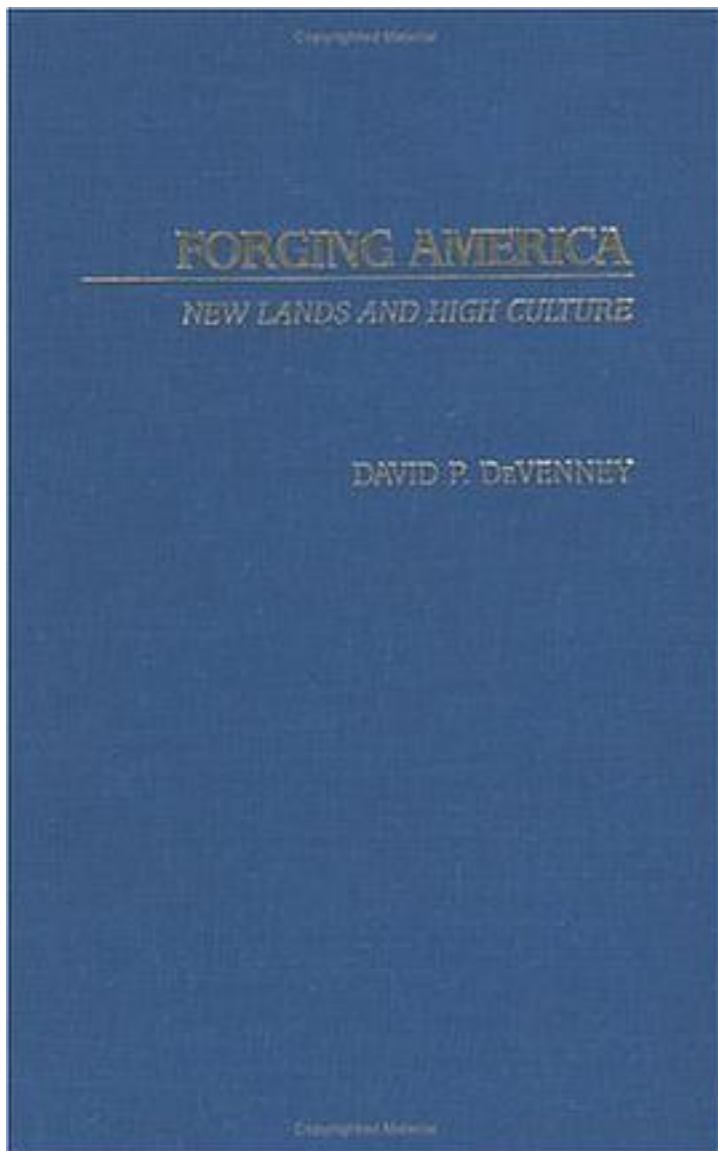


Forging America



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Offering a fresh perspective on the making of the American nation, "Forging America: New Lands and High Culture" shows how the various new portions of the country--the Northeastern wilderness, the West, and later the South and Midwest--were assimilated into the national and intellectual consciousness of the young nation. Specifically, author David P. DeVenney examines the ways in which the arts helped achieve this assimilation, primarily through music and painting, but also through literature and architecture. The search for American-ness in the arts, for what it meant to be an American painter, composer, or writer, occupied artists for the entire 19th century and for the first part of the 20th. Intellectuals viewed America in the 1800s as a new Eden, a primordial wilderness, and viewed themselves as chosen by God to begin a new chapter in the development of the world. This Romantic idea included exploring and taming the vast regions of the country and making their beauties accessible to the nation's Eastern population centers, filtering notions of the West through the arts and arriving at an idyllic vision absent any signs of danger or exoticism. DeVenney writes for the educated nonspecialist as well as the scholar, making "Forging America" a fascinating and useful tool for understanding a key way in which America became America.

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