Extract from In Cold Blood by Truman Capote

Context: In Cold Blood written in the 1950s. Tattoos were not as common nor popular then as they are now.

Dick stripped to his briefs was not quite the same as Dick fully clothed. In the latter state, he seemed a flimsy dingy-blond youth of medium height, fleshless and perhaps sunken-chested; disrobing revealed that he was nothing of the sort but, rather, an athlete constructed on a welterweight scale. The tattooed face of a cat, blue and grinning, covered his right hand; on one shoulder a blue rose blossomed. More markings, self-designed and self-executed, ornamented his arms and torso: the head of a dragon with a human skull between its open jaws; bosomy nudes; a gremlin brandishing a pitchfork; the word "*PEACE*" accompanied by a cross radiating, in the form of crude strokes, rays of holy light; and two sentimental concoctions—one a bouquet of flowers dedicated to "*MOTHER-DAD*," the other a heart that celebrated the romance of "*DICK*" and "*CAROL*," the girl whom he had married when he was nineteen, and from whom he had separated six years later in order to "do the right thing" by another young lady, the mother of his youngest child. ("I have three boys who I will definitely take care of," he had written in applying for parole. "My wife is remarried. I have been married twice, only I don't want anything to do with my second wife.")

But neither Dick's physique nor the inky gallery adorning it made as remarkable an impression as his face, which seemed composed of mismatching parts. It was as though his head had been halved like an apple, then put together a fraction off center. Something of the kind had happened; the imperfectly aligned features were the outcome of a car collision in 1950—an accident that left his long-jawed and narrow face tilted, the left side rather lower than the right, with the result that the lips were slightly aslant, the nose was askew, and the eyes were not only situated at uneven levels but of uneven size, the left eye being truly serpentine, with a venomous, sickly-blue squint that, although it was involuntarily acquired, seemed nevertheless to warn of bitter sediment at the bottom of his nature.

Perry, too, had been maimed, and his injuries, received in a motorcycle wreck, were severer than Dick's; he had spent half a year in a State of Washington hospital and another six months on crutches, and though the accident occurred in 1952, his chunky, dwarfish legs, broken in five places and pitifully scarred, still pained him so severely that he had become an aspirin addict. "*COOKIE*," the name of a nurse who had been friendly to him when he was hospitalized, was tattooed on his right biceps. While he had fewer tattoos than his companion, they were more elaborate—not the self-inflicted work of an amateur but epics of the art contrived by Honolulu and Yokohama masters. Blue-furred, orange-eyed, red-fanged, a tiger snarled upon his left bicep; a spitting snake, coiled around a dagger, slithered down his right forearm; and elsewhere skulls gleamed, a tombstone loomed, a chrysanthemum flourished.