

Flag Tattoos: Markers of Class & Sexuality

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Over the last fifteen years, I have often argued that practitioners of vexillology need to be more interested in intellectual movements and developing methodologies in complementary fields in the social sciences, in the arts and humanities, and in the emergent interdisciplinary discourse known as culture studies. With resolution and determination, vexillology needs to move beyond classification and categorization to profound considerations of the function and use of flags in creating and changing individual and group identities, in maintaining or challenging the power structure in any given society.¹ Although the response to date has tended to be underwhelming, and cross-fertilization in these categories has not in any way tapped the potential I am convinced is there for vexillology, I am heartened by revitalized discussions that suggest as we move into the 21st century some active vexillologists might again be looking for input from such disciplines as sociology and quantitative demography.²

In the past, I have sometimes suggested rudimentary models for how one might connect vexillology to what is going on in such academic pursuits as cultural geography, women's studies, children's literature, music, art, or anthropology.³ Today—admittedly in a very limited fashion—I would like to raise the topic area of flags as tattoos, and then sketch out possibilities for further work in this area to explore the dynamics of flag tattoos as markers of social class, and more complexly, sexuality. As is often the case in such ruminations, I shall raise many more questions than I shall answer; nevertheless, I believe that encouraging the international community of vexillologists to see the merit in such areas of inquiry—indeed, the *need* for such areas of inquiry—is a worthy pursuit in and of itself.

I started thinking about the special significance of a flag tattoo—as opposed to, say, a flag decal or a flag poster—when I was chuckling again over a rereading of Abbie Hoffman's autobiography *Soon to be a Major Motion Picture*.⁴ Therein lies a passage in which the infamous Yippie leader recounts the fracas that occurred in October 1968 as he was en route to testify for the second day before the House Un-American Activities Committee regarding Yippie activities at the Democratic Convention in Chicago. You might recall, that day he was the first person arrested for breaking the first U.S. federal law against flag desecration, also passed in 1968. Police grabbed him for daring to wear a U.S. flag shirt as he entered the building to testify. Here's the delicious part—as the shirt was ripped off in the scuffle that ensued,

and he was dragged away, Hoffman's back revealed a body-painted image of a different flag. As he tells it:

The next day I stood before the judge, [still] bare to the waist. The tattered shirt lay on the prosecutor's table in a box marked Exhibit A. "You owe me fourteen ninety-five for that shirt," I mentioned. Bail was set at three thousand dollars. "Get out of here with that Viet Cong flag. How dare you?" the judge intoned. "Cuban your honor," I corrected.⁵

Hoffman was a master at using both guerrilla theater and symbolic warfare to make a point, and he knew well the media coverage that would ensue. Realizing the American flag shirt would no doubt be forcibly removed, *he painted into his skin* the flag of Cuba. A powerful and direct insult to the government arresting him, it was at the same time a dynamic assertion of his rights to think and believe as an individual under the U.S. Constitution. Choosing the flag of Cuba was a clear affront, but it was a smarter public relations move for Hoffman's guerrilla theater intentions than the Viet Cong flag would have been in 1968. Eventually, in this case, the paint would be removed. Clearly, though, much of the impact of a tattoo comes from our recognition of its permanence, of it getting literally *under the skin* of the person wearing it. As markers, then, flag tattoos emphasize and imply extremely powerful personal identifications.

Tattoos have enjoyed a long and varied history in many different cultures around the globe, across the span of many centuries. A useful reference for more information here would be Stephen G. Gilbert's *Tattoo History: A Source Book*.⁶ Certainly, flag tattoos as markers of class and sexuality can carry very different meanings in different cultural and historical contexts. I wish to confine my reflections here to the re-emergence of tattoos in western European and American culture in the past 230 years, which I believe is directly tied to the spread of imperialism, of capitalist economies in search of natural resources and new markets. The South Pacific exploratory voyages of Captain James Cook, from 1769 on, brought the practice from Tahiti to western consciousness, and the very word "tattoo" is taken from the Tahitian word "ta-tu" which means "to mark" or "to strike."⁷

Two distinct groups became caught up in what sociologist Clinton R. Sanders has described as a "tattoo rage", a fad which was noticeable in Great Britain in the middle of the nineteenth century and had securely

spread to America by the end of that century. These were the nobility or elite, who most directly benefited from the expansion of these capitalist markets; and sailors, craftsmen, and the military, who more directly labored to assure the elite's benefits from this imperialism. Among the elite, tattoos tended to be stylish Oriental depictions received upon a trip to Asia or family coats-of-arms, both suggesting power and affluence. Among the nobility who proudly bore such tattoos were Czar Nicholas II of Russia, King George of Greece, King Oscar of Sweden, Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany, and most of the male members of the British Royal Family.⁸

The various European elite uses of coat-of-arms imagery as opposed to other tattoo options, evaluated based upon historical, geographical, and interfamilial contexts, would be a fascinating study to pursue. Flag tattoos, however, are more readily and consistently found among the latter group, the military and working class. Flag tattoos and variant civil religious iconography in tattoos have been a popular option among the military and working class folk seeking tattoos in America since the middle of the nineteenth century. Prior to the Civil War, evidence suggests the female personification of the United States referred to as "Columbia" was a popular tattoo in New York City. During the Civil War, the popularity of patriotic tattoos accelerated, many soldiers receiving them in battlefield camps in what can understandably be seen as rituals of nationalism.⁹ But the information I have found so far does not question the range or number of patriotic icons employed in these tattoos. I wonder, just how popular were flag tattoos as opposed to other patriotic icons, such as eagles or Lady Liberty? Did any shift in status parallel the rise of the cult of the flag? When and how were flags parsed (that is, suggested by style and design) and when were they directly represented without modification in tattoo imagery? To date, as far as I can tell at this point, no one has attempted to delineate the rise and/or fall of flag tattoos as compared to other civil religious tattoo iconography—or the relative popularity of civil religious tattoos as compared to other types of tattoos (such as declarations of eternal love or religious symbols). Although retrieving total data at this point would be impossible, there are remaining nineteenth century tattoo selection books and historical description references that could be reviewed for evidence.¹⁰ It would be intriguing to check and see how the dissemination of parsed flag or direct flag tattoos in the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century compared to the rise and dissemination of the cult of the American flag, because although the middle class in America never became caught up in the nineteenth century "tattoo rage," they were integral to the successful establishment of the cult of the American flag. How distinct American social classes differed in flag usage and

interpretation, and how they complemented and fed each other's coalescing of a nationalist consciousness, would be another unexplored area for students of American vexillology ready to expand its boundaries of inquiry.

To my mind, probably the most influential book to be published in the past five years, for what it suggests by implication for cross-cultural and anthropological pursuits in vexillology, would be Carolyn Marvin and David Ingle's *Blood Sacrifice and the Nation* (Cambridge Press, 1999).¹¹ Although their study focuses upon flag ritual in the United States, a website they set up prior to publication suggests how the paradigm could be applied to Israeli culture, and a student term paper in my university vexillology class in 2000 argued a similar application to Australian flag culture.¹² To do the complexity of their paradigm justice, I heartily recommend a close reading of the book to all of you. Briefly, they adapt Durkheim's model of the totem taboo as the organizing principle of group consciousness—in this case, American nationalism. As their title suggests, the totem—the American flag—demands a regular blood sacrifice to hold the group's identity together. A totem class develops to protect and serve the flag (soldiers, sailors, police, etc.) while affiliative groups are fraternal tribal structures that "covet totem power and wish to seize it."¹³ I see very strong overlap between Marvin's "totem class" and the social groups involved in the "tattoo rage" of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, as tattooing came to be seen as increasingly vulgar, unacceptable, and deviant from middle class standards—a perspective growing at the turn of the twentieth century and clearly well defined by the 1920s in America¹⁴—so did tattoo culture and popularity of flag tattoos spread beyond the totem class to these affiliative groups. It took the historical establishment of the cult of the American flag in national consciousness to spur the adoptive and challenging use of American flag tattoos by affiliative groups, many of whom experienced their own "tattoo rages" in the twentieth century. Abbie Hoffman explains his "symbolic warfare" strategy of flag appropriation in his autobiography, and he used the American flag in all kinds of creative and controversial ways as strategies to get Americans to question what the country's central ideals truly were.¹⁵ Affiliative groups are engaged in a corollary activity, although perhaps not as self-consciously aware, when they adopt and adapt American flag tattoos.

When affiliative groups use flag tattoos, they are defining themselves as warriors, as equals to the status of members of the totem class such as marines, soldiers and sailors. Our modern equivalent of warrior-gladicators, professional sportsmen, certainly carry on this tradition. Brief examples of flag tattoos used in this way include "Captain Canuck" Paul Benoit of professional wrestling, who enters the ring in Canadian flag mask, Canadian flag cape, red and white tights, the Canadian flag carried in

his arm, and a big Canadian flag tattoo on his massive chest.¹⁶ Then there's Chris Johnson of the Brisbane Lions team in the Australian Football League, who is much admired for this aboriginal flag tattoo.¹⁷



1. Chris Jordan's Tattoo

You might not be aware of this, but 45% of the National Basketball Association's membership now are tattooed, and that percentage continues to rise. Parenthetically, a controversy has recently ensued over whether these athletes have the right to sell space on their skin—so often viewed by millions around the globe on television—as rental turf for logos and corporate icon tattoos.¹⁸ Perhaps ultimately, in the end, we will discover the true taboo secret that our blood sacrifice in the United States is not to the American flag, as Marvin suggests, but rather to the Golden Arches or the Nike swoosh.

Not all affiliative groups are as beloved by members of the dominant culture as these athletes. Some interesting and powerful images of affiliative group uses of flag tattoos include members of the American Nazi party.¹⁹



2. Members of the American Nazi Party

Note that, like the Ku Klux Klan, the American Nazi party will often opt for the direct appropriation of the complete flag image. Many of the white supremacist political groups, as documented and depicted in James Ridgeway's *Blood in the Face*, have a penchant for using flags and flag imagery in their movement, not only the U.S. flag, but others, such as the Confederate Battle Flag, the flag of the White Aryan Resistance movement, the Nazi Swastika, or the flag of the Christian Identity Church. That religious group has done a lot of evangelical outreach through the Aryan Brotherhood, a white supremacist prison gang that also draws upon the strong and distinct tradition of prison tattoos in asserting affiliative group identity. Not surprisingly, given these overlappings, and the social class positioning, one notices popularity of tattoos among the Skinheads as well.²⁰

A U.S. District Court federal judge in Houston, Texas, ruled on 24 January 2000 that the presence of a Confederate flag tattoo on the arm of a white city official could not be allowed as evidence in a race discrimination lawsuit brought by two African American city employees. The same judge had allowed the tattoo admitted as such evidence in an earlier trial that ended with a hung jury. In the interim, the South Carolina clash over the significance of that flag symbol had ensued in the media, and for the new trial, the judge ruled it was unclear what the tattoo truly meant to its owner, especially as he had received it decades earlier in his life. The ruling suggests not a celebration of free speech rights, but rather recognition by the government that the interconnections and layers of personal and group meaning in a flag tattoo are undeniably complex.²¹

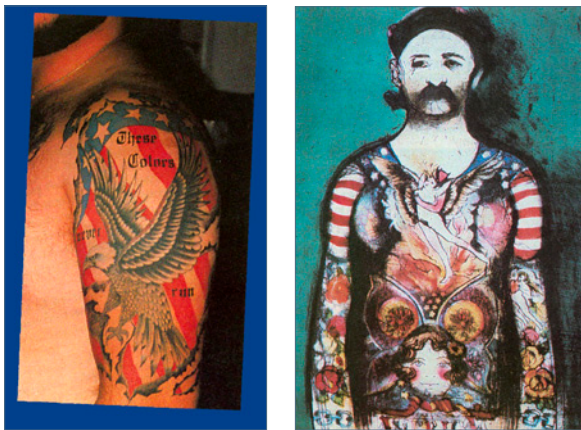
Many of the less political or non-sports affiliative groups, although still concerned about the masculine, warrior cultural identity, are more likely to employ a parsed American flag motif in their tattoo traditions. Excellent and abundant examples here can be found in such groups as the Hell's Angels.



3. Hell's Angels

Hunter Thompson's classic new journalism study of the group, published in 1966, includes a popular and powerful parable much beloved in oral traditions among the bikers. A deaf and dumb biker known as "the Mute" was stopped by a cop for speeding near the Boardwalk in Santa Cruz and ordered to remove his Levi jacket displaying the Hell's Angels "colors." Communication was done with pad and pencil, and the Mute obliged, to reveal a leather jacket beneath bearing a Hell's Angels decal. He was ordered to remove that and did so. Beneath was a wool shirt resplendent with more Hell's Angels symbols—he was told to remove it—then an undershirt with the same imagery—he was told to remove it. As you might guess at this point, the angry cop called for the removal of the last shirt from the Mute, who silently and proudly displayed a great Hells Angels death head tattoo upon his chest. The group's telling of the parable ends with the cop driving away in disgust, with the Mute ready to bare more if necessary to show his affiliative allegiance emblazoned in his very skin.²² Predating but highly parallel to the Hoffman incident, here the tattoo speaks loudly and victoriously for a man who cannot use his voice.

Studying the changing iconography and possible shifting uses of parsed flags in a group such as the Hells Angels over time would help us better understand complex and never completely stable structures of group and personal identity for such participants as the Mute or the biker bearers of these tattoos.²³



4 & 5. Biker Tattoos

Around the same time period that the Mute and Abbie were displaying their tattoos to American law enforcement, tattoo culture in the United States was beginning a Renaissance. Connected to the significant cultural shifts occurring in the tumultuous decade of the 1960s, the middle class began to entertain, in modest ways, the acceptance of tattoos, and more and more individuals found meaning in using tattoos as a way to establish and celebrate their personal identity.²⁴ Because I live in California my perspective may be skewed, but it seems to me nowadays tattoos may be found much more among

the middle class than in my youth, and also more women openly wear them. Even the Father of Vexillology himself, Whitney Smith, now sports a flag tattoo.²⁵

Not everyone wears flag tattoos for the same reasons, and many flag-tattooed people are probably not themselves aware of the complexity of social forces that led them to this option. Let us move to a consideration of the rise and use of flag tattoos and new types of flags in gay culture.²⁵ 1969, the year after Hoffman was arrested, was the year of the Stonewall Riot, the symbolic outing of an evolving gay culture in America that had been present but taboo for many, many decades. An excellent source for more information on the cultural antecedents of this, confined to a very specific regional focus, but like Marvin's work in anthropology truly important as a model for the application of a paradigm to better understand the complex dynamic of distinct social class markers in variations of an evolving gay identity, is George Chauncey's *Gay New York*.²⁶

I don't wish to give you a lecture on the details of gay history—I'm sure no one came here today expecting that. However, I continue to affirm that students of flag culture must be willing to enter any and all areas of social and cultural analysis where the use of flags and flag-related symbols are involved in the complex creation of individual and group identity or in the struggle for power and control in any society.²⁷ Not all gays now share the same culture, and the very definition of the category "gay" is problematic in different temporal and cultural contexts. Still, within the American gay subculture that coalesced during the 1970s and has evolved to the present, there are some applications of Marvin's ideas about affiliative group identity applied to flag tattoo use that lead us into territory not regularly explored in vexillology: perceptions and definitions of both masculinity and sexuality.

Chauncey spends part of his study documenting a flourishing but covert range of man-man sexual activities 1890-1940 in which many participants would neither self-identify or be seen determined by the dominant culture to be gay. The stereotype of the effeminate, limp-wristed, swishy fellow equaled gay in this period—he might be called a fairy or a pansy—while masculine men who enjoyed gay sex but could pass for heterosexual eluded detection and suspicion. Chauncey approaches this "butch/fem" dichotomy as a phenomenon and process that varied according to social class, ethnicity, and race.

Even today in the 21st century, especially in many cultures where a high emphasis is placed on machismo, the old stereotype persists that a man can only "really" be determined gay if he acts like a drag queen. I leave these fascinating and shifting intersticings of masculinity and sexuality for you to reflect upon at a later date, but I ask you to note the correlation and overlap between these groups studied by very different scholars: many of those belonging to Marvin's totem class and affiliative groups

categories are in the social classes that experienced Sanders' "tattoo rage." They are the same men who, according to Chauncey's paradigm, would be in denial to the middle class culture of homosexual activity if and when it occurred, and the middle and upper class custodians of culture would gladly participate in this denial; yet, as Chauncey reports, this homosexual activity WAS occurring, far more often than the dominant culture wished to recognize.²⁸ Moreover, in the fetishizing of working class male sexuality, the tattoo takes on an undeniably erotic significance, and the flag tattoo becomes a special marker of a totem class or affiliative group ideal for many gays.²⁹ Let us briefly consider this semiotic process, then look at some examples of elements of it at work.

Most vexillological work on gay culture and flags to date has been limited to documenting and giving the origin of the Rainbow Flag and its variants, such as James J. Ferrigan III did at ICV 12 in San Francisco,³⁰



6. The Rainbow Flag

and perhaps more recently, describing the Leather Flag or the Bear Flag and their variants to the uninitiated. Two websites that are very useful in this latter context are the Rainbow Icon Archive and Chris Pinette's colorful "Flags of the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Community."³¹ Such documentation is of course essential, but as with all flags around us, vexillologists can and should push on not only to describe flags but to analyze how and why they function in different cultural contexts. Within vexillology itself, people sometimes joke about how gays are attracted to flags (both their use and their study!) and generally such joking evokes a sensibility of gay—as-interior-decorator, gay-as-aesthete, gay-as-Auntie Mame at a parade. I make no complaint or apology here, for certain groups do seem to be drawn to certain professions or vocations in different cultural and historical milieus: the Irish did move into jobs as firemen and policemen in late 19th century America, the Cambodians have taken over the donut shop businesses in contemporary California, and in that same state as we speak the Vietnamese are making great inroads in the running of manicure shops. We should not automatically discredit such assertions

if statistically proven, we should be asking *why*? The answers will never be simple. I do have some initial thoughts on evolving gay culture and its connection to some new flags and the use of flag tattoos.

In post-Stonewall gay culture, hypermasculinity was understandably fetishized by those looking for alternatives beyond the categorization of sissy-boy or drag queen. In a chart he prepared to summarize the acquisition process and self-definitional/identity consequences for contemporary Americans getting tattoos, in 1989 sociologist Clinton R. Sanders pointed to masculinity as first and foremost in what he labeled "affiliative meanings" for tattoos.³² Let me attempt to explain the particular significance of this semiotic connection for emergent gay culture by a specific example. Think of the disco group The Village People. Recall how successful they were, during the early years of this gay liberation movement, at combining campy gay fetishizing of male stereotypes with mass marketable recordings that went to the top of the charts. Millions across America sang along about joining the Navy or going to the Y.M.C.A., surely not all cognizant of the gay cultural connotations conveyed throughout such songs. The members of the group—the cop, the soldier, the construction worker, the cowboy, the Indian, the biker—they embody stereotypes of the tattooed masculine ideals of the totem group and affiliative groups. Not only were they sexual fantasies, but they became models for emergent gay subcultures devoted to uniforms, leather, and bears—subcultures with a definite penchant for flags. The musical group actually mediated the process, building on stereotypes and fantasies harkening back generations while helping to spread and codify them in the liberated gay world.

Then and now, tattoos continue to be significant markers of masculinity in these gay subcultures, and not coincidentally, the use of distinctive flags as decorations, apparel, and icons used in group rituals by these subcultures has flourished. I am thinking here specifically of the Leather Pride flag, first displayed on 28 May 1989; the original Bear Flag, designed in 1992; and the International Bear Brotherhood Flag, designed in 1995; and all their variants.³³



7. Leather Pride Flag



8. Bear Flag 1992



9. International Bear Brotherhood 1995

I would be interested to learn from flag retailers and manufacturers about the growth and reliability of markets for leather and bear flag paraphernalia in the past decade, and I do not believe it is a coincidence that distinctive flag use or tattoos would flourish in these particular gay subcultures more than other gay subcultures.

The flags are affiliative masculine, the tattoos are affiliative masculine, thus flag tattoos are emphatic in their masculinity, in gay parlance, incredibly butch. Here is an example of an International Bear Brotherhood Flag Temporary Tattoo available from a website.³⁴

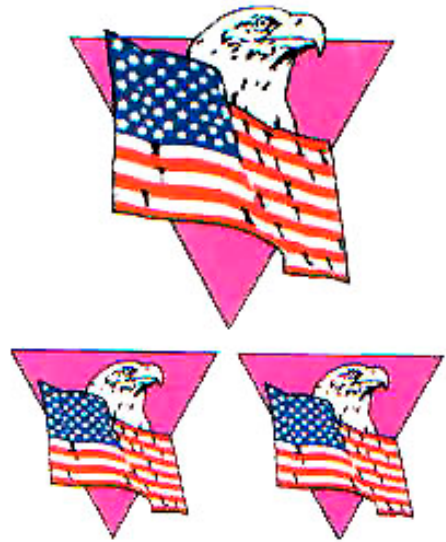
International Bear Brotherhood Flag Temporary Tattoo



This is a fun patch for all you bears out there! The International Bear Brotherhood Flag Temporary Tattoo is features simple directions. Not recommended to apply to sensitive skin or near eyes.

10. Temporary Tattoo

Here are some other gay flag temporary tattoos also available on line.³⁵

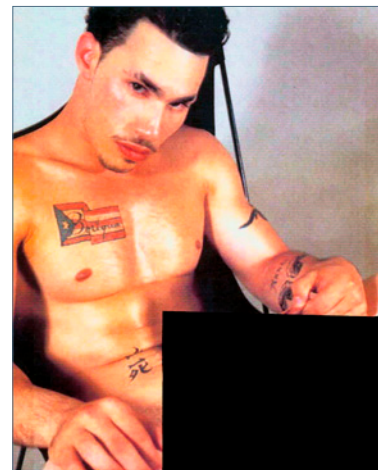


11. Temporary Tattoos



12. Temporary Tattoos

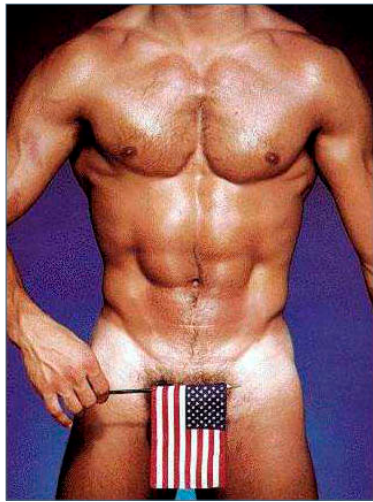
Here is but one example of a flag tattoo as marker of potent sexuality readily discernable to gay readers of image as text, downloaded from the Internet: a Puerto Rican flag evokes layers of meaning-- working class, exotic, macho, perhaps dangerous?—on this so-called banjee boy.



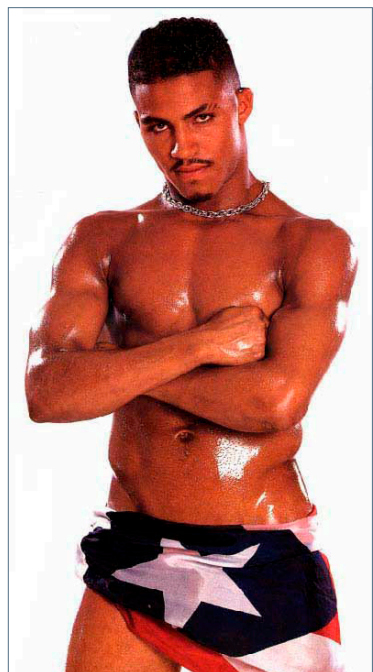
13. Puerto Rican Tattoo

However, while also sensual, the flag of the Netherlands tattooed and prominently displayed on the right upper arm of a smiling, welcoming blond jock on a Dutch gay pay-per-view website suggests a happy member of a sexually progressive society, not so secretive, taboo, or illicit.³⁶

Much more work can be done on how and why different types of people choose to burn flag tattoos into their skin. What the tattooed folk believe they are saying about themselves and how others in the society interpret the flags will not always be the same. Sexual orientation and where someone belongs on the continuum between total masculinity and total femininity are clearly not the same thing, yet both are elements central to an individual's identity. How flags are used in the process of constructing or altering that identity for the individual is a question we should be asking. How gays and other affiliative groups use flags to shape personal or subcultural identity in society needs to be addressed.



14.



15.



16.

There is so much more to learn about ourselves and the world around us, and flags play such a fascinating role in individual and group identity formation. I sincerely hope scholarly explorations and considerations of flag meaning and usage in these and similar ways have not reached an end, but a new beginning in the 21st century.



17.

Notes

1. This was a theme of my talk "Vexillology, the Academy, and the Future" delivered at NAVA 28 in Portland, Oregon, 8 October 1994. Also, see "A Note from the President" in NAVA News 25.1, 25.2, 26.1, 26.6 for more examples.
2. See Ron Hassner, "God for Harry! England and Saint George!: The Evolution of the Sacred Flag and the Modern Nation-State," *The Flag Bulletin* 39.1 (2000): 5-47; Peter Orenski, *Quo Vadimus? An Essay on the State and Future of Vexillology*, copyright 2001, 2003 Peter Orenski.
3. By category, some quick references: cultural geography—"The Power of Place, the Power of Icons," *Crux Australis* 7

- (1991): 86-95; women's studies—see quote from one of my NAVA News columns in Orenski, "Quo Vadimus?" Part I, note 56; children's literature—see *The American Flag 1777-1924: Cultural Shifts from Creation to Codification* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson, 1990) Chapter 5; music—"The National Anthem," *John and Mary's Journal* 11 (Summer 1988): 13-22; art—"The Flag of an American Impressionist" *NAVA News* 21 (Sept.-Oct. 1988): 9; anthropology—*The American Flag 1777-1924*, Chapter 1.
4. Abbie Hoffman, *Soon to be a Major Motion Picture* (New York: Perigree, 1980). Hoffman always wanted his life story told on film, but fans of the activist agree he would be disappointed by the inaccuracies and the misrepresentations in the attempt made in 2000, *Steal This Movie!* See Jared Hohlt, "Tales of Hoffman," *Slate Archives* 21 August 2000, <http://slate.msn.com/LifeAndArt/00-08-21/LifeAndArt.asp> 23 March 2001; also, "New Movie About Abbie Hoffman Has Friends Furious," 31 August 2000, http://lists.village.edu/lists_archive/sixties-1/1722.html 23 March 2001.
 5. Hoffman 169.
 6. excerpt from Stephen G. Gilbert, *Tattoo History: A Source Book*, Chapter Fourteen: U.S.A. at Tattoos.Com, the premier body art E-zine. <http://tattoos.com/jane/steve/usa/html> 18 March 2001.
 7. Clinton R. Sanders, *Customizing the Body: The Art and Culture of Tattooing* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1989) 17.
 8. Sanders 15.
 9. Mike McCabe, "The New York City Tattoo: The Origins of a Style," Tattoos.Com, the premier body art E-zine. <http://tattoos.com/bowery.htm> 23 March 2001.
 10. as reported in the Gilbert Chapter Fourteen excerpt above, "One of the first professional American tattoo artists was C. H. Fellowes, whose design book and tattooing instruments were discovered in 1966 by a Rhode Island antique dealer and are now in the collection of the Mystic Seaport Museum in Mystic, Connecticut."
 11. Carolyn Marvin and David W. Ingle, *Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Totem Rituals and the American Flag* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 1999).
 12. Carolyn Marvin and David W. Ingle, "The Rabin Assassination," *Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Revisiting Civil Religion*, posted sometime in 1996 <http://www.asc.upenn.edu/usr/fcm/jaar.html> 22 March 2001. See also Jessica Boverio, "Tug of War: The Changing Face of Australia," Humanities 190 Senior Seminar Paper, San José State University, San José, CA, 19 May 2000.
 13. Marvin and Ingle (the book—not the website) 186.
 14. Sanders 18.
 15. Hoffman 128.
 16. [Dav Pinnick] "Captain Canuck—Paul Benoit" <http://www.angelfire.com/tx/DavsRoom/Benoit.html> 22 March 2001.
 17. "Brisbane Lions Player Profile—Chris Johnson," The Official Australian Football League Web Site http://www.afl.com.au/players/player_profile_960212.htm 22 March 2001.
 18. Jim Litke, "Tattoo Advertising Could Be Next in NBA," ABCNews.com 21 March 2001 http://abcnews.go.com/sections/sports/DailyNews/tattoos_010321.html 21 March 2001.
 19. With grateful appreciation, images are taken from "Tattoos" file, Flag Research Center, Winchester, MA, 15 February 2001.
 20. James Ridgeway, *Blood in the Face: The Ku Klux Klan, Aryan Nations, Nazi Skinheads, and the Rise of a New White Culture* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1990) passim, 163.
 21. "Judge Won't Allow Tattoo as Evidence," *Amarillo Globe-News: Texas News* 26 January 2000 www.amarillonet.com/stories/012600/tex_LD0642.001.shtml 23 March 2001.
 22. Hunter S. Thompson, *Hell's Angels: A Strange and Terrible Saga* (New York: Ballantine, 1967) 87-88.
 23. "Tattoos" file, Flag Research Center.
 24. Sanders 19.
 25. For greater philosophical ruminations on this topic, see Susan Benson, "Inscriptions of the Self: Reflections on Tattooing and Piercing in Contemporary Euro-America," in Jane Caplan, ed., *Written on the Body: The Tattoo in European and American History* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000): 234-254.
 26. George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).
 27. Little has been done in this area of analysis, though some promising cross-cultural inquiry was begun by Robert Tobin, a German professor at Whitman College. At the 2000 meeting of the Pacific, Ancient, and Modern Languages Association in Los Angeles, CA, he gave a brief talk entitled "Camping the Flag," abstracted here: "This paper is a comparative examination of the American and German flags in queer culture. While the American flag has been evoked in queer culture from postcards to ACT-UP, in the German context any appeal to patriotism in an assimilationist way is bound to have an appearance of nationalism that is virtually unspeakable in post-war Germany. Thus the possibilities of complex, multiple interpretations that are necessary for good camp do not exist for the German flag." *Pacific Coast Philology* 35.2 (2000): 170. Autobiographical quasi-erotic recollections of flag tattoos in urban Chicago in the early 1950s: Samuel M. Steward, *Bad Boys and Tough Tattoos: A Social History of the Tattoo with Gangs, Sailors, and Street-Corner Punks 1950-1965* (New York: Harrington Park, 1990): 80.
 28. See, for example, Chauncey, Chapter 3: "Trade, Wolves, and the Boundaries of Normal Manhood."
 29. For a suggestive essay by an anonymous female tattoo artist, articulating the (taboo?) generally unspoken possibility that the getting of a tattoo is itself a powerful psychological/sexual exercise, see Phthaloe, "Are Tattoos Sexual?" <http://bme.freeq.com/tatoo/A10311.tatareta.html> 22 March 2001.
 30. James J. Ferrigan III, "The Evolution and Adoption of the Rainbow Flag in San Francisco," *The Flag Bulletin* 28(1989): 116-122.

31. *Rainbow Icon Archive: Icons for the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Community* <http://www.enqueue.com/ria> 23 March 2001; Chris Pinette, "Flags of the Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Community" <http://www.pinette.net/chris/flags/gay> 23 March 2001.
32. Sanders 59.
33. Pinette.
34. *Gay-Mart—Bear Pride—International Bear Brotherhood Flag Temporary Tattoo* http://www.gaymart.com/bear_pride/2item/i007605.html 23 March 2001.
35. *Don Ling's Gay and Lesbian Temporary Tattoos* <http://www.gayweb.com/306/home.html> 23 March 2001.
36. Downloaded from adult gay websites and newsgroups, anonymous sources.

Image Sources

1. "Brisbane Lions Player Profile—Chris Johnson" *The Official Australian Football League Web Site* http://www.afl.com.au/players/player_profile_960212.htm 22 March 2001.
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