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"The Provincial Nature of George Perkins Marsh"

Hall, Marcus

Hall, Marcus. "The Provincial Nature of George Perkins Marsh." *Environment and History* 10, no. 2, "The Nature of G.P. Marsh: Tradition and Historical Judgement" special issue (May, 2004): 191–204. doi:10.3197/0967340041159803 . While many of Marsh's novel conservation insights were universal and true for citizens of all countries, his key warnings about degradation were characteristically American—having been interpreted, produced, and packaged by an American for Americans. The contrasts he saw between American and Mediterranean lands allowed Marsh to formulate and then support his thesis that humans not only modified but damaged the earth. This paper suggests that Marsh's warnings about degradation depended upon America's rising infatuation with its wild continent: not until a nation could view wildland as healthy and beneficent could one of its citizens suggest that enlightened humans often degraded it. For those accustomed to tamed, gardened land, as in southern Europe, non-human forces inflicted the worst land damage. Marsh ushered in a new paradigm of environmental damage that placed blame on culture rather than nature. All rights reserved. © 2004 The White Horse Press

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Source URL: http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/3197
Print date: 04 November 2026 06:15:50