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"The most deadly spot on the face of the earth": The United States and antimodern images of "Darkest Africa" 1880-1910

[Melinda Stump, University of Northern Iowa](#)

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Keywords

Africa--Public opinion--History; Africa--In popular culture--Civilization--19th century; United States--Civilization--20th

Abstract

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries in images of Africa and Africans were prevalent throughout described as primitive or child-like and were contrasted v civilization of middle-class Anglo-Saxons. This thesis will attempt to complicate the current historiography on Unite Africa. Furthering Jackson Lears's theories of antimoderni United States, I argue that the images produced of Africa attempts at regeneration and intense experiences. Due to made due to the Industrial Revolution and the urbanizatio modern, white, middle-class Anglo Saxons at the end of t began to feel that they were the victims of civilization. Vict consumption led to a culture of self-repression and weigh Lears, the consequence of this overcivilized society was a urban prisons through intense experiences. This manifes First, in the craft aesthetic, or the idea that hand-made foll something mass produced. Second, in an attraction to th attraction to the unexplained mysteries of human existenc the martial idea, or the idea that war, combat, or physical men stronger and more vibrant. Finally, in the nature cure getting in touch with nature, one could unleash authentic f and get over their neurasthenia. I apply these manifestati images of Africa in the period between 1880 and 1910. L Geographic Magazine, the World's Columbian Exposition Roosevelt's 1909 safari trip to Africa, I contend that the in used as an escape from the "colorless" life of modern so the self-repressed Anglo-Saxon race. I argue that in an ar escape the overcivilized, consumer-driven city, middle-cla produced, and bought images of Africa.

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