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Expedition

by

Evan Crankshaw

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Abstract

Exoticism presents fantasy constructs of Otherness which make up a discourse of problematic “truths.” This discourse is reflected and perpetuated in culture-items (art, literature, music, etc.) which can be identified as “exotica.” On one level, exotica simply reinforces these “truths,” but it also offers potential revelations relating to the exotic construct itself, a collection of fictions so elaborate and vast that it may be said to have its own history. Exotica can be described as the reflexive form of that alternate history; it is also a fantasy zone which reveals a desire on the part of the exoticizer to escape the reality of the present and identify oneself with the Other. Because the Other ultimately emanates from ourselves, I posit there is much learn from an appreciative study of exotica. With an understanding of the history, formal components, and linguistic concepts which make up exotica, I explore a way of making work that immerses itself in the exotic discourse and cannibalizes its various manifestations. The resulting work itself belongs on an exotica timeline; it simultaneously replicates the effects of exotica, functions as a critique or analysis, and presents a particular reading of culture and history which argues via juxtaposition the similarity and interconnectedness of various disparate aspects of the exotic discourse.

Part One: Exotic

"[W]hen I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, When I grow up I will go there. [...] I have been in some of them... but there was one yet—the biggest, the most blank, so to speak—that I had a hankering after. True, by this time it was not a blank space any more. It had got filled since my boyhood with rivers and lakes and names. It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery—a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness."

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*¹

"We came into a world we had never dreamed of [...] east of the sun and west of the moon—outside time and beyond space."

Thor Heyerdahl, *KON-TIKI: Across the Pacific by Raft*²

"Was I to have made this far journey, only to find the very thing which I had fled?"

Paul Gauguin, *Noa Noa*³

1 Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (Dover Publications, 1990), 70-71.

2 Thor Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki: Across the Pacific By Raft*, trans. F.H. Lyon (Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1950), 64.

3 Paul Gauguin, *Noa Noa* (New York: Nicholas L. Brown, 1919), 2.

“*Exotic*”

Ambiguous and vaguely-defined, the word “exotic” has the potential to be all things to all people. A quick association test may find that the word conjures, for most, a very specific and consistent set of ideas and imagery (tropical scenes and so forth, signifiers of the exotic), but the deeper ramifications—intense personal desires and accumulated subconscious or discursive “knowledges”—may be more varied, and less easily identifiable, from individual to individual. This tension between banality and profundity, hackneyed clichés and the inexpressible sublime, is what makes the exotic so fascinating, so textually rich. It is a body of fictions imbued with truths, a fantasy inextricably intertwined with our historical reality.

In the etymological sense, “exotic” (deriving from the Greek *exo*) means simply *of the outside*. The word was first used in the English language sometime around the start of the 17th century, a period when global exploration was at an unprecedented height. “Exotic” would have been a necessary piece of terminology in this time, useful in expressing the *foreignness* (and a burgeoning fetish for said foreignness) of all the many things discovered, collected, and fabricated in encounters with the vast world of “Others.”⁴ “Exotic,” both then and now, does not necessarily mean “African-esque,” “Oriental,” or even merely “tropical” (though it is often, perhaps most often, used in these ways as well, especially in the 20th century)—it has, in and of itself, no specific, fixed cultural or geographical meaning. Its essential referent is the factor of *difference* (a sensation relating to the Romantic sublime, an alluring and dangerous “incomprehensibility”) of the “Other” as experienced by the non-Other (the “Self” or the “West”).

Because of this, its insidious implications are undeniable. The manner in which exoticism places

4 Philip Hayward, “The Cocktail Shift,” in *Widening the Horizon: Exoticism in Post-War Popular Music*, ed. Philip Hayward (Sydney: John Libbey & Co./Perfect Beat Publications, 1999), 7.

emphasis on *difference* practically begs for problematic notions of various superiorities to graft themselves onto it, leading to justifications of colonialist privilege, imperial aggression/exploitation, social evolutionism, and basic East/West binarism. The ramifications of this malignant discourse within exoticism has, in recent decades, been subjected to serious, devastating examination by post-colonial theorists, ultimately leading to a necessary reevaluation of the key terms and relationships of exoticism.⁵ Once one begins to perceive the manner in which aspects of exoticism tend to express or reinforce a profound (and profoundly destructive) power imbalance with intrinsic ties to colonial expansion and exploitation, it does become tempting to dismiss the various manifestations of exoticism in art and culture as imperialist propaganda. But this would be reductive; much would be lost in such an overcompensation. Instead, I suggest we endeavor to examine (and continually reexamine) exoticism, taking careful consideration of what was—and still is—of value or significance within it. In doing so, we may better understand how the exotic functions as more than just a mirror of our prejudices; it is also a depository for our dreams, a dark mirror of ourselves.

The Exot

“The child's sense of Exoticism. For the child, exoticism comes into being at the same time as the external world. Gradation: at first, everything the child cannot reach is exotic for him. The exotic mingles with the mysterious... Another abrupt change: as he reads a story, he suddenly realizes that he will someday be able to experience very thing that he is reading about! His games go on exactly as before. The game is the same. His state of mind is different. An unknown feeling: desire, a man's emotion. He knows it is a game. But he perpetuates it in his desire to experience it.”

Victor Segalen, *Essay on Exoticism*⁶

In his unfinished *Essay on Exoticism* (written sporadically from about 1910-11 to his mysterious death in 1918, posthumously published in 1955), Victor Segalen (*fig 1*) attempts to reclaim exoticism

5 Post-colonial studies emerged concurrent to other post-structural movements, such as feminism, postmodernism, and deconstructionism, and can be seen as a key part of the radical social reappraisals of the '60s and '70s. Edward Said's 1978 *Orientalism* is a key text in this narrative, an incendiary and brilliant polemic which opened the door for a much broader and more diverse critical conversation across disciplines of cultural theory, literature, and history.

6 Victor Segalen, *Essay On Exoticism* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2002), 37.

from the corrosive banalities of tourist points-of-view and colonial bureaucracy, writing in search of deeper understandings free from Western cultural prejudice (albeit to wildly varying degrees of success). In it, he coins the term *Exot*, which he uses to refer to the rare figure who “sniffs out the beyonds” of diversity and exoticism. Segalen envisioned the Exot as a figure (almost implicitly Western, but *special* among his kind) capable of interacting with the exotic on a more profound level than the tourist or “average observer”; not merely free from banality, the Exot is also liberated from the disciplines and responsibilities inherent in the role of the reporter or cultural assimilator. The Exot is defined by his hunger for diversity: “the mysterious within, the mysterious, which is the quivering approach, the extraordinary scent of Diversity.” He⁷ knows well enough who he is—and who he is not—to keenly discern the *difference* present in his contact with *otherness*. He “savors it with rapture,” possessing “the sharp and immediate awareness of an eternal incomprehensibility.”⁸ To Segalen, the *incomprehensibility* is not to be feared or reconciled, but exalted, and the experience of diversity is an exchange which enhances and enriches the Exot's self. While his effort is laudable, deeply sincere, and at times exquisitely well-written and insightful, there are enormously problematic aspects to Segalen's conception of the Exot and exoticism (to be explored, in brief, shortly). What we may take from him, however, is a framework upon which we may build; a useful concept of at least *one* exoticism, and in the form of the Exot, a role which corresponds to it.

Segalen's writings on exoticism are situated in a time of transition, the zenith and slow decline of the colonial period, and so he is of course a mass of contradictions. Like the many modernist artists who employed “primitivism” in their quest for new modes of expression (and who were his contemporaries), Segalen is highly critical of European imperialism while still partaking of all the

7 Segalen, not even remotely progressive in his vision of gender, always speaks of the Exot as masculine, so I adopt the tendency for this section. The Exot has no essential gender as far as this writing is concerned, however—nor any essential racial background, for that matter.

8 As translated by Paul van der Grijp, *Art and Exoticism* (Berlin: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 8.

benefits of such structures.⁹ Indeed, as a physician in the French navy serving in China and French Polynesia, his access to these distant lands was inextricably linked to, and perhaps entirely dependent upon, colonial activity.¹⁰ Segalen's principal opposition to the colonial attitude is a deep loathing for colonial culture's unimaginative penchant for integration and exploitation, particularly the resulting homogenization of cultures; for Segalen, this pattern of assimilations amounted to a personal nightmare, a systematic eradication of the precious diversity of the world. It is an admirable position, on the one hand, but Segalen's writings also shows us the darker side of opposing such “progress”: he is similarly skeptical of revolution, human rights, and particularly feminism for the same reasons: the upending of “old” ways and power structures enact progressive change, and this change threatens diversity by eliminating social and cultural contrasts.¹¹

Thus Segalen's exoticism, like so many others, is an inherently problematic one, “committed to spatializing territories into fixed, static, and unchanging landscapes that existed in temporalities outside modernity: vast ethnographic museums of alien cultures and peoples who lived in a zone of contemporary noncontemporaneity...”¹² It's this type of precious thinking, rooted (for all its best intentions) in paternal superiority, stewardship, and imperial nostalgia, which has been so roundly critiqued and dismantled by post-colonial theorists. Yet, Segalen's eloquent and passionate attempt to salvage exoticism (from all that is populist, overly romanticized, tourist-oriented, or bureaucratic) and view the world in terms of ecstatic difference (rather than unifying similarities, the inevitable processes of integration into the consuming West, or the transformation of the *primitive* into the *civilized*) is a useful one to revisit—the flaws of *Essay on Exoticism* must be examined, but they do not negate its virtues.

9 Patricia Leighton makes this argument concerning Picasso and his contemporaries in “Colonialism, *l'art negre*, and *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*,” from *Picasso's Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, ed. Christopher Green (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 77.

10 Grijp, *Art and Exoticism*, 8-9.

11 Segalen, *Essay on Exoticism*, 63-65. Segalen's acceptance of the “diversities” engendered by oppression and hierarchy is his worst quality.

12 Harry Hartoonian, in “Exotics of Nowhere,” introduction to *Essay On Exoticism* by Victor Segalen (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2002), ix.

Time and the Primitive

“Clear the field first of all. Throw overboard everything misused or rancid contained in the word exoticism. Strip it of all its cheap finery: palm tree and camel; tropical helmet; black skins and yellow sun... Then strip the word exoticism of its exclusively tropical, exclusively geographical meaning. Exoticism does not only exist in space, but it is equally dependent on time. From there, move rapidly to the task of defining and laying out the sensation of Exoticism, which is nothing other than the notion of difference, the perception of Diversity, the knowledge that something is other than one's self; and Exoticism's power is nothing other than the power to conceive otherwise.”

Victor Segalen, *Essay on Exoticism* ¹³

In defining exoticism as a set of constructs (with a deeper meaning than mere fetish for the Orient or the tropics), Segalen hits on a crucial distinction in describing a *temporal* aspect. As much as the exotic represents a longing for that “other” place, that mysterious *locale*, the exotic also emerges from a longing for another *time*, outside of or beyond the present. Pining for the exotic is not merely geographic; it is in large part a desire to step from one time (the “contemptible and petty” present), to another (“the elsewheres and the bygone days”).¹⁴ Such longing—a nostalgia for a *place in time* which almost certainly never existed (at least not as we “remember” it)—almost necessarily traffics in fictions and fantasies. This exotic zone is a manifestation of an escapist desire to scurry out from the darkness of the present and into the light of an imagined age: pre-industrial, pre-capitalist, pre-Victorian, pre-civilization itself. The most extreme realizations of this can be found in the twin constructs of the primordial (or primeval) and the post-apocalypse—before and after civilization, or even mankind (and we may look to the Romantic painter John Martin for an example an exoticist artist who eschewed nearly all tropical paradise to focus on these two escapist temporal zones, with enormous success).¹⁵ This temporal aspect illustrates an interesting element of the exotic fantasy: it applies to the future just as well as the past. In the latter, we deal in issues of primitivism and cultural timelessness; in the former,

¹³ Victor Segalen, *Essay On Exoticism* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2002), 18.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁵ William Feaver, *The Art of John Martin*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

we enter into science fiction.

The “primitive” might well live in the present but he represents the timeless past. Much as Edward Said's *Orientalism* defines the Orient as a constructed dark mirror of the Occident—not a region or people in any meaningful sense but rather the contrast by which the West understood and defined its own self¹⁶—the “primitive” too is a construct which cannot exist without its fraternal twin, a shadow which cannot exist without its form. The other half of the primitive is “civilization.”¹⁷ The primitive construct generally takes one of two forms, both of which serve to define, by contrast, civilization. The first is a timeless and unchanging state where man and nature are one and evolution is in stasis; this infers either a biological *inferior*, incapable of evolving into civilized man and thus ripe for exploitation, or a more natural, *purser* form of humanity eternally attuned to nature. The second is the primitive as a vision of civilization as it existed in a previous evolutionary stage—a cultural “childhood,” the “blank slate upon which civilization will be written.”¹⁸ To idealize, fantasize about, or identify with the primitive is a manifestation of a desire to escape from one's cultural present, and into an alternate state (the timeless or out-of-time) or an “earlier” one (the “innocent” and pre-evolved).¹⁹

On the other end of the temporal spectrum of exoticism is science fiction. While the genre's current form often assumes a rather cold aesthetic seemingly at odds with the torrid tropicalismo of typical exotic fare, science fiction has always been linked to exoticism. This can be seen in its usage of temporal escapism; demonstrated by the manner in which early science fiction efforts, in attempting to create *other worlds*, looked to the new and alien—the exotic—which emerged from the growing colonial

16 Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Vintage Books, 1979).

17 This is the one of the primary arguments of Mark Antliff and Patricia Leighton's “Primitive,” in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. R. Nelson and R. Shiff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

18 Antliff and Leighton, “Primitive,” 226.

19 This is why Pacific islanders are so frequently described in expedition literature with variations on such phrases as “children of Eden,” etc., or “Arcadians,” equating them with the perceived early paradise of the Classical world (Bouganville referred to Tahiti as “New Cythera”). Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 110. I recall too a *World Adventurer's Club* radio serial episode (“Devil Dog”): “The lost children of Eden, their isle an unspoiled paradise.”

expanse, and borrowed heavily. The writings of Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, Edgar Rice Burroughs, the films of Méliés, *King Kong*, and the various incarnations of Flash Gordon (to name but a few of the most obvious, easily relatable examples) are textbook works of science fiction with intrinsically exotic themes, whether employing a safari-esque narrative structure (Méliés' *Impossible Voyage* and *Trip to the Moon*,²⁰ Verne's *Journey to the Center of the Earth*), or exploring the West's anxiety in relation to evolution and the primitive (Wells' *Island of Dr. Moreau*, or *The Time Machine*). Méliés' seminal science fiction films, *Impossible Voyage* (1904) and *Trip to the Moon* (1902), could almost just as well be expeditions to some mysterious island, his attempts to create an “alien” landscape are so similar to, and reliant on, embellished and fictional accounts of Africa or the Pacific Islands. His approach is recurrent throughout this type of fiction, and the parallels with adventure-exoticism are self-evident: scientists of one stripe or another (certainly Western) venture to an unfamiliar place (or time, or place out-of-time), encounter the local flora and fauna, observe or engage in the ritual culture of the indigenous “other” (occasionally conquering, slaying, or becoming their god) and return triumphant. Wells' *Island of Dr. Moreau*, on the other hand, stages a post-Darwinian horror story against the backdrop of yet another mystery island, exploring (and exploiting) a Victorian obsession with evolution as well as a profound colonialist anxiety over the civilizing of the primitive. The basic plot of the novel is consistent in many ways with the expedition-narrative, as exemplified by Méliés' films, but the emphasis is on the psychological aspects of colonial culture. As such, it bridges the gap between the serious colonial fiction of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and more relatively frivolous fantastical science fiction, such as Jules Verne's *Journey to the Center of the Earth*,²¹ and serves as an excellent example of an area where the two seemingly disparate worlds find themselves inextricably linked.

In both Wells' novel and Conrad's we also see a narrative device often employed in the service of

20 Itself based on an 1865 Verne *Voyages Extraordinaire* novel, *From the Earth to the Moon*.

21 Though it ought to be pointed out that *Journey to the Center of the Earth* does attempt to couch its fantastical narrative in “sound” hollow-earth science, or more accurately, pseudo-science. It's not fantasy on the order of a fairy tale, but it does feature a dinosaur fight in a subterranean ocean.

exoticist art and literature: the “true account” angle. This allows for an exotic narrative, whether embellished or outright fictional, to be presented with the authority of “truth” and contemporaneous “reality,” borrowing language from early anthropological travel-logs and New World encyclopedias. When incorporated into such an overtly fantastic work such as *Dr. Moreau*, the conceit that the narrator has actually experienced these events—and is now conveying them to the reader almost as reportage (combined with at least a patina of scientific authority)—is an effective tool. It makes the plot twists seem more credulous, the violations of reality more believable. This method, with its complex and various blendings of fact and fiction, science and fantasy, informative documentary and lurid entertainment, is a staple of exotic art and a grand literary tradition. But it can be highly problematic, as well. The verisimilitude insisted upon by the fictionalized “true account” may bring the reader/viewer *into* the fantasy, but it may also establish (intentionally or incidentally, as the case may be) the fantasy as *fact* (or at least, having basis in fact), informing, even dictating to, the individual's worldview.

This tricky territory of authoritative authorial voice is reflected in other media: the supposedly highly accurate panorama of the 19th century, postcards, various field recordings and “exotic” music, World's Fair exhibitions and human zoos, the museum itself (as a “display-zone” for Otherness, stripped of context), etc. Perhaps none fit this bill better than photography and film, both of which project intense authority and engender a presumption in the viewer of seeing reflected an unmediated truth. While the deceptive capability of the film medium often leads to the irresponsible half-truths of documentation and propagandistic lies of omission, it also results in extraordinarily illusionistic images, with one foot in the credible world of visceral reality, and the other in the dream-world of constructed fantasies. The exotic arts are best served by methods that can assert at least a veneer of authoritative truth, engendering suspension of disbelief and the awe of the incredible being made credible.

A New Exot

An inner Exot has been with us since birth, a time when all that we could not reach was exotic to us; once we have matured, we discover that the exotic is woven inextricably into our language and culture. I posit that we might strive to become Exots of another stripe. Let us not concern ourselves now with exploring other actual places and cultures; rather, let us *explore the construct of the exotic itself*—as though it were a place in time, into which we could mount an expedition. This place, or rather this non-place, is the universe of *exotica*. Let us penetrate it as we would a virgin island, test its boundaries as Thor Heyerdahl tested the Pacific ocean. An alternate dimension has been created for us, woven from a bricolage of fiction, mediated truths, lies, and fantasies; a depository of Western dreams of the Other, a zone formed by the inversion of our own selves. In this shadow realm of nameless jungles, inscrutable alien tribes, unmapped and misnamed islands, and imperturbable paradises, let us seek a new kind of incomprehensibility. Unlike Segalen's incomprehensibilities—which are rooted in ethnographic reality and are thus easily explained if you care to learn about other cultures—the world of *exotica* is full of incomprehensibilities which have *no cultural meanings beyond our own*; the products of invention and abstraction, they are mythic, empty vessels into which we may pour a personal set of meanings.

In the course of this expedition, we may indeed uncover heinous, racist artifacts from our own history (issuing forth from even from our own heroes), and the appalling, infantilizing attitudes of superiority taken by the West towards a colonized Other. In the case of such evidence we should not shy away, or make excuses. But it would be tragic to respond with total repudiation—these problematic instances were conceived and justified in “an atmosphere we can no longer experience and must work to understand.”²² *We must work to understand*. By struggling to comprehend the reasons for these

²² Leighton, “*Colonialism, l'art negre, and Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*,” 77.

attitudes, we may learn from them, and sharpen the mind of our own inner Exot so as to avoid their corrosive inheritance. We have to struggle in this way, *it is worth it*, because there is great value, beauty, and profundity in *all* moments of exoticism, however problematic. Not just *despite* these problems, but quite often largely *because* of them. They are worth investigating, appreciating, and *enjoying*, on the merits of what they can show us; they reveal the topography of our internal desires, the construction of our fantasies. Knowing that certain attitudes were for exoticists omnipresent in their culture and thus entrenched in their way of thinking, we may also search for value and meaning in the ways these artists actually used the exotic (again, however problematically) as a mechanism to *break* from the mainstream. Let us go with generosity and search for these elements of sincerity and difference, exploring what they tell us about the dreams of Western culture, the longing to escape into something other than what already *is*, to identify *not* with society but with the Other. This may be encountered in the overt intentions of the artist, the subversive message, or sussed out from an unconsidered subtext; it may also take the form of a network emerging, not from individual works, but from the pattern of the cultural zeitgeist.

Part Two: Exotica

“Listening to the subtle blendings of rhythms and voices both human and instrumental, one feels that he is being allowed that rare glimpse into other cultures... other rooms. We become armchair travelers with our magic carpet, our hi-fi (or stereo) equipment, and this album. We see and feel the searing veldt... the moody reaches of the jungle... a tribal initiation fête and sheer encompassing beauty. Here, in all honesty, has been recreated that lost universe of fantasy— completely appealing, impeccable in its taste and typically Martin Denny!”

-Back cover notes for Martin Denny's 1959 Exotica LP *Afro-Desia*

*“Les Baxter really knows a thing or two about transporting people, musically, to far-off places...the final effect that he creates is more than simply African and Latin-American; it is grandiose, extravagant... music for every romantic daydreamer, full of the rich lull of the tropics and the fascinating drum call —
TAMBOO!”*

-Back cover notes for Les Baxter's 1956 Exotica LP, *Tamboor!*

“If you wish to escape the pressures and tensions of sophisticated commercialism, daily hypnosis of television, undercurrents of social and political tidal waves, then follow the sun to the islands in the Pacific... When you hear a recorded tropical bird call, velvet vibes, piano and exciting percussions blend together, you ARE on an island... you see tranquil blue lagoons, hazy purple valleys and lovely hula hands— you are immersed in the bewitching spell of Arthur Lyman's ISLE OF ENCHANTMENT.”

-Back cover notes for Arthur Lyman's 1964 LIFE series LP, *Isle of Enchantment*

“...a combination of the South Pacific and the Orient...what a lot of people imagined the islands to be like...it's pure fantasy though.”

-Martin Denny, on his particular brand of musical Exotica²³

²³ Philip Hayward, “Martin Denny and the Development of Musical Exotica,” in *Widening the Horizon: Exoticism in Post-War Popular Music*, ed. Philip Hayward (Sydney: John Libbey & Co./Perfect Beat Publications, 1999), 75.

“*Exotica*”

Having offered a serviceable look at the definitions and components of the *exotic* as a form of cultural discourse, I now turn to *exotica*. This section will include a definition of terms and a selective timeline of *exotica*. Let me clarify my terms: “*Exotica*,” in its most common iteration, refers to a genre of music popular in the 1950s and 1960s, but I intend to use the term more generally. For the purposes of this writing, “*exotica*” will describe the broad range of culture-objects produced in service, or as a result, of the exoticist discourse, as well as (and this is key) the constructed fantasy-universe that they collectively create (the details of which I will elaborate upon shortly).²⁴ Whereas “*Exotica*” (capitalized) is the musical genre (which I will briefly touch upon here and return to at the summation of the timeline).

Exotica music constitutes a group of musical recordings (with a broad diasporal halo of associated or similar albums), popular in the West during the mid-20th century (some of them enormously so), which express a fetish for the exotic. With alluring, sensational cover art (*fig 2*), and pulpy back-cover prose, these records lured in their largely Western audiences with promises of escapism and armchair travel, intimating a taste of new and previously unimagined sounds from other lands—a tempting glimpse of relaxation in paradise, paradoxically mixed with the shock of the primitive and erotic unknown. Rarely even remotely ethno- or geographically accurate, *Exotica* music is, in many ways, Western popular music in an inauthentic mask of the other; the musical equivalent of a set of highly idealized, tourist-oriented postcards.

²⁴ I note that I am not the first to employ the term in this way, and that “*exotica*” is frequently used to describe any number of things. Perhaps its most stable application, though by no means fixed, is to connote *paraphernalia* of the broader *Exotica* trend in mid-century pop/kitsch culture. However, it is frequently used in service of broader categories; for example, John Hutnyk’s *Critique of Exotica: Music, Politics, and the Culture Industry* explores a notion of largely 20th century “*exotica*” and rarely if ever makes mention of the *Exotica* music of the 1950s.

These records offer some of the purest examples (indeed, they may even serve as a sort of rubric) of a major aspect of the exoticist discourse which I shall refer to as “exotica.” In the timeline which shall follow, I will expand the category of exotica beyond such a small and specific niche and into a larger, multivalent history of other culture items well beyond just the realm of music.

In his book, *Exotica*, David Toop offers a useful description of his subject:

*“Exotica is the art of ruins, the ruined world of enchantment laid waste in fervid imagination, the paradox of an imperial paradise liberated from colonial intervention, a golden age recreated through the lurid colors of a cocktail glass, illusory and remote zones of pleasure and peace dreamed after the bomb [...] an absurd perception of what may once have been.”*²⁵

He begins the book with a text-pyramid of themes as they apply to the term:

exotica
a dream
colonisation
a bizarre image
an image of paradise
mutual misunderstanding
an imagined quality of elsewhere
a projection from the unconscious
a conjured place, person or atmosphere
erotic desire synthesised with asexual phenomena
constructs of the imagination, essences of difference
that which is remote, other, unusual, unfamiliar, obscure
a fantasy of alien culture, behaviour, appearance, environment

While Toop's book is an almost exclusively musical history, he and I share an attitude of allowing exotica a broad categorical umbrella. Certainly, the term may be used to describe a wide variety of things, but it's no simple task to say exactly what *is* and *isn't* exotica (and of course, many things which contain *elements* of exotica may not be best defined as exotica *per se*, so much as they are

²⁵ David Toop, *Exotica: Fabricated Soundscapes in a Real World* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1999), iix.

simply related to a spectrum of exotica culture). Still, taking an “I know it when I see it” approach is only useful to the individual employing it; I would suggest that exotica is best exemplified by a work²⁶ of an exoticist nature which employs one or more of these elements, many of which may overlap considerably:

- A capacity for “armchair travel” or other simulation of travel as an experience.
- Aspires to edification in relation to the *Other* or the *elsewhere* but mainly offers *spectacle*; perhaps exemplified by panoramic-exhibition, ethnographic, and docu-tainment forms.
- Recontextualizes and/or distorts ethnographic reality or “fact” by synthesizing it with Western fantasy, mythic language, touristic idealization, or the assumption of an escapist identity.
- Employs Western methods or aesthetic values but ornaments or syncretizes itself with elements of exotic “difference.”
- Conjures a mythic or archetypal Other, or constructs a pastiche of Otherness.
- Relies heavily on well-established exotic tropes (palm trees, bird calls, etc.) and clichés.

A Timeline of Exotica: A History of a Fantasy

By the 1770s, Captain James Cook had attained the status of an international celebrity-explorer, becoming in many ways the culminating figure of the age of exploration and discovery. In 1776, he embarked on his third voyage²⁷ to the Pacific islands, taking with him the artist John Webber, who was to be the expedition's artist. Webber received instructions which differed significantly from those given to his predecessors, Hodges and Parkinson; while they were to explicitly (if not always exclusively) create scientific drawings, Webber was to illustrate *scenes*, narrative tableaux and vignettes for the eventual

26 A culture-item of any sort, from along the entire spectrum of art and culture, from high to low, etc.

27 This was his final voyage: Cook was killed by native Hawaiians in 1778.

entertainment of what was, by that point, an eager and invested audience.²⁸ In the words of Cook, Webber was to,

*“Serve to make the result of our voyage entertaining to the generality of readers, as well as instructive to the sailor or scholar [...] enabling us to preserve, and to bring home, such drawings of the most memorable scenes of our transactions, as could be executed by a professed and skilful artist.”*²⁹

Webber had the unenviable task of having to produce images which would be entertaining to a mainstream audience without sacrificing the closely observed realism that might make the drawings useful to an expert in the field. The resulting works (*fig.3*) were a problematic compromise: highly Westernized, didactic scenes, populated with idealized, classicized figures (reminiscent of Boticelli and cliché even for the time, drawing criticism³⁰), but also featuring highly accurate flora and fauna (with ethnographic details, such as costumes, fluctuating somewhere in between the two extremes³¹). These drawings evidence the groaning of an early exotica; hybrid fictions born at the intersection of disparate, irreconcilable goals.

Cook's voyages, and the attendant drawings produced by his expedition artists, were made during an age of unprecedented expedition, discovery, and imperial expansion. For the West, the world seemed to be growing larger and more diverse at an incredible rate. Cook's celebrity status, the subsequent closeness with which his exploits were followed—as well as the numerous illustrations (and cheap, popular copies of illustrations—*fig.4*) related to expeditions and the publication of travel accounts—offers but one example of the way this expansion fascinated the European public. Yet travel of any sort was still very difficult for people across all class lines—for example, Queen Victoria had never even visited India.³² To capitalize on this interest in travel, and the emergence of an exotic world,

28 Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 108-109.

29 Cook, *Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, quoted in *ibid.*, 109.

30 Herder, *Outlines* (1803) quoted in *ibid.*, 114.

31 In scenes, Webber tended to classicize and is considered much less than accurate in regards to ethnographic detail, whereas in portraits he was often more reliable (*ibid.*, 28).

32 Veronica della Dora, “Putting the World into a Box: A Geography of Nineteenth-Century “Travelling Landscapes”” *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 89 (2007), 288.

there arose a wide variety of optical devices designed to simulate the experience, chief among them the panorama. These became essential objects of early exotica.

Invented by Robert Barker in 1785 (soon to be ever more popularized by Robert Fulton) the panorama evolved from a broad family of optical devices (including the peep show, diorama, and pocket globe, among others), hybridized with concepts such as the mural, landscape painting, or painted screen. Within a decade the Western world was enthralled in a “panoromania.”³³ In contrast to the spatial restrictions of a conventional painting, these exhibits offered immersive, full-body experiences. The panorama, which means “total view,” allowed for “ambulatory autonomy,” meaning that the entire person of the spectator was able to wander the space of the scene, absorbing themselves in it; the panoramic canvas itself was enclosed within a space designed to insure the viewer see nothing but the uninterrupted scene.³⁴ The accuracy of the scenes depicted were much touted. Panorama companies often launched lengthy expeditions to distant locations, where they rigorously worked on site to create detailed, realistic, and purportedly well-researched scenes.³⁵ This edifying element of studious realism, combined with the adventure narrative of the artist-expedition, further fueled the public's enthusiasm, and panoramas became discussed and celebrated in explicit terms as a “substitute for travel.”³⁶ Charles Dickens, capturing the zeitgeist of the panoramaniacal age, wrote a story/article (entitled “Some Account of an Extraordinary Traveler,” published in *Household Words* in 1850) about a character named “Mr. Booley,” a man who travels the world, somehow without ever leaving London. The article's denouement has Mr. Booley reveal that, of course, his travels were all by aid of “gigantic-moving panorama or diorama mode of conveyance.” Panorama allowed the exotic landscape to come to you, delivered to your city through the union of art and empire. Echoing a persistent Rousseauian

33 della Dora, “Putting the World into a Box,” 288.

34 Clarke and Doel, “Engineering Space and Time: Moving Pictures and Motionless Trips,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 31 (2005) quoted in *ibid.*, 294.

35 *ibid.*, 298-300.

36 *ibid.*, 296.

Romantic notion of unification through simulation of travel, Dickens has Mr. Booley proclaim this “mode of conveyance” to be:

*“[a] new and cheap means [...] for conveying the result of actual experience, to those who are unable to obtain such experiences for themselves; and to bring them within reach of the people – emphatically the people. New worlds open out to them, beyond their little worlds, and widen their range of reflection, information, sympathy and interest. The more man knows of man, the better for the common brother hood of us all.”*³⁷

Rousseau's notion of universal brotherhood informs much of the exotic discourse of the period; it certainly informs the fascinating example of an 1804 scenic wallpaper, *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique*, produced by wallpaper manufacturer Dufour et Cie. The wallpaper is one of the first of its kind, in that it is not only scenic, but truly *panoramic*. Across a vast 20 panels (*fig.5*), it depicts the various locations and peoples encountered in Cook's voyages, as described by Cook in his published accounts. Designed after Webber's drawings, Dufour's product is an aestheticized taxonomy of extremely disparate and far-flung peoples, compressed into one continuous, homogenized Tahitian landscape, idealized for maximum escapist pleasure. It was accompanied by a 48-page booklet, which took great care and pride in arguing the wallpaper as a documentary device with the noble purpose of edification and promotion of universalist thought. The language ultimately reveals the paper as the exotic artifact that it plainly is:

*“We hoped that viewers would be pleased to see assembled in a convenient and vivid manner this multitude of peoples who are separated from us by vast oceans, arranged in such a way that without leaving his apartment, a studious man [...] reading the history of the voyages or the specific accounts of the explorers used in these decorations, might think himself, by casting his eyes around him, in the presence of the depicted people.”*³⁸

Perhaps even more succinctly, the booklet later remarks “The purpose of the enterprise, as stated in the outset, is to try to *please the eye and to excite the imagination without taxing it.*” (Emphasis mine.)

37 Charles Dickens, “Some Account of an Extraordinary Traveler,” *Household Words* 1 (1850): 73-77.

38 Peter Rudd, trans. “Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique, Tableau Pour Décoration en Papier Peint.” in *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique*, ed. Vivienne Webb (National Gallery of Australia, 2000), 32. Originally published 1804.

Dufour's wallpaper is a radical innovation on the model presented by the panorama, and a perfect piece of *exotica*. Rather than having to visit this captured landscape in the public zoo of the panorama house, Dufour allows an individual to purchase it for the home. Designed to fit almost any spatial need (*fig 6*), the wallpaper (and others like it) offers the consumer an ownable world, groomed to exclude any detail that would make it unsuited for the dining room or study, transformed radically by European stylistic intervention to match already-established preconceptions so as to seem more comfortable and familiar. Here, as in the panorama, the viewer becomes the center of a circular universe, but this time from the controlled domain of the *home*. Transformed by the wallpaper, the wall ceases to be a barrier and becomes a portal for armchair travel and escapist fantasy.

If the scenic wallpaper renders *personal* the panoramic experience, shrinking it down to the size of a private room, the world's fairs, beginning in 1851, present it as an enormous and multitudinous microcosm on the scale of a small, dense city. These expositions didn't just set out to create a panoramic representation of a certain place (or category of places), but rather the entire world, organized like an encyclopedic exhibit.³⁹ The fairs as a whole were vast and overwhelming, but each nation or colony's pavilion functioned as a graspable, essentialized entry.

The first fairs, while exotic, were focused as much (if not more) on industrial innovation and “modernity”; but modernity and exoticism are inextricably linked in an imperial world. This created an avenue for the spectacle of the Other, and a particularly potent strain of *exotica*, to assert itself as a major, even primary, appeal of the fairs—especially as a less scrupulously informational, more entertainment-driven, and even more overtly exploitative culture of midway-style areas slowly gained prominence. The entire culture of world's fairs and expositions is a subject of massive interest and endless study for anyone tracking the development of culture (exotic or otherwise) in the 19th and 20th

39 In fact, G.B. Goode (arranger of many of the late 19th-century Expos), explicitly stated that the Exposition should operate as “an illustrated Encyclopaedia of Civilization”- Tom Gunning, “The World as Object Lesson: Cinema Audiences, Visual Culture and the St. Louis World's Fair, 1904,” in *Film History* 4 (1994): 425.

century, and each fair seems to have contained endless examples of exotica, exoticism, and various cross-cultural pollinations. There is likely no larger or more influential concept in this timeline of exotica than the fairs (particularly if one considers the way the model extends through everything from zoos and ethnographic museums to the Olympics, Disneyworld, and even the Venice Biennale, with its national pavilions⁴⁰), so I'll have to be regrettably brief on the subject. That said, I'd like to address two aspects of the fair which strongly relate to exotica: a continuing evolution of panoramic or otherwise simulated travel, and the capacity for fairs to expose the West to other cultures in significant and influential ways.

In an example of ripe exoticist spectacle, the 1889 World Exhibition in Paris (*fig 7*) featured a recreation of the streets of Cairo, supposedly painstaking in its accuracy. Designed to be viewed from the panoramic “God's eye view” vantage point of a newly-constructed Eiffel tower, but also to be penetrated at the ground level for experiential, participatory spectatorship, “Cairo Street” featured “authentic” Egyptian donkeys and even imported *dirt* (smeared on walls and covering the streets), a staff of (non-Egyptian) actors playing Egyptians, and a “mosque” with belly-dancers and a bar inside.⁴¹ A previous Paris Exhibition in 1867 had also introduced the “national pavilions,” a tradition which continued through subsequent fairs and allowed various nations and colonies to represent themselves. These pavilions did sometimes aim to issue correctives or present an authentic portrait,⁴² but more often than not they engaged in a sort of populist exoticizing of their essential appeal. This is particularly true of the 1889 “palace of the colonies,” which was among the first and most influential presentations of living exhibits (*fig 8*).⁴³ But perhaps the truest home of exotica at the fairs was along the margins, in the

40 It's worth mentioning that not only do the national pavilions carry on the spirit of the fairs, but also that last year's (2013) exposition was entitled *Il Palazzo Enciclopedico (The Encyclopedic Palace)*, and was themed around a very world's fair-esque notion of containing all the world's information in one place.

41 Christiane Demeulenaere-Douyère, “World Exhibitions: A Gateway to Non-European Cultures?,” in *Quaderns d'Historia de l'Enginyeria* 13 (2012): 89.

42 As demonstrated, for one example, in Zeynep Çelik, *Displaying the Orient: Architecture of Islam at Nineteenth-Century World's Fairs*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

43 Of course, as “colonies” these conquered nations tended to have less in the way of autonomy, if any, in choosing the manner of their representation.

midways and commercial centers. In these places, one found the majority of living exhibitions, village scenes, and human zoos; belly dancers (known at the time as “hoochie-coochie” dancers), Balinese girls, and other “primitive” musical or erotic spectacles; and variations on the panorama, such as “virtual voyages” (multimedia rides/spectacles), and forerunners/analogues of early cinema.⁴⁴ By the St. Louis fair of 1904, the midway (called “the Pike”) had moved in from the margins to play a central role, and was described in the press as a “Living colour page of the world” where “pictures speak louder than words.”⁴⁵

These “virtual voyages,” which combined the concept of panoramic perception with the “frictionless travel” of trains, offered a variety of experiences, including exotic locations, re-enactments of major disasters, and even science fiction. A 1901 “Trip to the Moon” ride (nearly coinciding with Méliés' similar film of 1902) provoked a critic to comment, “not satisfied with exhausting the earth, [showmen] have already begun on the universe. Behold the world is a sucked orange.”⁴⁶ In a truly majestic and culminating example of this type of attraction, the St. Louis fair featured a ride called *Creation*, a masterpiece of temporal exoticism and massively compressed travel-simulation. Housed in a giant ornate building (*fig. 7*), *Creation* took the visitor on a time-travel voyage, *backwards* along a 1,000-ft. canal (via “grotesque craft”), past a moving multi-media panorama which illustrated scenes starting with the present and progressing to the past. At its climax, the ride halted for visitors to disembark and enter a primeval temple, wherein the walls dissolved and the creation of the universe itself was simulated.⁴⁷

Although these events had the arguable effect of shrinking the world down to a digestible consumer experience, the fairs did also possess a fascinating potential to expand the world's scope by presenting a

44 Gunning, “The World as Object Lesson,” 432.

45 *Ibid.*, 432.

46 *Ibid.*, 437.

47 *Ibid.*, 438.

wide-ranging spectacle of diversity⁴⁸ on an unprecedented scale—and, like the panorama, by making itself accessible to nearly all class of visitor. These expositions may have been simplified abbreviations (replete with misinformation) of an immense and complicated world, but it must be noted that they also contained seemingly endless information within that compressed space. If exposure to Javanese Gamelan dancers in 1889 was insufficiently contextualized, rooted in exploitation, or not entirely ethnographically accurate, it nonetheless had the effect of stimulating research, awareness, and interest in Javanese music; not only as an exotic oddity, but as a potential for a new way of thinking about music. This led to key East-West syncretisms and cross-cultural study (Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, and Erik Satie's interest in Gamelan began at the 1889 fair, impacting the development of music in the early 20th century). Gauguin, Picasso, Van Gogh, and virtually every artist who attended the fair left having accumulated some sort of exoticist, syncretist, or travel-oriented rejuvenation, part of a larger trend which would drive much of the Modernist movements of the early 20th century.

In 1880, Pierre Loti published *Rarahu*, also known as the *Marriage of Loti*, the story of the author's island journey and subsequent “marriage” to a 14 year old Tahitian girl. A world traveler and outrageous exoticist (*fig. 9*), Loti's writings were phenomenally successful. He quickly became one of the most prominent literary figures of his day, “the most flamboyantly adventurous Frenchman of his time, one of the most famous men of the century” (though his contemporary reputation is rather less esteemed).⁴⁹ His work blended travelogue and fiction, weaving his own experiences with the women of the Polynesian islands (and elsewhere) into formulaic romance narratives, padding them out with (largely stereotype-confirming and often deeply ignorant) racial, cultural, and gender commentary, then distinguishing them with lush, panoramic passages of florid scenery and languid sensory impressions. Using words to paint broad idealized pictures of paradise, Loti's *exotica* is of a piece with Dufour's

48 A diversity which included no small degree of “reality,” or something close to it, mixed in amongst the dominant problematic fictions.

49 Toop, *Exotica*, 62.

scenic wallpaper, minus anything in the way of edification—Loti's prose is almost pure escapism, fluffy literary armchair travel.

In 1891, the painter Paul Gauguin traveled to Tahiti, inspired in large part by Loti (as well as experiences at a world's fair, and the publication that same year of Delacroix's African journals). Ostensibly in search of rejuvenation and escape from Europe, he also set out to realize his personal Loti fantasy: settling in a village, Gauguin lived as an islander, married a 13 year old native girl, and wrote a book. Like *Rarahu*, Gauguin's *Noa Noa* (fig 10) combines travelogue, personal journal-writing, and exoticist fiction (including passages of scenic and erotic prose). The book is also full of sketches, attempts at hybrid visual style, and collage; it ends with a lengthy (and less-than-accurate) chronicling of Maori mythology. Gauguin's quest for rejuvenation, while flawed, was a sincere undertaking; his desire to achieve this via identification with the *other*, as represented by the Maori, is what sets him apart from the likes of Loti. His “going native” is an absurd self-delusion, an engagement not with the local culture or its stylistic forms but with a European *idea* of them; nevertheless, it stands as a rejection of European social norms, resulting in the invention of a new visual style through syncretistic engagement with Tahitian art and exoticist fantasy. This work, imbued with the hybrid fictions of exotica, presents a way of interacting with exotic cultures that (while problematic) differs radically from the more imperial eye of Delacroix and the Orientalists, and predicts the primitivism which would soon be so key to the Cubists.

The literary approach of Loti and Gauguin—mixing personal account with bold romantic fiction—is found throughout exotic literature of the period (as I've mentioned in the previous section, under “Time and the Primitive”). Joseph Conrad employs a similar, though intensely more serious, method in his body of work, particularly his 1899 masterpiece of colonial literature, *Heart of Darkness*. H.G. Wells and Jules Verne, writing pure fiction, work the “true account” into their novels as a formal element to

lend their works verisimilitude and a patina of science (exemplified in Wells' 1896 novel *The Island of Doctor Moreau*). Another angle on this approach can be found in many popular literary forgeries going back well into the 18th century (and earlier), such as Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, or *Tales of the Genii*, a massively popular *One Thousand and One Nights*-esque faux-Oriental compilation of supposed folk literature.

The synthesizing of fact and experience into fiction and archetype is at the very heart of exotica, and we also see it in many of the earliest films. 1914's *In the Land of the Head Hunters* (directed by Edward Curtis, the prolific photographer of Native Americans), makes a fine example, a wholly fictional film with an implicit documentary tone, concerned with savage primitive stereotypes and acted out by indigenous Kwakwaka'wakw peoples (*fig 11*). The film is another installment in an evolution of virtual voyages, living exhibitions, and fictionalized travel accounts, and stands as the obscure antecedent to at least two traditions in film. One is a jungle-centric model of exploitation or B-picture (also known as the “goona-goona,” the sort of film which is often dependent on cannibals/headhunters for conflict).⁵⁰ The other is the so-called “docudrama” films largely pioneered by Robert Flaherty, such as *Nanook of the North* (from 1922, often considered the first feature length documentary), *White Shadows in the South Seas* (1928), or *Tabu* (1931), a deeply compromised collaboration with F.W. Murnau (*fig 12*).⁵¹ Flaherty's films ostensibly aim for documentary truth, but are compromised by his willingness to invent and distort. His ultimate tendency is to shape his footage into archetypal narratives centered around pitting a “primordial” man/noble savage against nature itself with little or no mention of colonial influence.⁵² His films present a timeless pseudo-reality—peopled with an exotica-pastiche of primitive man, but constructed from very real, very modern components.

50 Toop, *Exotica*, 75.

51 It's also worth mentioning the “Mondo” exploitation documentaries (“shocksplotation”) of the '60s and '70s, a bizarre and enormous body of films which lie between the Goona-Goonas and the Flaherty pictures in terms of intent and method, and operate even less scrupulously than either.

52 Toop, *Exotica*, 53. (Extrapolating from an Asen Balicki quote of a John C. Messenger quote- an extremely, regrettably secondary source.)

Much like Gauguin before them, the avant-garde at the turn of the century embraced a desire to draw vitality and rejuvenation by rejecting Western convention and identifying with Otherness. In this period, the Other is largely represented by “primitive” subsaharan Africa, a geographic preference which reflects the intense European colonial interests in the region at the time (particularly the Congo), and the subsequent influx of African art and artifacts (*l'art negre*) which made their way to Europe through colonial trade as a result of those interests. While there is of course no one single way this influence manifests itself, or any single resultant artistic philosophy, a generalized look at the modernist view of Africa reveals a variation on familiar themes: a romanticized construct of a mythical, pre-civilized, almost monolithic Other whose artifacts contained real magic (of a sort) and whose total opposite nature could even constitute a destabilizing threat.⁵³ This view, somewhat typical at least in its gestalt shape, differed from the mainstream in that it tended to see the potential for primitive rupture as vaguely positive or necessary. Avant-gardists, such as Picasso, imagined the primitive to adhere to purer values, containing an elemental vitality that had been lost in the civilized West; “neither the inferior brute nor a misunderstood equal, but something more like an absolute other who remains possessed of primordial powers with which 'modern' culture has lost touch—much to its disadvantage.”⁵⁴ On one hand, these modernist thinkers used African aesthetics and “primitive” strategies to rejuvenate their art; on the other, to critique “civilization,” bourgeois values, and quite often, colonialism itself. That they nonetheless subscribed to an exoticized view of an Other which they “preferred to mystify rather than examine” means that their “subversive revisions necessarily remained implicated in the prejudices from which they derived.”⁵⁵ The “African,” imagined as a dark mirror of European civilization, offers a valuable and incendiary counter-model to Western values—a talisman for revolutionary cultural shifts—but a reliance on fiction and myth reveals little about Africa itself and a great deal about Europe and

53 Leighton, “*Colonialism, l'art negre, and Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*,” 95-80.

54 *Ibid.*, 95.

55 *Ibid.*, 78.

its attitudes towards the general Other.

Of this primitivist surge, Picasso certainly looms largest. His 1907 work, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)* (fig 13), is a seminal example of modernist primitivism and exemplifies the complex contradictions which carry throughout the period. The work registers a critique of colonial and evolutionist attitudes, and identifies the artist *with* the other and *against* society; it also reinforces notions of difference, primitivism, and the horror of the grotesque. One of Picasso's great influences at that time was the anarchist and absurdist playwright Alfred Jarry (fig 14). Jarry's 1901 *Ubu Colonial* is an extended critique of colonial attitudes and Enlightenment philosophy (rejecting the ideas of the *noble savage* and *degenerate savage* alike), but, like Picasso, “revels in ethnic difference... evoking 'tribal' life and art as irrational, magic, and violent” and embraces these qualities as superior (albeit in a provocative and absurdist manner).⁵⁶ In *Ubu Colonial*, the Other becomes an ambassador of the perverse “superiority” of the exotic; one scene depicts a colonial figure's astonished realization that “the white man is simply a Negro turned inside out like a glove.”⁵⁷ Jarry's play is a form of *exotica* with express subversive intent, and employs the racist construct of “Africa” as a staging ground for critique. In knowingly employing the *constructed* universe (rather than any sort of “real” or ethnographically factual universe), it exemplifies the *exotica aspect* of *fin de siècle* modernist primitivism.

By the 1920s, African art had moved from the marginal domain of the avant-garde and into the mainstream, particularly in French culture, which was beginning to manifest an outrageous mania for the exotic. In 1921, African art was shown at the Venice Exposition of Art (though not uncontroversially), and a fashion for jazz and all things *negré* evidenced a more thorough assimilation of European tastes and African aesthetics; a transformation of the promise of *transgressive primitivism* into a less threatening aesthetic culture, not unlike the previous century's Japonisme. This caused the

⁵⁶ Ibid., 89-90.

⁵⁷ Jarry quoted in Ibid., 90.

Surrealists, who were intensely interested in primitive art (*fig 15*), to downplay African art as “being too 'rational' and too 'naturalistic,’” favoring instead Oceanic, American Indian, and Arctic tribal art for their supposedly deeper connections to the subconscious.⁵⁸ In the 1929 “Surrealist Map of the World” (*fig 16*), the world is re-imagined and distorted according to Surrealist preferences (as well as a pointed distaste for colonial influence and European patriotism). In this map, Africa is tiny, Europe is even smaller, the non-Alaskan US is nonexistent, and the Pacific islands loom like mammoths in the Ocean, dwarfing a minuscule Australia. Once again, the world is presented as an exhibit, rearranged to suit the values and ideologies of its curators—though in this case, the artifice of the exotic construct is more tacitly recognized as a function of the European subconscious.

1929 also saw the birth of a short-lived but significant periodical, *Documents* (*fig 17*). Edited by transgressive writer Georges Bataille, *Documents* was conceived as a forum for surrealist activity (in an expanded sense⁵⁹) outside of the strictures of Breton's Surrealist Movement proper (from which Batailles and several others had recently split). It quickly developed a “distinctly ethnographic bent” and became a place where surrealism and ethnography (a fairly young field of study at the time) freely juxtaposed, blended, and slipped into each other's methods and vocabularies via the literal or symbolic act of collage.⁶⁰ *Documents* demonstrates how the two “disciplines” (now so seemingly disparate) employed the exotic as an instrument of subversive discourse. This strategy of “ethnographic surrealism” pursued a disruption of hierarchy and questioned the distinction between high and low art (embracing not only the functional but also the mass-produced, alongside art-for-art's-sake); celebrated ugliness as well as beauty (while problematizing the use and value of such terms); “delight[ed] in

58 Jack Flam, introduction to *Primitivism and Twentieth Century Art: A Documentary History*, ed. Jack Flam and Miriam Deutch (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) 13-14.

59 Surrealism outside of the restraints of the Surrealist movement, “an esthetic that values fragments, curious collections, unexpected juxtapositions – that works to provoke the manifestation of extraordinary realities drawn from the erotic, the exotic, and the unconscious” not limited to Breton's “Movement Narrowly defined, with its manifestos, schisms, and excommunications.” (though certainly in line with Breton's own assertion that surrealism was not “a body of doctrines [...] but an activity”)- James Clifford, “On Ethnographic Surrealism,” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4 (1981): 539-540.

60 Clifford, “On Ethnographic Surrealism,” 548.

cultural impurities and disturbing syncretisms” and made use of its halves' mutual “license to shock”;⁶¹ and was suspicious of the artifice of contemporary cultural reality, offering the exotic or Other as an alternative. Rather than presenting stable facts, there is a conscious pursuit of disorientation, disruptive display of difference, and a willingness “to dislocate the orders of its own culture.”⁶² *Documents* is a particularly rich and self-aware artifact of this intersection, but it's also a very short-lived one; however, the publication's discontinuation in 1930 was hardly the end of such ethnographic surrealist strategies (intentionally employed or no), particularly as found in ethnographic museums with their isolated aesthetic objects and juxtapositions, “moments when cultural realities are cut from their contexts and forced into jarring proximity.”⁶³

Despite the reservations of the Surrealists, African art and Afro-aesthetics engulfed the French mainstream in the 1920s. It was not merely a function of *visual* culture; *negrophilie* (fig 18) came to France not only in the form of ethnographic fascination, *l'art negre*, and avant garde art such as Cubism, but also as part of a burgeoning mania for jazz, and jazz dancing (such as the Lindy hop and the Charleston), and Afro-Cuban music culture. While negrophilia as a broad concept is not isolated to France (much of the rest of the Western world was similarly enthralled at the time), French *negrophilie* is an especially significant exotica phenomenon as it had the effect of collating widely disparate cultures into one homogenized celebration of distilled *Otherness*, in the form of the mythic *negro*. This culture-mania absorbed and conflated elements of the Harlem Renaissance (particularly the “jungle music” of Duke Ellington's Cotton Club period—fig 19), Cuban art and identity movements in painting and music (*Cubanismo*), imperial culture, and all things related to *l'art negre*. Less a critique of colonialism than an escapist, cathartic response to the horrors of World War I, the wild syntheses of *negrophilie* served to satisfy European primitivist fantasies; a longing for a paradisaal return to a more primal,

61 Ibid., 550-551.

62 Ibid., 559.

63 Ibid., 563.

simpler state, the bliss of savage *innocence*. More or less willfully ignoring the genocidal horrors of a colonial-occupied, extremely militarized Congo and North Africa, Parisians imagined Africa—and blackness itself—as somehow the polar opposite of war-torn, industrialized Europe.

No one embodied this phenomenon better than Josephine Baker, the first black international superstar (*figs 18 and 21*). Dubbed by Picasso “the Nefertiti of now,” Baker's self became the depository for the exotic plurality. An American from East St. Louis who came to France in 1925, Baker set out to be “more French than the French,” and became both a symbol of France and the symbol of all Othernesses. Her various roles on stage and film reveal a fluid hybrid of nearly all races, “a crossreferenced, comprehensive encyclopedia of global colonial culture [...] a playful (and perhaps politically meaningful) appropriation of an aesthetic of colonialism.”⁶⁴ Baker operates in the arena of pop-culture, but her ability to comment on the exotic discourse through pastiche and mimicry is potentially as meaningful as similar efforts made by the avant-garde. Baker demonstrates the way exotica simultaneously confirms stereotypes and undermines them, and embodies the transformative power of relating to the other. In *Josephine Baker's Colonial Pastiche*, Matthew Guterl points out that Baker's relative freedom from personal racial oppression (as she would have experienced it in America, and as many black Europeans and African colonial subjects must have experienced it as well), was in part due to her *celebration* of race, but also *dependent* on her collusion with European ideas of the essentialized other. He argues the significance of:

*“Baker's exceptionally clever use of the vast catalogue of colonial representations, many of which were fairly demeaning and conceptually thin, with an emphasis on a fantasist's pastiche built out of these stereotypical small details and racist brush strokes. No performer before or since has covered such a broad geographical and temporal space... used such a dubious palette... [or] been known for their construction of such a dazzling pastiche, whatever its politics. Baker boldly embodied multitudes, many of which were mere fantasies of the imperial mind. By doing so she raised the question of their relatedness—their nascent third world-ness—within and across colonies and spheres of influence.”*⁶⁵

64 Matthew Pratt Guterl, “Josephine Baker's Colonial Pastiche,” in *Black Camera* 2 (2010): 28-29.

65 Guterl, “Josephine Baker's Colonial Pastiche,” 35-36.

Whether this was Baker's explicit intention is almost beside the point (the issue of her agenda is of course problematic and conflicted); as we have seen with *exotica*, the creator's intent is less important than the manner in which the works themselves function as parts of a larger network, and what they reveal in their role as part of that network.

In many ways the most important figure in the development of American music, Duke Ellington's contributions to exotic musical culture were not isolated to the “jungle music” of the 1920s. In fact, Ellington continued to pursue music in an exotic vein throughout his long career: on one hand employing “Africanisms as a source of historical and cultural identity,”⁶⁶ and on the other a studious, exotic syncretism which evokes the Other but also questions its meaning. This tendency can be seen in works as late as 1971's *Afro-Eurasian Eclipse*, a globe-trotting concept album which opens with Ellington speaking to a Marshall McLuhan quote, saying,

“Mister McLuhan says that the whole world is going Oriental and that no-one will be able to retain his or her identity. Not even the Orientals.... it's improbable that anyone will know exactly who is enjoying the shadow of whom.”

In 1936, Ellington and Juan Tizol composed “Caravan,” a technically very Latin composition in an Orientalist guise; one exotic culture masquerading as another. Tizol developed the composition while employing a technique he had learned as a child in Puerto Rico: sheet music was costly, so once they had learned the music, they would flip the sheet over and learn it upside-down and reversed. This is sometimes considered the birth of modal jazz, but it's also a magnificent abbreviated formula for *exotica* (one the ethnographic surrealists would have appreciated): invert one culture, filter it through the conventions of another (or two, or more), then put it in the mask of a third. This is also seen in Ernesto and Marguerite Lecuona's almost equally oft-recorded “Tabou,” first recorded by the Lecuona Cuban Boys in 1935 (*fig.20*). “Tabou” is itself a very *Cubanismo* composition⁶⁷ seemingly intended to

66 Toop, *Exotica*, 83.

67 Which is to say, a blend of upper class “white” Cubanisms borrowed from *fin de siècle* classical music and certain fetishized aspects of “black” Afro-Cuban music. In subsequent iterations, “Tabou” is often spelled “Tabu” or “Taboo.”

evoke the Orient with its snakelike melody, yet given Africa-evoking lyrics and a name derived from a Polynesian word (first introduced to the West by Captain Cook, interestingly enough). Who is enjoying the shadow of whom? As the language of exotica is taken up by increasingly diverse authors (positioned at different points along a spectrum of colonial authorities and subjects), within an ever-denser web, it begins to feel less like the voice of empire talking to itself, and more like an almost international language.⁶⁸

Sometime around 1926, at the height of negrophilia and the Harlem Renaissance, one of Duke Ellington's Cotton Club dates was attended by Maurice Ravel, the Impressionist composer, perhaps best known at the time for the 1909 ballet *Daphnis et Chloé*.⁶⁹ Ravel was one of the most prominent of a group of *fin de siècle* exoticists in the classical world,⁷⁰ interested in expressions of Otherness as well as the incorporation of musical techniques of ethnic or exotic origin in order to deviate from the standard language of the European classical idiom. This was at least partly influenced by experiences at the world's fairs; however, while both Ravel and Debussy were fascinated by Javanese Gamelan at the 1889 world's fair in Paris, neither adopted the rigorous structural differences of Gamelan itself.⁷¹ Rather, they tended to engage exoticism through the use of certain “fetishized *itches*” and other aesthetic devices woven into a largely Western, but nonetheless experimental, formal structure.⁷² This was done in service of exoticism, but also its twin, “folklorism.”⁷³ “This pitch-bending serves a utopian function: it reveals a teeming exterior world beyond the perimeters of rational tonal order [...] and also serves to

68 Both “Caravan” and “Tabou” would be recorded obsessively, in dozens of iterations, by later Exotica musicians.

69 Toop, *Exotica*, 82-83.

70 Including Debussy, Stravinsky, etc., as well as the activity around the profoundly exotic, highly influential Ballet Russes, for whom Ravel sometimes wrote.

71 Erik Satie, who was also present at the fair, *would* attempt such a thing, as well as contemporaries Colin McPhee and John Cage.

72 Rebecca Leydon, “Utopias of the Tropics: The Exotic Music of Les Baxter and Yma Sumac,” in *Widening the Horizon: Exoticism in Post-War Popular Music*, ed. Philip Hayward (Sydney: John Libbey & Co./Perfect Beat Publications, 1999), 50-53.

73 Folklorism is extremely similar to exoticism, but celebrates/fetishizes difference and “authenticity” from a more insular perspective, evoking a sense of national identity by co-opting or evoking elements of European ethnic minority music (the geographically internal Other).

perpetuate the idea of the exotic as essentially irrational and maladjusted. In place of logic [...] sensuality.”⁷⁴ Ravel and Debussy also developed the use of wordless choruses, described as an “invisible choir’ [representing] a remote, mythic time and place; the wordless voice intimates a pre-rational ancient past.”⁷⁵

One of Ravel's best known exotic works debuted two years after his Cotton Club visit. 1928's *Boléro* is an intensely exoticized, primarily repetitive, and highly sexual take on Spanish dance music.⁷⁶ But Ravel had long experimented with exoticism/folklorism, both formal and conceptual. *Daphnis et Chloé*, commissioned for the fantasist Ballet Russes, exoticized a Greek fantasia, “less concerned with archaic fidelity” than evoking the “Greece of my dreams” (particularly as envisioned by 18th century French painters⁷⁷), and his 1924 *Tzigane* is drawn from Gypsy music in an exoticizing manner. Whether Ellington influenced Ravel's subsequent work in any meaningful way is hard to say, but it's nevertheless an interesting intersection. Either way, it's worth making note of just what Ravel was working on in 1926: *Chanson Madécasses* set to music the poems of Evariste-Désiré de Parny (fig 22), writings supposedly translated from works written in India and based on “Madagascan models” (perhaps similar in its approach to such other exotic/folkloric forgeries as *Tales of the Genii* or Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*). The work, and its accompanying text, is mildly critical of colonial contact (one song opens with “*Aoua! Mefiez-vous des blancs*” or “beware of the whites”), but in many ways is highly reminiscent of Dufour's idyllic abstractions of paradisaic village life. The piece is first-degree exotica, ultimately transforming the Madagascan subjects into the mythic generalized other. A critic in attendance at the premiere, Henri Prunières, commented “one thinks of Japanese paintings... of the ideal Tahiti discovered by Pierre Loti...” and happily concludes that Ravel “worries no more than Parny of geographic

74 Leydon, “Utopias of the Tropics,” 51.

75 Ibid., 52.

76 Much like “Caravan” and “Tabou,” *Bolero* too would become a mainstay of later Exotica.

77 Toop, *Exotica*, 73.

exactitudes [...] his savages could just as well be Maoris or Arabs or Malgaches.”⁷⁸

Having established a timeline of various exoticisms in relation to exotica, I will now turn to the music genre canonically referred to as Exotica. I regrettably skip over a great many worthwhile elements: Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*; Carmen Miranda and the *Brasiliana* craze which included Walt Disney's South/Central American WWII-era “good-neighbor” film *Three Caballeros*; the trajectory of Hawaiian music, Hawaiiiana, and steel guitar in relation to the world's fairs, Hawaii's annexation, and later, its role in World War II and subsequent statehood (and resulting second-wave Hawaiiiana craze); Gamelan and its significance to gay culture in the classical and avant garde music community; early cinema and its connection to Egyptomania and popular mysticism; the exotic trilogy of musicals by Rodgers and Hammerstein (*King and I*, *South Pacific*, and *Flower Drum Song*); Thor Heyerdahl's crossing of the Pacific on the Kon-Tiki; and of course, a great many films. Exotica is a web of interconnected themes, techniques, aesthetics, and attitudes which, if studied thoroughly, may tessellate outward in infinite repeating and overlapping iterations. I hope to have established a sense of that web, and illustrated some of its key strategies.

Hybridization Meets its Final Destiny as Pure Fantasy

In 1952, Les Baxter recorded *Ritual of the Savage (Le Sacre du Sauvage)* (fig.23). Though the term “Exotica” itself was not widely used until 1956 or 1957, Baxter's seminal work is generally considered to be the first defining album of the genre.⁷⁹ Its general sound (lush strings, wordless vocals, and exotic ornamentations), aesthetic presentation (sensational album art and liner-note prose), and many of its

78 Leydon, “Utopias of the Tropics,” 52.

79 Though not quite the first: Baxter and Yma Sumac's *Voice of the Xatabay* (1950) would seem to be the prime candidate for the first classically Exotica album.

musical compositions all formed the foundation for subsequent Exotica music. Baxter's album is a travelogue through a nonspecific exotic locale, and self-describes thusly: “*The Ritual of the Savage* is a tone poem of the sound and struggle of the jungle... the hue and mood of the interior... the tempo and texture of the bustling sea ports and the tropics!”⁸⁰ As a “tone poem,” the record deals in sensations and impressions, not facts, and serves as an ornate elaboration on accumulated Western stereotypes and impressions of the exotic. Each track has an accompanying text, illustrating a vague, archetypal tableau, evoking exotic sensation, or propelling a loose narrative (fig. 24). This prose (which recalls Ravel's *Chanson Madécasses*, and perhaps Dufour's pamphlet) is a mainstay of many Exotica records, and a key strategy. It constitutes a “paratext” which conditions the mode of listening and programs the listener to enjoy a properly calibrated synaesthetic virtual voyage.⁸¹ For “Quiet Village” (arguably the most important composition to the entire Exotica canon):

*“The jungle grows more dense as the river boat slowly makes its way into the deep interior. A snake slithers into the water, flushing a brilliantly plumaged bird who soars into the clearing above a quiet village. Here is a musical portrait of a tropical village – deserted in the mid-day heat.”*⁸²

The intent is not to replicate the music of another geographical place or ethnic culture, but rather to create for the listener a transportive, personal experience of traveling to a *construct* of an exotic land. Or, as is often the case for an Exotica LP (such as Baxter's 1955 *Tambool!*), a handful of such lands, in a globe-trotting microcosmic panorama where each selection is an aural diorama of a different “point” on the globe. These albums become a collaboration with the listener: presented with certain vague but familiar impressions of essentially interchangeable exotic “elsewheres,” guided by the imagery of the cover art and the evocations of the “paratextual” prose, their imagination does the rest.

Baxter has been variously described (by record labels and occasionally by himself) as a sort of world

80 Liner notes, *Ritual of the Savage*, 1951.

81 Françoise Escal, quoted in Shuhei Hosokawa, “Martin Denny and the Development of Musical Exotica,” in *Widening the Horizon*, 88.

82 Liner notes, *Ritual of the Savage*, 1951.

traveler or ethnomusicologist, but in truth he had no particularly advanced knowledge of ethnic music and nearly no travel experience (he did visit Mexico once while composing the score for *The Sacred Idol* in 1959, but never left his hotel).⁸³ Instead, he built his version of Exotica on a foundation of *fin de siècle* exoticism in Western classical music (with which he identified intensely⁸⁴)—its *fetishized pitches* and Romantic composition—and used it as a vehicle with which to explore innovative arrangements, studio production effects (including tape-splicing and electronic instrumentation), and newly emerging stereo technology. Exotica bridged old and new, and could be used as a Trojan horse for experimentalism in mainstream channels. Under the cover of exoticism, Baxter was free to employ such relatively unconventional techniques as dissonance, repetition and minimalism, electronics and other new instruments, as well as “sexual” drums and “pagan” passions, among other things. If any of these elements seemed inappropriate or undesirable⁸⁵ for inclusion on a thoroughly mainstream instrumental pop record (in a pre-rock n roll, pre-psychedelic context which tended to favor comfort and escapist pleasure over challenge or disorientation), all blame could be silently shifted to the mysterious Other—the shadow figure responsible for generating such inverted aesthetic values.

One particular collaboration illustrates this strategy of dichotomies rather explicitly. In 1950, Baxter tested the waters of Exotica by producing *Voice of the Xtabay*, a showcase for the singer Yma Sumac (fig.25). Sumac was a mysterious figure with a four (perhaps even five) octave voice, supposedly a descendent of “the last Inca Kings,” born in the Peruvian Andes.⁸⁶ *Xtabay* is one of the truly bizarre records of the Exotica canon, showcasing the swooping, mostly wordless vocals of Sumac as she growls

83 Toop, *Exotica*, 43. Toop compares this to the methods of the surrealist writer Raymond Roussel.

84 Particularly Debussy, Ravel, and especially Stravinsky, the latter's *Rite of Spring* or *Le Sacre du Printemps* inspiring the title of *Ritual of the Savage (Le Sacre du Sauvage)*, an attempt on Baxter's part to align himself with his heroes specifically and with “serious” art music generally. He makes this overt in an interview with R.J. Smith (speaking about his film scores): “My scores were Petrouchka. Stravinsky, Ravel. Other people's scores were movie music.” - Toop, *Exotica*, 73.

85 This being rarely the case; Baxter's instincts as a populist and entertainer meant that his syntheses were deft and careful, and rarely came across as outrageous or grating.

86 Taken from Xtabay's liner notes. While a complete biography has never been produced to refute this backstory, it's patently fictionalized. Also inaccurate is an opposing rumor that Sumac is really “Amy Cumas” from Brooklyn—it's fairly certain she is a native of Lima, Peru, but little else is known.

like an earthquake, chirps like a bird, bellows like an angry god, and demonstrates a powerful, inhuman vocal range. Baxter's arrangements reinforce the mythical narrative, highlighting a primeval, dreamlike quality, swirling around her like the dread mists of antiquity and the ghosts of pagan gods. The liner notes give a sense that the music of *Xtabay* is an ethnomusicologically sound replication of Inca folk tradition, but in truth there is nearly nothing on the record that relates to *any* South American music tradition. In fact, there's a futurist angle to the proceedings: Baxter uses Sumac almost like a human theremin, editing her phrases together by splicing magnetic tape.⁸⁷ The album is ultimately exoticism constructed in service of sonic weirdness—Sumac's debut embodies the exotica strategy of legitimation through the use of Otherness, and she becomes the scapegoat for Baxter's more experimental ideas.⁸⁸

Not all Exotica music was so adventurous. One of the most successful practitioners was Martin Denny, a musician of sterling quality and relative lack of daring experimentation. Denny's early albums cemented Exotica as a commercially viable prospect; his 1957 album *Exotica* lent the genre its name, and created a more easily-replicated model for subsequent Exotica artists to follow. *Exotica* was followed by a string of similar albums, all best-sellers: *Exotica II*, an LP entitled *Forbidden Island* which featured an original composition entitled “Exotica,” *Exotica III*, and a whole host of others, from *Afro-Desia* to *Primitiva* to *Quiet Village* (all of which feature the same cover formula: the buxom Sandy Warner, the “Exotica girl,” in some minimally exotic setting—near a mask, in front of a bamboo curtain, etc.—*fig. 26*). Denny's musicality was far simpler, utilizing a basic cocktail jazz combo and straightforward arrangements, all accented with items from his collection of “exotic” instruments (shamisen, moonharp, the “boo-bam,” chimes, the totally modern but nonetheless exotic-sounding vibraphone and marimba) employed not for authenticity but rather for their innate *effect* (an even-simpler iteration of the aforementioned “fetishized pitches”). The relative simplicity of his approach can likely be attributed to

87 Toop, *Exotica*, 74.

88 It must be pointed out that Sumac's technique and persona are more or less her own creation, and so her agency in these proceedings, though characteristically mysterious, is not to be taken for granted.

Denny's profession; while Baxter was an ambitious composer and conductor of orchestras, Denny was the leader of a house band at the Bora Bora club in Hawaii, playing to sold-out tourist crowds six nights a week.

Baxter studiously *experimented* with the form; Denny did not. However, you might say he seriously *played around*, and in this playful approach he did contribute his own extremely influential, major formal elements to the Exotica idiom. Most notably, a seemingly mild but contagious innovation born from the live setting: the bird call.⁸⁹ Issuing from his percussionist, Augie Colon, wild tropical bird calls were improvised all over the recordings; dissonant, absurd cries tearing through the fabric of the easy-listening Hawaiiansque cool-jazzscapes. This adornment would become extremely common, an easy signifier for exoticness used on subsequent records from Denny, his offshoot groups (particularly that of his brilliant and equally successful protege, Arthur Lyman) and the many imitators and colleagues which followed.

Denny once said of his own music, “it all adds up to a modern sound that evokes some very primitive feelings.”⁹⁰ Like so many other items on the broader exotica timeline (from the world's fairs to the surrealist *Documents*), Exotica combines tropical primitivism (and all the timelessness/escape from the modern world that implies) with industrial language of modernity. The back covers of any given Exotica LP were dense with descriptions of stereo technology. Extremely technical details (frequency rates, disk-cutting systems, names and serial numbers of microphones and tape heads, phrases like “virgin vinyl pressed to rigid specifications”), the optimum needle/stylus/speaker setup for playback—the best ways to experience sonically-induced armchair travel. Phrases intended to evoke futurist sci-fi and sonic illusionism abound: “High Fidelity in Spectra-Sound,” “The Phantom 3rd Channel,” “Transistorized Stereophonic Sound,” “Orthophonic Dynamic Range,” “Visual Sound Stereo,” “True

89 Supposedly started as part of a playful competition with loudly chirping frogs in one of the Bora-Bora's ponds.

90 Martin Denny, quoted in Hosokawa, “Martin Denny and the Development of Musical Exotica,” 77.

Hi-Fi,” “Incomparable Hi-Fi” “Entire Sound Spectrum,” “Phase 4 Stereo,” or “Adventures in Sound.” This breathless technobabble (some legitimate and informative, some just mumbo-jumbo) was aimed at a growing market of would-be audiophiles, newly affluent mid-century suburban consumers. Appealing to the audience's sense of their own modernity and economic comfort, Exotica records offered a potential for mastery of the new audiophilic language and gadgetry while simultaneously promising a mode of escape, a portal to an exotic dimension easily installed in any suburban rec room. Exemplifying the dichotomy, Arthur Lyman's LPs all boast of being recorded in the “Henry J. Kaiser Dome” (*fig. 27*), an acoustically “nearly perfect” aluminum “half-sphere” with a natural space-age reverb effect (“natural room acoustical reverberation”) that was nonetheless open to the night air: “Oh yes, the ocean sounds heard are real Pacific salt water waves. Native cries are, well, weird but real.”⁹¹

What makes Exotica so important to this timeline is that it shows how thoroughly, blissfully inauthentic the construction of the Other had become. 1950s Exotica draws upon an increasingly distilled yet ever-multiplying series of exoticist fictions, weaving an absurd construction so far removed from any reality that it seems to reference nothing but itself—“a genuine imitation of a previously constructed wilderness.”⁹² Claims to Baxter's foundation in ethnomusicology are an irrelevance; the truth is that he and his ilk operate as fabulists and fantasists, synthesizing disparate elements into a “fabricated exotica without boundaries or sovereignty, a place where hybridisation [meets] its final destiny as pure fantasy.”⁹³ That these fantasies are so abstracted, broken down to their essential components, and based in overt fiction, does not exempt them from being problematized; they are still woven from expectations and stereotypes emanating from the West's relationship to the Other. But this is precisely what makes them so interesting. On the subject of Les Baxter's musical exoticism, Rebecca

91 Liner notes to Lyman's 1958 LP *Taboo*, an album which sold two million copies and opens with perhaps the definitive Exotica recording of Lecuona's “Tabou” (though Baxter's version, on 1956's *Caribbean Moonlight*, is likely the more significant of the two in terms of innovation and influence).

92 Joseph Lanza quoted in Toop, *Exotica*, 46.

93 *Ibid.*, 38.

Leydon remarks,

*“The exotic embodies deep-seated contradictions and ambivalences: it is experienced as a self-conscious escapist fantasy but it is also a ‘collection of knowledges’ regarded as authoritative and natural; it is a set of damaging stereo-types, a dangerous perpetuation of power relations, but, at the same time, it represents an implicit criticism of post-war America’s drabness and homogeneity.”*⁹⁴

This recalls the paradoxical nature of Segalen’s work, or Leighton’s comments on Picasso and the fin-de-siècle avant-garde; that they “could simultaneously share in and be sharply critical of colonial attitudes.”⁹⁵

Exotica music more than simply confirms Western preconceptions of the Other, it transforms them into a complete and seductive fiction—a journey into the archetypal or every-“jungle,” where we encounter the rituals and spectacle of the fictive “native” or human Other. Rarely is it clear, or at all important, whether this jungle and its inhabitants are intended to be Amazonian, African, or otherwise island-borne, whatever that would or could mean, from Hawaii to Papeete to Haiti. This homogenized fantasy, re-sharpened and distilled, is arguably no more terrestrially credible than Edgar Rice Burroughs’ exotic Mars or Verne’s hollow earth. In borrowing the language of pseudo-scientific ethnology and expedition literature it lightly edges a toe into the territory of science fiction; its “disturbing syncretisms,” indifference to hierarchy, and myriad juxtapositions and anachronisms align it with ethnographic surrealism. Exotica is a collectively and unconsciously built alternate *artificial* universe, the ultimate timeless (and placeless) zone, a dimension in which we might house the “exotic immensity”⁹⁶ of our sublime fantasies. Synthesizing from centuries of exotic-oriented desire, the exotic, by means of Exotica, enters the domestic private interior and transports the listener to a purely fictional zone, where he colonizes only his own imagination.

94 Leydon, “Utopias of the Tropics,” 48.

95 Leighton, “Colonialism, *l’art nègre*, and Les Demoiselles d’Avignon,” 77.

96 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, 123.

Part Three: The Exotiste

“In anticipating the reasonable criticisms of historians and geographers [...] we should admit how far artistic license has been taken, not only in the juxtaposition of different places and events, but also in the gathering of peoples from different times and lands, such that only the most indulgent reason will forgive it in the interest of the success of the design.”

Dufour et Cie., *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique* ⁹⁷

“The mechanism of collage, it seems to me, is revealed by this very simple example. The complete transmutation, followed by a pure act, as that of love [...] The coupling of two realities, reconcilable in appearance, upon a plane which apparently does not suit them [...] thus I obtained a faithful fixed image of my hallucination and transformed into revealing dramas my most secret desires—from what had been before only some banal pages of advertising.”

Max Ernst, *What is the Mechanism of Collage?* ⁹⁸

“The notions of distanciation, exoticism, representation of the other, and difference are inflected, reworked, readjusted as a function of criteria no longer geographical or cultural but methodological and even epistemological in nature: to make foreign what appears familiar; to study the rituals and sacred sites of contemporary institutions with the minute attention of an 'exotic' ethnographer, and using his methods; to become observers observing those others who are ourselves”

Jean Jamin, on the *Collège de Sociologie* ⁹⁹

“You forget all that a skilled vivisector can do [...] There is building up as well as breaking down and changing [...] monsters manufactured... the study of nature makes a man at last as remorseless as nature.”

Doctor Moreau, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* ¹⁰⁰

“You can't treat ethnographic problems as a sort of detective mystery!”

‘Why not?’ I said.”

Thor Heyerdahl, *KON-TIKI: Across the Pacific by Raft* ¹⁰¹

97 Rudd, trans. “Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique,” 32.

98 Max Ernst, “What is the Mechanism of Collage?” in *Beyond Painting*, trans. Dorothea Tanning (New York: Wittenborn, Schultz, 1948): 13.

99 Jean Jamin, “Un Sacré Collège,” quoted in Clifford, “On Ethnographic Surrealism,” 561.

100 H.G. Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (Penguin Books, 2005, original pub. Date 1896), 71-75.

101 Heyerdahl, *Kon-Tiki*, 30.

“*Detectives off to the End of the World*”¹⁰²

Exotica music is not only a sort of zenith of exotic conceptual abstraction pertaining to the preceding timeline; it's also key to understanding the majority of the exotica (or otherwise exotic) art, music, and literature which followed it, including of course my own.¹⁰³ Musical Exotica—as conceived by the likes of Baxter, Denny, Sumac, and Lyman—marks a point on the timeline when the exotic construct becomes most estranged from reality, internalized and self-generative, drawing power and content more from *within* itself than from any external source. The 1950s of Exotica's formative years occurred after the age of discovery had ended, when the imperial project had begun to wind down; nonetheless, the *fabricated wilderness* of exotica, comprising by that point centuries' worth of a history all its own, had become rich enough to sustain itself and generate its own reality. The *world* (once a place for infinite potential *diversities*, to use Segalen's nomenclature) may have been rendered a sucked orange, but exotica is and was inexhaustible—a hollow earth with endless layers and infinite space, identifiable by a hull comprised of superficial exotic signifiers and tropes but held together by the gravitational pull of its mysterious core of deep associations, enigmatic desires, and eternal incomprehensibilities.

As I have said already, let us *penetrate* this no-place, let us become Exots of this constructed zone. My work has this goal as its aim, to explore the making, meaning, and history of exotica whilst contributing to it as a practitioner of exotica myself. Similar to Breton's conception of Surrealism as an *activity*, my work is both the *act* and *product* of a personal exotica; both experiential and analytical, it actively penetrates, explores, and provokes, but also creates avenues by which a viewer may do the same

102 This is the title of the first chapter of Thor Heyerdahl's *AKU AKU: The Secret of Easter Island*—a glib title which sums up Heyerdahl's fascinating pseudo-scientific, experimental approach to archaeology and ethnography. (London: Rand McNally, 1958.), 15.

103 Another timeline unto itself, perhaps best saved for another day, which would include: Another timeline unto itself, best saved for another day, which would include: the music of French/Italian production library artists (such as Roger Roger & Nino Nardini or Piero Umiliani), Van Dyke Parks, Brian Eno & David Byrne, The Residents, Haruomi Hosono, various elements of the “New Age” movement (from Yanni to Iasos) etc., and the work of artists such as Walton Ford, Mark Dion, Alexis Rockman, Kahn & Selesnick, Ben Rivers, and Enrique Chagoya, to name but a very few.

themselves. In this pursuit, I occupy four essential roles, broad arenas that necessarily (and almost constantly) blend and overlap: Fantasist, Semiotician, Ethnographer, and Vivisectionist.

Fantasist

The fantasist endeavors to fabricate exotic fantasies and illusions, constructing elaborate entertainments that invite the viewer(s) to participate in exotic fantasy. This is the role most closely tied to the *generation* (which is to say, *creation, production, propagation*) of exotica; in order to study exotica, the fantasist forges his own. Fantasist works themselves belong on the exotica timeline—they don't merely comment on exotica, they are *themselves* exotica. The key is fantasy and entertainment: the fantasist implicates himself by revealing his fantasy; the audience is implicated via their enjoyment of the entertainment (submitting to the fantasy and meshing it with their own). In order for this exchange to work, the entertainment should not be an entirely passive one.¹⁰⁴ The viewers should be transformed into Exots themselves, partaking in the fantasy not only as a spectator but also as an invested party to an experiential interaction with the work—in other words, the viewers themselves become authors of a fantasy. As with Les Baxter or Dufour et Cie., the artist-as-fantasist provides the paratext and the general aestheticized experience, but the viewer contributes their relationship to (and particularized, personal interpretation of) the fantasy. The artist moves the *personal*, via the act of creation and presentation, to the realm of the universal; the viewer completes the process by transforming the universal to the personal.

104 To elaborate in a slightly tangential manner: Exotica music is often (perhaps *most* often) employed as “background music” (which is to say, not subjected to active listening), but works such as Les Baxter's are explicitly intended for, and maximized by, active listening. Baxter himself loathed the idea of being relegated to the background; Denny seems to have largely planned for it (and formulated ways to subvert his position as a backdrop).

Semiotician

The semiotician, or linguist, examines the language of the discourse of exotica by analyzing its tropes, symbols, and aesthetics, as well as the way those signifiers form relationships in order to infer aspects of the exotic. Segalen may have wanted to rid the exotic of its cheap finery, but it becomes clear that it is that very stuff—the endless repetition of clichés reinforcing the continuation of already established tropes—which holds exotica together. In this role it is possible to examine how these signifiers (*i.e.*, palm tree, volcano, island girl, bird sound, fetish sculpture/mask, coconut, etc.) function. On one hand, such signifiers can be arranged to form a coherent suggestion of the exotic; on the other hand, if juxtaposed or isolated, they can be used to confuse, subvert, or recontextualize the conventions of exoticism. The image of a volcano, for example, can infer a superficial expression of lust and passion; a palm tree can stand for paradise and relaxation. But there is a deeper root association to both, which, if emphasized by the machinations of the semiotician, may negate or subvert the aforementioned “easy” readings: we might just as easily be led to interpret a volcano as an emblem of prehistory, annihilation and disorder, the indifference of nature, and/or the anxiety of human insignificance in the face of timelessness. An image of a nubile islander may promise carefree sensuality and paradisaic relief from the constraints of civilization; she may also portend pagan ritual, horror, and a cannibalistic death.¹⁰⁵ The semiotician manipulates and deconstructs the function and meaning of these associations and evocations. Another approach is found in the minimalization of the context in which a trope is presented. For example: if one were to juxtapose an old world map with a speaker playing field recordings of a jungle, would such a minimal combination effectively convey the exotic? It becomes meaningful to observe whether it succeeds or fails in its evocations, and to what

¹⁰⁵ Contextualized in still another way, she may also represent the victim of colonial subjugation which lies at the heart of the “island girl” miscegenation fantasy, *a la* Loti or Gauguin. These signifiers can also be manipulated to reveal aspects of a historical “reality.”

degree. This hypothetical tableau may have the effect of taking a familiar feeling and render it alien; depending on its execution, it may also function almost perfectly, revealing how simple a mechanism is required to evoke the exotic. Does an Exotica artist like Martin Denny, for example, do much more than this, when he plays a Latin jazz number and juxtaposes it with bird sounds? This line of inquiry explicates the mechanics of exotica.

Ethnographer

The ethnographer is a complex role with several facets, ranging from historian to collector to cultural critic. To be an ethnographer in the field of exotica is not to study exotic peoples, of course, but to study *ourselves*, and the way in which exotica manifests in our culture. As Jean Jamin described the goals of the problematic and fascinating Collège de Sociologie,¹⁰⁶ “to become observers observing those others who are ourselves.” The ethnographer acts as a historian of the Other, collecting histories of Otherness and exoticism and connecting them in meaningful ways. This research and its collation should not result in conventional historical narratives; it should take unexpected paths and make surprising connections. Exotica has its own history, a not-yet-fully excavated chronology of related *fictions* which winds its way through our historical reality, engaged in reciprocal dialogue with no clear borders. Much of this history is still buried in the muck of subtext, so the ethnographer of exotica must act as a critical interpreter of cultural texts. A great deal of this history is also lost to the unexamined arenas of “low” culture,¹⁰⁷ and so the ethnographer must act as a detective or archaeologist, eschewing

106 A splinter of late-1920s surrealist activity (which, like the aforementioned *Documents*, also included Georges Bataille) which aimed to inject scientific rigor and cultural studies into the surrealist/avant-garde discourse, and favored ritual, collective expression, and transgression over the more privatized experiments of Surrealism à la Breton and company. Clifford, “On Ethnographic Surrealism,” 558-561.

107 To which Exotica music is often relegated by the culture-historical discourse (certainly there are only a very small number of academic works on the subject), as well as B-movies, advertisements (*especially* advertisements), kitsch objects, etc.—areas of expression which tend to lean on broad characterization, stereotypical narratives, and clichés such as are

hierarchical striations in culture and sniffing out forgotten artifacts of the exotic discourse in unexpected places and less-studied, or forgotten, media and/or fields. This process requires the ethnographer to also act as a collector, compiling histories, artifacts, fragments, and other manifestations of exotica; these collected things must then be curated and arranged to reveal interpretations and analyses, create meaningful juxtapositions, jarring proximities, and/or flattened hierarchies.

Vivisectionist

The previous three roles may be read to suggest a sort of obligation to disciplinary practices, rigor, or ethics; such considerations, while valuable, should not dictate the work lest the art become removed from its subject. The work should not be didactic, ethical, or discipline-centric but rather contradictory, enigmatic, and problematic—in provocative, productive ways. Any of the four roles, hybridized with one another, should achieve this effect, but no role insures it so much as that of the vivisectionist. The vivisectionist represents the spirit of surrealism, subjectivity, and subversion; the activity of lying, distorting, manipulating; fabricating new “disturbing syncretisms” and disruptive juxtapositions, making new things from old parts and pursuing disorientation, rupture, and transgression. Exotica at its least imaginative can act like a drug, stimulating only one part of the brain in predictable ways. By acting as the vivisectionist, the artist can create ruptures within the work (formal or conceptual; horrors or discontinuities) which serve to disrupt the fantasy and stimulate unpredictable lines of thought (reflections, connections, critiques, epiphany) in the viewer. Vivisection

endemic to the exotic, and which, due to their Freudian market strategies or mass-produced nature tend to communicate a great deal about a culture's collective unconscious. Alan Nadel explains this idea quite well (Nadel is specifically referring to commercial films, specifically Disney films, but his comments are applicable to other like items as well): “as large collaborative enterprises, they are the products of extensive consensus about the ways to commodify the values and assumptions of a culture at a very specific cultural moment.” - Alan Nadel, “A Whole New (Disney World Order: *Aladdin*, Atomic Power, and the Muslim Middle East,” in *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film*, ed. Matthew Bernstein and Gaylyn Studlar (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 185.

may employ chaos as a tool, but it is not itself the pursuit of chaos; it is a breaking down and rebuilding in search of new models. It is an attempt to accelerate evolution, to make from old parts a better form.¹⁰⁸

Hell is a Tropical Island to Which the Artist is Bound

Since the earliest days of exploration, exoticism has always been imbued with an anxiety, a preemptive nostalgia for a disappearing diversity. One of the major themes of exoticist culture is this melancholy (somewhat self-aggrandizing, but not wholly inaccurate) sense, the perception that the very same advance of empire and discovery which enabled the world to grow larger by the day would soon inevitably have the reverse effect; that the forces of discovery were ultimately destructive, and that the probings of the West would eradicate, or at least irrevocably alter, those “precious diversities,” leaving the world smaller than it had ever been. In an age of global interconnectedness (in the aftermath of almost total imperial intervention,¹⁰⁹ beneath a looming specter of monocultural homogeneity), perhaps this yearning has never been more true, or pure, than it is now. But exotica in the contemporary age has value beyond an investigation and critique of the role of imperialist nostalgia in the 21st century. By penetrating the exotic zone, we may explore a fascinating history, and numerous bodies of work, which together compose a vast constructed fantasy; a magisterial, boundless dimension which is—for better or worse—one of the major cultural achievements of the West, an eternal frontier of interrelated literary, artistic, and historical fictions. This achievement not only *needs* to be analyzed, it also deserves to be appreciated on its own terms.

We may also discover a great deal about ourselves (both in terms of our individual *self*, and the way we define *ourselves* as a social or cultural group) and our relationship to the Other (and all that the

108 Unlike the titular vivisectionist of *Doctor Moreau*, however, I do not suggest vivisection as a pursuit of perfection; failures in the reconciling of disparate forms are not to be banished but taken on their own terms.

109 Not to suggest that the project of Western intervention, domination, and exploitation has in any way ended; the approach and philosophy may have evolved somewhat but the activity persists worldwide.

idea of the Other entails). We may also suggest that the Other is not only us, but indeed a *better* us. It is worth entertaining the notion that, by inverting ourselves and our values, we may have actually created a utopian ideal. Therefore, identification with the construct of the Other creates the potential for a subversive discourse that is not only disruptive, but possibly *positive, constructive*. Utopia literally means “no-place”; perhaps *exotica*, out of space and out of time, is one very important conception of that no-place.

One last historical vignette: this notion of positive subversive identification with the exotic Other is echoed in the work of a Welsh poet, artist, and Exot, Iefan Fflach Gwregys (*fig.28*). An alienated young artist with fierce anti-British, anti-colonial sentiments, Gwregys first began to identify strongly with the folkloric Other of his ethnic heritage, adopting a less-anglicized (and somewhat confused in its formulation) “tribal” Welsh pseudonym. Later, in 1904, having become disenchanted with the “complacency” of his countrymen, he set out for South America, ostensibly to make contact with indigenous peoples and exile himself to writing somewhere outside of the reach of the imperial diaspora (it is speculated he made it at least as far as Trinidad, after which he was never heard from again).¹¹⁰ His last significant known writing, an exoticist polemic, is contained in a letter to a friend:

“If we reject the moral systems of our society [in the West], that which was formerly designated to be evil must then be reappraised ... evil is but a rather facile mechanism, a word used to quickly and moralistically connote ... the dark mirror of our morality, the reverse-image of our values. It is these value systems [those of the West] that are broken, in my estimation, and ought to be rejected outright ... evil, so to speak, takes on a new character, then. It reveals itself to be positively sane quality, even desirable ... Utopian, a superior set of values. Suddenly the devil is heroic. So too is the savage, the primitive (that is, the popular idea of the savage which has been conjured up in the West, which seems to have very little ethnologic value in terms of its accuracy) ... indeed, the savage we imagine is only ourselves, reflected in an inverted mirror. He is the opposite of the moral European male. And once we have recast the European male in his proper role as villain (the agent of an unjust god, the propagator of a ruinous code, a brutish coloniser), then we can see the primitive for what he has always been: a subconscious formulation, undertaken by our collective imagination, of a sort of secret Übermensch, a champion of anti-morality.. We should all aspire to savagery! I should stand and identify with Satan, with the heretic, the pervert, above all the savage. I strike against God, and call him my enemy ...

110 Emil Cumas, *Poets out of Time: Literary Skeletons Upon the Temple Steps* (Brigadoon: William Sparkle & Charlotte N., 1985), 97-99.

*renounce the mores of my society ... I pursue their opposite. I shall find that Hell is a tropical island, a jungle, an oasis where men may be free – a savage paradise in the indifferent void, shining bright in the jungle night.”*¹¹¹

This passage recalls a line from Gauguin's *Noa Noa*: “Two races were face to face, and I was ashamed of mine.”¹¹² In the end, Gauguin's shame was driven as much by his *idealization of a culture he did not fully understand* as it was by his dissatisfaction with the flawed society into which he was born. Gwregys' comments, on the other hand, elucidate a cognizance of the true source of the primitive construct, and the shame *he* feels for his race is provoked by a disappointment with West's tendency to deem as inferior that which he identifies as its “better angels” (which is to say, the qualities assigned to the so-called primitive, savage, or Other).

My work sets out to achieve a better understanding of the form and function of the exotic; to present intellectually provocative entertainments of spectacle; to posit intriguing readings of a special history; and to stimulate a thoughtful reexamination of exotica. If it achieves these goals—and I believe it does—then I am pleased. But I hope too for the occasional moment where I might guide the mind of the viewer to a *blank place of mystery* within themselves; a region of the consciousness, *shining bright in the jungle night*, where we might encounter the savage self of our imagination and begin to conceive of ourselves as something *other* than what already is.

“And if his conscience is clear, [the artist's] answer to those who [...] demand specifically to be edified, consoled, amused; who demand to be promptly improved, or encouraged, or frightened, or shocked, or charmed, must run thus:—My task which I am trying to achieve is [...] to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you see. That—and no more, and it is everything. If I succeed, you shall find there according to your deserts: encouragement, consolation, fear, charm—all you demand—and, perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask.”

Joseph Conrad¹¹³

~ End ~

111 Ibid., 98-99.

112 Gauguin, *Noa Noa*, 30.

113 Joseph Conrad, Introduction to *The Nigger of the Narcissus* (novella, 1897), in *Joseph Conrad: Tales of Land and Sea*, (New York: Hanover House) 107.

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¹¹⁴ Esta fuente falsa demuestra la estrategia de emplear un Otro como portavoz de las ideas subversivas y sitúa el Exot histórica (en lugar de lo primitivo, lo que sería más típicos) como otro tipo de otra a la que nos contemporáneo. Este acto de viviseccionism muestra la facilidad con la que podemos fabricar historias falsas y el derecho de los artistas a participar de la "verdad" con los cuchillos extra-éticos de arte.

Image List:

fig 1:

Portrait of Victor Segalen

fig 2: (top: left to right)

Martin Denny, *Forbidden Island*, © 1958, by Liberty Records, LRP-3081.
Cover photograph by Garret-Howard. (Image from private collection of Evan Crankshaw.)

Edmond De Luca, *Safari*, by the Trans-World Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Heinrich Alster, © 1958, by Miller International Company, SF-5500.
Cover art by Joseph Krush. (Image from private collection of Evan Crankshaw.)

(bottom: left to right)

Tak Shindo, *Mganga!*, © 1958, by Edison International, CL-5000.

Robert Drasnin, *Voodoo*, © 1959, by Tops Records, L-1679/9679S. Cover photograph by Dave Pell.

fig 3: (top)

Engraving after John Webber, *Dance in Otaheite*.

(bottom: left to right)

John Webber, *The Plantain Tree in the Island of Cracatoa*, colored aquatint, 1808. In *Views in the South Seas*, pl. IV. London: Boydell, 1808. (Image from Bernard Smith, *European Vision in the South Pacific*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.)

John Webber, *The Fan Palm, in the Island of Cracatoa*, colored aquatint, c. 1808. In *Views in the South Seas*, pl. XVI. London: Boydell, 1808. (Image from Bernard Smith, *European Vision in the South Pacific*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.)

fig 4: (top)

St.-Sauveur, *Tableau des découvertes de Capne Cook et de La Perouse*, hand colored etching, 1797 (Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki). In *Tableau des Découvertes du Capne*, 1798. (Image from Bernard Smith, *European Vision in the South Pacific*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.)

(bottom: top to bottom)

John Webber, *A Human Sacrifice, in a Morai, in Otaheite*, engraving, c.1784. In *Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, pl. 25. London: W. and A. Strahan, 1784. (Image from Bernard Smith, *European Vision in the South Pacific*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.)

Unknown Artist after John Webber, *The Offering of a Human Sacrifice in Tahiti*, woodcut, c. 1837 (original engraving 1773). In *Missionary Sketches*, 1873. (Image from Bernard Smith, *European Vision in the South Pacific*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.)

J.F. Read, *The Ceremony of a Human Sacrifice*, engraving, c. 1843. In James Cook, *Voyages*. London: W. Wright, 1843. (Image from Bernard Smith, *European Vision in the South Pacific*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.)

fig 5:

Joseph Dufour et Cie, *Les Sauvages de le Mer Pacifique*, hand colored woodblock [wallpaper print], c. 1804. (Image from *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique*. New South Wales: National Gallery of Australia, 2000.)

- fig 6: (top [group])
Joseph Dufour et Cie and Jean Zuber, installation views. (Image from Odile Nouvel-Kammerer, *French Scenic Wallpaper 1795-1865*. Flammarion: 2001.)
(bottom)
Jean Zuber, *Vues de Brésil*, hand colored woodblock [wallpaper print], 1829. (Image from Odile Nouvel-Kammerer, *French Scenic Wallpaper 1795-1865*. Flammarion: 2001.)
- fig 7: (top)
Collected images from World Fairs (Clockwise from left: 1889 Paris *Exposition Universelle*; Nicaragua pavilion, 1889 Paris; Angkor Pavilion, 1889 Paris; *Creation* attraction, 1904 St. Louis.) (Image sources unknown.)
- fig 8:
“*Stalwart Basutos (So. African aborigines) and their extraordinary homes,*” World’s Fair, St. Louis, U.S.A.” (Public image courtesy of the NYPL.)
- fig 9:
“Pierre Loti in various guises.” (Images from Elaine Sciolino, “The Curious Case of Pierre Loti,” *Tmagazine Blogs*, 2011. Accessed 2014.)
<<http://tmagazine.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/07/12/lumiere-the-curious-case-of-pierre-loti/>>
- fig 10:
Paul Gauguin, page from *Noa Noa*, photograph, watercolor, ink in journal, c. 1894-1896. (Image from Marc Le Bot, *Gauguin's Noa Noa*. New York: Assouline Publishing, 2003.)
- fig 11:
Edward Curtis, *In the Land of Headhunters*, silent film, directed by Edward Curtis (United States, 1914.)
- fig 12:
Unknown artists, “film posters: *Moana* (1926), *Tabou/Tabu* (1931), *Witte Schaduwen/White Shadows in the South Seas* (1928),” silent film, directed by Robert J. Flaherty.
- fig 13:
Pablo Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)*, oil on canvas, 1907 (Museum of Modern Art, New York City). In *Picasso*, by Phillippe Dagen. Monacelli Press, 2009.
- fig 14:
“Portrait of Alfred Jarry,” photograph, artist unknown, c. 1907. (Public image.)
- fig 15:
“Portrait of Andre Breton's Studio,” photograph, artist unknown. (Image from “Le Petit Robert,” 2013. Accessed 2014) <<http://lepetitrobert.blogspot.com/2013/05/victorian-glass-html>>
- fig 16:
“Surrealist Map of the World,” 1929. (Image from Denis Cosgrove, “Cultural Cartography: Maps and Mapping in Cultural Geography,” *Cairn.Info*, (ND): 159-178. Accessed 2014 <<http://www.cairn.info/revue-annales-de-geographie-2008-2-page-159.htm>>
- fig 17:
Documents: No. 1, 1929. (Public image.)
- fig 18: (top)
Unknown artists, *Bal.Negre*, poster, 1927; *Cotton Club*, woodblock poster, 1931; “Lecuona

Cuban Boys,” photograph, ND.

(bottom)

Photographs of Josephine Baker. (Images courtesy of Columbia, Mercury.)

fig 19: (top)

Jean Émile Laboureur, colored woodblock, in Évariste-Désiré de Parny, *Chansons madécasses*, (Paris: Éditions de le Nouvelle Revue Française, 1920.)

(bottom)

Portrait of Maurice Ravel, artist unknown, photograph, (ND). (Image from “David Bruchez Lalli.” Accessed 2014, <http://davidbruchez.com/events/berlioz_and_ravel/>

fig 20:

Les Baxter, *Ritual of the Savage (Le Sacre du Sauvage)*, ©1952 by Capitol records T288. Art by William George. (Image from private collection of Evan Crankshaw.)

fig 21:

Les Baxter, *Ritual of the Savage (Le Sacre du Sauvage)*, ©1952 by Capitol records T288. Art by William George. (Image from private collection of Evan Crankshaw.)

fig 22:

Yma Sumac, *Voice of the Xtabay*, ©1950 by Capitol records W684.

Yma Sumac, *Legend of the Sun Goddess*, ©1952 by Capitol T299. (Image from private collection of Evan Crankshaw.)

fig 23:

Martin Denny, *Exotica*, ©1957 by Liberty records LST 7034. Cover photograph by Garret-Howard. (Image from private collection of Evan Crankshaw.)

Martin Denny, *Exotica Vol. II*, ©1957 by Liberty records LST 3077. Cover photograph by Garret-Howard. (Image from private collection of Evan Crankshaw.)

Martin Denny, *Primitiva*, ©1958 by Liberty records LRP 3087. Cover photograph by Garret-Howard. (Image from private collection of Evan Crankshaw.)

Martin Denny, *Afro-Desia*, ©1959 by Liberty records LRP 3111. Cover photograph by Garret-Howard. (Image from private collection of Evan Crankshaw.)

fig 24:

Arthur Lyman, *Taboo*, ©1958 by High Fidelity Recordings R806. Cover photograph by Werner Stoy. (Image from private collection of Evan Crankshaw.)

Arthur Lyman, *The Legend of Pele*, ©1958 by High Fidelity Recordings R813. (Image from private collection of Evan Crankshaw.)

Arthur Lyman, *Bwana A*, ©1958 by High Fidelity Recordings R808. (Image from private collection of Evan Crankshaw.)

Arthur Lyman, *Taboo Vol. 2*, ©1958 by High Fidelity Recordings R822. (Image from private collection of Evan Crankshaw.)

fig 25:

Tintype photo of Iefan Fflach Gwregys (photographer and date unknown), Image from Cumas, Emil. *Poets out of Time: Literary Skeletons Upon the Temple Steps*. Brigadoon: William Sparkle & Charlotte N., 1985.

Images



Fig.1: Victor Segalen (date unknown).

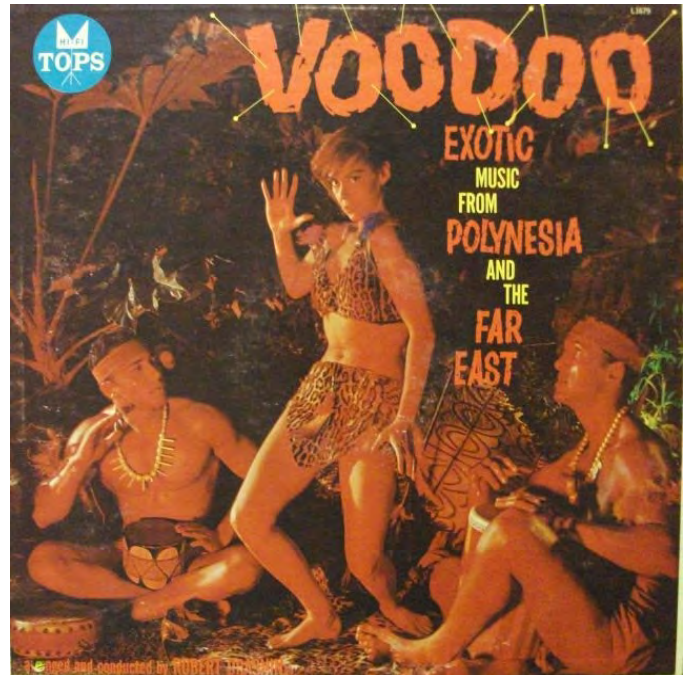


Fig. 2: Exotica album covers, clockwise from left: Martin Denny, *Forbidden Island* (1958); Edmond De Luca, *Safari* (1958); Robert Drasnin, *Voodoo* (1959); Tak Shindo, *Mganga!* (1958)

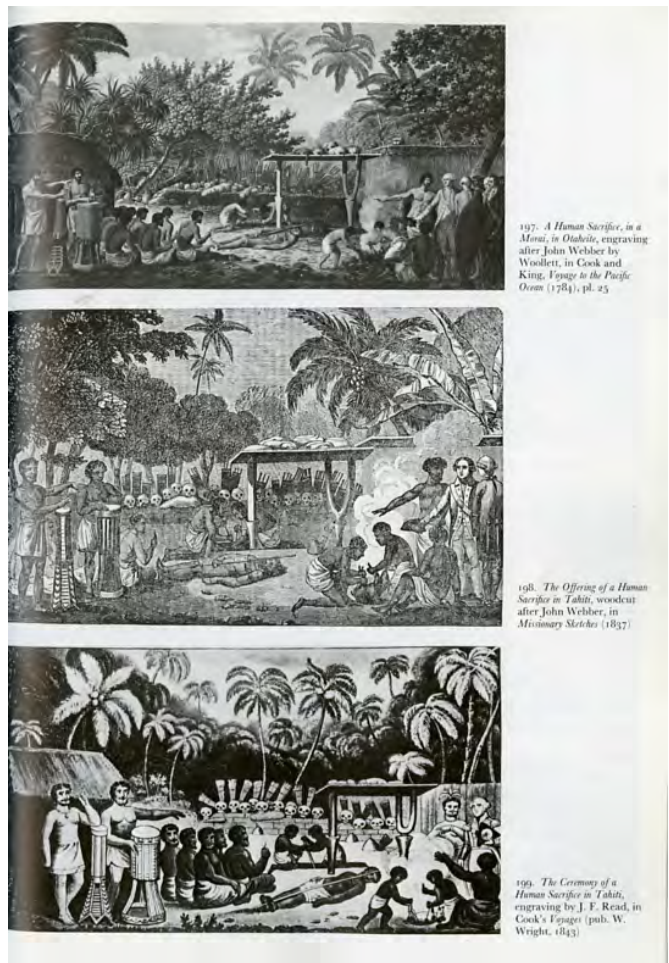


Fig. 3: (top) Engraving after John Webber, *Dance in Otaheite*;
(bottom) John Webber, *The Plantain Tree, Cracatoa*; *The Fan Palm, Cracatoa*.



Fig. 4: Popular works after Webber. Top: St.-Sauveur, *Tableau des découvertes du Capne Cook et de La Perouse*, 1797. This print was a major influence on Dufour et Cie.'s designer, Charvet, as he composed *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique* (Charvet's design was largely modeled after Webber, but drawn from several other Webber-inspired, more populist items as well).

Bottom: an array of prints drawing from the Webber work, *Human Sacrifice in Tahiti*.





I II III IV V VI VII VIII IX X



XI XII XIII XIV XV XVI XVII XVIII XIX XX

Fig. 5: Dufour et Cie's *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique*, 1804.

The Pacific peoples depicted in each drop (as documented in Rudd, trans. *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique, Tableau Pour Décoration en Papier Peint, 41.*) are— I: Nootka, Vancouver Island, British Columbia; II: Raiatea, Society Islands, French Polynesia; III: Lifuka, Ha'apai Group, Tonga; IV, V, VI: Tahiti, Society Islands, French Polynesia; VII: Tanna, New Hebrides, Vanuatu; VIII, IX: *Iles de Sandwich*, Hawaii; X, XI: Aotearoa, New Zealand; XII: Alaxsxag, Alaska; XIII: Nomuka, Ha'apai Group, Tonga; XIV: Kanaky, New Caledonia; XV, XVI: Tongatapu, Tonga; XVII: Tahuata, Marquesas Islands, French Polynesia; XVIII: Marquesas Islands, French Polynesia/ middle distance: Trowunna, Tasmania, Australia and the Admiralty Islands, Papua New Guinea; XIX: Rapanui, Easter Island/ middle distance: Trowunna, Tasmania, Australia and the Admiralty Islands, Papua New Guinea; XX: Belau, Palau.



Fig. 6: (top right and left) Dufour wallpaper depicting Indian scenes from the Salem room of the St. Louis Art Museum; (center) Dufour competitor Zuber wallpaper installed in the diplomatic reception room of the White House; (bottom) detail of Zuber wallpaper, *Vues de Brésil*, 1829.



Fig. 7: Images from World's Fairs. Clockwise from left: 1889 Paris *Exposition Universelle*; Nicaragua pavilion, 1889 Paris; Angkor Pavilion, 1889 Paris; *Creation* attraction, 1904 St. Louis.



Fig. 8: Stereoscopic image of Living Exhibition, or “Human Zoo,” from 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. Peoples depicted are the “Stalwart Basutos (So. African Aborigines).”



Fig. 9: Pierre Loti in various guises.

Songeries -

Il est extraordinaire qu'on
mettre tout de mystère sans fait
Stéphane Mallarmé

En l'absence du Maître un Curieux
ami attendu - pénètre dans l'atelier dont la porte entrou-
verte ; - et, dès le seuil, le visiteur reste immobile,
s'étonnant des nues.

Il s'était hâté de venir, passionnément Désireux, p
aussi de voir l'œuvre nouvelle de Paul Gauguin, l'œ
Tahitienne, fruit de trois années de travaux et de rêves,
si bas, dans l'île et, prudent, il avait à tous risques
même à celui (d'où venait la peur) de ne pas Comprendre
longtemps, interdit à son imagination de faire à l'avant
la jouissance par d'indiscrètes inductions de probabili-
il venait, l'esprit frais, les yeux francs, et rosi, devant
cette fête de jeunesse et de soleil à fonds inquiétants
Jusque dans leur clarté, qu'il s'étonnait, qu'il
s'abaissait de toutes ces splendeurs singulières
et calmes, simples, absolus où rien de notre occident
ne persiste -

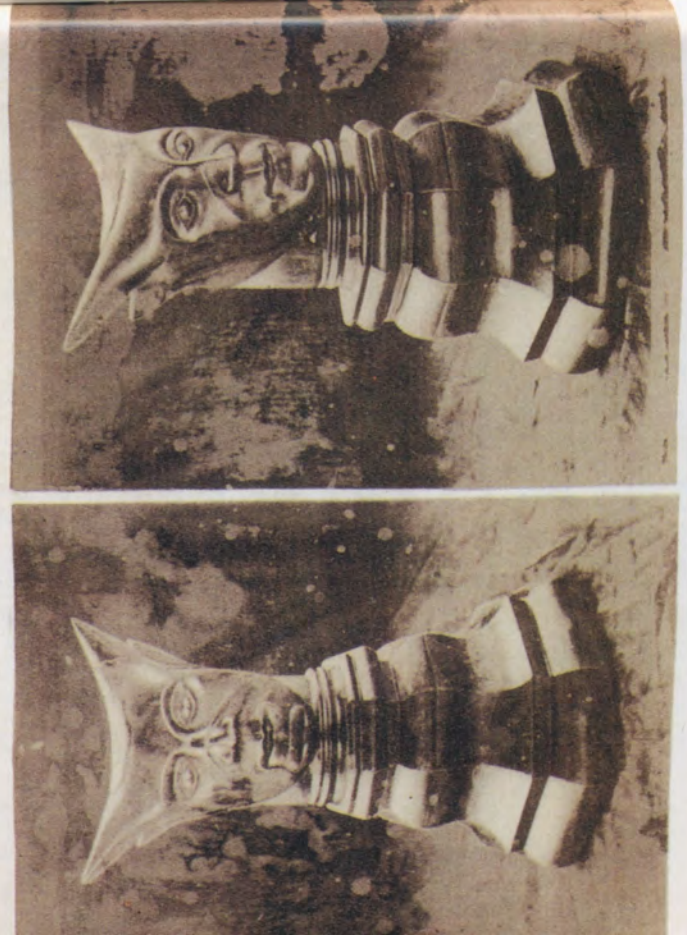


Fig. 10: Page from Gauguin's Noa Noa.

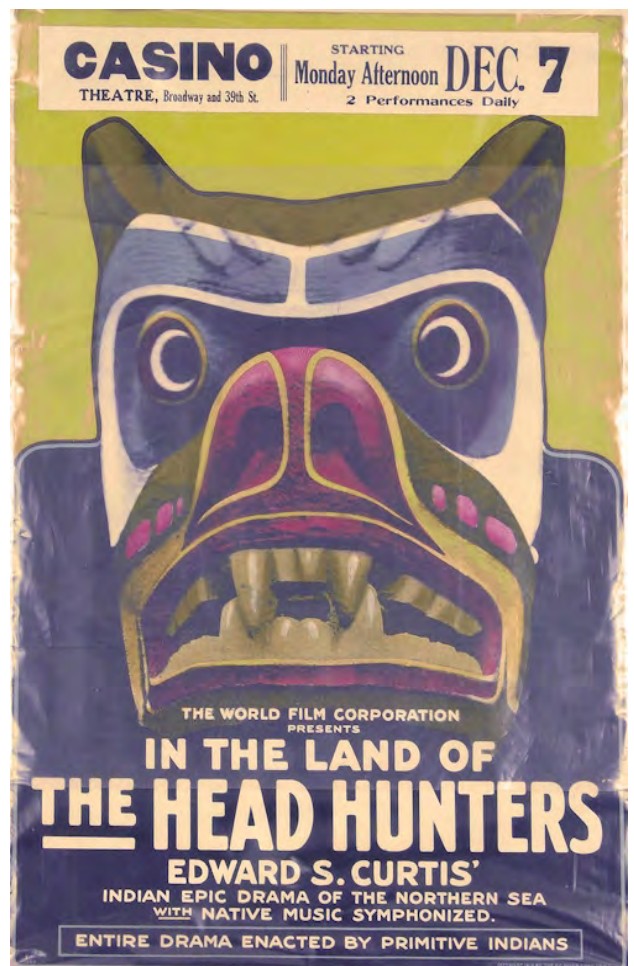


Fig. 11: Posters and still from Curtis' *In the Land of the Head Hunters* (1914).

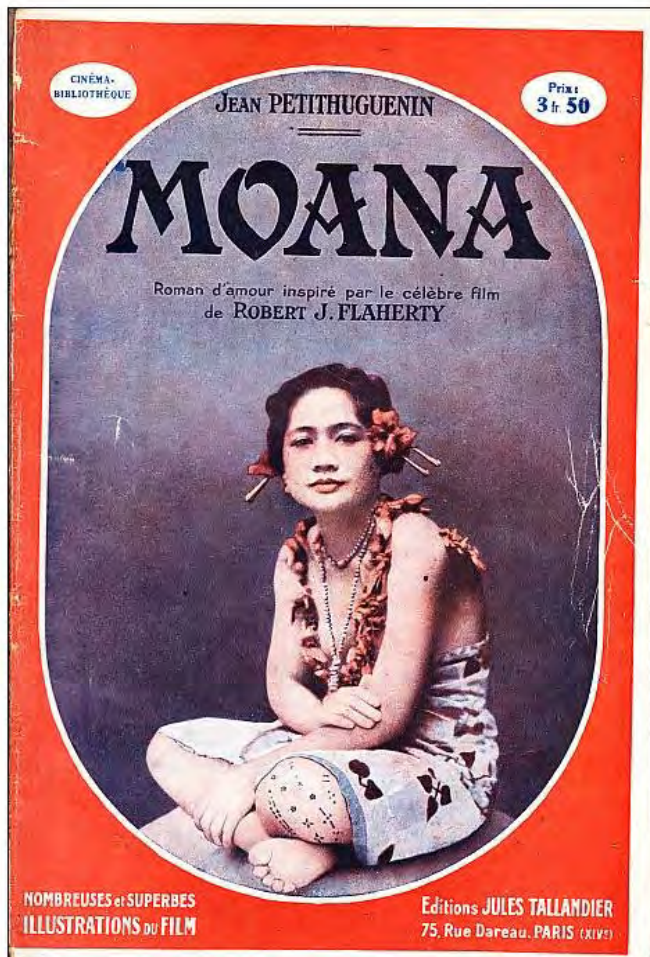


Fig. 12: Flaherty film posters.



Fig. 13: Pablo Picasso, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. Version O)*, 1907.

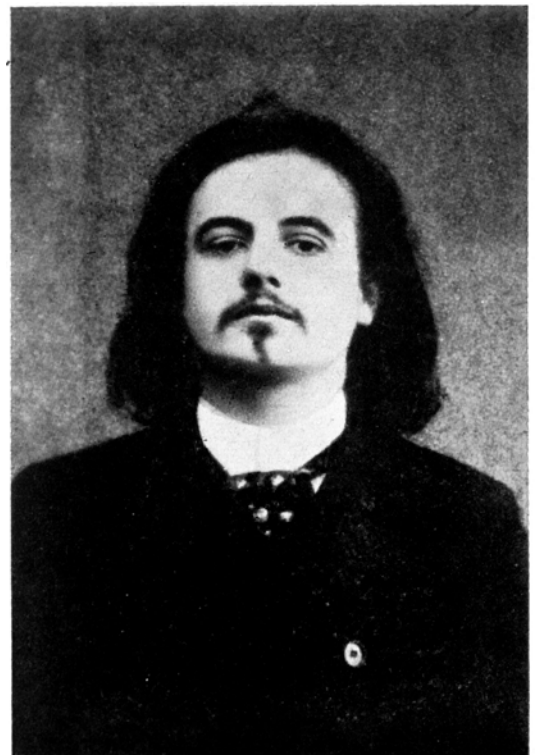


Fig. 14: Alfred Jarry, photograph taken sometime prior to his death in 1907 but date unknown.



Fig. 15: Photograph of Breton's studio, with its collection of primitive works.



Fig. 16: *The Surrealist Map of the World, 1929.*

DOCUMENTS

DOCTRINES
ARCHÉOLOGIE
BEAUX-ARTS
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Magazine illustré
paraissant dix fois par an

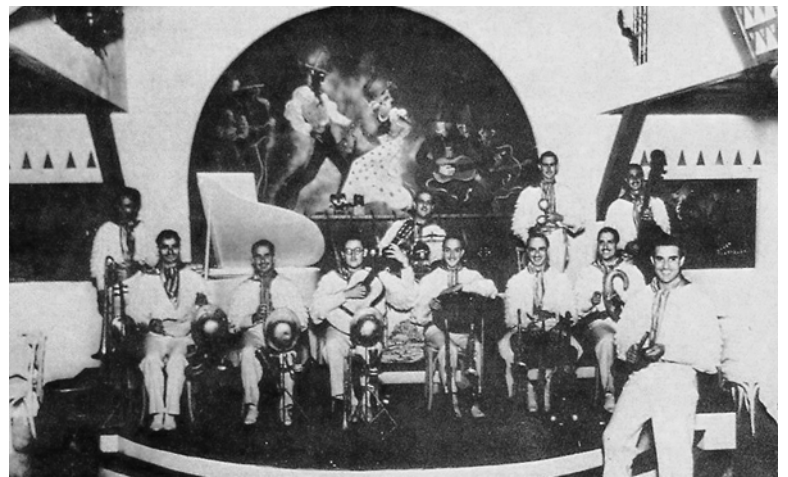
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D^r CONTENAU, L'art sumérien : les conventions de la statuaire. — Paul PELLIOT, Quelques réflexions sur l'art " sibérien " et l'art chinois à propos de bronzes de la collection David-Weill. — Josef STRZYGOWSKI, " Recherches sur les arts plastiques " et " Histoire de l'art ". — Georges BATAILLE, Le cheval académique. — Carl EINSTEIN, Aphorismes méthodiques. — Carl EINSTEIN, Pablo Picasso : quelques tableaux de 1928. — Michel LEIRIS, Notes sur deux figures microcosmiques. — Georges LIMBOUR, Paul Klee. — Georges Henri RIVIERE, Le Musée d'ethnographie du Trocadéro. — Jean BABELON, L'Évangéliste de Saint-Lupicin. — Hedwig FECHHEIMER, Exposition chinoise à Berlin. — André SCHAEFFNER, Igor Strawinsky.

PARIS. - 39. rue La Boétie.

Prix : 15 fr.

Fig. 17: *Documents* No. 1, 1929.



Figures 18-20: (clockwise from left) *Negrophilie* in the form of a 1927 French *Bal Negre* poster advertising Josephine Baker (with art emphasizing her much-touted “tubular” body); A Cotton Club woodblock poster, 1931; The Lecuona Cuban Boys photographed before a negrophilic stage backdrop.

Fig. 21: Josephine Baker.



CHANSONS
MADÉCASSES



PARIS
ÉDITIONS DE LA NOUVELLE REVUE FRANÇAISE
35 ET 37, RUE MADAME
1920

CHANSONS MADÉCASSES 11



Chanson première

— Quel est le roi de cette terre? — Ampa-
nani. — Où est-il? — Dans la case royale.
— Conduis-moi devant lui. — Viens-tu la
main ouverte? — Oui, je viens en ami. — Tu
peux entrer.

Salut au chef Ampanani. — Homme
blanc, je te rends ton salut et je te prépare
un bon accueil. Que cherches-tu? — Je
viens visiter cette terre. — Tes pas et tes

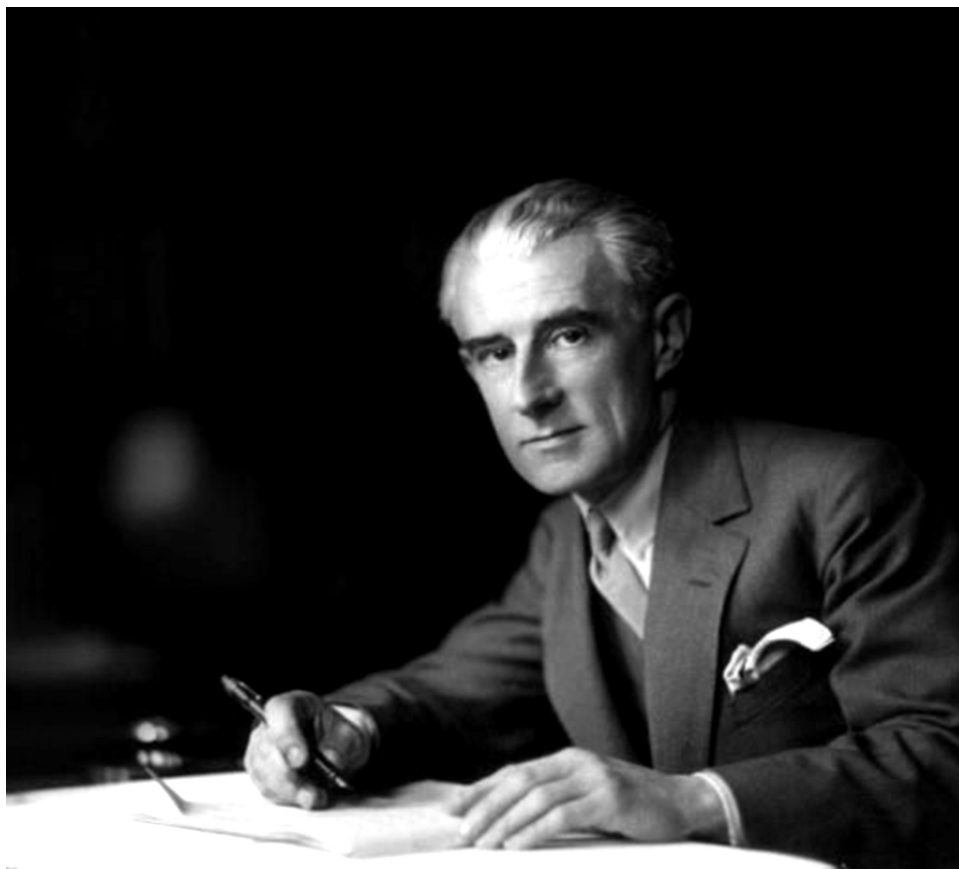


Fig. 22: (top) *Chanson Madécasses* by Evariste-Désiré de Parny, 1920; (bottom) Maurice Ravel.



Fig. 23: Les Baxter's *The Ritual of the Savage* (*Le Sacre du Sauvage*), 1952 (cover art by William George). Note the juxtaposition of style and content between the “primitive” masks and aristocratic partygoers. Note also the interaction of the figures in the background; what at first glance appears to be a suave dance or romantic tableau may also be a struggle during the overture of a rape. While many Exotica album covers feature unoriginal or banal images, this one in particular is seemingly intentionally complex; a rather sophisticated paratextual composition which can be interpreted in any number of ways and seems to comment on the nature of its subject and the exotic discourse.

THIS CAPITOL DUOPHONIC RECORD SHOULD BE PLAYED ONLY ON
STEREO PHONOGRAPHS

A NEW SOUND

Here are yesterday's famous recordings revitalized by a new sound . . . DUOPHONIC sound.

DUOPHONIC is an exclusive Capitol technical development designed to enrich monophonic "hi-fi" performances that are irreplaceable. It brings to these memorable, once-in-a-lifetime renditions a more vivid sound with many of the characteristics of stereo.

COMPARISON WITH MONOPHONIC SOUND

In contrast to mono, DUOPHONIC has a dimensional two-speaker effect, a broad spectrum of sound, regard-

less of the listener's position. There is no "centering" and none of the disappointing letdown often experienced in hearing mono discs on stereo equipment.

COMPARISON WITH STEREOPHONIC SOUND

DUOPHONIC technically is not stereo. But it is a bigger, fuller, more satisfying sound than monophonic. And through the technique of DUOPHONIC, yesterday's great performances may be heard with much of the same spaciousness and depth enjoyed in today's stereophonic sound.

Do the mysteries of native rituals intrigue you . . . does the haunting beat of savage drums fascinate you? Are you captivated by the forbidden ceremonies of primitive peoples in far-off Africa or deep in the interior of the Belgian Congo?

This original and exotic music by Les Baxter was conceived by blending his creative ideas with the ritualistic melodies and seductive rhythms of the natives of distant jungles and tropical ports to capture all the color and fervor so expressive of the emotions of these people.

The Ritual of the Savage is a tone poem of the sound and the struggle of the jungle . . . the hue and mood of the interior . . . the tempo and texture of the bustling sea ports and the tropics!

The Ritual of the Savage

(Le Sacre du Sauvage)

busy port Lying far down the coast of the southernmost continent, are cities as well as jungles. These tropical ports . . . steeped in their heat and humidity . . . teeming with activity of foreign trade . . . have their music. It is the music of the docks . . . the freighters, bananas, coffee . . . and toiling natives.

sophisticated savage With an air of élan that marks sophisticates from Madison Avenue to the Gold Coast, a lean native, casually clad in bone jewelry and an enigmatic smile, ambles up to a merchant and effects a trade: a freshly-caught fish in return for a tall, gold-capped, empty perfume bottle — a carefully-chosen gift for a well-loved young friend.

jungle river boat The visitor to the tropics frequently hears exotic melodies . . . music reflecting African and Oriental influence. In this fascinating composition, Les Baxter has combined both to describe the quaint, dilapidated craft which is usually the only means of transportation deep into the interior.

jungle flower Here, delicately pictured, are the lush tones and subtle rhythms of the softly colored jungle flower swaying in the gentle tropical breeze.

barquiza A gentle musical drawing of late afternoon and a little boat (a barquiza) that moves lightly and unhurried, going nowhere, through the dark green stillness near the shaded shore.

stone god The intriguing legend of the huge stone head found deep in the jungle and moved a thousand miles upstream by natives to become their god . . . for ritual, worship, and ceremony . . . is the inspiration for this fascinating music.

quiet village The jungle grows more dense as the river boat slowly makes its way into the deep interior. A snake slithers into the water, flushing a brilliantly plumaged bird who soars into the clearing above a quiet village. Here is a musical portrait of a tropical village — deserted in the mid-day heat.

jungle jalopy An ancient, elegant auto — abandoned by a hunter who found going it on foot more to his liking — becomes community property, and appears in a variety of mobile and immobile capacities in a jungle town.

coronation Can you envision the rotund and diminutive native king, fantastically attired in his "evening clothes" of animal skins and colorful feathers from jungle birds . . . replete with top hat covered with scenes from travel posters . . . a tattered umbrella overhead and followed by a procession of drummers, trumpeters, flutists and surging dancers? This bizarre picture is vividly described by rhythm and melody in "Coronation."

love dance The fervid sun has dropped behind the jungle curtain . . . living creatures of the tropics make their nests. A chattering chimp squawks a final command to its young. Over the softening sounds of evening comes the beat of the tom-tom . . . bringing together the entire native populace for a ritual as stimulating as it is sacred. Here is music for a slow, surging, and erotic dance . . . a dance as seductive and pulsating in its concept as in its execution . . . gentle in tempo . . . violent in excitement.

kinkajou This playful theme describes the wiry, wifal antics of the Kinkajou, a jungle animal that sometimes makes itself at home as a village pet.

the ritual Numerous and varied ceremonies color the lives and customs of the African native. Many have never been seen by white man . . . are forbidden but to members of the cult. Here, for the first time on record, the rhythms and musical sounds of secret and highest orders of native tribes are used to transform the jungle mat into a colorful stage for the violent emotional expressions of these mysterious and primitive folk.



Fig. 24: Back cover liner notes to *Ritual of the Savage*.

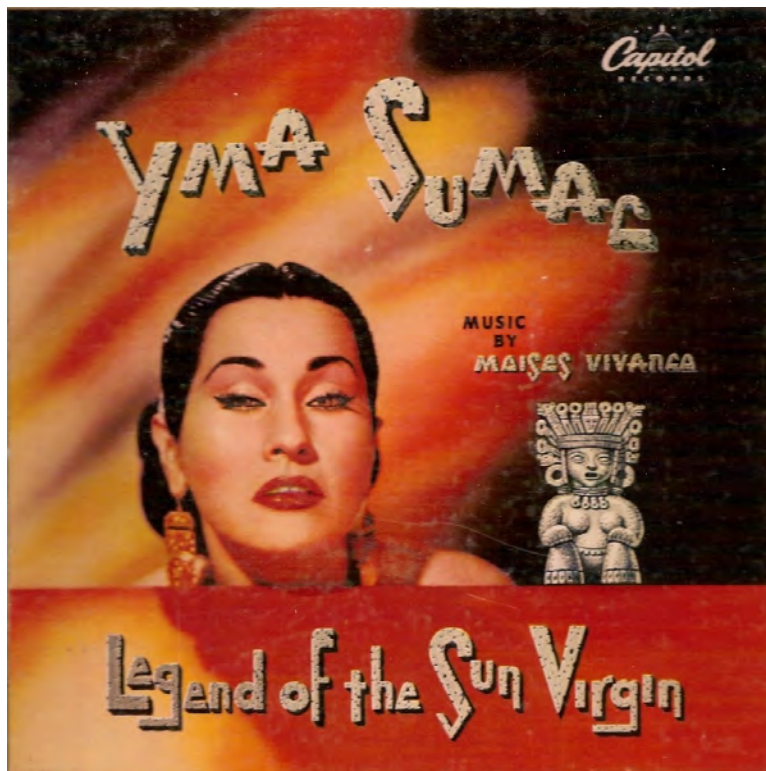


Fig. 25: Yma Sumac LP covers. Top: *Voice of the Xtabay*, with Les Baxter, 1950. Bottom: *Legend of the Sun Virgin*, 1952.

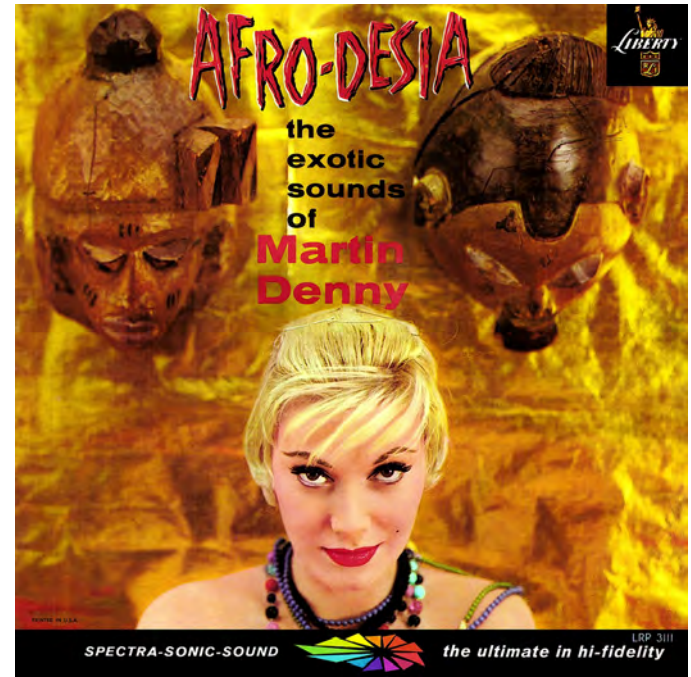


Fig. 26: Martin Denny LP covers. Clockwise from left: *Exotica* (1957/58); *Exotica Vol.II* (1958); *Afro-Desia* (1959); *Primitiva* (1958). Model on all covers is Sandy Warner, “The Exotica Girl.”



Fig. 27: Arthur Lyman's LPs in particular stressed audiophile virtues and stereo effects. LP covers, clockwise from left: *Taboo* (1958), *The Legend of Pele* (1958- note how the Hawaiian goddess is portrayed as a white woman emerging from a volcano), *Taboo Vol. 2* (1959), *Bwana A* (1958). At bottom: the Henry J. Kaiser dome.



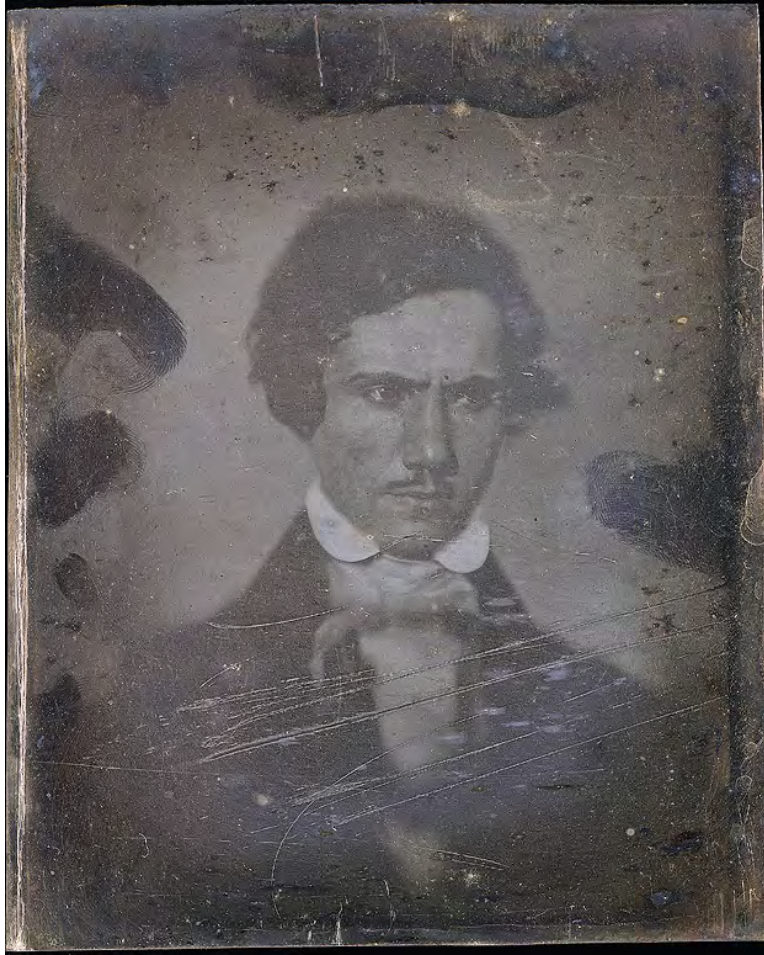


Fig. 28: Tintype of a young Iefan Fflach Gwregys, photographed before his 1904 disappearance (date unknown).