



# From Fetish to Subject: Race, Modernism, and Primitivism, 1919-1935

*Carole Sweeney*

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Was modern primitivism complicit with the ideologies of colonialism, or was it a multivalent encounter with difference? Examining race and modernism through a wider and more historically contextualized study, Sweeney brings together a variety of published and new scholarship to expand the discussion on the links between modernism and primitivism. Tracing the path from Dada and Surrealism to Josephine Baker and Nancy Cunard's *Negro: An Anthology*, she shows the development of *négrophilie* from the interest in black cultural forms in the early 1920s to a more serious engagement with difference and representations in the 1930s. Considering modernism, race, and colonialism simultaneously, this work breaks from traditional boundaries of disciplines or geographic areas.

Why was the primitive so popular in this era? Sweeney shows how high, popular, and mass cultural contexts constructed primitivism and how black diasporic groups in Paris challenged this construction. Included is research from original archival material from black diasporic publications in Paris, examining their challenges to primitivism in French literature and state-sponsored exoticism. The transatlantic movement of modernism and primitivism also is part of this broad comparative study.

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