

and regional forms wider exposure. Such work is squarely in the interests of the material culture field at large, where research is based on the analysis of large bodies of data and large numbers of artifacts. Without accurate baseline information on collections, this is impossible to carry out.

Each of the catalogue entries in *Boats and Boating in the Adirondacks* includes the boat's typological name; length; beam; weight; builder; date of construction; a narrative about significant features; references and further reading if applicable; donor information and the accession number. Each boat was photographed against a neutral background and roughly the same scale and, in most cases, from a point off the starboard bow or port quarter, unless another view served better. The photographs are unfortunately often either underexposed and/or badly printed, with the result that many of the interiors of the boats are too dark to make out details. Nonetheless, the photographs alone represent a significant research resource.

The catalogue entries are quite similar to those used in the earlier Mystic Seaport Museum and Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum volumes, though the Mystic catalogue adds another section called "status," which records the degree of originality, restoration and repair. However, this information is often mentioned in the

narrative section in the Adirondack volume. Taken in their aggregate, these catalogue entries are a running curatorial commentary on the collection, and form a narrative equally as compelling, if not more so, as the historical chapters that precede them. It is obvious from the information given about the boats both that a tremendous amount of research has been carried out, and that there is still a great deal to be known about these complex artifacts and the makers and users associated with them.

The strength of North America's watercraft tradition is in its local and regional forms. It becomes abundantly clear from a consideration of the range of small craft types that have been developed over the last two hundred years to what a large extent the design and use of artifacts of material culture is situational and contingent. Out of the fundamental requirements for a structure to carry a person (or persons) on the water and to accomplish a task afloat, come a multitude of forms, each one a singular response to a user, an environment and a use.

Boats and Boating in the Adirondacks brings into full view the watercraft, builders and users of a significant American region. In doing so it makes a contribution not only to the study and understanding of historic watercraft, but to the ongoing exploration of the culture of material and the materiality of culture that is at the heart of this discipline.

Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory*

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Schama, Simon. *Landscape and Memory*, Toronto: Random House of Canada, 1995. xi + 652 pp., 250 black and white, 45 colour illus., cloth \$44.96, ISBN 0-394-22214-8.

Landscape and Memory is one of a cluster of recent volumes that have related the social memory to the construction of symbolic place and time.¹ Schama's primary objective is to discover the myths, memories, and obsessions that underlie the Western world's interaction with Nature. It is an "excavation below our conventional sight-level to recover the veins of myth and memory that lie beneath the surface" (p. 14). But it does more than expose the deep roots of our thinking about the physical world.

Aesthetically, it is the influence of deep-seated cultural experience and preferences that "invests a retinal impression with the quality we experience as beauty" (p. 12). And more ominously, inherited traditions and remembered myths have often transformed geology, hydrology, botany, and zoology from scientific abstractions into symbolically charged places as part of "the cult of patriotic landscape" (p. 63).

Perhaps this is why this volume is being reviewed in a journal that some would think is concerned primarily with science, technology, and the material paraphernalia of history. It is because, as Schama puts it, "...landscape is the work of the mind. Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of

rock" (p. 7). Landscape, therefore, is as much a human construct as are our tools and the material things they produce, and Schama goes on to argue that,

Landscape is culture before it is nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock...once a certain idea of landscape, a myth, a vision, establishes itself in an actual place, it has a peculiar way of muddling categories, of making metaphors more real than their referents; of becoming, in fact, part of the scenery [p. 61].

Landscape is always a "kulturlandschaft;" Nature transformed into human use, if only through the categories of a distant gaze across time and space.

It follows from this that if *Landscape and Memory* is a book about places, it is also about people and their socially constructed ideas of places. They are the necessary catalysts for turning Nature into Landscape. Schama takes pains throughout his scholarly study to identify the artistic and literary provocateurs who become the principal architects of societies' inscapes. Their presence is perhaps best seen in their rendering of "wildernesses." Be it Albert Bierstadt, Carleton Watkins, or Ansel Adams for the American West — or, even though they are never mentioned, A. Y. Jackson, Lawren Harris, or A. J. Casson for the Canadian North! — their rendering of peopleless places implies a human agency: "...the very act of identifying (not to mention photographing) the place presupposes our presence, and along with us all the heavy cultural backpacks that we lug with us on the trail" (p. 7).

And one heavy component of that load is made up of myths which, Schama points out in a critique of them, are "seductive things" (pp. 133–4; 207–13). Concerned that they be appreciated for their power and influence, he quotes Saul Lieberman's assessment: "Nonsense (when all is said and done) is still nonsense. But the study of nonsense is science" (p. 132). Art historians and psychologists have demonstrated how myth and magic have become encoded in symbolic worlds and often determine human attitudes and even behaviours. Schama explores his thesis through humankind's interaction with woods, water, and rock.

Deep within the core of the Western psyche lies an archaic memory of the forest as at once mysterious place and refuge, challenging environment and resource. Schama demonstrates this with several detailed case-studies: an evocative analysis of the role of the Lithuanian forests

at "the hidden heart of national identity" (p. 56); a genealogy of how "[r]eligion and patriotism, antiquity and the future — all came together in the Teutonic romance of the woods" (p. 107), a mythic memory of the forest and German militant nationalism; an analysis of Christianity's forest-tradition with allusions to a wooden stable, Joseph the carpenter, the crown of thorns, and the wooden Cross all contributing to the iconography of the "timber history of Christ" (p. 219). These are representative of Schama's use of myth, imagination, and fact to establish his connections across time and cultures.

He does the same with humankind's long history of interacting with water. The need to control it as an essential prerequisite for life, to regulate its vagaries of supply and destructive forces, and to use it as a medium of movement have all resulted in a rich "grammar of hydro-mythology" (p. 277). Schama deconstructs the "sacred hydraulics" of the Nile, Tigris-Euphrates, and Jordan that became embedded in our concepts of life, purity, and civilization. He also outlines how the skills developed to produce Bernini's ornamental hydraulics of pools and fountains were later directed to the more prosaic, though more important, chores of canals and public water supply. And rivers were as important as forests in the geography underlying national myths. The Danube has long been a device for uniting a polyglot Austrian-Hungarian empire: Smetna's Vltava served as a metaphor for the continuity of Czech history; the Thames has helped define Englishness; the Rhine is another building block of Germany identity; and the Hudson, Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri have all been integrated into an American historiography of national expansion.

Schama's third elemental challenge is Rock and its manifestation in the mountains that have again posed the dualities of fear and wonder, revulsion and beauty. His opening essay here addresses the monumental gigantism of "mountain carving," arguing that "[t]o make over a mountain into the form of a human head is, perhaps, the ultimate colonization of nature by culture, the alteration of landscape to man-scape" (p. 396).

In the United States it culminated in the very rugged-masculine profiles of Mount Rushmore that prompted Rose Arnold Powell's campaign to balance it with an equivalent monument to "feminine heroism." Schama contextualizes this national experience in the millennia of human contact with mountains from Tao masters such as Zhang Ling to the emotive complexities of the Romantics. Indeed, he

considers the possibility of constructing a "simple dialect in the cultural history of the mountain: occidental and oriental, imperial and mystical, Dinocratic and shamanic" (p. 410).

Mine must be one of the last reviews of *Landscape and Memory*. Over the last eighteen months it — plus the companion BBC television series — has received much attention. Some have carped over sins of omission and commission: the misspelling of German terms; the incorrect dating of grandsons of kings; the failure to refer to a preferred example of landscape association. I could make

much of that one! After all, who better than a Canadian appreciates the resonance of Nature in national identity.² Our world of boreal forests, frozen water, and rocky north has been "Seton-ized," "Group of Seven-ed," and "Fry-ed" and "Atwood-ed" into our very being.³

In the final analysis, however, Schama has produced a magisterial work whose ambitious sweep and eclectic scholarship make it at once a fine read and excellent scholarly resource. The footnotes and illustrations alone justify purchasing it.

NOTES

1. Raphael Samuels, *Theatres of Memory* (London: Verso, 1994); W. J. T. Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); John Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Martin Warnke, *Political Landscape: The Art History of Nature* (Chicago: Reaktion, 1995).
2. See Brian Osborne, "The Iconography of Nationhood in Canadian Art," in Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels, eds., *The Iconography of Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Paul Simpson-Housley and Glenn Norcliffe, eds., *A Few Acres of Snow: Literary and Artistic Images of Canada* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1992).
3. In fact, some cultural provocateurs have been reacting against it and Charles Pachter and John Boyle have challenged our preoccupation with such environmental stereotypes and argued for more social and populist metaphors. See Brian S. Osborne, "Grounding National Mythologies: The Case of Canada," in Serge Courville and Normand Séguin, eds., *Espace et culture* (Sainte-Foy, Quebec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1995).