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Quotes by Boorstin, Daniel J.

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We read advertisements to discover and enlarge our desires. We are always ready -- even eager -- to discover, from the announcement of a new product, what we have all along wanted without really knowing it.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

America has been a land of dreams. A land where the aspirations of people from countries cluttered with rich, cumbersome, aristocratic, ideological pasts can reach for what once seemed unattainable. Here they have tried to make dreams come true. Yet now... we are threatened by a new and particularly American menace. It is not the menace of class war, of ideology, of poverty, of disease, of illiteracy, or demagoguery, or of tyranny, though these now plague most of the world. It is the menace of unreality.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

It is only a short step from exaggerating what we can find in the world to exaggerating our power to remake the world. Expecting more novelty than there is, more greatness than there is, and more strangeness than there is, we imagine ourselves masters of a plastic universe. But a world we can shape to our will is a shapeless world.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

The American experience stirred mankind from discovery to exploration. From the cautious quest for what they knew (or thought they knew) was out there, into an enthusiastic reaching to the unknown. These are two substantially different kinds of human enterprise.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

Celebrity-worship and hero-worship should not be confused. Yet we confuse them every day, and by doing so we come dangerously close to depriving ourselves of all real models. We lose sight of the men and women who do not simply seem great because they are famous but are famous because they are great. We come closer and closer to degrading all fame into notoriety.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

A sign of celebrity is often that their name is worth more than their services.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

The traditional novel form continues to enlarge our experience in those very areas where the wide-angle lens and the Cinema screen tend to narrow it.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

Of all the nations in the world, the United States was built in nobody's image. It was the land of the unexpected, of unbounded hope, of ideals, of quest for an unknown perfection. It is all the more unfitting that we should offer ourselves in images. And all the more fitting that the images which we make wittingly or unwittingly to sell America to the world should

come back to haunt and curse us.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

The most important American addition to the World Experience was the simple surprising fact of America. We have helped prepare mankind for all its later surprises.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

What preoccupies us, then, is not God as a fact of nature, but as a fabrication useful for a God-fearing society. God himself becomes not a power but an image.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

In our world of big names, curiously, our true heroes tend to be anonymous. In this life of illusion and quasi-illusion, the person of solid virtues who can be admired for something more substantial than his well-knownness often proves to be the unsung hero: the teacher, the nurse, the mother, the honest cop, the hard worker at lonely, underpaid, unglamorous, unpublicized jobs.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

We need not be theologians to see that we have shifted responsibility for making the world interesting from God to the newspaperman.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

The greatest obstacle to discovery is not ignorance -- it is the illusion of knowledge.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

The most refined skills of color printing, the intricate techniques of wide-angle photography, provide us pictures of trivia bigger and more real than life. We forget that we see trivia and notice only that the reproduction is so good. Man fulfils his dream and by photographic magic produces a precise image of the Grand Canyon. The result is not that he adores nature or beauty the more. Instead he adores his camera -- and himself.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

The improved American highway system isolated the American-in-transit. On his speedway he had no contact with the towns which he by-passed. If he stopped for food or gas, he was served no local fare or local fuel, but had one of Howard Johnson's nationally branded ice cream flavors, and so many gallons of Exxon. This vast ocean of superhighways was nearly as free of culture as the sea traversed by the Mayflower Pilgrims.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

In fast-moving, progress-conscious America, the consumer expects to be dizzied by progress. If he could completely understand advertising jargon he would be badly disappointed. The half-intelligibility which we expect, or even hope, to find in the latest product language personally reassures each of us that progress is being made: that the pace exceeds our ability to follow.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

Time makes heroes but dissolves celebrities.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

The modern American tourist now fills his experience with pseudo-events. He has come to expect both more strangeness and more familiarity than the world naturally offers. He has come to believe that he can have a lifetime of adventure in two weeks and all the thrills of risking his life without any real risk at all.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

Not so many years ago there was no simpler or more intelligible notion than that of going on a journey. Travel --movement through space --provided the universal metaphor for change. One of the subtle confusions --perhaps one of the secret terrors --of modern life is that we have lost this refuge. No longer do we move through space as we once did.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

Modern tourist guides have helped raised tourist expectations. And they have provided the natives -- from Kaiser Wilhelm down to the villagers of Chichacestenango -- with a detailed and itemized list of what is expected of them and when. These are the up-to-date scripts for actors on the tourists stage.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

As individuals and as a nation, we now suffer from social narcissism. The beloved Echo of our ancestors, the virgin America, has been abandoned. We have fallen in love with our own image, with images of our making, which turn out to be images of ourselves.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

The world of crime is a last refuge of the authentic, uncorrupted, spontaneous event.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.

Our attitude toward our own culture has recently been characterized by two qualities, braggadocio and petulance. Braggadocio -- empty boasting of American power, American virtue, American know-how -- has dominated our foreign relations now for some decades. Here at home -- within the family, so to speak -- our attitude to our culture expresses a superficially different spirit, the spirit of petulance. Never before, perhaps, has a culture been so fragmented into groups, each full of its own virtue, each annoyed and irritated at the others.

- Boorstin, Daniel J.



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