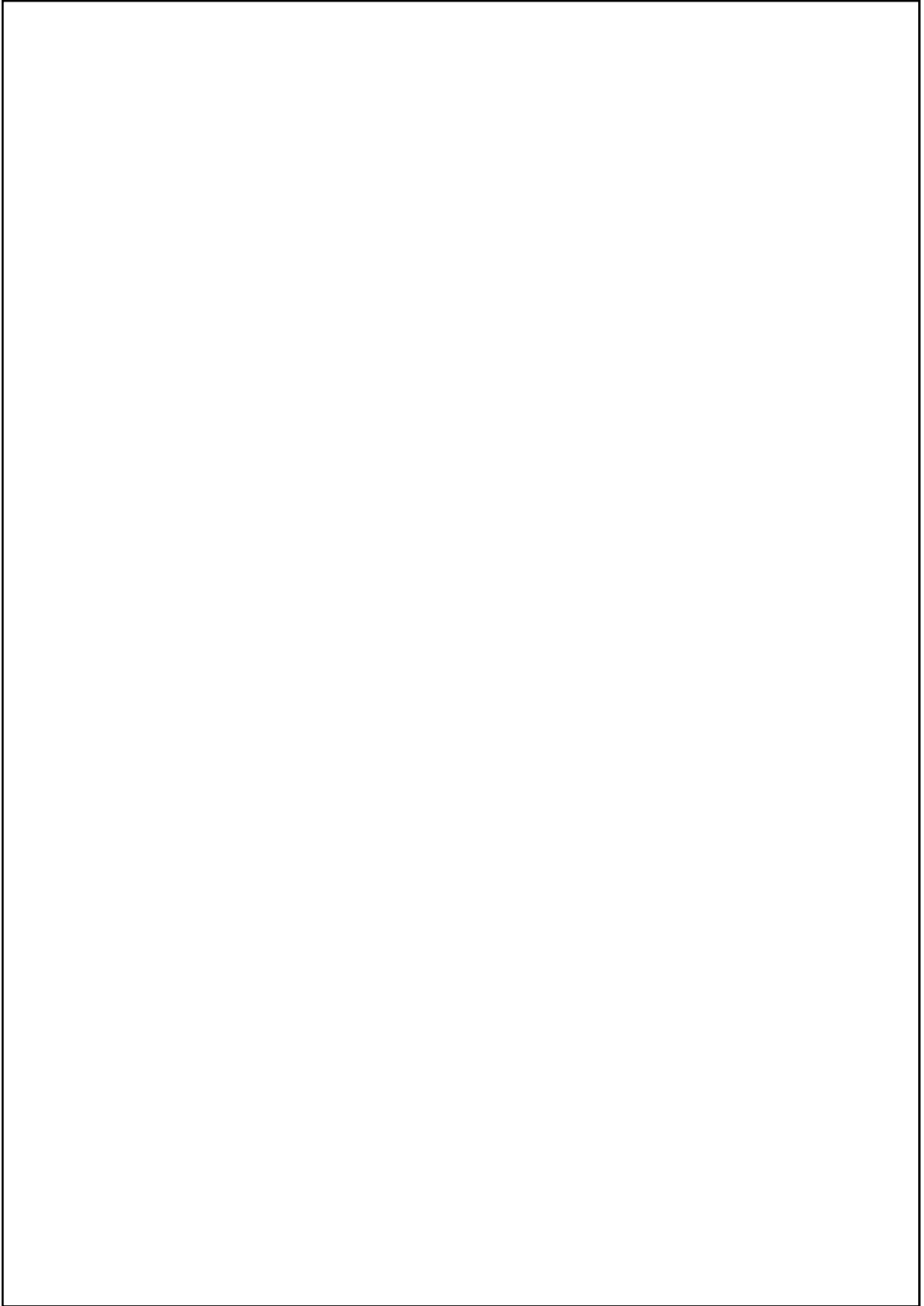


Figure 8: Joseph Kabris

The Frenchman Kabris was a contemporary of Robarts in the Marquesas, and although they were quite possibly the only white men permanently residing on the same island group during the same period of time, the two exhibited extraordinarily different attitudes to the tattoos they received. Both men were integrated into Marquesan society, becoming fluent in the language and customs of their adopted people and marrying into Indigenous families, though both Greg Dening and Jennifer Terrell have suggested that Kabris came closer to Marquesan society than any of his contemporaries ("Introduction" 8; 103). Both Robarts and Kabris were tattooed in the Indigenous Marquesan manner as a matter of necessity; however, Robarts was marked less extensively than Kabris, who seems to have embraced the practice and was heavily tattooed. The reasons for Robarts' less extensive markings are hinted at in his encounters with Kabris. In his narrative, Robarts describes the moment when he met Kabris after the latter had received his facial tattoo: "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). In this interaction, Kabris is 'masked' by his facial tattoo, and therefore unrecognisable. The denial of visual recognition – in Robarts' terms, visual 'Knowledge' – indicates the removal of Kabris from Robarts' visual perception of what a fellow white man should be, and Robarts recoils in horror from this permanently masked – and therefore transformed – individual. Robarts' recoiling from Kabris' transformation illuminates his own reluctance to become tattooed, and to undergo the same kind of 'transformation'.

Horace Holden, a beachcomber in the Pelew Islands in the 1830s, was similarly horrified by the prospect of facial tattooing. He writes that the Islanders were "exceedingly anxious to perform the operation upon our faces; but this we would not submit to, telling them that sooner than have it done we would die in resisting them" (102-3). The pervasiveness of the fear not only of bodily, but facial transformation is of particular significance. In Foreign Bodies, Alfonso Lingis articulates the role of the face in interactions between human beings. He suggests that "the face of another can be perceived as the exposed surface of a depth-structure," (168) indicating that the face, more than any other body part, is somehow the signifier of a deeper self: the point of exposition of the 'truth' of an individual. For this reason, the transformation of the face, by way of tattooing, signified for the white

beachcomber an even deeper level of transgression, which was immediately linked to how he would be perceived.

Additionally, the recognition of the face as not only a signifier of the other's truth, but also a reflection of the spectator's own subject-position, further complicates the way that the transformed face is perceived and interpreted. Lingis writes:

When I look at the face and the position of another, I see him or her stand there where I might be standing; his or her body is stationed there as a possible variant of, a signifier for, a metaphor for, my body. (191)

Lingis' assertion here corresponds with Grosz's theorisations of the freak body that were discussed in the previous chapter, which reflect on the interrelatedness of the concepts of self and other. That is, the other is always the reference point for the self, but when the other is different, uncanny, the metaphor that the other provides becomes disjointed, reflecting another possibility that Lingis identifies as being potentially "frightening" or "alluring" (191).

For Holden, the perceived transformative power of the tattoo dictates the use of a number of curatorial and contextualising techniques, which are engaged around the display of tattooing in the text. His pre-emptive engagement with established motifs of the beachcomber narrative, such as the threats of "captivity or death amongst a barbarous people" (28) that are on his shipmates' minds before they have even established that there are people on the island, signals an astute awareness of, and adherence to, generic conventions. Additionally, the objectifying nature of the Indigenous peoples' tattoos is established at the first opportunity. Upon seeing the Indigenous people, he remarks, "I was filled with horror by the sight of being apparently human, and yet almost destitute of the ordinary marks of humanity... They were fantastically tattooed on different parts of their bodies" (32). The tattoos render them 'destitute' of humanity. Presumably, this transformation out of the realm of humanity informs his own fear of being thus 'transformed'. Moreover, the pre-emptive nature of his disapproval of the tattoos and what they represent signals the intended tone with which his own tattooing should be received. This 'set up' exemplifies Holden's curatorial

position, and the role of this position in the establishment and perpetuation of the tattoo's perceived links with imagery of "captivity and death" amongst a savage, Other people.

Where Robarts hints at his distaste for Indigenous Marquesan tattoos in his abhorrence of Kabris, and his failure to mention his own tattoos, many beachcombers are more explicit in their condemnation of Indigenous tattoos and depict the process of tattooing as a torturous and painful process that they were either forced into, or - like Burns and Robarts - reluctantly submitted to as a matter of survival. As I have mentioned, the denial of agency with relation to participation in 'barbaric' practices such as tattooing is a key element that is pervasive in beachcomber narratives. Fundamental to the execution of this denial of agency is a textual manipulation wherein the author/editor exercises his curatorial influence over the exhibition of the tattoos and tattooing process within the narrative. Since the beachcomber narratives were some of the first popular texts to represent the tattooing process, the depictions that I discuss in the following section would have been highly influential in the consolidation of images of tattooing as a barbaric, torturous practice, which was most often associated with themes of captivity. The beachcombers' exhibition of this process, and the investments they had in creating a very particular kind of depiction, essentially created a cultural image that was not based upon 'fact', but was directed by a deliberately framed 'presentation'. This presentation was defined and contextualised by the objectives of their narratives - the exhibition - as a whole.

John Rutherford, a beachcomber in Aotearoa New Zealand from 1816 depicts his tattooing as a torturous procedure, of which he was a passive victim:

The whole of the natives then seated themselves on the ground in a ring, we were brought into the middle, and, being stripped of our clothes, and laid on our backs, we were each of us held down by five or six men, while two others commenced the operation of tattooing us. (Craik 135)

Surrounded by "the whole" of the natives, "stripped" of their clothes, and "held down by five or six men" the tattooing process is obviously not something the men submitted themselves

to willingly¹¹. In insisting upon this unwillingness, Rutherford essentially denies responsibility for the Othering marks that he has received. This, in turn, establishes two important meanings. Firstly, Rutherford denies responsibility and therefore ‘maintains’ his whiteness and associated civilised racial and cultural identity. Secondly, the tattooing process is depicted as an inflicted, torturous event, whereby the white men are victimised; the description therefore establishes the Maori as barbarous and savage. The tattoos are implicated as both the means and the result of the torture.

Holden’s depiction of his own tattooing process is remarkably similar to Rutherford’s, though it is significant that his language is notably more elaborate, suggesting perhaps that he has embellished the story, or at least has a very clear understanding of how his narrative was to be marketed. Holden writes:

The barbarous beings among whom our lot had been cast, deemed it important that we should be *tattooed*, and we were compelled to submit to the distressing operation. We expostulated against it — we entreated — we begged to be spared this additional affliction; but our entreaties were of no use. (102)

Holden establishes his unwillingness to participate in the procedure whilst simultaneously reiterating the barbarous nature of a people who would practice such a “distressing operation”. He continues this attitude in his description of the operation in a scene that is remarkably similar to Rutherford’s account:

We were in the first place securely bound down to the ground, and there held fast by our tormentors. They then proceeded to draw with a sharp stick the figures designed to be imprinted on the skin. This done, the skin was thickly punctured with a little instrument made of sharpened fish bones[...] It was effectually done; for to this day the figures remain as distinct as they were when first imprinted, and the marks will be carried with us to the grave. (102-3)

¹¹ Orr et al., following Keone Nunes, dispel the myth of forcible tattooing, pointing out that “the intricate and precise designs of Oceanic tattoo can never be achieved without the full cooperation of the tattooed” (Orr et al, 296).

In addition to emphasising the torturous elements of the procedure, Holden also evokes the issue of permanence, lamenting the fact that the marks will be with him for the rest of his life. Furthermore, Holden emphasises the compromised nature of his skin — his corporeal boundary. He writes, “After we were tattooed, the parts operated upon were, for a long time, running sores... Our flesh had so fallen away, that on lying down, our bones would actually pierce through the skin” (109). For Holden, the penetration and also deterioration of his skin is the focus of the tattooing procedure. He also emphasises that the tattooing has left his boundary wounded and vulnerable — open and weeping — to the extent that it can no longer contain his bones.

In O’Connell’s narrative, the tattooing process is similarly depicted as fearful and torturous; however, the process is also clearly linked to two other popular tropes often deployed within beachcomber narratives: cannibalism and Indigenous marriage. By situating the tattooing within a context of torture, he denies responsibility for the marks, though the process is ultimately represented as being beneficial, promoting him to a position of power within the tribe and even saving him from being eaten.

O’Connell sets a scene of suspense prior to his account of the actual process, describing an ominous journey to the place where he and his fellow prisoners were to be tattooed, which “would have been pleasing, if we had not been so utterly in the dark as to the purpose of the journey” (113). On arrival, O’Connell and his companion busy themselves in speculation as to their “end”. The woman who tattoos O’Connell’s hand is described as his “executioner”, and the process itself is described as a “battering” and a “punishment”. He claims to have heartily entreated against any further tattooing, but to no avail: the “savage printers” continued their torture, and O’Connell “often thought [he] should die of these apparently petty, but really acutely painful inflictions” (116).

For the purposes of making their story more marketable, and in order to maintain or re-establish a sense of European/American identity, suggestions of voluntary submission to ‘savage’ ways were often denied, especially in relation to Indigenous tattooing and marriage

into Indigenous societies. O'Connell denies agency with regard to both of these processes by connecting them. The connection hinges upon O'Connell's representation of the torturous tattooing process as a test of masculinity and, by association, sexual prowess. O'Connell's companion in captivity, George, was apparently unable to bear the pain of being tattooed, and begged not to have the operation completed. This wish was granted, but not without "unequivocal expressions of disgust at his cowardice and effeminacy" (115) from the Ponapeans. In O'Connell's narrative, George is emasculated by not being able to endure the tattooing. This in turn establishes O'Connell as brave, honourable and manly. In addition to this, O'Connell claims that the Ponapeans exclaimed "Jim Chief brave!" in admiration of his endurance. This exclamation does much for O'Connell's standing: he is designated a 'chief', with all the term's implications of power, authority and status, and he is also established for the reader as being "brave" even in the eyes of the savages. This status is further confirmed by George's marriage to a wife of "no rank", whereas O'Connell is wed to a member of the ruling family.

In many captivity and beachcomber narratives, tattooing is described in terms that sexualise the process, with an emphasis being placed on penetration with "sharp sticks", and, especially in the cases where young girls are being tattooed, the loss of blood. In O'Connell's narrative, the tattooing process is similarly sexualised, though the emphasis is more on titillation than predation. O'Connell fixates upon the "bevy of tender ladies" who are responsible for the operation, and seems almost ecstatic when he writes that "between every blow my beauty dipped her thorns in the ink" (116). This also establishes a possessive relationship between O'Connell and the woman tattooing him, which pre-empt the relationship to follow: he calls her "*my* beauty", and later discovers that the tattooing process was actually a part of a marriage ritual whereby he becomes wedded to one of his tattooers.

His wife

was only about fourteen years of age, affectionate, neat, faithful, and, barring too frequent indulgence in the flesh of baked dogs, which gave her breath something of a

canine odor, she was a very agreeable consort. During my residence upon the island she presented me with two pretty little demi-savages, a little girl, and a boy, who stands a chance, in his turn, to succeed his grandfather in the government of the island¹². (122)

O'Connell is careful to outline his wife's virtues in terms recognisable and appreciable by a Euro-American audience, and asserts his links to the royal family, though he simultaneously mocks her and reiterates her savagery by mentioning the fact that she eats dogs. Reisenberg indicates that O'Connell's unawareness of the marriage ritual is likely to be an embellishment, created for the same reason that most beachcombers implied that their tattoos were an involuntary infliction: O'Connell suggests that he was married unwittingly and therefore, unwillingly.

Interestingly, Vason's marriage to a Tongan woman is presented as the 'final straw' that finally 'broke' his ties to civilisation. Vason situates his experience as an allegorical struggle between good and evil, wherein each temptation is met with a struggle between his "evil inclinations" and his "conscience" (132). Chapter Ten is titled "The Author's Declension", and begins to describe in detail Vason's turn away from his Christian position, including his marriage: "My marriage, which for a time rendered me very happy, threw down every barrier of restraint, which hitherto conscience had opposed to my inclinations, and opened the door to every indulgence" (133). It is the crossing of the sexual and familial boundary represented by marriage that allowed his ultimate, unrestrained 'indulgence'. When his fellow missionaries came to find and 'save' him, it is also this tie to his wife that most disinclined him to return to the mission.

For many beachcombers who aimed to sell their stories as a means of making a living upon returning to European or American society, it was important to re-establish their European identity so that they were not viewed by the public as degraded rogues. As Daniel Thorp

¹² The Ponapeans' social stratification was matrilineal, so male beachcombers generally had little impact on the distribution of social power and status.

points out, beachcombers were considered by white populations to be “more degraded than the Natives,” presumably on account of their ‘fall’ from civilisation: while the Indigenous people had never been civilised, the white man gone native had held civilisation in his grasp and thrown it away in favour of the Indigenous, ‘savage’ way of life (2). For this reason, depictions of Indigenous tattooing, marriage, and other rites that may have been perceived as evidence of a white man’s ‘fall’ into native degeneracy, were suitably framed to absolve the narrator of responsibility. O’Connell presents his wife in terms that make her identifiable by Europeans as “valuable” (she is described as being well-mannered, loyal, and a member of the royal family), and simultaneously “savage”. Similarly, his tattoos, though not condoned, are presented in terms that make their value identifiable to a European audience. Just as the tattooing process connects him to the royal family, so too does it protect him from the ever-present threat of cannibalism, which is a ubiquitous theme not only in many beachcomber narratives, but also in a number of displays of savage people in museums and sideshows, such as Barnum’s Fijian Man-Eaters.

As Frank Lestringant points out, “the noun ‘cannibal’ derives from the Aarawak caniba, apparently a corruption of cariba, the name (meaning ‘bold’ it is said) which the Carribean Indians of the Lesser Antilles gave to themselves” (15). Around 1492 the term was adopted by Christopher Columbus, and by 1533 the word ‘cannibal’ “was already firmly attached to manifestations of a barbarity which was as mythical as it was extreme” (33). The word’s etymological history, therefore, is couched within a mythological barbarism, an entrenched cultural myth that is, like tattooing, embedded within the discourses of colonialism. Since the term’s inception, the threat of encountering ‘cannibal savages’ has been a constant fixture in explorers’ journals, travellers’ and beachcomber narratives, and most writers seem to be obsessed by the question of whether or not the people they encountered actually did or did not practice anthropophagy¹³. Within his narrative, O’Connell justifies his tattoos by engaging this trope and evoking the previously-established threat of cannibalism. O’Connell claims that his tattoos prevented him from being ‘eaten’ by another tribe when he was travelling through the Islands:

¹³ For a detailed discussion of representations and cultural uses of cannibalism in colonial Pacific literatures, see Paul Lyons’ American Pacificism.

Notwithstanding the representations of Ahoundel that we were in danger of being eaten if we ventured out of his sight, nothing but the most courteous treatment was received by us. My tattooing, speaking of my relationship to Ahoundel-a-Nutt, was better than letters of introduction. (182)

By implying that he was shipwrecked and captured, and that his participation in the ‘savage’ act of tattooing was forced, and in fact justified by the equal or greater threat of being actually ingested by a “savage”, O’Connell again disavows responsibility for his participation in the Ponapean’s primitive way of life, while simultaneously responding to a public demand for cannibalism as a narrative feature.

Elsewhere in the narrative, cannibalism is depicted as a generically savage practice. When O’Connell is shipwrecked off Port Macquarie with five “Kanakas,” for example, O’Connell claims to be solely responsible for righteously dissuading the savages from their cannibalistic impulses towards each other, thereby situating himself not only as superior to the natives, but also as a kind of saviour, rescuing them from their debased urges. He also makes sweeping generalisations about the national identity of his companions, identifying them only as “South Sea islanders” yet referring to them as “countrymen”. In this statement, O’Connell assimilates what may have been a significantly diverse group of men under the general term “Kanakan”¹⁴. Like Samoa in Melville’s *Mardi*, O’Connell’s companions are “identified with [their] place of origin and [their] culture, in a movement that enforces metonymy or synecdoche,” (Ellis 22) and that engages with the notion of a blanket primitivism that pervades much colonial literature. Significantly, this blanket primitivism is perhaps most evident in many beachcombers’ depictions of tattooing as a generally and generically savage or primitive practice which is not determined by any cultural or geographical specificity.

¹⁴ The Macquarie Dictionary defines ‘Kanakan’ as “Pacific Islander, formerly one brought to Australia as a labourer”. Paul Lyons expands upon this, pointing out that kanaka is the “Hawai’ian term for ‘person’ that became the generic and later derogatory epithet for all Oceanians” (*American Pacificism* 35)

John Rutherford, a man who was marketed as “The White Chief”, traded upon the depiction of his experiences among the ‘savage’ people of New Zealand. What is perhaps most significant about Rutherford, is that most of the tattoos on his body were not in fact Maori, but Tahitian in origin. Tattoo historian C.H. Fellowes notes that

[a] contemporary engraving shows that [Rutherford’s] face was indeed decorated in the Maori style, but on his body and wrists he bore Tahitian tattooing, while the designs on his chest may have been applied in Rotuma [one of the Fijian Islands]. (7)

This indication that Rutherford had been tattooed again in Tahiti, subsequent to the ‘forced’ tattoos he received as a ‘captive’, casts doubt upon his adamant claims that he was tattooed against his will. Rutherford’s attitude to this additional procedure is never mentioned within Craik’s or any other narrative. The important point though, is the fact that the tattoos, despite their cultural specificity, were recognised as being generically ‘savage’ enough to render their *actual* origin ultimately meaningless, again reiterating Bennett’s assertion that the actual authenticity of an artefact is essentially irrelevant once subjected to the processes of curating and presentation. Also, the fact that Rutherford was able to exhibit himself as a man “tattooed by Maori” in spite of his Tahitian designs is indicative of the notion of ‘blanket primitivism’ that tattooing evoked. The tattooed body was merely marked by ‘savagery’, and the cultural and geographic origin of those marks was ultimately inconsequential. In the context of Rutherford’s captivity and involuntary, torturous tattooing, the tattoo emerges more potently than ever as a symbol of universal savagery and barbarity.

In Rutherford’s case, this notion of blanket primitivity was circumscribed by the curatorial voice of his editor, George Lillie Craik. Rutherford’s narrative was published as a substantial section of Craik’s book, The New Zealanders (1830). In cases such as Rutherford’s, the editor of the volume maintains ultimate curatorial power, thereby situating the beachcomber narrative itself as an artifact which can be held up as ‘evidence’ of the editor’s ideological convictions. Craik’s utilisation of Rutherford’s narrative exemplifies the way that a text can be framed in order to bolster the dispersal of a particular agenda. James Drummond, editor of the 1908 edition of The New Zealanders, admits that “It was largely to meet the public taste for something wonderful and striking that John Rutherford’s story of adventures in New

Zealand saw the light of publicity” but he does concede that the book supplied “interesting information” about a “country and a race of which very little was then known” (2). The lack of prior knowledge of New Zealand allowed Craik’s book to slip easily into a position of authority on Maori customs. Just as the world’s fair directors saw their events as an opportunity to ‘educate’, and therefore influence an ignorant populace, Craik, for all intents and purposes, curated the exhibition of Rutherford’s narrative within his own text in such a way as to highlight the alleged dichotomy between ‘civilised’ and ‘savage’.

Craik utilises Rutherford’s narrative largely to support his own observations and opinions about Maori society, inserting extracts from Rutherford’s narrative as supplementary evidence. Craik’s biases, however, are evident, even from the section titles of his book. A section of Chapter 9, for example, is called ‘Dirty Habits of the New Zealanders’ (212), while others are called ‘Cannibalism’ (101-113); ‘Customs of the People’ (121-123); ‘Scenery’ (165-167); ‘Religious and Superstitious Notions’ (227-235); ‘Mode of Fighting’ (253). Craik introduces the topic of tattooing from an anthropological point of view, which, like many of his other observations is supposedly ‘scientific’, though it is not without bias:

The custom of marking the skin, here called tattooing, is one of the most widely diffused practices of savage life, having been found, even in modern times, to exist, in one modification or another, not only in most of the inhabited islands of the Sandwich Isles, but also among many of the aboriginal tribes of Africa and America. (Craik 137)

Craik’s description of tattooing, though brief, is significant in that it may well have been the first account of the practice that some readers had come across. For this reason, his positioning of it as a ‘savage’ practice is significant in that it aids the dispersal of this perception. Furthermore, Craik’s presentation of the Maori as ‘primitive’ and ‘savage’ provides a contrast for his presentation of Rutherford. In contrast to the natives, Rutherford’s whiteness is foregrounded, and implicitly, his authority is bolstered, in turn supporting Craik’s claims to authenticity.

Craik’s anthropological observations lend an air of authority to the text, which is at once anthropological study, adventure story and political manifesto. Rutherford is situated as the

protagonist/hero of the text, and, in the context of Rutherford's textualised exhibition, Craik's passages adopt the air of the announcer, contextualising and explaining the 'scientific' details of Rutherford's narrative. The Rutherford sections are entitled 'Rutherford's interview with Mawman' (251), 'Rutherford's Journey Into the Interior' (215), 'Rutherford Made a Chief: Marries' (195-197) and 'Rutherford's Return to England'. The anthropological tone of Craik's book situates Rutherford's narrative in a unique position that distinguishes it from other beachcomber narratives that, without the 'scientific' framing that Craik provided, could be perceived as less 'authentic' in their rendering of the native peoples and practices they depict. In addition to this, Craik's authority also served to further extricate Rutherford from the unsavoury association with beachcombers.

While Rutherford's own narrative depicts his involuntary tattooing and captivity, Craik reinforces Rutherford's status as an imprisoned victim, perhaps in an effort to preserve the reputation of his anthropological informant and protagonist:

The circumstances of Rutherford's capture and detention in New Zealand were but indifferently calculated to reconcile him to the new state of society in which he was there compelled to mix, notwithstanding the rank to which his superior intelligence and activity raised him. Though a chief, he was still a prisoner; and even all the favour with which he had himself been treated could not make him forget the fate of his companions, or the warning which it afforded him to how sudden or slight an accident his own life might at any time fall a sacrifice. (282)

Craik maintains that Rutherford was a prisoner, that he lived in fear, and that it was his 'superiority' that allowed him to infiltrate Maori society and gain a position of power. Moreover, his commentary on Rutherford's narrative allows him to effectively annul the kindnesses that Rutherford relates, reminding the reader that the "favour" of the natives was essentially meaningless given his status as "prisoner". Craik's curatorial textualisation of his primary artifacts, Rutherford and his narrative, allows the perpetuation of the Maori as essentially devoid of 'civilised' traits such as mercy and kindness. Craik intimates that Rutherford was not a beachcomber, emphasising instead his status as a captive, and claiming that other people who have 'gone native' have done so out of laziness. "Generally," he writes,

“the Europeans who have adopted the life of the savage have been men driven out from civilization, or disinclined to systematic industry” (282). Rutherford, of course, does not fit this categorisation. Craik relates that

[a]fter his return to England Rutherford occasionally maintained himself by accompanying a traveling caravan of wonders, showing his tattooing, and telling something of his extraordinary adventures[...] His manners were mild and courteous; he was fond of children, to whom he appeared happy to explain the causes of his singular appearance; and he was evidently a man of very sober habits. (277-78)

In this passage, Craik assures his reader that Rutherford was a respectable man who was kind and personable – not in any way associated with his fellow beachcombers, nor the unsavoury types in the circus or sideshow, since he “greatly disliked being shown for money” (278) and only submitted to it in an effort to make a living. Historian Daniel Thorp counters Craik’s claims, however, suggesting that Rutherford survived in England “by picking pockets and displaying himself at carnivals” (8).

The editor of Vason’s narrative, James Orange, plays a similar role to Craik, by simultaneously defending the merits of the narrative, and reiterating its primary message; in other words, directing the reader’s comprehension of the *meaning* of the exhibition. According to Orange, Vason’s Authentic Narrative was published out of a desire to warn future missionaries of the temptations they might encounter in the Pacific. Orange states in his preface that the objectives of the publication of “the history of the delinquencies is to educate and fairly warn missionaries of the personal risks in being exposed to savage life” (vi). The volume is dedicated to God, and Orange assures the reader that all proceeds from its sale will be contributed towards future missionary endeavours.

Orange points out that Vason “had no intention that the facts should be made public during his life,” (vi) and Vason’s own narrative clearly states his shame and remorse regarding the events that the narrative details, though he plainly declares the truth of all that he relates: “In this I shall not disguise my conduct, but declare everything with that scrupulous attention to truth, without exaggeration or palliation, to which I have endeavoured, uniformly, to adhere,

in all that I have related” (119). This assurance of the truth of the narrative is something that is uniformly present in beachcomber narratives, even those that are fictionalised, such as Melville’s Typee and Omoo, and (at least some of) O’Connell’s narrative.

While the authority and authenticity of Rutherford’s and Vason’s narratives were defended and justified by their editors’ curatorial influence, many beachcombers felt the need to offer some kind of justification and defense of truth themselves, an urge which further aligns their narratives with the display of racialised freaks: as Anne Maxwell points out, “claims of realism” were fundamental to ethnographic exhibits seen in the world’s fairs. Holden emphasizes the useful and entertaining qualities of his narrative, presenting it as both truthful and valuable. He indicates that he has published it only “In compliance with the solicitations of many respectable gentlemen” (118). In a passage that simultaneously flatters his readers, Holden claims that his “strictly true,” “simple and unadorned” story

may serve to afford some information of a little spot hitherto supposed to be uninhabited, and to present to view of the curious and intelligent some knowledge of a portion of our race among whom no white man has ever before lived. (118)

Similarly, James O’Connell indicates that he intended his narrative, A Residence of Eleven Years in New Holland and the Caroline Islands, as “a compilation of facts upon portions of the world comparatively little known,” and that he has “identified [himself] with it only so far as was necessary to give it the interest of a narrative” (251). O’Connell self-consciously assures his readers that he is a respectable individual, an operation paralleled by his deployment of various tactics that establish his work as a sophisticated piece of writing. O’Connell’s descriptions of his first voyage, on board a female convict ship bound for Botany Bay, and his descriptions of the female convict passengers in particular, provide a clear indication of the social position he wishes to project for his readers. He is derisive toward the women, and clearly positions himself as morally superior, emphasising the convicts’ criminal status. He employs a phonetically rendered, vernacular dialogue when relaying the conversations of the women, which contrasts sharply with his own narrative language, which is articulate. In addition, his references to Shakespeare, poetry, and other canonical literature situate his own work as being ‘literary’ and his narration as educated rather than anecdotal.

The apparent urgency with which beachcombers rushed to defend the authority and truthfulness of their narratives indicates a certain degree of awareness of the disapprobation accorded to men of their social milieu. While O'Connell makes an effort to distance his narrative from any association with the beachcombers', his self-projection is confused at best. O'Connell, perhaps more than other beachcombers I have discussed, displays an unrelenting uneasiness with his own position within the narrative, something most strikingly represented in his varying assertions of identity. He represents his alliances ambiguously and inconsistently, and at various points his attitudes — towards the British, the Indigenous populations of the Islands he visits, and ultimately, himself — seem confused. O'Connell's contradictory assessments of the Indigenous communities, for example, swing from the imperialist stereotype of Indigenous people as "indolent," "vilely licentious," "filthy," "predatory," "utterly degraded" and "the connecting link between apes and men" (82), to a more Rousseauistic romanticisation of the Ponapeans: "some people claiming to be civilized might take a lesson from the humanity of these people to shipwrecked mariners" (109).

O'Connell's first encounter with the Indigenous Australians is another example of this contradiction. Initially, O'Connell mocks the "Chief of the Sydney Cove blacks," King Bungaree, sarcastically commenting upon his second-hand officer's coat and lack of shoes. He writes that, "upon his neck was suspended the order and insignia of his nobility, - a plate which might have been gold, but was brass, bearing the inscription, 'BUNGAREE, KING OF SYDNEY COVE'" (30). While Bungaree's inferiority and paltry imitation are emphasised at first, O'Connell quickly concedes that "King Bungaree[...] is indeed better entitled to his rank than the English to his land" (31). In this comment, O'Connell betrays sympathy for Bungaree that exposes an understanding of the Indigenous right to possess land, something that was either not recognised or ignored by many of his contemporaries.

Similarly, O'Connell's empathy for the Ponapeans is profound, and is perhaps most indicative of the challenges to allegiance that he encountered and which he subsequently struggles to express, given the restrictions of genre and audience expectations. His empathy is

also evident in his understanding of his own position as Other amongst the Ponapeans, something that is especially evident in his awareness of his own (and others') colour, which is unusually nuanced, and at times rather complex. On several occasions he notes the way that the blue veins that show through his relatively translucent skin are constant sources of amazement and wonder for the Ponapeans. He also remarks on the 'practical joke' of surprising people who had never seen him before, by entering

a house suddenly, with a howl, and [striking] an attitude[...] Imagine the effect which would be produced on a party of American or European ladies by the sudden apparition of an albino under such circumstances, and you will have some idea of the fright of the islanders. (123)

It is a fear of whiteness that is identified here: of someone lighter than oneself suddenly appearing. This anecdote emphasises his Otherness on Ponape, and evinces quite a profound awareness of the subjectivity of Othering.

Holden betrays a similar element of sympathy towards the Palauans, and expresses an awareness of his own Otherness in his understanding of the Islanders' curiosity to "learn something of the nature of beings so different from themselves" (54). Holden is sympathetic and even affectionate towards his Palauan hosts, whom he describes as being extremely helpful in the building of a canoe for himself and his shipmates (63). In addition, "many favors" of "rude kindness" were shown them, and they felt "emotions of regret and were quite overpowered with a sense of our obligations to them for the many favors they had bestowed upon us" (72). Since most white people in the Pacific at that time perceived themselves to be superior to the Indigenous populations, and consequently felt that the resources of the Indigenous people were somehow 'owed' to them, Holden's empathy is outstanding. Despite this empathy though, he, like Rutherford and many other beachcombers, maintains that he was a 'captive' and, in particular, that his tattoos were a 'sorrowful' torture:

They clustered around us, and, placing their hands upon our flesh, seemed greatly to wonder that it should differ so much from their own. The fashion of wearing a skin so white as ours, seemed to them, no doubt, to be an offence against the taste and refinement of their portion of the world. To go at large without being tattooed, was to carry with us the palpable proofs of our vulgarity; and, to our sorrow, we were afterwards compelled to conform to the custom of the barbarians in this respect, and shall carry with us to the grave the marks of their well-meant, though cruel operation upon our bodies. (50-51)

Like O'Connell, Holden recognises that it is his whiteness that is of interest and a subject of intrigue to the Palauans, and is essentially what they consider to be 'vulgar'. While the Palauan culture and custom requires that Holden and his ship-mates' whiteness be covered by tattooing, Euro-American observers also perceived the tattooing process as covering or even erasing whiteness, along with the moral and cultural righteousness which is at times assumed to be synonymous with it. This is most clearly expressed in Vason's narrative, which Elleray suggests is a victim of confused narrative voices, - the beachcomber battling with the evangelist. "In its evangelical register," she writes, "the Narrative departs from standard beachcomber texts that present themselves as part adventure tale, part travel narrative, and part ethnographic observation, but not usually as moral tract" (165).

In his history of missionaries in the Pacific, Neil Gunson gives some indication of the conflict between beachcombers and missionaries, and identifies at least one case where a beachcomber was pitted in direct opposition to a missionary settlement. W.P. Crook, an early missionary in the Marquesas, is described by Gunson as "the most indefatigable educationalist in the first thirty years of missionary activity" (240). According to Gunson, "Crook's adversary in the Marquesas was an 'Italian renegade'¹⁵ who led the islanders in 'furtherance of his abominable practices'" (167). Here, the moral conflict between the beachcombers and the missionaries is personified. Indeed, it is the *beachcomber* who is situated as corrupting the *natives*. This clearly positions the beachcomber as morally inferior to the Indigenous people, thereby cementing the notion of these characters as degenerate and

¹⁵ Again, the beachcomber is described as a renegade.

morally reprehensible. Gunson also details, with much distaste, the prevalence of a ‘sailor religion’ that was introduced in the Marquesas before the establishment of any official missions. According to Gunson, “They taught that they themselves were sacred and that all food prohibitions (*sa*) were wrong. Polygamy was practiced, converts were baptized, and sea shanties were sung at their services” (169).

In light of this, Vason’s narrative can be read not only as the story of a man who crossed the boundary between civilised and savage, but also of one who crossed the boundary between the antagonistic identities of beachcomber and missionary. For Vason’s fellow missionaries, the ultimate boundary is crossed when he is tattooed. After Vason is tattooed, he is left behind by the missionaries “as a just punishment of my dereliction of them and their cause” (184), and he resigns himself to the prospect of ending his days in Tonga. Vason’s choice of language is interesting here, as it betrays his dissociation from the missionary cause by his use of “they” and “theirs”. In this passage, he clearly aligns himself as Other to the missionaries, thereby cementing his ties to the Tongans he lived amongst. Not coincidentally, this alignment follows immediately upon his being tattooed – the physical transformation confirming, and making visible, the moral transformation.

Gunson’s take on Vason’s ‘fall’ closely echoes Vason’s own account of his experiences in that his time as a beachcomber is positioned as a moral challenge in which Vason is ultimately redeemed. According to Gunson, Vason

underwent a kind of conversion in reverse, for not only did he give up all the ‘means of grace,’ but he adopted the way of life best adapted to gaining the confidence of his Tongan protectors. In taking several wives, and in adopting the dress and markings of the people, his defection was complete. (154)

Vason’s ‘way of life’ is something that he subjected himself to as a means of gaining the trust and protection of the Tongans he lived amongst. For Gunson, ‘defection’ involves marriage, dress, and ‘markings’ – presumably tattoos.

Missionaries in the Pacific were hugely influential in the discontinuation of the practice of tattooing in many Pacific societies, and the presence of Indigenous tattoos was often cited as an indication of conversion (or lack thereof)¹⁶. Gunson writes that W. P. Crook was largely responsible in the Marquesas for the promulgation of the idea that tattooing was a sinful activity. When some of Crook's students were tattooed, he "prevailed" on the judges "not to send them to labour on the road 'with those who will not fail to make them worse,' but to bring them to the school and punish them with a dozen lashes with a cat-o'-nine tails" (Gunson, 240-241). Crook is positioned by Gunson as lenient and considerate - as recognising his pupils' potential to be saved from the further denigration that would result from other workers' negative influence. What he would replace this with, however, is a mode of punishment that is manifested in pain and corporeal invasion. Crook's supposed leniency towards his pupils betrays the inherent irony of colonial ideas about acceptable, as opposed to, barbaric pain: the distinction is arbitrary, and only determined by social and cultural constraints and perceptions.

Another Pacific missionary, the Reverend Richard Armstrong, relates that the practice of tattooing, which he refers to as *kakauing*, "often gives [the Marquesans] an exceedingly savage and almost frightful appearance". This effect is "aside from," and perhaps a violation of, the "regularity of their bodily proportions, symmetry of form and beauty of features" which makes them "greatly superior" to the Hawaiians and Tahitians (9). A contributing factor to this superiority is also their "fairness", which of course makes them closer to English standards of beauty. Morally, however, the Marquesans are described as being "filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity" (11). He indicates that the "most abhorrent" of their moral features are "as continually visible on their moral character, as the fish, fowls, and creeping things, drawn in dark figures, are, upon their naked bodies" (11). Here, the 'deplorable' moral characters of the Marquesans are like "tattoos" upon their consciousnesses. For Armstrong, as for other missionaries, the Indigenous tattoos physically embody the moral depravity of the unconverted Marquesans. Indeed, this attitude was so pervasive amongst missionaries in the Pacific, that in the Society Islands, the renunciation of tattooing was designated as a symbol of

¹⁶ For further information on the missionary impact upon tattooing practice see Blackburn and also D'Alleva .

faith, and was a prerequisite of becoming a member of the church. Gunson notes that “Tattooing was not forbidden by civil law... and consequently it was forbidden only to church members” (305). This kind of exclusion again indicates that tattooing was perceived as manifesting a morality (or immorality) contrary to the kind of religion that the missionaries preached.

The moral associations of tattoos, as well as the obvious racial implications of naturally fair skin being coloured and tainted by the process of tattooing, meant that, for Vason, his ‘fall’ was cemented by this physical transformation. However, as Elleray points out, the permanence “precludes the recognition of wrongdoing and the reversal of choice” (174). Vason, and other permanently marked beachcombers were essentially unable to reverse or remove the process by which they were transformed, resulting in the narrative emphasis on the tattooee’s lack of agency. The issue of ‘covering’ the marks that Vason received as a beachcomber is addressed somewhat differently by Vanessa Smith, who suggests that “Vason is exposed in civilization wearing the garb of an exotic culture; to clothe him or his narrative is not to cover spiritual nakedness, but the inscription of that culture” (40). In other words, what the narrative works to cover, by denying agency, are not the spiritual implications of Vason’s tattooing, but the cultural. Ultimately, the permanence of the tattoo means that the suggestions it evokes can at best be covered or clothed, both literally and metaphorically, but never reversed or removed.

These suggestions, and the perceived damage done to the beachcomber’s white identity, are articulated in their interactions with the crews of European ships that call at the Islands. When Vason learns of an English ship that is docked at Tonga, he paddles out to it, in the hope that it will provide him with a passage back to England. “When we came near, I called out, ‘How do you do, countrymen?’ But the sailors only laughed at me, as they supposed, from my dress, that I was a native who had picked up some European phrases” (194). His visual appearance denies the possibility of recognition as one of the sailors’ ‘countrymen’, and therefore denies his prior identity. He is rendered, temporarily at least, as Other. Rutherford is similarly Othered by his appearance and tattoos when he approaches the American brig that facilitated his passage back to civilisation. When the brig lands, Rutherford is allegedly sent out to ‘lure’ the ship into the harbour, as it is presumed by the rest of his tribe that his

appearance will make him more trustworthy. Initially however, his tattooed, swarthy complexion presents problems for Rutherford, the captain of the brig mistaking him for one of the natives. Upon reaching the ship, Rutherford claims:

I immediately went on board and presented myself to the captain, who, as soon as he saw me, exclaimed, 'Here is a white New Zealander'. I told him that I was not a New Zealander, but an Englishman; upon which he invited me into his cabin. (275)

Rutherford is immediately recognised as 'white,' yet his national identity remains unclear to the captain, until Rutherford speaks, thereby revealing his 'true' identity. This truth enables his invitation into the cabin and his ultimate rescue.

These scenes of rescue are an important juncture in these narratives in that they represent the moment when the beachcomber begins to resume his civilised identity, and the recognition of him as 'white' is perhaps the most pivotal part of this process. The framing of the 'rescue' scene – the language, props, metaphors and messages that are employed and depicted also forms the conclusion of the narrative and ultimately reinforces the messages that are depicted in the narrative: primarily, the lack of agency on the part of the beachcomber and the barbaric savagery of the Indigenous people. The 'escape' scene is depicted in frantic, desperate terms in order to reiterate these messages.

Rutherford allegedly "begged" the captain of the American brig to "rescue" him. He remarks that he "had been a prisoner among these savages ten years, all but two months" (276), again reiterating the unwillingness of his association with the Maori. Juxtaposed with the preceding narrative however, this reiteration is unconvincing: he had been fully integrated, married, had children, been tattooed, and "treated very kindly" (156) and made a chief; yet he still positions himself as a "prisoner".

Similarly, when Vason learns of a European ship docked at Tonga, he starts behaving as though he is a captive, suggesting that the Tongans will 'kill' him if they find out his plan to escape. Vason refers to the ship as "the only opportunity of getting out of the hands of these savages" (194). The desperate attempt to escape is an "alarming crisis," in which "the delay of

a few minutes might have for ever cut off my return to the tranquil delights of civilized life, the soothing pleasures of a peaceful Sabbath, and the supporting consolations of religion” (195). It is the mere suggestion of an opportunity to return home which re-instils these feelings to Vason, and signifies a change of heart, a metaphorical and moral ‘return’ to righteousness, which can only be assured by his return to England since, as has become evident, Vason is incapable of living his morality without the support of society. On the ship home, he looks forward “with shame and anxiety to [his] native country” (199). By framing these moments as desperate, frantic scenes of escape from the hands of bloodthirsty savages, the prior assertions of captivity are crystallised so that the final word of the narratives compounds and reiterates the messages projected by the narrative.

Like Kabris, Robarts, O’Connell, Rutherford and Burns, George Vason returned from the Pacific with a full traditional tattoo and eked out an existence as an educational artifact of exoticism. Smith offers a useful interpretation of this phenomenon:

As performer, the beachcomber could maintain an identity in translocation, supporting himself by representing the culture from which he had come, even as he had in the Pacific Islands. The practice of tattooing meant that the body of the repatriated white man often bore the inscription of an alien aesthetic, which could serve as the text of performance. Not simply of anthropological or aesthetic value, the tattoo was also the scandalous sign of degeneration (47)

Smith’s interpretation is useful in that it raises the notion of translocative, performative identity, which was a common feature of many beachcomber narratives. The indelible physical marks – the tattoo – signified the deeper marks upon the identity of the ‘captured’ individual. More significantly, however, it transformed them into an artifact, and inscribed them as such.

The returning beachcomber was subject to substantial shifts in cultural placement, and therefore identity, as a result of the borders he had crossed. For the tattooed beachcomber, who was often forced to make a life as an exhibited freak, a border was also crossed between subject and object. Many travellers to the Pacific, not only the beachcombers I have discussed

here, described the dehumanising and objectifying effect of tattoos. O'Connell likens his tattooed appearance to one of animality, claiming that after receiving his tattoos he resembled a "rhinoceros" (116), and writing that "I came from the tattoo hospital a bird of much more diversified plumage than when I entered" (116). Possibly the most famous beachcomber of all, Herman Melville, claims that the process of tattooing "obliterated every trace of humanity," and also likens the tattooed appearance to that of a rhinoceros (Typee 118). He exclaimed that by being tattooed, he would have been transformed into an "object" (298), like the old chiefs whom he likens in appearance to "verde-antique" (a type of marble, which is commonly engraved or carved) (118). Similarly, Frank Coffee, a traveller who published his journal as Forty Years in the Pacific: A Book of Reference for the Traveller and Pleasure for the Stay-at-Home in 1920, likens the tattooed faces of elderly Maori to "plaques of old wood" (179). Beachcombers contributed to this historical trajectory of objectification: by bearing the generic marks of the savage, the tattooed beachcomber became an exotic artifact, whose primary value, and indeed currency, was derived from the objectification and display of the tattooed body.

While it could be argued that most beachcombers actually objectified themselves by willingly being exhibited, my contention is that their exhibition was an at times desperate response to the objectification and Othering that the European and American public had already dealt them. This attitude was framed and informed by the traditions of objectifying native, tattooed people that had been emerging in exhibitions dating from the late eighteenth century. For Joseph Kabris, the selling of his story was merely a way to make "a few rubles [sic]," on his return to Europe, and his body of Marquesan tattooing had become his "major asset" (Campbell 138). At the time of his death this "major asset" was actually preyed upon by art dealers and collectors who intended to flay and tan Kabris' tattooed skin. Like so many other tattooed bodies, traded as commodities across oceans and cultures, Kabris ended his life being most valued as a freakish object. I believe that the return of the beachcomber, the crossing of the border from 'savagery' to civilisation, and its inherent objectification was fundamental in promoting and maintaining the symbol of the tattoo as the mark of savagery, even on a white man.

As O'Connell points out, "Tattooing, spoken of in another connection as embalming the memory of the dead, is an art essential, in its symbolical language, to the preservation of the traditionary uses of the natives" (151). In light of this, O'Connell, and other beachcombers who were inscribed in a similar manner, became physical embodiments of the 'savage' way of life and brought an element of this back to their own culture upon their return. For European and American readers and viewers, the tattooed white man was an exoticised and spectacularised individual who had been physically and psychologically transformed by his experiences, wearing primitivity on, and in, his skin. Tattooed beachcombers became fixtures in the public imaginary and consciousness at a time when tattooing, as a phenomenon and as a discourse, was still emerging. For this reason, the beachcombers' representation of their tattooed bodies played a fundamental part in the formation and cultivation of a discourse of tattooing that was linked to colonialism's project of Othering. The beachcombers' impulse to offer justification for their Indigenous tattoos suggests that they were already subjected to the negative connotations and assumptions that tattoos held. Their texts however, in perpetuating the negativity and reiterating the need to distance the beachcombers from the process and/or deny agency in receiving the marks, reinforce a discourse that represents tattoos as the visual signifier of a primitive Other. As beachcombers became entrenched in the public consciousness as exotic spectacles, the objectification they were subject to within Euro-American society was solidified. Having taken the 'mark of the savage' into their bodies, the tattooed beachcombers who returned to their native cultures found themselves unable to reassimilate and were therefore rendered as liminal figures for the rest of their lives. The writing and publication of their narratives served to justify and explain the tattoos the beachcombers received; however the visual titillation offered by the spectacle of performance rendered such explanations irrelevant. The freak show of physically embodied savage skins would always subsume the written word. This in turn indicates that the peculiar transgression that the Indigenous tattoo is emblematic of - the visual stigma of a breach of boundary - was an inescapable transformation: one which resulted in a loss of concrete identity, status and home.

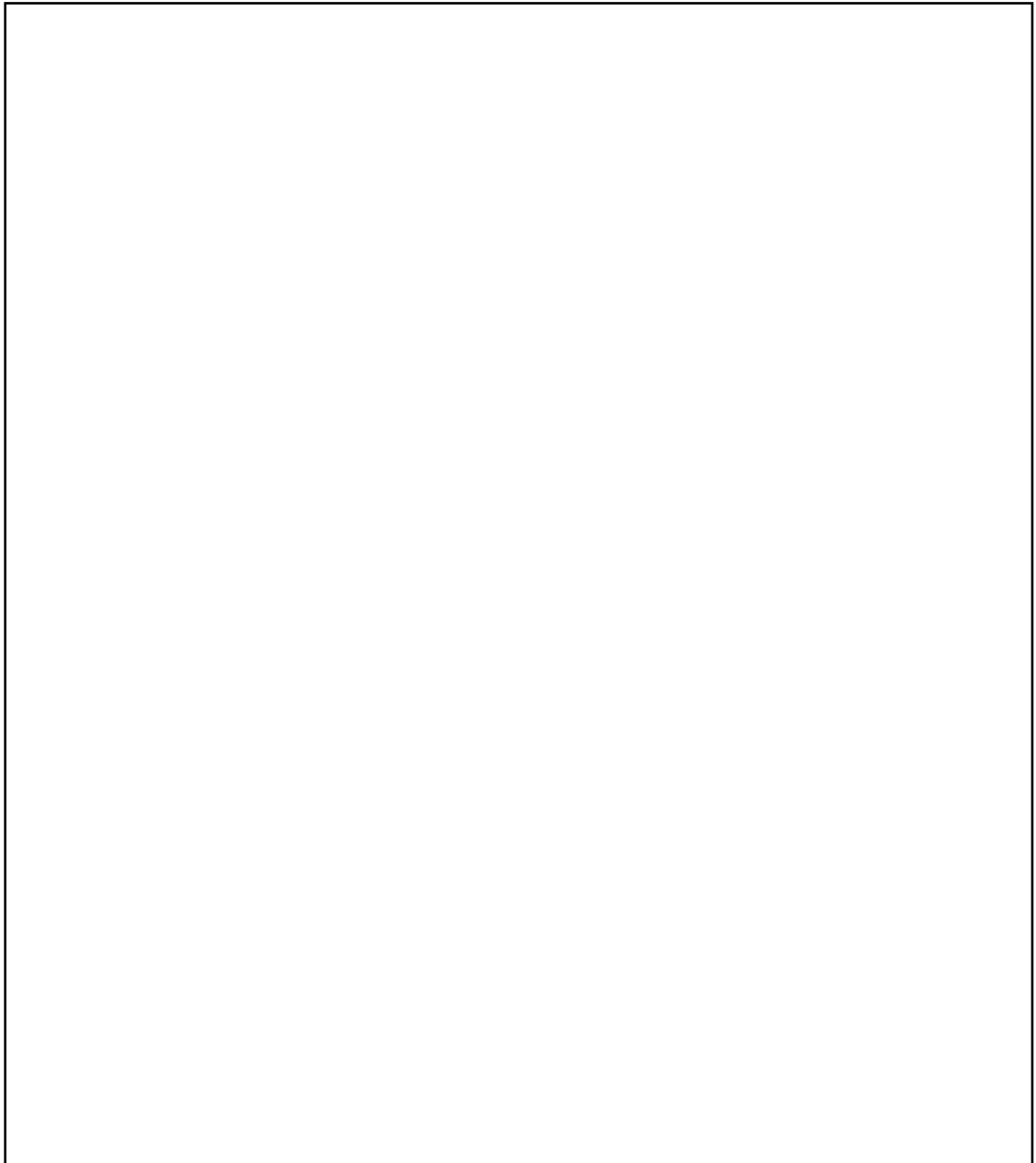
While the beachcombers, vis-à-vis the display of their Indigenously tattooed bodies, introduced the viewing and reading public to an image of 'tattoo' that provoked important shifts in the way that the tattooed body was perceived by the Euro-American populace, the

subject of the next chapter, Olive Oatman, brought these associations to North America's western frontier. In Chapter Three, I address the narratives that emerged in response to the captivity of Olive Oatman, and probe the ways that concepts of nation and race are situated by the various 'curators' who produced presentations of the Oatman captivity.

3:

“...AS WE BELONGED TO THEM WE SHOULD WEAR THEIR
KI-E-CHOOK”:

THE CAPTIVITIES OF OLIVE OATMAN.



On the morning of August 5, 1850, Olive Oatman set out with her parents, Royse and Mary Ann and her six siblings, aged between two and seventeen years, from Independence, Missouri¹⁷ as part of a Mormon splinter group known as the Brewsterites. Like many emigrants, they headed into the wild, untamed west in search of their “promised land”. The trail that the Brewsterites followed, however, was not as well-known as most other Western emigrant routes. Unlike the majority of Mormons, who converged at the great Salt Lake, the Brewsterites followed the prophecy of Bashan, which situated the promised land at the confluence of the Colorado and Gila Rivers.¹⁸ Due to factional fighting within the party, the wagon train deteriorated into smaller and smaller groups until at last, after a short rest near the Gila river bend, on the “very rim of *Apacheria*,” (Dillon “Tragedy” 49) the Oatmans set off on “a faintly blazed trail over which no emigrant party had ever gone before” (Root 5).¹⁹ Royse Oatman made the decision to push his young family on “against the advice of everyone” (Root 10) and despite emaciated cattle and oxen, a lack of supplies, and warnings about “hostile Indians” on the trail ahead. On February 18, 1851 the family was attacked by a group of Yuman Yavapais²⁰. All were killed, except Olive and Mary Ann, aged thirteen and eight respectively, who were taken captive, and Lorenzo, fourteen, who was left for dead. Lorenzo was later rescued and made his way to California, where he found work and maintained efforts to locate his sisters. Olive and Mary Ann were marched to the “Apache Camp”, where they stayed until they were purchased by the Mojave²¹ approximately a year

¹⁷ Interestingly, Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon religion, dedicated a site very near Independence as the Center Place of Zion in 1831. According to Smith, the countryside surrounding Independence was very similar to that in the Garden of Eden (Hansen 70).

¹⁸ For more details about the Brewsterites, see McGinty, B. The Oatman Massacre.

¹⁹ This account was given to Virginia V. Root by Susan Parrish, who was also a member of the Brewsterite emigrant train. She related her narrative to Root shortly before her death in 1909, though it was never published. Root’s account is held at the University of Arizona library.

²⁰ In Stratton’s account, as in most accounts of the day, the attackers are named as Apache. Olive, in the interview she gave upon arrival at Fort Yuma, similarly identifies them as Apache. Their identity remains unclear, providing a textual example of Anne Maxwell’s observation that in many ethnographic displays there existed a distinct inability (perhaps unwillingness) to distinguish between Native American tribes, reiterating notions of blanket primitivism discussed in previous chapters. Historian A.L. Kroeber (1951) suggests that the tribe who made the attack were Yuman Yavapais. Timothy Braatz states that “one can only conclude that the demise of the Oatman family was the work of either Tonto Apache or Yavapais raiders, or both” (254 n.66). An article in the Tombstone Epitaph also asserts that the attackers were Yavapais, not Apache. Bancroft’s History of Arizona and New Mexico suggests that the attackers were Maricopas (485), while Brian McGinty has argued that they were Tolkepayas (a Yavapais sub-group). I will use Kroeber’s more general identification, with which McGinty also concurs, except in cases where I quote from texts referring to them as Apache.

²¹ Both Mojave and Mohave are accepted spellings of the tribal name. I have chosen to use the former spelling for the sake of consistency, since this is used by most of my sources, except for Stratton’s and

later. They were adopted by a “chief” and tattooed in the traditional Mojave manner: five bands, connected to triangular shapes radiating outwards, were applied between their lower lip and chin, and bands were tattooed upon their arms. Mary Ann, along with many Mojave people, died of starvation due to a drought-induced famine, probably in 1855, but Olive, who was known among the Mojave as Aliutman or Spantsa, survived until she was again purchased by a General at Fort Yuma and returned to Euro-American society. In all, Olive spent five years among the Yuman Yavapais and Mojave people, and after the publication of her narrative — The Captivity of the Oatman Girls: Being an Interesting Narrative of Life Among the Apache and Mohave Indians (1957) — by the Methodist minister, Reverend Royal B. Stratton, she went on to become one of the most famous female captives in United States history. The Mojave tattoos on Olive’s chin and arms are arguably the principal reason for her enduring fame, and they are also the reason that she is continually evoked as having been subjected to one of the “most harrowing episodes in the history of the southwest” (Dillon “Ordeal” 30).

A growing body of academic scholarship attends Stratton’s narrative and the genre of captivity narratives generally, and the work of key Oatman scholars such as Katherine Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and Brian McGinty has provided an indispensable foundation for this chapter. My primary focus, however, is not on Stratton’s narrative as such. While Stratton, as the editor of the most widely-distributed version of the Oatman captivity²² was certainly responsible for curating the exhibition of Oatman’s body, particularly in the accompanying publicity/lecture tour, there are also several other texts that exhibit Oatman and her tattoos and which, importantly, illuminate Stratton’s curatorial power by exposing the extent to which he manufactured his version of the narrative. Before and after publication of Stratton’s book, reports of Oatman’s experiences featured in the popular press, including early newspaper accounts and later magazine articles, right up until the early 1990s. While Stratton’s version of the narrative is a carefully constructed and deliberately curated production, his control over public perception of Oatman, her tattoos, and her narrative is by no means absolute. These popular accounts are indicative of the public perceptions that actually deviated from

Lawton’s text. For more information on this, see Lorraine Sherer’s article “The Name Mojave, Mohave: A History of its Origin and Meaning”.

²² Derounian-Stodola has described the book as a best-seller.

the master-narrative that Stratton attempted to produce. In addition to these accounts I also address a series of both published and unpublished letters and journal entries, which are held at the University of Arizona Special Collections, and the Arizona Historical Society museum.

Also fundamental to this comparative analysis is Wendy Lawton's Ransom's Mark (2003). This short novel is one of the most recent versions of Oatman's captivity, and was published as a part of the Daughters of the Faith series of historical fiction for young teenagers. According to Lawton's website, "each book in the Daughters of the Faith series features a heroine who solves a nearly insurmountable situation. In the process, she discovers or deepens her personal faith in God" ("Wendy Lawton [website]"). Where Stratton utilised and curated Oatman's story in order to perpetuate colonial anti-Indian sentiment, Lawton has curated Oatman and her tattoos in order to educate young readers and inspire faith in Christianity. In this text, the tattoo on Olive's chin is situated as "a mark of ransom, a sign of God's love and deliverance" (Lawton, back cover), which, as I will show, is a dramatically different interpretation from Stratton's. Ransom's Mark is significant because it goes some way towards challenging the stereotypical images of Native Americans, and, by extension, the stereotypes that surrounded Oatman's Mojave tattoos.

In this chapter I direct my attention towards these heretofore unaddressed texts in order to interrogate the way that an identical artifact – that is, Oatman's tattooed body and the story of her captivity – can be exhibited in different ways in order to generate different meanings. Analysing and articulating the profound differences in the accounts of Olive Oatman's life and captivity, it becomes easier to assess the way that her story was used for ideological purposes and to emphasise the way that the 'truth' of captivity narratives is both unclear and changeable. Additionally, such a comparison provides an insight into the way that Oatman was curated with a deliberate ideological intention in mind. Essentially, by comparing and contrasting differing exhibitions of the same item, I show that authenticity is dependent upon the intention of the literary curator.

As June Namias, Richard Slotkin and others have shown, on the North American frontier the captivity narrative played an invaluable role in establishing and maintaining a sense of identity for settlers and explorers. As in the Pacific, captivity narratives in the United States

maintained essential borders between savagery and civilisation by perpetrating stereotypes such as the noble or ignoble savage and the religious and righteous white man who was in many instances represented as merely claiming ‘what is rightfully his’ through the concept of Manifest Destiny²³. Namias points out that “captivity pictures, stories and histories helped the Euro-American culture struggle through questions of cultural and gender identity during periods of extreme change and uncertainty” (11). Slotkin pays particular attention to the fact that the American colonies were settled during the same period that saw the development of the printing press. Slotkin suggests that this is not a coincidence, and that the dominance of printed material in the establishment of the mythology of America – the new continent – has affected the way that Americans perceive their nation:

The colonies were founded in an age of printing, in a large part by Puritans, who were much inclined toward the printing of books and pamphlets and the creating of elaborate metaphors proving the righteousness of their proceedings. Since Americans turned readily to the printed word for the expression and the resolution of doubts, of problems of faith, of anxiety and aspiration, literature became the primary vehicle for the communication of mythic material, with the briefest of gaps between the inception of an oral legend and its being fixed in the public print. (Slotkin 19)

Captivity narratives formed a major part of this body of literature. Slotkin also notes the “formal permanence” that was ensured by this system, indicating that the prompt transferral of the legend from experience to the written word helped to avoid a ‘Chinese whispers’ type situation. Slotkin does concede however, that distancing was a result of remembering the tale after a few years in captivity, via the distancing mechanism of writing itself, and also because of the fact that “myth as literature is subject to the movements of the literary marketplace” (20). The demands of the marketplace can be linked to the ideological demands of the culture in question. For early settlers in North America, the very agenda of mythmaking both influenced and was influenced by the demands of the literary marketplace. As a consequence, the editorial process was answerable to a series of requirements that were culturally, generically and ideologically determined.

²³ According to Anne Maxwell the concept of Manifest Destiny came to replace the religious imperative for American imperialism that was promulgated by Columbus and later, the pilgrims (76-77).

The popularity of female captivity narratives in the nineteenth century was at least partially due to the fact that they were a very powerful ideological tool for defining the boundaries of Euro-American society on the frontier. In Bound and Determined, Christopher Castiglia assesses the impact of female captivity narratives upon the consciousness of America, and suggests that “captivity narratives were circulated to create what Lauren Berlant has called a national symbolic, rendering the borders of America as the boundaries of the white, female body” (9). When considering this metaphor of the white female body as national body, the transgressions expressed in Oatman’s narrative — tattoos primarily, as well as the linked categories of miscegenation and childbearing — present a symbolic violation. Judith Butler’s expansion of Mary Douglas’ analysis of the idea of skin as boundary is useful here. According to Butler, Douglas “suggests that what constitutes the limit of the body is never merely material, but that the surface, the skin, is systematically signified by taboos and *anticipated transgressions*” (167; emphasis added). It is important to emphasise the concept of *anticipated* transgressions because it is the notion of anticipation that determines the function of the body-as-boundary within the captivity narrative. Namias identifies the central tropes of the female captivity narrative as suggested or anticipated *threats* of sexual or corporeal violation of the white female. Butler reiterates this idea in a more general context. She writes, “if the body is synecdochal for the social system *per se* or a site in which open systems converge, then any kind of unregulated permeability constitutes a site of pollution and endangerment” (168). In nineteenth century Euro-American culture, sexual relations between white (captive) women and Indian men constituted an example of such ‘unregulated permeability’. As Dyer has shown,

[a]ll concepts of race are always concepts of the body and also of heterosexuality. Race is a means of categorising different types of human body which reproduce themselves. It seeks to systematise differences and to relate them to differences of character and worth. Heterosexuality is the means of ensuring, but also the site of endangering, the reproduction of those differences. (20)

Here, Dyer identifies the intrinsic link between heterosexuality and racial identification. In the colonial context, this link becomes even more important, since processes of racial distinction are fundamental to the establishment of empire. Within the captivity narrative, the connection between sexuality and race is similarly considered. Penetration of the white female corporeal boundary by the coloured Indian penis represents a violation of the female body specifically (the act of sexual intercourse) and the white nation generally (due to the progeny of that intercourse – coloured, tainted, non-white children).

In Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power, Ann Laura Stoler identifies the ideological constructs that surrounded miscegenated progeny by analysing the standard dictionary definition of the word ‘degeneracy’ with its inherent implications of sexual, inherited, and therefore racialised links to ‘cultural decline’. Stoler writes that the “moral, biological, and sexual referents of ‘degeneracy’... were fused in how the concept was actually deployed” (63). In turn, this use of the word became linked to policies of sexual control in the colonies. “Sexual control,” she writes,

figured in the substance, as well as the iconography, of colonialism’s racial policies... Sex in the colonies had to do with sexual access and reproduction, class distinctions and racial demarcations, nationalism and European identity. (78)

In representations of the North American frontier, particularly in the popular female captivity narratives, suggestions of miscegenation are carefully deployed in a similar manner. The notion of ‘mixed blood’ confuses boundaries and complicates the terms by which whiteness and Europeanness can be defined, and is therefore a threat to colonial coherence. Stoler points out that

[c]olonisers themselves were not by nature unified, nor did they inevitably share common interests and fears; their boundaries – always marked by whom those in power considered legitimate progeny and whom they did not – were never clear. (24)

Even when no actual sexual violation is mentioned, rape imagery and suggestion were constant in stories of female captivity. James Levernier and Katherine Zabelle Derounian-

Stodola, in their book The Indian Captivity Narrative 1550–1900 cite various examples of such imagery. One such example is found in An Affecting Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Mrs. Mary Smith (1815). In this text, Smith’s two daughters, aged eleven and nineteen are “stripped, tied hands above head to saplings, pierced with pine splinters dipped in turpentine (described in rape imagery as ‘standing erect on the bleeding victims’)” (Derounian-Stodola and Levernier 130). This example clearly indicates the way that bodily violation is equated with sexual transgression within the captivity narratives of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The girls’ bodies are ‘pierced’ by the ‘erect’ needles of the Indians, the violation and transgression being cemented by the loss of blood – the movement of ‘inside’ to ‘outside’. In the Oatman narrative, this imagery is manifested in the discussion of tattooing.

The tattoos that Olive Oatman received in captivity, and which were exhibited by Stratton both within his book and in the promotional lecture tour, are what distinguish her story from the many other narratives of female captivity. Roy Harvey Pearce emphasises the repetitive and conventional aspects of the genre of the captivity narrative, pointing out that “[n]ew episodes came with new frontiers; yet patterns and themes were reproduced again and again” (16). By the time that Olive was ‘restored’ to civilisation, public appetite for female captivity narratives had waned. In spite of its publication after what Pearce identifies as the ‘decline and fall’ of the popularity of the genre, however, the tattoos that Olive received during her captivity set her physically apart from her predecessors, thereby ensuring both the success of the narrative, and Olive’s status as a celebrity, whose spectacularised, corporeal presence at lectures both promoted the book, and served as proof of its authenticity. According to Oatman historian Edward Pettid²⁴, “The Oatman story *branded* Arizona” (“Lecture Notes” 4; emphasis added.), and this branding can be attributed to the novelty, imagery and distinction that the tattoos afforded the narrative. The tattoo marks that Olive wore were interpreted and reinterpreted in photographic representations, newspaper articles, Stratton’s popular book and a lecture tour that spanned the US following her captivity. Olive’s marked body formed a

²⁴ Most of Pettid’s research has not been published. His manuscript is held in the University of Arizona Special Collections, along with supplementary materials and a number of smaller articles which have been published in popular magazines.

fundamental part of the marketing and promotional tours that Stratton organised, in which Olive, and perhaps more significantly, her tattoos, were displayed.



Figure 9: Poster Advertisement for Olive Oatman's lecture tour.

This notion of the ‘captive-as-spectacle’ was really pioneered in the United States by Stratton and Oatman, as no captive had previously been toured in this way. Of course, Olive’s tattoos were the reason for this display. As Namias points out, “Much iconography of the [early 1830s] presented suffering, battered and mutilated (tattooed) women as victims of Indian lust and mistreatment” (109). The mutilation that is visually apparent upon the captive body in the form of the Indigenous tattoo instantaneously signified for the Euro-American public the transgressive violation of which the Indians were capable. The way that Oatman’s tattooed body was curated by her Euro-American interpreters, and the way that this exhibition formed a part of a larger discourse about white femininity and racial boundaries, meant that for ‘Whites,’ the Indigenous tattoos on Olive Oatman’s face and arms — her *Ki-e-chook* — came to signify the native violation of the body of white American femininity. As Richard Dyer indicates, the notion of ‘purity’ is intrinsically linked to notions of whiteness. Therefore, representations of Oatman’s Indigenously tattooed white female body, especially in relation to issues of childbearing, racial ‘purity’ and miscegenation, operate within a larger framework that is directly related to notions of colonial identity and control.

In Stratton’s book, these issues prove to be a significant hurdle to Stratton’s ideological imperative, by complicating the manner in which he could use Oatman, her narrative, and her tattooed body to further his agenda. Jennifer Putzi’s article ‘Capturing Identity in Ink: The Captivities of Olive Oatman’ goes some way towards highlighting the complications that Stratton faced, arguing that, contrary to Stratton’s representation of the marks as symbols of “the unassailable nature of gendered and racialised identity,” the tattoos actually “raise the possibility that the boundaries of identity are ultimately permeable and unreliable” (179). Ultimately, Putzi suggests that Oatman’s tattoos are a contradiction, in that they represent an attempt to “fix” racial identity by permanently marking and altering the body, yet they simultaneously signify that racial identity cannot, in fact, be “fixed” since it is fluid and permeable. Nowhere is this more evident than in the contradictory accounts of several key incidents in the narrative of her captivity and release. Oatman’s racial identity is contested and confused as a result of the marks and, more specifically, the white viewer’s insistence upon ‘reading’ something into them. In the context of the Oatman captivity, tattoos prove to be as semantically rich as the written word, or perhaps even more so. The audience’s imperative to ‘read’ the tattoos, despite the guidance and directions provided by Stratton’s

curatorial power, meant that a variety of meanings were produced. Inevitably, many of these were informed by previous representations of tattooed people, and some responded in ways that were contrary to Stratton's intention. As Braunberger indicates, "As symbols demanding to be read, tattoos on women produce anxieties of miscegenation" (1). Consequently, the marks were most commonly perceived to be symbolic of marriage and/or childbearing.

Suggestions that Olive and Mary Ann had in fact been married to the Mojave Chief's sons, and had children to them presented major obstacles for Stratton, as he struggled to maintain a sense of her propriety, piety, and innocence in order to perpetuate an image of Oatman as a victim of the Indians' barbarity. For the same reasons that the beachcombers and/or their editors were compelled to deny agency with regard to their Indigenous tattooing and marriage, Stratton was also concerned with the way that Oatman's alleged familial transgressions would be perceived. Castiglia suggests that captives' need "to refute the suggestion of rape, despite the fact that the Indians reportedly did not rape captives, points to an identification in the minds of their white audiences between captivity, race, and sexual vulnerability" (127). Richard Irving Dodge, in his 1883 text, Our Wild Indians: Thirty-Three Years' Experience Among the Red Men of the Great West provides an example of such assumptions, claiming that "no woman has, in the last thirty years, been taken prisoner by any wild Indians who did not, as soon as practicable, become a victim to the brutality of every one of the party of her captors" (Dodge, quoted in Lewis 76). As Washburn, Derounian-Stodola, Carter and Levernier have pointed out, rape and/or inter-racial sexual relationships represented a transgression that forever altered the relationship between the captive woman and her original culture and society. As an extension of this attitude, marriage and childbearing were seen as cementing this transgression. Namias notes that "Indian marriage formalised [the female captive's] acculturation, permanently separating her and *transforming* her culturally into '*them*'. She was no longer fully '*us*' (91; emphasis added). Similarly, Brown suggests that the captive Mary Jemison recognised and accepted that "the birth of her half-Indian child [made] it impossible for her ever to become fully 'white' again," (146). As a result of these concerns, much of Stratton's narrative, and many contemporary newspaper accounts are concerned with denying such allegations. According to Richard Dillon, these mediums "united in protecting the chaste reputation of the modest and ladylike Olive" ("Tragedy" 59).

A letter from Fort Yuma that was published in the *L.A. Star* on March 29 1856 states that Olive “has not been made a wife” during her time in captivity and assures readers that “her defenceless situation [was] entirely respected during her residence among the Indians” (reproduced in W. B. Rice 99). Similarly, the *Daily Alta*, in San Francisco reported that “Miss Oatman has invariably been treated with that civility and respect due her sex. She has not been made a wife, as has been heretofore erroneously reported, but has remained single” (quoted in Clark and Clark 48). Olive’s tattoos, however, acted as an accelerant to the rumours of marriage, and speculation was rife that her marks were symbolic of such a union.²⁵ Significantly, the suggestions that Olive had given birth to what obviously would have been “half-breed” children added intensity to the rumours of racial transgression. In an effort to counter these rumours, Stratton works conscientiously within the narrative to show that Oatman’s tattoos were not symbols of marriage, but “slave marks”, applied to the girls to signify ownership, and to make it more difficult for the girls to escape.

According to Stratton, in a scene remarkably reminiscent of many beachcombers’ depictions of the tattooing process, Olive “pleads” with the Indians that they not put “those ugly marks” on her and Mary Ann.

To all our expostulations they only replied in substance – that they knew why we objected to it; that we expected to return to the whites, and we would be ashamed of it then; but that it was their resolution we should never return, and that as we belonged to them we should wear their ‘Ki-e-chook’. (*Captivity* 1994 ed. 134)²⁶

Stratton claims that the Mojave told Olive and Mary-Ann that the marks

²⁵ Derounian-Stodola has recently argued extensively and persuasively that Oatman did indeed marry and bear children.

²⁶ It is important to note that the unlikely articulation of this verbose statement raises serious questions about the authorial integrity of the account. Rod Edmond notes that in missionary accounts from the Pacific, this tactic of quoting ‘*ver batim*’ is used to “render the text authentic and allow the writer to put some unlikely-sounding speeches into the mouths of native informants” (Edmond 43).

could never be taken from the face, and that they had given us a different mark from the one worn by their own females – as we saw – but the same with which they marked all their own captives, and that they could claim us in what tribe soever they might find us (Captivity 1994 ed. 134).

This assurance that the tattoos were slave marks and not symbols of marriage or assimilation is also reinforced in Olive Oatman's lecture notes.²⁷ These lectures were devised by Stratton as a way of marketing his book, and it is clear at many times throughout her talk that the main motive behind her talks was promotional²⁸. Her talk consists of a summary of Stratton's book, but at key, 'suspenseful' moments, such as that of the massacre itself, Olive interrupts her talk with the claim that "The emotions of my heart will not allow a recital of those barbarities of that awful hour. (The scene is described in the published Narrative entitled Captivity of the Oatman Girls)" (Pettid "Lecture Notes" 10). Carolyn Hunter argues that "the shaping of Olive Oatman's address reaffirms the basic values of the audience for which it was designed," and that the content of the talk was edited in order to comply with Stratton's representation of her experiences (12). It is predictable, then, that she would aid Stratton's cause in confirming that the marks were slave marks, pointing out that "Their captives whether Indians or whites become slaves. They give them the tribes [sic] slave marks so that in case they desert to any other tribe they can be recognized at once," (Pettid "Lecture Notes" 19). Oatman draws attention to her own tattoos by addressing her audience directly – "You perceive I have the marks indelibly placed upon my chin" (Pettid, "Lecture Notes" 19) – thereby promoting her body as an object of spectacle. This emphasis upon the tattooed body as spectacle essentially affords the same kind of 'looking but not looking' that was encouraged by tattooed ladies such as Irene Woodward, whose narrative is discussed in Chapter One: the audience is compelled to gaze upon the displayed, tattooed body, yet the modesty of the displayed woman is emphasised in such a manner as to promote the illicit nature of the spectacle, thereby intrinsically linking questions of gender and sexuality to the already observed projections of race.

²⁷ The notes were transcribed and published with an introduction by Pettid in the San Bernardino County Museum Association Quarterly. Quotes from these notes include underlinings as per Pettid's transcription.

²⁸ Pettid also indicates in his introduction to the published version of the notes that the purpose of the lecture tour was to "promote the sale of the thriller, Captivity of the Oatman Girls; and, to help raise funds for church-building" (Pettid "Lecture Notes").

As Lewis points out, captivity provided a way for people to depict lascivious scenes without being subjected to censorship laws. Artists began to place their subjects in “situations where their nakedness had come about as a result of external circumstances — such as the state of unwilling captivity — rather than as a result of ‘sauciness’” (70). Lewis suggests however, that this actually presented a contradiction for viewers and readers, since “the state of bondage, which was supposed to legitimate nudity by separating it from sensuality, actually increased the image’s power to titillate by adding intimations of sexual dominance and sadism” (70). Stratton’s awareness of this contradiction is clear, as he struggles with the scenes that he presents of the captive girls. Stratton’s account of the girls’ tattooing, for example, keenly evokes a sense of sexual transgression. The Indians “pricked the skin” on the girls’ faces “until they bled freely” then repeated the pricking action a second time after dipping the sticks into the colouring substance and administering it to the “lacerated parts of the face” (*Captivity* 1994 ed. 134). The opening of the girls’ faces and the insertion of ink by way of the intrusion of “sharp sticks” under the skin “has distinctly phallic overtones” (Derounian-Stodola “Mary Rowlandson” 37) and clearly suggests a rape scenario. Indeed, Lewis lists the “piercing of naked flesh with a sharpened stick or some similar instrument” as being an “important tactic for suggesting sexual assault through acts of violence against women” (73). The flow of blood further emphasises the girls’ violated chastity by evoking the bleeding that is supposed to result from the loss of virginity.

While Stratton is keen to maintain the suggestion of violence and transgression, he must simultaneously establish Olive as a site of moral strength and purity, not a symbol of weakness and potential racial pollution. Ironically, given his silencing of Oatman’s voice elsewhere in the narrative, Stratton leaves the ultimate assurance of her chastity to a first-person declaration from Olive herself. While she stresses her endangerment, Olive asserts that no sexual violation had occurred: “I considered my age, my sex, my exposure, and was again in trouble — though to the honour of these savages, let it be said they never offered the least unchaste abuse to me” (*Captivity* 1994 ed. 168). Olive’s modesty is represented as intrinsic to her ‘character’, and therefore operates as a sign that she is “still of the race to which she belonged” (*Captivity* 1994 ed. 185).

The contradictions of Stratton's rendering of Oatman's tattoos and the related issues of marriage and childbearing are plainly evident in an assessment of the existing supplementary material. Alfred L. Kroeber and Derounian-Stodola have both argued extensively against the legitimacy of much of the information contained in Stratton's account, including his claims that the tattoos indicated the girls' position as slaves, and a growing body of anthropological material also supports this. In Marks of Civilization, Arnold Rubin indicates that "In western North America, lines tattooed on women's chins ... usually indicated group membership and/or marital status" (179), and J.W. Powell, in a report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Smithsonian Institute states that "marks tattooed upon a Mojave woman's chin denotes that she is married" (64). In 1854, the War Department Railroad Survey spent a month in the Mojave valley, and an account of their journey was published in Harper's New Monthly magazine in 1858. In this account, the author claims that "When married, [Mojave women's] chins are tattooed with vertical blue lines" (Tribes 463). In 'Mohave Tattooing and Face-Painting', anthropologists Edith Taylor and William Wallace claim that the "designs are only decorative and have no symbolic meaning" (4). Perhaps most significantly, Olive herself makes no mention of slavery in an early interview with the L.A. Star, which was published prior to Stratton's version, indicating only that the tattoos were applied to all the women uniformly.

The comments on her tattoos in her lecture notes and Stratton's book contradict the accounts Oatman gave to the Generals at Fort Yuma and the L.A. Star prior to meeting Stratton, again emphasising the extent to which Stratton manipulated Oatman's narrative. In the early Star article, Oatman clearly indicates that the Mojaves treated her well, and would allow her to visit the whites at any time, but that they feared accompanying her, lest they be punished for having the girls in their custody in the first place. Pettid includes in his manuscript a "Memorandum of Questions" that were asked of Olive when she arrived at the Fort. When asked, "How did the Mohaves treat you and your sister? [...] She answered 'Very well' / & from her manner seemed perfectly pleased / they had never whipped her but always treated her well" (Pettid Manuscript 138).

The only known account from the Native American perspective also affirms that Olive and Mary Ann were happy and treated well during their captivity. In 1903, Kroeber interviewed

TokwaOa, who was present on the return journey of Olive Oatman, and had several encounters with the girls during their time with the Mojave people: “Aliutman, as they called her, was well remembered by the Mohave in 1903, and they usually were the first to mention her, expecting that this white captive would be what Americans were likely to find of most interest in Mohave history” (1). In this interview, TokwaOa claims that the girls “got on well with [the Mojave]” and “were happy living there,” and that the ‘chief’ had called on everyone in the Mojave settlement to “help raise them” (2). Indeed, even within Stratton’s account, certain incidents suggest that the girls were treated affectionately during their time. Kroeber, for example, points out that the seeds that the girls were given during the famine “evince lively affection” (11). Perhaps even more significant than this, however, is the symbolic gift of land.

In her book The Land Before Her, Annette Kolodny suggests that the captivity story provided “a mode of symbolic action crucial to defining the otherwise dangerous or unacknowledged meaning of women’s experience of the dark and enclosing forests around them” (6). Kolodny offers an analytical perspective regarding women’s experiences of the frontier as it relates to the environment and physical landscape. In particular, Kolodny notes the way that cultivation of the landscape — the marking out and maintenance of gardens — was for women on the frontier a way of generating a sense of identity and also reclaiming the landscape into which they were thrust. Kolodny writes that gardening was a way for women to make a claim on the landscape, which was distinctly a masculine domain. Frontierwomen, she argues, were displaced, not only by the journey away from their homeland, but also by the masculine rendering of the landscape. It was constantly referred to as a virgin, waiting to be conquered, and this terminology necessarily excluded women from this action. Gardening, therefore, represented a socially sanctioned way for women to preside over the landscape to a certain extent. The small garden that Olive and Mary Ann are given then, becomes doubly important for the girls as it signifies not only the generosity of the Mojave, but also the girls’ own, symbolic ‘control’ over the wilderness. The Mojaves’ affection for the Oatman girls is also apparent when consideration is given to the fact that the plot also becomes Mary Ann’s final resting place, after Olive begs and finally gains permission to bury her there. In her lecture notes, Olive also makes reference to the grave, indicating that it was the “one spot in the valley to which my heart clung with a mournful affection” (Pettid “Lecture Notes” 23)

when it was time for her to return to the Fort. She describes the grave as a “temple and a tomb, where the ‘God of the living and the dead’, communed with and comforted my aching heart” (Pettid “Lecture Notes” 23). Parrish, quite astutely, understands this gift as “a great mark of deference to Olive” (Root 18).

Although Stratton does mention the garden plot, his presentation does not elaborate upon the deep emotional connection that Olive felt towards this parcel of land. Indeed, this gift, along with the gift of seed that the girls receive from the Mojave is understated in Captivity of the Oatman Girls, as they are in obvious conflict with Stratton’s personification of the ‘Indians’ as violent and ruthless captors. His establishment of Olive’s tattoos as marks of slavery and captivity render their true meaning irrelevant, and allows him to exploit the marks as evidence of savage violation by violent captors against an innocent white female body. As Grosz points out,

[m]essages coded onto the body can be ‘read’ only within a social system of organization and meaning. They mark the subject by, and as, a series of signs within the collectivity of other signs, signs which bear the marks of a particular social law and organization. (“Intolerable” 65)

The decontextualisation of Olive’s tattoos — ‘her signs’ — through her removal from the social system within which they are given meaning, meant that they were open to interpretation within Euro-American society. For the reading and viewing public, the marks were literally unreadable, interpretable only as marks of savagery and primitivism. Stratton’s framing of the marks was therefore key to his curating of Olive within an ideologically driven context. Problematically for Stratton, however, he did not maintain exclusive power over the ways in which Oatman’s tattoos were ‘read’, and the tattoos became a type of *tabula rasa* upon which the viewing public could project their own meanings. As a result of this, Stratton’s curatorial power was challenged, and his attempts to control the responses of his readers and audiences were undermined by the already-entrenched set of meanings and perceptions that surrounded the tattooed body in the nineteenth-century.

In addition to the complications raised by the tattoos' perceived allusions to sexual and racial transgressions, Oatman's own physical and metaphorical 'whiteness' was disrupted by the Mojave tattoos and her sun-tanned skin. In early accounts of the Oatman captivity, Olive's 'whiteness' is keenly and explicitly interrogated, and questions were also raised as to whether Olive had in fact 'become' Mojave, and turned her back on Euro-American 'civilisation'. Evidence from Fort Yuma suggests that Olive was anxious and frightened upon her arrival. Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Martin Burke interviewed Olive on the 1 March 1856, but noted that she was "not able to pronounce more than a few words in English" (Pettid Manuscript 137). Prior to the conducting of this interview, another man at the fort, Lieutenant Colonel Nauman reported that Olive had "unfortunately, lost the use of the English language, speaking nothing but that of the rude people among whom she so long resided, and which no-one here can interpret well" (Pettid Manuscript 151). These reports of Olive's loss of English contradict newspaper reports that indicate Olive "converses with propriety," maintains a ladylike deportment and so on. It is significant that the accounts that actually supply Olive with a voice — quote her directly, and give representation of her experiences — comment on her loss of English. Her voice is limited, though it is important to note that this limitation is not only a result of language constraints: as Carter points out, female captives were seldom free to use their own voice, or determine their own representation, without making concessions to the conventions of genre and culture. The accounts that do not mention Olive's loss of English, such as Stratton's book and newspaper articles, are the reports that actually subsume her voice within the greater ideological mechanisms that were at play: In these accounts, words, it seems, were 'put into her mouth'. The English language, and Olive's command of it, is deployed as a signifier of Olive's whiteness, even when it was not present. From the outset, then, her 'whiteness' is being manipulated in order to strengthen the representation of Olive as a 'saved' captive, who had not been integrated into native society, though her loss of English is clearly one sign of at least a partial integration.

Not surprisingly, the illustrations in Stratton's book emphasise the girls' whiteness, by exaggerating the contrast between Olive and Mary Ann's and the Indians' skin colour. Additionally, none of the illustrations depict any tattoos on the Oatman girls' skin. 'The captives at the Indian campfire,' (Captivity 1857 ed. 119) for example, depicts the girls seated at the fire, under a full moon. On the opposite side of the fire, nine Indians are seated and

standing, staring at the girls, though their looks are not necessarily malicious or angry, and some even seem to be smiling. There are dark mountains in the background, and the girls, though they are at the same distance from the fire as the Indians, are the only figures in the picture who have any light cast upon them. The fire clearly illuminates the girls' faces, though it leaves the Indians in darkness, making the contrast in skin tones more obvious, and also dehumanising the Mojave by obscuring their faces. Similarly, in the illustrations 'Death of Mary Ann at the Indian camp' (Captivity 1857 ed. 195) and 'Olive before the Indian council' (Captivity 1857 ed. 258), the contrast between the whiteness of the girls and the darkness of the Indians has clearly been manipulated, since Mary Ann and Olive would have been far less white than this, having been exposed to the desert sun for approximately five years. 'Death of Mary Ann' is particularly interesting, since, at this juncture in the narrative, both girls had definitely been tattooed, yet these marks are absent. Their faces, like their bodies, are 'pure' white, and appear to be almost glowing, though no light source is depicted in the illustration to offer such illumination.

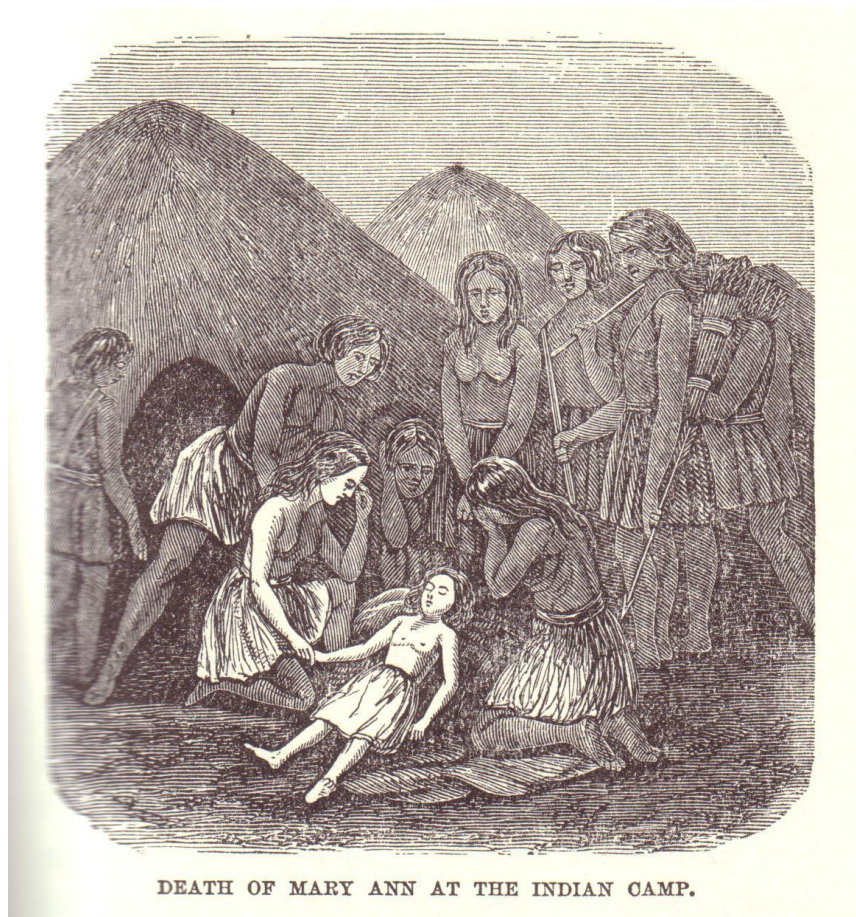


Figure 10: Death of Mary Ann.



THE CAPTIVES AT THE INDIAN CAMP-FIRE.

Figure 11: The Captives at the Indian camp-fire.

The glowing whiteness that is depicted and indeed emphasised by the illustrations in Stratton's narrative is clearly contradicted by first-hand witness accounts of Olive's arrival at Fort Yuma. These accounts comment almost uniformly upon Olive's appearance, drawing particular attention to the colour of her skin. In contradistinction to this, Stratton emphasises Oatman's purity and whiteness throughout his descriptions of the event and in the accompanying illustrations, and makes only oblique references to her changed appearance. The scene depicting Olive's reunion with her brother Lorenzo, for example, makes a tantalisingly cryptic reference to her tattoos. Strangely, the reunion, and the Oatman siblings' own thoughts on being reunited, are related by Stratton, not Olive or even Lorenzo, which seems incongruous given the personal and emotional nature of the scene. He writes,

[s]he was grown to womanhood; she was changed, but despite the written traces of her outdoor life and barbarous treatment left upon her appearance and person, he could read the assuring evidences of her family identity. (*Captivity* 1994 ed. 200)

Here, the unmentioned marks are “*written traces*” – the inscription of captivity onto the now womanly body of Olive Oatman. Stratton’s account of this moment is likely to have been imagined by the author, and his intentions are clearly exposed by his mediation of the encounter. While Stratton maintains that, despite her changed outward appearance – physical testimony to the captivity she endured – Olive remains, through her unmistakable “family identity” one of “us” not one of “them”, other accounts of this moment contradict this version. Mr L. J. F. Jaeger was present at the fort when Lorenzo was reunited with Olive, and reported in his journal that “she did not know him and he did not know her also” (*Pettid Manuscript* 151), contradicting Stratton’s romanticised rendering of the scene wherein Lorenzo recognises his sister by way of her family likeness. Jaeger writes there was “so much change in 5 years”.

The illustration that attends this scene in the 1857 edition of *Captivity* draws particular focus to Oatman’s whiteness, and she is shown in almost glowing contrast to the Indians who accompany her. According to Stratton’s narrative, “Olive, with her characteristic modesty, was unwilling to appear in her bark attire and poor shabby²⁹ dress, among the whites” (*Captivity* 1994 ed. 198), and requested that a dress be brought to her before she would appear at the Fort. The white dress in the illustration serves to further emphasise the distinction between Olive and the dark, semi-naked woman who stands beside her. Rod Macneil has noted that in contexts of captivity and other cross-cultural encounters, “being naked made Europeans less civilized” (65). For Oatman, and her narrative, it is essential that she is represented as being in no way ‘tainted’ or uncivilised by her captivity, and Stratton’s emphasis of her modesty in this scene can also be seen as an effort on his part to distance

²⁹ As Kroeber remarks, “shabby” is most likely Stratton’s “circumlocution for blouseless” (15).

Olive from other female captives, who ‘went native’ and, like some beachcombers, turned their back on ‘civilisation’³⁰.

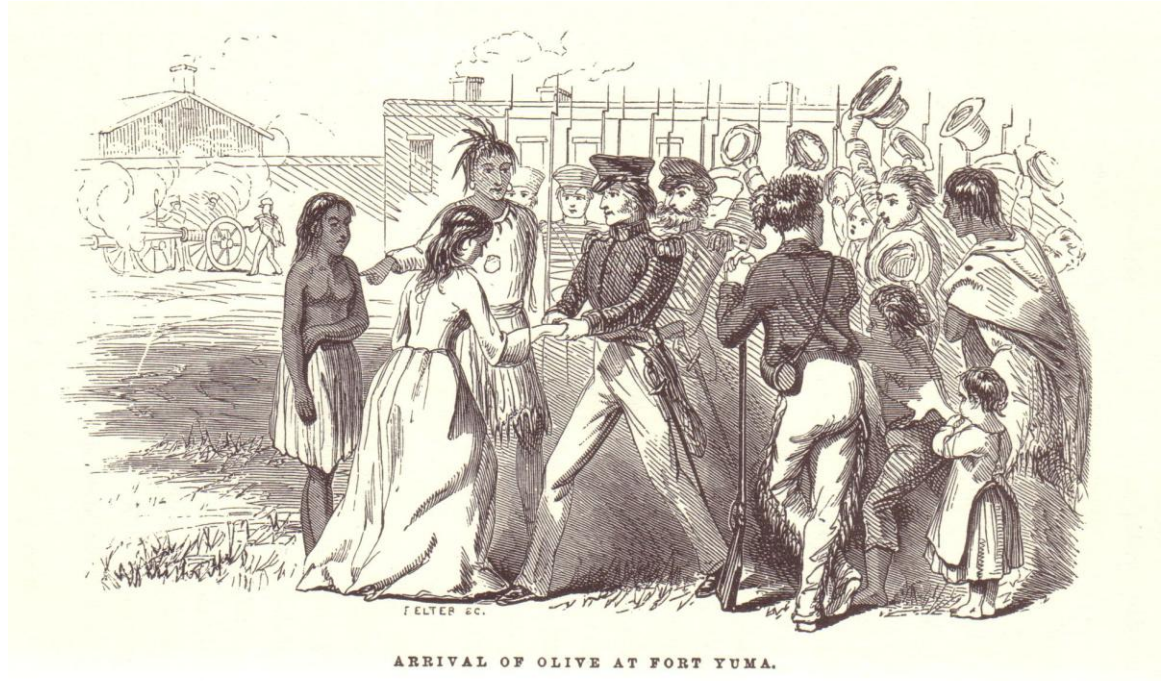


Figure 12: Arrival of Olive at Fort Yuma.

Though Stratton’s meaning is evident in his textual rendering of this scene, the visual representation, and its contradiction of the textual, serves another purpose, in that the frock that she requests is, symbolically, white. In the illustration, this serves to emphasise her own whiteness, both physical and metaphorical. Again, the tattoo marks are not present in this illustration, further promoting the suggestion of Olive’s (both racial and moral) purity. In fact, Oatman’s tattoos are only present in those illustrations depicting her *post*-captivity, once she had become, via the publication of her narrative, an object of spectacle. It is also significant to note the ratio of illustrations that are provided before and after the attack and captivity. The first eighty-five pages of the text describe the family’s history and preparations for the journey.

³⁰ Frances Slocum is one such female captive, who was captured by Delaware Indians in 1778 and never returned to her Euro-American family, instead choosing to live for more than 50 years with the Delaware Indians, marrying four times and having several children. Similarly, Eunice Williams was captured in Massachusetts in 1704, and although she visited her Puritan family several times in her life, she chose to live with her Mohawk family until she died at the age of 90.

In these eighty-five pages, only one illustration is provided, and it does not depict any members of the Oatman family. In contrast, the remaining two hundred pages of the book, which are concerned with Lorenzo's escape, and the Oatman girls' captivity, are interspersed with eleven illustrations, evincing the extent to which her captive body is spectacularised within the text. As Derounian-Stodola notes, "Between the first and third editions... the number of engravings rose from 12 to 16, [and] the treatment of the subject generally became more sensational and sentimental" ("Mary Rowlandson" 38). She also remarks that the placement of the engraving of the tattooed Olive moves from a 'discreet' position at the end of the last full chapter, before the 'conclusion', to the start of the narrative. This movement, and also the use of a new engraving in which her tattoos are more prominent positions the spectacle of Olive's tattooed body as more prominent than the narrative itself: her tattoos become the object of the reader's gaze before they have read one word of her story. This is suggestive not only of the spectacular nature of the tattoos, but also indicative of the extent to which the tattoos were promoted after her release.

As I have already mentioned briefly, the whiteness that is emphasised in Captivity of the Oatman Girls is in no way supported by those accounts from people at Fort Yuma who witnessed Olive's return, further emphasising Stratton's curatorial power in his exhibition of Oatman's experiences and tattoos. One such account suggests that even during negotiations with the Mojave prior to her return to Fort Yuma, her racial identity was perceived to be ambiguous. During these negotiations, some Mojave

advanced arguments that Olive was not a white woman; that she was from a race of people much like the Indians. Living away towards the setting sun. They had painted her face and figure with a dingy, dim color, tatooed [sic] her features, with five streaks or lines from the corners of her mouth to the tip of her chin. Making her at first glance look like an Indian girl, beyond doubt of a casual observer. (M. Rice 17)³¹

In this account, the Mojave use the ambiguous appearance and tone of Olive's skin in an attempt to hide her identity and thus keep her among them. Here the colour of her skin

³¹ This manuscript, located at the Arizona Historical Society, is an unpublished draft of 'The Oatman Family'.

works in conjunction with the colouration of her tattoos to obscure her 'whiteness' and Euro-American identity. An account in Harper's New Monthly Magazine of November 1864 describes 'A Tour Through Arizona', including a description of Olive's release. The author of the piece received details from Henry Grinnell, who was instrumental in relocating Olive to Fort Yuma. He writes:

[s]o completely was she disguised by long exposure to the sun, by paint, tatooing [sic], and costume, that [Grinnell] could not believe she was a white woman. When he spoke to her she made no answer, but cried and kept her face covered. It was not for several days after her arrival at Fort Yuma that she could utter more than a few broken words of English. (Browne 701)

Charles Morgan Wood's account of Oatman's return to Fort Yuma similarly comments upon her ambiguous appearance: "When the captives came to the house a good many of the bystanders laughed at Mr. Grenell [sic] and said that they were Indians. As they had been tattooed on the chin and were very dark from sunburn they looked indeed like Indians" (Wood 8).³² It is only when Grinnell "raise[s] the hair of one captive up behind the ears where the sun could not have burnt the skin" that the 'true' racial identity is revealed - uncovered, as it were. In this revelatory scene, Oatman's 'whiteness' is uncovered as something that has not been erased, but only temporarily covered by the colours of her experiences - her exposure to the sun, and her tattooed chin. Ultimately, her intrinsic and unassailable 'whiteness' is shown to remain intact; presumably, after her return to Euro-American society, her skin colour faded and regained its 'whiteness'.

While first-hand accounts of her ransom at Fort Yuma unanimously commented on the changed tone and colour of Olive's skin, newspaper accounts at the time of her 'rescue' were similarly concerned with her appearance, though their agenda was more overt, and more aligned with that of Stratton. The longest of these accounts appeared in the L.A. Star on April

³² Charles Morgan Wood was interested in Western History, and a collection of his articles and manuscripts, including this account of the Oatman family and massacre, is held at the Arizona Historical Society, Tucson.

9, 1856, and it was, according to William B. Rice, reprinted four times (100).³³ The Star reporter writes that

Olive is rather a pretty girl, with *a skin as fair as most persons who have crossed the plains*. Her face is disfigured by tatoored [sic] lines on the chin, running obliquely and perpendicularly from her mouth. Her arms were also marked in a similar manner by one straight line on each. (quoted in W. B. Rice 101; emphasis added)³⁴

The author's comment upon Olive's 'fairness' is of most interest here, since it is clear that he is not in fact commenting upon 'fairness' but upon her colour. Like "most persons who have crossed the plains," Olive's skin was far from 'fair' as is exemplified by the accounts from Fort Yuma³⁵. Similarly, the tattoos are mentioned in an ambiguous manner; they are described as "disfiguring", and therefore not a *part* of Olive's white, pretty face. A New York Times article of May 4, 1858 also comments on Oatman's appearance: "Her chin bears the 'Chief's mark', a species of tattooing, set in five parallel lines, running downwards from the lower lip. This savage embellishment does not materially enhance the personal charms of the lady, but it is an indelible evidence of the scenes she has undergone" (quoted in Pettid Manuscript 171). The 'savage embellishment' is regarded as neither a detraction nor an enhancement, but rather 'evidence' of her experiences, though what these 'experiences' entailed is left unclear.

Similarly, the poem 'Stanzas to Olive Oatman'³⁶, which appeared in several newspapers after the first edition of Stratton's book was published, and which was also included as a kind of post-script in Stratton's third edition, emphasises Olive's fairness. The poem begins, "Fair Olive!" (Captivity 1857 ed. 289) and goes on to express "not what *one* merely, but what *many* felt who read this narrative in that state, and who have become personally acquainted with

³³ For more information on the LA Star and its role in the publicising of the Oatman captivity, see Rice, 1969, pp111-112.

³⁴ The entire Star account, entitled 'Olive Oatman, the Apache Captive' is reproduced in Rice's article, 'The Captivity of Olive Oatman: A Newspaper Account'. I am quoting from Rice's reproduction.

³⁵ As Kolodny points out, the loss of 'fairness' associated with westward migration, was also linked to a loss of femininity. She writes, "fear of growing old before her time, of losing the capacity for feminine coquetry, was a fear that most women (and men) associated with westward emigration" (Kolodny, 174).

³⁶ The author of this poem is noted only as "Montbar". No further details are known.

Miss Oatman” (*Captivity* 1857 ed. 288). The poem explicitly situates Olive as a kind of martyr for the new American nation, and her ‘fairness’ lies at the crux of this identity.

In captive chains whole races have been led,
But never yet upon one heart did fall
Misfortune’s hand so heavy. *Thy young head*
Has born a nation’s griefs, its woes, and all
The serried sorrows which earth’s histories call
The hand of God. (*Captivity* 1857 ed. 290; emphasis added.)

Oatman, here situated as the bearer of “a nation’s griefs,” also carries the weight of “all the serried sorrows” that God may deliver. These lines clearly align the idea of the nation, and the kind of suffering that was perceived as being a necessary part of the settling of that nation, as part of God’s plan, reiterating the notion of Manifest Destiny, and perhaps more significantly, the situation of the young female body – within the poem Olive is described as “a simple maiden” – as the young, ostensibly ‘virgin’ nation. Olive’s ‘fairness’ acts within the poem as a controlling trope, tying together and unifying with ‘whiteness’ the concepts of nationhood, suffering, righteousness and religion.

The poem’s rendering of Olive as a symbol of the strength and fortitude of white femininity and, by extension, white American identity, allows no room for a consideration of the possibility of any non-white children, such as had been alleged. Like Stratton, the poem curates Oatman’s body (her tattoos remain unmentioned) in order to perpetuate a white, expansionist, anti-Indian ideology. Representations of inter-racial relations, sexual or otherwise, were not supportive of such exhibitions, and were therefore excluded. As Dyer suggests, “Inter-racial heterosexuality threatens the power of whiteness because it breaks the legitimization of whiteness with reference to the white body” (25). He points out that there is an expectation that white women will make white babies in order to ‘bolster’ and maintain the white race. This is especially the case in sites of imperialism and colonialism. The subject of Oatman’s alleged Mojave children therefore, presented a complicated problem for people at the time, and the varying representations of these children reflect this confusion. Newspaper reports regarding Oatman’s alleged children engage racial signifiers similar to those found in

the reports of Oatman's appearance, and the representation of the visible racial identity of her children is complicated and perhaps more symbolic than factual.

An 1863 article in the Reese River Reveille (Austin, Nevada) claimed that a "beautiful, light-haired, blue-eyed girl, suppose [sic] to have been a child of the unfortunate Olive Oatman" had been adopted by a pioneer at Oatman Flat in 1858 (quoted in Clark and Clark 81). The "light" appearance of this child — her anglicised beauty — is presumably the signifier of her non-Mojave background. While Oatman's own 'whiteness' is scrutinised and compromised — by sunburn and tattooing — her children's racial identity is clearly signified by their essentially 'white', anglo appearance. Yet it is clear that this whiteness has been imagined, given that Olive Oatman herself had dark eyes and hair. Another account of Oatman's children situates them as signifiers of the savage/civilised dichotomy. Susan Parrish was, with her family, a member of the Brewsterite wagon train, and developed a close friendship with Olive and her older sister Lucy. Olive lived with the Parrish family in Oregon for a brief period after her captivity, and Parrish's account of this period offers significant insight into Oatman's experiences. She claims that Olive was married to the chief's son and "at the time of her rescue, was the mother of two little boys. The marks of tragedy linger upon these children, for travellers to Phoenix... say one of them is as savage as any member of his father's race, while the other is the image of his mother's people" (Root 18). From Parrish's description of the children, it appears that she is concerned with making a comment upon the "tragedy" of mixed-race children. For her, these children represent and embody the extremes of Mojave 'savagery' and the 'image' of Euro-American whiteness. Once again, Euro-American identity is an 'image' — a visual signifier of belonging — while 'savagery' is depicted as *being* — an inherent quality that Oatman's more 'Mojave' child just "*is*". Perhaps more significantly, Parrish suggests that these children are "marked" by the tragedy, presumably both metaphorically and physically.

Although only a few reports of Oatman's Mojave children were actually published,³⁷ many 'unofficial', personal reports indicate that there was some contention surrounding this issue.

³⁷ In addition to the reports I have mentioned, see also 'Arizona History from Newspaper Accounts' in Arizoniana. This article details the 1922 divorce suit that was filed against John Oatman, who "claims to be the grandson of Olive Oatman, famous in Arizona history" (29).

Stratton's reaction to a "powerful proscription against racial mixing in American popular fiction" (Brown 140) meant that he was incapable of considering Olive's alleged children in his book. He wanted the book to be popular, so he followed popular cultural conventions. As Brown points out, "Racial mixing represents a fundamental contradiction to the national ideology of racial separatism; therefore, the frontier romance, intent upon the creation of a 'national' literature, registers this contradiction as a tense 'silence'" (137). While I am not suggesting that Captivity of the Oatman Girls is a frontier romance of the kind that Brown is referring to here, Stratton's obvious preoccupation with his book's popularity, and his own positioning of the book as a piece of propaganda, indicate that he would have been subject to the mores that informed this literature.

As I have shown, the contradictory relationship between other 'public' texts, and more 'private' accounts illuminates the extent to which Stratton curated Oatman's narrative in order to position it as a piece of cultural work within the context of colonialism in the United States. Stratton's awareness of his book's 'job', not only in terms of the cultural work that it performs, but also in terms of its marketability as a commodity, extends to the way that he perceives and places Olive herself as a commodity, not only within the text, but also in the lecture tour and public appearances that she made following its publication. Olive's marketability, and her position as an item of trade is intrinsically linked to Stratton's manipulation of the narrative and the subsequent loss of Olive's voice within the text. Castiglia identifies the loss of female agency to be a consequence of the desire of editors and publishers to fit the narrative into a particular genre: in the case of Olive's narrative, that of religious allegory. He writes,

[i]n the majority of captivity narratives, editors obscure and revise the captives' stories in order to strengthen flagging religious devotion, to justify westward expansion and the extermination of the Indians and to create the illusion of a stable and paternal nation. (20)

As a result of editorial involvement in the texts of female captives, the "obscured and revised" narrative attains primacy over the individual captive's story. The mediation offered by the editor simultaneously provides and denies agency to the captive, whose story is told, though

seldom in her own words. In this transaction, the captive, vis-à-vis her narrative, becomes tradeable. As Castiglia points out, the genre of the female captivity narrative “is almost synonymous with the circulation of women between groups of men” (8). The commodification of Oatman as a voiceless item of trade and spectacle links her directly with other human exhibits, whether they be Indigenous, ethnographic or tattooed freaks, who were similarly silenced in the context of their narratives of enfreakment.

Oatman’s commodification is echoed within the text itself, as Stratton describes the various “transactions” within which she operates as currency. In the prefaces, the return to “civilisation” necessitates a ransom or trade. Olive is “purchased” in order to be restored, and her restoration becomes inseparable from her value as a commodified object. From the moment when Olive and Mary Ann were purchased by the Mojave³⁸, the girls are established as commodities, and this status is maintained by Stratton throughout the narrative. From this point, movement of the girls between groups becomes a transaction, and they are variously purchased with items such as blankets, beads and, finally, a horse. This parallels the exploitation that she was subject to as her story — her body — was traded and exhibited. The presentation of Olive’s tattooed body to be viewed by the paying public meant that not only was her narrative the subject of public scrutiny, but her body became a public spectacle. As Castiglia points out, “The captive’s body and her text become interchangeable through captivity” (119). I would suggest that especially in Olive’s case it is not the captivity or the telling of the captivity alone that made her body synonymous with the text. Her textual body, in particular her tattooed face and arms, are interchangeable with the body of the text — Olive’s body is her narrative. As I mentioned earlier, Olive was b(r)ought back to civilisation by men, and was later in the custody of and marketed by men. Her body, already an object of trade between patriarchal forces, becomes further objectified as a spectacle subject to the gaze of thousands.

³⁸ Captives, according to Washburn, played a key economic role in Indian-white relations. It is not surprising then, that the Mojave are more than aware of Oatman’s commodity value. A representative from the fort had tried unsuccessfully to retrieve Olive from the Mojave once before. The Yuman chief explained to the officer that the reason for their failure was their reluctance to ‘pay’ for the girl’s release. TokwaOa explains: “The chief advised them: ‘I would say to him, ‘I will give you something for her,’ because they did pay for her and they do like her.’ And if you pay, you will surely get her” (Kroeber, 23).

As Olive's body was transformed into text, Stratton expanded his marketing strategy and realised just how powerful a currency the tattoos were. His concern for the marketability of the narrative is evident in his prefaces to the second and third editions of Captivity of the Oatman Girls, which make explicit reference to the 'value' of the book. He addresses the desire of the reader, making it clear that the narrative is a marketable commodity, and that it is his desire to make the text a pleasurable object of consumption:

We trust the reader will find most, if not all, of the objectionable portions of the first edition expunged from this, beside some additions that were, without intention, left out of the former, put into their proper places in this. He will also find this printed upon superior paper and type; and in many ways improved in its appearance. (Captivity 1857 ed. 10)

Stratton assures readers of the second edition that they are getting a superior product, addressing the reader as a consumer, not just of the written words, but also of the material book itself and, by extension, the textualised, exhibited artifact: Olive's tattooed body. Stratton's awareness of the consumer-value of his volume is also evident in his explicit response to criticism that was levelled against him after the publication of the first edition. Like the beachcombers and their editors, in the first edition Stratton claims a desire to "give the incidents in a plain, brief and unadorned style, deeming that these were the only excellencies that could be appropriate for such a narrative" (Captivity 1857 ed. 6-7). This claim was attacked by the press of the time, who recognised, and drew attention to, the fact that Stratton most certainly did not present the narrative in such a style.³⁹ In response to these attacks, a great portion of the preface to the second edition is taken up with defending his literary skills and tastes. The defence indicates that Stratton was keenly aware of the way that the narrative was received by the public — his consumers. The preface to the third edition also betrays this awareness, as Stratton assures the reader that they are making a valuable purchase that extends beyond mere entertainment. He wrote, "of all the records of Indian Captivities we feel confident none have possessed more interest than this" (Captivity 1857 ed.

³⁹ Hubert Howe Bancroft, in 1889, wrote "The subject was a most fascinating one, as shown by the large sale; but the intrinsic interest was, or should have been, well nigh destroyed by the dress of literary fustian in which it pleased the Rev Stratton to present the narrative of the captive girl" (Bancroft 486).

14-15). In this preface, the author acknowledges the popularity and commonness of the captivity narrative, yet assures the reader, in tones not dissimilar to those of many prefaces to the beachcomber narratives discussed in the previous chapter, that this one is *more* interesting than any other. He also urges that not only will the reader “add to his private or family library a volume whose chief attraction will not be merely in the detail of horrors, of suffering, of cruel captivity, which it brings to him; but one which his children will find valuable for reference in the years they may live to see,” since the “dark Indian tribes are fast wasting before the rising sun of our civilization” (*Captivity 1857 ed.* 15-16). These sentences make Stratton’s ideological beliefs clearer than previous prefaces, and, interestingly, he draws attention to the fact that the narrative is of additional value as information about a ‘dying race’⁴⁰, since the tribes are being exterminated, as he sees it, by “the white race” who are their “only dreaded foe” (*Captivity 1857 ed.* 16).

Oatman historian A. L. Kroeber has dismissed Stratton’s book as mere propaganda, and suggests that Stratton’s ideological and commercial ambitions severely impinged upon his ability to present Oatman and her narrative in any kind of ‘useful’ way. Kroeber notes that Stratton’s account is “somewhat sensational” and “would have had more permanent value if it had sought to record more of Olive’s concrete remembrances instead of vague phrases meant to thrill” (Kroeber 1). “This little volume,” he writes, “does not do justice to such possibilities as its theme would have developed if the handling had been straightforwardly and accurately factual. Stratton’s book aims to be sensational but is imprecise, wordy, vague, emotional, and pious” (Kroeber 9). Kroeber’s scathing attack on Stratton’s representation of the narrative fails to consider the genre and political climate within which Stratton was working. While I do not condone Stratton’s treatment of the narrative, it is essential to develop and sustain an understanding of the context within which the narrative was published. As Pearce points out, the more captivity narratives the public were exposed to, the more overt became the religious and political messages contained within them: “The propagandist value of the captivity narrative became more and more apparent; and what might be termed stylization, the writing up of the narrative by one who was not directly involved, came to have a kind of journalistic premium” (3). What Pearce identifies here - that is, the connection between ideology,

⁴⁰ For more detailed information on dying race theory and its involvement in exhibitions, see Anne Maxwell’s *Colonial Photography and Exhibitions*.

stylistic and “journalistic premium” or authority – is fundamental to my argument in terms of the linkage of genre, ideology and authority. The process of stylising the narrative in order to invest it with authority is fundamentally similar to the presentation of exhibited artifacts, wherein the very presentation of them within the ‘authoritative’ setting of the museum, not only imbues them with meaning, but with truth. As Bennett and others have argued, it is not the artifact itself, but the mode of presentation, and the associated and understood systems of interpretation, which determine the way that the exhibited item is ‘read’. The journalistic premium attached to the generic stylisation of the narrative performs a similar function: Stratton’s writing ‘around’ the narrative, his interpretations and his presentation are what give the narrative its ultimate meaning.

The exhibition of Olive Oatman’s tattooed body within Stratton’s text was supported, promoted and cemented by the actual physical display that was afforded by the book’s promotional lecture tour. In tones reminiscent of the world’s fairs’ ‘scientific’ ethnographic displays, Oatman and Stratton toured the United States ostensibly conducting informative, educational lectures on the “Manners and Customs of the Savage Indians” (“Lo! The Indian Captive!” [Broadsheet]) but in actuality, urging listeners to purchase copies of Captivity of the Oatman Girls. By disguising the promotion of his book as an educational exercise, Stratton obviously (though perhaps unintentionally) aligns his presentation of Oatman, her narrative and her body, with the tradition of thinly veiled ‘educational’ displays of the world’s fairs, which were more often ideological and/or commercial in intent. As Anne Maxwell points out, the American tradition of display, founded in their exhibitions and world’s fairs, was much more obviously about entertainment. By 1886, she claims, “the displays incorporated elements from the circus” (17). Where British and European displays of colonised peoples at least pretended to be scientific, in the United States the entertainment value of displays of Otherness was openly embraced.

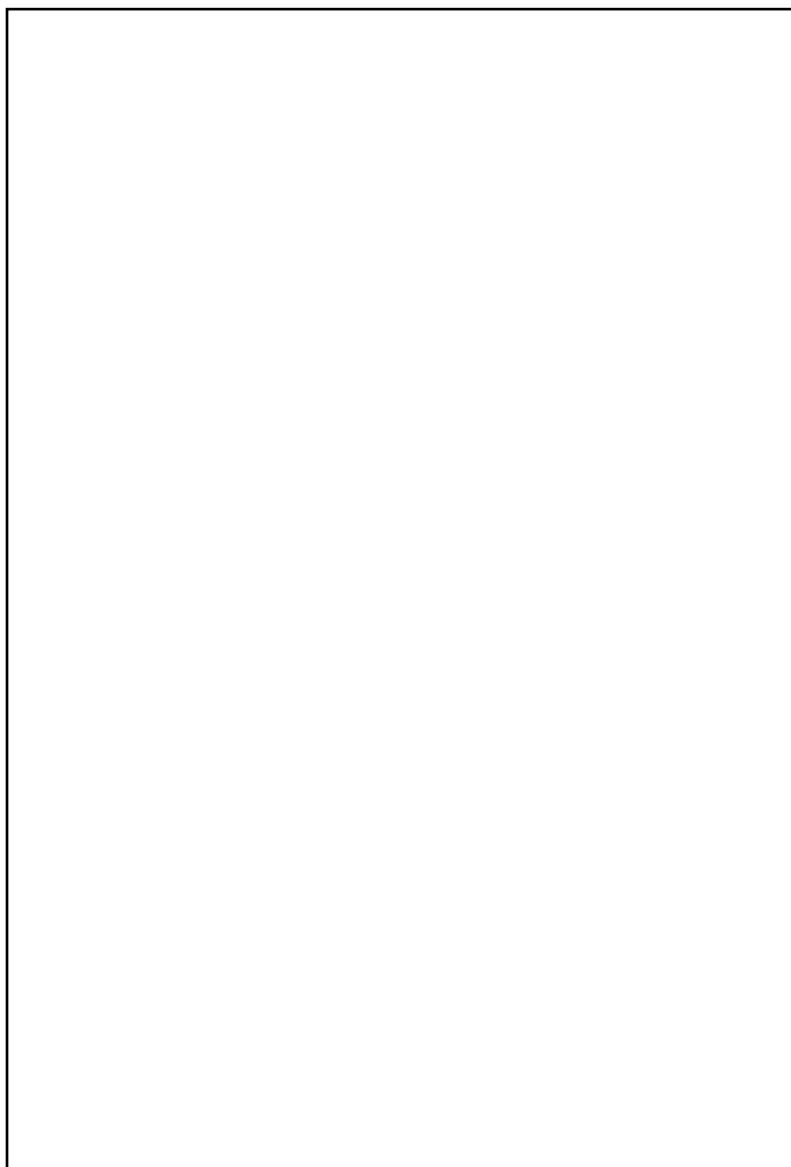


Figure 13: Olive Oatman publicity image. Copies of this photograph and others like it were sold to Oatman's audiences.

The alignment of Olive with circus and sideshow freaks is also apparent in the visual merchandise that accompanied her lecture. In addition to Stratton's book, images of Olive, reminiscent of the 'Cartes de Visite'⁴¹ sold by circus freaks throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, were also sold at these appearances. These images further cement Olive's situation as a racialised freak and item of consumption, as her image was reproduced

⁴¹ According to Merry Foresta, "The carte-de-visite was paper photography's cheapest answer to the call for popular photographs". (168). The method of production meant that the cards could be produced cheaply and were therefore distributed widely.

and sold all over North America. Rosemary Garland Thomson, in the introduction to her influential edited volume, Freakery, articulates the way that such cards responded to and enhanced the creation and performance of the circus and sideshow freak:

[t]he four entwined narrative forms that produced freaks were, first, the oral spiel — often called the ‘lecture’ that was delivered by the showman or ‘professor’ who usually managed the exhibited person; second, the often fabricated or fantastic textual accounts — both long pamphlets and broadside or newspaper advertisements — of the freak’s always extraordinary life and identity; third, the staging, which included costuming, choreography, performance, and the spatial relation to the audience; and fourth, drawings or photographs that disseminated an iterable, fixed, collectible visual image of staged freakishness that penetrated into the Victorian parlor and family album. (7)

Though Derounian-Stodola has argued that Oatman was the prototype for the tattooed ladies who gained popularity in the late nineteenth century, it is interesting to note from Thomson’s description that Olive may well have been a ‘freak’ before her time, as her ‘packaging’ and presentation has all of the characteristics listed by Thomson. Also significant to this argument, is Thomson’s assertion that the four characteristics she lists, which are present in Stratton’s exhibition of Olive, are responsible for “producing freaks”. In this statement, Thomson draws attention to the fact that freaks are manufactured, thereby emphasising Stratton’s role in creating and projecting an image of Olive Oatman as a tragic, victimised Indian captive.

Robert Bogdan, a leading theorist of ‘freakery’, points out that the sale of pictures and postcards was an important part of the performance of a ‘freak’. He explains that, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,

[p]hotographic portraits of each exhibit were available and would be inscribed with a personal message for an additional fee. Professional photographers took the pictures, and they carefully posed the attraction in their studios to promote the exhibits’ staged identity. (Freak Show 27)

While Oatman was never depicted as ‘part Mojave’ the publicity pictures that were sold at her lectures were quite obviously contrived to juxtapose her ‘civilised’ identity with the incongruous tattoo that covered her chin. One photograph in particular, held at the Arizona Historical Society’s archives, shows Olive posed formally in a ‘parlour’ type room (Fig. 13). The dress she wears is conventionally Victorian, yet the decorative embroidery on the dress’s hemline is strikingly ‘primitive’ and quite obviously mirrors the design of the tattoo on Oatman’s face.⁴² Once again, this technique is similar to that of the presentation of freaks such as bearded ladies. As can be seen by comparing Figures 13 and 14, the pose and stylisation adopted in this picture of Oatman is strikingly similar to that of Madame Clofullia, the bearded lady of Switzerland (ca. 1860). Clofullia’s beard is echoed by Olive’s tattooed chin. As both Maxwell and Bogdan have pointed out, the presentation of freaks was often accentuated by an emphasis on contradiction. For the bearded lady, her freakishness is highlighted by an exaggerated femininity in her pose, dress, hairstyle and other feminine effects. Similarly, tattooed ladies were presented in such a way as to underscore the conflict between what the tattoo symbolised, and what a woman was ‘supposed’ to be. In Oatman’s case, both gender expectations are challenged by her marks.

⁴² In his poem “Olive Oatman” Peter Dale Scott also comments upon this. “The black crisscrossed / lines around her cuffs / and around her hem / imitate the style / of the hatchmarks / between her chin and lips” (93).

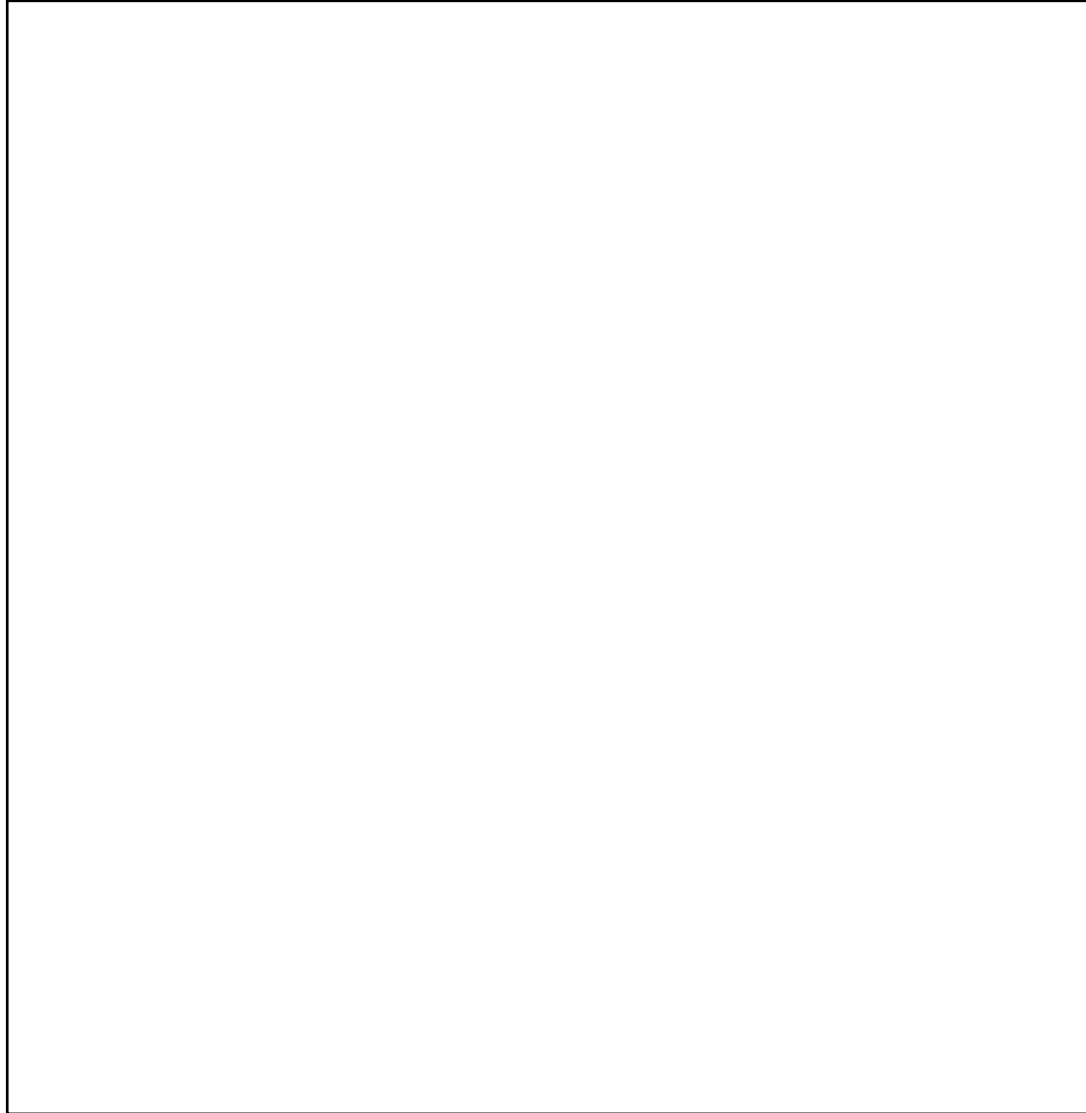


Figure 14: Madame Clofullia, the Bearded Lady.

The L.A. Star article I discussed in an earlier section of this chapter (published prior to Stratton's book) emphasises Olive's firm anchoring in civilisation, despite her ordeal. Like the newspaper descriptions of Irene Woodward, the Star article emphasises Olive's ladylike manner, skills and chastity:

She converses with propriety, but as one acting under strong constraint; and she has not forgotten the instructions of her childhood. She reads well, writes a fair hand, and sews admirably; though in her captivity she saw no implement nor instrument of civilization. (reproduced in W. B. Rice 104)

In this passage, the long isolation from implements of civility and white people is shown to be of no consequence to the well-raised Olive, whose entrenchment in civilisation cannot be erased by isolation, deprivation, or even physical inscription. The article also establishes that Olive is keen to return fully to white society, and although the author makes ambiguous reference to the fact that Olive is “not, as yet, able to express her thoughts in language”, he assures the reader that she is actively working to leave her ordeal and time with the Indians behind her by spending “most of her time in study” (reproduced in W. B. Rice 104). Her “lady-like deportment” and “pleasing manners” are also emphasised in order to maintain the sense that the “White Way” is unconquerable (99).

This article’s, and indeed Stratton’s, assurances that Olive was working hard to leave her ordeal behind her, are contradicted by many personal accounts. In 1899 ‘The Murder at Oatman Flat’ was published in the first issue of the Arizona Graphic magazine. The paper, written by Samuel Hughes, had been previously read before the Arizona Pioneer Historical Society, and detailed Hughes’ meeting and discussions with Lorenzo and Olive Oatman. Hughes, like Jaeger, claims that Olive and Lorenzo did not recognise one another when they first met. Hughes goes on to indicate that Olive did not in fact rejoice in her return to “civilisation”. He writes:

[w]hen they⁴³ arrived at the fort and saw the white women they were ashamed and wished themselves back with the Indians again, and would have run away if they had had a good chance... She often told me she would like to see some of her old friends, even if they were Indians. (7)

Hughes’ expression of the girls’ initial anxiety about their return to the whites, and Olive’s desire to again see some of her “old friends” clearly contradicts Stratton’s depictions of the Mojaves as savages, whose cruel captivity Olive was relieved to escape. The desire for escape in this passage is in fact from the whites at the Fort. Parrish also claims that Olive had a desire to ‘escape’ from the Fort upon her arrival. According to her memoirs, Lorenzo was staying

⁴³ Olive was ransomed to Fort Yuma with another captive woman – a Mexican.

with her family when news of Olive's ransom reached the West coast. She claims that when Lorenzo arrived at the Fort, he found a "frightened, tatooed [sic] creature who was more savage than civilized and who sought at every opportunity to flee back to her Indian husband and children" (Root 16).

In many personal recollections of Olive Oatman, suggestions of depression, anxiety and dissatisfaction are symbolically linked to the 'meaning' of her tattoos. People who met Oatman invariably comment upon the "blue tattoo marks around her mouth," (Clark and Clark 81) and note that she was "shy" and "retiring" on account of the marks (Clark and Clark 49, 81). Pettid quotes in his manuscript from a letter written by Mrs R. H. Gilfillian, the granddaughter of Reverend S. P Taylor. Apparently Olive lived with the Taylors — Mrs Abigail Taylor was Olive's "first school teacher after her release" (Pettid Manuscript 164) — in Rogue River Valley after her release. According to this letter, dated April 17, 1909, Olive

was painfully sensitive about the tattooing on her chin, and on meeting a stranger, her hand invariably went to her face to hide the cruel disfigurement. Her terrible troubles and hardships had so worn upon her that she was subject to the deepest fits of melancholy and despondency, often walking the floor at night weeping and wringing her hands... All her letters (after she had gone away) are written in a spirit of affliction. Her troubles are almost beyond comparison. (Pettid Manuscript 164)

While the author of the letter does describe the tattoos as a "cruel disfigurement," her rendering of Olive's dissatisfaction differs greatly from the newspaper accounts and Stratton's book, which almost unanimously comment upon the extent to which Olive successfully and happily readjusted to Euro-American life and, perhaps more significantly, her position as an objectified item of spectacle. The San Francisco Daily Alta, for example, in 1856 claimed that Olive possessed "a pleasing manner, amiable disposition and rare patience with those who rush to see her and to stare at her, with about as much sense of feeling as they would to show off wild animals" (quoted in Clark and Clark 48). The *Alta* situates and acknowledges Oatman's status as a spectacle yet reports that, presumably due to her intrinsically pleasant character, she was able to deal with this status gracefully. Mrs Gilfillian, however, links the shame Olive felt about her tattoos to her depression and melancholy.

The depression that Mrs. Gilfillian depicts is not unique among personal accounts such as these. Recollections from most people who met Olive after her captivity paint a similar picture of her dissatisfaction and depression. In his reminiscences⁴⁴, James H. Miller, an early resident of Arizona and New Mexico who met Olive while she was in Oregon, remembers her solemn character. He recalls:

[w]hen I was a small boy I saw Olive she was a beautiful well formed woman I was fasinated [sic] with her ... Could not keep my eyes off of the three marks on her chin. I never saw her smile her youth was destroyed she was old beyond her years. (Miller n.p.)

Similarly, Parrish recalls that Olive was “a grieving, unsatisfied woman” after leaving the Mojave Valley, “who somehow, shook one’s belief in civilisation” (Root 18). Parrish’s connection of Olive’s grief with the notion of civilisation makes apparent the transgressive nature of the depression that Oatman experienced after her release. For many who knew her, Oatman’s grief was a symbol and symptom of the extent to which she had surrendered her ‘white’ identity and affiliated with the Mojave.

In ‘Olive A. Oatman: Her Captivity with the Apache Indians, and Her Later Life’, popular historian Sharlot M. Hall writes that

[t]he later life of Olive Oatman was as quiet and peaceful as her girlhood was tragic. In her beautiful home, guarded by her devoted husband, she gave herself up to many noble charities, especially the care of orphan children. One of these, an adopted daughter, nursed her tenderly in her last illness of a year... She was quiet and reserved; the great suffering of her early life set her apart from the world, but she was a noble, helpful woman, always first to aid the sick and poor, and especially children in need. She was a woman of much intelligence and strength of character, and even as a girl must have been able to meet difficulties with rare courage. (227)

⁴⁴ The manuscript of Miller’s reminiscences (never published) is held at the Arizona Historical Society Library (MS 0495).

Hall writes that Olive was “taken into slavery such as few have survived” and that the “sadness of her early experiences never quite lifted, as the blue-black tattooed mark of the Mojave captive never left her face” (227). The tattoo is emblematic not only of her slavery, but of her sadness.

The spectre of depression and madness haunts reports of Olive’s later life and, indeed, her death, with many newspapers reporting that she had died of insanity, in a mental institution. A 1922 article from The (Phoenix) Arizona Republican claims that Olive “became such a thorough Indian woman that years later, when her brother insisted that she leave her [Mojave] husband and children, she went insane” (“Arizona History from Newspaper Accounts” 29). According to Derounian-Stodola, it was actually Stratton who died of “insanity” or “disease of the brain” (“The Captive and Her Editor” 187), yet this cause of death was transferred to Olive, of whom it was repeatedly reported that she had died in an insane asylum. Hall emphatically refuted these reports: “She was never insane, nor did she live in New York after 1865. Hundreds of people yet live who knew her during her long residence in Texas, and can bear witness to her clearness of mind and nobility of character” (227). Derounian-Stodola has argued that the conflation of Stratton’s and Oatman’s deaths indicate the extent to which they had, on some level, become the same person. Perhaps more significant than this, however, are the implications attached to madness within the context of colonialism and captivity. Seri Luangphinit points out that

[m]adness and colonial identities are both bound, often fused, within discursive productions of imperial states; therefore, any discussion of insanity within the colonial scenario must recognize the accompanying creation of social positions, which are also subject to differences of class, color and heritage. (61)

Brown links the projection of madness within frontier literature more explicitly with suggestions of miscegenation. He notes that “insanity or living death” are the “inevitable ‘curse’ invoked by the ‘Unnatural’ mingling of white and Indian blood” (137), linking the erroneous reports of the reason’s for Olive’s death, to her alleged experiences in captivity. He goes on to explain that “[p]olite literature like the frontier romance represents this affront

[miscegenation] as insanity or atavism, the gradual mental decline of vibrant white heroines following their sexual contact with Indians” (138). Even within the conventions offered by frontier literature, insanity is linked culturally to reports of miscegenation.

Links between Olive’s tattoos and her depression are also evident in relatively modern renderings of the story, and serve to illustrate the extent to which Oatman was never able to escape the spectacle that she had been transformed into following her release. In 1958, a dramatised version of the story was published in True West magazine. This account, heavily sentimentalised and sensationalised to fit the genre of frontier romance, is called ‘Wife of the Chief’ and clearly panders to the dramatic conventions of the genre. The author Freeman Hubbard’s report of Oatman’s death signifies the extent to which her tattoos in fact defined her identity, even after years of living outside of Stratton’s imposed spotlight. Hubbard wrote, “Years later, Olive Oatman became the bride of a white man, John B. Fairchild. She died on March 20, 1903, at Sherman, Texas, with the thin blue tattoo lines of a Mohave squaw still marking her face and arms” (39). Despite being traded again and married to a white man, Oatman essentially died as a ‘squaw’ – rendered permanently thus by the marks on her face. Indeed, this sentiment is reiterated on a plaque near her Texas gravesite. The plaque was erected by the State Historical Survey Committee and reads:

Captured in Arizona at age 13 (1851) by Yavapai Indians, who massacred six members of family. Sold to Mojave Indians. She was treated kindly but bore mark of slave – blue, cactus needle tattoo on chin – for rest of life. (transcript from photograph, Clark and Clark 90)

Oatman’s death, like her life, is defined by the mark of her captivity and, unfortunately, offers no more ‘truth’ than the many and varied accounts of her life and experiences in the southwestern desert.

Ransom’s Mark: The Re-writing of the Captivities of Olive Oatman

Wendy Lawton’s Ransom’s Mark, the most recent fictionalisation of the Oatman family’s story, was published as part of the Daughters of the Faith series in 2003. The book is a short

novel, aimed at a young, female, Christian readership, and re-presents Olive's experiences, exhibiting her captivity and, perhaps more significantly, her tattoos, in an extraordinarily different way to Stratton. While the differences between Ransom's Mark and Captivity of the Oatman Girls are notable, Lawton's text still obviously occupies and caters to a moral niche, where certain values – Christian faith, family values, racial tolerance and empathy for the colonised position of Native Americans – are quite forcefully promoted and idealised. In Ransom's Mark, Lawton has re-written the captivity in order to exhibit Olive and her tattoos in a more generous, less paternalistic, but nonetheless still overtly ideological and stereotypical manner. Lawton attempts to cast Olive as a modern heroine, whose plight is both accessible and appealing to a modern, young, female readership. Gender roles and distinctions, however, are strictly maintained in an attempt to show that strength need not come at the expense of femininity.

In White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier, June Namias identifies three types of white female captive: the Survivor, the Amazonian, and the Frail Flower. As Namias explains, each of these types essentially provides a way of presenting the heroines of captivity narratives in ways that would suit the cultural and ideological era within which they were published. Stratton's presentation of Olive Oatman fits very much within the Frail Flower mode, both chronologically and stylistically. According to Namias, the Frail Flower started to appear in captivity narratives in the 1830s, corresponding with the rise of True Womanhood and the mass marketing of sentimental fiction (36). The Frail Flower herself is a

poor, hapless woman who is taken unawares. She is shocked and distressed by her capture and by the deaths and dislocations that go with it. What makes her a candidate for Frail Flower status is that she rarely emerges from her shock, distress, and misery. Frail Flower narratives include brutality, sadomasochistic and titillating elements, strong racist language, pleas for sympathy and commiseration with the author's suffering, special appeals to her sad lot as a distressed mother, and occasional invectives against dirt and sex among Indians. (37)

Stratton's depictions of Olive's (and Mary Ann's) captivity certainly fill most of these criteria. According to Namias, the Frail Flower contributed to an "emerging gender ideology contrasting powerful white men with totally powerless white women overpowered by villainous and brutal Indians" (47). Stratton's (and other authors') engagement with this mode of writing about captivity, meant that many of the personal strengths and fortitudes that became apparent to women in captivity, such as, in the Oatmans' case, the ability to travel great distances on foot and without food or water, were either ignored or downplayed in order to reiterate their dependence on strong, white men. As Sarah Carter points out, the female captive was often depicted as weak, passive, voiceless, and ultimately, the property of men, in order to justify the white man's impulse towards genocide, colonialism, and vengeful violence. The possibility of a dual identity, where a woman is depicted as both strong *and* female/captive, is therefore problematic because of the dichotomies that were essential to the justifying myths of colonialism. As a postcolonial text, Ransom's Mark does not have the same ideological objective as the original, nineteenth century versions of the narrative, so it is obviously not constrained by the same conventions and representations. In the nineteenth century the frail woman image was both popular and significant, in terms of the political nature of the genre. For readers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, however, a modern heroine can be depicted as strong, and even as challenging traditional gender stereotypes.

Lawton, to a degree, seems at odds with the freedoms that she is allowed by the context of a more modern readership and literary marketplace. The 'challenges' she presents - to stereotypical representations of Native Americans and to the place of women both in frontier society and, by extension, society in general - are problematically and misleadingly simplistic. Much of this stems from the fact that Lawton herself has an ideological investment in the way that her presentation of the narrative is perceived. For this reason, certain aspects of the narrative have been manipulated in order to make the story fit within Lawton's image of Olive as a Christian heroine. A significant example of Lawton's manipulative curating, is the omission of any explicit references to the Oatmans' Mormonism. Like Stratton's and other popular accounts, Lawton does not mention this motivation for the Oatmans' move westward, as it is in conflict with her depiction of Olive as a mainstream Christian heroine, so Lawton dismisses, but doesn't explicitly name, the cult-like nature of the Mormon sect that

the Oatmans followed. When Mr Oatman is first trying to convince his wife to make the move further west, Mrs. Oatman asks “Does this have anything to do with all those strange pamphlets you’ve been discussing with Mr. Thompson and others about a colony – a promised land – near the Colorado River?” (22). Mr Oatman replies that he doesn’t agree with “all the beliefs of the man calling for this journey,” though he does believe in a Promised Land. The patriarchal nature of the decision is evident when Mrs Oatman responds, resigned: “I’ve never stood against you before, Royce, and I won’t do so now. You’ve provided well for us over the years. The job God gave me is to follow your lead and care for this family” (23).

On the whole, this attitude of resignation is emblematic of most women’s in the book, including the daughters, and Lawton seems critical of this patriarchal rule when she expresses the anguish that the women feel about leaving their home. Indeed, the intuition of the women – their fear and apprehension about the journey – is given a voice in Lawton’s text, though these forebodings are ultimately useless given the gendered family power structure. When Mrs. Oatman asks her friend if she fears going to the west, she replies: “‘Sometimes [...] But look at them.’ She pointed towards the men. ‘Once they make up their minds to [go], here is no stopping them’” (19). When the wagons pull out of their yard, “Olive heard her mother sigh deeply and understood the reason – her father stood there staring at the wagons with a sense of deep longing” (20). Lawton here emphasises the fact that many frontierswomen, even when not in captivity, were at the mercy and whim of their men, essentially ‘captives’ to the white, patriarchal culture.

The patriarchal family structure is also stressed in Lawton’s depictions of the traditional division of labour. The concept of ‘women’s work’ is established on the very first page, and the listing of gendered tasks is repeated every few pages throughout the first (pre-captivity) section of the book. When guests arrive at the Illinois homestead, for example, the girls are asked to set the table, help prepare coffee and care for the younger children, and the boys set about chopping wood and constructing a makeshift table to accommodate their guests (1-2). When the wagon is packed, Mr Oatman checks the wheels, the tools, and the livestock equipment, while Mrs Oatman packs the interior of the wagon with linen, cooking utensils and, despite her attempts to resist sentimentality, her wedding dress and various other “family

treasures” (24). While Glenda Riley argues that on the frontier such gender divisions were, out of necessity, not overtly apparent since many non-traditional skills and strengths were required of frontierswomen, Lawton persists in depicting the girls and women as the followers, cooks, carers, cleaners and worriers, and the men as leaders, hunters, fire-makers, and protectors (33,39,56,71). Her intention in thus relegating the female characters in her book seems not, however, to depict them as submissive or passive, but to illustrate that strength and femininity are not mutually exclusive. The peculiar brand of feminism that Ransom’s Mark promotes could be categorised as a kind of Christian postfeminism for teenagers, but generally, the text can be read as re-positioning Olive from a Frail Flower to a Survivor.

According to Namias, the Survivor was popular in the early-colonial period in Puritan New England, through the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In contrast to the Frail Flower, the Survivor is “tough, both physically and emotionally,” (25) and her strengths and achievements are celebrated in early captivity narratives, which “told the Puritan community of the tremendous physical, emotional and spiritual stamina of its women in times of trial” (29). Survivors, according to Namias, “show a range of feelings from extreme powerlessness to aggressive hostility. Yet they all adapt, survive, and make sense of and, in a sense, bear witness without undue victimisation, personal aggrandizement, or genocidal aggression” (25).

Certainly, Lawton’s Olive adapts, survives and makes sense of her situation, and at certain points even revels in exerting a degree of resistance. Like Stratton, Lawton depicts the attacking group as relishing the girls’ distress during, and immediately after, the attack. In Lawton’s account, however, this steels Olive’s will to keep her emotions hidden from her captors, and marks the first sign of her resistance: “The Yavapai pushed some bread towards the girls, but the smell of food caused Olive’s stomach to lurch. One man laughed at her refusal. Olive felt as if the captors enjoyed seeing her distress. She decided it was important to keep her grief in check” (79). This self-control signifies Olive’s taking control of the one thing she still has some agency over - her emotions - thereby aligning her with the emotionally ‘tough’ Survivors. Suggestions of resistance are continued as their journey progresses:

Olive wondered if their captors had begun to have second thoughts about how easily they could control her and her sister. As Olive pictured her frail seven-year-old sister sitting in the road, refusing to take another step, and a frustrated Yavapai throwing her over his shoulder, she smiled for the first time since the massacre. Her mother's strength had sustained their family over many a bumpy road. Perhaps these Indians would discover that they'd underestimated the pluck of an Oatman female. (83)

The strength of the family is seen here as distinctly and explicitly matriarchal, and also matrilineal, as Olive and Mary Ann find that they have inherited, and can utilise their mother's strength. The whims of her father are referred to as the "bumpy roads" that their mother was forced to navigate for the family, while following Mr Oatman's sometimes troublesome dreams.

Also significant in Namias' characterisation is the Survivor's lack of racist sentiment. Certainly, Ransom's Mark contains none of Stratton's anti-Indian sentiment, and at many points in the narrative Olive expresses empathy for the Native American people's colonised position. While Stratton depicts the Native Americans as animalistic, predatory, "bloodthirsty" "human devils," who "lurk," "prowl," (40) and "skulk" in wait of "prey" (39), Lawton's Olive wonders "Did the Apaches resent strangers encroaching on their territory?" (67). This empathy is again apparent in a conversation between Lucy and Olive: "I wonder if the Indians think all white people are weak and foolish?" "It looks like we don't trust them and they don't trust us, doesn't it?" Lucy sighed. "They probably don't like us coming into their land." (50). Even days after being taken captive, on the difficult and exhausting trail to the Yavapai village, Olive observes that

[t]he [Yavapai] continued to watch the back trail, observing much closer than Olive's fellow travellers had ever watched. It gave her a brief glimpse into the wariness and fear that marked these people. The threat of wagon after wagon of settlers must have weighed heavily upon them. (86)

However, while Lawton makes an effort to inject a degree of cultural sensitivity and postcolonial awareness into her rendering of the narrative, particularly with reference to the

representation of the Native American people, her actual depictions of the Yavapai and Mojave are, though not as degrading and offensive as Stratton's and others', still distinctly stereotypical, and almost explicitly engage the well-known types of the noble and ignoble savage. As Maxwell points out, depictions of the noble savage emphasised simplicity, beauty and freedom, while representations of the ignoble savage included depictions of barbarism, poverty and dependency. She notes that "Whether noble or ignoble, the figure of the Indian was invested with traits and values that were racially and culturally overdetermined" (104). While Maxwell's assessment relates specifically to representations of Native Americans in colonial photography and exhibitions, there is no doubt – and this is exemplified in Stratton's and even Lawton's texts – that this kind of "racially and culturally overdetermined" characterisation is also pervasive in the corresponding literature. On the journey westward, "the anticipation of meeting [Indians] monopolize[s] the travelers' thoughts" (Lawton 43). Olive contemplates and assesses the stereotypes that surround her on the wagon train, and "wished she knew more about these natives and wondered if they were the heroic figures her father thought or the cruel savages others in their company thought. She guessed the truth might lie somewhere in between" (44). Though Lawton here seems to dismiss the noble/ignoble savage binary, after Olive actually becomes acquainted with the Yavapai and later Mojave tribes, these stereotypes are very much reiterated. The Yavapais who attack the group are described as "renegades and troublemakers," and are contrasted with the "gentle Pimoles" (73). When the girls arrive at the Mojave village a similar contrast is established, reiterating the division between the 'noble' (read 'more recognisably civilised') Mojave and the 'primitive', 'savage' Yavapai. Unlike the Yavapai village, which Olive perceived to be primitive and dirty, the Mojave village is immediately recognisable as a community. The Mojave's cultivation of the land contributes to this depiction of the village, therein negating, trivialising and ultimately labelling as 'primitive' the Yavapai tradition of hunting and gathering.

The distinctions between the noble Mojave and the primitive and savage Yavapai are also apparent in the characterisation of the individuals who are identified in each tribe. As in Captivity of the Oatman Girls, only one of the Yavapai is named. Of the Mojave, the chief, Aespaniola, and his daughter, Topeka are the only ones named. This is ironic, given Olive's earlier realisation that, since squaw and brave are not "good words" because "the Indians they

met ever used those words at all,” (57) the settlers should “just learn their names so we could call them by name like we do Mr. Metteer or Mrs. Thompson” (57).

The above contradiction is but one example of Lawton’s (mostly failed) struggle to escape the constraints of the pervasively stereotypical representations of Native Americans in frontier literature such as the captivity narrative. An analysis of Lawton’s presentation of Topeka provides another example of this problematic relationship. When Olive and Mary Ann are purchased by the Mojave, Chief Aespaniola sends his daughter Topeka to complete the transaction. Significantly, this breaks the cycle of domination by men, and suggests the more ‘peaceful’ (that is, female) nature of the Mojave as compared to the violent, insolent, male Apaches. Topeka’s command over the Yavapai startles and inspires Olive and Mary Ann, who exclaims, “‘Oh dear, its funny to see a girl in charge, isn’t it?’” to which Olive replies “‘Yes. For Indians, it is very unusual.’ Come to think of it, Topeka, for all her respectful ways, seemed very powerful – young and pretty, but very powerful.” (97). This depiction of Topeka, mediated through the impressed exclamations of the young captives, positions Topeka as a heroine of sorts. She exudes such desirable traits as youth, beauty, and power, and Olive respects her for this. Furthermore, her heroic countenance is rendered as heavenly when, on the journey to the Mojave camp, Topeka reveals the reasons for the girls’ purchase. When Topeka relays this story to her, Olive takes it as a sign that God is with the Mojave, further situating them as the ‘good’ or ‘noble’ savages, contrasted with the Apache, who are godless:

Could this have been the answer to her prayers when she asked God to send someone to ransom them? [...] When Olive had prayed, she pictured God mobilizing the army at Fort Yuma to make a daring rescue. Instead, God spoke quietly to a Mohave chief and his daughter. (103)

Lawton’s message here is twofold: firstly, God acts in mysterious ways that cannot be predicted. Secondly, the noble Mojave are not as Godless as some anti-Indian perspectives would have us believe. The twist in this, is that *who* they are ransomed to becomes irrelevant, and the girls, on the trail with Topeka, feel as though their prayers have been answered, since they have been ransomed and rescued from the savage Yavapai.

When the girls arrive at the Mojave camp, they are taken in by the chief's family. Lawton uses dialogue from TokwaOa's account: "when Aespaniola introduced them to the tribe he put one girl on either side of him, put his hands on their shoulders and said: 'let all the people help raise them'" (107). Aespaniola's paternalistic attitude towards the girls is evident here, and compounded when the time comes for Olive and Mary Ann to receive the *ki-e-chook*.

Topeka's own tattoo is pivotal in the initial encounters between Olive, Mary Ann and Topeka. "Topeka's face was beautiful - perfect, except for a strange tattoo running down her chin. And she had the same kind of lines on her upper arms. Olive couldn't help staring. What was that?" (96). Topeka's "perfect" face, with beautiful skin, long black hair and trustworthy eyes, is interrupted and, in Olive's perception, confused by the marks. According to Topeka, the girls have to be tattooed because "When we ransomed you, you became ours" (107). When Olive asks if this is "the mark of a slave" Topeka replies "No. You see I wear one. Am I a slave? Because you are ours, you are bound to us. We must protect you. If another tribe finds you while you are out digging roots, they will not hurt you when you wear our mark of protection." (107). In this short passage of dialogue, Lawton links the tattoo to the process of ransom, thereby setting up the connections between both ownership and protection. For Lawton, this is fundamental to her presentation of the tattoos as 'ransom's mark', which is the meaning given by Topeka, in a move that compounds her position in the text as a messenger/saviour from God.

At various points throughout the narrative Topeka reminds Olive of her faith, and encourages her to pray and give thanks for the kindnesses God has shown her. The kindnesses shown to her and her sister by the Mojave - namely the gift of seeds and the burial of Mary Ann in the garden plot - are explicitly depicted by Lawton as signs of God's mercy, the implicit suggestion being that the Mojave could only provide such generosity with God's intervention. The ultimate reminder of God's love for Olive also comes from Topeka, as Olive is preparing to leave the Mojave and return to Fort Yuma. In this "Final Ransom" Olive has no agency. When the message comes to say that Olive is to be returned to the Fort, there is no question that Olive has any say in whether she goes or stays, despite her being treated like "part of the tribe" (107) and calling Aespaniola's wife "mother" (119): she is the

property of the Mojave, and they are the ones who decide if she will be ransomed or sold. “Olive knew the decision was not hers to make. What was the right decision? She knew she loved Topeka like a sister. But what if Lorenzo was alive?” (128). In this moment, Olive’s ‘true’ identity comes into question, and she is torn between her Mojave ‘sister’ and white brother. While Topeka’s mother reminds her: “You will always have Mohave in your heart, daughter” (128), it is apparent that it is not the Mojave in her heart that concerns her, but the Mojave inscribed upon her face. She laments to Topeka, “my *ki-e-chook* means I will never fully belong to the white man’s world. I do not think I can rejoin the people of my birth” (130). Topeka, however reminds Olive that

‘you belong to neither the Mohaves nor to the whites. You belong to your God. He is the one who sent me to ransom you. He is the one who kept your brother alive and touched the heart of my mother and father.’ Topeka wiped Olive’s tears off her chin, gently tracing the lines of her tattoo. ‘Every time you look into the glass and see the *ki-e-chook*, you must remember God’s love for you. It is the mark of ransom – of greatest love’. (130)

In this scene, Lawton reiterates the suggestion that the tattoo is symbolic of Christ’s sacrifice, suggested earlier when Olive realises that she has come to terms with the marks. Olive

touched the tattoo on her chin. How disfigured she had felt when they first applied it. Now it no longer bothered her, it had become the ransom’s mark – the remembrance of the price that had been paid for her by the Mohaves and their promise of protection. As Olive began to understand what God had done, and, as her flame of faith rekindled, she also liked to think about her *ki-e-chook* as the remembrance of the ransom price that Christ had paid for her with His own life and His promise of protection. (126)

This re-presentation of the tattoo as a symbol of God’s mercy, and His power to influence even heathens like the Mojave, quite neatly (perhaps *too* neatly) reconciles the disjuncture that the tattoo ultimately created for Olive on her return to Euro-American society. The sentimental tone adopted in the final scene between Topeka and Olive segues neatly into the sentimentality of the Oatman siblings’ reunion scene. Lawton, like Stratton, cannot resist the

temptation to falsely depict their meeting at the Fort as though Lorenzo was there waiting for Olive. After saying goodbye to Topeka, Olive “turned toward the fort to see a figure far in the distance – Lorenzo. As she stepped back into the world of her people, Olive knew that God would continue to walk alongside her” (131). The ‘turn’ represented in this scene is clearly symbolic, as it essentially erases the ambiguity of her identity: on seeing Lorenzo in the distance, she crosses the threshold back to “her people”.

An analysis of Lawton’s re-presentation of the Oatman story allows an exposition of the curator’s power when presenting an artifact to a different audience, in a different era, ultimately with a different motivation and objective. Ransom’s Mark provides a clear example of the way that an artifact can be re-exhibited in a new context, in order to garner very different results to previous displays. Indeed, the varying motivations and objectives behind the many presentations of Oatman, her captivity and her tattoos mean that – to paraphrase Bennett – the ‘truth’ of her narrative has been obscured and rewritten to such a degree that it is all but obliterated.

As an artifact that has been exhibited numerous times in numerous and varied contexts, Olive Oatman’s tattooed body provides an excellent example of the extent to which exhibition is a deliberately calculated and controlled process. Oatman’s colonial presence was mediated by the traditions dictated by the ideologies of the day, and early curators of her narrative were forced to incorporate or at times attempt to alter the existing discourse that surrounded the exhibition of white, Indigenously tattooed bodies. The performance of racial Otherness that the tattoos represented, and the associated complications to identity and whiteness meant that any kind of presentation of Olive’s story was bound to be fraught. In addition to the complications arising from literary/generic conventions, the Oatman narrative was also keenly influenced by the traditions that had emerged throughout the history of the exhibition of tattooed bodies. In the various re-tellings of the narrative, tropes are both consciously and unconsciously borrowed from the circus and sideshow, thereby cementing perceptions of tattooed bodies as spectacularised, racialised others: objectified pawns in a larger, ideologically driven project. For early writers – most notably, Stratton – these problems proved insurmountable, and their presentations have ultimately flailed under the weight of contradicting rumours and counter-narratives. Even modern presentations, such as

Ransom's Mark, have failed to entirely escape the legacies and constraints of those early depictions.

What Ransom's Mark does represent, is a move towards purely textual exhibition of an Indigenously tattooed body. While literary exhibitions of the tattooed beachcombers interacted with actual corporeal displays in circuses, fairs and sideshows, and Oatman's own body was physically exhibited as publicity for Stratton's book, Ransom's Mark provides an exclusively textual rendering of corporeality. The text exhibits the tattoos, but does not hinge upon or interact with an actual display of corporeal Otherness. In the following chapter, I will pursue this notion of a purely textual exhibition, and explore the way that, even without the direct dialogue between a textual and a physical exhibition, literary representations of Indigenous tattoos can still be read as a performance and exhibition of racial Otherness.

4:

"A CHIEF, OR A CUTLET, IN POLYNESIA"?:
HERMAN MELVILLE'S UNEASY JOURNEY.



Tr.

Page 178.

"The canoe glided rapidly through the water."

In his first two novels, Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life (1846) and its sequel Omoo: A Narrative of the South Seas (1847), Herman Melville curates a textual exhibition of tattooed bodies – both Indigenous and white – that engages with the tropes and conventions developed in the genres of beachcomber and captivity narratives that I have discussed in the previous chapters. Like Ransom's Mark, Typee and Omoo are purely textual exhibitions of the tattooed body, so the kinds of corporeal display that accompanied many of the narratives discussed in earlier chapters was not possible. While Melville's early novels have in the past been considered to be autobiographical beachcomber narratives, a number of more recent scholars have shown them to be at least partially fictionalised, and the beachcombers themselves – Melville's fictionalised narrators – were not tattooed. Further differentiating Melville's novels from the other beachcomber and captivity narratives that I have discussed, is the element of the travel narrative that is present in Typee, and even more so in Omoo. In this way, Melville's narrators evoke Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's traveller who, disinterested in collecting physical souvenirs like photographs or trinkets (or, for that matter, tattoos), instead collects narratives and stories, in order that they might relate them to, and essentially perform them for, their 'audience' back home. As the narrative becomes the souvenir – an article that can stand for and represent the traveller's experience, and communicate a series of "destination images" (Morgan and Pritchard 69) relating to the toured location – the interrelatedness of travel and literature is reinforced.

For this reason, Melville's narratives can be read as contributing to a tradition of vicarious tourism, which was later facilitated by the world's fairs, of exhibiting primitive Others within the context of an embryonic cultural tourism industry. Travel writing, or what Paul Lyons calls "literary tourism" ("Man-Eaters" 77) formed an integral part of this industry, and in this chapter, I extend my reading of literature as performance and exhibition space, to the related conception of literature as a means of vicarious travel. Like the exhibitionary spaces of the world's fairs and the circus, such literature allows readers and viewers to 'consume' Others. Literary exhibitions, such as the narratives discussed in this chapter, expanded upon the vicarious touristic consumption allowed by other formats of exotic spectacle, and developed the tropes that had already been set up, translating them into a literary format.

Pivotal to Melville's translation of these modes is his utilisation of what he describes as a "man about town" (quoted in de Paul 53) figure – a carefree, single white man, touring a far-off land in search of adventure. Literature such as Melville's Typee and Omoo, which combines the popular beachcomber and captivity genres with the identity of the travelling adventurer persona further promoted the concept of consuming exotic people and places as spectacles within the literature of the travel writing genre⁴⁵. Typee and Omoo are travel narratives that perpetuate a myth of the Pacific and Pacific people, situating the latter as easily recognisable types – most notably the Maiden, the Chief, and the Warrior or Noble Savage – against whom the white narrator can contrast himself in order to define his identity. In this respect, it is possible to read Melville's display of tattooed Others as performing the same function as the side- and freak-shows: providing a corporeal, racial and cultural Other against which white, 'civilised' identity can be contrasted and ultimately reinforced. These stereotypical images of exotic Others do not by any means find their origin in Melville's novels, but their presence provides a system of defining boundaries for his narrators. Furthermore, Melville's nineteenth-century engagement with these stereotypes, and their relationship to his representations of tattooing and tattooed people further entrenched the ideas that surrounded the tattooed body in Europe and America, and solidified images of tattoos and tattooed bodies as spectacular and Other. Melville's overwhelming popularity meant that his representations were undeniably far-reaching and influential.

My objective in this chapter is to explore the way that tattooed bodies are displayed in Typee and Omoo, and assess the extent to which this positioning is a response to already-established meanings surrounding the display of tattooed bodies. Within this discussion, Melville is the curator of his textual exhibitions, and is in charge of arranging the artifacts – that is, the narrative and the characters embodied within it – in order to create and communicate the meaning of the text. Melville and Tommo are not the same, and are not interchangeable: even though Tommo is ostensibly *based* on Melville-in-the-Marquesas, my argument situates Tommo as an artifact. Melville, as curator, makes the ultimate decisions regarding the ways

⁴⁵ For more detailed discussion of Typee and Omoo as travel and captivity narratives, see Janet Giltrow's 'Speaking Out: Travel and Structure in Herman Melville's Early Narratives', and Michael Berthold's "'Portentous Somethings': Melville's Typee and the Language of Captivity'.

that Tommo will be curated, and how he will be arranged in relation to other artifacts, which, as Bennett points out, provide and contextualise his 'meaning' as an exhibited artifact.

My contention is that Melville's representations of tattooed characters made a significant contribution to the widespread circulation of stereotypical imagery that reinforced images of tattooed people as objects of spectacle. Furthermore, I argue that Melville's curatorial style is couched within the conventions offered by traditions of exhibiting primitive people as subjects/objects of a touristic gaze, which is geared towards rendering the racial and cultural Other as both different and knowable. At the heart of this analysis is a consideration of the narrators' own ambiguous positions, the way that the narrators are positioned in relation to the types offered within captivity, beachcomber and travel narratives, and the way that this positioning echoes that of the white museum-, circus- or fair-goer who defines him or herself against the Others s/he witnesses. By observing the way that the tattoo is represented in each of the novels, as well as drawing attention to the protagonists' interaction with the projection of 'types' as a means of identity definition, I expose the way that Melville's curatorial position in his first two novels contributed to the expansion of a method of exhibiting tattooed Others within literature.

In the March 7th, 1846, edition of the London Examiner, an anonymous reviewer speculates as to the whereabouts of Toby, Tommo's sidekick character in Typee. "Mr Melville," he writes, "never could make out what became of him - whether a chief, or a cutlet, in Polynesia" (reproduced in Branch 62). The reviewer's concerns, and the dichotomy he presents as a possible solution, presumably arise from an understanding that these are the two most common positions available to a white man in the Pacific. The term 'chief' essentially refers to the position of beachcomber: that is, an individual who lives alongside, or at times within, the Indigenous culture and maintains some sense of autonomy and sometimes power. The rather unfortunate term 'cutlet', on the other hand, refers to the common (if erroneous) understanding that a white man who is not a beachcomber is a captive, whose life will tragically end at the savage and bloodthirsty hands of his anthropophagous Indigenous captors. This reviewer's clear identification of the dichotomy of identities of white visitors to the Pacific in the nineteenth century offers a useful framework through which to view Melville's narrators' uneasy transitions of identity in his two first novels, as it is emblematic of

the extent to which white visitors to the Pacific during this period relied heavily upon colonial dialectics in order to make sense of the foreign world. In Typee, and its sequel, Omoo, the identities of Melville's narrators oscillate between these extremes, and are essentially defined by the other characters against whom they are contrasted. Central to the schema of categorisation that is employed by Melville is an overwhelming engagement with a number of stereotypical figures including, in addition to the aforementioned Indigenous types, the tattooed beachcomber, who in Typee and Omoo becomes an object of abject horror. In the characterisation of each of these 'types', tattooing and tattoos play a fundamental role.

Before landing in the Marquesas, the narrator of Typee, Tommo, indicates that he is familiar with the "strange visions of outlandish things" such as "tattooed chiefs" that he is soon to witness (Typee 3). The "anticipatory imagination" (Thompson 6) of the Island and its inhabitants as the ship approaches the Marquesas strongly evinces the extent to which Melville himself was aware of popular imagery of the Pacific, and also exemplifies Melville's own desire to re-create and reinforce such imagery. Lyons argues that Typee prefigures a number of patterns of thought in what he terms "American Pacificism," not as a result of Melville's inventiveness, but as the result of "an in-cite-full archival methodology that relentlessly refigures the common motifs of his day" (American Pacificism 46). Juniper Ellis points out that by engaging with such reiterative, stereotypical imagery, Melville participates in and contributes to a process of literary colonialism. She argues that Melville's significance and influence extends beyond his position as an "American novelist," since the "literary cartography" that Melville produced, specifically in his first three novels, meant that no writer to follow could ever escape Melville's legacy of representing the South Seas (11).

More profound than the inescapability of Melville's mapping of the Pacific, however, is the fact that Melville himself, regardless of whether or not he actually was a vehement critic of imperialism⁴⁶ as Lyons and others have claimed, ("Man-Eaters" 69) was unable to resist the temptation to engage a number of stereotypes that are participatory in the cultural work that provided for and allowed processes of imperialism to operate⁴⁷. More specifically, the

⁴⁶ For a compelling counter-argument to this popular perspective on Melville's work see Ka'imipono Kaiwi.

⁴⁷ Ultimately, Melville himself also failed to escape the stereotypes that were placed upon him as a result of his early work. As a friend of Melville's wrote in a letter to his mother, "with his liberal views, he is

curatorial perspective he adopts in relation to the tattooed characters in Typee and Omoo is reflective of the interactions between Melville's work and early (re)presentations of tattooed people. Stanley Orr, Matt Rollins, and Martin Kevorkian, rather ambitiously argue that Typee "may replicate the experience of being tattooed through the impact of semantics, sentence pattern, and sound" (297). While personal experiences of being tattooed and reading Typee prevent me from concurring with these claims, their description of Typee as not merely *inscribed*, but *inscribing*, (295) is evocative of the text's (and Melville's) influence upon representations of the Pacific. While Ellis highlights the importance and significance of Melville's 'opening up' of the South Pacific as a site of literary interrogation, she ultimately suggests that "even as Melville questioned certain assumptions, he often reinscribed them: a constitutive part of his criticism is his promulgation of the same categories and his extension of the domain that they attempted to mark" (13). Lyons reiterates this, claiming that "no U.S. writer has been more influential than Melville in reflecting and (re)establishing the basic patterns through which Oceania came to be perceived" (American Pacificism 40-41). Melville's influence, however, lies not only in the reiterative and reflective element of his texts, but in their alignment and relationship with other, profoundly influential colonial literature, exhibitions and displays. As the author of a number of popular, widely-read texts which exhibit tattooed people, both Indigenous and white, Melville was faced with the question of whether to continue, or challenge, existing conventions that surrounded the actual and textual display of tattooed people. My reading of Typee and Omoo suggests that, although certain aspects of his texts, such as his critique of missionary and colonial activity in the Pacific, attempt to challenge colonial stereotypes, his engagement with existing, inherently exhibitionary traditions essentially inhibits, and to a degree, disables, these attempts.

Margaret Werry has argued that the Pacific has played an incomparably significant role in the west's spectacularisation of Otherness in images of colonial travel. Werry identifies a

compounded genealogy of projections of and into the Pacific that was, from the outset, *markedly theatrical and singularly spectacular*: from the frenzy of theatricalization and imag(in)ing that attended the publication of Cook's voyages in the United Kingdom, to

apparently considered by the good people of Pittsfield as little better than a cannibal of a 'beach-comber'" (Stedman xxiv), a notoriety he came to detest (Sanborn 119-20).

the exalted, elemental brutality of primitive accumulation in Melville's 'dirty, yet somehow vast and magical Pacific'. (360; emphasis added)

Werry's identification of Melville's texts as having been complementary to Cook's journals in the process which established a tradition of representing Pacific imagery in both spectacular and, perhaps more significantly, theatrical terms, has been profoundly influential upon my reading of Melville's novels. The alignment of the publication of Cook's journals and Melville's imag(in)ing of the Pacific with an inherently spectacular projection of Otherness, which is intrinsically linked to the processes of colonial expansion, perfectly underscores my suggestion that Melville was not only participatory, but also influential in a continuation and expansion of the forms of exhibition which facilitated such spectacular Othering.

Equally influential upon the perspective from which I approach Typee and Omoo is Leonard Cassuto's suggestion that in Typee, Tommo's fear of tattooing is related directly to the process of explicitly racialised Othering that becoming tattooed would entail, due to the fact that it would align him, metaphorically at least, with the racialised tattooed 'freak' of the circus sideshow. Cassuto contextualises this concern by explaining that

Tommo's fear in Typee of becoming a racial freak... stands as an individual manifestation of an increasing tension that permeated American culture generally in the 1840s, a tension linked to the unravelling of the racial distinctions central to American social organization and the meaning of being 'white'... Tattooing in Typee embodies this tension, acting as a code for racial difference that visibly links color to freak status. (235)

Cassuto's argument specifically focusses on the threat to whiteness that tattooing poses, which in turn reinforces the image of the tattooed body as an explicitly racialised Other. Given the historical position of this literature within a colonial, expansionist period, Melville's novels participate in the movement that situated the tattoo as a mark not only of the racialised, but also of the *colonised* Other, thereby implicating a power relationship that is not merely tied to notions of colour and race, but to that of political domination and, perhaps more pertinently, exploitation. Despite Melville's debatable attempts in his early novels to critique

imperialist and missionary endeavours in the Pacific, the fear of tattooing, of liminality, and his adherence to the binaries and stereotypes that facilitated and justified the imperial and colonial agenda actually made him complicit in promulgating the cultural discourses of spectacularised Otherness. As Cassuto points out, these discourses were commonly played out in circuses, side- and freak-shows. The textual exhibition of 'types' such as the tattooed beachcomber, and more significantly, the curating of such types as a point of contrast against which to define his narrators' identities, reiterates the narratives' alignments with displays of Others, and Melville's compliance with associated generic conventions. A number of textual similarities also compellingly indicate the novels' close relationship with the beachcomber genre and its associated displays of tattooed Others.

Keith Huntress claims that Melville used Horace Holden's narrative specifically as one of his sources while writing Typee, and there are certainly numerous passages that are similar enough to lend weight to Huntress' claims (though, as pointed out in Chapter Two of this thesis, most beachcomber narratives contained passages that were remarkably similar to one another). Similarly, John Evelev has observed that the beachcomber James O'Connell printed a pamphlet version of his life to be sold to "his viewers" in 1846, the same year Melville published Typee, ("Made in the Marquesas" 29) and suggests that it was likely that O'Connell's career and narrative came to Melville's attention. Evelev goes on to argue that Melville is similar to O'Connell and the beachcomber Joseph Kabris, since each of these men converted their "experiences in the South Seas into a profitable commodity" - Melville through his publication of "a slightly up-market travel narrative" and O'Connell and Kabris through the display of their tattooed bodies, and their subsequent transformation into "exotic objects" ("Made in the Marquesas" 30, 36).

The beachcombers' fame resulted from careers based very much on an exploitation of the public's appetite for the spectacularised Otherness that is inherent within the narratives and display of tattooed bodies. Typee and Omoo are similarly engaged with the tropes of exhibition and enfreakment that enabled the beachcombers' display. As Cassuto points out, Typee can be read as "a tattooing narrative, minus the tattooing. Even though Tommo recoils from the tattooing itself, Typee embraces the stories that surround the American display of

the practice,” (240) namely circus freak- and side-show displays, as well as captivity and beachcomber narratives.

Unlike Kabris and O’Connell, however, Melville himself occupies an ambiguously defined position that seems both outside and inside the exhibition, and both committed to, yet distanced from, the various narrative forms that come into play. What is perhaps most significant to consider in regard to Melville’s position, is Evelev’s insightful assertion that the narratives and performances of both Melville and the beachcombers alike, are “a highly mediated portrait of their experience: not only a portrayal of their encounter with the ‘primitive,’ but also the encounter with their ‘civilized’ audience and their demands” (“Made in the Marquesas” 36). As Evelev has pointed out elsewhere, there is no doubt that Melville’s early works were carefully constructed and edited in order to ensure popular success (*Tolerable Entertainment* 36-40). Evelev’s emphasis on the demands of the audience goes some way to explaining Melville’s treatment of the beachcomber (and especially the tattooed beachcomber) characters in *Typee* and *Omoo*, who provide an important point of contrast for Melville’s narrators, and whose Indigenously tattooed white bodies are a source of Otherness that significantly influences the narrators’ attitudes towards the tattooing process.

As discussed in Chapter Two, beachcombers occupied an ambiguous and much maligned position in the popular cultural imagination of the nineteenth century. Campbell suggests that the beachcombers were typically

pragmatic, often desperate men, frequently with an abhorrence of ‘savages’... They underwent extraordinary experiences only in the sense that they were out of place, dislocated, participating in a way of life and events that, however novel for them, constituted someone else’s mundane, ordinary existence. (x)

Two striking points arise from Campbell’s assessment. Firstly, he describes the beachcomber’s experience in terms remarkably similar to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s observation of “the drama of the quotidian,” (*Destination* 45) a process of display, found in museums, world’s fairs and circuses alike, which creates spectacle and novelty from an Other’s day-to-day existence. According to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, the drama of the quotidian

feeds on what John MacAloon calls a genre error: one man's life is another man's spectacle. Exhibitions institutionalise this error by producing the quotidian as spectacle, and they do this by building the role of the observer into the structure of events that, left to their own devices, are not subject to formal viewing. (Destination 47)

In turn, this process emphasises and effectively draws out and highlights difference, since it is the alterity of the Other's quotidian details and artifacts that makes them 'interesting' enough to offer up for attentive looking, in the form of exhibition. In beachcomber narratives, where 'anthropological' sections often describe native practices in sensational, freakifying terms, the drama of the quotidian is in play. Consequently, Otherness is spectacularised.

Secondly, Campbell's description of the beachcomber character as a "renegade" who "lives among natives" (4) echoes the one given by Melville in Omoo. Here Melville describes the term 'beachcomber' as being

much in vogue among sailors in the pacific. It is applied to certain *roving* characters, who, without attaching themselves permanently to any vessel, ship now and then for a short cruise in a whaler; but upon the condition only of being honourably discharged the very next time the anchor takes hold of the bottom; no matter where. They are, mostly, a reckless, rollicking set, *wedded to the Pacific*, and never dreaming of ever doubling Cape Horn again on a homeward-bound passage. Hence, their reputation is a bad one. (Omoo 83; emphases added)

Melville's self-contradiction is immediately apparent in the narrator's expression of distaste towards the beachcombers' being 'wedded' to the Islands, as he seems to have conveniently forgotten that in Typee he had seriously entertained, if only for a moment, thoughts of taking up permanent residence on one of the Islands himself. Perhaps even more indicative of the narrator's conflict regarding the characterisation of the beachcomber, is his use of the word 'roving', which he uses, on several occasions, to describe the much-despised beachcomber, Jimmy (Typee 354, 363). Contradictorally, given Melville's attempts to distance the narrative

from that of the beachcombers, the term appears in his translation of the word ‘omoo’ in the preface to that book:

The title of the work - Omoo - is borrowed from the dialect of the Marquesas Islands, where, among other uses, the word signifies a *rover*, or rather a person wandering from one island to another, *like some of the natives*. (Omoo xi; emphases added)

This translation of the title strongly suggests the general translation of the term ‘beachcomber’ in that it signifies a wanderer, a “rover” and, in particular, an individual who is “like some of the natives”. This suggestion of being “like” the Other, or even adopting what S. X. Goudie describes as a “hybrid” identity (222), is evocative of the kind of assimilation which the narrator attempts to resist throughout both Typee and Omoo. I have deliberated over the various definitions of the term in order to illustrate the confusion surrounding Melville’s projections of these characters - he is at once comparable, yet distanced from them. Anderson suggests that Melville

had undoubtedly chosen ‘Omoo’, deliberately, as the title for his recognizably autobiographical book because it was more respectable than the more accurate English designation of “Beachcomber” - a word that was already in disrepute a hundred years ago. (284)

In both Typee and Omoo, Melville’s insistence upon describing the beachcombers as reckless, roguish, and disreputable, serves to distance his narrators from this “notoriously untrustworthy” group who, by the time of Melville’s visit, populated many of the Islands throughout the Pacific (Lamb, Smith and Thomas 122). In the epilogue to Typee⁴⁸, for example, Melville describes a beachcomber who goes by the name of Jimmy, and resides on the beach at Nuku Hiva. Jimmy is a “grizzled sailor” who “lived a devil-may-care life in the household of Mowanna the king” (Typee 354). He knows the language of the Marquesans, and, like the “renegado,” Lem Hardy in Omoo, wears their traditional dress and is tattooed in the Indigenous style. The narrator’s distaste for Jimmy is obvious: he is shown to be a

⁴⁸ This section is actually referred to as the ‘sequel’ to Typee; however since I am referring to Omoo as the sequel, I shall refer to this as the epilogue.

dishonest and mercenary “heartless villain,” (*Typee* 357) and, as Malini Johar Schueller has argued, Jimmy’s story is included in *Typee* as a warning against the consequences of ‘going native’, and “might well have been titled ‘The moral of Jimmy: The Results of Savagery’ instead of ‘The Story of Toby’ as it appears in the book” (10). Such examples illuminate the extent to which the narrator is almost fanatical about both criticising the beachcombers, and positioning his narrators in opposition to them.

However, as I have already mentioned, in spite of Melville’s assurances to the contrary, there is a wealth of both critical and textual material that is at least suggestive of the texts’ affiliations with the beachcomber genre and of Melville’s narrators’ occupation of this transgressive position. Scores of books and articles have asserted that Melville was indeed a beachcomber⁴⁹, and that *Typee* and *Omoo* are in fact beachcomber narratives of the tradition that had been steadily gaining popularity from the beginning of the nineteenth century, forty years prior to *Typee*’s publication. D. H. Lawrence, for example, shows Melville not only as “a bit of a beachcomber,” (18) but explicitly describes Melville’s narrator in liminal terms, writing that Tommo is “over the border,” “half-human” and “abstract” (11). Yet Lawrence recognises that “Herman’s whole being revolted” at the thought of becoming like the ‘renegade’ (that is, beachcomber) he meets in *Omoo*.

In direct contrast to such assertions, T. Walter Herbert claims that

Melville’s title for the new book adequately signifies how firmly he has chosen to entrench himself in the marginal perspective; he called it *Omoo*, which, as he explains,

⁴⁹ See, amongst others, Duban (xvi); Herbert (147, 77). Most significantly, H.E. Maude, in his landmark work ‘Beachcombers and Castaways’ lists both *Typee* and *Omoo* in his annotated appendix of “The Beachcomber Books”. He writes, “The following are annotated citations to the twenty-one works mentioned as having been written by, or from material obtained from, Pacific beachcombers and castaways” (281). Maude claims that *Omoo* is “the most autobiographical of all [Melville’s] works” and “remains substantially a record of the personal experiences of a beachcomber at a time when they had ceased to be anything but vagrants and nuisances” (284). He also lists *Typee*, stating that although it is “only partly autobiographical” and borrowed from earlier accounts of the Marquesas, “it was accepted as genuine ethnographical travel literature at the time” (285). Bowen claims that although Melville was previously recognised as a beachcomber, and as contributing to the genre of beachcomber narratives, there has been a shift in emphasis since *Moby Dick*, which locates him as more generally a ‘South Seas’ or whaling writer (1-2). More saliently, however, Melville has been acclaimed since the mid-20th century as a pre-eminent American writer or indeed a writer of universal significance. This perhaps provides a more striking contrast with the contemporary identification of him as a beachcomber writer.

is a Marquesan word meaning ‘rover’. Melville’s refusal to yield to the canons of civilized respectability forms part of the larger intellectual adventure of his works [...] Melville pursued unstable and ambiguous perspectives into deeper and deeper ranges of meditation as his career unfolded, to a point at which he unsettled the presuppositions of his age with sufficient energy and acuteness to alienate readers who had been delighted by Typee in its unexpurgated form. (189-90)

Herbert suggests that Omoo is a response to the unfinished work of Typee, since Melville believed there was more to be said about colonial presence in the Pacific. Indeed, in Omoo’s preface Melville himself claims that the intention of the book is to “give a familiar account of the present condition of the converted Polynesians, as affected by their promiscuous intercourse with foreigners, and the teachings of the missionaries, combined” (Omoo ix). The beachcomber form, Herbert argues, allows Melville to do this because of the liminal status it affords, enabling him to comment, supposedly as an “unbiassed [sic] observer,” (Omoo x) on colonial and missionary influences upon the Indigenous people of the Pacific Islands he visited. Problematically, Herbert unequivocally accepts Melville as the narrator. As curator, Melville certainly controls the ‘voice’ of the exhibition (in this case, the text), yet he is not exhibited himself. Herbert’s analysis and interpretation of Melville’s choice of title also fails to address the narrator’s consistently obvious distaste for the beachcomber population. Herbert’s failure to consider this point detracts significantly from his argument, since a pervasive tone of disapproval is explicitly expressed towards these characters throughout both texts. This element of the narratives suggests that, rather than relishing in the liminal status that being a ‘beachcomber’ afforded him, Melville was at odds with this liminality, and struggled with it.

As Maude points out, the “peculiar position of the beachcomber, in and yet out of the indigenous society, made him an excellent mediator... the interpreter of one culture to another” (276). The beachcombers were intermediaries, and although they were valuable both to white and native populations, their liminal identities posed problems for colonisers, as they collapsed the binaries so essential to the dialectical discourse that allowed and informed a great deal of identity-definition. As a literal and figurative ‘boundary-dweller’ the beachcomber, in straddling the civilized-savage binary, occupies what Herbert terms a “no-

man's land between alien forces" (147). Through this occupation, the beachcomber is both threat and anomaly, simultaneously objectified and empowered by his "no-man's" status: a status, and set of characteristics and perceptions that are remarkably similar to those associated with the freakified circus exhibit. Particularly for tattooed beachcombers, whose cultural affiliation was even more tenuous and complicated, identity could not be defined by the terms offered by the dichotomy of civilised and savage, and he therefore presented a challenge to the western understanding of civilised identity itself.

The tattoo's liminality, being both inside and upon the corporeal self, and its links with an extensive tradition of exhibition and display, Othering and enfreakment, positions the tattoo as emblematic of an Otherness that is simultaneously compelling and repulsive. For readers and viewers in the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in particular, tattoos operated on a symbolic level and projected very similar meanings (atavism, primitivity, savagery, degeneracy) regardless of whether they were applied by a Polynesian savage, ferocious Indian or, later, a tattoo artist in the West End of London or the Bowery in New York. Within the traditions of the beachcomber and captivity narratives, as well as within the larger category of South Seas and travel literature in general, the tattoo was an important symbol of savagery, as it was already well-entrenched - and therefore easily recognised by the general European and American public - as "the universal fashion" of "savages"⁵⁰. Consequently, the tattoo was also representative of the degenerative character of those beachcombers who had crossed the boundaries of civilisation/savagery so thoroughly - and permanently - as to become tattooed in the Indigenous style, thereby visibly declaring their allegiance to 'savage' ways of life. In both Typee and Omoo, the terminology used to describe the visage of the tattooed beachcombers is clearly intended to simultaneously Other (and consequently, freakify) the tattooed white body, and is evocative of the narrator's awareness of the ambiguous affiliations suggested by these characters' marks.

In Typee, Tommo expresses an apparently inordinate fear of tattooing, which indicates an awareness of what the marks would mean within the context of asserting his western identity and avoiding the terrifyingly liminal position occupied by the beachcombers. Indeed, at times

⁵⁰ Unsigned review, London Examiner, 7 Mar 1846, qtd. in Branch 63.

he seems to be more afraid of being tattooed than of being eaten. A number of critics have pondered this seemingly incongruous fear, and have suggested a variety of explanations, most of them relating to the impact the tattoo would have upon various facets of Tommo's sense of self. Ron Edmond, for example, argues that in *Typee*, tattooing is related explicitly to performances of sexuality and cannibalism. Furthermore, Edmond reads Tommo's fear of tattooing as a fear of being de-classed, and thereby *losing* his western identity, rather than a fear of *becoming* savage: "To be tattooed," he writes, "is not to become Marquesan, but to *cease to be western*". (93; emphasis added). Critics such as Larry Griffin and Merlin Bowen suggest that the fear of tattooing in Melville's narratives arises from a fear of assimilation to a 'savage' culture (Griffin 48; Bowen 16), while S. X. Goudie and Daneen Wardrop suggest that Tommo's fear stems from a fear of illegibility, arguing that an apprehension about not being able to read what the Marquesans will write upon his body ultimately provokes Tommo's flight from the Typees⁵¹ (Goudie 222; Wardrop 139-40). Evelev, on the other hand, suggests that Melville uses the act (and fear) of tattooing as a metaphor for his anxieties about being "inscribed within the marketplace's demands for objectified exchange," ("Made in the Marquesas" 21) and highlights Melville's concerns for popular success, and his awareness of his own participation in the marketplace by becoming the "symbolic object of his narrative" ("Made in the Marquesas" 24).

While Dan Latimer follows Richard Chase's analysis of *Typee*, and aligns the fear of cannibalism with a fear of castration, a result of the infantilisation he experiences in the valley, I believe that Melville's fear is less about gender transgression than about bodily transgression in general: his fears, whether of cannibalism, castration, or tattooing, represent a fear of physical alteration, disfigurement or mutilation. I would also argue that Melville's representations of tattooing, and his interpretations of the results of Indigenous inscription, indicate a greater intention and fear, which derives from an awareness of the *transformative* power of the tattooing process. It is not a specific fear, but a general fear that his body – his corporeal identity – will be irreparably damaged or altered, thereby "leaving the social order

⁵¹ As Lyons, Flory and others have noted, Melville's spelling of 'Typee' deviates from the accepted spelling of 'Taipi', and in their writing have rectified this by adopting the latter spelling. I have chosen, in all awareness of 'Typee' as a colonial misnomer, to utilise Melville's spelling nonetheless, to remind the reader of the fictionalised nature of Melville's representations. In my view, he does not depict the Taipis, but rather the imagined, romanticised, and ultimately curated Typees.

completely to become... what Melville would call an ‘isolato,’ a permanent object of horror and disgust” (232): in other words, a freak. Latimer briefly aligns cannibalism with the tattoo, obliquely observing that “The other way [Tommo] senses he is being eaten, of course, is via the threat of tattoos,” (234) yet he offers no elaboration upon this comment, implying that it is self-explanatory. Latimer’s suggestion is tantalisingly incomplete, since it hints at, yet does not explore, the essence of Tommo’s ongoing and seemingly disproportionate fear. To be consumed, permanently, by the Typees’ ink under his skin, for their markings to ‘eat’ and, in altering it, ‘digest’ his skin, poses more of a threat, and is the source of greater fear for Tommo, than the threat of being literally cooked and eaten.

The parallel nature, and to a certain extent, the interchangeability, of the themes of cannibalism and tattooing, are a familiar and well-established trope in colonial beachcomber, captivity and travel narratives, as well as contemporary touristic representations of Others⁵². As Derounian-Stodola and Levernier point out, in North American captivity narratives, rituals such as tattooing and cannibalism were often linked, because they “define the initiate in terms of the capturing culture, [and therefore] constitute boundaries that, once crossed, also define the initiate in terms of the ‘other’” (41). The transformative boundary crossing articulated here is not exclusive to the North American context of course, and in *Typee*, the two paramount threats of being eaten and being tattooed are shown to be quite literally interchangeable, suggesting perhaps that they ultimately equate to the same thing: a loss of civilised identity, as it is subsumed by the savage body who is responsible for the transformation.

Yet Melville’s heavy engagement with these tropes throughout the narrative is also emblematic of Michelle Elleray’s observation that depictions of tattooing and cannibalism are almost “obligatory” in beachcomber narratives (173). Indeed, the topic of cannibalism was so popular and pervasive around the time of the publication of Melville’s first books, that in 1864, an anonymously authored article containing virtually no mention of cannibalism was published in the *Nautical Magazine and Naval Chronicle* under the title ‘A Day Among

⁵² In May 2008 I witnessed a group of Indigenous Australians busking in Circular Quay, a popular tourist area of Sydney. Between performances, in which they played didgeridoos and danced, the body-painted performers encouraged tourists to come and take pictures, assuring: “Don’t worry, it’s perfectly safe – we’ve already had breakfast!”.

Cannibals; or, Adventures of a Whaleman at the Marquesas' ("A Day Among Cannibals; or, Adventures of a Whaleman at the Marquesas"). Melville's engagement with the topic is certainly suggestive of his awareness of the demands of the literary marketplace, and he employs the themes accordingly. Immediately prior to Tommo and Toby's defection from the ship, the captain issues a warning to his crew, assuring them that, should they leave the ship, they will be done for: "if those tattooed scoundrels get you a little way back into their valleys, they'll nab you" (*Typee* 42). What is interesting about the captain's warning is that it very clearly equates being eaten with being tattooed. The captain alternates between calling the native population "tattooed scoundrels" and "bloody cannibals", establishing that they can be safely assumed to occupy both of these 'savage' identities. He goes on to relate to his crew the story of a boat called the *Dido*, who lost part of her crew on that very island.

Plenty of white men have gone ashore here and *never been seen any more*. There was the old Dido, she put in here about two years ago, and sent one watch off on liberty; they never were heard of again in a week – the natives swore they didn't know where they were – and only three of them ever got back to the ship again, and one with his face *damaged for life*, for the cursed heathens tattooed a broad patch clean across his figure-head. (*Typee* 42; emphases added)

In this tale, the conflation of the tattooed face and the consumed sailor becomes evident. The sailor whose face is tattooed is consumed by this indelible mark, and his "figure-head," as a consequence of the mark, will "never be seen any more": he might as well have been eaten with his crewmates.

Like Melville's "almost obligatory" invocation of cannibalism, the scene in which Tommo encounters the tattooist Karky at work in a thicket, serves a very explicit narrative function, which addresses and fulfils the reading public's appetite for depictions of savage practices, and reiterates the themes articulated above. Tommo's encounter with Karky is a climactic, "primal scene" (Wardrop 141) in the narrative, and Wardrop has argued that as a result of his interactions with Karky, Tommo begins to perceive tattooing as a form of "cultural rape" (142). This encounter, and subsequent revelation, brings Tommo's attitudes about the Othering, transformative potential of the tattooing process into sharp focus, drastically

strengthening his desire to flee his ‘captors’: neither the suspected cannibalism nor his discovery of the Typees’ ritually preserved heads provoke such a desperate and final fear in Tommo.

In describing his encounter with Karky, what starts off as a fairly straightforward, pseudo-anthropological description of the tattooing practice soon moves into the familiar, objectifying language that is used to describe tattoos throughout Typee and other beachcomber narratives. The artist is a “tormentor” who works with his “mallet and chisel” and the subject becomes a piece of stone to be carved (Typee 295). The tattooing tools are described as “cruel-looking,” and the tattooist is a “callous-hearted” “woodpecker” (Typee 296). The scene is set for the horror that ensues when “the wretch” indicates a desire to tattoo Tommo, who, “[h]orrified at the bare thought of being rendered *hideous for life*... struggled to get away from him” (Typee 297; emphasis added). The permanence of the act – the thought of being made indelibly ‘monstrous’ – is truly horrendous to Tommo, and he “shudders” at the “ruin he might inflict upon my figure-head” (Typee 297). As Karky motions toward making three parallel lines in the fashion of Kory-Kory’s markings, which Melville describes elsewhere as being reminiscent of prison bars (Typee 106), “the flesh fairly crawl[s] upon [his] bones” (Typee 298). These horrified responses at being “imprisoned” by the tattooed bars are much more extreme than the reactions to both of the supposed incidences of cannibalism. When he comes upon three severed heads for example, he is shocked, yet maintains his composure enough to hide his discovery from the Typees. The thought of actually *living* with a deformed and objectified face, however, a face that is no longer his, that has been consumed, as it were, by Karky’s inks, is much more horrendous than being consumed in death:

This incident opened my eyes to a new danger; and I now felt that 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... What an object he would have made of me! (Typee 298; emphasis added)

The consumption of his “face divine” would result in the ultimate objectification, so that even if he does manage to ‘escape’ the island, he would be so transformed that reassimilation into white society would be impossible. In being tattooed, Tommo, like the tattooed man from

the *Dido*, would have his identity erased, since the boundary between himself and Other would be permanently, irrevocably transgressed and therefore obliterated. Tommo's descriptions of the *types* of people who willingly engage with such a 'savage' practice (i.e., Others), is suggestive of an awareness of the "violence to identity" (Evelev "Made in the Marquesas" 20) that tattooing represents, which in turn betrays a fear of what Schueller terms the "permanent visible impress of the other on his whiteness" (11). Ultimately, Tommo's desire to reassimilate – his desire to remain, essentially, 'white' – is what distances him (and, by extension, Melville) from the beachcomber characters he criticises, such as Jimmy.

Melville's distance from not only the characters he curates, but also from the narratives themselves is articulated in the prefaces, which serve a number of purposes relating to Melville's curating of the textual content, and author(ising) of the 'truth' of the narratives. Like many beachcombers, in both Typee and Omoo, Melville (or perhaps his publisher) uses the prefaces as a point at which to assure the reader of the accuracy of the narratives that follow. Melville claims that he "has stated such matters just as they occurred, and leaves every one to form his own opinion concerning them; trusting that his anxious desire to speak the unvarnished truth will gain for him the confidence of his readers" (Typee x). Similarly, in Omoo it is an "earnest desire for truth and good" (Omoo x) which inspired the writing of the narrative. The assurance of truth is something that is virtually ubiquitous in published beachcomber narratives. Horace Holden, for example, assures his readers that his is a "strictly true," "simple and unadorned" story (118), and indeed each of the beachcombers discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis also include some assurance of legitimacy in the introductions to, or bodies of, their narratives.

While Melville assures his reader that the events depicted in his first two novels are truthful, he also comments upon the "entirely incomprehensible" nature of the scenes he at times depicts, much in the way that sideshow announcers drew in a crowd by admitting the unbelievable of the exhibits they advertised. The title of Ripley's famed "Believe it or Not" museum, for example, surely epitomises such techniques of calling upon the audience's desire to "see for yourself". In Omoo, during a depiction of a reunion of two of his shipmates, he writes, "The meeting of these men, under the circumstances, is one of a thousand occurrences appearing exaggerated in fiction; but, nevertheless, frequently realized

in actual lives of adventure” (Omoo 98)⁵³. Melville here confronts, head on, the doubt the reader may be feeling with regards to such inexplicable coincidences, and directly and explicitly addresses the crossovers between fact – “*actual*/lives of *real* adventure” - and fiction. In addition to this, though, the narrator at times articulates *his own* incomprehension of events. Again in Omoo, the narrator expresses the feeling that the circumstances that brought him on board the ship at the beginning of the narrative “almost made me doubt my own existence” (Omoo 3).

By articulating his own awareness of the fantastic nature of the events depicted, and the existential dilemma such awareness produces, Melville in a way anticipates and ultimately thwarts any suggestion of the narrative as unbelievable, thereby further blurring the lines between fiction and reality. The fictionalisation of Melville’s narrator-character is an engagement with the projected, displayed individual: the exhibited artifact. Melville, by addressing the links between fiction, reality, and suspension of disbelief, articulates this artifact/character as a construct. In this way, he draws upon the same kind of faith that museum-goers have in the authority of the exhibited artifacts and the narrative they create.

The meshing of fictional and ‘real’ identities is a well-addressed theme in criticism of Typee and Omoo, given the suggestions that the narratives are at least partly autobiographical, and many articles have been written concerning the truthfulness of the events detailed in the narratives (with an overwhelming emphasis on Typee), not least of all the extensive analysis offered by Robert Forsythe⁵⁴. Regardless of the outcomes of such investigations, however, the fact remains that in both novels, Melville has given his narrator-protagonists fictional names, thereby suggesting that, despite a very real and close relationship to the characters, he ultimately wishes to maintain a distance between ‘Herman Melville’ and the characters, including the narrators, whom he exhibits within the text. While a number of Melville scholars, for example Lyons, refer to Typee’s narrator as ‘Melville/Tommo’, I feel that it is

⁵³ It is also interesting to note the similarities between this description, and the language used by Stratton when describing Olive and Lorenzo Oatman’s ‘reunion’.

⁵⁴ See also Michael Clark’s article ‘Melville’s Typee: Fact, Fiction and Esthetics’; John Samson’s ‘The Dynamics of History and Fiction in Melville’s Typee’; and Volume 51 of *ESQ*, which compiles papers from a 2003 symposium on the “actuality of place” in Melville’s early novels - in particular its introductory essay by G. R. Thompson ‘Being There: Melville and the Romance of Real Life Adventure’.

important to make a distinction, given my argument's emphasis on Melville's position as curator of the textual exhibition. As G. R. Thompson puts it, "Melville is not a one-to-one equivalent of his fictional character-narrator, Tommo, any more than Samuel Clemens is Hank Morgan" (4)⁵⁵.

Janet Giltrow specifically relates the phenomenon of re-naming to Melville's engagement with the travel writing genre, pointing out that an emphasis on creating and maintaining a distance between the 'tourist' and the people s/he 'tours' among is a key feature of the genre. This seems to be of particular importance to Melville, given his apparent reluctance to be identified as a beachcomber. She asserts that the publication of the travel narrative provides a defining and essential point of severance between the traveller and the experiences s/he chronicles, which reasserts the traveller's 'belonging' to his or her origin culture (19). Such assertions of alterity are significantly reminiscent of the sideshow- or museum-goer's maintenance of boundaries between 'us' (the viewer) and 'them' (the viewed).

For the tattooed beachcombers discussed in Chapter Two, this severance is suspended by the indelible inscriptions they wear upon their bodies, which ultimately prevent a continued declaration of distinction between themselves and the cultures they resided amongst. Melville, *sans* tattoos, partakes of the opportunity to return to his origin culture, and affirms his temporary traveller (as opposed to more permanently entrenched/assimilated beachcomber) status via the publication of his narratives. The selection of fictional names for the narrators, who are, according to some commentators, representative of himself, then, suggests a conscious decision on Melville's part to deny a direct or transparent relationship with the characters, and by extension, the narrative⁵⁶. Yet, as I discuss elsewhere in this chapter, in the process of trying to maintain an appropriate, acceptable identity throughout the narratives, Melville complicates the terms by which he is defined.

⁵⁵ From a scholarly perspective, such distinctions are essential. It is significant to note, however, that at the time of *Typee*'s publication, 'Tommo', 'Typee' and 'Melville' were all used to describe Melville, both in the press, and amongst his friends. For a detailed discussion of this, see (Evelev *Tolerable Entertainment* 43).

⁵⁶ For an especially compelling and detailed discussion of the relationship between Tommo/Melville, see Thompson.

The various acts of naming and re-naming, which are pivotal within both texts, compounds this point. As Thomas Joswick suggests, in adopting a fictional name, Melville actually resists the identity that he gives himself within the text: “his name is the sign by which the real and the arbitrary merge, by which the mask and the fate collapse into the story” (344). The complicated process of naming and re-naming is further nuanced for Melville, as it not only involves the fictional character that represents himself, but also the self that he inhabits outside of the narrative, in the prefaces. For Melville and his readers, name-changing, and even at times namelessness, is a feature of the unfixed, roving narratives, but the prefaces maintain the presence of Melville himself as master-narrator.

In Typee, the issue of (re)naming is raised when, in a patronising gesture to make his name more accessible for the Typees, he becomes named *by* them. When the opportunity comes to share names with Mehevi, the Typee ‘chief’, the at-this-point nameless narrator

hesitated for an instant, thinking that it might be difficult for him to pronounce my real name, and then with the most praiseworthy intentions intimated that I was known as ‘Tom.’ But I could not have made a worse selection; the chief could not master it; ‘Tommo,’ ‘Tomma,’ ‘Tommee,’ everything but plain ‘Tom.’ As he persisted in garnishing the word with an additional syllable, I compromised the matter with him at the word ‘Tommo,’ and by that name I went during the entire period of my stay in the valley. (Typee 90-91)

His hesitation, and his frustration at Mehevi’s inability to “master” the “plain” appellation that the narrator chooses for himself suggests the presumption of superiority which derives from the narrator’s awareness of and engagement with the savage/civilised binary and its associated suggestions of primitive/advanced and simple/sophisticated. More than this, however, and as Nicholas Nownes points out, this name change is a “mutation,” whereby Melville, in the safety of the narrative, is assigned his new captive/beachcomber name (324). Tommo, as the narrator is addressed throughout Typee, is not his name, nor is it a name he chose for himself. It is a compromised name, and one which, from the outset, reveals the complicated and compromising power structure that is in place between him and the Typees. The name he gives the Typees is rejected, and they name him Tommo in its place, thus beginning the

‘captivity’ of the narrator’s identity. Yet another layer is added to this power struggle when one considers Evelev’s point, that “Melville uses the Marquesan verb meaning ‘to enter into, to adapt well to’ for the name of his narrative persona” (“Made in the Marquesas” 24). In using this term, Melville implies that he is a successful integrator, and that the Typees perceive him as such, since they are, according to the narrative, responsible for bestowing this name upon him. This complicated process of naming and re-naming is a prelude to the at times convoluted identity confusion that ensues for the narrator throughout Typee and, later, Omoo, which, apart from its narrative function is also likely to have been a tactic used to distance ‘Melville the New England writer’ from ‘Tommo the rollicking South Sea adventurer’, but not so much as to completely fictionalize the character⁵⁷.

Where in Typee Tommo is named by his ‘captors’, signifying their control over his capacity for self-definition, in turn complicating Melville’s engagement with the savage/civilised dichotomy that he allegedly detests, yet cannot resist, in Omoo the naming process produces an altogether different set of meanings. As he ‘escapes’ the valley, and sheds the captive persona he has adopted for the greater part of the narrative, making his transition from captive to “rover” complete, the narrator is again re-named. On first joining the ship after his dramatic escape from the valley, he is assigned by his shipmates the title “Typee... king of the cannibals” (Omoo 5). In addition to this name-change, the narrator is also the subject of a symbolic series of physical changes: his infected leg is treated and wrapped in a sail, so that he starts to look like a “sailor with gout” (Omoo 3), his “tappa” cloak is removed, and his hair and beard are trimmed, completing his transformation back into a “civilized mortal” (Omoo 4). In escaping the valley and regaining control over his identity, the narrator’s identity as Tommo, captive of the Typees, is erased as he is re-dressed and renamed by his crewmembers as the “King”. With this re-naming, the reader is alerted to the shift that has occurred, and the autonomy and power that the narrator gains from this re-naming is indicative of the shift in tone that is detectable between the two novels. Certainly, the complicated nature of the development of the character, and his relationship with the oppositional ‘types’ found more obviously in Typee, becomes especially evident as his

⁵⁷ At no point did Melville wish to present his narrative as fiction, and it was published as a part of a “series devoted to supposedly true accounts of exotic, foreign travel,” (Butterfield 15). Maude notes that Typee was “accepted as genuine ethnographical travel literature at the time” of its publication (285).

position — and consequently the tone of the narration — changes significantly after his escape from the valley at the end of Typee.

Most notably, the narrator's attitude towards tattooed characters in the second novel is of a distinctly less horrified nature than in the earlier work. This can be attributed, in addition to the narrator's own changed position, to the differences between Tahitian and Marquesan societies' relationships with colonisation at the different periods of Melville's visits. According to Juniper Ellis, in Omoo Melville depicts the native population as having met their 'inevitable' end, which comes as a result of their inability to adjust to post-contact life. She writes,

Melville produces in Typee what amounts to Nukuheva's swansong, where Omoo is Tahiti's epitaph [...] At the time of Tommo's visit, the Typees are still unfallen, intact, unenlightened. In Omoo, however, Tahiti has many years since succumbed to a succession of Spanish, English and French interests. (19)

When Melville, using the authorial and authoritative role of beachcomber, "depicts Tahitians as helpless and overwhelmed victims," (Ellis 19) he effectively shifts the narrator's subject position and corresponding fears and values, including the disproportionate fear of tattooing that was evident in Typee. In Omoo, the conquest of the Tahitians (and, by association, the entire native population of the Pacific) is complete. They are "viewed as completely and inevitably meeting their demise" (Ellis 19), and the narrator is therefore allowed the power and authority to ridicule, rather than fear, the Indigenous people. Additionally, and perhaps more significantly, however, the shift in power following Tommo's 'escape,' also means that the potential of "consumption" by the Indigenous tattoo lessens. His awareness of the transgressive nature of the tattoo however, is, if anything, heightened, as his new identity conflicts problematically with the pervasive disapproval of the beachcomber characters that has been exhibited within the narratives, thereby destabilising the identity that was established throughout Typee. In light of this potential complication, the claiming of a post-captivity, post-Tommo name and identity is crucial for the narrator's shift. But, as I will show, Melville's curatorial perspective remains shaped by both generic and populist concerns and conventions.

According to John Samson, “in the canon of works sacred to Melville scholars, Omoo holds a peculiar place as the one novel completely simple and profane” (496). Samson suggests that the dearth of critical analyses of Omoo is due not only to its supposed simplicity, but also to a failure to consider the text within the “context the book itself suggests” (497) — that of missionary narratives. While Melville certainly does concern himself with a critique of the missionary presence in Omoo, I would argue that the narrative itself cannot be categorised as a ‘missionary narrative’ per se. As I pointed out in Chapter Two, beachcombers and missionaries were often pitted vehemently against one another, and their narratives reflected this antagonism. For this reason, Melville’s critique in Omoo of the missionary presence in Tahiti actually aligns the narrative more clearly with the beachcomber narratives than with those of the missionaries. While Samson is critical of Omoo’s rambling quality, which he sees as being manifest in its “flawed narrative, casual tone, and pervasive humor” (509), my reading of this rambling quality is as a reflection of the rambling — or ‘roving’ — nature of the beachcomber, which contrasts starkly with the stifled captivity of Typee. Omoo is an unusual text, which seems, at best, generically confused. Unlike Typee, which engages with the generic conventions outlined by the captivity, beachcomber, and travel writing genres, Omoo would have proved difficult for readers approaching it with the expectations arising from its status as ‘sequel’ as a result of its exhaustingly diverse formal and generic engagements. Of course, elements of the aforementioned travel and beachcomber narratives are certainly apparent, but their positioning is ultimately less coherent than in Typee. The rambling quality of the narrative, its wandering, descriptive passages that include political and social commentary critiquing the colonial presence in Tahiti, set alongside anthropological observations of the impacts of colonialism upon Tahitian culture, reflects the ‘freedom’ that Herbert suggests is a result of the narrator’s ‘beachcomber’ role. Perhaps as a response to this, the narrator’s attitudes towards tattoos, tattooing and tattooed people become — though less extensive than in Typee — more definite.

In Omoo, the transgressive potential of the tattooing process becomes more clearly defined, and it becomes far more apparent that it is not tattooing per se that the narrator fears, but, specifically, Indigenous tattooing upon a white man’s skin. While such ideas are hinted at in Typee, the direct comparisons offered in Omoo articulate it much more clearly. As Denning

points out, “[a] tattoo was the badge of a voyage to Polynesia in the 18th Century” (Mr Bligh 35). Indeed, during Melville’s time in the Pacific, the presence of tattooed seamen was increasingly pronounced. Throughout Melville’s oeuvre, frequent reference is made to tattooed members of the various crews he depicts, culminating of course in the sophisticated rendering of Ishmael and Queequeg’s tattoos in Moby-Dick. On the ship in Omoo, for example, the narrator describes one of his ship-mates whose “short and nervous arm [is] embossed with pugilistic bruises, and quaint with many a device in India ink” (Omoo 80). In contrast to the distrust and fear evoked by the “swart, tattooed skin” of the “dark moody savage” Bembo (Omoo 72), or the horrifyingly “stained” beachcomber, Lem Hardy, the white sailor’s non-Indigenous, self-administered tattoos are merely ‘quaint’, and a normal fixture of seafaring life. The Indigenous tattoo on the other hand, is a permanent mark of the ‘savage’, and in the case of Bembo, goes hand in hand with his “propensity to kill men and eat them” (Omoo 72).

Lem Hardy is described as a

renegado from Christendom and humanity – a white man, in the south seas girdle, and tattooed in the face... 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. (Omoo 26)

The main source of horror at the appearance of this man is, of course, the tattoos *in* his face, not merely *on* it: a horror emphasised by the somewhat unusual preposition “in”. In this passage, an understanding of the corporeal transgression that the tattooing process encompasses is hinted at. Additionally, the narrator is horrified that the man had submitted to being tattooed *voluntarily*. This beachcomber is objectified by his facial tattoo, and is rendered a “*renegado* from humanity” implying that, in being so literally de-faced, he has forfeited his status as human. Significantly, Melville’s use of the word “renegado” echoes Maude’s description of the beachcombers as “renegades from civilization” (276). As in the case of many beachcombers, the issue of the tattoo’s permanence impacts upon the narrator’s perception of its transformative function.

While the permanence of the tattoo is obviously one of the most frightful aspects for Melville's narrator, since it represents an indelible mark of savagery upon his body, there are various points throughout both narratives where the narrator seems willing to 'play dress-ups' in native garb, and to take a purely observational, performative and even pseudo-anthropological (à la 'participant observation') part in Indigenous celebrations and festivals. As Stone points out, "Playing the role of the other requires that the player *dress out* of the role or roles that are acknowledged to be his [sic] own. Costume, therefore, is a kind of magical instrument" (409). For Tommo, Stone's emphasis on *playing* the role of the other is of primary concern, as it suggests a temporary, and essentially disposable adoption of an Other identity. At the "Feast of the Calabashes" for example, Tommo takes great pride in his adoption of the Typees' costume, even going so far as to declare that he "could not delight the savages more than by conforming to their style of dress" (Typee 217). Constance Classen and Davis Howes have described the eighteenth century traveller's penchant for being represented (in paintings etc) as actually embodying the cultures they had visited. Like Tommo, who "dressed up" for the entertainment of his Marquesan hosts,

[e]mbodying the peoples of other lands through putting on their clothing enabled Europeans to pretend an intimate knowledge of their cultures and played with the European fascination with 'going native.' Only played with it because the observers of this charade understood that, though the trappings were exotic, the European sensibilities underneath were intact. (205)

In Typee, conformity to 'savage' practice is acceptable and even boast-worthy when it is temporary, or performative, and does not involve corporeal permanence or violation, in the same way that a tourist's participation in a 'traditional' show is merely part of the 'fun' of superficially participating in a performance of an Other culture.

As Campbell suggests, the tattoo is "the best objective means of making the distinction [...] between assimilation and outward conformity" (100), and Tommo is not prepared to go so far as to assimilate, since assimilation implies some degree of forfeiting his 'civilised' identity. While Tommo is happy to participate in Typee rituals on a superficial level, the two permanent transgressions — tattooing and cannibalism — are actively and explicitly rejected, as

Tommo recognises their potential to permanently render him as Other by absorbing him into what Bowen has called the “universal blank of savagery” (16). Bowen uses the term ‘blank’ to designate the general savage body which existed in the minds of the Euro-American west, wherein Native people – be they American, Oceanic, or Australian – were all essentially interchangeable, and therefore depersonalised and objectified. As Herbert points out, this kind of objectification was essential in the formation of a national identity for Europeans and Americans, not least of all in encounters on colonial frontiers. According to Herbert, the “internal dialectic,” the “term of psychosocial self-definition” was

best lived out in encounters with peoples – like the Marquesans – who arguably embodied savage humanity. As a counterplayer against whom the civilized self can test its integrity and strength, the candidate for the role of savage can be an American Indian, a Polynesian, and even upon occasion a white man. (126)

Herbert articulates here the processes of oppositional self-definition that were also played out in the world’s fairs, circuses and sideshows of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The white men Herbert refers to are, of course, the beachcombers who had indeed assimilated into the host Indigenous society. They were more often than not permanently marked as Other by the tattoo marks they wore, and had thereby forfeited their ‘civilised’ identity and assumed the role of savage Other. Herbert refers to this situation as a complication of the defining polarity of self and not-self. In encounters where the Other does not conform to the definition offered by the ‘civilised’ order, in the way that a natively tattooed and dressed white man did, or the way that beautiful and peaceful Typees did for Tommo, the boundary lines become unsteady and blurred. Consequently, identities are challenged, and self-definition in terms of a civilised-savage polarity becomes uneasy. This challenge proves too much for Melville’s narrator, and in his descriptions of the Typees, he resorts to engaging with a number of well-used and severely damaging stereotypes in his descriptions of many of the Marquesan people Tommo encounters.

Most of this discussion to this point has been concerned with a consideration of the narrators’ positioning in opposition to the character of the beachcomber, in order to illustrate the confusion within the narratives in relation to popular perceptions of white men in the Pacific.

I will now turn to a consideration of Melville's treatment of a number of Marquesan characters in an attempt to expose the ways in which he utilises the motif of the tattoo to reinforce stereotypical imagery of Indigenous people as either Maidens, Warriors, or Chiefs. With the exception of the warrior/noble savage character of Marnoo, Melville's representation of the tattooed Pacific Islander people in Typee and Omoo are potently reminiscent of the trivialising and objectifying exhibitions of tattooed Indigenous people in world's fairs, circuses and sideshows, as well as some beachcomber and early travel narratives. Tommo predominantly views the tattoos of the Marquesans and Tahitians he encounters as ridiculous, pathetic or hideous, thus in the process reinforcing the representation of Indigenous people in terms of a number of colonial stereotypes. These ethnographic stereotypes, identified by Balme, Maxwell and others as the Maiden (or in some readings, the Belle), the Warrior, and the Chief, are represented in both literary and touristic exhibitions of Indigenous people, and are, according to Balme, "conventional topoi in the history of European perceptions and iconography of Polynesians" (70; see also Maxwell 156).⁵⁸ In Typee and Omoo, representations of these 'types' are profoundly informed by depictions of tattooing, in that the kinds of tattoos these characters wear are inflected by imposed, western standards. Melville seems self-consciously aware of the evocative power of tattooing, and has curated his representations of them accordingly in order to enhance his characterisations of the Marquesan characters he depicts.

The presence of the romanticised character of Fayaway in Typee provides a striking example of the way that the tattoo can be textually curated and manipulated as a symbol of identity in order to facilitate the curator/author's intentions. Fayaway is undeniably cast in the role of the Maiden stereotype, as she is emblematic of the sensuous, heterosexual, accessible, hospitable, beautiful, exotic, natural, and free "feminised lushness of the Pacific" (Desmond 12). While Desmond's term is specifically related to images of the Hawai'ian 'hula girl', I believe that Melville's representations of Fayaway certainly contributed to the mainland depictions of hula girls that promoted such imagery of Pacific femininity. As Desmond argues, "clusters" of imagery representing sensual, exotic depictions of hula girls have over the years created within the mainstream U.S. consciousness an image of Hawai'i that is decontemporised,

⁵⁸ Anne Maxwell has also discussed the use of these types in tourist advertising, 218-219. They are also noted by Ryan, ("Tourism" 958, 965).

feminised, and essentially Othered. In Typee, the characterisation of Fayaway prefigures the hula girl representations discussed by Desmond, providing a popular, foundational image of Pacific femininity to which later images of hula girls responded. Fayaway is described by Tommo as a “beautiful nymph” with a “free pliant figure” that was “the very perfection of female grace and beauty” (Typee 109). Such descriptions of the “lovely damsels” of the Typee valley contribute to the process of Pacific feminisation that Desmond’s hula girls also participate in. Like the hula girl, who is traditionally represented as being “not white,” but “not black” either (Desmond 136) Fayaway’s “complexion was a rich and mantling olive, and when watching the glow upon her cheeks I could almost swear that beneath the transparent medium there lurked the blushes of a faint vermillion”⁵⁹ [...] The skin of this young creature, from continual ablutions and the use of mollifying ointments, was inconceivably smooth and soft” (Typee 109-10). Here, by insisting upon the visible “blush” upon Fayaway’s cheek, Melville asserts the fairness of her skin that allows such colouring to be visible. Additionally, he evokes a tactile consideration of the soft texture of her skin.

However, given the narrative’s overwhelming insistence upon tattooing as the mark of the primitive, savage, Other, Fayaway’s exotically rendered femininity is potentially compromised by the presence of “desecrating” (Typee 111) tattoos upon her otherwise desirable body. Anderson asserts that Melville “undoubtedly reduced and expanded the amount of tattooing on his women to suit the romantic needs of his narrative” (151), and Fayaway is surely the prime example of this kind of manipulation and omission. Melville seems conscious of the implications of Tommo’s relationship with a tattooed woman, and reluctant to admit that this beautiful woman, of whom Tommo is the “declared admirer” (Typee 178) during his time in the valley, is marked as a savage body: “Were I asked if the beauteous form of Fayaway was altogether free from the hideous blemish of tattooing, I should be constrained to answer that it was not” (Typee 110). His distress at having to cast a tattooed woman as the female romantic lead in his narrative is obvious, and he moderates his account accordingly, downplaying the tattoos almost to invisibility. He describes her marks:

⁵⁹ It is interesting to note the similarities here with many U.S. frontier narratives, which equate the female pioneer’s femininity with her ability to ‘blush’ – i.e. the maintenance of a light complexion.

Three minute dots, no bigger than pinheads, decorated either lip, and at a little distance were not at all discernible. Just upon the fall of the shoulder were drawn two parallel lines half an inch apart and perhaps three inches in length, the interval being filled with delicately executed figures. These narrow bands of tattooing, thus placed, always reminded me of those stripes of gold lace worn by officers in undress, and which were in lieu of epaulettes to denote their rank. (Typee 111)

Fayaway's tattoos are subtle, delicate, and essentially feminine in nature. Just as the beachcombers often emphasised their Indigenous wives' noble genealogy and utilised descriptors of beauty, modesty and status that would be easily recognised by Euro-American readers, Fayaway's tattooed shoulders are described in terms that are evocative of the nobility and grandeur of a military official – an individual of rank. Moreover, the subtlety of her tattoos is such that they are indiscernible from a certain distance, and therefore do not amount to a permanent blemish upon her person.

In his anthropological analysis of this description of Fayaway's tattoos, Anderson points out that her tattooing is unlikely to have been exactly as it is described in Typee, simply because women were not tattooed in this fashion. It is also obvious from descriptions of other tattooed women in the book that a degree of moderation has occurred, since there is some discrepancy in the way that their tattoos are rendered. Melville's motives though, are plain enough, given Tommo's romantic involvement with, and attraction to, a tattooed body who, elsewhere, would have been exhibited as a freak. It is reasonable to assume that Fayaway was one of the first tattooed women Melville (and much of his reading public) had come into contact with⁶⁰. In casting Fayaway as the narrator's love interest or "first love" (Kosofsky Sedgwick 28), Melville treads a fine line and is careful to maintain his narrator's (and by extension, his own) distance from the vulgar tattooed body. Melville, necessarily associated with the first-person narrator, would have been aware of the line he would cross if he was perceived as being in love with a heavily tattooed woman – he would become a freak by association.

⁶⁰ It is possible that Melville may have observed other tattooed Indigenous women, but since Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas was one of his first landings, his contact would have been limited. He would not have viewed any tattooed women in America either, since Olive Oatman, the first tattooed woman to be exhibited publicly, did not appear until the 1850s, and the first tattooed female circus performer did not appear until the 1880s.

The vulgar, grotesque and ultimately laughable “Cannibal Queen” provides a stark contrast to Fayaway’s delicacy and serves as evidence of Anderson’s suggestion that Melville is discriminating in his representation of tattooed women. The Queen’s bare legs are described as being “embellished with spiral tattooing, and somewhat resembling two miniature Trajan’s columns” (Typee 8). With her column-like legs’ architectural function exposed, the Queen’s “hieroglyphics” are positioned to detract from and thereby render ridiculous her otherwise European costume. The patronising tone of the descriptive passage spectacularises and mocks the Queen’s attempt at mimicking European dress. She is “dark-complexioned,” and her dress is “gaudy” and short. On her head she wears a “fanciful turban of purple velvet, figured with silver sprigs, and surmounted by a tuft of variegated feathers” (Typee 7-8). In all, she is depicted as the very antithesis of the Maiden Fayaway’s subtlety, and her tattoos are at the core of this perception.

Compounding the ridiculousness of the Queen’s marks is the affiliation and affection she feels towards an “old *salt*” amongst the crew of the French ship. This sailor, like the Queen, is tattooed and objectified by Melville in a similar way; his marks, like the Queen’s “hieroglyphics,” are likened to “an Egyptian sarcophagus” (Typee 8). The Queen shows an immediate fondness for the tattooed sailor, and “gazed in admiration at the bright blue and vermilion pricking” on his legs, feet, chest and arms (Typee 8). Eager to further their tattooed bonding, the Queen “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). Melville’s misrecognition of the Queen’s affinity with the tattooed sailor leads to her being trivialised and de-feminised. Latimer suggests that the “cannibal queen’s” “mooning” the French soldiers was an act of patriotism on Melville’s part, and that his portrayal of the scene is intended to embarrass and expose the French sailors. I would suggest however, that in addition to Melville’s obviously anti-French sentiments, the depiction of the scene does much more than humiliate a tattooed French sailor. The Queen provides for Melville and his readers a representation of the unrefined, savage and ultimately grotesque femininity embodied by her marked and objectified form. Just as the beachcomber provides the archetypal contrast to Melville’s touring Tommo, the Queen provides an

illustration of precisely what Fayaway is not, even in spite of the latter's delicate, discreet, and even charming tattoos. The Queen's tattoos on the other hand, are both indiscreet and vulgar, as is her method of displaying them. In addition to this, by depicting the Queen's affinity with an ordinary sailor, her monarchical status is undermined.

As in the case of Captain Constantenus' garb of 'rich Turkish stuff,' and Irene Woodward's 'beautiful dress', throughout both Typee and Omoo, the Marquesans' tattoos are frequently likened to various articles of clothing (Fayaway's epaulets, the chief's "suit of shabby tattooing") in order to metaphorically evoke the process of covering the skin. As Goudie points out, "In a climate in which clothing has little to do with protection and in a culture that condones nakedness, apparel's discursive function is foregrounded" (218). For this reason, the metaphor of being 'clothed' in tattoos becomes useful for Melville, as he compares and contrasts the various 'coverings' that his narrator encounters. Where the metaphor falls short however, is in its implication of superficiality; this is clearly not understood by Melville, who is preoccupied by the *depth* of the tattooed mark. He still pursues the descriptive power of the comparison however, and also uses it as a point of contrast, especially in describing the 'royalty' of the Islands.

In Typee, Tommo is forthcoming in his approval for the "magnificent military uniform, stiff with gold lace and embroidery" in which "The King of the Cannibal Islands" is arrayed. A "slight blemish" upon this image, however, is a piece of tattooing which is described in such a way as to render the king both hideous and ridiculous: "A broad patch of tattooing stretched completely across his face, in a line with his eyes, making him look as if he wore a huge pair of goggles; and royalty in goggles suggested some ludicrous ideas" (Typee 7). In contrast with the "majestic" western military dress, which initially is used to represent the King as a grand leader, whose "appearance was certainly calculated to produce an effect," the "ludicrous blemish" of the Marquesan tattoo undermines both the character of the King and his rule which, because of this "blemish" is obviously of less consequence than that of the "unblemished" Frenchmen. Similarly, when the narrator describes a meeting between the "patriarch-sovereign of Tior" and the French admiral, he is indebted to the presence of the tattoo to ultimately distinguish between the two "tall and noble-looking men". He admits that the native chief is both magnificent and grand, as is the French admiral, yet still places the

tattooed Marquesan and the French officer at “two extremes in the social scale — the polished, splendid Frenchman, and the poor tattooed savage.” (Typee 35). The admiral maintains his magnificence and authority, and the chief, because of his tattoos, is reduced to a “poor” state of wretchedness. In the above examples, the presence of European-style dress is not enough to cover or redeem the tattooed body from its savage state. It becomes a site of ridicule, and the contrast provided by the ‘grand’ European uniforms only serves to highlight the depravity of the tattooed body. Like the cannibal queen, who no amount of gaudy fabric and baubles can sophisticate, the tattooed body is rendered in Melville’s exhibitions as being indelibly degenerate, primitive and, essentially, savage.

The elderly chiefs that Tommo encounters in the valley are the subject of similar ridicule and objectification when they are reduced by Melville’s description to “hideous old wretches” (Typee 118). They are rendered as such as a result of their tattoos, which had, according to Tommo “obliterated every trace of humanity” (Typee 118). Again, Melville’s perception of the tattoo’s transformative effect is reiterated. The old men are described as having a “uniform dull green colour,” and “a frightful scaly appearance, which, united with its singular colour, made their limbs not a little resemble dusty specimens of verde-antique” or some kind of “rhinoceros” (Typee 118). Once again, in one fell swoop, Melville provides a thoroughly derogatory description of revered members of Typee society. They are dehumanised, likened to animals, vegetables, “creatures” (Typee 118) or *specimens* - anything but ‘men,’ since ‘men’ could not possibly wear such marks.

It is not only in depictions of savage, objectified ‘specimens,’ however, that Melville employs the tattoo to enhance his characterisation of the ‘types’ he exhibits within the texts. In descriptions of the Chief or Noble Savage characters as well, tattoos play a significant role, and on two occasions in Typee a change in tone can be detected, which derives from Melville’s engagement with Euro-American standards of social value. In the lengthy description of Mehevi’s formal costume provided by Tommo,

that which was most remarkable in the appearance of the splendid islander was the elaborated tattooing displayed on every noble limb... 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. (Typee 99)

In this description, Melville's casting of Mehevi as the Warrior or Noble Savage is blatantly apparent. In this instance, the tattooed body is described as "splendid," "noble" and "excellent"; whereas in previous descriptions the tattoo actively diminishes the beauty or nobility of the subject, in this instance, the "lines drawn upon his face" in fact attest to his nobility and splendour. In fact, these marks, teamed with his general attire, and the treatment he receives from the villagers, make Melville "determined to secure, if possible, the goodwill of this individual" (Typee 99). Melville is similarly in awe of the figure of Marnoo, "The Stranger," and also seeks his approval and friendship. As in the case of Omai's reception in London, the public perception of tattooing as either beautiful, grand, and ultimately appreciable, is determined by the curator's framing of the tattooed subject. In the cases of Mehevi and Marnoo, their perceived status as 'noble' influences Melville's curatorial position in regard to their tattoos, and vice versa.

Marnoo represents for Tommo a marginal, crossover figure who is, unlike the beachcombers, simultaneously respected and recognised as a part of each world he inhabits. This awareness awakens within Tommo various feelings of isolation, ineptitude, jealousy and awe. Like the beachcomber, and to a certain extent, Melville himself, Marnoo occupies the boundaries and limits, travelling "between paradise and the fallen world, telling stories in several languages to both," (Latimer 219); yet, in contrast to his white counterparts, Marnoo is comfortable with his boundary crossing. As an embodiment of all that Tommo would like to be (yet simultaneously emblematic of the conflict Tommo feels about the character's occupation of a marginal position), Marnoo is, like Mehevi, cast as a Noble Savage figure, whose characterisation fulfils a number of conventions surrounding depictions of such figures both in literature and exhibition.

Marnoo's arrival in the valley re-awakens a feeling of hope within Tommo, who has become resigned to his capture and melancholy. The encounter with this boundary-dweller, this border-crosser, reminds Tommo that perhaps he too can re-cross the beach back into white society. Tommo describes Marnoo as "one of the most striking specimens of humanity that I

had ever beheld" (Typee 179). In his beauty and symmetry, he can only be compared to a work of art: "the oval of his countenance and the regularity of every feature reminded me of an antique bust" (Typee 179). In addition to these striking features, and perhaps more tellingly, Tommo is compelled and even impressed by Marnoo's tattoos, though he does seem pleased to announce that "his face was free from the least blemish of tattooing" (Typee 179). Tommo concedes that although the rest of Marnoo's body is "drawn all over with fanciful figures," they are drawn in a coherent design that he sets apart from the normally haphazard design of the other Typees' tattoos. Tommo describes a tattoo on Marnoo's back that he declares to be "the best specimen of the Fine Arts I had yet seen in Typee," (Typee 180) and even goes so far as to admit the "unique and even elegant effect" of the marks (Typee 180). With this statement, Melville takes his first step towards reforming his prejudice regarding the tattooed body, seeing and depicting it not as a mark of savagery or objectification, but as "Fine Art". The facilitator of this shift though, is Marnoo, and I believe that this is an essential point to maintain, since Marnoo is not, in Tommo's eyes, comparable to the other people in the valley. Marnoo is immediately set apart from the other Typees by his "marble repose," and the terms used by Tommo in his description reflect this, as they are evocative of Euro-American standards of beauty, appreciation, and value, a pattern that culminates in his description of Marnoo's tattoo as "Fine Art". Marnoo is also distinguished by his frequent and sustained contact with French and English soldiers, and is competent in their languages. Moreover, his face remains unblemished: his "figure-head" is not "defaced". These factors combined mean that Marnoo is less savage, and therefore less of a threat to Tommo's precarious "civilised" identity than his counterpart, Kory-Kory, for example, from whom Tommo feels compelled to assert his difference by ridiculing or disparaging his tattooed body.

Tommo's companion, Kory-Kory, in contrast to Marnoo, is represented as a "hideous object," who is in fact held captive, in Tommo's view, by his tattooed face:

His countenance thus triply hooped, as it were, with 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. (Typee 106)

Here, despite asserting throughout the narrative that he is being held captive by the Typees, Tommo imposes the visage of unhappy captivity upon his companion, again suggesting that the physical presence of tattoo marks is a captivity in itself. More than captivity, however, the tattoos evoke in Tommo “the idea of a pictorial museum of natural history, or an illustrated copy of Goldsmith’s *Animated Nature*,” (*Typee* 106) suggesting the experiences of those tattooed colonised people who were in fact taken captive, and who did appear in museums or the pages of illustrated books about ‘nature’. Yet in spite of such comments, Tommo stops short of the ridicule that he employed earlier in the narrative, and even offers Kory-Kory an apology for his “heartless description”: “I mean thee no harm in what I say in regard to thy outward adornings; but they were a little curious to my unaccustomed sight” (*Typee* 106). The explanation offered exposes two important points. Firstly, Tommo sees unfamiliarity as a legitimate and acceptable excuse for his otherwise harsh descriptions of his friend. He admits his prejudice, yet engages it all the same. This prejudice is complicated by the second point, which is that Tommo is provoked to offer the apology in the first place: he has become emotionally involved with these people, and therefore is conscious of being hurtful in his depictions. This instance is one of many where Tommo’s self-perception is challenged, and the boundaries between his self, and the savage Other become blurred by his emotional attachment; hence the ambiguous swaying between sympathy and horror at the tattooed bodies he sees.

While Tommo’s descriptions of Marnoo and Mehevi are some of the only examples in *Typee* of any regard for tattooing either as an art form or even as a culturally specific phenomenon that deserves his respect, in *Omoo*, once the narrator has transcended his ‘captive’ status, his attitude changes. In *Omoo* the narrator clearly respects the professionalism and skill of the tattooists of La Dominica, who are, like Marnoo, described in terms that relate their practice to Euro-American standards. This shift in his attitude betrays something of the movement of the narrator’s thoughts regarding his own position: his description of the tattooing process and tradition in La Dominica is less hysterically fearful than his descriptions in *Typee* due to the fact that his self-perceived (and projected) identity is no longer that of the captive. The threat of enforced tattooing therefore, is less real than it was in *Typee* and his identity is no longer in need of overt defence. His change in position allows the narrator to describe “The Tattooers of La Dominica” in terms that almost reveal

an admiration for the practitioners of the “fine art”, whom the narrator calls “professors,” “genteel tailors,” and the “gentlemen of the faculty,” (*Omoo* 30) appellations which contrast starkly with Tommo’s description of Karky as a ‘tormentor’. The change in tone reflects Melville’s utilisation of opposition and contrast, à la the circus side- and freak-show, and ultimately draws attention to his dependence upon these techniques of identity definition.

Though Tommo symbolically ‘escapes’ his captivity at the end of *Typee*, in *Omoo* the narrator is subject to a more literal captivity, in that he is actually physically detained in prison. His attitude towards this captivity, however, and his depiction of the events, further illustrates the extent to which Melville has, in his second novel, transcended the position occupied by the protagonist of the typical ‘captivity narrative’. Simultaneously, by symbolically reversing the captive gaze, Melville actually betrays an element of comprehension of methods of display and objectification. In *Omoo*, the narrator’s experience of captivity comes at the hands of the British, when he is momentarily made an inmate of the ‘Hotel de Calabooza’ – the British prison⁶¹. While imprisoned, the narrator expresses no fear, indeed relishing his position, which, he indicates, allows him to “make observations” of the natives (*Omoo* 131). Yet it is not only the narrator who is allowed this luxury, and he lucidly describes an exchange whereby his observational gaze is powerfully returned. According to the narrator, it is the idleness of the Tahitians that allows them to visit him and his companions in the prison. He describes his group of inmates as

the lions of the neighbourhood; and, no doubt, strangers from the distant villages were taken to see the ‘Karhowrees’ (white men), in the same way that countrymen, in a city, are gallanted to the Zoological Gardens. (*Omoo* 131)

The narrator depicts himself as both object and subject of the natives’ spectacle, yet turns the gaze outward, in an attempt at maintaining the power structure that is manifest in the dichotomy of spectator/spectacle. Stephen de Paul suggests that this scene is attended by an “edge of Melvillean parody,” as it reverses the previously mentioned situation of “Tahitians being exported to Europe and examined there as curiosities of the human species” (66).

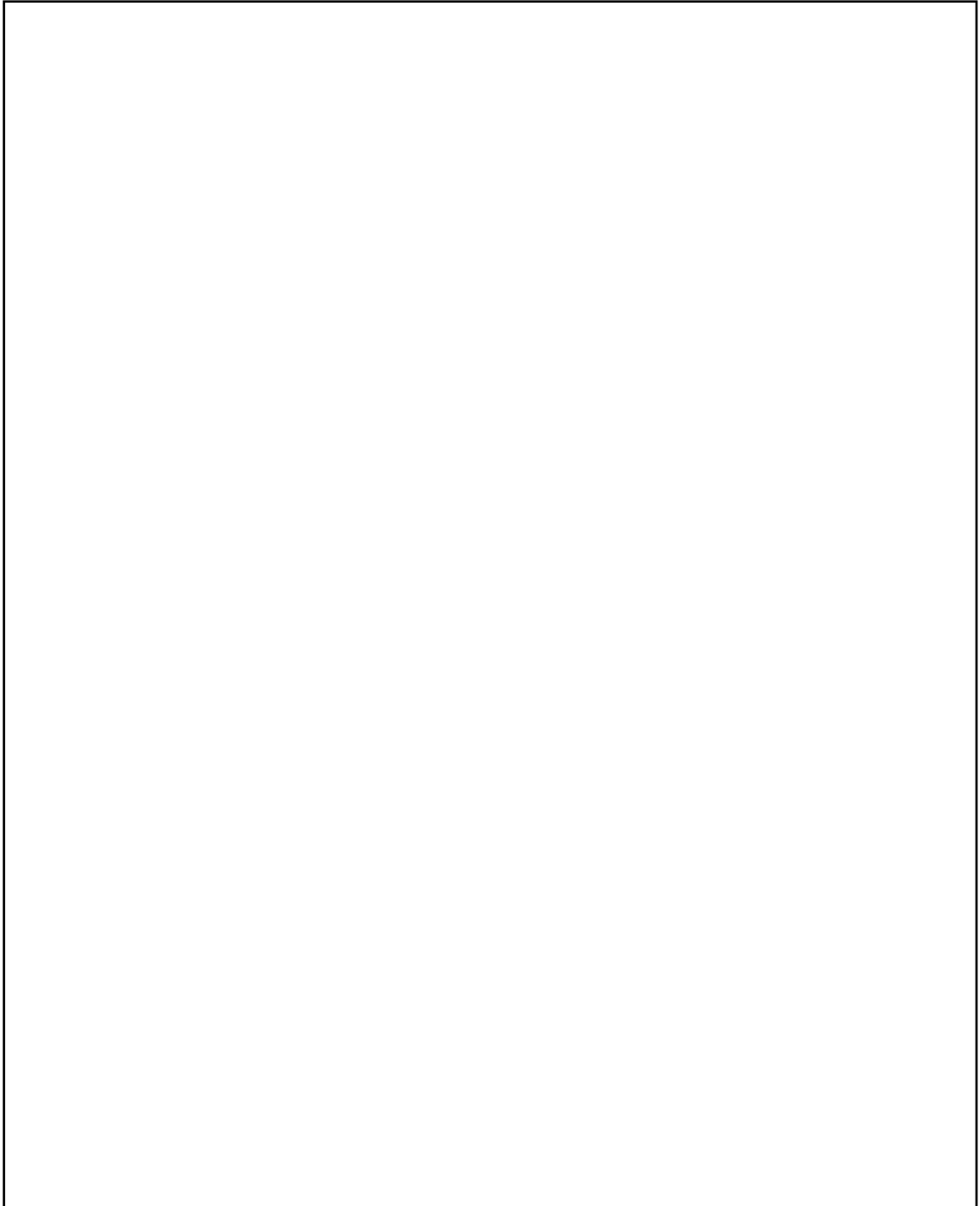
⁶¹ Interestingly, this experience is remarkably similar to O’Connell’s imprisonment in Manila for piracy.

According to de Paul, this scene, and Melville's 'parody' provides a "cultural balancing of the ledger [which] equalizes colonizer and native in their shared site of mutual acculturation" (66). While I agree that there is most certainly an element of parody involved in Melville's evocation of this scene, I feel that to suggest an element of "equalization" is to seriously undermine the devastating experiences of those Tahitians who were exported and objectified in world's fairs and other exhibitions. Rather than "equalization" I would suggest that Melville's parody attempts instead to highlight processes of objectification and display, and to bring to the attention of the reader the contextualised nature of directions of observational gaze, especially in sites of cross-cultural contact and interaction, colonial or otherwise. By assuring his reader of the leisurely and valued nature of his opportunity to "observe the natives" the narrator downplays the potentially damaging fact of his imprisonment and reinforces his position as empowered observer, a position that is central to the dominant, white Euro-American identity that he has so struggled to maintain throughout both narratives.

In 'The Self in Self-decoration,' Marilyn Strathern describes the way that bodily decoration – including the tattoo – operates within the corporeal dimension of self-definition. She points out that since the self is "manifested through the body, not divorced from it," the concept of an "incorporeal state of self-hood" cannot be realised (Strathern 250). Ultimately, she concludes that "If decorations comment on the relationship between inside and outside, they do not imply a dichotomy between spirit/body or essence/material in such a way as to make the former more crucial to personality than the other" (250). Strathern's analysis affords an explanation of why the act of being tattooed proved to be so horrifically confronting for Melville's narrator. His corporeality represents a precarious site of self-definition subject to the competing claims of civilisation and savagery. As his experiences in the Pacific Islands make him increasingly aware of the problematic nature of the Euro-American dependence on dialectical terms of self-definition, he struggles to maintain his composure as these terms, once decontextualised by his residence in the islands, begin to crumble. Melville's narratives suggest that his social means of self-definition are eroded in the valley, since he is deprived of an interactive set of terms with which to define himself; as a result of this deprivation, his body assumes the role of self in a very essential way. Consequently, a dermic transgression, a bodily invasion would mark the crossing of the final boundary between self and other, a boundary which Tommo/Typee desperately needs to maintain and assert. In Typee and

Omoo, the narrator's struggle to maintain a recognisable self, which is clearly different to the abjected Others that he perceives himself *not* to be, is reflected in the changing attitudes and responses to the practice of tattooing, and tattooed characters. The exhibitionary traditions of displaying tattooed people as Other allows Melville to curate the tattooed characters within the texts in terms that his Euro-American readers can recognise and position his narrators against. Yet as the narrator's position shifts and sways, from captive, to beachcomber, to traveller and back again, so too do his attitudes towards the oppositional characters he is exhibited with. In Typee, Tommo is most obviously positioned as a captive, and the contrasting representations of the Typees, and the associated threat of tattooing belies Tommo's struggle to reconcile his horror and attraction towards his Marquesan hosts. In Omoo on the other hand, Melville's narrator occupies a more straightforwardly beachcomber role, yet his abhorrence of the beachcombers is, if anything, more pronounced. In addition to a negotiation of the role of beachcomber, Omoo sees Melville's position as a traveller or adventurer defined more prominently. This meshing of a number of narrative and subject positions within Typee and Omoo creates a unique perspective from which to observe the way that the colonial genres of captivity and beachcomber narratives exist alongside and interact with genres such as travel writing, which, as a result of the tourist industry's relationship with world's fairs and exhibitions, are also intrinsically related to colonial appropriation and the display of cultural artifacts. The modern tourist industry, as a result of these connections, is intrinsically intertwined with the histories of representation and exhibition discussed throughout this thesis. In the following, final chapter, I turn my attention toward the modern tourism industry in Aotearoa New Zealand, and discuss how contemporary representations of Maori tattoo both respond to, and attempt to re-write, existing traditions of exhibition.

5:
MOKO AND IDENTITY:
THE CHANGING FACE OF THE LANGUAGE OF THE SKIN



Herman Melville's first two novels are, apart from anything else, remarkable for the manner in which they blend a number of genres, yet ultimately remain elusively undefinable. While Melville borrows from the conventions of beachcomber and captivity narratives, engaging and reinforcing tropes and stereotypes from each, he simultaneously constructs an entertaining travel narrative that is, amongst other things, pitched at the stay-at-home or armchair traveller⁶². Such interactions between literary representation and travel are not new. In fact, Nigel Morgan and Annette Pritchard have suggested that the modern tourism industry and the creation of "destination images" - images that are representative of the destination's perceived touristic attractions - have been profoundly influenced by literary representations of place, space, and travel (69). Prior to the availability of cheap travel, literature offered readers a vicarious opportunity to 'travel' without leaving home. Frank Coffee, in 1920, for example, published his memoir Forty Years on the Pacific: The Lure of the Great Ocean; A Book of Reference for the Traveller and Pleasure for the Stay-at-Home. But even since the advent of relatively accessible global travel, literature still plays a fundamental role in the creation of destination images and conceptions of other people and places. For example, Paul Theroux's book, The Great Railway Bazaar comes recommended to the reader by William Golding's assertion that Theroux has "done our travelling for us brilliantly" (front cover blurb), thereby suggesting that a book, when written 'brilliantly' allows a reader to travel without leaving the comfort of their home.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the world's fairs and exhibitions provided millions of Americans and Europeans with opportunities to do the same thing: to tour hundreds of cultural villages from all over the world, to 'experience' racial and cultural Others doing supposedly everyday things in a 'natural' setting without leaving the comfort of their own, familiar cities. Simultaneously, travelling circuses such as Barnum and Bailey's Greatest Show on Earth advertised their shows as "A Holiday Created For all Classes At Little Cost" (Poster reproduced in Davis 23). Today, visitors to Hawai'i's Polynesian Cultural Centre can visit seven themed villages, which allow them to tour the Pacific in one handy

⁶² "These Victorian collectors were interested in the faraway lands that were romanticised in the art, literature, and popular culture of the day" (Foresta, 48).

location. As Morgan and Pritchard point out, the world's fairs and exhibitions were forerunners of modern, globalised mass tourism, since they allowed people to 'visit' other cultures and nations by proxy (168), thereby allowing global tourism on a localised scale. This concept of 'visiting' and consuming other cultures and nations vicariously – by being an armchair or stay-at-home traveller – links together the forms of exhibitionary cultural representation that are found in contemporary, postcolonial literature, photography and tourist paraphernalia.

My perspective in this chapter has been influenced by Tony Bennett's concerns that contemporary representations of 'the past' – in museums, as well as other exhibitionary sites such as literature, art and film – are of consequence to more than just perceptions of history (Bennett, 162). The relationships between depictions of history and our knowable, lived present will affect the ways that futures are imagined and, in time, created. For these reasons, popular representations of moments of history – particularly moments of colonial contact – have affected, and continue to affect, ongoing perceptions not only of the moments described, but the people and places involved. For these people, many of whom are engaged with ongoing processes of decolonisation, contemporary representations of the past have the ability to either liberate or confine them to the histories of colonialism and so are of upmost importance.

The aforementioned forms of 'vicarious' travel are of particular interest to me in this chapter for two reasons. Firstly, these forms of exhibition have a documented and substantial history of relationships and intersections with representations of Indigenous people that has engaged with a spectacularisation of Otherness and the idealisation or simplification of cultural traits. Secondly, within these genres there is a pronounced emphasis placed on such representations: the stay-at-home traveller's 'experience' and perception of the places s/he 'visits' is mediated and dictated by a series of filters that are exclusively determined by other people. Although, as Dean MacCannell, Bennett and others have shown, *all* tourism is in fact subject to these kinds of mediations in that a tourist will inevitably have some kind of pre-conceived idea of the destination, whether from photographs, postcards or brochures, the real-life tourist – the traveller – is at least given the opportunity to transcend these preconceptions, whereas the stay-at-home's experience is never unmediated.

Throughout this thesis, I have argued that the representations of Indigenous tattooing produced by the literature of colonialism have irrevocably dictated and directed the way that 'tattoo' is understood by the west. The exhibitionary history of tattoos and tattooed bodies has rendered them the spectacle of the Other, a status that is reflected in the way that they are represented today. In this chapter, I turn to a reading of more contemporary exhibitions of Indigenous tattooing as they appear in postcolonial literature from Aotearoa New Zealand and the modern tourist industry. My interest in the tourist industry stems from its relationship with the world's fairs and exhibitions that were discussed in the first chapter, which can, as Curtis Hinsley has argued, be viewed as some of the earliest forms of touristic consumption. In light of such arguments, I feel that it is useful to consider the modern-day manifestation of this phenomenon of consuming cultures, and how it impacts upon contemporary Indigenous movements towards cultural revitalisation and preservation.

Indigenous, postcolonial 'curators' are today exhibiting their tattooing culture, and the signs and symbols associated with it, within a framework wrought by centuries of colonially determined representations. Ultimately, I am concerned in this chapter with addressing the legacies of colonial representations of Indigenous tattooing, and exploring the ways that these legacies manifest themselves in a selection of textual and touristic exhibitions from the last 25 years in Aotearoa New Zealand. I have chosen Aotearoa New Zealand as the focus of this chapter for a number of reasons. Firstly, this location presents an interesting opportunity to address an historically entrenched Indigenous/cultural tourism industry. Maori have been actively involved in tourism throughout the country, both as producers and operators of commercial tourism ventures, and subjects/objects of the tourist gaze, virtually since the moment of first contact with Europeans (Ryan "Tourism" 955). Furthermore, there have been recent movements within the New Zealand Tourism Board, at the suggestion of the Aotearoa Maori Tourism Federation, to modernise images of Maori in tourism literature, and the discourse relating to the pervasiveness of Maori and Moko as a 'brand' for Aotearoa New Zealand is both active and ongoing. Concurrently, there exists a powerful Maori cultural renaissance that is actively engaged with the colonial history of Moko's survival. These debates are both active and intertwined. Additionally, Moko has been embraced by a number of contemporary Maori writers and artists who both comment and build upon the debates

mentioned above. As far as I am able to ascertain, these factors are not present within any other tourist destination in the world.

Moko provides an excellent focus for an exploration of the struggle between the images of Maori as romanticised, pre-colonial savages, and more contemporary representations of Maori as vital and valuable members of Aotearoa New Zealand's cultural landscape, since Moko is frequently depicted in imagery from both ends of this spectrum. On one hand, Maori performers in cultural shows for tourists wear painted Moko as a signifier of the authentic 'Maori-ness' that is being depicted, and on the other, Maori political activists and various urban Maori gangs wear tattooed Moko as symbols of their dedication to their cultural identity in a contemporary setting⁶³. Again, this could be said to exemplify the way that an identical artifact - the Moko - can be exhibited in order to communicate different meanings.

While it may initially seem incongruous to be discussing tourism artifacts such as souvenir tea-towels and postcards alongside literature, I have chosen to do so in order to illuminate the way that colonial representations have impacted upon two quite disparate (but also intrinsically connected) genres of representation. I have chosen the texts discussed in this chapter - Keri Hulme's novel, The Bone People (1983), Alan Duff's novel, Once Were Warriors (1990), and a photographic collection entitled Dedicated by Blood (2003) -because of the ways that the Maori authors have approached the representation of Moko within these texts, which have, in their own ways, been influential and/or far-reaching as a result of their popularity. In light of this, they are similar to the popular texts I have discussed in other chapters, in that they have each contributed significantly to the ways that tattoos and tattooed bodies are represented and perceived. Each of the author/curators of these texts are Maori, so the particular question of *self*-representation is directly addressed. The approaches taken by the authors/curators are, I believe, indicative of the extent to which colonial representations have attempted to relegate Indigenous tattooing, and in particular, Moko, to

⁶³ Tama Iti is a member of the Tuhoe tribe, and has been politically active in Aotearoa New Zealand for almost his entire life. He wears a full facial moko. Of Iti, Maori Labour MP and radio host John Tamihere says: "he's got his activism tattooed onto his head" (Bearup 20).

simplistic, derivative stereotypes of an imagined, pre-colonial Maori. These same stereotypes can be identified in much travel material – both advertising and souvenirs.

Let me express, at this juncture, that I am conscious of the tendency in postcolonial studies, which has been identified by Rod Edmond, towards an implication that contemporary postcolonial literature is merely a reaction to dominant European and/or colonial representations (22). Such implications in turn reiterate the image of the “reactive indigene” and are problematic for postcolonising people. In keeping with this awareness, I do not wish to suggest that all contemporary self-representation by Maori is a response to colonialism, thereby implying that contact with Europeans has been the most fundamental occurrence in Maori history. It should be apparent from the preceding argument, however, that representations of tattoos are inextricably linked to, and influenced by, the process of exhibition that has paralleled colonial appropriation and control of Indigenous cultural artifacts, and it is from this foundation that I approach the analysis of the various texts in this chapter. Foremost, however, is a consideration of the ways that representations are created and maintained, and a subsequent contemplation of the implications such representations have.

Tourism’s links with imperialism, colonialism and ethnographic exhibition find their origins in the world’s fairs and exhibitions. Several scholars have pointed out the absolutely foundational role that the world’s fairs played in the “figuration of a global space” that simultaneously incorporated, promoted and naturalised processes of imperialism and colonisation within an explicitly spectacular mode of entertainment (Werry 368). The world’s fairs’ capacity, and indeed, imperative, to provide exhibition-goers with an educationally enriching *experience* ultimately created the formula for the many varieties of cultural tourism that were to emerge over the coming decades, as mass global travel became more available to more people (Maxwell 5). Anne Maxwell explicitly links the expansion of the global tourism industry to the proliferation of shipping and railway networks whose primary purpose was to connect Europe (and, to a lesser degree, the United States) to its colonies. This connection, according to Maxwell, suggests that “modern mass tourism was created on the backs of colonized peoples” (5).

Of course, given the modern tourism industry's connections with world's fairs and exhibitions this connection is hardly surprising, yet the similarities between the seemingly outdated modes of presentation favoured by the world's fairs, and allegedly more 'evolved' forms of representation promulgated by the modern tourist industry are significant. Morgan and Pritchard have highlighted the prevalence of oppositional representation in nineteenth- and twentieth-century representations of Others, where ethnographic 'specimens' and subjects of cultural tourism alike are described and represented in terms which reiterate the dichotomies of savage/civilised, developed/traditional, and us/them (168). Jane Desmond suggests that such methods of "codifying difference" are fundamental to the maintenance of the tourism industry, and firmly locates the origins of such systems within those forms of popular and/or educational exhibition that promoted the development of a pseudo-scientific ethnographic gaze (xiii).

Despite changes in academic, scientific, and theoretical thought, however, the kinds of categorisation that created these genres of entertainment still exist. Indeed, the overlaps between ethnographic display and touristic development are evident in the presentation and exhibition of cultural Otherness that can be seen in contemporary (supposedly postcolonial) Aotearoa New Zealand and indeed, around the world, wherein Indigenous people are consistently depicted as "ahistorical curios" whose statically primitive, and supposedly timeless visages veil many of the real challenges that contemporary Maori face (Morgan and Pritchard 219).

The ethnographically oriented origins of what is today known as cultural or Indigenous tourism⁶⁴ are apparent in the presentation/exhibition of Indigenous 'types' within the touristic context, and, as MacCannell and others have suggested, the study of tourism – and in particular the images related to the proliferation of cultural or Indigenous tourism – offers

⁶⁴Chris Ryan defines Indigenous tourism as "the movement of persons for cultural motivations such as study tours, performing arts, cultural tours, travels to festivals, visits to sites and monuments, folklore and pilgrimages all associated with an indigenous people, where the term 'indigenous people' is interpreted according to United Nations criteria of minority first nation peoples subjected to colonial histories but with specific rights of self determination" ("Tourism" 954). Cultural tourism is defined as concerning "small groups of tourists seeking to know about and sustain natural environments, and also wishing to learn about the cultures associated with such places and the need to sustain local communities" ("Tourism" 953)

the opportunity to expose power structures that are otherwise disguised or ignored. As MacCannell, in an expansion of Thorstein Veblen's work, points out, leisure activities are reflective of social structure. The tourist, though s/he is possibly unaware of the fact, is engaged in a program of viewing, consuming and processing "society and its works". Although many tourist attractions' past or present social functions are often hidden behind their fame *as a tourist attraction or destination*, as MacCannell points out, "this fame cannot change their origin in social structure." (*Tourist* 55). Ryan similarly identifies the intrinsic connections between tourism and society, suggesting that tourism is in fact reflective of the relationships embedded within the toured society ("Tourism" 966). Morgan and Pritchard argue that the imagery used in tourist advertising, promotion and souvenirs are as socially revelatory as more frequently analysed media such as film, literature, photography and art (3).

An investigation into touristic imagery, then, provides an opportunity to explore the impacts of colonial representation upon the capacity for Indigenous people to represent themselves to the rest of the world. The academic debate surrounding the political power of touristic self-representation by Indigenous people is lively, with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars arguing for both sides. Proponents for one side of the argument, such as Christopher Balme, argue that cultural tourism provides Indigenous people with an opportunity to subvert or even return the objectifying gaze of the presumptuous European tourist. Balme specifically argues that the cultural performances staged at the Polynesian Cultural Centre in Hawai'i provide an opportunity for subversion by allowing performers to mimic European projections of 'Polynesian-ness'. This kind of "parodic irony" is likened by Balme to the double-voiced trickster discourse which Henry Louis Gates has identified in Black oral and literary expression (Balme 60). While Balme concedes that such moments do appear to come perilously close to self-effacement, he ultimately asserts that the Polynesian Cultural Centre's cultural performances allow Pacific Islander people to publicly subvert and resist the objectifying tourist gaze. The laughter the performers provoke is not, according to Balme, the sound of a continuation of humiliating stereotypes of colonised Indigenous people, but is a confirmation of the performers' "superior knowledge of the discourses they assume the tourists bring with them" (62). Balme suggests that in places such as Hawai'i and Aotearoa New Zealand cultural performances are a way of preserving culture in the face of pressures to

assimilate, and modify cultural practices so that they ‘fit’ a new political and cultural arena (64).

John Taylor also sees the potential within tourism for Maori to take control of the way that they are represented; however, he is cautious of the problems that are also associated with cultural and Indigenous tourism. He warns that tourist shows re-inscribe images that simultaneously essentialise and simplify symbols of Maori-ness, and “transmit the over-signification of an identity of difference” (16). By reclaiming control of Maori imagery in the tourism industry however, Taylor sees a possibility for Maori to undermine and even re-write the images proliferated within the previously pakeha-dominated cultural tourism industry (16). Yet Taylor stresses that this reclamation is dependent upon a rearrangement of the standard representational styles and tropes. He writes:

Rather than solely playing on authenticity, with its attendant essentialization of Maori as a mythological pre-contact society, cross-cultural encounters based on sincerity allow for the communication of more localized identities. In doing so they may undermine such essentialization and communicate important local values. (16)

Taylor here suggests a different mode of presentation that is more politically powerful, and therefore more useful for undermining or re-interpreting stereotypical representations.

Chris Ryan’s position, while recognising the untapped discursive *potential* of cultural tourism, ultimately lies on the other side of the debate. In his article ‘Maori and Tourism: A Relationship of History’ he suggests that cultural tourism runs the risk of Maori being marginalised as tourist entertainment (“Maori” 258). Terry Webb also acknowledges the potential for tourist art, such as cultural performance, to communicate progressive and transformative social meanings, yet suggests that its power is ultimately tempered by its “rush to woo an audience” (63). In other words, the tourist attraction’s potential is weakened by its inherent dependence upon economics and commercialisation. Bennett suggests that such commercial demands create a risk of tourist attractions actually *manufacturing* a vision of the past that fulfills the expectations dictated by the foreign tourist market, which usually incorporates stereotypically exotic, ‘traditional’ or ‘authentic’ motifs (Bennett, 162). Werry

articulates this relationship with regards to the broader global economy and the many interrelated facets of performativity that interact with it:

Show business (the trade in showing, or imaging) is both a powerful imag(in)ing technology and a system of circulation – again, of money, information, people, commodities – intimately interlinked with still broader systems of global flow. The entertainment industry, of which theatre and tourism have historically been integral and interrelated components, embodies the projective, performative energy of capital – that which animates business by desire through picturing the desirable. (357)

Here, tourism is identified as a key industry responsible for the manufacturing of ‘desire’, thereby further emphasising its dependence upon - and simultaneous creation of - processes of consumption.

Roger Keesing perceives the problems associated with cultural tourism to run even more deeply. In his analysis of Epeli Hau’ofa’s reading of contemporary political relations in the Pacific, Keesing suggests that the modern tourist’s obsession with locating and consuming the most remote, most ‘authentic’ cultural artifacts, and most ‘traditional’ people, is responsible for the perpetuation of ideologies of cultural difference (Keesing 165). The pursuit of authenticity is also, according to Keesing, what blinds people to the ‘now’ of postcolonial Pacific relations, and the associated influences of positioning and exhibiting Pacific peoples as ‘traditional’ and ‘authentic’. Keesing points out that the concerns within some tourist studies regarding ‘inauthenticity’ are not, in fact, what matter. Of primary concern rather, is “the neocolonial theatre of alienation,” (173) which forces people to represent themselves within a system of signification that has historically valued a pre-contact notion of authenticity, thus necessarily excluding any trappings of modernisation. The subsequent objectification and consumption – via photographs, videotapes and souvenirs – of the represented culture, does not in any way promote or reinforce conceptions of Indigenous identity from the Indigenous perspective but rather reinforces and recapitulates romanticised western notions and stereotypical images of what an ‘authentic’ Pacific Islander should be (Keesing 173).

Keesing is concerned that the idealised, romanticised and stereotypical imagery of a pre-colonial, pristine and authentic Pacific marginalises attempts at self-definition, smooths over the violence of colonialism and, as Taylor puts it, downplays cultural contemporaneity (17). Desmond similarly identifies the role that tourism, and its associated “commodified performative practices” (130) play in veiling or downplaying the political and economic concerns of the Indigenous population. Keesing also draws attention to the fact that the images produced for the tourist industry are directly responsive and answerable to the prevailing Western stereotypes in a manner that is comparable with Greg Denning’s identification of the flawed European rendering of Polynesian history: these images and ‘histories’ hinge upon an “ahistorical” “imagined moment” (*Performances* 59)⁶⁵. These “imagined moments” prevail throughout the textual exhibitions that I have discussed in this thesis, and dictate the curatorial patterns that are repeatedly employed in order to substantiate the associated histories. It is therefore not surprising that touristic exhibitions of (tattooed) Indigenous people, intended for a predominantly white, Euro-American consumer⁶⁶, reiterate and respond to these kinds of stereotypical imagery.

On the souvenir teatowel ‘A History of New Zealand’ (ca. 2006), for example, there are several notable things about the way that Maori people are incorporated into the ‘history’ that is intended for touristic consumption. Firstly, the textual rendering of New Zealand’s history makes only generic (and at times ambiguous) reference to the Maori people: “The first encounter between Maori and European is violent, leading to bloodshed.” Then,

The Maori, Indigenous people of New Zealand, sign a Treaty with the British on 6th February 1840, known as the Treaty of Waitangi. The subsequent influx of European settlers leads to the turbulent period of the New Zealand Wars, also known as the land wars, and lasting over twenty years. The Maori, although inferior in number, proves a formidable foe. (*A History of New Zealand* [teatowel])

⁶⁵ As Denning points out, when the crew of the *Dolphin* went ashore at Tahiti, “Around them stretched a panorama *engraved forever as paradise on the European mind*” (*Performances* 136; emphasis added). This translation of initial perception by a small crew of sailors into the abiding perspective of an entire culture is a perfect example of such processes of ‘imagination’.

⁶⁶ As Ryan notes, consumers of Maori tourist products are very seldom New Zealanders. (Ryan “Tourism”)

“The Maori” are here imagined as a homogenous, warrior-like mass, whose only value, within the text of the souvenir at least, is as an historical curiosity, apparently warranting no further discussion. The Maori population is not mentioned in the paragraph about “New Zealand today”, further compounding their relegation to the position of historical artifact, and the illustrations on the teatowel reserve no place for Maori identities outside of the stereotypical images allowed by the conventions of simplification that are encouraged by colonial writings of history (Denning Performances 48). Several ‘typical’ figures are represented amongst the illustrations of kauri trees and sheep – a shearer, a gold-pro prospector, “Early Settlers” and the Endeavour – yet all of them are white, except for the figure labelled “Maori”. He is depicted in the traditional *wero* (Maori challenge) stance, crouched, with spear held ready to attack. Several markers signify his ‘authenticity’: the spear, the flax skirt, the tiki, the feather head-dress and, of course, the facial Moko. For the purposes of touristic consumption, the Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand can only be depicted in ‘authentic,’ ‘traditional,’ primitive roles such as the Warrior. As Taylor points out, such representations, “which seek to retain a previously discussed image of ‘authenticity’, contribute to a regime of signification which posits the Otherness of Maori as both exotic and knowable,” (20) but also as unchanging and unchangeable.

The relegation of Indigenous people in tourist settings to images that reproduce pristine, ‘authentic’, pre-colonial depictions is explained by MacCannell’s assertion that modern tourism is driven by a desire for authentic experience: the tourist’s desire to experience and consume an ‘untainted’ image. Touristic representations of Indigenous people are, therefore, geared towards allowing the tourist to be privy to an ‘authentic’ ‘slice of life’. In a re-reading of Erving Goffman’s work, MacCannell places an emphasis on the performative nature of the tourist space, not insignificantly termed the “stage setting”, that positions front and back as “ideal poles of a continuum, poles that are linked by a series of front regions designed to look like back regions, and back regions set up to accommodate outsiders” (“Staged Authenticity” 602). Such elaborate constructions of tourist attractions are designed to facilitate an aura of authentic *experience* in what would otherwise be akin to a museum display. As Taylor points out, “In tourism, authenticity poses as objectivism. It holds the special powers both of distance and of ‘truth’. These are vital components in the production of touristic value” (8).

Taylor's claim is most certainly apparent in the beachcomber and captivity narratives I have discussed, as well as in Melville's Typee and Omoo, which all invested heavily in ideas of authenticity and truth, allowing the reader to be a vicarious consumer of the adventure of the narrative, and also a pseudo-ethnographic observer of the 'primitive' societies depicted. Modern tourism engages this technique by providing tourists with an opportunity to witness a 'slice of life', such as the village displays at the Polynesian Cultural Centre, or, perhaps even more 'authentically', the extremely popular "cultural experiences" such as the Tamaki Maori Village. Visitors to the village are promised a "Journey back in time to a Pre-European lifestyle experience of customs and traditions," and are 'invited' to

[e]njoy the night's festivities with us as you are treated to a banquet of succulent foods cooked the traditional Maori way, rediscover the Maori village as it comes alive to the sound and activities of tribal songs, dances, myths and legends and browse throughout the largest after hours tribal market place in Rotorua. ("Tamaki Maori Village [website]")

As Balme points out, "[t]he premise behind such encounters - and the performances that almost invariably accompany them - is that the tourist is privy to a slice of 'primitive' life" (57).

In his article 'Staged Authenticity', MacCannell suggests that those kinds of settings that are designed to appear as though the visitor/tourist is privy to something 'behind the scenes' "[allow] adults to recapture *virginal sensations of discovery*" (596; emphasis added). MacCannell's choice of words here is arresting, in that it perfectly suggests the relationship between modern cultural/Indigenous tourism and the re-enactment of the colonial moment of 'discovery'. The kinds of spaces that MacCannell discusses are those that include the production of authenticity relating to 'traditional' performances by 'natives' in exotic locations. MacCannell's use of the word 'discovery' suggests that the appeal of these kinds of tourist attractions lies in the possibility for a re-discovery and re-colonisation of a primitive,

pre-European past. This consumption of the primitive allows white tourists the opportunity to become both explorers and discoverers.⁶⁷

In keeping with this line of thought, Silver asserts that Indigenous people “can only continue to be attractive to tourists so long as they remain undeveloped and perhaps, in some respects, primitive” (quoted in Ryan “Tourism” 960). Taylor understands this effect as resulting from an expectation that ‘authentic’ tourism sites and productions “must pay homage to a conception of origins” (9). The inherent emphasis on originality, and an ideal of a ‘pristine’ or untainted culture demands a decontextualisation of Maori people which denies any acknowledgement of contemporaneity. As a result of the tourist’s obsession with and demand for authenticity, Maori have become a symbol only of past (read, ‘dead’) ways and traditions.

Obviously, this creates major complications for representations of Maori in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand, since ‘authentic’ Maori are perceived to exist in a static, pre-colonial state. This denial of contemporaneous identity for Maori has existed in the performative spaces of tourism and exhibition for at least a century. At the Christchurch exhibition of 1906-07 for example, Maori and other Pacific Islander people were engaged to perform their primitivity in order to provide a contrast for displays of industrial and economic progress. For this to be effective however, they had to abandon the symbols and evidences of their own cultural development that had included a degree of westernisation (Maxwell 136).

⁶⁷ This can be linked to the studies finding that Maori people are not interested in the kinds of Maori cultural tourism that promotes such stagey, ‘authentic’ performances: the attraction of ‘discovery’ is not as strong.



Figure 15: Wooden 'Maori Warrior' souvenir postcard, featuring an adaptation of Parkinson's 'The Head of a chief of New Zealand' (ca. 2007).

Postcard and other souvenir images were, and continue to be, similarly responsible for the proliferation of representations of Maori in a frozen, pre-contact state. The image depicted on the postcard 'New Zealand' (Fig. 15), for example, presents a complicated double-message. While the subtitle underneath the illustration declares: "Maori Warrior: New Zealand is very proud of its Maori Culture," the image is a reproduction of "The Head of a Chief of New Zealand, the face curiously tatowed, or mark'd, according to their manner" by Sydney Parkinson. Parkinson, as Mark Blackburn, Nicholas Thomas and others have

pointed out, produced some of the most famous, recognisable and extensively reproduced images of Maori, therefore making a substantial contribution to the west's imag(in)ing of Maori and Moko. More significant than the image's fame however, is the fact that it is extremely dated, the original having been first published in 1773 at the height of European 'discovery' of the Pacific Islands and their people. The disjuncture between the claim – "New Zealand *is* very proud of its Maori Culture" – and the image – an (almost) pre-contact representation of 'traditional' Maori – ultimately suggests that 'New Zealand is proud of its Maori culture, as long as it stays in the past, and therefore remains non-threatening to dominant white hegemony'. Furthermore, the postcard reinscribes one of the 'types' of identity that Maori are allowed to inhabit – the Warrior, who exists alongside the other stereotypes of Maiden or Belle, and Noble Savage, who were discussed in the previous chapter in relation to Melville's characterisation of Fayaway and Marnoo.

As Balme sees it, these types, and their easily recognised, prominent and unabating position in representations of Indigenous people throughout the Pacific, are responsible for a continued reluctance "to represent contemporary roles in actual daily life on the islands" (70), thereby maintaining dominant perceptions of Indigenous Pacific peoples as existing only in the past, forever waiting to be 'discovered'. To this day, the Warrior, Chief and Maiden types are reiterated in a variety of touristic exhibitions. At the Polynesian Cultural Centre's Samoan Village attraction, for example, tourists can see, amongst other 'traditional' activities such as coconut husking and tree climbing, a "Village maiden and Chief's lecture" (T. Webb 67). Similarly, the souvenir teatowel "New Zealand" (ca. 2000) represents images of a tattooed "Warrior" and demure, feather-cloaked "Maori Maiden". The Maori Warrior, Maiden, and Chief can also be observed on postcards, which will most commonly depict these immediately recognisable images⁶⁸ (Fig. 16).

⁶⁸ For examples of Maori Maiden, Chief and Warrior postcard images from the early twentieth century, see Blackburn 60, 61, 64, 80.

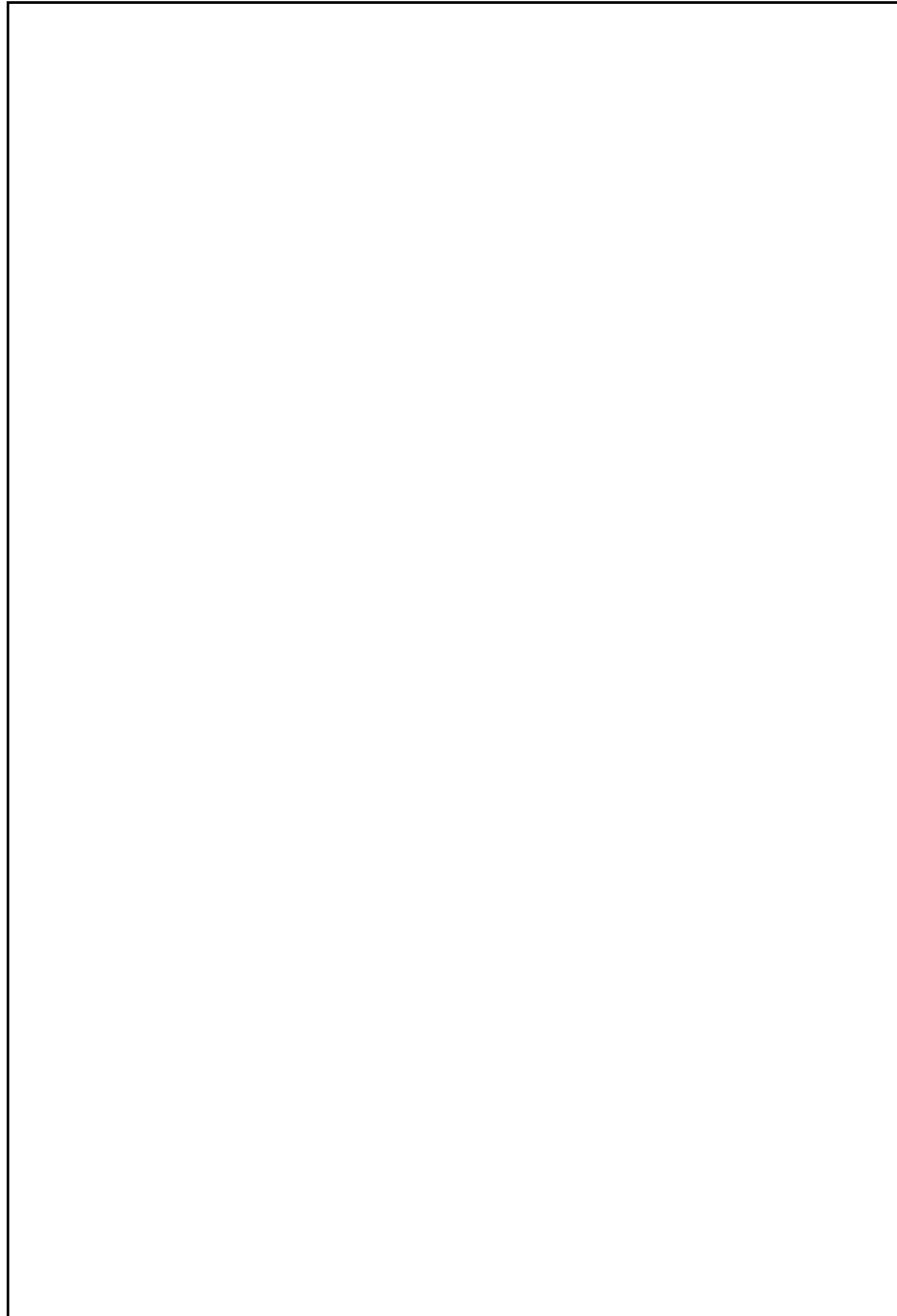


Figure 16: 'Maori Maiden' postcard, ca. 1910.

Postcard imagery has played a paramount role in the diffusion of such images since the format made its debut at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893⁶⁹. While Desmond points out that the period from 1898 to 1918 is considered as a “golden age” for postcards, when they

⁶⁹ This connection again compounds the interrelatedness of the world's fairs and exhibitions and the creation and maintenance of tourist destination imagery. For more information on postcards, see Harris.

“formed an important social circuit of visual imagery during the period before film (and later television) regularly brought exotic images of faraway places into U.S. communities,” (43) the power of the postcard as a tool for creating and reiterating images of Indigenous people as stereotypical ‘types’ is still present today (Fig. 17). The capacity of the postcard to achieve such ends is essentially connected to the west’s incapacity to recognise a pre-European Pacific history that is not idealised and/or imagined. As Dening so aptly describes it: “Since the history of Polynesian cultures could only be written out of sources that were European, one would always have to know who the Europeans were before knowing the Polynesians” (*Performances* 59). This, according to Dening, renders the ‘history’ “ahistorical” and thereby exposes the image’s foundation in imagination. As long as these myths are perpetuated, and as long as Indigenous people are accepted to be without history and therefore unchanging, these images can circulate in the west unquestioned, in turn perpetuating the image of the history- and change-less Indigene. (Desmond 45)

Taylor argues that this is similarly suggested by the ways that Maori are positioned alongside the ‘pristine’ and ‘unspoiled’ landscape that is the primary focus in a great deal of Aotearoa New Zealand’s tourism advertising. Desmond and others have identified the Hawai’ian hula girl as the distinct ‘branding’ image of Hawai’i, and in Aotearoa New Zealand, the image of the tattooed, Haka-ing Maori performs a similar function. The message sent by the fierce, savage Maori warrior is profoundly different to the beautiful, feminine and hospitable hula-girl of Hawai’i. The proliferation of this image within the staged and controlled context of touristic performativity, however, ultimately diffuses the potential savagery of the image, whilst simultaneously reiterating the image of Maori as mere signs of “what the tourist audience believes them to be” (Desmond xx). As Ryan puts it, the “making safe of the primitive into an image of entertainment” denies “the concept of Maori in the twentieth, much less the twenty-first century, as peoples of the contemporary era” (“Maori” 261).

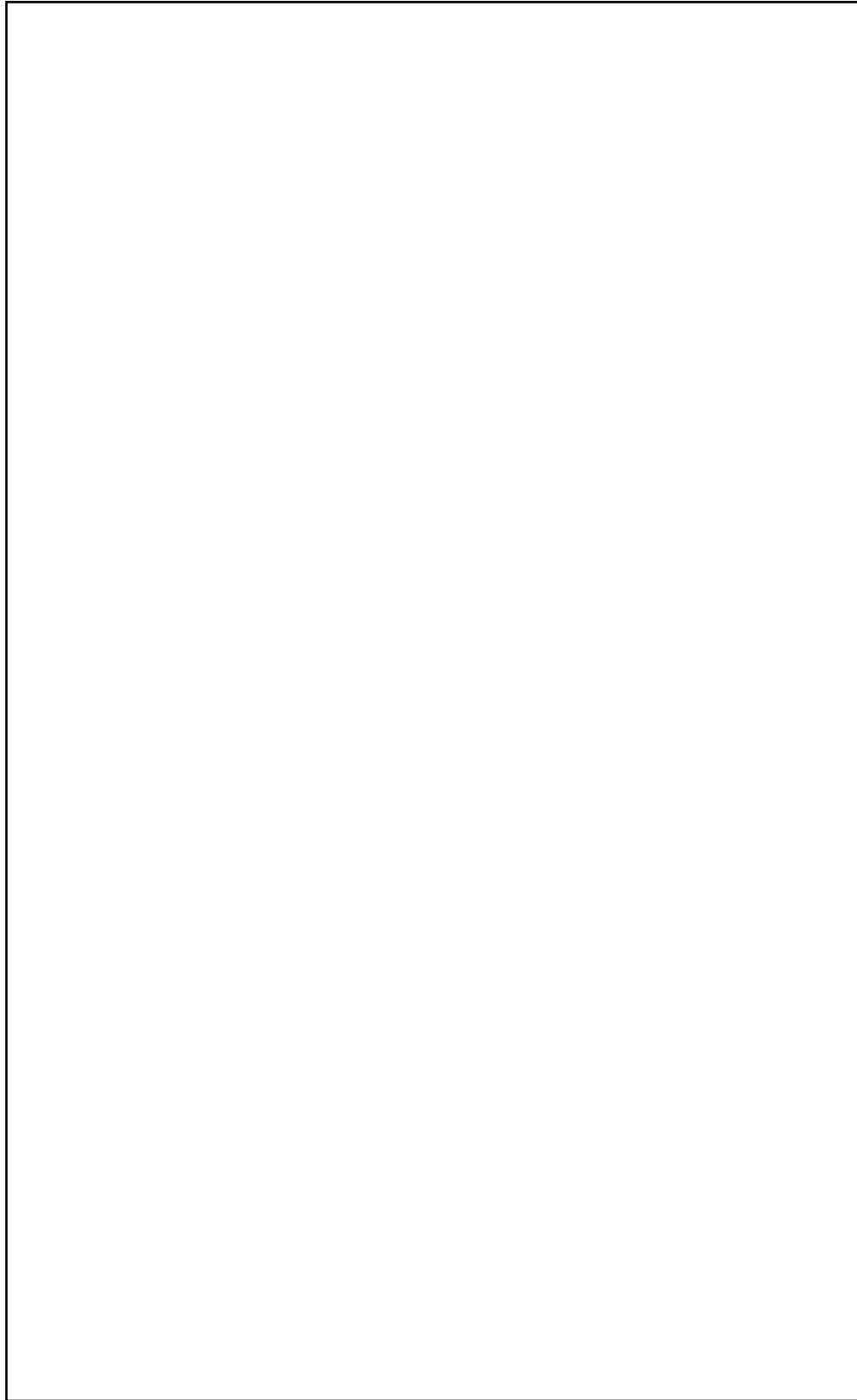


Figure 17: A selection of postcards depicting Maori performing 'traditional', decontemporised activities (ca. 2007).

Representations of the realities of contemporary Maori have struggled to be perceived amongst the proliferation of imagery depicting a traditional, Maori past. In both Once Were Warriors (1990) and The Bone People (1984), authors Alan Duff and Keri Hulme have made attempts to represent contemporary Maori, while also addressing the ruptures that are evident between the social and cultural realities of modern Maori and the commonly accepted markers of what an ‘authentic’ Maori should ‘be’. In both novels, tattoos operate as foci for the debate. Hulme, however, comes closer to reiterating the perception of Moko as an ancient ‘relic’, making no space within her narrative for Moko as a contemporary cultural practice. In this way, Hulme’s novel can be viewed as perpetuating Alan Hanson’s suggestion that “‘traditional culture’ is an invention constructed for contemporary purposes ‘which proposes a stable heritage handed on from the past’” (quoted in Pritchard 338). Maxwell has also pointed out that ‘authenticity’ is a notion that has been created by western institutions, whose job it is to assign cultural and economic value to artifacts gathered from other cultures. This process is inevitably responsible for the urge to disguise western influence, and the valuation and favouring of pre- contact artifacts and imagery as somehow more authentic, which in turn implies that post-contact culture is not valuable.

In Hulme’s novel, pre-contact Maori-ness is distinctly favoured: of the many treasures collected by Kerewin, the ones most valued are those that can be “guaranteed pre-pakeha” (The Bone People, 313). When Joe meets the kaumatua – a man the locals call “the last of the cannibals” (The Bone People, 335) – the “traditional culture” referred to by Hanson is embodied by the old man’s Moko, which is symbolic of the ancientness of the artifacts under his care. The *Moko Kuri* that is tattooed across the kaumatua’s face is a style of tattooing from the Murihiku area of the South Island. Eminent Moko historian James Cowan believes the tattoo to be of “the old style, which had been displaced by the newer, curvilinear style everywhere but in the impoverished and thinly populated south” (quoted in Gell 249). In The Bone People, this mark is an inscription of tradition and primitivism in an easily recognisable form, and is interpreted by Joe (for the reader) as a signifier of “ancient-ness”. Embedded within Joe’s description of the kaumatua is a brief interpretation of the mark: “But the really astonishing thing,” Joe thinks, “is the two parallel blue lines across this kaumatua’s face. A truly archaic *Moko*, te moko-a-tamatea. He had thought the people who had worn that tattoo dead for centuries.” (346). Joe’s observations identify the man as a “true

ancient” and also, significantly, Joe locates the man’s Moko as being pre-contact, since he had thought the people of that Moko “dead for centuries”. In this sequence, the Moko acts, for both Joe and reader alike, as a signifier, which is contextualised and understood not for its inherent meaning, but for the “ancientness” that it symbolises. Joe’s description and explanation of the “archaic moko” contributes to the overall meaning created by Hulme’s exhibition of a series of Maori cultural artifacts – the canoe, the pond, and the kaumatua himself. The perceived “ancientness” – situated as pre-contact and therefore authentic – contributes to the reader’s understanding of the pond and canoe as both profound and spiritually weighted. Significantly, this explicitly ancient mark is the only Moko depicted in The Bone People, and when the kaumatua dies, so too, symbolically, does this Maori tradition.

Yet even after the kaumatua’s death, his Moko plays a powerful role within the novel as it is Moko – embedded within and in a way adapted to the pakeha legal system – which allows the transfer of the canoe’s resting place to Joe. In a great deal of early western documentation of Moko, the marks were often likened to a signature or fingerprint, on account of their uniqueness. The signature analogy is derived from several instances within post-contact documentation where Moko has acted in lieu of a signature on legal documents such as treaties. As Alfred Gell points out, Moko designs “were important markers of the individual identity of particular chiefs. Eventually, they came to function as signatures, when chiefs appended copies of their individually distinct *Moko* designs to treaties made with the pakeha” (245; see also Te Awekotuku *Mau Moko* 112).

In The Bone People, the concept of Moko as an inimitable signature is utilised by Hulme as the kaumatua instructs his lawyer only to honour his legal will in the instance that it has been *over*-signed with the design of his Moko. “I made a will,” he explains to Joe,

which is unsigned as yet, with no beneficiary, yet. I left with the lawyer a complicated design which I said I would draw over the name of the beneficiary and my own name on my copy of the will, so he would know I completed it with a sound mind, without being under duress. (360)

The Moko, in being written over both signatures on the document, actually *subsumes* the pakeha imposition of the signature as the only legally binding mark. The elder's adoption of this practice, *despite* the fact that he could in fact sign his name, places a greater emphasis on the legitimacy of Moko as signature. Furthermore, it suggests a co-operation of pakeha (the legal will) and Maori (Moko) ways. The mystical canoe and god that are under the kaumatua's care are described as being "the heart of Aotearoa" (370). The kaumatua's grandmother, recognising the significance of the relics, yet also aware that, with colonisation, Maori ways would no longer be recognised and/or respected, made sure "pakeha fashion" (370) that the land could never pass out of her care, until she found a suitable successor. Her creation of a legal will, which is a blend of Maori and pakeha ways and procedures, ultimately protects the relics, and suggests that Maori need to adapt to, know, and work within the pakeha system in order to survive and preserve their cultural heritage.

Hulme's suggestion, however, is tempered somewhat by the traditionally dehistoricising way in which she curates her textual exhibition. The artifacts she chooses to signify the authentic "heart" of Aotearoa are undeniably represented as being both ancient and, somewhat ironically, in need of stewardship in the pakeha world. Contemporary debates surrounding the issues of cultural ownership of and curatorial rights over Maori artifacts are directly responsive to suggestions that Maori-ness is *not* ancient, but is in fact living and contemporarily valuable. These suggestions are not pursued in Hulme's representation and, like many of the author/curators discussed throughout this thesis, she utilises traditional representations of tattoos which focus upon and interact with a cultural imagery of tattoos and tattooing as something Other, whether that Otherness be suggested as ancient, culturally alien, or freakish.

When it comes to the fact of actually signing the kaumatua's will, for example, it is not only the complicated nature of the design that startles and unnerves Joe, but the alarming deftness with which the kaumatua executes it.

As though the fingers have eyes, they take the pen back to Joe's name, and quickly draw a complicated maze of spirals and spreading lines. Too quickly. No calligraphist

could have drawn the *Moko* so perfectly in the short time the fingers execute it. With the same horrid fluidity, a second pattern is drawn over the *kaumatua's* signature. (373)

Here, the process of writing Moko is presented as “horrid,” and, since “no calligraphist” could have drawn the Moko in the way that the kaumatua does, the writing over of his will becomes uncanny and therefore alarming to Joe. By having the kaumatua’s Moko write over the pakeha signature, however, Hulme suggests that Moko is, in spite of its representation as an ancient relic, more final, more complete and ultimately more inimitable than simply name or signature, and symbolically reclaims the Moko’s power as a legally binding, legitimate form of writing. Her exhibition of Moko is thus somewhat complex in its contradictions. Hulme’s curating of Moko as an ancient symbol of mysticism and authenticity however, ultimately subsumes the powerful message of Moko’s inimitability.

In Duff’s text, on the other hand, tattoos and tattooed bodies are curated in such a way as to problematise the implications of Moko’s inimitability and comment upon contemporary tattooing practice. Key to this critique is Duff’s curatorial perspective with regard to the application of Nig’s Moko, which is copied from a book. The tattooist himself is aware of the problematic nature of using a copied design, yet applies it anyway: “[H]e knew the design and its stock of variations so well he could do it by heart... a replica of olden-day Moko, which the tattooist’d copied out of a book from a photograph of a real tattooed Maori head” (181). This scene is preceded by one in which one of Beth’s elders, who had come to speak and teach at Beth’s house, describes the pride and strength that their ancestors showed in enduring the pain of the tattoos. Nig’s “electric job” (181) is clearly positioned in contrast with the elder’s description of traditional tattooing practice. Yet the “tears of sheer pain” (181) cried by Nig during the application process actually prove his toughness, and align him with his ancestors, who “endured the pain of *moko*,” and proved their “warriorhood” (180). As Te Awekotuku points out, for contemporary wearers, especially within the pantribal culture of rural and urban gangs, “the tattooed face, or ‘mask’, intentionally achieves the same impact [as it did in the past] – ferocious, menacing, aggressive” (“Ta Moko” 114). Elsewhere, Te Awekotuku explains that “the God of War, Tumatauenga, was honored [sic] by the tattooed face,” (“Mata Ora” 125) confirming the Moko’s position as symbolic of toughness for many urban wearers.

Despite these similarities, however, Nig's awareness of an element of inferiority is expressed in a dream sequence in which he is visited by his ancestors. In a bid to have them recognise him as "one of them," Nig

gestured frantically toward his face, his new tattoos just like theirs... But when he looked into the eyes of them all at once, he saw that terrible glaze of reason gone... And their tattooed faces were deeply etched, while his manhood markings were but lightly marked. (189)⁷⁰.

In this dream, he is identified by the ancestors as being "no longer one of [them]," someone who "no longer thinks as [they] do" (189). The disjuncture between 'old' and 'new' ways is exemplified by the differences in tattooing practice, and modern tattooing is ultimately represented as an inferior and essentially meaningless copy.

Duff's criticism of modern tattoo practices within the Maori community is pronounced in scenes such as this. His curatorial perspective highlights contrasts between old, 'authentic' tattooing, and newer, electric designs such as Nig's, and ultimately contributes to and promotes a system of representation that values past Maori practices as both more valuable, and more authentic than newer, postcolonial adaptations of those practices. Nig's "lightly marked" Moko is, however, still a powerful and symbolic gesture, though in a different way to the Moko of old. Pritchard indicates that "[c]ontemporary *Moko* seems very much inflected by [its capacity] to stand as an assertion of Maori sovereignty and authority" while it simultaneously operates as "a form or mark of identification that is, to use a Derridean phrase, already 'counter-signed' by 'European modernity'" (Pritchard 340). Inherent within Pritchard's assertion is the suggestion that Moko, as a symbol of "Maori-ness", can only exist in light of its interaction with European assessments of tattooing and its meanings. As a mark, the Moko, within this new urban cultural system, operates simply as a tattoo that symbolises

⁷⁰ The perceived differences between electric and hand tattooing have sparked many lively debates about the authenticity of each technique. Gordon Toi Hatfield, a well-respected Moko artist and author of the book, Dedicated by Blood uses both methods, depending on the effect he wants to achieve. He says neither is preferable and that "Chisel or needles, it is still Ta Moko" (Hatfield 55).

Maori-ness, nothing more, much in the way that Olive Oatman's tattoos symbolised a nebulous 'Indian-ness' for readers and viewers in the nineteenth century. For Nig, even without an understanding of the nuances and specific symbols contained within the mark, Moko is instantly recognisable as a "Maori" marking. Given a widespread incapacity to 'read' Nig's Moko however, and given that the design is not representative, as traditional Mokos were, of Nig's whakapapa, his Moko becomes merely 'just another tattoo', albeit one that signifies Maori-ness.

Within the community depicted in Once Were Warriors, the wearing of tattoos, no matter what their content, seems almost automatic and assumed, driven by what Te Awakotuku suggests is a "compulsion that comes from a place deep within" (Mau Moko 161). The young children of the community talk about the tattoos they will get: "And tats: Gonna get one right here, that muscle there you got it, bro. Yeow. A snake eh... A tiger? With big fuckin *teeth*" (82). Later, and as a matter of course, the kids become tattooed. "Just a couple of kids maybe fourteen, fifteen, mad keen to become Brown Fists; already covered in home-made tats, their hands and exposed arms purple with tats" (30). Nig takes the Moko as an external symbol of his Maori-ness, understanding the epistemology of his society enough to realise the way that this mark will be received. Yet the mark has ceased to be a symbol in its own right, and has been transformed into an external depiction of an internal desire. Nig chooses a tattoo that not only symbolises his toughness, which almost any kind of tattoo could have done, but also his Maori-ness, for which Moko seems to be most apt.

As Victoria Pitts points out, in modern body modification communities "the tattoo ritual is a process in which individuals can express their identities, commitments, and personal and spiritual growth" ("Reading the Body" 364). Duff's curatorial position in Once Were Warriors certainly supports Pitts' assessment, yet Duff also curates the Moko within his textual exhibition as a modern mark of an historical relationship. A tangible ancestral meaning and dialogue has been appropriated and subsumed by a modern interpretation that suggests a totally different meaning. Or does it? The tattoo is repeatedly mentioned throughout the text as an exhibition of toughness, and, as I mentioned previously, in this way a link can be made to the original Maori procedure of tattooing warriors to make them appear more formidable to their opponents:

We used to be a race of warriors... And our men used to have full tattoos all over their ferocious faces, and it was *chiselled* in and they were not to make a sound. Not one sound. The women too, they had tats on their chins and their lips were black with tattooing. (47).

This reiterates Moko as a symbol of toughness, yet it is not only Moko that is used as a symbol of toughness within the text. Bad Horse's tattoos are a "chart of his troubled childhood" (76), and the tattoos of the man Jake meets in the toilet signify that he's a "crim" (71). There is a clear similarity in these instances, yet the fact remains that modern tattoos lack the literary content of the traditional Moko, which, as Salmond points out, are the basis of many Marae (Maori meeting house) rafter paintings. Since the Marae operates, by way of the elaborate carvings depicting stories containing the history of the tribal ancestry, as a kind of literature, the tattoo's link to this design also locates them within a sphere of documentation and storytelling. But it is a storytelling based on an understanding of these designs in this way. As Beth points out, the Marae is "a bookless society's equivalent of several volumes. If you knew how to translate it, that is" (121). Where Hulme's curating of the Moko as an "ancient relic" contributes to a continuation of images of Moko as not contemporarily valuable, Duff's exhibition of contemporary Maori tattooing practice ultimately suggests that Moko has been caught between 'old' and 'new' 'readings' of the tattooed body. Just as a lack of knowledge can render the stories of the Marae meaningless or unreadable, so too can the same lack render a tattoo merely a tokenistic or symbolic gesture.

In Maori tourist performances and paraphernalia, Moko operates at the level of a symbolic, yet inherently meaningless motif of 'authentic' Maori-ness. The images reproduced on the postcards 'Nga Haka Maori' and 'A Maori Haka' (both ca. 2007) both depict Maori with painted⁷¹ Moko engaged in 'traditional' Maori activities such as carving, haka and poi dancing (Fig 17). The proliferation of painted or otherwise mass-produced Moko in tourist performances and souvenirs represents a problematic appropriation of a cultural practice

⁷¹ It is immediately apparent from both photographs that the Moko are painted, not tattooed, primarily because of the thick lines, the skin's lack of texture, and most significantly, the imperfection and asymmetry of the designs.

that, historically, has been highly individualised. Te Awekotuku has drawn attention to the “graphic commodification” of Moko (“Mata Ora” 130), which began with the touching-up of early Maori portraits, in order to fulfil the fetishistic desires of the western audience who consumed the pictures. This alteration of Moko imagery is an early example of western commercial control over the Moko and its uniqueness which has continued, almost unabated, in the tourism industry. The presence of the painted or otherwise mass-produced Moko is also ironic given the history of tattoos as being the ultimate in indelible truth, both because of their permanence, and because of what Desmond terms “physical foundationalism” – the idea that the body is real and therefore a “repository of truth” (xiv). For many beachcombers, their Indigenous tattoos symbolised their transgression because of the fact that they could not be removed – the transgression could not be reversed and so their cultural affiliations within Euro-American culture were always questionable. For the tourist gaze, however, a gaze directed towards, and in some ways immune to, the ‘creation’ of a staged authenticity, these questions of permanence don’t seem to matter. Painted Moko ‘passes’ as authentic, as it creates the *image* of ‘authenticity’, albeit superficial, staged, and ready for touristic consumption.

Perhaps even more problematically however, there exist a number of other issues relating to the fact that the mass-production of copied Moko is not reflective or respectful of Moko’s history as a highly individualised and deeply sacred practice. This in turn contributes to the essentialisation of Maori (and even Polynesian) tattoo that has existed for more than two centuries, and which I discussed in relation to the ‘blanket primitivism’ that is apparent in the narratives of many beachcombers, captives and tattooed circus performers, wherein cultural and geographical specificity is sacrificed in favour of a more general rendering of ‘primitivity’. As Te Awekotuku and others have pointed out, Indigenous tattoo designs and techniques vary dramatically throughout the Pacific, yet this fact has been continually misrepresented or even ignored within many popular representations (Mau Moko 109). While the curvilinear design of Maori Moko would perhaps be the most widely recognised of all Pacific tattoo styles, mass-produced representations pay no regard to the highly unique, geographically determined and tribal nature of the individual designs. Tourist artifacts and souvenirs such as the Maori “warrior” doll (ca. 2007), who wears a ‘flax’ skirt and shawl and bright green Moko,

contribute to the maintenance of blanket primitivism by denying the individuality of what a Moko actually and fundamentally is.

Moko is essentially and by definition one-of-a-kind: the polar opposite of the mass-produced, consumable tourist image and souvenir, which allows the tourist (or recipient of the touristic gift, the vicarious, stay-at-home, armchair traveller) to remove the artifact from its cultural context, and appropriate it as an item of display. This process plainly echoes the removal of ethnographic items for display in exhibitions and museums, and, indeed, the early trade in tattoos and tattooed bodies that was facilitated by early Pacific explorers. As Constance Classen and Davis Howes point out, “[c]ollecting is a form of conquest and collected artefacts are material signs of victory over their former owners and places of origin” (209). ‘Specimens’ such as Omai, and sailors, whose collections of tattoos paralleled their collections of other souvenirs and curiosities, propelled tattoos into the realm of ethnographic collection and display, which was intrinsically linked to processes of colonisation. These parallels in turn suggest a relationship between the early consumption of tattoos and modern consumer tourism (Thomas, Cole and Douglas 19). The tourist souvenir/artifact’s power, like other decontextualised and exhibited objects, lies in its immediate dislocation from the culture within which its intended meaning is understood, and its re-placement within a culture where meaning is dictated by a different set of values and intentions, which are primarily dictated by the curator of the object’s exhibition.

Kirschenblatt-Gimblett has suggested that tourism involves a process whereby “[a]n ethnographic bell jar drops over the terrain... [and] a neighborhood, village, or region becomes for all intents and purposes a living museum in situ. The museum effect, rendering the quotidian spectacular, becomes ubiquitous” (“Objects” 413). The carrying away of touristic souvenirs– synecdochial items that are intended to stand for the ‘authentic’ article that cannot be removed – echoes the removal of ethnographic items for display in museums, in that they communicate something about the represented culture, that is dictated and mediated by a series of culturally defined filters. Morgan and Pritchard emphasise this filtering process in their description of the museum’s process of exhibition:

[m]useums appropriate and display objects for certain ends and the objects are incorporated and constructed by the *articulation of pre-existing discourses*. In this way, the museum becomes an arbiter of meaning since its institutionalized power allows it to articulate and reinforce the scientific credibility of frameworks of knowledge or discourse functions through its method of display. (37; emphasis added)

Morgan and Pritchard's comment on the museum's reiteration of pre-existing discourses perfectly summarises the touristic display's echoing of existing colonial discourses and modes of presentation of Indigenous people. Taylor explains this phenomenon in relation to the objectification of cultural performers, who,

in the absence of any sustained dialogue, [...] become 'strangers' whose concrete existence and reality are denied. The oft-repeated images too commonly found on other markers (including brochures, postcards, and other media representations) are thereby certified, duplicated, and returned with new found validity. (22)

The removal and display or exhibition of the Moko via the tourist image therefore potentially imperils the efforts of those Maori who wish to redefine and re-embrace Moko as a living, contemporary and powerful cultural practice. When Moko is used in tourist imagery and performance to represent, signify and indeed authenticate the image of the pristine, pre-European Maori, it takes its place in the exhibition alongside other 'traditional', though no longer contemporarily applicable, signs of the 'authentic' Maori.

Ryan outlines the parallel debate that surrounds the placement of certain Maori artifacts in museums. As I mentioned earlier, many Maori view these items not as items of a previous, lost age, but as living contact with ancestors. For this, and other reasons, many Maori believe that museums are merely memorials to European colonisation of New Zealand Aotearoa and therefore challenge the museum's ownership and control over Maori artifacts (Ryan "Maori" 266). In 'Paradise Regained: The Role of Pacific Museums in Forging National Identity', Adrienne Kaeppler addresses this phenomenon by asking: "When objects become artifacts or art, and thus suitable to be placed in a museum, does this mean that a nation is in the process of losing its culture?" (19). While answering this question, Kaeppler urges us to

consider the fact that museums, “as much as some people would like to deny it, *are* political” (21). I have mentioned the debates outlined by Ryan and Kaeppler since they expand upon MacCannell’s identification that exhibitions of the primitive suggest the primitive is a dead form, and furthermore that exhibitions of ‘the past’ necessarily divorce us from it. “The staging of otherness,” MacCannell writes, “renders history, nature and traditional societies only aspects of the structural differentiation of the modern world,” (*Tourist* 84) thereby reinforcing the processes of oppositional identity definition that were institutionalised by world’s fairs, circuses and sideshows. In addition, Kaeppler and Ryan’s arguments call to attention once again the implications of exhibition for a colonised (or otherwise compromised) culture. While Kaeppler certainly implies that museumification and exhibition of cultural artifacts at least *suggests* that a culture is dying or dead, Ryan’s argument, by explaining and theorising the reasons behind Maori resistance to exhibition, highlights a contemporary comprehension of this process.

The exhibition of Moko in tourist imagery and texts such as Duff and Hulme’s novels as a ‘traditional’ and therefore not contemporaneously valuable artifact is challenged however, by a number of exhibitions (in the form of books, performances and photographic works) curated and produced by people who are actively involved in the modern tattooing movement⁷². Remarkable amongst these is the photographic book, *Dedicated by Blood*, by Maori tattoo artist Gordon Toi Hatfield, which brings together a number of photographs of Maori and their Moko, along with accompanying narratives outlining the subjects’ reasons for taking Moko⁷³. Most striking within the book are those images that explicitly address the history of ‘traditional’ exhibitions of Maori and Moko, which are contrasted with photographer Patricia Steur’s deliberately modern images, depicting tattooed Maori wearing business suits, reading the newspaper, talking on a mobile phone, and playing guitar.

A recurrent theme in the narratives of the people depicted, is their identification of Moko as an act (and symbol) of defiance, resistance and survival⁷⁴. As Alfred Gell points out,

⁷² See also Te Awakotuku (*Mau Moko*).

⁷³ The book was launched in the Netherlands with a gallery exhibition of the collected photographs.

⁷⁴ Nikora et al. also comment on the uses of Moko as resistance (479).

[f]or some reason, within the confines of our cultural system, tattooing is not susceptible to aestheticism within the accepted canon of art forms in the way that many popular crafts and practices – quilt-making, for instance – have been. The answer lies in the specific relation between tattooing, the body, and subjectivity, which has an irreducibly political dimension. (16)

Precisely because of the “political dimension” that Gell identifies, tattooing represents a tangible and potent form of resistance to dominant social mores. In Dedicated by Blood Hatfield curates not only the visual representations of Moko, but also, via the textual component to his exhibition, the political motivation and resistance that each Moko embodies. For example, one of Hatfield’s subjects, Kingi Taurua, claims that

[o]ne of the many reasons for agreeing to accept the Moko is to promote a statement heralding the beginning and awakening of the Ta Moko and the philosophy of tama tu tama ora tama noho tama mate. (Stand you live – lie down you die). It is also a statement that showed our culture was alive despite the efforts of the colonizers. (Taurua in Hatfield 9)

Similarly, Manu Neho says that Moko represents her “rising above the oppression and intolerance of a monocultural society, the correcting of an aberration” (Neho in Hatfield 56) and Tuhipo Maria Rapido Kereopa writes: “My children will not suffer the oppression of intolerance, because I have asserted my tino rangatiratanga [independence, self-determination]” (Rapido Kereopa in Hatfield 13). These subjects explicitly articulate Moko’s power not only as symbol of resistance, but also as a champion of Maori sovereignty and a way forward out of fourth world oppressions. Hatfield curates the spectacle of enormous, beautiful photographs of tattooed bodies, but his contextualisation rewrites both the motive and outcome of the spectacularisation, thereby reclaiming Maoris’ right to exhibit their tattooed bodies not as sites of freakish, primitive Otherness, but as symbols of an active, contemporary and valuable resistance and response to colonisation.

Yet the transgressive, politically potent power of contemporary Moko is not merely confined to the present, and many of the subjects suggest the temporally transcendent nature of their

Moko, and its articulation of a tribute to memories of grandmothers and great-grandmothers who wore traditional Moko⁷⁵. Tuhipo Maria Rapido Kereopa, for example, sees her Moko as her “visible presence in this time and in this space,” while it is simultaneously her “rite of passage to the past and to the future” (Rapido Kereopa in Hatfield 13). Jada Tahu Ngawai Tait-Jamiesen also suggests the transcendent nature of her Moko, stating that it is representative of “who she is being” and also where she has come from, again reiterating the past/present/future connotations of the Moko.

⁷⁵ As Te Awekotuku and others have pointed out, by 1930 the male Moko had all but died out, whereas the female Moko existed until well into the 1950s. Te Awekotuku credits its perseverance to the fact that many rural Maori women were still quite isolated, so “contact with Pakeha judgment or approbation was minimal” (Te Awekotuku, 112).

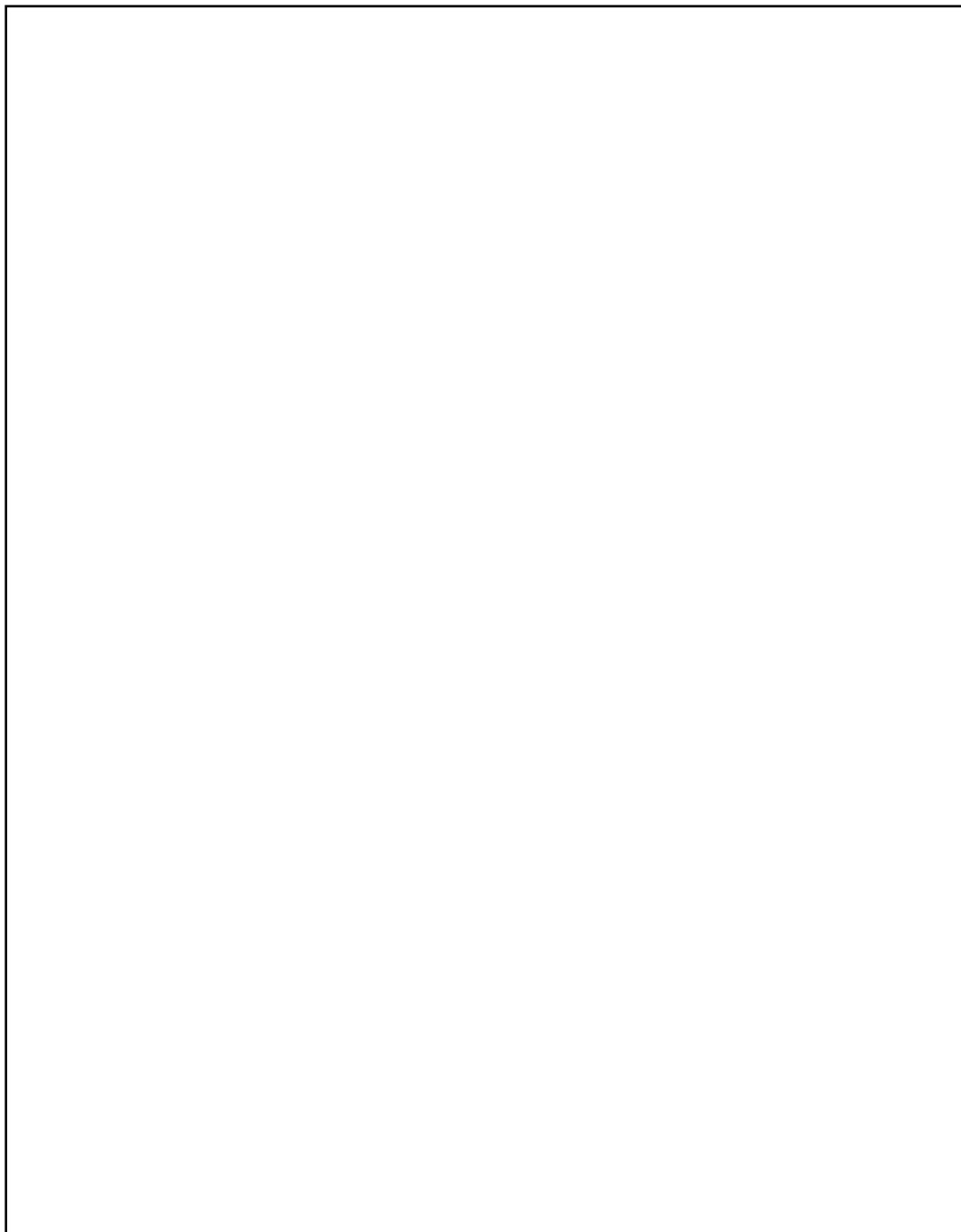


Figure 18: Jada Tait-Jamiesen's portrait in Dedicated by Blood.

The photos of Tait-Jamiesen, however, are potently evocative of the Polynesian Maiden stereotype (Fig. 18). She is kneeling on a woven flax mat, grass shawl around her shoulders, wearing a carved bone necklace and feathers in her hair, and she is naked, but for the shawl. Indeed, it is significant to note that most of the women in the book are depicted in images

that are at least suggestive, if not downright answerable to, the image of the Maiden. The most transcendent images in the book are those of the men, suggesting that Maori women are even more contained by historically determined stereotypes than the men, again reiterating the gendered nature of colonial relations, and how these relations have influenced contemporary relationships with tattooing. In Once Were Warriors, for example, it is the men who are tattooed, despite the strong and sustained history of Maori women and Moko. The disjuncture between Nig's attitude towards tattoos, and the attitudes of his ancestors, is evident in his response to women's tattoos. While Terence Barrow points out that traditionally on females, "the untattooed face was generally regarded as ugly," (81) Nig, in direct contrast to this, is not at all attracted to tattooed women. "Pity about them tats" Nig thinks about Tania, "can't stand a tat on a woman. Make em look cheap. Like they're a slut" (149-150). Nig's distaste for Tania's tattoos further emphasises his removed relationship to the historical perception of tattoos, and is representative of the colonial influences that have disrupted and redefined attitudes towards tattooing in Aotearoa New Zealand. He is here marked once again as a participant in a culture that is different not only in practice, but in perception, from the culture of his ancestors.

In Dedicated by Blood, an attempt is made to heal these disjunctures, and to reclaim and re-enliven perceptions of Moko as both beautiful and powerful. In certain photos, a deliberate challenge to the images of the Warrior and Chief (and, to a lesser degree, the Maiden) is perceptible. Te Tauhu-o-Kawa-tapu-a-rangi-Paul, for example, has a full Moko kanohi (facial tattoo). With his shaved head, enormous frame and bone and jade earrings, he could perhaps be depicted as a menacing warrior figure. In the first photo, which appears alongside the text, he is wearing a grass shawl and bone jewelry (Hatfield 95). Nothing in the photograph indicates the historical period within which it was taken, and the image could easily be compared with one of Charles Frederick Goldie's paintings of a Maori warrior⁷⁶, or an image of a chief from the Maori village at a nineteenth-century world's fair. On the following page, however, the photos depict him at home, with his family, wearing jeans, t-shirt, raincoat and gumboots. He is seated outside his house with his wife and children and dog, tools (shovel and sickle) at his side. This sequence of photos show not only the

⁷⁶ For more information on Goldie's paintings of Maori, see Te Awkotuku ("Ta Moko").

contemporaneity of the tattoos, but also the quotidian context within which Moko lives. It is not something that is purely relegated to performances of Maori-ness, or to museums or artifacts, or to mystical, ancient kaumatuas, as in The Bone People. Moko is something that lives, every day, in the most mundane of contexts. Similarly, the images of Kingi Taurua are suggestive of the temporally transcendent power of Moko that many of the subjects of the book suggest, and the photography deliberately subverts many traditional representations. Taurua is depicted in the images that face his written statement wearing a business suit, sitting outside a café, with a latte, reading the Management section of the newspaper (Fig. 19). It is a black and white photo. On the next page, he is depicted in ‘traditional’ Maori costume (grass woven skirt, feathers in hair) perhaps in a marae with Maori wood carvings visible in the background. In one of these ‘traditional’ photos though, he is talking – laughing – on his mobile phone, locating this ‘traditional’ image powerfully – and joyfully – within a modern context.

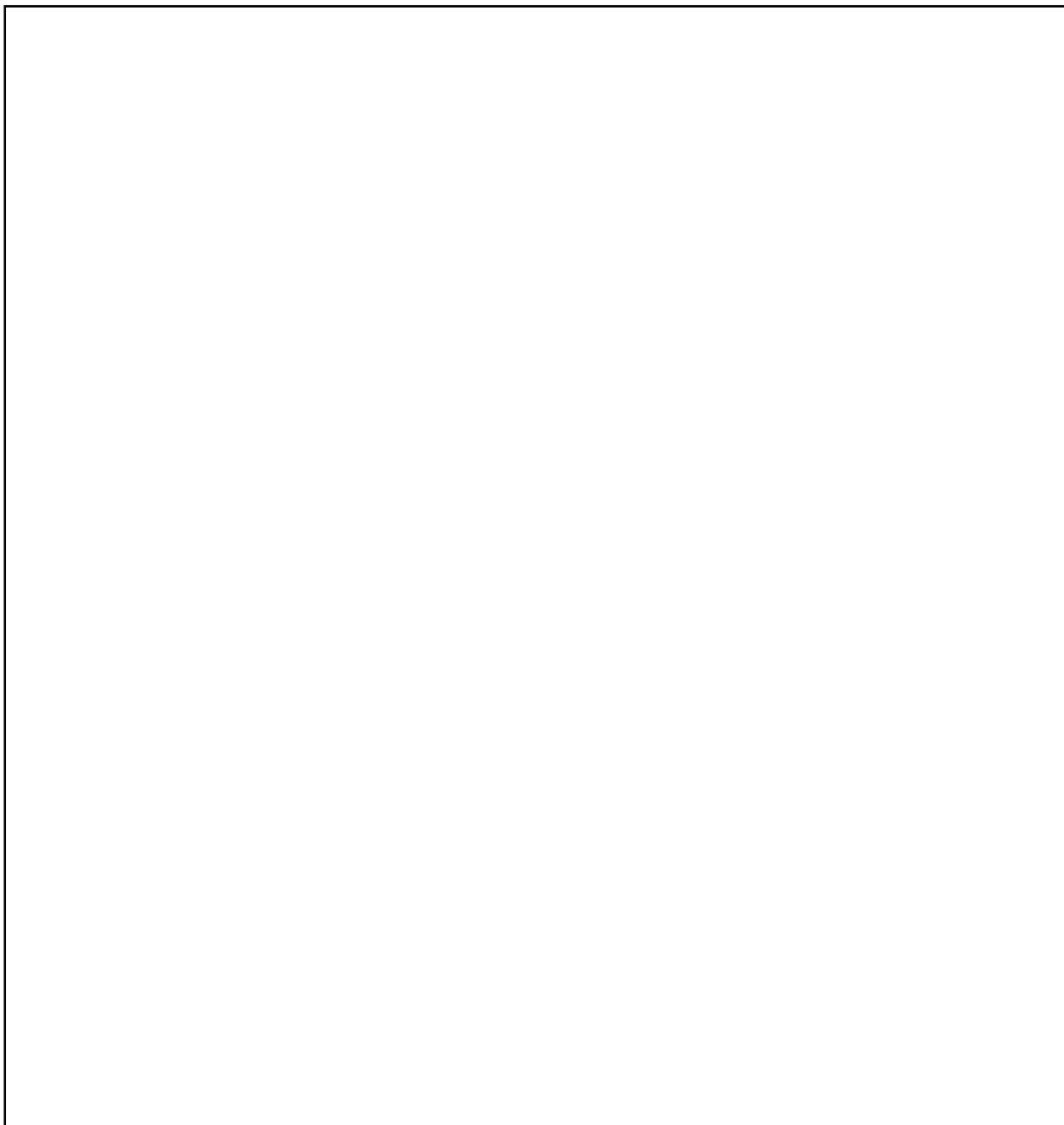


Figure 19: Kingi Taurua.

The photographs of the Mohi Whanau (Mohi family) are similarly transgressive, and their accompanying statement explicitly comments upon the notion of ‘tradition’ and what it means for contemporary Maori. “Tradition at some stage must be new, what is created in [the non-traditional Moko of our family] may perhaps be the ‘tradition’ of the future” (Mohi in Hatfield 74). This quote suggests the transitory and evolutionary nature of ‘tradition’, which is

ultimately disallowed by the repetitive re-presentations of an imagined, pre-European past that are perpetuated within tourist paraphernalia and destination imagery. Hatfield echoes this when he asserts Moko is a survivor, and a reminder of the Maori's "power of adaptability" (Hatfield 55). In the Mohi Whanau's statement, Moko is imagined as transitional and evolving - adaptable and relevant within contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand, and therefore suggestive of a way forward for Maori people.

In Once Were Warriors the transgressive, transcendent and ultimately transformative potential of Moko oscillates within the debate surrounding appropriate appropriation, whilst simultaneously symbolising the disjuncture between the old and the new. Pritchard's notion of a "transformative" culture, which builds upon Bill McKay and Peter Shand's suggestion of "a conception of culture that is permeable, transformative, dynamic and creative," (Pritchard 334) is echoed in Beth's proactive re-learning of her lost culture and history. At the same time as she is learning and sharing, however, she also acknowledges that the Maori people can't just "go back", to their roots, and/or ignore the fact of the pakeha's influence upon most areas of their lives. Progress and forward movement can be achieved by a kind of *re*-appropriation of what has been lost culturally and socially by way of education and practice, but a utilisation of this knowledge *in light* of the present situation and the recent history is necessary. This seems to be, superficially, a valid suggestion, and the ending of Duff's novel is, I believe, one of hope. Yet it is ultimately problematic in that it fails to address and define clearly exactly how "cultural appropriation" is to be policed, and to what extent (re-) appropriation of ancient ritual is in fact inappropriate even within the Maori community. Although Nig is criticised for having his Moko applied with a machine, with no genuine understanding or appreciation of the practice or of the design other than that it is "Maori" to wear Moko, in the context of McKay and Shand's argument, such modernisation of the Moko could be viewed as a progressive and urban re-appropriation of an ancient practice that has in fact been irrevocably altered by the presence of the pakeha. While Nikora et al. point out that Moko, though related to tattoo, is historically distinct from the western practice (478), modern conceptions and perceptions of Moko and Moko-wearers are mediated by the colonial palimpsest that has imposed a new set of meanings upon tattooing and tattoo-related practices such as Maori Moko. Contemporary wearers, and indeed contemporary representations of Moko, struggle against these impositions in an effort to reclaim the 'true'

meaning of Moko and, as Renata Salecl suggests, not simply copy some old cultural forms, but reinterpret those forms in a new way (Salecl 21).

For these reasons, books such as Dedicated by Blood, which attempt to wrench Moko from its position as an ahistorical artifact, and exhibit it as a powerful and meaningful contemporary phenomenon, are valuable. Yet even within such exhibitions, the prevalence of stereotypes and expectations of past representations are apparent – and not only in the representation of imagery evoking the Warrior and Maiden. Nikora et al. highlight the connection between “pre-colonial and resistance representations” and the fact that many contemporary Moko wearers feel and experience “heavy pressure to be fluent speakers of Maori, competent ritualists, and reservoirs of traditional knowledge” (480). Most significant here is the acknowledgement of the Moko’s suggestion of a ‘pre-colonial’ identity and the associated expectations of ‘traditional’ knowledge and modes of behaviour. That these pressures are experienced by Moko wearers in their day-to-day lives evinces the extent to which images of the Moko as a ‘traditional’ and pre-historical artifact have prevailed. The public’s perception of Moko wearers’ ties to expectations of traditional, pre-colonial knowledge indicate that they are perceived as representative of a timeless Maori-ness that has no standing or relevance in contemporary society. These expectations, however, are not altogether negative, as they present a significant challenge to perceived notions of traditional Maori-ness as ‘dead’, given the living nature of the tattoo, which is not, like other cultural artifacts such as tools or clothing for example, a passive object. As Nikora et al. point out

Moko imaged as survival, pride, femininity, beauty and as non-dominant ethnic identity contests the assumed right of dominant groups to dominate. It signals the continued existence and resistance of Maori and points to all the failed efforts to make Maori subservient. Moko takes on a symbolic power that questions hegemony by presenting alternative ways of viewing and being. Moko and the embodied become acutely political. (481)

For many of the subjects in Dedicated by Blood, these political expectations have been willingly embraced, and the understanding that Moko wearers will be role models is implicit within the process of obtaining Moko as described by them. Nikora et al. explain:

Within families, and Maori communities, Moko confronts how Maori think about ourselves, histories, continuities and change. It is a mark of critical reflection and conscious choice, and signals an ongoing engagement with the decolonization project. (488)

Gordon Toi Hatfield, author of Dedicated by Blood, and Maori Moko tattooist, explains that the people featured in his book

are all kaupapa [mission] driven and do not consider their Moko to be a look, but a lifestyle choice. Most do not drink, smoke or use drugs. We believe that the level of understanding of Moko is an important phase of its awakening and the people who carry Moko are role models for those who will inherit their Moko in time to come. (5)

This statement draws perceptions of Moko (and by extension, tattooing in general) away from a position on the surface, which is immediately and necessarily spectacular. Moreover, however, this passage, and others like it, allow the author/curator's voice to explicitly and overtly mediate and direct the reader/viewer's perception. Hatfield, as a Maori and as a Moko artist who is actively engaged in curating widely-disseminated images of tattooed people, is reclaiming *at every level of creation and representation*, images of Maori Moko. As a response to colonially appropriated and commodified control over representations of Indigenous people and their tattoos, this is an incredibly powerful step forwards. Obviously, all Maori (and other Indigenous people) are in a position to contribute to debates surrounding appropriation of culture. In regard to tattooing however, which, despite its increasing popularity is still practiced by a relative minority, exhibitions such as Hatfield's present a significantly visible and visual statement about the rise of Moko in Aotearoa New Zealand, which, via the perspective provided by the contextualising text, goes beyond merely re-presenting images that have been produced in the past.

For the people in Hatfield's book, Moko represents an opportunity to redeem traditional tattooing practices from the degraded, objectified position dictated by colonial relations and subjugation. Hare Wikaira indicates that committing to the Moko helped him to "clean up

[his] act” because he felt that by taking Moko, he would be perceived as a role model for other young Maori (Wikaira in Hatfield 72). Statements such as these are interesting considering the undeniable criminal aspect of contemporary tattooing practice in Aotearoa New Zealand, and its ties to many urban and rural gangs and organised crime. Indeed, these connections are so deep that Te Awekotuku argues that a debt is in fact owed to both prison tattooing culture, and to the tattooing culture of urban gangs, since she credits both of these as having acted as a “bridge” for the continuation of tattooing practice for Maori, and she claims that much of the finest and most inventive tattooing work is being done in prison (Mau Moko 114, 64). In direct contrast to this, and perhaps as a reaction to the historical connections between tattooing and criminality that are discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the leader of the Black Power club disapproves of the tendency to get Maori tattoos in prison. He sees it as a contradiction, since prison tattooing is western culture-based, and bears nothing in common with the art and culture of Moko. I would suggest, however, that it is perhaps more useful to view prison based Moko as indicative of the hybrid nature of contemporary Moko/tattoo.

The perseverance of Moko as a symbol of defiance and declaration of identity for Maori (and other Indigenous) people can certainly be related to Susan Benson’s identification of an association between contemporary tattooing practice and positions of vulnerability. In situations where corporeal definition and personal ownership, subjectivity and selfhood are compromised, tattooing represents an available method of reclamation of bodily control. This is most obviously evident in the cases of prostitutes, prisoners, convicts and sailors who tattoo themselves as a way of reclaiming, and reasserting ownership and control, of their bodies. As Alain Corbin notes, tattoos on prostitutes in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries took “the form of a concern to redeem the sold body” (157-58) in a manner similar to that of sailors who, forced to live in cramped quarters with no personal space or privacy, asserted control over their bodies by tattooing. For Maori living within a dominant white culture, Moko avails them of an opportunity to take control of their bodies, thus solidifying and confirming their Maori identity. Reweti Hui Kaakahu Te Mete, in Dedicated by Blood is a perfect example of this. He claims that his pūhoro (leg tattoo) “affirms [his] commitment to the growth and well-being of [his] culture,” (Te Mete in Hatfield 81). Similarly, Helen Kaipo,

in the same book, says she wanted to take Moko in an effort to become more “holistically Maori in every way possible” (Kaipo in Hatfield 26).

In light of these statements and relationships then, it is interesting to note that Hatfield apparently has no qualms about tattooing Moko on a non-Maori, such as musician Ben Harper, who is featured in Dedicated by Blood. Harper, who is of Jewish and African-American heritage and lives in California, has extensive Moko on both of his arms and his back. Hatfield suggests that Harper is an example of the “enormous” global consciousness about Moko. He writes: “A non-Maori like Ben Harper is a good example of people who are searching to experience something traditional, yet in a very tangible form” (87). This statement is distinctly complicated, given the emphasis in current tourism scholarship surrounding the importance of authentic experience in the development and popularity of tourist attractions, as well as discussions in the tattoo community surrounding the practice of kirituhi – tattooing Moko on non-Maori⁷⁷. Is a non-Maori, such as Harper, a cultural tourist, and the Moko an elaborate souvenir, comparable to the teatowels, dolls and postcards discussed elsewhere in this chapter? The temptation to read it as such certainly exists, and there is no doubt that many non-Maori tourists who visit Aotearoa New Zealand come away with a Moko-esque tattoo as a souvenir of their travels. Indeed, tattoos have operated as souvenirs for travellers – both to the Pacific and elsewhere⁷⁸ – for centuries. This phenomenon, however, is much more telling than it may initially appear since, as MacCannell points out, souvenirs can only operate as such under certain circumstances. In order for items such as a Moko-style tattoo, boomerang, Swiss music box, or a bolt of Liberty Print fabric from London to serve as souvenirs, MacCannell argues, their receiver (or viewer) must “possess the knowledge that makes the connection between the object and its referent” (Tourist 150). Moko’s ability to act as a symboliser of Maori-ness (and, by extension, a souvenir of Aotearoa New Zealand), rests upon the fact that the association already exists within the popular, global consciousness. This consciousness arises, in equal parts, from two interrelated phenomena. Firstly, Aotearoa New Zealand has consciously deployed images of Maori and Moko as “a trademark, essentially – through which the New Zealand state could

⁷⁷ Of course, this practice is not new in itself, as discussed in Chapter Two. The difference here is that Harper is not a beachcomber, and has not integrated himself into a Maori community.

⁷⁸ For an account of the uses of tattooing as “souvenir” in French Polynesia, see Kuwahara. For information on pilgrimage souvenir tattoos, see Caplan (“Introduction”).

distinguish itself in a competitive market for migrants, tourists, trade, and investment” (Werry 366). This trademark, or branding, was proliferated most powerfully by the United States Navy’s tour of the Pacific in 1907, when mass-produced imagery from the toured locations was sent back to the United States in the form of postcards, photographs and carefully-constructed media reports. Problematically, in this context, “Maori bodies were invoked to legitimate the revitalization of Anglo-Saxonsim, and Maori culture – borrowed and burlesqued – [...] was subsequently enjoyed vicariously by millions within the U.S.” (Werry 366). This branding is intrinsically related to the proliferation of destination images – in literature, art and exhibition – that created and entrenched the cultural perception of Maoriness that was consumed. Morgan and Pritchard perceive the end result of tourism promotion and marketing to be “a system of meanings communicated by signs, which are at once the product of, and the reinforcement and recreation of particular ways of seeing and interpreting the world,” (31) and they ultimately conclude that contemporary tourist images of Others are “the culmination of a historical tradition which continues to structure perceptions today” (212).

Yet it is not only Maori Moko that is being exported and commodified as a tourist souvenir. Throughout the Pacific, tattooing has played, and continues to play, an integral role in the development of tourist industries in Pacific Island nations. Samoa and Tahiti have both hosted international tattoo festivals, which have been explicitly targeted towards tourists, and as a result of such promotion, tattoos have emerged as the ultimate souvenir (Kuwahara 31). This, along with the publication of books such as Tattoo Road Trip: Samoa, has meant that Pacific tourism is now largely engaged with “the globalization of tattoo culture” (Kuwahara 32). Harper’s Moko, applied by a Maori artist at Harper’s home in Los Angeles, seems to me the ultimate example of this globalisation, which is, essentially, an extension of a globalised colonial practice of disengaging and transposing cultural practices from their original setting and re-presenting them in a new context under necessarily different circumstances.

Superficially, this may seem problematically close to cultural appropriation. Hatfield’s explanation of the process of tattooing a non-Maori such as Harper, however, is powerfully suggestive of the healing potential of Moko (and, by extension, other forms of culturally specific tattooing). Furthermore, Hatfield’s curating of the Harper photographs and text

within the system of meaning generated by the book as a whole, contextualises Harper's Moko experience within Hatfield's own experience of tattooing a non-Maori. In this context, the globalisation of Moko is ultimately portrayed as a positive movement, as long as both parties are cognisant of the implications of the cross-cultural encounter. In this way, Hatfield's book contributes to a shift in perception surrounding Maori Moko as a transformative and transgressive process. Both Harper and Hatfield express that the Moko is about more than just the tattoo. It is about a relationship – to oneself, and to others. Hatfield explains: "Moko is not just about beautiful designs. Moko does not make a person, but complements the existing and often unrealized potential of that individual. The individual is testimony to the moko, not the other way around" (87). Harper as well, reiterates this. When Hatfield arrived at Harper's home to apply the tattoo, the two exchanged

songs of loss love, triumph and tragedy. We exchanged philosophy over the balance and imbalance of the planet, and how we planned to change it. At that moment, my moko had begun. He did not physically draw lines until the next morning; the unification of our worlds was as much part of the moko as the pattern itself. (Harper in Hatfield 88)

Several meanings are revealed in this statement. The alignment of discussions of 'healing' and 'balance and imbalance' and the 'unification' of two different worlds suggests that Moko is capable of facilitating such healing and unification. The performance of this specific cultural practice in an environment and culture of sharing and mutual respect seems to obliterate the need for cultural ownership of the practice or exclusive rights. While Hatfield asserts that cultural exploitation and appropriation needs to be carefully monitored and controlled, he also recognises that by engaging with people such as Harper, Maori have the opportunity to promote their culture on their own terms, since Hatfield maintained control over the design selection, and actively engaged with him about the meaning and responsibility of carrying Moko.

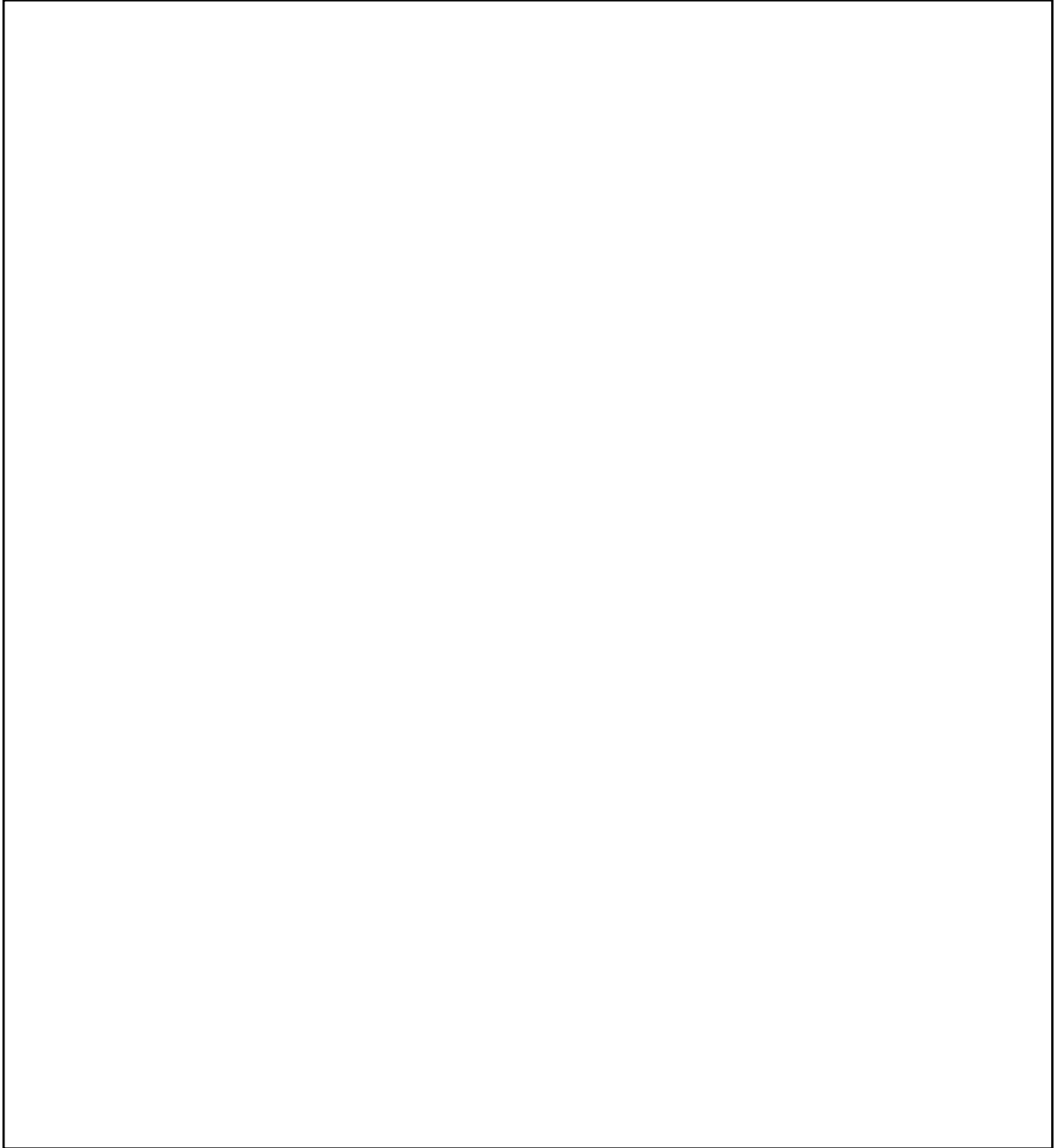


Figure 20: Gordon Toi Hatfield and Arthur Harawira in the pukana (gesture of defiance).

The Moko's part in Hatfield's vision of reconciliation is, I believe, representative of Moko's position within the broader spectrum of contemporary Maori society and culture. While this position is by no means straightforward, and while a vast number of contemporary exhibitions of Moko are still constrained by the legacies of centuries of colonial appropriation

and (mis)representation of Moko, texts such as Dedicated by Blood are slowly moving Moko into a contemporarily valued position. Most notable about Dedicated by Blood's transgressive power though, is its willingness to engage with the signs and traditions that have resulted in Moko's relegation from modernity in the first place. Moko's potential is expressed most clearly (and also humorously) in the pukana (gesture of defiance) depicted on page 71 (Fig. 20). The tattoo artist, and author of the book, Gordon Toi Hatfield, is kneeling down with his tattoo machines, which he has housed in a violin case, à la the famed Mafioso's gun case. Gordon wears a t-shirt and shorts, and his puhoro (leg design) is visible. Behind him is Arthur Harawira, spear in hand, wearing a flax skirt, mid-haka. The photo suggests a way forward for a warrior race and a melding of 'traditional' with new forms of resistance such as the tattoo. The photo's alignment with a "gesture of defiance" suggests that the reclamation of the culture of Moko, not just on an aesthetic, 'fashionable' level, but on a spiritual level as well, is a movement of healing as well as reclamation of Maori cultural heritage, which is active and powerful in spite of colonial oppression of the practice.

The postcolonially reclaimed Indigenous tattoo, therefore, can no longer represent what it did pre-contact. It holds the entire history of colonial representation within it, and it is a coded and loaded literal inscription of the body at the very location that object becomes subject. As such, the Indigenous tattoo's movement into a postcolonial system of meaning is defined by its ability to engage with and translate the representations of the past.

As Elizabeth Grosz has pointed out, the metaphors of body writing

posits the body, and particularly the epidermic surface, muscular-skeletal frame, ligaments, joints, blood vessels, and internal organs as corporeal surfaces, the blank page on which engraving, graffiti, tattooing or inscription take place. This metaphor of the textual body asserts that the body is a page or material surface... ready to receive, bear and transmit meanings, messages or signs, *much like a system of writing*. (Volatile 117; emphasis added)

Grosz's statement highlights the fact that writing – be it corporeal, textual or otherwise – can only operate within a system of meaning. As a result of this necessary *contextualisation*, the tattoo in itself cannot exist as a symbolic text. It is only within the context of history and

culture that it establishes meaning, so the tattoo cannot escape the layers of meaning that have been inscribed within it via the process of historical representation. If contemporary curators are to move beyond the stifling colonial traditions that attach images of Indigenous tattooing to notions of a pre-contact authenticity, histories of display, both textual and otherwise, *must* be considered. Hatfield's exhibition, in this regard, represents the most clearly-articulated vision of Moko's postcolonial future. Its engagement with colonial imagery, and its representation of such imagery in a carefully curated context provides a historically engaged, yet transgressive, foundation upon which future exhibitions can build.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS AN APPROPRIATE APPROPRIATION

In his narrative, the beachcomber James O'Connell relates for his reader an anecdote involving the Ponapeans' discovery of some books he had in his possession. He writes,

the leaves were torn out and sewed into blankets, under which half a dozen women were strutting in all the pride of peacocks. In addition to the beauty which the article thus manufactured possessed as a "lagow [likou]," (blanket), it had another charm in the tattooing. The wearers imagined themselves connected with the English chiefs while thus wearing the white man's tattoo. (110)

When it began to rain, and the garments were washed from their bodies, "They were very much chagrined [...] and protested that the white man's tattoo was good for nothing, it would not stand. That the islanders' tattoo will stand, my body is witness" (110). This is an incredible scene in the narrative, and one which has, unsurprisingly, been attentively discussed by most scholars who have worked on O'Connell's narrative. I have included it for this very reason. These cross-cultural encounters, which juxtapose processes of communication – the writing of the book with the tattooing of the Ponapeans – provide the subject matter for a dazzling array of exhibitions and representations of cultural Otherness. Curators, whether of narratives, bodies or tattoos, are responsible for arranging otherwise random objects, images and/or artifacts into a system of meaning. The curating of such collections, in both literary and corporeal exhibitions of tattooed Otherness, has undeniably contributed to how we understand tattooing today. The efforts made by Euro-Americans to 'read' the translocated tattoos that appeared in these exhibitions and displays, have meant that, even though the "white man's tattoo" will not "stand", in that the written pages can quite literally be destroyed by something as transient as a rain shower, the implications of the 'white man's' rendering of the tattooed body has proved to be a most steadfast 'writing' indeed.

The literary and corporeal exhibitions of tattooed bodies contained within each of the texts discussed in this thesis have contributed to the popular Euro-American conception of tattooed bodies as Other, and perhaps more significantly, spectacular. As I have shown, the author-curator performs essentially the same function as the curator of a museum, world's fair or sideshow display of corporeal Otherness. Even in cases where the 'artifact's' voice is not entirely silenced, and the narratives are ostensibly told "in their own words" (such as in the case of a number of the beachcomber narratives discussed in Chapter Two) they are at the very least subsumed and mediated by the voice of their editor-curator and the pressures deriving from populist and generic demands.

The texts gathered here, though apparently disparate, are connected by their authors' engagement with the tropes of exhibitionary display found in the colonial formats of the world's fairs, exhibitions, and circus side- and freak-shows. These tropes, though superficially 'entertaining' are deeply and irreversibly determined by the traditions of display that accompanied the 'discovery' of Others, and the necessary role such displays played in naturalising, justifying, and rationalising colonialism. The tattooed exhibit occupies a niche within this greater tradition of display due to its occupation of the boundary between the 'made' and 'born' freak. As social theorists attempted to posit racial 'characteristics' as inherent, the potentially transformative 'influence' of the tattoo – a savage inscription that, in transgressing the corporeal boundary, alters the 'essence' of the tattooed individual – complicated such notions of racial and cultural affiliation. Consequently, exhibited tattooed Others were curated in such a manner as to Other the tattooed body, and reinscribe categories of Western identity.

Ultimately, however, this operation often proved to be problematic for author-curators due to the tattoo's semantically rich nature, which, in many cases, prompted viewers and readers to interpret the marks in ways other than those dictated by the curator. Most notably in the case of Stratton's exhibition of Olive Oatman, the slippery suggestions made by the display of her tattoos at once contradicted, complicated and complied with Stratton's ideological agenda, and were ultimately 'too large' to be harnessed by Stratton successfully. For Herman Melville, a strict and at times stifling adherence to a series of stereotypes meant that his display of tattooed bodies could successfully, if somewhat mechanically, 'confirm' the contrasting,

western identity of his narrators. These types, and Melville's cementing of them via his undeniable influence over western imagining of the Pacific, provide a set of figures for the Maori curators discussed in Chapter Five to 'play with'. At times successfully, at times clumsily, the postcolonial influence upon curatorship of imagery and tropes discussed in earlier sections of the thesis brings the tattooed body to the door of the "gilt and scarlet cage" that holds Hayden's alienated and Othered 'Tattooed Man' captive. It is this looking back and looking forward that is most fascinating to me, and it is this that I believe to be imperative for future considerations of tattoo.

Tattooing is undeniably embedded within western culture. It is no longer a subversive act for many people, and no small number of proponents consider tattooing to be, as Melville puts it, an example of "Fine Art". Such developments, however, have failed to consider the histories of exhibition that I have exposed within this thesis. Or perhaps these histories have, like the artifact's 'voice', been subsumed by the larger meta-discourses relating to representations of tattooed bodies. For contemporary practitioners however, be they scholars of tattooing, tattoo artists of all origins or indeed the *spectators* of tattooing, an awareness of and engagement with these histories will make the difference between reappraisal and re-inscription. As I pointed out in Chapter Five, for Indigenous people engaged in processes of de-colonisation, the reclamation of traditional tattooing practices is often a significant (and significantly visible) step. Yet attempts to make such a step without a consideration of the tattoo's deeply embedded relationship with the maintenance of colonial power and appropriation may prove to be detrimental to these efforts, in that it will entrench notions of a de-contemporised 'native' who can only be viewed as 'authentic' if pre-colonial.

The curatorial traditions of exhibiting tattooing and tattooed bodies then, must be reassessed in light of the histories of colonially oriented displays. As tattooing in general moves into an increasingly globalised arena, the potential for cultural specificity to be forever lost to a generic concept of modern primitivism increases. For these reasons, present and future textual curators are faced with the challenge to curate an image and idea of authenticity that both *incorporates* and *re-writes* the exhibitions of Otherness that have rendered the tattooed body as an object of spectacle.

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