



Riverscapes and National Identities (Space, Place, and Society) (Space, Place and Society)

Tricia Cusack

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Painted riverscapes such as Claude Monet's impressions of the Seine, Isaak Levitan's Volga views, or Thomas Cole's Hudson scenery became iconic not least because they embodied nationalist ideas about place and about culture. At a time when nationalism was taking root across Europe and the United States, the riverscape played an important role in transforming the abstract idea of the nation into a potent visual image. It not only offered a picture of the nation's physical character, but through aspects such as style, the figures portrayed, and the nature of the implied spectator, it presented a cultural ideal.

In this highly original book, Tricia Cusack explores significance of painted riverscapes to the creation of national identities in nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe and America. Focusing on five rivers, the Hudson, the Volga, the Seine, the Thames, and the Shannon, the author outlines the history of the development of national landscapes, elaborating on the distinctive nature of riverscapes. Drawing on the symbolic potential of rivers to represent life and time, the riverscape provided a metaphor for the mythic stream of national history flowing unimpeded out of the past and into the future.

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