

Felicitas Hoppe

Pravda

An American Journey

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A wild post-Soviet ride from coast to coast: the truth about America

Felicitas Hoppe – winner of Germany’s most prestigious literary award, the Büchner Prize – takes us on an expedition to an unknown America, travelling ten thousand amusing and poetic miles from Boston to San Francisco to Los Angeles and back to New York. Wide awake and clear of sight, Hoppe is a literary whirlwind in the footsteps of Ilf and Petrov, two Russian writers who travelled the same route eighty years before her, becoming cult figures. Whether she’s inspecting the Ford factory and the first electric chair along with them, painting Tom Sawyer’s fence by the by, vanishing in a tornado or meeting Quentin Tarantino in the eye of the storm – *Pravda* (Russian for truth) shows readers things never before been written about the most incredible country on earth: a literary world discovery.

FELICITAS HOPPE, born in 1960, lives in Berlin. Her debut novel *Picknick der Friseur* appeared in 1996, her second novel *Pigafetta* was published in 1999 after a round-the-world trip on a cargo ship, followed in 2003 by *Paradiese, Übersee*, 2004 by *Verbrecher und Versager*, 2006 by *Johanna*, 2008 by *Iwein Löwenritter*, 2009 by *Sieben Schätze* and the stories *Der beste Platz der Welt*, 2010 by *Abenteuer – was ist das?*, 2011 by *Grünes Ei mit Speck*, a translation of texts by the American children’s book author Dr. Seuss, and 2012 by the novel *Hoppe*.

Felicitas Hoppe has received numerous awards, including the **Georg Büchner Prize**, the *Aspekte Prize for Literature* and the *Bremen Prize for Literature*. She has also held lecturing posts at several German Universities and Dartmouth College, New Hampshire, Georgetown University, Washington D.C.

translated by Katy Derbyshire

Chapter 3

A day later, I was wrapped in a blue plastic bag at the foot of the thundering Niagara Falls, still hearing Walter's voice in my mind's ear. It floated audibly above the waters, asserting itself effortlessly, not only against the roar and the cries of women and children, but even against the voice of my travel companion Ms AnnAdams, who stood unbendingly at the ship's rail and stoically recited the ballad of John Maynard, that staunch helmsman who held out until he reached the shores: "He saved our lives, our noble king. He died for us; his praise we sing."

For even the greatest helmsman of all times can't compete with Walter's voice, just as little as the thousands of tons of water plunging, according to Ilf and Petrov, from the height of a skyscraper into the depths. Tamed nature, pure backdrop, fantastical scenery on a stage where the same play is acted out over and over two times an hour, with tourists as its protagonists, under the guiding hand of a director who does not wish to be named in the programme. We're all in the same boat after all, under the strict rule of free will, all pulling together, from the captain down to the ticket collector.

Masters and servants in one, we simply play along, playing ourselves at our own expense, each immersed in pure self-observation with our cameras until the short trip is over at last and we are released back into real life, to a living landscape of souvenir stalls and trash, the margins littered with blue plastic coats no one needs any more. I was the only one who folded my blue bag with care and then stuffed it in my backpack, for later perhaps at the Pacific, while the others were busy stocking up on souvenirs, postcards and key chains hung with tiny seals made of fake fur.

But the show must go on for it's only two thirty, so everything's still possible and doable before we head to a motel to freshen up in a pool so small one has to kill one's time in it standing up, until we're allowed to part ways one last time, to the restaurants of Niagara or a brief visit to the House of Frankenstein. Above its entrance hangs resplendent a gigantic mask, and from its mouth issues the voice of the all-American monster: The fear starts here!

It really does reside here, the petty tourist's dirt-cheap fear, directly at the entrance to the ghost train, on the thin line of dawn and dusk between Canada and the United States, guarded by two fire-breathing dragons, a vampire with double-whitened fangs and a double Frankenstein, a long queue already forming behind him. The general public's desire for utter horror.

Don't get me wrong: I love general public queues; I queue too, and have done for years. I too am one of those who go along for the ride, through a world full of overweight and underweight phenomena, besotted with the ridiculous blue raincoats and the cheap umbrellas of their servants and bearers. I'm besotted with the mirrored sunglasses, with the scent of my bargain-price sun cream and the childlike laughter with which we board the pleasure ships that take us to the shores of democratically administered miracles of nature for a dearly paid half hour. I adore the cheerful cries when the cold water comes down from above, wrapping our bodies in a mist that blurs us for a moment, mercifully.

I really do love it, this human community for sale, its carefree intrusiveness on our brief joint journey through a world occupied all day long with making our true nature disappear. Not to mention our ghost, still speaking in Walter's voice at the entrance to Frankenstein's house, a voice intrusively carrying off the queue of waiting tourists into a warm world of artificial horror behind which the real world may disappear at last, because we still dream of rescue and homecoming, of a rise that will never take place because we'll never understand that no one is interested

in human destinies, not in the great land of visions and dreams.

Three cheers for all the world's tourists, always tortoise and hare rolled into one. As soon as I want to go from A to B to cast my gaze as undisturbed as possible upon the good, true and beautiful, the others have always got there before me. I simply don't get it, I simply don't get there, I simply don't get through, neither to the good nor the true, to say nothing of the beautiful. They're always pushing in between with their giant bellies, their half-open greedy mouths, their never-ending hunger for breaks and vacations that can't be sated with the best will in the world, just as little as their longing to take part in a world constantly doing business with them but never sharing the profits.

For the true America belongs not to the masters of good taste, not to the pharaohs of yesteryear and even less to the masters of true feeling, but to the auditors of interior progress, who wear neither coats nor blue hoods but slightly faded T-shirts, long since on the opposite shore, on the warmer side, on the golden coast where no one goes cold, while we're still at the Cavalier Motel Niagara, run for years by a tired Chinese couple who sweep the drive with a birch broom, lost in dreams half-asleep in the mornings, to get better wifi.

When we clambered, all four of us, into the brightly lit Ferris wheel not far from Frankenstein's house, whisking us up above the pool and the borders, we were suddenly reconciled with it all, with the landscape, the light, with the northerly border, even with ourselves. All at once everything was in the right place. Foma's arm over Jerry's shoulders, the view of the waterfall breath-taking and the world of the ticket-collectors quite far away. Purest close-ups and long-shots of happiness, as over Lake Erie the Swallow took flight.

While making sandwiches for our journey, our last hostess Elly had recited Fontane's ballad by heart down to the last verse, her husband Dan speaking – with

the typical pride of a mayor of yesteryear – of a magnificent monument to the greatest helmsman of all times, erected with great sacrifice by German emigrants on the shore of the lake: a John Maynard rising to the heavens, hewn from marble by the sweat of a brow, his outstretched golden arm pointing the way to a better future. Except that, the morning after, there was not emigrant nor monument to be found on the banks out at Buffalo. Until Foma finally spotted the flat plaque of plain bronze, nothing but the faint memory of a ballad from a German lesson he'd never had himself.

Write that in your notebook, dear Ms Eckermann, and add that AnnAdams grew briefly melancholy at the sight of Lake Erie. For the water was radiant and warm, the imported Oktoberfest mid-bloom, and Fontane's poem seemed to her so beautiful and moving that I declaimed it repeatedly at full length from my back-seat Tocqueville bay on the drive to Detroit, with her interrupting me every time I failed to perfectly match the original.

Write this too in your little notebook: that emigrated Europeans make poor tourists because they're constantly arguing with themselves beneath the burden of their education, although by now we're heading inland for Detroit, in a red Ford Explorer that will fly us to our next destination, into the heart of Henry Ford's workshop, a man who decided a century ago to make not only a few of us but humankind as a whole mobile and happy ever after. For the purpose of our labour, and I quote the master himself, "is an automobile specially designed for everyday wear and tear—business, professional, and family use; an automobile which will attain a sufficient speed to satisfy the average person, at an exceedingly reasonable price, which places it within the reach of many thousands."

The master emphasizes the following points in particular: quality of the material. Simplicity of construction. Quality of the engine. Reliability of the ignition. Automatic oiling. Simplicity and ease of control. For Mr Ford believes in a

different God, in a mobile God with no desk and no office. Mr Ford is a free man, after all, with a calendar free from appointments, his head still held high in the billows of progress, a man one can never get hold of because he always enters the room from the back, which is why his business flourished as if by magic, through the pure presence of his absence.

That's his secret, the tiny key to the controls of the great planetary transmission with a prospect of domination and great profit: never be where people expect you to be, always be elsewhere, always be busy, always be ready for surprises, as though every day were wonders and wassails! For Henry is nothing but pure promise, never where the others look for him, a God who disguises himself from his worshippers while he builds Tin Lizzies and risks his neck on weekends as a racing driver.

After his battles are won, he plays the violin in the evenings and has a flourishing model village built, the likes of which the Soviet peasant-improvers can only dream of to this day: forests, fields and clean rivers, air fresh as dew, contented cows and pardoned turkeys strolling through the front gardens of single-storey houses in which a community gathers in the evenings, a community that no longer dreams of anything. Not because it doesn't have the energy, but because everything is already in the right place, while the production rolls effortlessly on and leaves every vision of the future behind it.

The capitalist as a storyteller. Rural life with urban earnings, that was the master's motto, that car king and anti-Semite occupied for the rest of his time with bringing the world into line by means of journalism. When the young Master Ford rode out to town in his little carriage – so they say back here in my Tocqueville bay – he had his pockets full of bric-a-brac until he really (in actual fact) managed to construct a watch of his own at the age of thirteen.



That was only the beginning. In the meantime, we're pulling together worldwide and all sitting at the round table of unstoppable progress, which knows no more head and no rulers, but at which we're still not all equal because not everyone has the opportunity to make something out of their talents. The peasant-improvers knew that better than I do, when they came out to Dearborn some eighty years back, led by Solomon Trone to meet Mr Ford in person.

But the prophet was not there, for – see above – Mr Ford likes to circulate. To kill their waiting time productively, Ilf and Petrov were sent for a few hours to Greenfield, the aforementioned museum and model village, in search of the New Man of whom the Russians still dream to this day. Just like the old museum attendant who received his guests with eyes aglow in an old wooden house with creaking floorboards and soot-stained walls still hung with icons of Thomas Alva Edison. Tears came to the man's eyes as he showed the Russian guests the first light bulb and acclaimed, still tear-drenched: Let there be light! And: Without Edison, there would be no science! Then he wiped off his tears and began to glow himself, as he said quietly and clearly: Write only what you think. But write for the whole world.

While Ilf and Petrov go on writing unmoved, commissioned by *Pravda*, the world now dreams of quite different things, not of light bulbs but of databases that light up our interior veins, of a car that needs neither driver nor ruler because it drives all on its own these days. No more fighting for places or power to the keys, neither Foma nor AnnAdams at the wheel. Becky has liberated herself from her flat cage on Foma's lap and is out and about of her own accord. She's in touch with the whole wide world, while we, back in my Tocqueville bay, devote ourselves to the great thoughts of yesteryear, to the reading of books we haven't quite managed so far, as they're simply too thick.

But as the car now drives all on its own, steered and commanded by a third party,

we are at last on the right road to really (in actual fact) being free, free people and free readers, freed from steering, braking and accelerating. We are free and in safety, with no duties or wants any more. At a reliable average velocity of sixty-five American miles an hour, we ride off like Ivan the Fool on our fairy-tale stoves, reading the world from back to front and conscientiously writing down everything that can be noted through the misted window of the Tocqueville bay as we drive past, timeless advertising slogans on a fence of posters extending across the Midwestern landscape.

I'm simply trying to write down what the world out there has to offer: I spy something green. Chocolate garden. Your doctor is currently in class. Catch the wave! Bite into a legend! Largest fireworks in the world! Bikers get cancer, too! Grill an' chill! Always wear your life jacket! Beautiful homes! Wonderful communities! Advertise here! Ford. It's McRib season – let's feast. Welcome to Ford. If you don't know whose signs these are you haven't travelled very far.

But those who want to read make slow progress on a highway supposed to take us to a city Radio John warned us about back in Brantford: Watch out for the neighbourhood – Detroit is black, the most dangerous city in America, full of slaves on demand. Write that in your little white notebook, Ms Eckermann, but write too that the black peril is ancient history now because the investors are on the advance, as is easily spotted by the reliable presence of their vanguard: the artists.

The artists, you see, with their sensitive noses, are always there before the businesspeople; they smell the rat of the future immediately. Always prepared to make premature sacrifices, they nest briefly in the walls of the crumbling structures of yesteryear, walls long since sold but not yet humanly cultivated. Thus they live, in the damp chinks between yesterday, today and tomorrow, hungry zeitgeists haunted by a secret desire for the palaces of yore, for fame and fortune,

myriads of cheap, conscientious slaves in the service of art and of the commentary of a progress that they – apparently at the peak of our times but always desperate and underpaid – attempt to illustrate over and over. No wonder their pictures of the present day so rarely work out, for they despise the laws of time differences.

One of them was my fellow traveller Jerry's friend Becca, First Artist in the Wall, an invited guest of the Henry Today Foundation, a talented blonde string bean from the east of Germany. She did in actual fact live in a wall, some four metres wide and one twenty high, in the attic of a damp house slated for demolition. A small cave with no window or door, reached only via a rickety ladder, with little space for heads or suitcases even when bowing down to her sponsor. The whole scenario seemed familiar. It smelled of mould and drugs, of late-onset anarchy, of the ceremonial cattle-driving of the avant-gardes of yesteryear, of that small musty gap between art and the real world provided by some benefactor who still believes he's aligning art with real life.

Becca was merely one proof among many. When she crawled, on the morning of our arrival – friendly, hungry and unkempt – out of the sponsored hole in the mouldy wall, which threw no light upon art but quite a lot on the life of artists, it suddenly became searingly clear to me that we're all artists on demand, not just Becca and Jerry but also Foma the gardener and I. With the exception of AnnAdams of course, who possesses an academic pension with a right to appreciate art, of which art has no share to this day.

Yet in the end it was AnnAdams who freed Becca with determination from her cave and shoved her on the back seat between herself and myself to drive to Dearborn at last, where the five of us boarded a bus that took us directly to the Ford works one bright Saturday morning, to a model workshop for tourists and Russians, a workshop for all those who still believe in the new man and wish for nothing more dearly than seeing him with their own eyes at long last.

The bus was stuffed full of families and children, all excited and in the best of moods. Above the black driver at the front of the bus was a gigantic screen, on which the bust of an attractive white man appeared shortly after our embarking, a man who introduced us from above, with a voice as gentle as it was imperative, to the great story of the master, a story composed of nothing but virtue and underlain with high-pathos symphony music which took inescapable effect upon me.

Oh yes, I'll admit, I was literally in the symphonic grip of that great story, for Mr Ford likes to circulate and I turn circles too. I too suddenly wanted to be great and progressive, possessed by a true vision that will make me a true great artist one fine faraway day, no doubt about it, with a cow of my own in a field of my own in the boundless Midwest, with a firm of my own and a hobby all mine. I saw myself sitting at a flying golden desk, flanked by scores of conscientious bonded scribes, all thinking, writing and imagining for me around the clock and in changing shifts, inventing ever more stories that make me immortal forever, because they stick to reliable poetological ground rules one can only learn in Europe: quality of the material. Simplicity of construction. Quality of the engine. Reliability of the ignition. Automatic oiling. Simplicity and ease of control of the planetary transmission. Quality of the execution.

While I was still under the spell of imperial timbres and occupied with drawing up fantastical contracts complete with dizzying fees, the bus had long since reached its destination. The voice on the screen fell silent; we disembarked and found ourselves in a magnificent hall, only to become the tail of another snaking general public queue, its forked tongue politely asking us to pay up.

The fear starts here! We paid up fearlessly without batting an eyelid, before we were instantly pushed to the end of a second queue under the strict commands of the attendants and guards, all of them black beneath bright orange T-shirts. This queue number two moved slowly but surely up an escalator to the next floor,

where we were finally granted a first glance of our own at Henry Ford's famous workshop, of the model conveyor belt on a model factory floor, where nobody knows who's watching whom: are the tourists eyeing the workers or, in actual fact, the weekend workers eyeing their Saturday tourists?

From our bird's-eye perspective the work seemed simple, the workers calm and collected. Instead of the grey overalls and masks from Dr Brecht's theatre, they wore cheerful everyday clothing, bright T-shirts and late-summer pants. Now and then they'd stop and look up, as though keeping a lookout for stars between two working procedures. Otherwise, nothing seemed to disturb them, least of all the streams of visitors, firmly convincing Foma they were not workers but actors, merely playing the role of model workers.

He was probably right; presumably the whole thing was nothing but a project, a dress rehearsal for a sentimental paying audience. For who if not Henry, the all-American monster who considers himself the inventor of the first pocket watch, would ever have thought of replacing unemployed workers from Detroit with unemployed actors from Hollywood, miming the simple man on the factory floor for the tourists of the world, acting out the little man before his lunch break who dreams of other, bigger roles, until finally the bell tolls and he can make a dash for the cafeteria. The perfect performance achieved its objective: I pressed my forehead against the ship's rail of the visitors' balcony and began to cry, not knowing why. Aside from me, though, no one cried, neither AnnAdams nor Jerry nor Foma and least of all Becca, who instead had the audacity to take real pictures of the scene, even though a huge sign above the entrance clearly cautioned: No pictures to be taken.

She had obviously come along to perform practical resistance against her existence in a Detroit wall. She shot from the hip, verboten-ly mobile, while I was still trying to distract attendants and guards, to start a conversation with Radio

Orange about wages and shifts and to transform the facts of the matter into quick-fire poetry. But the attendants and guards didn't listen to me, not only because their ears were plugged and their frozen smiles left no chance for conversation, but also because the workshop was simply too noisy.

Yet then all of a sudden, as if to disprove the theory of the New Man, there rose an objection in human form, in the shape of the third mechanic from the left: he simply lowered a right fender, raised his head and sent a challenging look up to me, up to the windy gallery where I was now standing between Ann Adams and Becca, who simply couldn't stop shooting from the hip. The mechanic saw that all too well and paused for a moment before his gaze shifted shape to a swallow, flew unexpectedly from down below up right through the workshop and settled between two flaps of its wings on the railing beside me, where it shape-shifted again into a pointer. For that mechanic had recognized me. Before he dashed to the cafeteria he put his hand to his cap in friendly greeting, to wish me luck for my travels. Then he raised his phone and pressed the shutter button.

I never saw that picture but I know all too well that ten thousand pictures from Jerry's Brides by the Roadside series could never outweigh that gaze of a single mechanic, not even if I ever do end up marrying. Standing at the prow from Detroit to Hollywood, wherever the wind blows me, I shall always remember that swallow, the gaze of a man in blue pants, that tells me Foma's not right after all, because the artists will never understand what master they're really serving and who secretly provides their daily bread, while the third mechanic from the left knows only too well at whose expense he consumes the spongy white bread unsung by poets to this day.

And so we ended up in the third general public queue, which took us to the third pillar of the empire, the Museum of American Innovation, a bizarre mix of souvenirs from the wide world of power and wealth, testaments to the old human

dispute between circulation and settlement. Among old carriages and locomotives, airplane propellers and moon rockets, stood a collection of settees, sofas and seats in oversized doll's houses.

All of them had been epoch-making, including Washington's field bed and the rocking chair of the nation – in which Lincoln was shot dead, half asleep in his theatre box. Upon chunky lumberjack tables of yesteryear stood delicate porcelain even older, cups with gold rims and silver-plated plates. Glass side tables boasted knives, forks and spoons of ivory. All flanked by heavy closets against the wide backdrops of wallpapered walls dripping with mirrors and art, an indiscriminate accumulation of inventory and design.

Yet the world of furnishings was merely a sideshow; much more important were the cars. Cars, what else? Cars of all colours and creeds, all sizes and classes: vintage vehicles, sports cars and limousines, on a platform the open-topped car from which JFK waved one last time before the same fate met him as Lincoln. In between, Tin Lizzies, subcompacts and soybean cars, tank cars, tanks, trucks and buses, trailers and motorhomes, shopping carts and children's carts, soap carts and dodgems, motorcycles, bicycles, racing cycles, tricycles, scooters and, last but not least, back to the roots of forward motion, the simple shoe: roller skates, ice skates, mini-skis, cross-country skis. Last traces in the snow of history.

And above all that, high in the air beneath the roof of the temple of progress, a gigantic parachute reminding us of the great dream of flight and the fear of the fall that comes after, of man's desire for a moon over which the empires are still squabbling as though there weren't plenty of planets, as though they didn't know the moon was sold years ago, though that changes nothing – the moon still belongs to me alone, the little poet-next-door.

But what's the moon compared to the gold-framed portrait of a master? It shows

the inventor as a possessor and collector, hair salted and peppered, elegant, exquisitely dressed, freshly scrubbed up and shaved. An icon of extremely good taste and unstoppable progress. It was hung next to a large case stuffed full of certificates, medals, trophies, all testimonies to great triumphs. The only thing missing in the collection was the Eagle Shield of the German Reich, plus Hitler's congratulatory note that went with it: I regard Henry Ford as my personal inspiration.

As always, though, the greatest treasure came last. Disappointed and disillusioned, we had long since set out in search of fresh food, simple catering at Lamy's Diner, when Foma suddenly stood rooted to the spot in front of one last display case. Its contents exerted a magical attraction and mobilized his entire attention, so I forgot my hunger and joined him in casting a glance at the case.

At first glance, there was not much to see, just a little pile of bric-a-brac from the pockets of a boy who dreams of one day being a great inventor. Alongside lay a pocket watch, presumably that legendary first one. But the third exhibit clearly harboured a great secret. Beside the watch stood a small test tube on a delicate rack, containing, as we read, the last breath of the man who made the world light up for ever.

As I leaned over the glass case there came a sudden bright light, the museum shifting shape into a temple and Edison's last breath into a self-illuminated holy relic. I heard trumpets and bells in the distance and was about to go down on my knees and utter a prayer, while Foma the gardener stood unaffected beside me, tapping his right forefinger against the glass and saying quietly: Let there be light! Fearing he might awaken the dead man's breath to new life and trigger an alarm, I grabbed Foma's hand, which in turn grabbed Becky, not only to take a photo but also to capture the sound. He was not fast enough, though; the bells and trumpets died down, the apparition and music vanished before he could press his shutter

button. Nothing else happened. None of the attendants had noticed us.

At that moment, it dawned on me that Foma was not a man of progress but a real Russian, not an artist on the history of revolution but a master of resurrection, who views even lifeless exhibits as living creatures only apparently come to an end. Foma the gardener knew all too well that everything can be brought back to life with a little skill and goodwill, that resurrection is not witchcraft, nor a question of faith. One merely has to know the law of growth, which relies, just like art, on the shifting of time.

No doubt about it, Foma had made a great discovery, in a museum I had until that moment believed to be of yesteryear, by the very nature of its inventory. Yet the ravages of time cannot be suspended, one thing disappearing quietly and unnoticed while the other grows. Dead material too goes on growing in secret, gets bigger and bigger rather than smaller, moves closer and closer instead of further and takes up new space over and over in the jungle of our memories, in a most threatening manner. Even the museum with its unbending will for settled status and its unquenchable wish for significance and standstill, for fixed places and strict labels, even the museum is constantly circulating and creating new dizziness and turmoil over and over, just like its master.

For the things live longer than us and will still be there once we're long gone. Anything can reawaken unexpectedly, the historic rocking chair and the limousine of death, the sleeping certificates and trophies just as the notes from führers and forgers and the wonderful story of the friendship between Thomas A.E. and his student H.F., who revered the inventor of light like an idol. A friendship I learned about only later from a free-of-charge brochure I read out loudly and poignantly once we'd made it to Lamy's, eating lukewarm white bean soup and waiting for coleslaw and tuna-fish sandwiches.

The brochure features, alongside the portraits of the two innovators and the strongly enlarged test tube of last breath, a picture of two magnificently padded wheelchairs with red velvet seats and armrests, below it the following comment: ‘He (Ford) admired his master (Edison) so much that he had a wheelchair built for himself to run races with the elderly Thomas Alva on weekends.’

As I read, there appeared before my mind’s eye the spacious grounds of an American mansion, cut through by a racetrack of freshly raked gravel, more carpet than racetrack, along which two men in wheelchairs sped towards a destination neither of them will ever reach. For no matter who wins these races, the one sure thing is that there’s a small pavilion at the end of the track where the final referee sits, despite all athletic ambition, sipping tea and nibbling biscuits and suspiciously reminiscent of the unfriendly receptionist from Port Hope: ‘a man with a bald, chalk-white skull in which the eyes lay deep in their sockets and from which the nose had disappeared.’

The fear starts here! But Sir Henry did not give in; he stood tall and confronted the death of his friend and master with determination. The death chamber, I read on, resembled a laboratory, full of test tubes for the purpose of capturing the last breath before that breath tried to bolt unnoticed and vanish soundlessly through the door or the window. I imagined Edison’s son in his father’s death chamber, swathed in the costume of a butterfly collector, instead of simply sitting at his father’s bedside and holding his hand fishing with the butterfly net of science for the last breath of a genius to save it for posterity. Now that last breath, beneath an airtight seal, rests in the Museum of American Innovation.