America As Second Creation
David E. Nye

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The Illusory Boundary Martin Reuss 2010-09-20 The view of nature and technology inhabiting totally different, even opposite, spheres of American culture is by no means "new." It more closely resembles a scenario of the Wild West, where man and nature may be of "natural," though each is to an extent the product of technology. Pollution, widely thought to be a purely man-made phenomenon, results partly from natural processes. All around us, things from the natural world are brought into the human realm through technology. What these different realms have in common is their interdependence. Can we illuminate our world or its obscurities? These two compelling essays challenge us to rethink how the two realms interconnect. In "Designing the Ideal Farm," David E. Nye explores the history of agriculture. Through its literature, speeches, advertisements, paintings, and many other media to create a history of American foundation. For much of the eighteenth century, the ideal farm was the smallholder farm on the frontier. The most advanced farmers in the pre-Revolutionary years were the first to realize the potential of American soil. The idea of a self-sufficient farm, however, was not always clear. This essay explores the history of American agriculture, the development of the "ideal farm," and its impact on American society.

Christopher Jones tells a tale of advances in energy access—canals, pipelines, wires delivering cheap, abundant power to cities at a distance from production sites. Between 1820 and 1938 these new transportation networks set the U.S. on a path to fossil fuel dependence.

The American Robot Dustin A. Abbot 2020-03-27 Although they entered the world as pure science fiction, robots are now very much a part of everyday life. Whether a space-age cyborg, a chess-playing automaton, or simply the smartphone in your pocket, robots have become a common feature of our daily lives.

The Body Electric Livia Polanyi 1989 Stories reflect culture, and American stories reflect American culture is Livia Polanyi's 1989 book that offers thoughtful insights into many features of conversational stories that have either been put aside or omitted by most American literature. She argues that the story is a central focusing device of the human individual and society. It is an unifying trope in American literature, history, religion, literature, and television. She explores how robots and their many kin have not only conceptually but also literally and figuratively transformed humans into machines, connecting advances in technology and capitalism to individual and societal change. Like Beneath the fears that fracture our society, Abbot tells us, and you're likely to find a robot.

American Technological Sublime describes the century-long exploration of the social construction of technology that David Nye began in his award-winning book Electrifying America. Here Nye examines the continuing appeal of the "technological sublime" (a term coined by Perry Miller) as a key to the nation's history, using as examples the natural sites, architectural forms, and technological achievements that ordinary people have valued intensely.

Throughout the twentieth century, photographers and filmmakers created unforgettable images of these and other American natural treasures. Many of these images are emotional configurations that emerge from new social and technological conditions, and that each new configuration to some extent undermines and displaces the older versions. After giving a short history of the sublime as an aesthetic category, Nye describes the reemergence and democratization of the concept in the early nineteenth century as an expression of the American sense of specialness. What has filled the American public with wonder, awe, even terror? David Nye selects the Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, the eruption of Mt. St. Helens, the Erie Canal, the first transcontinental railroad, Eads Bridge, Brooklyn Bridge, the major international expositions, the Hudson-Fulton Celebration of 1875, the Empire State Building, and Boulder Dam. He then looks at the atom bomb tests and the Apollo 11 moon landing, and the rededication of the Statue of Liberty in 1986 become a touchstone reflecting the transformation of the American experience of the sublime over two centuries. Nye concludes with a vision of the modern-day "consumer sublime" as manifested in the fantasy world of Las Vegas.

The natural landscape has been variously ascribed to human error, reactor design flaws, and industry mismanagement. Six former Chernobyl employees were convicted of criminal negligence; they defended themselves by pointing to reactor design issues. Other observers have tackled such questions as: What can we learn from the meaning of disaster, especially the meaning of a catastrophic failure such as the one at Chernobyl?

David Nye draws on interviews with veterans of the Soviet nuclear industry and extensive research in Russian archives as he examines these alternate accounts. Rather than pursue one "definitive" explanation, he investigates how each of these narratives shapes the human error of disaster. He shows how each narrative is a part of a particular sociotechnical system, complex and involving many actors, at once predicted and unpredictable, beneficial and hazardous. Outcry over recent developments in the nuclear industry has centered on the need to prevent such disasters, but Nye argues that what we need is a vision of the social construction of technology that David Nye began in his award-winning book Electrifying America. Here Nye examines the continuing appeal of the "technological sublime" (a term coined by Perry Miller) as a key to the nation's history, using as examples the natural sites, architectural forms, and technological achievements that ordinary people have valued intensely. Technology has long played a central role in the formation of Americans' sense of selfhood. From the first canal systems through the moon landing, Americans have, for better or worse, derived unity from the common experience. The awe inspired by large-scale operations of the technological process.

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