

BODIES AND TATTOOS: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE WILDERNESS

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(Milan)

*Here on the body, on the surface,
the waving, fleeting, changeable soul, the soul striped,
naked, colored, troubled, blazed; here are the tattoos. My white soul
flames and spreads red colors changing with other red colors.
The deserts are black if there is no soul;
green are the prairies where the soul
sometimes lay*

Michel Serre, *Les cinq sens*

In his *Last of the Mohicans* (1826) James Fenimore Cooper gave us the description of Chinganchgook, one of the heroic Indian characters of the world-famous novel. "His body" wrote Cooper "which was nearly naked, presented a terrific emblem of death, drawn in intermingled colors of white and black".¹ In this sentence, Cooper's narrative made a fusion between the body and the tattoo or body painting. The naked body itself becomes a tattoo that represents the dangerous Indian in the crudest forest and this sentence remains one of the most powerful symbols of the belonging of this body, an Indian body, to the wilderness.²

¹ James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), Ed. John Mc Williams, Oxford University Press, New York, 1990. p. 29.

² The difference between "body painting" and "scarnification," as John Aubrey enjoyed saying instead of "tattooing" when he helped me with my research at the Newberry Library in Chicago, is essential to a study of American Indian culture, but not so important to this context. I would like to thank all the Newberry Library staff that gave me invaluable help for this study.

Regarding the description of tattoos, Cooper was more explicit in other parts of the novel. For example, the portrayal of Tamenund, the old, "wise and just" patriarch of the Delaware encampment, offers us a perfect description of a tattooed body:

The color of his skin differed from that of most around him, being richer and darker; the latter hue having been produced by certain delicate and mazy lines of complicated and yet beautiful figures, which had been traced over most of his person by the operation of tattooing.³

In this way, tattoos were closely related to the body, much more than body painting, to the point of becoming part of the body. With these marks, the body itself was transformed in memory of the past, history, consciousness and wisdom. The "mazy lines" traced on the Delaware chief's body remind us of the ancient history of the Great Lakes tribes and of the times before the arrival of white men, before Jesuit and Puritan missionaries' religious teaching that forbade so many things, one of which was the art of tattooing.

The tattoos of the Delaware chief were closely connected to the behavior of the American Indians in the eighteenth century and their traditions became part of Cooper's narrative: certainly he had never lived with the Indians, nor he was an ethnographer, but he accumulated broader

³ James Fenimore Cooper, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

information about frontier life useful for rendering the Indian characters of his novels, even if in a stereotyped way.⁴

It is certain that tattooing was a custom among the indigenous people of the Great Lakes: Father Joseph François Lafitau, a Jesuit who traveled through these regions in the early eighteenth century, reported: "The Iroquois appear to me to have taken it from their neighbors, usually only the men have themselves tattooed".⁵ John Long's *Journal* among the Chippewa described the making of a tattoo:

The chief draws the figure he intends to make with a painted stick dipped in water in which gunpowder has been dissolved; after which with ten needles dipped in vermilion, and fixed in a small wooden frame he pricks the delineated parts, and where the bolder outlines occur he incises the flesh with gun flint (...) during the process the war songs are sung.⁶

⁴ In these works he made the good Indians all too good and the bad Indians all too bad, as Allan Nevins recalls in his Afterword to *The Last of the Mohicans*, p. 540. Certainly, Cooper was not esteemed by American Indian scholars. For example, Francis Parkman didn't like Cooper's Indian characterizations, even if he considered that the *Leatherstocking Tales* were helpful in reminding to the readers that white "civilization has a destroying as well as a creative power", *Ibid.*, p. xiii. For the symbolism of the *Leatherstocking Tales* in the American history see Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land. The American West as Symbol and Myth*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. pp. 51-70 and also Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land. Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1975. pp. 89-114.

⁵ Father Joseph François Lafitau, *Moeurs des Sauvages Américains, comparés aux mœurs des premiers temps par le P. Lafitau, de la Compagnie de Jésus*, Charles Estienne Hochereau, Paris, 1724. English translation: *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Costumes of Primitive life*, Ed. William N. Fanton and Elizabeth L. Moore, Champlain Society, Toronto, 1974. vol. 2, p. 35.

⁶ John Long, "Voyages and Travels of an Indian Interpreter and Trader, Describing the Manners and Customs of the North American Indians (1768-1782)", London, 1791 in *Early Western Travelers*, Ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, Arthur H. Clark Co., Cleveland, 1904. vol. 2, p. 85.

And what about the images tattooed on Native Americans' bodies? The Indians living in the belt of northern coniferous forest, especially, had their societies organized in clans which traced their ancestry through the mother's line and each of these clans had a totemic animal that had religious and symbolic significance to the group and to the individual members of the clan itself. In this framework, totemism was one of the chief motifs in tattooing among Indians. The figures of animals tattooed on their skin were the symbols of their totems, their protectors, the suppliers of a magic power.⁷

Here we have Cooper's novels touching upon this topic: "I have seen strange and fantastic images drawn in their paint" affirmed David Gamut, the master of psalmody of *The Last of the Mohicans*. "Was it a serpent?" somebody asked him. "Much the same" he answered "It was in the likeness of an abject and creeping tortoise". Then, when the Delaware sagamore spoke:

his gestures were impressive, and, at times energetic. Once he lifted his arm on high, and as it descended, the action threw aside the folds of his light mantle [enough to reveal] the animal just mentioned (...) worked in a blue tint, on the swarthy breast of the chief.⁸

Once again we find a tattoo; once again we find a symbol of totemism patterned by Cooper upon Reverend John Heckewelder's *Account of the History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighboring States*, the book published in 1819 which gave our author almost all his information about Indian history. In this work, Heckewelder specified that the Unamis of Tortoises were an eminent Delaware clan. The Tortoise, or, as commonly called, the Turtle tribe, among the Lenape, claimed a superiority and ascendancy over the others

⁷ Garrick Mallery, *Picture-Writing of the American Indians*, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1894. p. 122.

⁸ James Fenimore Cooper, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

because their relation, the great Tortoise, a fabled monster, the Atlas of their mythology, bore according to their traditions this great island earth on his back.⁹

Cooper used this powerful interrelation between the totem and nature, but he emphasized the importance of nature. The "savages" have a qualitative vision of nature, in contrast with the "white" vision of nature that is quantitative and instrumental.¹⁰ Even if he was not completely conscious of this mentality, Cooper was not obsessed with the control of nature, although he spoke of the "toils and dangers of the wilderness."¹¹ Certainly he understood the intrinsic violence of the wilderness, but this concept assumed a positive meaning and became the focal point of his *Leatherstocking Tales*. I will come back to this point further on.

Another example of tattoos linked to totemism occurs at the end of the novel, when we see the death of Uncas - Nature's sensitive, truthful and skilled Mohican warrior - and Cooper narrates his funeral in full detail:

Seated, as in life, with his form and limbs arranged in grave and decent composure, Uncas appeared, arrayed in the most gorgeous ornaments that the wealth of the tribe could furnish. Rich plumes nodded above his head; wampum, gorgets, bracelets, and medals, adorned his person in

⁹ John Heckewelder, *Account of the History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighboring States*, Committee of History, Moral Science, and General Literature, Philadelphia, 1819. The major contemporary critic of *The Last of the Mohicans* objected that its "characters were Indians of the school of Heckewelder, rather than of the school of nature" (Lewis Cass in an 1828 issue of the *North American Review*); Heckewelder was an ardent missionary, and, like many of the missionaries living on the American frontier, he tried to understand Indian souls and motives.

¹⁰ For further discussion of implications of this analysis see Pierluigi D'Oro, "Savage and Civil: Indian Violence and Non in the Revolutionary Context", in Loretta Valtz Mannucci, ed., *People and Power: Rights, Citizenship and Violence*, Milan Group in Early United States History, Quaderno 3, Milan, 1992. p. 21 (or see www.library.vanderbilt.edu/quaderno).

¹¹ James Fenimore Cooper, *op.cit.*, p. 11.

profusion (...) Directly in front of the corpse, Chinganchgook was placed, without arms, paint, or adornment of any sort, except the bright blue blazonery of his race, that was indelibly impressed on his naked bosom.¹²

Jesuit priests and Puritan clergy generally opposed this totemism and tattooing. Both worked for the conversion of Indians to Christianity. Jesuit priests especially established missions and martyred themselves in the hostile land. They trekked northward to the Great Lakes region to convert the Hurons, who were settled in towns with populations of several thousand. As opposed to the Puritans, the Jesuits studied the Indians beliefs and tried not to replace these beliefs, but to build on them.¹³

"One must be very careful condemning a thousand things among their customs, which greatly offend minds brought up and nourished in another world" wrote a Jesuit Father in 1647 and continued:

It is easy to call irreligion what is merely stupidity, and to take for diabolical working something that is nothing more than human; and then, one thinks he is obliged to forbid as impious certain things that are done in all innocence, or, at most, are silly but not criminal customs.¹⁴

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 340. In Herman Melville's *Typee* (1846) there was a description of the effigy of a dead warrior, on the island Nukahiva in the Marquesas, quite close to this one. See Gesa Mackenthun, "Haunted Utopia: Colonialism and the Search for a Usable Future in *Arthur Gordon Pym*, *Typee*, and *The Crater*," in Loretta Valtz Mannucci, *Visions of the Future*, Milan Group in Early United States History, Quaderno 5, Milan, 1996. Even in Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* we have "a fine utopia of Indian natural living." Annette Kolodny, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

¹³ For an analysis of the Jesuit role in these regions see Francis Parkman, *The Jesuits in North America in the Seventeenth Century*, New Library, Boston. 1909.

¹⁴ Quoted in William J. Eccles, *The Canadian Frontier, 1534-1760*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1969. p. 48.

Following these principles, the Jesuits carefully distinguished between the "evil" traditions of the Indians, such as the tattoos or the prayers to the devil, and their natural "medicines."¹⁵ This fact does not mean that Jesuit missionaries were sympathetic to Indians or accepted the principle of human equality - for example, they raised objections to racial mixing and interracial sexual relations - but it helps us to understand the differences between the ideologies of Catholic and Protestant missionaries.¹⁶

The latter missionary activity was meager and focussed on the weakest tribes, which had lost political and cultural autonomy in New England. Weakened by disease and overwhelmed by the steady growth of the white society, these tribes abandoned their culture and replaced it with the English style of life, lived in "Praying villages", and imitated white man's clothing, images and forms of worship: to put it simply, they transformed/lost their identities. Puritan missionaries did not accept any degree of interaction between cultures and they, like the Jesuits, did not ever consider tolerating tattoos.¹⁷

Yet tattooing was a custom in ancient times for Christians who often came back with religious symbols - or even a whole series of them - tattooed on their bodies after participating in a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The pain of tattooing was seen as an element of sacrificial masochism to ensure the mercy of the divine powers. The Puritans interfered with the spread of this custom and stressed the psalm in the Old Testament: "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you" (Lev. XIX. 28). Following this rule, they fought tattooing both in Europe and in

¹⁵ Virgil J. Vogel, *American Indian Medicine*, Civilization of the American Indian Series, Norman, 1970. pp. 42-43.

¹⁶ George R. Healy in his "The French Jesuits and the Idea of the Noble Savage," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., 15 (1958). pp. 143-167, reassumes the theological disputation on this concept.

¹⁷ About the English missionary activities see Gordon G. Brown, "Missions and Cultural Diffusion," *American Journal of Sociology*, 50 (1944). pp. 214-219; Pierce R. Beaver, "Methods in American Missions to the Indians in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Calvinist Models for Protestant Foreign Missions," in *Journal of Presbyterian History*, 47 (1969). pp. 124-148; Francis Jennings, "Goals and Functions of the Puritan Missions to the Indians," *Ethnohistory*, 18 (1971). pp. 197-212.

America and discouraged native tattooing. In New England, especially, tattoos came to be the mark of Cain: not the sign of holiness, but of crime and black magic. More generally, the tattoo was considered a "mode of adornment to be warred upon, the representation of the "savagism" that must be eliminated.¹⁸ So long as the Indians remained "savages," they menaced the identity of the Puritan way of life favoring by their visible presence all the religious deviants in the community itself such as Roger Williams, Quakers, and the Salem witches.¹⁹ Maintaining the moral standards within their community was a main purpose of the Puritans and tattoos, as permanent marks on the skin, were also infamous brands: scarlet letters defining criminals, slaves, deserters and "savages".²⁰

The physical bodies, with their tattoos, reproduced the anxiety of the social bodies. As in Foucault's studies, the body was viewed as "the inscribed surface of events ... totally imprinted by history."²¹ Tattoos, in particular, liberalize the vision of the body as a surface on which any culture "writes" its metaphors. The Indian bodies were, therefore, not simple undifferentiated "surface" onto which were designed abstract lines, but they were inscribed with constructed patterns to sign the hidden message of a "nature".

Cooper's narrative failed to show a specific, conceptual relationship. Certainly the tattoos and the naked body were linked with a nature, but this was not strictly associated with the Native American culture, but with generic "savagery." The naked and tattooed body reinforces the opposition between "Columbus" and the "savages," the naked primitive opposed to the

¹⁸ Albert Parry, *Tattoo: Secrets of a Strange Art as Practised among the Natives of the United States*, Simon and Shuster, New York, 1933. p. 124.

¹⁹ James Axtell, "Colonial America Without the Indians: A Counterfactual Scenario" in Frederick E. Hoxie, *Indians in American History*, Harlan Davidson, Arlington Heights, Ill., 1988. p. 57.

²⁰ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1960. For Hawthorne this story centered on the efforts of the Puritans to inscribe on Hester Prynne's body the mark of her sin, adultery, was an emblem of Puritanism itself.

²¹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vintage, New York, 1980, p. 148. Foucault's studies underlie much of the current work on the body.

dressed civilized.²² And the "savage" was noble as well as ignoble, depending on the historical needs and circumstances of the Europeans.²³

But the extraordinary new element for the Europeans in the "New World" was the wilderness and Cooper needed to add much more wilderness to his Indians: the tattoos, as ancestral heritage of primitive people and proof of masculinity, and the naked and muscled body were one of the traditional ways to do that. In this context, bodies and tattoos were necessary to understand the natural world around Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*: the wilderness, with its complexity of meanings. More clearly, he used the description of the tattoos not only to offer us his interpretation of life and manners in a frontier context but especially to describe the image/concept of "wilderness" and make it credible to the mental "eye" of those who had not seen it directly.

We are at the real point of the essay: to clarify the human presence in the wilderness and how the human body became part of the wilderness itself. In other words, this body, with its tattoos, contains a specific weight/quantity of wilderness and different weight/quantities are represented by the wild beasts and the forest (see pictures 1 and 2).

²² See, for example, Ralph Waldo Emerson's description of Columbus and the savages in "Nature", *The Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Modern Library, New York, 1950, p. 12. The dressed state was "normal," the nakedness was "natural".

²³ James Axtell, "Colonial America Without the Indians", *op. cit.*, p. 60.



Fig. 1: A Mohawk chief who journeyed to England in 1710 for a treaty. His grandson was Joseph Brand who remained allied to the British with his Mohawks during the American Revolution, becoming the scourge of the New York frontier (Library of Congress). In the painting, we can note tattoos, as well as a wild beast and "primitive" forest, a wilderness.



Fig. 2: Tomochichi with his nephew, portrayed in 1734. He was born before the first Englishman set foot in the Carolinas. We can note the **existence of a tattoo** tradition linked again with the context by an eagle and the surrounding forest (Smithsonian Institution, National Anthropological Archives).

Or better, the body **fixes an important symbolic content** and its image constitutes the emblematic **representation** of the very wilderness identity itself. Recognizing **this representation** of the wilderness means considering European culture as **normal**, in contrast with the spectacle of another culture as non-normal, or wild. The Europeans were fascinated with this "wild" body and its context: **the frontier**. The frontier world was the frame of this body and **the draining of all the emotional tension** it created in the civilized.²⁴

²⁴ See in this context Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters From an American Farmer* (1793), Dutton and Co., New York 1960, especially letter XII, "Distresses of a Frontier Man",

Cooper describes the fascination of the wilderness and, at the very end, breaks the spell. The wilderness may be marvelous and one can "lay in the soothing and sublime solitude;" the woods may be "as silent and seemingly deserted as the day they came fresh from the hand of their great Creator".²⁵ But tragedy may be beyond the nearest tree, and the wilderness become suddenly "savage" with all its negative symbols. The violence of the wilderness explodes and the Indians become "Devils incarnate," crowding the forest ready to scalp people and keep them "for the torture by fire." The wilderness becomes "the infernal regions, across which unhappy ghosts and savage demons were flitting in multitudes."²⁶

Hoc est enim corpus meum: in the tales of Cooper we have the Indian that offers himself. He offers his reality, his figure, his existence. But for the white colonizers the Indian body moving in its natural ambience with its tattoos was a foreign object. It was difficult to understand and impossible to decode with the usual canons imposed by rigid rules of behavior in eighteenth century Europe. Alien bodies sink, by the weight of their nakedness and difference into the hell of Christian culture, which fought to dress them and to abolish tattoos. But why did the overt body provoke all this hate? Indian nudity forced a confrontation with the unknown; strange signs, images and tattoos were a cultural inscription on the body and for the right-minded person of that time the body could not be "written," because it could not have a meaning; it could only be branded to mark its inferiority and deviance.²⁷

The naked bodies and the tattoos were narrated by Cooper to create a reaction in white American readers. The same reaction sought by John Vanderlyn, who painted the "Death of Jane McCrea" in 1804. The death of Jane McCrea, scalped by Indians allied to the British Army, was an

pp. 198-231. He feared that the life on the frontier and "the imperceptible charm of Indian education" could lead Europeans to "becoming wild."

²⁵ James Fenimore Cooper, *The Deerslayer* (1841), Ed. Allan Nevins, Penguins Books, New York, 1980. pp. 46, 117.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 101, 335.

²⁷ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, Cronopio, Napoli, 1995. p. 13.

important source of Revolutionary War propaganda and elicited a response of horror, and justifying white reactions (see picture 3).



Fig. 3: John Vanderlyn, *Death of Jane McCrea*, 1804, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford.

In crudest form, Cooper appeals more than once to the same fear in his audience. Not only scalping:

The dark hand of the savage twisted in the rich tresses (...) while a knife was passed around the head ... as if to denote the horrid manner in which

it was about to be robbed of its beautiful ornament.²⁸

But even infanticide:

The savage spurned the worthless rags, and perceiving that the shawl had already become a prize to another, his bantering, but sullen smile, changing to a gleam of ferocity, he dashed the head of the infant against the rock.²⁹

More generally, the "fear" Cooper provoked in his audience depends on the ethical and moral approach to ethnicity and aesthetics. In our case, the body remains the repository of emotions and the "reservoir of passion" more than do the brutal massacres and other horrible facts.³⁰

The question now is: how we can relate these bodies and tattoos, the emotions they create, and the text? There is a typical relation of cause and effect existing between the text and the audience. Certainly all the good romantic novels were expected to contain pathos, a term used "to denote an emotional response" as stated by Nina Baym in her comprehensive study of nineteenth century American novels.³¹ But what about the "nature" of the body and its relations to emotions? The body is a metaphor, but we can place it nevertheless in specific historical moments, in its various representations,

²⁸ James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *op.cit.*, p. 92.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

³⁰ Robyn R. Warhol, "As You Stand, So You Feel and Are: The Crying Body and the Nineteenth-Century Text", in Frances E. Mascia-Lees and Patricia Sharpe, eds., *Tattoo, Torture, Mutilation and Adornment: The Denaturalization of the Body in Culture and Text*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1992. p. 102. In this essay the author seeks to answer the question: why is it we resent being made to cry? But we can ask ourselves, too, why we resent being made to get frightened or bewitched.

³¹ Nina Baym, *Novels, Readers, and Reviewers: Responses to Fiction in Antebellum America*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1984. p. 140.

and, especially in the nineteenth century, the colorful description of bodies was at least in part a surrogate for the lack of graphic images.

In this way the Indian body was "shown" to Western readers in its nakedness, apparently muscled and heavy, but missing its intrinsic force: powerless and unintelligent. For these readers Indian bodies are then not an occupied space but an open space, linked with the forest and the wild beasts, part of a scene. But the marked body becomes instead a site where the wilderness takes form in being "savage", tattooed. The wilderness gets the upper hand and the tattoo became scarnification; a proof of courage. When Magua, the terrible Huron chief, showed his body, "tearing aside the slight calico that very imperfectly concealed his painted breast" it was covered by "scars given by knives and bullet."³²

The body is almost naked, but that in itself is not enough. Cooper needs to add something to the body to make it aggressive and necessary to his condition of wilderness. The body is painted, branded, scarnified, tattooed. In a single word: transformed, made into the very image of its world, possessed by it and expressing it. For the whites this transformation into word/image is an inscription "outside" the body: marked in the behavior, in the clothes, in the manners of a social class; it is much more an a-scription than an inscription. All those conditions, which are written on the Indian body as permanent "personality" in its tattoos, were not only ornaments but emblems, signs of nobility or definition of the position in a social hierarchy.

Cooper's narrative shows the use of tattoos only for the males. But tattoos were not only for men. Through their tattoos Paraguay's women in the eighteenth century had "their face, breast, and arms covered with black figures" and following the words of the old missionary who discovered them they were "more beautiful than beauty itself".³³ The Mohave Indians of the lower Colorado River are another example. In a study of their life and costumes, published in 1947, the authors affirmed:

³² James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

³³ Martin Dobrinzhoffer, *An Account of the Abipones: An Equestrian People of Paraguay*, 3 vol., J. Murray, London, 1822, vol. 2, p. 20. About female scarnification see Bruce Lincoln, *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Studies in Rituals of Women's Initiation*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. 1981.

Two favorite methods of self-embellishment are tattooing and paint. Men and women have marks tattooed on the chin and usually on the foreheads (...) Almost everyone tattooed, because a man or a woman without marks on the face would be refused entrance to the land of the dead and to go down a rat-hole instead.³⁴

This study explained also that "face-painting and tattooing are rapidly disappearing. The Indian Service has consistently opposed and discouraged both practices." Like the missionaries in the seventeenth century, the Indian Service forbade tattoos.³⁵

In Cooper's tales, as well, the tattoos would soon disappear from the male bodies. In *The Deerslayer*, the first of the *Leatherstocking Tales* in chronological order but written in 1841, after Cooper's travels in Europe, he turns back to the early manhood of the heroes of the frontier saga but we do not find any trace of tattooing.

By the first half of the nineteenth century, tattoos were starting to become a fashion in the English aristocracy and middle classes which were searching for a taste of the exotic. From "initiation rite", tattooing was transformed by the Europeans in a "fashion for initiates" and the tattoo became the badge of a voyage to Polynesia where the origins of the word (tatau) was found.³⁶ With this new meaning, the tattoos were no longer useful for the description of the American frontier and James Fenimore Cooper avoided further tattoos in his fiction. He continued instead describing "naked, painted warriors," "red devils" that became "dark, and fierce looking statue in the attitude of nature ... soon blended with the brown covering of

³⁴ Edith S. Taylor and William J. Wallace, *Mohave Tattooing and Face-Painting*, Southwest Museum Leaflets, Los Angeles, 1947. p. 20.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Alessandra Castellani, *Ribelli per la pelle. Storia e cultura dei tatuaggi*, Costa e Nolan, Genova, 1995, pp. 30-31; Greg Denning, *Mr Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Engl., 1994. p. 35.

the prairie."³⁷ In this way, Cooper's pilgrimage to the frontier forgot the tattoos but it passed again through the bodies, metaphors for the wilderness.

³⁷ James Fenimore Cooper, *The Praire* (1827), Ed. Henry Nash Smith, Rinehart, New York, 1950, pp. 125, 21, 48, 91.