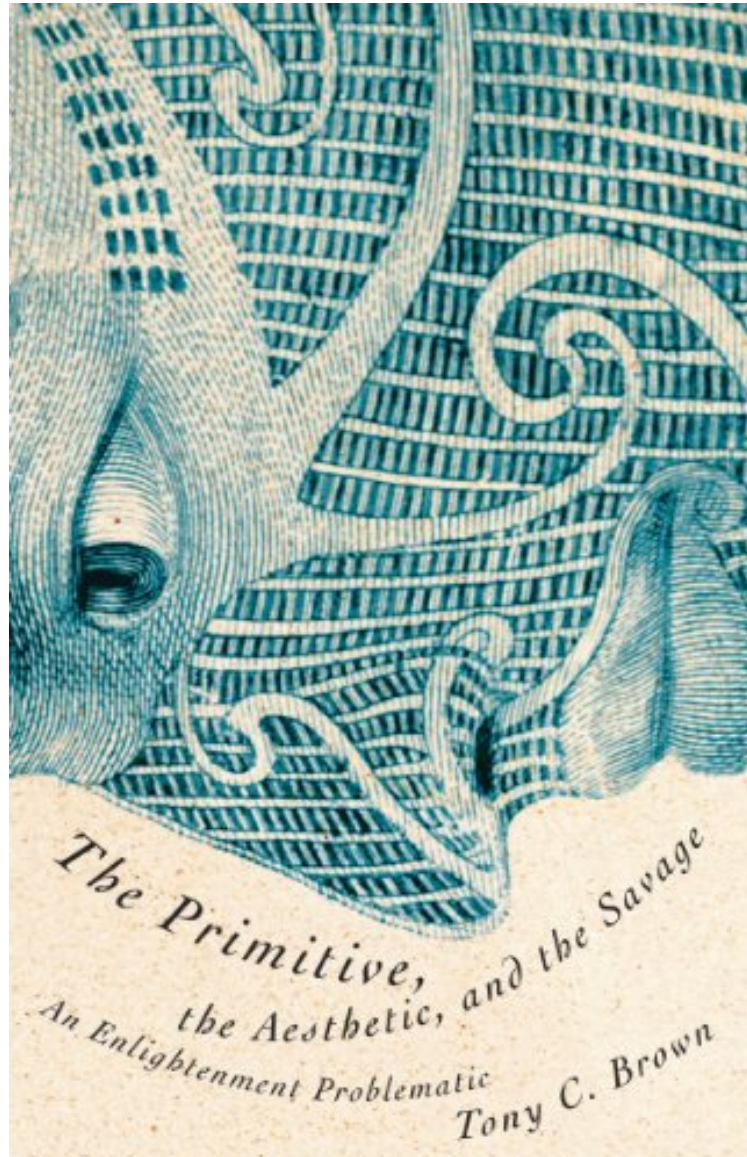


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# The Primitive, the Aesthetic, and the Savage: An Enlightenment Problematic

*Tony C. Brown*

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**Tony C. Brown : The Primitive, the Aesthetic, and the Savage: An Enlightenment Problematic** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *The Primitive, the Aesthetic, and the Savage: An Enlightenment Problematic*:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. BrilliantBy joeliuscaeserThis book is really just an incredible read. Brown investigates the impacts that a dangerous conflation between the notion of the primitive and "savage" peoples

of non-Europe has had on European thought and philosophy.

Tony C. Brown examines "the inescapable yet infinitely troubling figure of the not-quite-nothing" in Enlightenment attempts to think about the aesthetic and the savage. The various texts Brown considers—including the writings of Addison, Rousseau, Kant, and Defoe—turn to exotic figures in order to delimit the aesthetic, and to aesthetics in order to comprehend the savage. In his intriguing exploration Brown discovers that the primitive introduces into the aesthetic and the savage an element that proves necessary yet difficult to conceive. At its most profound, Brown explains, this element engenders a loss of confidence in one's ability to understand the human's relation to itself and to the world. That loss of confidence—what Brown refers to as a breach in anthropological security—traces to an inability to maintain a sense of self in the face of the New World. Demonstrating the impact of the primitive on the aesthetic and the savage, he shows how the eighteenth-century writers he focuses on struggle to define the human's place in the world. As Brown explains, these authors go back again and again to "exotic" examples from the New World—such as Indian burial mounds and Maori tattooing practices—making them so ubiquitous that they come to underwrite, even produce, philosophy and aesthetics.

"Mounting a strong critique of historicism in recent literary studies for implying causal relations, Tony Brown attends instead to the conditions of possibility of history. In "The Primitive, the Aesthetic, and the Savage", Brown reevaluates the importance of the notion of the primitive in founding an ur-history that can only be conjectural. He points to the interest in the origins of language in making it possible to think in terms of the human capacity to develop and become historical. This is compelling work that suggests the important interconnections among aesthetics and anthropological thought." --Frances Ferguson, Johns Hopkins University  
About the Author Tony C. Brown is associate professor at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, where he teaches eighteenth-century literature and literary theory.