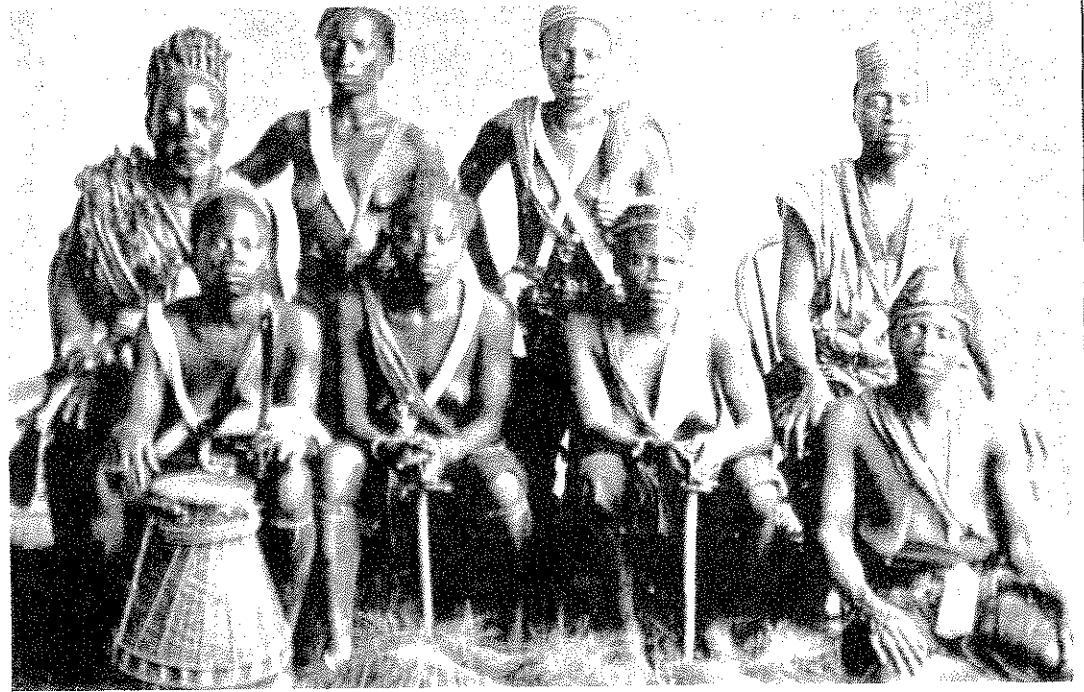


Dahomean Dancers from the World's Columbian Exposition, 1893.



“PRIMITIVISM” IN AMERICAN ART: SOME LITERARY PARALLELS OF THE 1910s AND 1920s

GAIL LEVIN

American writers of the first and second decade of the century sought special American roots in a “primitivism” akin to the fascination with the same theme in art.

Primitivism in American art began under the aegis of the European avant-garde, but it soon merged with certain American aspirations and assumed a distinctive character. While some American artists were interested in African tribal art for its diverse formal and evocative qualities, others looked to the themes and motifs of American Indian art which offered American modernists an answer to nationalistic critics' demands not only for an American style but also for a native American subject matter.

American interest in primitivism was not limited to the visual arts. The artist and critic Walter Pach noted in 1920: “Poets, artists, and those scientists who see that their profession must take heed of aesthetic ideas are naturally the first to become aware of the profound value of the Primitive . . .”¹

It is not the intention of this study to focus on the work of those primarily known as visual artists, for I have discussed these figures, including Max Weber, Marsden Hartley, Man Ray, William Zorach, Alexander Calder and others, in my essay in the catalogue for “Primitivism” in *20th Century Art*, the exhibition currently at the Museum of Modern Art.² Rather, this essay investigates the little-known vogue of primitivism among American writers, particularly poets. Before discussing the interest in “primitivism” among the American literary avant-garde and their connections to visual artists with whom they shared this enthusiasm, it is important to review some of their common sources for knowledge about tribal art and culture.

One of the first times African sculpture was exhibited in America as art rather than as ethnological artifact was in the exhibition held at Alfred Stieglitz's gallery, “291,” in November 1914, arranged by Stieglitz with the help of Marius de Zayas.³ This exhibition had, in fact, been anticipated by Robert Coady when he showed some examples of American art at his Washington Square Gallery in the spring of 1914.

Coady, who also exhibited European modern art, the work of American Negro children, and South Seas sculpture, crusaded for the recognition of the black contribution to American culture.⁴ In 1916-17, Coady published a magazine called *The Soil* which served as a platform for his eccentric opinions regarding modern art in America. In *The Soil*, he juxtaposed reproductions of primitive sculpture and photographs of industrial machinery and contemporary urban vistas, accompanying these incongruous pairings with quintessentially Dada statements.

About the same time, in October 1915, Marius de Zayas, along with Paul Haviland, Francis Picabia, and Agnes Meyer, opened the Modern Gallery, as an extension of Stieglitz's efforts. They showed modern art and photography along with examples of primitive art, explaining their desire “to illustrate the relationship between these things and the art of today.”⁵ In *Camera Work* of October 1916, de Zayas published an essay called “Modern Art in Connection with Negro Art,” and in that same year, the book, *African Negro Art: Its Influence on Modern Art*.⁶ Here he argued that African art “has re-awakened in us the feeling for abstract form; it has brought into our art the means to express our purely sensorial feelings in regard to form, or to find new form in our ideas.”⁷ De Zayas also wrote the introduction to Charles Sheeler's folio book of photographs, *African Negro Wood Sculpture*, published in 1918, which illustrated works from the Modern Gallery where important patrons of modern art including John Quinn, Agnes Meyer, and Walter Arensberg had purchased primitive sculptures.⁸

In the early twentieth century, American Indian art could be seen in New York at the Museum of Natural History and at the Brooklyn Museum; the Museum of the American Indian opened in 1916. The Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago offered Midwesterners a varied exhibition of Indian art. These exhibitions, however, were all ethnological in their orientation. It was not until 1931 that the

artist John Sloan helped organize the great Exhibition of Indian Tribal Arts, held at the Grand Central Art Galleries in New York in 1931-32, which first treated the objects as art rather than as ethnological artifacts.

During the 1920s, interest in primitive art in America was fostered by several important publications. In 1926, *Primitive Negro Sculpture* by Paul Guillaume and Thomas Munro was published with illustrations of works in the collection of the Barnes Foundation. Guillaume, the Paris dealer who had provided Marius de Zayas with works for the African sculpture exhibition at "291" in 1914, and Munro, a professor of modern art at the University of Pennsylvania, not only dealt with African art in the context of tribal life, but considered African art's "relation to contemporary art" and claimed it offered a "compromise between representation and design."⁹ Anthropologist Franz Boas' influential *Primitive Art*, first published in America in 1928, countered the prevailing attitude that primitive man's mental capacity was lower than that of Western man.¹⁰ Boas, who endeavored to explain primitive styles, focused on the art of Northwest Coast Indians, and his book generated much interest in their art.

In the first half of the twentieth century, both in Europe and in America, there was a growing interest in African culture in general; among the avant-garde, this was frequently extended to a fascination with black Americans, especially their development of jazz music. Jazz was popular with American artists and writers and, as many famous American jazz musicians toured Europe, particularly during the 1920s, they influenced writers, artists, and fellow musicians.¹¹ Artists were attracted to the improvisational aspects of jazz as well as to its directness and simplicity, qualities they also appreciated in African sculpture and associated with black culture in general.

The white avant-garde saw blacks as symbolic of their own search for personal freedom, able to evade convention and expectation.¹² These whites saw Harlem as a place that had "magically survived the psychic fetters of Puritanism."¹³ One view suggests that blacks in Harlem were actually impeded in defining their own identities by the vanguard whites who were mesmerized by their own view of black life.¹⁴ Nonetheless, black American artists were encouraged to consider African art by black writer Alain Locke who argued: "African art, therefore, presents to the Negro artists in the New World a challenge to recapture this heritage of creative originality, and to carry it to distinctive new achievement in a vital, new and racially expressive art."¹⁵

Numerous early twentieth-century white writers depicted blacks as having escaped the dehumanizing technological turmoil of industrial society and celebrated what they viewed as their childlike, innocent nature in direct contrast to their own tainted civilization with its sophisticated, stressful discontents.¹⁶ By early 1914, Vachel Lindsay, a former art student of Robert Henri,¹⁷ was chanting his poem "The Congo" (which he subtitled "A Study of the Negro Race") before William Butler Yeats at a *Poetry* magazine banquet:

Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, BOOM,
THEN I had religion, THEN I had a vision.
I could not turn from their revel in derision.
THEN I SAW THE CONGO, CREEPING THROUGH THE BLACK,
CUTTING THROUGH THE FOREST WITH A GOLDEN TRACK.¹⁸

His chief supporter, *Poetry* editor Harriet Monroe, saw his poems as a return to "a closer relation between the poet and his audience" as in "primitive nations," and compared his work to "the wonderful song-dances of the Hopis and others of our aboriginal tribes."¹⁹ In his focus on contemporary stereotypes about African tribal culture and his interest in primitive sounds, Lindsay responded to the influence of jazz and to current discussion of anthropological investigations of primitive cultures, but his own sources were diverse. He wrote to Harriet Monroe that his poem "The Congo," "a rag-time epic that takes about seven minutes," had been inspired in part by "the Dahomey dancers at the World's Fair,"²⁰ referring to his recollection of visiting the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893, as an impressionable teenager. He had probably been drawn to African culture because both his parents were enthusiastic Christian evangelists who supported missionary work in Africa. By 1893, the Lind-

says' home library already included several volumes on Africa and they were undoubtedly conversant with writings on Christian missionaries there.²¹ In "The Congo," Lindsay connected African culture to black Americans, juxtaposing ragtime music with the Congo:

Boomlay, boomlay, boomlay, BOOM,
A roaring epic, rag-time tune
From the mouth of the Congo
To the Mountains of the Moon.²²

At the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Lindsay not only saw the Dahomeans but also had an opportunity to discover ragtime music, performed there by Scott Joplin and others who participated in the many ragtime contests on the midway. Some contemporary scholars now make the same connection that Lindsay did—seeing the survival in jazz of elements of Dahomey music.²³ Lindsay's personal attitude to the Negro was one of racial equality. Yet his naive celebration of Negritude, which employed stereotypes then common, has blurred his deep appreciation of the racial identity of black Americans. This has caused his poem to be misunderstood, and recently, even dismissed as racist. Yet in 1949, no less a figure than black poet Langston Hughes included "The Congo" in the section on "Tributary Poems by Non-Negroes" in the anthology, *The Poetry of The Negro, 1746-1949*.²⁴

Lindsay's thinking about connections between African and black American cultures parallels that of French society in the 1910s and 1920s, where even intellectuals saw black American culture as an extension of African tribal life.²⁵ Indeed, Lindsay's primitive phrase in "The Congo," "Mumbo-Jumbo will hoo-doo you," preceded "Mumbo-Jumbo idole des Madingos" in Blaise Cendrars' poem, "Continent Noir," published in *L'Oeuf dur* in Paris in April 1922.²⁶

The significance of primitivism in Lindsay's work rests not only in the content of his poems but in his sensational method of delivery. Lindsay was an early variant of today's performance artist, a kind of one-man vaudeville show, giving sing-song recitations to popular audiences. He gave "The Congo" detailed marginal notations, such as "shrilly and with a heavily accented meter" or "with a touch of Negro dialect," indicating the importance of the style of delivery. Lindsay's performance of "The Congo" preceded the European Dadaists' events inspired by primitivism, such as the "African Nights" at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich in 1916. There Richard Huelsenbeck chanted his "Negro" poems (each terminating in shouts of "Umba, umba"). Tristan Tzara also wrote "African poems" and used pseudo-African words.

Hart Crane, in his poem "Black Tambourine" of 1921, also linked African culture to black Americans. Crane wrote:

The Black man, forlorn in the cellar,
Wanders in some mid-kingdom, dark that lies,
Between his tambourine, stuck on the wall,
And, in Africa, a carcass quick with flies.²⁷

Crane, at the time living in Cleveland, had become friends with a painter, William Sommers, and had even begun to produce his own drawings and watercolors. Art inspired Crane, prompting him to order art books from Germany on topics such as his favorite painters and African sculpture.²⁸

Crane's "Black Tambourine" appears to be somewhat autobiographical. At the time he was unhappily working for his father in the basement of a store and tearoom. He disliked this position intensely and, evidently, "brooded over the fact that his father had discharged a Negro, who had formerly done the work, in order to make room for him."²⁹ Crane also fraternized with the Negro waiters and chefs working in the kitchen nearby. Thus the forlorn black man in Crane's poem is, like him, trapped behind "the world's closed door." Crane, despite his father's opposition and contempt, was determined to write poetry. Thus, he identified with the black man's unhappy fate which serves as a metaphor for his own emotional and economic bondage. The "tambourine, stuck on the wall," rather than being played and enjoyed, may symbolize Crane's own art—poetry, then temporarily stifled. In order to pursue his art, Crane had to accept both his homosexuality and the economic uncertainty that went with his chosen metier.

This connection of the black American and the African, seeing both as childlike and closer to nature, is an aspect of the general response to the primitive shared by American and European cultures.

It is significant that Gertrude Stein, then living in Paris, finished writing her portrait of the young American black woman, Melanctha (one of the short stories in *Three Lives*), during the period she was posing for Picasso's portrait of her in 1905-06. While Stein modeled Melanctha on the Negro women she had met during her outpatient work in obstetrics while she had been a medical student at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore,³⁰ her creation of Melanctha also coincides with her initial acquaintance with Matisse and his growing interest in African sculpture. Stein's language in "Melanctha," based on the characters' interior and spoken monologues, which has been described as "drummed out by the insistent rhythms of speech, the simple blunt, declarative sentences of the style,"³¹ can be thought of as a kind of literary primitivism.

The simplistic view of blacks as an antidote to the machine age recurs during the 1920s in American novels like Waldo Frank's *Holiday* and in Carl Van Vechten's unfortunately titled *Nigger Heaven*.³² An enthusiast of black culture, Van Vechten, who contrasted white society to the Negro's "natural sense of elemental rhythm and passion," hoped to have Picasso illustrate *Nigger Heaven* and even enlisted Gertrude Stein to persuade the artist, revealing his appreciation of the parallel of his theme to Picasso's primitivism.³³ In his notes for the novel, Van Vechten explained his choice of title which was misinterpreted by many critics: "Nigger Heaven is an American slang expression for the topmost gallery of a theatre, so-called because in certain of the United States, Negroes who visit the playhouse are arbitrarily forced to sit in these cheap seats. The title of this novel derives from the fact that the geographical position of Harlem, the Negro quarter of New York, corresponds to the location of the gallery in a theatre."³⁴

Van Vechten, who was also known as a photographer, was a long-time supporter of the American black and a friend of many promi-

nent blacks, including poet Langston Hughes, who was also a critic and greatly admired jazz. At the salon-style parties Van Vechten and his wife held, his interest in the primitive was indicated when he had Chief Long Lance perform Indian war dances.³⁵ This followed an evening some years earlier that he had arranged at Mabel Dodge's salon with Negro entertainment.³⁶

In his novel *Holiday*, Waldo Frank, who was also a social, literary, and art critic in the coterie of Alfred Stieglitz, employed the rhythms of black and Southern dialect, assisted by his friend, the black author and poet Jean Toomer, with whom he traveled in the South in September 1922 while this book was in progress.³⁷ In 1923, Toomer published a collection of his work in *Cane*, which included the poem "Georgia Dusk," which deals with black Americans' African heritage, "The solid proof of former domicile":

Meanwhile, the men, with vestiges of pomp,
Race memories of king and caravan.
High-priests, an ostrich, and a juju-man,
Go singing through the footpaths of the swamp.³⁸

Toomer's reverence for his African heritage, which coincides with interest in African art, continues in the poetry of other black poets during the 1930s, for example, "Afro-American Fragment" by Langston Hughes:

So Long,
So far away
Is Africa.
Not even memories alive
Save those that history books create,
Save those that songs
Beat back into the blood -
Beat out of blood with words sad-sung
In strange un-Negro tongue -



Marsden Hartley.
Indian Composition, 1914-15.
Oil on canvas, 47 1/2
x 47 1/2". Vassar College Art Gallery.



William Zorach,
The Young Boy,
1921. Wood, 22 1/2".
Whitney Museum
of American Art,
Promised Gift.

So long,
So far away
Is Africa.³⁹

The vogue for African art in America made the black continent seem closer, more immediate. The evocative power of these sculptures inspired Eugene O'Neill in his 1920 work, *The Emperor Jones*, an experimental mood play about primitive terror and superstition with a Negro Pullman porter, Brutus Jones, as its hero. The staging utilized the beating of a tom-tom. O'Neill recalled "reading of the religious feasts in the Congo and the uses to which the drum is put there"; he also visited his artist friends, William and Marguerite Zorach in Provincetown "to share a rare book they had recently acquired, which contained photographs of African woodcarvings and masks."⁴⁰ This was undoubtedly their copy of Charles Sheeler's 1918 folio book of photographs, *African Negro Wood Sculpture*, which inspired William Zorach in his depiction of his son Tessim as *The Young Boy* in 1921.

Several of the same writers who focused on blacks also celebrated the innocence of the American Indian. Waldo Frank, contrasting the

purity of the Indian to the civilized decadence of the white man, wrote that the Indian "whether he dwelt in populous cities or in teepees . . . lived in a spiritual world so true and so profound, that the heel of the pioneer has even now not wholly stamped it out."⁴¹ Vachel Lindsay saw the Indian as a redeemer, "Red-men, new-made," in his poem "The Black Hawk War of the Artists," which was "written for Larado Taft's Statue of Black Hawk at Oregon Illinois" and was "to be given in the manner of the Indian Oration and the Indian War-Cry":

Power to restore
All that the white hand mars.
See the dead east
Crushed with the iron cars –
Blinding the sun and stars!⁴²

Lindsay wanted to establish the Indian as a revered ancestral civilization, an essential contributor to America's past, ignoring the actual ill treatment of the Indian as inferior.⁴³ He was enchanted by the romance of the noble savage and liked to imply that he was partially of Indian descent.⁴⁴

Even Langston Hughes, whom Vachel Lindsay encouraged and helped to promote, became interested in the American Indian. In his autobiography, Hughes recalled how he heard much talk among New York artists and writers about going out to Taos, New Mexico, and was inspired to write a poem, "A House in Taos," which refers to "the Rain God," the sun, moon, and wind, as well as "Indian corn colors of the desert" – "red, white, yellow."⁴⁵ This poem, published in 1927, was not about any specific place, but years later when Hughes met Mabel Dodge Luhan, she insisted that *her* house was not like the one the poem described, despite the associations that so many people had made upon reading the poem.⁴⁶

In the 1920s, Hart Crane chose the "nature-world of the Indian" as a metaphor for "the Myth of America" which he presented in "Powhatan's Daughter," Part II of *The Bridge*.⁴⁷ Moving from the poem "The River," which transports the reader to the Midwest, and about which he admitted "the rhythm is jazz," Crane attempted to approach "the primal world of the Indian" in "The Dance."⁴⁸ "Not only do I describe the conflict between the two races in this dance," Crane explained, "I also become identified with the Indian and his world before it is over, which is the only method possible of ever really possessing the Indian and his world as a cultural factor."⁴⁹

After moving to New York, Crane came to know a number of artists including the painter and writer, Marsden Hartley. Crane appears to have responded to Hartley's essay, "Tribal Esthetics," published in *The Dial* in 1918, where Crane himself subsequently published. Hartley began his article: "In the life of the American Indian all expression symbolized itself in the form of the dance. It is the solemn high mass of the Indian soul, to which he brings his highest gifts for adoration."⁵⁰ Hartley lamented: "We are without the power to celebrate the simple experience. We have no ceremony for our vision."⁵¹ Crane may also have known some of Hartley's abstract Indian theme paintings of 1914 which celebrate the spirit of the Indian.⁵² Crane's admission in "The Dance" that he became "identified with the Indian and his world," suggests a parallel with his earlier identification with the forlorn black man in "Black Tambourine." In his 1924 essay on Hartley, the critic Paul Rosenfeld noted that "the poor Indian" had, until recent times, been the only American to have developed a "feeling for the earth" and he celebrated the Indian's dances and rituals which put him "in harmony with nature . . ."⁵³ Just a year later, Hartley's friend, William Carlos Williams, tells in his poetic essay, *In the American Grain*, how Daniel Boone came to understand the necessity: "to be *Himself* in a new world, Indianlike. If the land were to be possessed it must be as the Indian possessed it . . . the flower of his world."⁵⁴

Earlier, Robert Frost, in his 1916 poem "The Vanishing Red," had portrayed the Indian, "the last Red Man In Action," as an innocent and passive victim, a mere casualty of a white man's evil arrogance.⁵⁵ This parallels Marsden Hartley's 1914 identification with the Indian as "the peaceful and unobtrusive citizen." For so many American artists and writers, the Indian, the African, and even, by extension, black Americans became mythic symbols of an earlier, less corrupt age.

The directness and simplicity of the primitive art they admired

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was seen by modernist visual artists and writers as a valid path to a more honest and less decadent means of expression – the “universal idea” about which Hartley had written to Stieglitz in 1912.⁵⁶ Wassily Kandinsky, in his treatise (published in America in 1914 as *The Art of Spiritual Harmony*), had written of the modern artist’s sympathy with “the Primitives” because of the mutual desire “to express in their work only internal truths, renouncing in consequence all consideration of external form.”⁵⁷ Marius de Zayas saw that rather than naturalistic representation in art, and even mechanical representation through photography, “Negro art has made us discover the possibility of giving plastic expression to the sensation produced by the outer life, and consequently also, the possibility of finding new forms to express our inner life.”⁵⁸ Kandinsky also noted: “The nightmare of materialism, which has turned the life of the universe into an evil, useless game, is not yet past; it holds the awakening soul still in its grip.”⁵⁹ It was in part this struggle to counteract the growing sense of alienation and sterility in modern society, so well articulated by Kandinsky, that led so many American (and European) artists and writers to concurrently investigate the “primitive.” Their continuing exchange of ideas on the subject made primitivism one of the crucial intellectual tangents in art and literature of the 1910s and 1920s.

1. Walter Pach, “The Art of the American Indian,” *The Dial*, LXVIII, January 1920, p. 62.
2. See Gail Levin, “American Art,” in *Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, edited by William Rubin (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984), pp. 452-473. The exhibition, sponsored by Philip Morris Incorporated and the National Endowment for the Arts, is at the Museum of Modern Art through January 15, 1985 and will subsequently be shown at the Detroit Institute of Arts (February 23-May 19, 1985).
3. For De Zayas’ own account of this and other African art exhibitions in New York, see Marius de Zayas, “How, When, and Why Modern Art Came to New York,” Introduction and Notes by Francis M. Naumann, *Arts Magazine*, 54, April 1980, pp. 109-112.
4. See Judith K. Zilczer, “Robert J. Coady, Forgotten Spokesman for Avant-Garde Culture in America,” *American Art Review*, 2, 1975, pp. 77-89.
5. Original announcement circular for the opening of the Modern Gallery, 500 Fifth Avenue, on October 7, 1915; reprinted in *Camera Work*, October 1916, No. 48, p. 63, as “291 and the Modern Gallery.” Important exhibitions of African art were held at the Modern Gallery in 1916 and in 1918; for reviews, see De Zayas, “How, When, and Why Modern Art Came to New York,” pp. 110-112.
6. Marius de Zayas, “Modern Art in Connection with Negro Art,” *Camera Work*, October 1916, No. 48, p. 7. Marius de Zayas, *African Negro Art: Its Influences on Modern Art* (Modern Gallery: New York, 1916). For a discussion of de Zayas’ ideas on African art, see Judith K. Zilczer, “Primitivism and New York Dada,” *Arts Magazine*, 51, May 1977, pp. 140-142. De Zayas, who viewed Africans as intellectually inferior, child-like savages, was not aware of more accurate anthropological opinions.
7. De Zayas, *African Negro Art*, p. 41.
8. Sheeler published only 22 copies of this book but it was owned by several artists including Max Weber and William Zorach. B.L. Reid, *The Man From New York: John Quinn and His Friends* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 556-557.
9. Paul Guillaume and Thomas Munro, *Primitive Negro Sculpture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1926), p. 133. Guillaume’s role in promoting African art was discussed by Clive Bell in an essay, “Negro Sculpture,” reprinted in Clive Bell, *Since Cézanne* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1922), pp. 113-121.
10. Franz Boas, *Primitive Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928). Boas had earlier expressed enthusiasm for the art of Northwest Coast Indians in “Representative Art of Primitive People,” in *Holmes Anniversary Volume* (Washington, D.C.: Bryan Press, 1916).
11. See Mona Hadler, “Jazz and the Visual Arts,” *Arts Magazine*, 57, pp. 91-101.
12. See David C. Driskell, *Two Centuries of Black American Art* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), p. 59.
13. Nathan Huggins, *The Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 89.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Alain Locke, “The African Legacy and the Negro Artists,” in *Exhibition of Productions by Negro Artists* (New York: Harmon Foundation, 1931), p. 12. For examples of black American artists’ uses of African art before 1940, see the work of Palmer Hayden or Aaron Douglas.
16. This is discussed by Frederick J. Hoffman, *The Twenties: American Writing in the Postwar Decade* (New York: The Free Press, 1965, reprint of 1949 edition), pp. 305-307, but he does not address the roots of this sensibility in the 1910s and its continuity into the 1940s.
17. Even Edward Hopper, a classmate of Vachel Lindsay’s, appears to have produced a drawing after a primitive sculpture during his student years, perhaps under Lindsay’s influence, as he later liked to mention having studied with the poet. It was Henri who encouraged Lindsay to pursue his poetry rather than a career as a painter. The author is at work on a study of Vachel Lindsay and the visual arts.
18. Vachel Lindsay, *The Congo and Other Poems* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1914), pp. 3-4.
19. Harriet Monroe, Introduction to Vachel Lindsay, *The Congo and Other Poems*, *ibid.*, pp. viii-ix.
20. Quoted in Harriet Monroe, *A Poet’s Life* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), p. 333. Lindsay also noted other influences as follows: “the story of the Pygmies and the Mountains of the Moon in Stanley’s darkest Africa, Josep Conrad’s haunting African sketches full of fever and voodoo and marsh, Mark Twain’s assault on King Leopold, and the race riots in Springfield, Illinois, several years ago, and *The Souls of Black Folk*, [by [black poet] Bughardt DuBois, and the recent death of a missionary on the Congo known and loved by many of my friends . . .” See also Rossiter Johnson, ed.,

- A History of the World’s Columbian Exposition Held in 1893* (New York: Appleton & Co., 1898), vol. III, pp. 443-44, which notes that the Dahomey Village consisted of 30 native houses populated by 69 people, 21 of whom were female warriors who performed the “fetish war dance.” I am grateful to the Larry Zim World’s Fair Collection, New York, for this information.
21. Lindsay’s mother was an organizer of Christian fundamentalist missionary groups in Springfield, Illinois. Among the books on Africa in the Lindsays’ library, for example, were Henry M. Stanley, *In Darkest Africa* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1890), and Henry Drummond, *Tropical Africa* (New York: Columbia Publishing Co., 1891). Later, Mrs. Royal J. Dye, *Balenge: A Story of Gospel Triumph on the Congo* (Cincinnati: Foreign Christian Missionary Society, 1909), was added. I wish to thank Mildred Abraham of the Vachel Lindsay Collection in the C. Waller Barrett Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, for helping me locate these volumes.
 22. Lindsay, *The Congo and Other Poems*, p. 4.
 23. See Frank Tirro, *JAZZ: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1977), pp. 94-95; Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis, *They All Played Ragtime* (New York: Knopf, 1950, p. 149); Marshall W. Stearns, *The Story of Jazz* (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 3-15.
 24. Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps, eds., *The Poetry of the Negro, 1746-1949: A Definitive Anthology* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1931), pp. 250-254.
 25. For a discussion of artists in France and their attitude, see Laura Rosenstock, “Leger: ‘The Creation of the World,’” in Rubin, ed., “Primitivism” in *20th Century Art*, pp. 474-484.
 26. Blaise Cendrars published *L’Anthologie nègre, folklore des peuplades* (Paris: Editions de la Sirène, 1921), a compilation and translation of African literature. He wrote the story for the ballet “The Creation of the World,” based on African creation myths. See also Bernard Mouralis, “Note Sur L’Anthologie Nègre,” in *Europe*, 566, June 1976, pp. 169-178.
 27. Brom Weber, ed., *The Complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose of Hart Crane* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1966), p. 4.
 28. Philip Horton, *Hart Crane: The Life of An American Poet* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1937), pp. 110-111.
 29. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
 30. James Mellow, *Charmed Circle: Gertrude Stein & Company* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1974), p. 71.
 31. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
 32. Waldo Frank, *Holiday* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922). Carl Van Vechten, *Nigger Heaven* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926).
 33. Edward Lueders, *Carl Van Vechten* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1965), pp. 104-105.
 34. *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103.
 35. Bruce Kellner, *Carl Van Vechten and the Irreverent Decades* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968), p. 200.
 36. *Ibid.*, p. 70. Mabel Dodge did not share Van Vechten’s enthusiasm for these black performers, a male musician and a female dancer. See Mabel Dodge Luhan, *Movers and Shakers*, vol. III of *Intimate Memories* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936), pp. 79-80.
 37. William Bittner, *The Novels of Waldo Frank* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1955), pp. 89-91.
 38. Jean Toomer, *Cane* (New York: Liveright, 1923). Reprinted in Hughes and Bontemps, eds., *The Poetry of the Negro*, pp. 70-71. Years after the publication of Toomer’s book *Cane*, Langston Hughes recalled that Toomer, then married to a white novelist, refused to allow his poems to appear in “an anthology of Negro verse.” See Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1940), pp. 242-243.
 39. *Ibid.*, pp. 102-103.
 40. Arthur and Barbara Gelb, *O’Neill* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), pp. 438-439. See above, note 8. As late as 1942, Robert Duncan’s poem, “An African Elegy,” continued this romantic view of blacks. See Jerome Rothenberg, *Revolution of the Word: A New Gathering of American Avant-Garde Poetry, 1914-1945* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1974), pp. 133-135.
 41. Waldo Frank, *Our America* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919), p. 109.
 42. Lindsay, *The Congo and Other Poems*, pp. 44-46. See also Lindsay’s “An Indian Summer Day on the Prairie,” p. 66, where “The Sun is an Indian girl. Of the tribe of the Illinois.”
 43. Ann Massa, *Vachel Lindsay: Fieldworker for the American Dream* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), pp. 155-157.
 44. See Vachel Lindsay, “The Indian Girl—My Grandmother,” in *The Candle in the Cabin* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1923), p. 87.
 45. Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea*, pp. 259-262.
 46. *Ibid.*, p. 262.
 47. Weber, ed., *Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, p. 249, quoted from Crane’s letter to Otto H. Kahn, September 12, 1927.
 48. *Ibid.*, pp. 250-251.
 49. *Ibid.*, p. 251.
 50. Marsden Hartley, “Tribal Esthetics,” *The Dial*, LXV, p. 399.
 51. *Ibid.*, p. 401.
 52. Hartley’s *Indian Composition* (1914), for example, was shown in New York from February 9-11, 1927, at the time John Quinn auctioned his collection. This picture was then purchased by critic Paul Rosenfeld who solicited Crane’s “Ave Maria” for the anthology, *The American Caravan*, that he edited together with Van Wyck Brooks, Alfred Kreymborg, and Lewis Mumford (New York: Literary Guild of America, 1927), pp. 804-806. At the time of Crane’s tragic death, Hartley memorialized him in a 1933 painting, *Eight Bells Folly, Memorial for Hart Crane*.
 53. Paul Rosenfeld, *Port of New York* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1961), p. 94.
 54. William Carlos Williams, *In the American Grain* (New York: New Directions, 1925), pp. 137-138. Williams never met Crane but recalled in his autobiography that he had published a poem by Crane in *Contact* and purchased a canvas by Crane’s friend, William Sommers, at his behest. See *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (New York: New Directions, 1951), p. 171.
 55. Robert Frost, “The Vanishing Red,” in *Mountain Interval* (New York: Holt, 1916), reprinted in *The Poems of Robert Frost* (New York: The Modern Library, 1946), p. 156.
 56. Marsden Hartley to Alfred Stieglitz, September 1, 1912; The Alfred Stieglitz Archives, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven, Connecticut.
 57. Wassily Kandinsky, *The Art of Spiritual Harmony*, translated by Michael Sadler (London and Boston: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1914), p. 1. For a discussion of Kandinsky’s influence on American writers, see Gail Levin, “Wassily Kandinsky and the American Literary Avant-garde,” *Criticism a quarterly for literature and the arts*, XXI, Fall 1979, pp. 347-361.
 58. De Zayas, “How, When, and Why Modern Art Came to New York,” p. 109.
 59. Kandinsky, *The Art of Spiritual Harmony*, p. 2.