

Week 4 Day 2: *Heart of  
Darkness*

Modernism and Colonialism

ENGL201: Introduction to Modernism

# Schedule

- Housekeeping
  - Respond to Doodle Poll (on Course Website Landing Page)
  - Tools for Methodology Assignment
- Anthropology, Modernism and Conrad (25 mins)
- Women in *Heart of Darkness* (20 mins)

Joseph Conrad's works can usefully be placed in the context of historical and contemporary anthropology in order to demonstrate the complex manner in which cultural assumptions regarding European 'civilization' are simultaneously challenged and reinforced in the late nineteenth century.

(John W. Griffith *Joseph Conrad and the Anthropological Dilemma*, 1)

OCTOBER 2015

# NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

# ALMOST

A NEW ANCESTOR SHAKES UP OUR FAMILY TREE

# HUMAN

UNCOVERING  
A LOST CITY

DARING JOURNEY  
ON THE CONGO

TREKKING SWEDEN'S  
GLACIAL WILDERNESS

I did not think they would attack, for several obvious reasons. The thick fog was one. If they left the bank in their canoes they would get lost in it, as we would be if we attempted to move. Still, I had also judged the jungle of both banks quite impenetrable—and yet there were eyes in it, eyes that had seen us. (1984)



# Anthropology and Ethnography

- Pitt Rivers Museum (Oxford) established 1884
- *National Geographic* established 1888
- James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough: A Study in Comparative Religion* published 1890
- Franz Boas becomes the "father of modern anthropology," uniting disciplines like archaeology, physical anthropology, and ethnology
  - Introduced concepts like cultural relativism
- Modernist art contends with the rise of anthropology and the exploration of "primitive" forms of artistic expression for decades



# Primitivism

“nostalgia for a pre-civilized condition” (Michael Bell, 353)

Artist: Paul Gauguin “Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?,” 1897







What connection does the text make between sciences that look and observe and literary forms that emphasise confusion, the otherworld, and incomprehensibility?

I had to lean right out to swing the heavy shutter, and I saw a face amongst the leaves on the level with my own, looking at me very fierce and steady; and then suddenly, as though a veil had been removed from my eyes, I made out, deep in the tangled gloom, naked breasts, arms, legs glaring eyes—the bush was swarming with human limbs in movement, glistening, of bronze colour. (1986)



**RY &  
LINES**

On November 1, 1896, a picture showing the unclad or bare woman appeared in National Geographic magazine for the first time in the publication's long history.

You remember I told you I had been struck at the distance by certain attempts at ornamentation, rather remarkable in the ruinous aspect of the place. Now I suddenly had a nearer view...These round knobs were not ornamental but symbolic; they were expressive and puzzling, striking and disturbing—food for thought and also for the vultures if there had been any looking down from the sky; but at all events for such ants as were industrious enough to ascend the pole. They would have been even more impressive, those heads on the stakes, if their faces had not been turned to the house. Only one, the first I had made out, was facing my way...I returned deliberately to the first I had seen—and there it was, black, dried, sunken, with closed eyelids—a head that seemed to sleep at the top of that pole, and, with the shrunken dry lips showing a narrow white line of the teeth, was smiling too, smiling continuously at some endless and jocose dream of that eternal slumber.

(1995-96)





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## Women in *Heart of Darkness*

“Girl! What? Did I mention a girl? Oh, she is out of it—completely. They—the women I mean—are out of it—should be out of it. We must help them to stay in the beautiful world of their own lest ours get worse.” (1988)

# Women in *Heart of Darkness*

- pp. 1998-99
- pp. 2009

*Heart of Darkness* (1993), Perf. Iman

