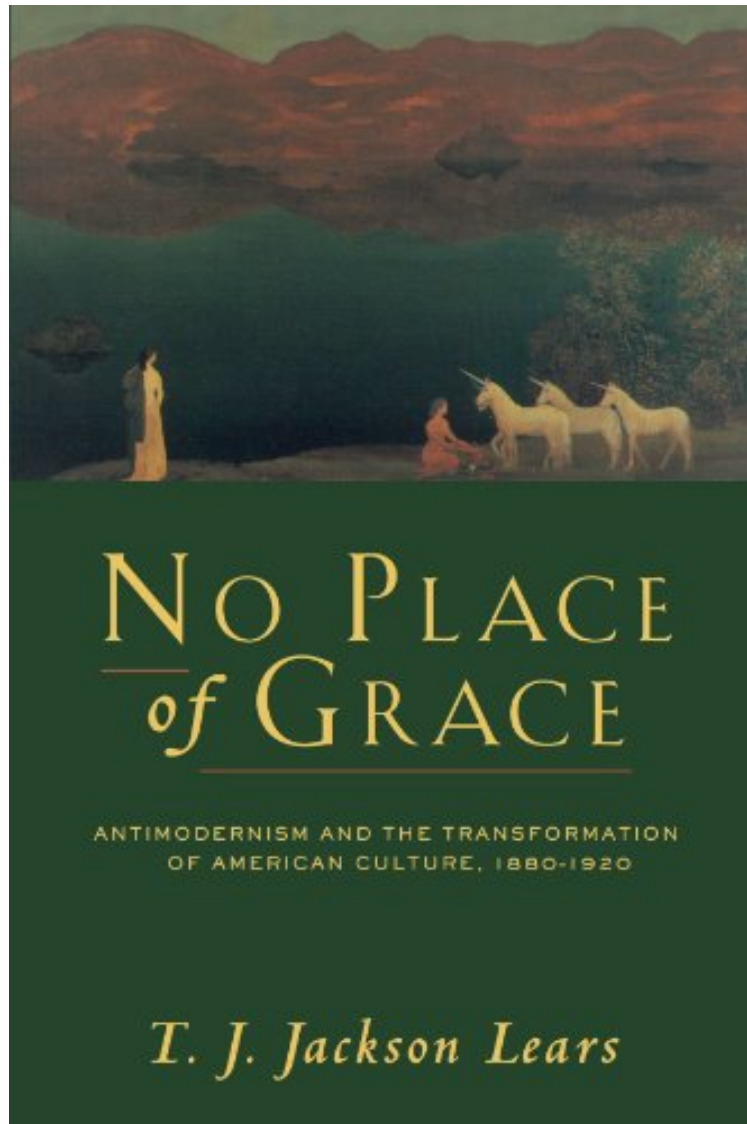


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## No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920

*T. J. Jackson Lears*

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**T. J. Jackson Lears : No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920:

24 of 25 people found the following review helpful. Antimodernism In depth By JMaynard "No Place of Grace" is a

revealing book that gives insight into a philosophy that has shaped American history in an extraordinary way. T.J. Jackson Lears is an excellent author and shows his thorough knowledge of the philosophy and the culture that gave birth to it. Every sentence in the book is carefully crafted with well-chosen words, as Lears does not waste the reader's time with incomprehensible terminology. He employs rhetorical devices with an ease that gives his writing a fluid rhythm, as his analogies couple words in a way that makes his meaning seem more poignant. By interspersing quotes, the author gives variety and realism to the text. He describes a philosophy, and then brings it to life with the words uttered from philosophers and the common man. Confusing trends are explained and analyzed, helping the reader understand concepts that create the foundations of his own thought. Lears introduces the reader to the post-civil war era which is easily forgotten, sandwiched between two wars that shadow its very real importance. He describes the time as ripe for progress, and hungry for change, which was considered the foremost indicator of the former. Europe watched as industrialism took hold of the American continent, and transformed American life and thought. The world began to be run by numbers on clocks and inventories, and the average businessman and even worker learned to measure value by quantity rather than quality. In this new world, family became tidily separated from the harsh realm of work and was created into some idealistic haven, to which it could hardly live up to. This first section of the book is very well structured, as it describes the history and mentality of a time period, and then analyzes the degeneration of cultural and individual authority that lead to Antimodernism. Religious authority is one of his greatest points of emphasis as his study on the morality of the time leads the reader to conceive the natural succession of Antimodernism. The stiff Victorian moral requirements remained in the changing society, but their foundation in the church was destroyed, leaving no standard by which the regulations derived their authority. Lears' expose on the weakening belief in Hell and the Devil is some of the most interesting analysis I have read, and it left me nodding in agreement and with new-found understanding. He links the increasing fear of pain to the popular opinion that Hell was an outmoded scare tactic of uncultured ecclesiastics. I was struck with the significance and truth in his description of the Victorian mindset that grew to deny the horror and agony of death, and ended up trivializing life and cheapening salvation. The author also investigates the "Neurasthenia" that grew from a "lowering of the mental nerve" and turned the world into an "infirmary rather than a battlefield." As he breaks down the psychology behind the supposed disease and its symptoms, the modern day American cannot help but see his culture described. When the author launched into Determinism, I smiled as he described the origins of philosophies that I encounter daily in advertising on TV or even in my own emotions and affections. The strange dichotomy of the "autonomous man" the society originally idealized and the socially dependant man it also admires is explained in an insightful way by Lears. The exceptional talent of the first is suffocated by the second, and soon any excellence is hemmed in by mediocrity. "No Place of Grace" gives an in-depth social commentary as it describes the growth and effects of a philosophy, almost like a scientist tracing a disease. I believe the book is important for any American to read, not only to understand his culture, but to see how his own worldview has been contorted.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. This is the book that made me want to be ...  
By Liz Kaune This is the book that made me want to be a historian. (I didn't succeed, but that's not Lears' fault.)

6 of 9 people found the following review helpful. roots of antimodernism  
By swanson No Place of Grace is a well crafted book which gives us a new prospective into the ever changing American way of thought which has lead America to be what it is today. Some of the main issues that T.J. Jackson Lears focuses on are the antimodernism in early industrial America, religion, politics, neurasthenia, and the psychological impacts that this had on the people after the civil war through the early twentieth century. Lears discusses the issues in such a way that it is quite easy to understand the complexity of the time. He has an amazing grasp on many of the areas of tension in the industrial age as well as a grasp on various social and political issues. His extensive knowledge of the English language makes his writing much more concise. T.J. Jackson Lears' use of interesting facts and quotes gives this book much more flavor and spice. One of the most interesting comparisons that Lears makes is he compares the way that the ideal human body back then was with a bit of a pouch to show leisure and wealth and compares how the idea of wealth and leisure have created a entirely new outlook for Americans. As Lears' follows the American train of thought he shows how America was a place that was constantly struggling with its self in the realm of the mind with two groups at both extremes pushing their view. One very interesting example of this is the fight over whether certain looked down upon traits such as drinking or anti social behavior was hereditary or of specific to a certain individual. One battle over this was the court hearing of a man who clamed to be "healing" the republican party by fallowing orders from God and killing a man who was causing fractions. This hearing was also very important in the social crisis that the republicans believed was going on. The thought that communists and anarchists were secretly meeting and scheming against the middle class higher class Anglo Saxons and drawing the ever increasing lower class immigrants into their plans was a very disturbing idea to the republicans. The republicans were also very wary of fallowing the European and making the same mistakes that they did. As a republican writer for the New York Tribune wrote "poverty, thrift, prosperity, wealth, luxury, corruptness, degradation, in these seven words the fate of many great empires is told." In order to combat what was considered to be "race suicide" great stores of weapons were stocked up in many of the large cities. With all of these changes came a change in religion. It became more of a happy social time with the consept of hell and of the devil put in the back on peoples minds. This fueled what is called the "modern Doubt". T.J. Jackson Lears

fully explains the impacts of the changes in society during the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century in an interesting and insightful way. I would definitely recommend this book to anyone that is interested in learning about the complete history of America.

T. J. Jackson Lears draws on a wealth of primary sources sermons, diaries, letters as well as novels, poems, and essays to explore the origins of turn-of-the-century American antimodernism. He examines the retreat to the exotic, the pursuit of intense physical or spiritual experiences, and the search for cultural self-sufficiency through the Arts and Crafts movement. Lears argues that their antimodern impulse, more pervasive than historians have supposed, was not "simple escapism," but reveals some enduring and recurring tensions in American culture."It's an understatement to call *No Place of Grace* a brilliant book. . . . It's the first clear sign I've seen that my generation, after marching through the '60s and jogging through the '70s might be pausing to examine what we've learned, and to teach it."Walter Kendrick, *Village Voice*"One can justly make the claim that *No Place of Grace* restores and reinterprets a crucial part of American history. Lears's method is impeccable."Ann Douglas, *The Nation*