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# American Technological Sublime

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## MONROE MIKAYLA

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### **Nature, Technology and the Sacred**

John Wiley & Sons

“Technologies have been shaping [our] emotional culture for more than a century, argue computer scientist Luke Fernandez and historian Susan Matt in this original study. Marshalling archival sources and interviews, they trace how norms (say, around loneliness) have shifted with technological change.” —Nature “A powerful story of how new forms of technology are continually integrated into the human experience...Anyone interested in seeing the digital age through a new perspective should be pleased with this rich account.” —Publishers Weekly  
 Facebook makes us lonely. Selfies breed

narcissism. On Twitter, hostility reigns. Pundits and psychologists warn that digital technologies substantially alter our emotional states, but in this lively look at our evolving feelings about technology since the advent of the telegraph, we learn that the gadgets we use don't just affect how we feel—they can profoundly change our sense of self. When we say we're bored, we don't mean the same thing as a Victorian dandy. Could it be that political punditry has helped shape a new kind of anger? Luke Fernandez and Susan J. Matt take us back in time to consider how our feelings of loneliness, vanity, and anger have evolved in tandem with new technologies.

**Technology Matters** Wadsworth Publishing Company

A major theme in American history has been the desire to achieve a genuinely

republican way of life that values liberty, order, and virtue. This work shows us how new technologies affected this drive for a republican civilization - a question as vital now as ever.

**The Double-edged Sword** JHU Press  
 Feminist Cultural Studies of Science and Technology challenges the assumption that science is simply what scientists do, say, or write: it shows the multiple and dispersed makings of science and technology in everyday life and popular culture. This first major guide and review of the new field of feminist cultural studies of science and technology provides readers with an accessible introduction to its theories and methods. Documenting and analyzing the recent explosion of research which has appeared under the rubric of 'cultural studies of science and technology' it examines the distinctive

features of the 'cultural turn' in science studies and traces the contribution feminist scholarship has made to this development. Interrogating the theoretical and methodological features it evaluates the significance of this distinctive body of research in the context of concern about public attitudes to science and contentious debates about public understanding of and engagement with science.

#### **Art, the Sublime, and Movement**

Harvard University Press

This book is a critical interdisciplinary approach to the study of contemporary visual culture and image studies, exploring ideas about space and place and ultimately contributing to the debates about being human in the digital age. The upward and downward pull seem in a constant contest for humanity's attention. Both forces are powerful in the effects and affects they invoke. When tracing this iconological history, Amanda du Preez starts in the early nineteenth century, moving into the twentieth century and then spanning the whole century up to contemporary twenty-first century screen culture and space travels. Du Preez parses the intersecting pathways between Heaven and Earth, up and down, flying and falling through the concept of being "spaced out". The idea of being "spaced out" is applied as a metaphor to trace the visual history of sublime encounters that displace Earth, gravity, locality, belonging, home, real life, and embodiment. The book will be of interest to scholars working in art history, visual culture, media and cultural studies, phenomenology, digital culture, mobility studies, and urban studies.

*The Machine in America* MIT Press

This entry in the Major Problems in American History series examines the history of technology in America, from colonial times to the present. Each of the 14 chapters contains an introduction, secondary readings, documents, headnotes, and suggested readings.

*Seven Sublimes* MIT Press

This examination of American novels from 1900 to 1940 traces the literary treatment of the technological sublime, a simultaneous awe and fear of technology. The American technological sublime is a construct that can be useful in understanding the often conflicted and ambivalent reactions of enthusiasm and anxiety, exaltation and depression, associated with the patterns of development experienced in the US in this transitory period. The first four decades of the 20th century saw the culmination of the technological sublime in America: the loss of the innocently one-sided

enthusiasm and technological republicanism of the 19th century to a fragmented, often paranoid, and largely pessimistic vision of technology that became dominant of the literature after World War II. After an evaluation of earlier scholarship on the American technological sublime, the study examines four important decades in the development of the American technological sublime and some of the literary responses to it *America's Assembly Line* MIT Press Discusses in nontechnical language ten central questions about technology that illuminate what technology is and why it matters. Technology matters, writes David Nye, because it is inseparable from being human. We have used tools for more than 100,000 years, and their central purpose has not always been to provide necessities. People excel at using old tools to solve new problems and at inventing new tools for more elegant solutions to old tasks. Perhaps this is because we are intimate with devices and machines from an early age—as children, we play with technological toys: trucks, cars, stoves, telephones, model railroads, Playstations. Through these machines we imagine ourselves into a creative relationship with the world. As adults, we retain this technological playfulness with gadgets and appliances—Blackberries, cell phones, GPS navigation systems in our cars. We use technology to shape our world, yet we think little about the choices we are making. In *Technology Matters*, Nye tackles ten central questions about our relationship to technology, integrating a half-century of ideas about technology into ten cogent and concise chapters, with wide-ranging historical examples from many societies. He asks: Can we define technology? Does technology shape us, or do we shape it? Is technology inevitable or unpredictable? (Why do experts often fail to get it right?)? How do historians understand it? Are we using modern technology to create cultural uniformity, or diversity? To create abundance, or an ecological crisis? To destroy jobs or create new opportunities? Should "the market" choose our technologies? Do advanced technologies make us more secure, or escalate dangers? Does ubiquitous technology expand our mental horizons, or encapsulate us in artifice? These large questions may have no final answers yet, but we need to wrestle with them—to live them, so that we may, as Rilke puts it, "live along some distant day into the answers."

#### **The Rise and Fall of American Technology** MIT Press

This provocative and timely book argues

that contemporary ideas and practices concerning nature and technology remain closely bound up with religious ways of thinking and acting. Using examples from North America, Europe and elsewhere, it reinterprets a range of 'secular' phenomena in terms of their conditioning by a complex series of transformations of the sacred in Western history. The contemporary practices of environmental politics, technological risk behaviour, alternative medicine, vegetarianism and ethical consumption take on new significance as sites of struggle between different sacral orderings. *Nature, Technology and the Sacred* introduces a radically new direction for today's critical discourse concerning nature and technology – one that reinstates it as a moment within the ongoing religious history of the West.

*America Transformed* MIT Press

Providing a global perspective on the development of American technology, *Technology and American Society* offers a historical narrative detailing major technological transformations over the last three centuries. With coverage devoted to both dramatic breakthroughs and incremental innovations, authors Gary Cross and Rick Szostak analyze the cause-and-effect relationship of technological change and its role in the constant drive for improvement and modernization. This fully-updated 3rd edition extends coverage of industry, home, office, agriculture, transport, constructions, and services into the twenty-first century, concluding with a new chapter on recent electronic and technological advances. *Technology and American Society* remains the ideal introduction to the myriad interactions of technological advancement with social, economic, cultural, and military change throughout the course of American history.

#### **A Companion to American Technology** MIT Press

"This is a follow-up to Nye's 1994 MITP book *American Technological Sublime*. (*American Technological Sublime* continues the 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.) This new project extends the sublime into new areas that reflect especially the last fifty years. Thus, in *Seven Sublimes*, Nye explores the natural,

technological, disastrous, martial, intangible, digital, and environmental sublimines--areas of sublime experience that were insufficiently recognized or theorized when Nye's earlier book came out nearly twenty-five years ago. Each suggests a different human relation to space and time. Most of these seven sublimines can be experienced at historic sites, ruins, large cities, national parks, or on websites"--

Space in America Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing

Carroll Pursell tells the story of the evolution of American technology since World War II. His fascinating and surprising history links pop culture icons with landmarks in technological innovation and shows how postwar politics left their mark on everything from television, automobiles, and genetically engineered crops to contraceptives, Tupperware, and the Veg-O-Matic. Just as America's domestic and international policies became inextricably linked during the Cold War, so did the nation's public and private technologies. The spread of the suburbs fed into demands for an interstate highway system, which itself became implicated in urban renewal projects. Fear of slipping into a postwar economic depression was offset by the creation of "a consumers' republic" in which buying and using consumer goods became the ultimate act of citizenship and a symbol of an "American Way of Life." Pursell begins with the events of World War II and the increasing belief that technological progress and the science that supported it held the key to a stronger, richer, and happier America. He looks at the effect of returning American servicemen and servicewomen and the Marshall Plan, which sought to integrate Western Europe into America's economic, business, and technological structure. He considers the accumulating "problems" associated with American technological supremacy, which, by the end of the 1960s, led to a crisis of confidence. Pursell concludes with an analysis of how consumer technologies create a cultural understanding that makes political technologies acceptable and even seem inevitable, while those same political technologies provide both form and content for the technologies found at home and at work. By understanding this history, Pursell hopes to advance a better understanding of the postwar American self.

American Technological Sublime Akademiai Kiado

Through close analysis of the historical and conceptual roots of modern science and technology, Brian Brock here develops

a theological ethic addressing a wide range of contemporary perplexities about the moral challenges raised by new technology.

Why America Failed MIT Press

From the medieval farm implements used by the first colonists to the invisible links of the Internet, the history of technology in America is a history of society as well. This title analyzes technology's impact on the lives of women and men. It also discusses the innovation of an American system of manufactures.

**Civilizing the Machine** John Wiley & Sons

This book explores the origin and future of "upgrade culture," a collection of cultural habits and orientations based on the assumption that new technologies will rapidly, perpetually, and inevitably emerge. By analyzing discourses of technological change and the practices of marketing workers inside the consumer technology industry between the early 1980s and the late 2010s, the book describes the genesis, maintenance, and future of upgrade culture. Based on archival and popular sources, first-hand interviews with a range of industry professionals, and participant observations at industry-only events, the book attends to issues both intimate to the culture of marketing work and structural to the organization of the consumer technology industry. This book will have a broad appeal to social/cultural theorists of technology, marketing, and consumerism, as well as to scholars in business history, communication, cultural studies, media studies, sociology, and anthropology. The Introduction of this book is freely available as a downloadable Open Access PDF under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-No Derivatives 4.0 license.

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America as Second Creation Bloomsbury Publishing

How conflicting ideas of nature threaten to fracture America's identity. Amber waves of grain, purple mountain majesties: American invest much of their national identity in sites of natural beauty. And yet American lands today are torn by conflicts over science, religion, identity, and politics. Creationists believe that the Biblical flood carved landscapes less than 10,000 years ago; environmentalists protest pipelines; Western states argue that the federal government's land policies throttle free enterprise; Native Americans

demand protection for sacred sites. In this book, David Nye looks at Americans' irreconcilably conflicting ideas about nature. A landscape is conflicted when different groups have different uses for the same location—for example, when some want to open mining sites that others want to preserve or when suburban development impinges on agriculture. Some landscapes are so degraded from careless use that they become toxic "anti-landscapes." Nye traces these conflicts to clashing conceptions of nature—ranging from pastoral to Native American to military-industrial—that cannot be averaged into a compromise. Nye argues that today's environmental crisis is rooted in these conflicting ideas about land. Depending on your politics, global warming is either an inconvenient truth or fake news. America's contradictory conceptions of nature are at the heart of a broken national consensus.

American Technological Sublime MIT Press  
Herrin (former staff historian for the Historic American Engineering Record program) presents an illustrative history of the engineering infrastructure of the 19th century United States. Photographs and drawings provide details of aqueducts, mills, bridges, mines, manufacturing devices, railroads, canals, dams, water works, and other structural asp  
American Genesis John Wiley & Sons  
Nye uses energy as a touchstone to examine the lives of ordinary people engaged in normal activities. How did the United States become the world's largest consumer of energy? David Nye shows that this is less a question about the development of technology than it is a question about the development of culture. In *Consuming Power*, Nye uses energy as a touchstone to examine the lives of ordinary people engaged in normal activities. He looks at how these activities changed as new energy systems were constructed, from colonial times to recent years. He also shows how, as Americans incorporated new machines and processes into their lives, they became ensnared in power systems that were not easily changed: they made choices about the conduct of their lives, and those choices accumulated to produce a consuming culture. Nye examines a sequence of large systems that acquired and then lost technological momentum over the course of American history, including water power, steam power, electricity, the internal-combustion engine, atomic power, and computerization. He shows how each system became part of a larger set of social constructions through its links to the home, the factory, and the city. The result

is a social history of America as seen through the lens of energy consumption. Consuming Power Univ of California Press

An exploration of the dialogue that emerged after 1776 between different visions of what it meant to use new technologies to transform the land. After 1776, the former American colonies began to reimagine themselves as a unified, self-created community. Technologies had an important role in the resulting national narratives, and a few technologies assumed particular prominence. Among these were the axe, the mill, the canal, the railroad, and the irrigation dam. In this book David Nye explores the stories that clustered around these technologies. In doing so, he rediscovers an American story of origins, with America conceived as a second creation built in harmony with God's first creation. While mainstream Americans constructed technological foundation stories to explain their place in the New World, however, marginalized groups told other stories of destruction and loss. Native Americans protested the loss of their forests, fishermen resisted the construction of dams, and early environmentalists feared the exhaustion of resources. A water mill could be viewed as the kernel of a new community or as a new way to exploit labor. If passengers comprehended railways as part of a larger narrative about American expansion and progress, many farmers attacked railroad land grants. To explore these contradictions, Nye devotes alternating chapters to narratives of second creation and to narratives of those who rejected it. Nye draws on popular literature, speeches, advertisements, paintings, and many other media to create a history of American foundation stories. He shows how these stories were revised periodically, as social and economic conditions changed, without ever erasing the earlier stories entirely. The image of the isolated frontier family carving a homestead out of the wilderness with an axe persists to this day, alongside later images and narratives. In the book's conclusion, Nye considers the relation between these earlier stories and such later American developments as the conservation movement, narratives of environmental recovery, and the idealization of wilderness.

**Upgrade Culture and Technological Change** MIT Press

He contrasts the commonly-held

perception that the pace of technology is accelerating with the historical record. He highlights the people and the organizations which are responsible for America's technological largesse. The book "follows the money" to uncover the underlying trends. The beginning of a decline in technology development is detected using indirect indicators for clues. Impacts on the formation of companies, employment and productivity provide sobering reasons to enlighten others and demand a change in course. After considering the possibilities, the book proposes several constructive actions which avoid the proverbial tendency to "throw more money at the problem." The goal of the book is to provoke discussion and promote action where appropriate. Americans' standard of living is at stake. Tech-savvy readers will want to understand this issue so as to influence others. Long-range thinkers will want to factor these considerations into their prognostications. The titans of the technology-based companies can develop new and improved strategies based on the findings of this book. And, our elected officials may want to act before a catastrophic disaster confronts the nation. This book will strike a chord with everyone who is interested in America's future economic health. Specific audience groups include scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, employees in technology based companies, government and corporate policymakers deciding the future of research and development (R&D) programs, government workers involved in the execution of government R&D programs and those thinking about a career in R&D. It is complementary to such works as *Politics and Economics in America: The Way We Came to Be*, by Richard E. Carmichael (Krieger Publishing Company, 1998), which explores political and economic history in order to explain the emergence of the United States' world economic dominance. Carmichael's book makes recommendations on how government could assist America's businesses in maintaining our economic leadership, but it does not address any aspects of technology development and associated issues. *Closing the Innovation Gap* by Judy Estrin (McGraw Hill, 2009), provides business leaders with concepts for leading their organizations so as to close the innovation gap with competitors.

It focuses on the innovation environment within the organization, whereas Dr. Gref addresses the complete technology development cycle, its financing, America's rise to global dominance, and the specter of a national decline. Image Worlds John Wiley & Sons

America's sense of space has always been tied to what Hayden White called the narrativization of real events. If the awe-inspiring manifestations of nature in America (Niagara Falls, Virginia's Natural Bridge, the Grand Canyon, etc.) were often used as a foil for projecting utopian visions and idealizations of the nation's exceptional place among the nations of the world, the rapid technological progress and its concomitant appropriation of natural spaces served equally well, as David Nye argues, to promote the dominant cultural idiom of exploration and conquest. From the beginning, American attitudes towards space were thus utterly contradictory if not paradoxical; a paradox that scholars tried to capture in such hybrid concepts as the middle landscape (Leo Marx), an engineered New Earth (Cecelia Tichi), or the technological sublime (David Nye). Not only was America's concept of space paradoxical, it has always also been a contested terrain, a site of continuous social and cultural conflict. Many foundational issues in American history (the dislocation of Native and African Americans, the geo-political implications of nation-building, immigration and transmigration, the increasing division and clustering of contemporary American society, etc.) involve differing ideals and notions of space. Quite literally, space and its various ideological appropriations formed the arena where America's search for identity (national, political, cultural) has been staged. If American democracy, as Frederick Jackson Turner claimed, is born of free land, then its history may well be defined as the history of the fierce struggles to gain and maintain power over both the geographical, social and political spaces of America and its concomitant narratives. The number and range of topics, interests, and critical approaches of the essays gathered here open up exciting new avenues of inquiry into the tangled, contentious relations of space in America. Topics include: Theories of Space - Landscape / Nature - Technoscape / Architecture / Urban Utopia - Literature - Performance / Film / Visual Arts.

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