

of the *Third Republic*, London, 1973, pp. 263–327.

26 Stéphane Mallarmé, 'The Impressionists and Edouard Manet', *Documents Stéphane Mallarmé*, ed. C.P. Barbier, Paris, 1968, p. 84.

27 Mallarmé, pp. 79–80.

28 Mallarmé, pp. 74–5.

29 Mallarmé, p. 84. [...]

30 Mallarmé, p. 77.

31 Vollard, *Renoir: An Inimate Record*, New York, 1934, p. 66.

32 Mallarmé, p. 86.

33 Theodor Adorno, 'Commitment' in *Aesthetics and Politics*, ed. Ronald Taylor, London, 1980, p. 177.

34 Emile Blavet, 'Avant le Salon: L'exposition des realistes', *Le Gaulois*, 31 March 1876. [...]

35 Vollard, pp. 62–3.

36 T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers*, New York, 1984.

## Hal Foster The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art

Source: Hal Foster, 'The "Primitive" Unconscious of Modern Art', *October*, 34, Fall 1985, pp. 45–70. This text has been edited and footnotes renumbered accordingly. Eight plates have been omitted.

At once eccentric and crucial, *Les Femmes d'Alger* (1907) is the set piece of the Museum of Modern Art: a bridge between modernist and premodernist painting, a primal scene of modern primitivism. In this painting a step outside the tradition is said to coincide with a leap within it. Yet one wonders if this aesthetic breakthrough is not also a breakdown, psychologically regressive, politically reactionary. The painting presents an encounter in which are inscribed two scenes: the depicted one of the brothel and the projected one of the heralded 1907 visit of Picasso to the collection of tribal artifacts in the Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro. This double encounter is tellingly situated: the prostitutes in the bordello, the African masks in the Trocadéro, both disposed for recognition, for use. Figured here, to be sure, are both fear and desire of the other,<sup>1</sup> but is it not desire for mastery and fear of its frustration?

In projecting the primitive on to woman as other, *Les Femmes* less resolves than is riven by the threat to male subjectivity, displaying its own decentring along with its defence. For in some sense Picasso did intuit one apotropaic function of tribal objects – and adopted them as such, as 'weapons':

They were against everything – against unknown threatening spirits. ... I, too, I am against everything. I, too, believe that everything is unknown, that everything is an enemy! ... women, children ... the whole of it! I understood what the Negroes used their sculptures for. ... All fetishes ... were weapons. To help people avoid coming under the influence of spirits again, to help them become independent. Spirits, the unconscious ... they are all the same thing. I understood why I was a painter. All alone in that awful museum with the masks ... the dusty mannikins. *Les Femmes d'Alger* must have been born that day, but not at all because of the forms; because it was my first exorcism painting – yes absolutely!<sup>2</sup>

Apart from a (bombastic) avant-gardism, Picasso conveys the shock of this encounter as well as the euphoria of his solution, an extraordinary psycho-aesthetic move by which otherness was used to ward away others (woman, death, the primitive) and by which, finally, a crisis in phallogocentric culture was turned into one of its great monuments.

If, in the *Femmes*, Picasso transgresses, he does so in order to mediate the primitive in the name of the West (and it is in part for this that he remains

the hero of MOMA's narrative of the triumph of modern art). In this regard, the *Demoiselles* is indeed a primal scene of primitivism, one in which the structured relation of narcissism and aggressivity is revealed. Such confrontational identification is peculiar to the Lacanian imaginary, the realm to which the subject returns when confronted with the threat of difference.<sup>3</sup> Here, then, primitivism emerges as a fetishistic discourse, a recognition and disavowal not only of primitive difference but of the fact that the West – its patriarchal subjectivity and socius – is threatened by loss, by lack, by others.

*Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* was also the set piece of the recent MOMA exhibition-cum-book, *'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, in which the painting was presented, along with African masks often proposed as sources for the demoiselles, in such a way as to support the curatorial case for a modern/tribal affinity in art. (The argument runs that Picasso could not have seen these masks, that the painting manifests an intuitive primitivity or 'savage mind'.) This presentation was typical of the abstractive operation of the show, premised as it was on the belief that 'modernist primitivism depends on the autonomous force of objects' and that its complexities can be revealed 'in purely visual terms, simply by the juxtaposition of knowingly selected works of art'.<sup>4</sup> Though the exhibition did qualify the debased art-historical notion of causal influence (e.g., of the tribal on the modern), and did on another front demolish the more debased racist model of an evolutionist primitivism, it did so often only to replace the first with 'affinity' (in the form of the family of *homo artifex*) and the second with the empty universal, 'human creativity wherever found'.<sup>5</sup>

Based on the aesthetic concerns of the modern artists, the 'Primitivism' show cannot be condemned on ethnological grounds alone. Too often the contextualist rebuke is facile, a compensatory expression of a liberal-humanist remorse for what cannot be restored. It is, after all, the vocation of the modern art museum to decontextualize. (Levi-Strauss describes anthropology as a *technique du dépaysement*:<sup>6</sup> how much more is this true of art history?) And in the case of the tribal objects on display, the museum is but one final stage in a series of abstractions, of power-knowledge plays that constitute primitivism. Yet to acknowledge decontextualization is one thing, to produce ideas with it another. For it is this absolution of (con)textual meanings and ideological problems in the self-sufficiency of form that allowed for the humanist presuppositions of the show (that the final criterion is Form, the only context Art, the primary subject Man). In this way the show confirmed the colonial extraction of the tribal work (in the guise of its redemption as art) and rehearsed its artistic appropriation into tradition. No counterdiscourse was posed: the imperialist precondition of primitivism was suppressed, and 'primitivism', a metonym of imperialism, served as its disavowal.

This abstraction of the tribal is only half the story; no less essential to the production of affinity-effects was the decontextualization of the modern work. It, too, appeared without indices of its contextual mediations (i.e., the dialectic of avant-garde, kitsch, and academy by which it is structured: it

is, incidentally, the excision of this dialectic that allows for the formal-historicist model of modernism in the first place). The modern objects on view, most of which are preoccupied by a primitivist form and/or 'look', alone represented the way the primitive is thought. Which is to say that the modern/tribal encounter was mapped in mostly positivist terms (the surfaces of influence, the forms of affinity) – in terms of morphological coincidence, not conceptual displacement. (The 'transgressivity' of the encounter was largely disregarded, perhaps because it cannot be so readily *seen*.) In this way, the show abstracted and separated the modern and the tribal into two sets of objects that could then only be 'affined'. Thus reduced to form, it is no wonder they came to reflect one another in the glass of the vitrines, and one is tempted to ask, cynically enough, after such a double abstraction, such a double tropism toward modern (en)light(en)ment, what is left but 'affinity'? What part of this hypothesis-turned-show was discovery (of transcultural forms, innate structures, and the like) and what part (modernist) invention?

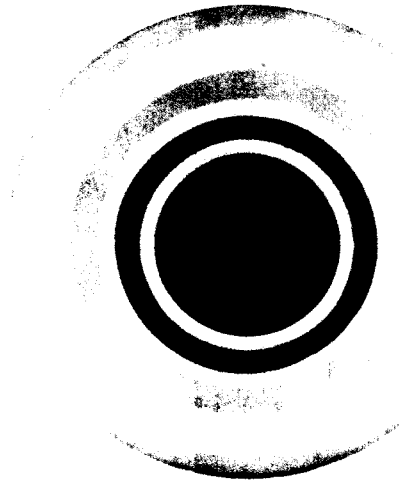
Elective Affinities, or Impressions d'Afrique (et d'Océanie)

[...] The exhibition commenced with displays of certain modernist involvements with tribal art: interest, resemblance, influence, and affinity proper – usually of a roughly analogous structure and/or conception. [...]

Otherwise, the affinities proposed in the show were mostly morphological – or were treated as such even when they appeared metaphorical or semiological (as in certain surrealist transformations wrung by Picasso). These formally coincidental affinities seemed to be derived in equal part from the formalist reception of the primitive read back into the tribal work and from the radical abstraction performed on both sets of objects. This production of affinity through projection and abstraction was exposed most dramatically in the juxtaposition of a painted Oceanic wood figure and a Kenneth Noland target painting (*Tondo*, 1961) [Plate 29], a work which, in its critical context at least, is precisely not about the anthropomorphic and asks not to be read iconographically. What does this pairing tell us about 'universals'? – that the circle is such a form, or that affinity is the effect of an erasure of difference. Here, universality is indeed circular, the specular image of the modern seen in the mask of the tribal.

Significantly, the show dismissed the primitivist misreading par excellence: that tribal art is intrinsically expressionistic or even psychologically expressive, when it is in fact ritualistic, apotropaic, decorative, therapeutic, and so forth. But it failed to question other extrapolations from one set of objects, one cultural context, to the other: to question what is at stake ideologically when the 'magical' character of tribal work is read (especially by Picasso) into modern art, or when modern values of intentionality, originality, and aesthetic feeling are bestowed upon tribal objects. In both instances different orders of the socius and the subject, of the economy of the object, and of the

29 Kenneth Noland, *Tondo*, also described as *Untitled Target*, 1961. Acrylic on canvas, 148.6 cm diameter. Collection of Mr and Mrs A.E. Diamond. © Kenneth Noland/DACS, London/VAGA, New York 1993.



place of the artist are transposed with violence; and the result threatens to turn the primitive into a specular Western code whereby different orders of tribal culture are made to conform to one Western typology. (That the modern work can reveal properties in the tribal is not necessarily evolutionist, but it does tend to pose the two as different stages and thus to encompass the tribal within our privileged historical consciousness.)

No less than the formal abstraction of the tribal, this specular code of the primitive produces affinity-effects. For what do we behold here: a universality of form or an other rendered in our own image, an affinity with our own imaginary primitive? Though properly wary of the terms *primitive* and *tribal*, the first because of its Darwinist associations, the second because of its hypothetical nature, the curators used both as 'conventional counters'<sup>7</sup> – but it is precisely this conventionality that is in question. Rubin distinguished primitive style from archaic (e.g., Iberian, Egyptian, Mesoamerican) *diacritically* in relation to the West. The primitive is said to pertain to a 'tribal' socius with communal forms and the archaic to a 'court' civilization with static, hieratic, monumental art. This definition, which excludes as much as it includes, seems to specify the primitive/tribal, but in fact suspends it. Neither 'dead' like the archaic nor 'historical', the primitive is cast into a nebulous past and/or into an idealist realm of 'primitive' essences. (Thus the tribal objects, not dated in the show, are still not entirely free of the old evolutionist association with primal or ancient artifacts, a confusion entertained by the moderns.) In this way, the primitive/tribal is set adrift from specific referents and coordinates – which thus allows it to be defined in wholly Western terms. And one begins to see that one of the preconditions, if not of primitivism, then certainly of the 'Primitivism' show, is the mummification of the tribal and the museumification of its objects (which vital cultures like the Zuni have specifically protested against).

The founding act of this recoding is the repositioning of the tribal object as art. Posed against its use first as evolutionist trophy and then as ethnographic evidence, this aestheticization allows the work to be both decontextualized and commodified. It is this *currency* of the primitive among the moderns – its currency as sign, its circulation as commodity – that allows for the modern/tribal affinity-effect in the first place. The 'Primitivism' show exhibited this currency but did not theorize it. Moreover, it no more 'corrected' this primitivist code than it did the official formalist model of modernism. This code was already partly in place by the time of the MOMA 'African Negro Art' show in 1935, when James Johnson Sweeney wrote against its undue 'historical and ethnographic' reception: 'It is as sculpture we should approach it.'<sup>8</sup> Apart from anti-Darwinist motives, the imperative here was to confirm the formalist reading and new-found value of the African objects. With the African cast as a specifically plastic art, the counterterm – a pictorial art – was institutionally bestowed upon Oceanic work by the 1946 MOMA exhibition 'Arts of the South Seas', directed by René d'Harnoncourt. Although this exhibition did not mention the Surrealists directly, it noted an 'affinity' in the art with the 'dreamworld and subconscious'.<sup>9</sup> It then remained for Alfred Barr (in a 1950 letter to the *College Art Journal*) to historicize this purely diacritical, purely Western system as a 'discovery': 'It is worth noting, briefly, the two great waves of discovery: the first might be called Cubist-Expressionist. This was concerned primarily with formal, plastic and emotional values of a direct kind. The second wave, quasi-Surrealist, was more preoccupied with the fantastic and imaginative values of primitive art.'<sup>10</sup>

The 'Primitivism' show only extended this code, structured as it was around a 'Wölfflinian generalization'<sup>11</sup> of African tactility (sculptural, iconic, monochromatic, geometric) versus Oceanic visuality (pictorial, narrative, colourful, curvilinear), the first related to ritual, the second to myth, with ritual, Rubin writes, 'more inherently "abstract" than myth. Thus, the more ritually oriented African work would again appeal to the Cubist, while the more mythic content of the Oceanic/American work would engage the Surrealist'.<sup>12</sup> This aesthetic code is only part of a cultural system of paired terms, both within the primitive (e.g., malefic Africa versus paradisaical Oceania) and within Primitivism (e.g., noble or savage or vital primitive versus corrupt or civilized or enervated Westerner), to which we will return. Suffice it to say here that the tribal/modern affinity is largely the effect of a decoding of the tribal (a 'deterritorializing' in the Deleuzian sense) and a recoding in specular modern terms. As with most formal or even structural approaches, the referent (the tribal socius) tends to be bracketed, if not banished, and the historical (the imperialist condition of possibility) disavowed.

Essentially, the Oxford English Dictionary distinguishes three kinds of 'affinity': resemblance, kinship, and spiritual or chemical attraction ('elective affinity'). As suggested, the affinities in the show, mostly of the first order, were used to connote affinities of the second order: an optical illusion induced the mirage of the (modernist) Family of Art. However progressive

this may once have been, this election to *our* humanity can now be seen as thoroughly ideological, for if evolutionism subordinated the primitive to Western history, affinity-ism recoups it under the sign of Western universality. ('Humanity', Lévi-Strauss suggests, is a modern Western concept.)<sup>13</sup> In this recognition difference is discovered only to be fetishistically disavowed, and in the celebration of 'human creativity' the dissolution of specific cultures is carried out: the Museum of Modern Art played host to the Musée de l'Homme indeed.

#### MOMAism

[...] The conflicted relation of 'Primitivism' to the modern and the present was evident in its contradictory point of view. At once immanent and transcendent, mystificatory and demystificatory, the show both rehearsed the modern reception of the tribal 'from the inside' and posited an affinity between the two 'from above'. It reproduced some modern (mis)readings (e.g., the formal, oneiric, 'magical'), exposed others (e.g., the expressionist), only to impose ones of its own (the intentional, original, 'aesthetic', problem-solving). The status of its objects was also ambiguous. Though presented as art, the tribal objects are manifestly the ruins of (mostly) dead cultures now exposed to our archaeological probes – *and so too are the modern objects*, despite the agenda to 'correct' the institutional reading of the modern (to keep it alive via some essential, eternal 'primitivism?'). [...]

But the exhibition did more than mark our distance from the modern and tribal objects; it also revealed the epistemological limits of the museum. How to represent the modern/tribal encounter adequately? How to map the intertextuality of this event? Rather than abstractly affine objects point by point, how to trace the mediations that divide and conjoin each term? If primitivism is in part an aesthetic construct, how to display its historical conditions? In its very lack, the show suggested the need of a Foucauldian archaeology of primitivism, one which, rather than speak from an academic 'post-colonial' place, might take its own colonialist condition of possibility as its object. Such an enterprise, however, is beyond the museum, the business of which is patronage – the formation of a paternal tradition against the transgressive outside, a documentation of civilization, not the barbarism underneath. In neither its epistemological space nor its ideological history can MOMA in particular engage these disruptive terms. Instead it recoups the outside dialectically – as a moment in its own history – and transforms the transgressive into continuity. With this show MOMA may have moved to revise its formal(ist) model of the modern now adjudged (even by it?) to be inadequate, but it did so only to incorporate the outside in its originary (modern) moment as primitivism. [...]

This recuperation of the primitive has its own history [...]. That the primitive was recognized only after innovations within the tradition is well documented: but what is the effectivity here, the ratio between invention and

recognition, innovation and assimilation? [...] For surely primitivism was generated as much to 'manage' the shock of the primitive as to celebrate its art or to use it 'counterculturally' (Rubin). As noted, the show argued 'affinity' and 'preparation'; yet here, beyond the abstraction of the first and the recuperation of the second, the primitive is *superseded*: 'the role of the objects Picasso saw on this first visit to the Trocadéro was obviously less that of providing plastic ideas than of sanctioning his even more radical progress along a path he was already breaking'.<sup>14</sup> This retrospective reading of the primitive 'role' tends not only to assimilate the primitive other to tradition but to recuperate the modernist break *with* tradition, all in the interests of progressive history. (As the very crux of MOMAism, analytic cubism in particular must be protected from outside influence; thus tribal art is assigned 'but a residual role'<sup>15</sup> in it.) What, apart from the institutional need to secure an official history, is the motive behind this desired supersession? What but the formation of a cultural identity, incumbent as this is on the simultaneous need and disavowal of the other? [...]

In the 'Primitivism' show, a transgressive model of modernism was glimpsed, one which, repressed by the formalist account, might have displaced the MOMA model – its 'Hegelian' history, its 'Bauhausian' ideals, its formal-historicist operation (e.g., of abstraction achieved by analytic reduction within the patriarchal line: Manet ... Cézanne ... Picasso: of the Western tradition). This displacement, however, was only a feint: this 'new' model – that the very condition of the so-called modern break with tradition is a break outside it was suggested, occluded, recouped. With transgression without rendered as dialectic within, the official model of modern art – a multiplicity of breaks reinscribed (by the artist/critic) into a synthetic line of formal innovations – is preserved, as is the causal time of history, the narrative space of the museum.

Seen as a genuine agenda, the show presents this conflicted scenario: MOMA moves to reposition the modern as transgressive but is blocked by its own premises, and the contradiction is 'resolved' by a formalist approach that reduces what was to be pronounced. Seen as a false agenda, this cynical scenario emerges: the show pretends to revise the MOMA story of art, to disrupt its formal and narrative unity, but only so as to re-establish it: the transgressive is acknowledged only to be again repressed. As suggested, that this 'correction' is presented now is extremely overdetermined. How better, in the unconscious of the museum, to 'resolve' these contradictions than with a show suggestive on the one hand of a transgressive modernism and on the other of a still active primitivism? Not only can MOMA then recoup the modern-transgressive, it can do so as if it had rejected its own formalist past. This manoeuvre also allows it at once to contain the return of its repressed and to connect with a ~~neo-primitivist~~ *neo-primitivist* moment in contemporary art: MOMAism is not past after all! In all these ways, the critique posed by the primitive is contravened, absorbed within the body of modern art: 'As if we were afraid to conceive of the Other in the time of our own thought'.<sup>16</sup>

## Primitivism

Historically, the primitive is articulated by the West in deprivative or supplementary terms: as a spectacle of savagery or as a state of grace, as a *socius* without writing or the Word, without history or cultural complexity; or as a site of originary unity, symbolic plenitude, natural vitality. There is nothing odd about this Eurocentric construction: the primitive has served as a coded other at least since the Enlightenment, usually as a subordinate term in its imaginary set of oppositions (light/dark, rational/irrational, civilized/savage). This domesticated primitive is thus constructive, not disruptive, of the binary *ratio* of the West; fixed as a structural opposite or a dialectical other to be incorporated, it assists in the establishment of a Western identity, centre, norm, and name. In its modernist version the primitive may appear transgressive, it is true, but it still serves as a limit: projected within and without, the primitive becomes a figure of our unconscious and outside (a figure constructed in modern art as well as in psychoanalysis and anthropology in the privileged triad of the primitive, the child, and the insane).

If Rubin presented the art-historical code of the primitive, Varnedoe offered a philosophical reading of primitivism. In doing so, he reproduced within it the very Enlightenment logic by which the primitive was first seized, then (re)constructed. There are two primitivisms, Varnedoe argues, a good, rational one and a dark, sinister one.<sup>17</sup> In the first, the primitive is reconciled with the scientific in a search for fundamental laws and universal language (the putative cases are Gauguin and certain Abstract Expressionists). This progressive primitivism seeks enlightenment, not regressive escape into unreason, and thinks of the primitive as a 'spiritual regeneration' (in which 'the Primitive is held to be spiritually akin to that of the new man'),<sup>18</sup> not as a social transgression. Thus recouped philosophically, the primitive becomes part of the internal reformation of the West, a moment within *its* reason: and the West, culturally prepared, escapes the radical interrogation which it otherwise poses.

But more is at stake here, for the reason that is at issue is none other than the Enlightenment, which to the humanist Varnedoe remains knightlike; indeed, he cites the sanguine Gauguin on the 'luminous spread of science, which today from West to East lights up all the modern world'.<sup>19</sup> Yet in the dialectic of the Enlightenment, as Adorno and Horkheimer argued, the liberation of the other can issue in its liquidation; the enlightenment of 'affinity' may indeed eradicate difference.<sup>20</sup> (And if this seems extreme, think of those who draw a direct line from the Enlightenment to the Gulag.) Western man and his primitive other are no more equal partners in the march of reason than they were in the spread of the word, than they are in the marketing of capitalism. The Enlightenment cannot be protected from its other legacy, the 'bad-irrational' primitivism (Varnedoe's dramatic example is Nazi Blood and Soil, the swastika ur-sign), any more than the 'good-rational' primitivism (e.g., the ideographic explorations of Picasso) can be redeemed from colonial

exploitation. Dialectically, the progressivity of the one is the regression of the other.

Varnedoe argues, via Gauguin, that 'modern artistic primitivism' is not 'antithetical to scientific knowledge'.<sup>21</sup> One can only agree, but not as he intends it, for primitivism is indeed instrumental to such power-knowledge, to the 'luminous spread' of Western domination. On the one hand, the primitivist incorporation of the other is another form of conquest (if a more subtle one than the imperialist extraction of labour and materials); on the other, it serves as its displacement, its disguise, even its excuse. Thus, to pose the relation of the primitive and the scientific as a benign dialogue is cruelly euphemistic: it obscures the real affiliations between science and conquest, enlightenment and eradication, primitivist art and imperialist power. (This can be pardoned of a romantic artist at the end of the last century who, immersed in the ideology of a scientific avant-garde, could not know the effectivity of these ideas, but not of an art historian at the end of this century.)

Apart from the violence done to the other in the occlusion of the imperialist connection of primitivism and in the mystification of the Enlightenment as a universal good, this good/bad typology tends to mistake the disruption posed by the primitive and to cast any embrace of this disruption – any resistance to an instrumental, reificatory reason, any reclamation of cognitive modes repressed in its regime – as 'nihilistic', regressive, 'pessimistic'.<sup>22</sup> [...]

Primitivism, then, not only absorbs the potential disruption of the tribal objects into Western forms, ideas, and commodities, it also symptomatically manages the ideological nightmare of a great art inspired by spoils. More, as an artistic coup founded on military conquest, primitivism camouflages this historical event, disguises the problem of imperialism in terms of art, affinity, dialogue, to the point (the point of the MOMA show) where the problem appears 'resolved'. [...]

## The Other is Becoming the Same; the Same is Becoming Different

[...] If the identity of the West is defined dialectically by its other, what happens to this identity when its limit is crossed, its outside eclipsed? (This eclipse may not be entirely hypothetical given a multinational capitalism that seems to know no limits, to destructure all oppositions, to occupy its field all but totally.) One effect is that the logic that thinks the primitive in terms of opposition or as an outside is threatened. [...] In the second narrative, this 'eclipsed' or sublated primitive re-emerges in Western culture as its scandal – where it links up genealogically with post-structuralist deconstruction and politically with feminist theory and practice. In this passage the primitive other is transformed utterly, and here in particular its real world history must be thought. For the historical incorporation of the outside might well be the condition that compels its eruption into the field of the same as difference. Indeed, the eclipse of otherness, posed as a metaphysical structure of opposites or as an outside to be recovered dialectically, is the beginning of

difference – and potential break with the phallogocentric order of the West. [...]

On the one hand, then, the primitive is a modern problem, a crisis in cultural identity, which the West moves to resolve: hence the modernist construction 'primitivism', the fetishistic recognition-and-disavowal of the primitive difference. This ideological resolution renders it a 'non-problem' for us. On the other hand, this resolution is only a repression: delayed in our political unconscious, the primitive returns uncannily at the moment of its potential eclipse. The rupture of the primitive, managed by the moderns, becomes our postmodern event.

The first history of the primitive encounter with the West is familiar enough, the fatalistic narrative of domination. In this narrative 1492 is an inaugural date, for it marks the period not only of the discovery of America (and the rounding of the Cape of Good Hope) but also of the renaissance of antiquity. These two events – an encounter with the other and a return to the same – allow for the incorporation of the modern West and the instauration of its dialectical history. (Significantly, in Spain, 1492 also marks the banishment of the Jews and Arabs and the publication of the first modern European grammar; in other words, the expulsion of the other within and the encoding of the other without.)<sup>23</sup> This, too, is the period of the first museums in Europe and of 'the first works on the "life and manners" of remote peoples' – a collection of the ancients and 'savages', of the historically and spatially distant.<sup>24</sup> This collection only expands, as the West develops with capitalism and colonialism into a world system. By the eighteenth century, with the Enlightenment, the West is able to reflect on itself 'as a culture in the universal, and thus all other cultures were entered into its museum as vestiges of its own image'.<sup>25</sup> [...]

There is no question that today we are beyond this border, that we live in a time of cancelled limits, destructured oppositions, 'dissipated scandals'<sup>26</sup> (which is not to say that they are not recoded all the time). Clearly, the modern structures in which the Western subject and socius were articulated (the nuclear family, the industrial city, the nation-state) are today remapped in the movement of capital. In this movement the opposition nature/culture has become not only theoretically suspect but practically obsolete: there are now few zones of 'savage thought' to oppose to the Western *ratio*, few primitive others not threatened by incorporation. [...]

For feminists, for 'minorities', for 'tribal' peoples, there are other ways to narrate this history of enlightenment/eradication – ways which reject the narcissistic pathos that identifies the death of the Hegelian dialectic with the end of Western history and the end of that history with the death of man, which also reject the reductive reading that the other can be so 'colonized' (as if it were a zone simply to occupy, as if it did not emerge imbricated in other spaces, to trouble other discourses) – or even that Western sciences of the other, psychoanalysis and ethnology, can be fixed so dogmatically. On this reading the other remains – indeed, as the very field of difference in which the subject emerges – to challenge Western pretences of sovereignty, supremacy, and self-creation.

## Notes

- 1 See William Rubin, 'Picasso', in *'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, ed. Rubin, New York: MOMA, 1984, pp. 252-4. [...]
- 2 Quoted in André Malraux, *Picasso's Mask*, trans. June and Jacques Guichamaud, New York, 1976, pp. 10-11.
- 3 My discussion of primitivism as a fetishistic colonial discourse is indebted to Homi K. Bhabha, 'The Other Question', *Screen*, vol. 24, no. 6, Nov./Dec. 1983, pp. 18-36.
- 4 Kirk Varnedoe, 'Preface', in *'Primitivism'*, p. x.
- 5 *Ibid.*
- 6 Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'Archaism in Anthropology', in *Structural Anthropology*, vol. 1, trans. Claire Jacobson, New York, 1963, p. 117.
- 7 See Rubin, 'Introduction', p. 74.
- 8 James Johnson Sweeney, *African Negro Art*, New York, 1935, p. 21.
- 9 René d'Hamoncourt, preface to *Arts of the South Seas*, New York: MOMA, 1946.
- 10 Alfred H. Barr, Jr., letter in *College Art Journal*, vol. 10, no. 1, 1950, p. 59.
- 11 Rubin, 'Introduction', p. 47.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- 13 See Lévi-Strauss, 'Race and History', in *Structural Anthropology*, vol. 2., trans. Monique Layton, Chicago, 1976, p. 329.
- 14 Rubin, 'Picasso', p. 265.
- 15 p. 309. A residual role but perhaps a real 'affinity': for it could be argued that cubism, like some tribal art, is a process of 'split representation'. See Lévi-Strauss, 'Split Representation in the Art of Asia and America', in *Structural Anthropology*, vol. 1, pp. 245-58.
- 16 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, New York, 1972, p. 12.
- 17 See Varnedoe, 'Gauguin', pp. 201-3, and 'Contemporary Exploration', pp. 652-683.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 202.
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming, New York, 1972.
- 21 Varnedoe, 'Gauguin', p. 203.
- 22 See, for example, Varnedoe, 'Contemporary Exploration', pp. 665, 697.
- 23 See Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America*, trans. Richard Howard, New York, 1984, p. 123. Todorov argues that the conquest of America was from one perspective a 'linguistic' one.
- 24 Todorov, p. 109.
- 25 Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*, trans. Mark Poster, St. Louis, pp. 88-9.
- 26 The phrase is Robert Smithson's; see *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, ed. Nancy Holt, New York, 1979, p. 216.