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# The Provincial Nature of George Perkins Marsh

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## ABSTRACT

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.

## KEYWORDS

Degradation, degeneration, transatlantic thought, George Perkins Marsh

'One of the best ways to study the American landscape is to go abroad', Wilbur Zelinsky once told an American audience. In the case of George Perkins Marsh, I don't believe we can understand the man and his contributions except by acknowledging that he travelled widely, and came to his conclusions by comparing home knowledge with foreign experiences. Going abroad, Marsh himself explained, allowed him to see what the New World would become if it followed the same course as the Old. 'Our curiosity' is more stimulated in 'countries

where the climate, the soil, the crops, the modes of tillage, and all the habits of rural life, are more diverse from our own', Marsh professed to a New Hampshire audience in 1856. Although *Man and Nature* (1864) celebrates humanity's beneficial earthly changes, its main purpose is to expose humanity's detrimental and deleterious changes. For Marsh, damaged Mediterranean lands contrasted with healthy American lands – or what was left of healthy American lands.<sup>1</sup>

Before one can decide whether George Marsh (1801–1882) was a man ahead of his times, or a man who reflected his times, we must be clearer about his core beliefs on environmental damage, improvement, and repair. When he called for the 'restoration of disturbed harmonies', what natural conditions did Marsh have in mind before and after this restoration? What elements of the American continent did Marsh consider to be normal and healthy? In short, what was Marsh's *nature* that he compared with counterparts overseas?

As part of the answer, certainly Marsh's healthy nature was wilderness, or what he termed 'the primitive forest'. Untouched American land, however mythic or real, was Marsh's model and yardstick by which he judged the state of European land – yet this is a paradoxical answer. For anyone who wades through Marsh's insightful though verbose writings, one will know that Marsh hardly applauds the benefits of wilderness, or wildness. For Marsh, the best land was one that was tamed, planted with orchards, tilled for abundant harvests. He called attention to the marvellous change in New England, 'which has converted unproductive wastes into fertile fields, and filled with light and life, the dark and silent recesses of our aboriginal forests and mountains'. So if Marsh considered wild forests to be normal, in most places he wanted to see them cut down to make way for farmland. I argue here that while many of Marsh's insights were universal and true for peoples of all nations, his beliefs about environmental degradation were typically American. In particular, I think he was American by linking degradation to wilderness: after Marsh, despising degradation was the flip-side of loving wilderness. One implied the other.<sup>2</sup>

Marsh's call for restoration encompassed three main assumptions: 1) humans modify natural systems for good as well as bad, 2) nature heals human-damaged natural systems only slowly, 3) humans degrade while supposedly improving. As other authors in this issue demonstrate, the first two assumptions were being promoted decades or even centuries before Marsh. But his third belief – that even enlightened humans acting with intelligence and foresight can damage natural systems – seems to be Marsh's most revolutionary environmental message. This notion of unintentional degradation relies on seeing wilderness as beneficent, which is a New World and especially American theme after the mid-nineteenth century. Not until a people could suggest that human-free land was advantageous and good, could the same people produce someone like Marsh who suggested that humans did not recognise the damage they inflicted. In Mediterranean countries where Marsh travelled, his hosts saw nothing good about human-free

land. By going abroad, Marsh learned to question their assumption that humans almost always improve the earth.

Wilderness is therefore a key concept to explore in Marsh's opus. 'Wilderness', however, appears only twice in *Man and Nature* (1864), and in both cases this term is referring to a desert wasteland, in agreement with its main mid-nineteenth century definition. Instead, *primitive*, *aboriginal*, and *wild* are much more commonly employed in this text for describing uninhabited places. Yet before setting foot in Europe, Marsh rarely mentioned these terms, as during his Rutland County speech of 1847, one of his earliest conservation statements. After travelling throughout Europe and the Mediterranean for almost five years between 1849 and 1854, eventually settling permanently in Italy in 1861, he spoke more frequently about the primitive forest, considering it to be one of his country's most distinguishing features.

Like many of the writers he borrowed from, Marsh contrasted Europe's human history with North America's natural history, and he saw youthful vigour in uninhabited nature. He wrote in 1861 that for Americans, 'accustomed to the verdant and ever-youthful luxuriance of the primitive forest, the very earth of Europe seems decrepit and hoary'. By the time he laboured on *Man and Nature*, he was qualifying that primitive forests, though unprofitable, were not necessarily dangerous wastelands, and may even deserve protection. So while Marsh declared that 'the sooner a natural wood is brought into the state of an artificially regulated one, the better it is for all the multiplied interests', sixty pages earlier found him applauding efforts to preserve Adirondack forests, whether for poetic or economic motives: 'Both these classes of considerations have a real worth.' After viewing European landscapes, George Marsh was finding new admiration for his home landscape, one that was young, primitive, aboriginal, and wild – or at least assumed to be so.<sup>3</sup>

Marsh's growing fondness for the wild therefore grew out of his own travels to places that seemed emphatically unwild: the ex-Roman empire. Peasants had worked and re-worked this land for centuries, planting or grazing it, smoothing or terracing it, replenishing or exhausting it. Wildland became Marsh's reference that he used to judge encounters with old lands. The more Marsh travelled across the Italian peninsula, the more he called into question the Italian distrust of unpeopled lands – and the more he defended America's growing reverence for the wild. America's best-known painters in Marsh's day, once enthralled with Old Europe's pastoral scenes, began turning their easels toward forest, wildlife, and mountain, free from civilisation's trace. Thomas Cole, Asher Durand, George Inness and others joined Marsh in admiring humanity's deep history, sojourning through the Alps or Apennines, renting a room in Florence or Rome for a month or a year, but eventually joining Marsh in turning back to admire untrammelled North American nature. For all these expatriates, Italy's essence was cultural, America's was natural.<sup>4</sup>

Always fascinated by large engineering projects, Marsh took keen interest in one of Italy's most spectacular examples of land reclamation situated in Tuscany's Maremma, a coastal area halfway down the peninsula being channelled and drained to create arable farmland. Italian statesman, Bettino Ricasoli, who owned large sections of the Maremma, encouraged Marsh to visit the area, while supplying him with various publications about the technical and historical details of this drainage scheme. Yet Marsh found himself envisioning very different forces from the ones Italians saw working in the Maremma. He and the Italians he consulted agreed that these coastal wetlands were useless, even dangerous wastelands in need of drainage – and he and the Italians made no mention of how marshes might sustain rare plants and animals, or how they might offer unusual landscapes for contemplation. This was a region infested by malaria, the bad air that harboured disease during summer. But while Marsh felt that Maremma's pestilential marshes resulted from human agency, as when wood collectors deforested upland regions and caused topsoils to wash to the coastal plain, the Italians saw heavy rain and muddy torrents – natural agency – to be the cause of these soggy areas. As Marsh explained it:

The western coast of Tuscany is not supposed to have been an unhealthy region before the conquest of Etruria by the Romans, but it certainly became so within a few centuries after that event. This was a natural consequence of the neglect or wanton destruction of the public improvements ... and of the felling of the upland forests, to satisfy the demand of wood at Rome.

People had caused the damage to this land, Marsh was saying. On the other hand, he noted that Italians

generally believed that the insalubrity of the province was the consequence, not the cause, of its depopulation, and that, if it were once densely inhabited, the ordinary operations of agriculture, and especially the maintenance of numerous domestic fires, would restore it to its ancient healthfulness.... Macchiavelli advised the Government of Tuscany 'to provide that men should restore the wholesomeness of the soil by cultivation, and purify the air by fires'.<sup>5</sup>

Far from blaming humans, Italians assumed that humans and their activities could resuscitate a damaged land. Contrary to Marsh, Italians praised culture while blaming nature.

Marsh therefore envisioned a different kind of environmental damage. In the Maremma, he felt that too many people had deforested the mountains and sent topsoil to the sea; Italians felt that too few people had been on hand to keep the land gardened and cultivated. Marsh saw *degradation*, but his European hosts saw *degeneration* – the spontaneous decay of gardened land. They struggled to mend nature's damages; he saw them struggling to mend culture's damages. When Italians drained malarial wetlands, when the Swiss reforested

flood-prone mountainsides or when the French seeded shifting sand dunes, they saw themselves combating natural forces through human means. But Marsh saw them repairing a once-pristine, once-wild land that humans had degraded. Marsh's provincial nature had given him a new perspective on the causes of environmental damage.



FIGURE 1. View of Piobesi Villa and gardens (near Turin) where Marsh wrote most of *Man and Nature* in Spring 1863. (Photo courtesy of the Municipality of Piobesi)

Certainly Marsh did not simply praise nature, as he thought it capable of bringing good as well as bad: 'Wherever [man] fails to make himself her master, he can but be her slave.' Still, Marsh showed himself acutely aware of the justifications for preserving wild nature. 'It is desirable', he wrote, 'that some large and easily accessible region of American soil should remain, as far as possible, in its primitive condition.' If Marsh distrusted unrestrained nature, he also saw benefits in untouched land. From my reading, Marsh grew to appreciate *wildland*, but he never trusted *wildness*. One sees in Marsh a reconciliation between the destructive potential of natural forces, and America's growing love affair with its wild country.<sup>6</sup>

Another key to understanding Marsh is to realise that he considered nature a *force* more than a *place*. Nature was the thing that shaped the land, but it was not the land itself. Nature carved canyons with rivers; it cloaked hillsides with trees: 'In all inorganic things, Nature infallibly accomplishes the end she proposes.' Marsh therefore saw nature not as a material substance, but more the way Noah Webster defined it in 1828: '*nature* is used for the agent, creator, author, producer of things, or for the powers that produce them'. Marsh's Italian colleagues, such as Carlo Cattaneo, emphasised that landscapes were moulded by forces that were more cultural rather than natural; at one point, Cattaneo said that Lombardy's countryside was produced by forces that were nine-tenths cultural and one-tenth natural. Marsh helped popularise this claim that humans were the dominant forces in sculpting the land. But unlike Cattaneo, Marsh stressed that human forces also damaged the land. More radically, Marsh taught that humans did not often recognise the destructive forces they unleashed.<sup>7</sup>

This unintentional damage resulted because of multiple, often invisible, connections between plants and animals, soil and rain. At least since Francesco Mengotti in the 1810s or Alexandre Surell in the 1840s, foresters and civil engineers were arguing that mountain forests served to prevent torrential flooding: tree trunks slowed coursing streams, tree roots anchored crumbling ground. But Marsh multiplied the consequences of removing the forest, adding that without trees, leaves and needles no longer dropped to form soil, rivers no longer flowed clearly and continuously. To these ecological disruptions, he joined economic, social, and political disruptions: timber removal led to silted rivers and shallow harbours, thereby diminishing fish harvests, hindering ship trade, land-locking cities, dissolving empires. Damages to the forest produced far-reaching damages in time and space unintentionally, often unknowingly. Marsh showed convincingly and exhaustively that humans damaged indirectly, not just directly. Before eclectic, widely-read Marsh there were other thinkers who exposed one or a few connections between human action and environmental disturbance, but there were few or none of them who simultaneously linked logging to fishing and trees to empire. As one of Marsh's reviewers put it, 'The main thought illustrated is not new, but it is brought out so forcibly, and illustrated by such encyclopedic learning, that it has the power of novelty.'

Only the author of a book as profusely detailed and broadly argued as *Man and Nature* could claim that ‘man is everywhere a disturbing agent. Wherever he plants his foot, the harmonies of nature are turned to discords.’ Before Marsh, most of humanity’s disturbances radiated invisibly, unknowingly.<sup>8</sup>

One had always found blame for environmental disturbances. When rivers flooded, victims blamed evil spirits, bad luck, God, or else they blamed nature and natural phenomena, be they heavy rainstorms or steep hillsides. But victims also blamed people to varying degrees, either those who cut down trees or else burned them down; either those who failed to replant trees, or else failed to care for replanted trees. In Venice, laws regulating forest cutting had existed since at least the sixteenth century, acting through prohibition, penalties, or incentives. When smoke first blanketed English towns, villagers blamed dirty coal or low chimneys or poor air filters more than the people who burned coal. Not only did Marsh multiply the blame placed on people, he multiplied the damages due to people. In a single volume he showed that floods, air and water pollution, erosion, desertification, species extinctions, and crop losses from exotic pests could all be traced to human activities that, in many cases, might have been avoided. Perhaps only destruction due to volcanoes or earthquakes escaped Marsh’s human blame – yet even these, he said, might be avoided if people excavated canals for diverting lava flows, or drilled deep wells for relieving tectonic strain. Marsh’s revolutionary idea was to place the blame for environmental damage squarely and ultimately on people. Perhaps Marsh’s first career as a lawyer helped him trace blame to a degree unimaginable by others.<sup>9</sup>

Locating blame is a complicated business. As an illustration of the different kinds of blame, the archives in Turin house a governmental report that outlines the causes of and remedies for the poor condition of Piedmont’s alpine forests. Dated 1784, this ninety-page report divides forest damage into three categories: ‘*De’ guasti per fatto d’uomo, De’ guasti per colpa d’uomo, De’ guasti per natura*’ – damages due to human presence, damages due to human negligence, damages due to nature. This report therefore distinguished natural from human damages, and then separated human damages into direct and indirect forms.<sup>10</sup>

Under examples of damage due to human presence, the report listed day-to-day tree cutting, as when farmers removed small trees for burning and large trees for building; charcoal manufacturers also consumed large numbers of trees. Under the category of damage due to human negligence, the report mentioned accidental forest fires or grazing by sheep and goats: although humans damaged the forest, sometimes their fires and domestic animals damaged them worse. But this report’s most detailed category of forest damage centred on spontaneous, everyday processes: ‘nature deteriorates, or more accurately, degenerates when plants grow old, after reaching or surpassing a certain point of maturity’. It added that not all trees reach old-age because diseases, poor soils, and soil losses hasten plant mortality. Still other trees get damaged by growing too close to other trees, starved as they are for light and soil nutrients. According to this



document, most injury to the forest resulted from ongoing, *natural* causes. Nature was the main cause of damage – and the leading culprit.<sup>11</sup>

Appearing in the eighteenth century, the report's most novel insights about the forest problem may well have been the suggestion that humans caused indirect damage to the forest. But the report's emphasis that nature was a central cause of forest damage reflected the day's more accepted opinion that human activities usually improved rather than damaged the earth: left unattended, nature produced worse forms and degenerated states. 'Wild nature is hideous and dying; it is I, I alone who can make it agreeable and living' declared Comte de Buffon, thereby teaching that enlightened humans tend to produce desirable changes in the land. Even a hundred years after Turin's forest report, Italian forestry laws and practices still reflected the assumption that nature *degenerated* the land, but that humanity usually *ameliorated* it. Only after Marsh did foresters favour combating human agency more than natural decay. Before his time, when floods or avalanches roared down the Alps, Italians blamed God or the weather more than the people who had cut down trees.<sup>12</sup>

Marsh was the leading spokesman of a new, characteristically American movement that would question the assumption that intelligent humans improved natural systems. Marsh warned that humans degraded directly as well as indirectly. More seriously, he warned that humans degraded unexpectedly, unknowingly, and unintentionally. As he wrote near the end of *Man and Nature*, 'I have more than once alluded to the collateral and unsought consequences of human action as being often more momentous than the direct and desired results.' Before Marsh, humans were much less to blame for deforesting, polluting, and extirpating the wilderness that threatened them from all sides.<sup>13</sup>

As David Lowenthal documents, *Man and Nature* was an immediate success, with the first thousand copies selling within a few months, leading to various reprintings and a worldwide reading. The congratulatory tone of book reviewers in American, British, French, Italian, and Russian periodicals signalled that Marsh had connected to an international audience receptive to his ideas. The human ability to damage the world was fast becoming a popular topic – and Marsh's evidence for humanity's constructive as well as destructive effects across large expanses of time and space provided much explanatory power. His corollary, that the human ability to improve was also an ability to repair, also provided hope to an otherwise doomsday account. As Marsh's very first sentence indicates, he aimed to 'suggest the possibility and the importance of the restoration of disturbed harmonies'. Importantly, *Man and Nature* repeatedly mentions the word 'restoration', a relatively rare term in early conservation writings: in fact, a digital search of America's early conservation canon, a selection of some 62 texts, pamphlets, key testimonies, and laws appearing between 1850 and 1920, reveals that *Man and Nature* contains more than a quarter of all the instances of 'restoration' in these writings. Such evidence offers more support to the claim that Marsh was the leading voice of a paradigm shift that made culture rather

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than nature responsible for the earth's degradation – and that made culture rather than nature responsible for its restoration.<sup>14</sup>

It also appears that Europeans and Americans, by holding very different attitudes toward The Wild, read *Man and Nature* differently. It can be said that Americans generally applauded Marsh's call for less degradation, while his European readers celebrated his call for more restoration. One American reviewer, for example, simply reiterated Marsh's warnings about the human destruction of natural systems, 'which with a little protection would have been an unfailing source of wealth'. Another American noted that, 'If the question were generally put, What has been the result of man's actions on the earth?', the usual answer would be a typical self-congratulation about human achievements and human enterprise. This reviewer then refuted this claim by recounting a long list of human damages to natural systems, eventually repeating Marsh's praise for recent efforts to protect the Adirondack forest. Now sensitised to the warning that humans caused damage to their pristine land, this American called for stopping its degradation and initiating its preservation.<sup>15</sup>

But unlike their American counterparts, English, French, and Italian reviewers were much more interested in Marsh's call for repair and restoration. Committed to the belief that natural forces caused damage to their manicured land, they skimmed over his warnings about damage. One French reviewer asserted that man's 'most important efforts would be to re-establish a portion of the useful forces ... to return a fraction of the fertility .... [S]ociety, on several fronts, is entering a period of reparation, reconstruction, and replantation'. Likewise, an Italian reviewer asked, 'Who does not know about our damaged alpine mountainside? Our wise author [has shown why] everyone is talking about the need for reforestation'. Another Italian also praised Marsh's contribution, offering that 'man's restorative actions' composed a large section of the book. A third Italian noted that Marsh's call for restoration paralleled the larger Italian endeavour of rebuilding and reorganising a new nation: 'now that Italy is rising again, [Marsh] can help us reflect on the problem of restoring Italy's land to a condition better fit for a prosperous and powerful nation .... We must restore a nature that has gone to ruins through improper care'. In the midst of severe depletion of their forests, soils and rivers, the French and Italians considered Marsh's main plea to be one of finding better ways to refurbish a deteriorated land. They saw their countries not as once-wild lands, but as once-gardened lands that required more gardening. While Americans identified with Marsh's warnings about degradation, Europeans identified with his plea for restoration.<sup>16</sup>

I believe it is still a useful exercise to identify Marsh look-alikes. I do not refer here to Marsh precursors, although this is a crucial field of inquiry being addressed by others in this issue. Instead, I keep an eye out for Marsh-doubles, people who have roughly comparable experiences, who lived at roughly the same time, and were thinking about some of the same issues. It helps me identify what might make Marsh special, and helps place this icon of conservation within a

background of contemporaries. This imaginary double would have considered a range of subjects, yet may have special interests in natural history, landscapes and their damage, agriculture and past agriculture, politics and business – but importantly, this person would also have travelled widely, and lived in foreign lands for extended periods. As Ian Tyrrell points out, botanist Ferdinand Von Mueller (1825–1896) is one such candidate, who was born in Germany before moving to Australia as a young man and helping spread Marsh's warnings. My own bias is to look for candidates in Italy, the place where Marsh spent the last quarter of his life. One Adolfo di Bérenger (1815–1895) thus becomes another good candidate; one who headed Italy's first forestry school beginning in 1869, one who wrote a thick volume about 'Forest Archeology' that slightly pre-dated *Man and Nature* and surveyed forest management since Roman times; moreover, Marsh cited this volume in his own book calling it 'the most learned work ever published on the social history of the forest'. Di Bérenger also travelled: from Germany where he grew up, then to Venice, and finally to Florence where he lived out his life. But maybe he did not travel far enough.<sup>17</sup>

Instead, my current favourite is Francesco Carega di Muricce (1831–1905), another Florentine and Marsh contemporary. As agriculturist, journalist, and politician, Carega wrote at one point that, 'If there is one subject that newspapers should daily address, it would concern ways to rapidly reforest our extensively denuded mountainsides.' In the country's leading agricultural journal (which he edited), Carega applauded the intent of Italy's fundamental Forest Law of 1877, but he lamented that it was producing few tangible successes. 'Why do they even make the laws?', he asked three times.<sup>18</sup>

Carega also travelled overseas and, like Marsh, he was impressed by the lessons to be learned by observing foreign lands and foreigners managing their lands. For over a year in 1871 and 1872, in fact, Carega toured the United States where he made careful observations that he would eventually share with his countrymen in speeches, articles, and books. One of his most illuminating speeches, delivered the following year to leading agriculturists at Florence's well-known Georgofili Academy where he was a member, is reminiscent of Marsh's 1856 speech at Concord's New Hampshire State Fair: both men recommended their audiences to take note of how land was managed on the other side of the Atlantic. Carega said that Italians should learn to expect more from North America than an occasional novel plant species, valuable as food or ornament; in that prosperous land, he said, 'there is a complex and rational agricultural system that merits our study and occasional imitation'.<sup>19</sup>

But Carega also admitted that with such remarkable contrasts, American lands and land-use practices afforded more interest to Italians as curiosities than as lessons. North America's 'endless, virgin forests', he said, meant that Americans have little knowledge of silviculture, and little need to practice it. Regarding agricultural production, he noted how Americans harvested almost twice as much grain as Italians on a given area of land: 'So powerful is the virginal force of

American soil that it surpasses even the most heavily fertilized of our exhausted and starved lands.' Carega also explained how Americans rarely utilised mineral or animal fertilisers to replenish their soils. Indeed the inattention to rebuilding the land's fertility seemed to be the principal difference between Italian and American agriculture: the very goal of Italian agricultural education, Carega explained, was to 'give life to a dying land ... by restoring and rejuvenating the soils through more rational and prudent farming methods'. Americans, he said, showed almost total indifference to this necessity for soil restoration.<sup>20</sup>

Carega lectured in Florence on the need to continue improving the land, but Marsh lectured in Concord on the need to stop degrading land. Marsh warned that forests stripped from Italian mountainsides resulted in 'extensive degradation of the soil and denudation of rock at higher elevations; the arable land of whole provinces has been laid waste'. On the other hand, Carega warned that human inaction damaged the land, and that only direct human intervention could improve it: 'We must convince landowners of the damage being done to a land left neglected and uncompensated for its past uses.' While Marsh pleaded with Americans to degrade the land less, Carega pleaded with Italians to improve it more.<sup>21</sup>

So here is where my favourite double doesn't look very much like Marsh. Carega's North American travels allowed him to see damages being done to his country by spontaneous, degenerative, natural action; Marsh's European travels allowed him to see the more revolutionary damages being done to his own country by human action. Both men believed that humans were responsible for a damaged land, but unlike Carega, Marsh felt that humans damaged the land indirectly, often without anyone realising it. The belief that untouched wildland was normal and good may have been Marsh's key assumption that he took to Europe. Marsh's standard for normal land was his own home landscape – a wildland that Marsh thought he had seen disappearing in the New England of his youth. One may speculate that without his reverence for wildland, Marsh may never have made humans the ultimate cause of environmental damage.

Peoples from Europe and the New Europes have seen themselves to be damaging their planet at least since John Evelyn's seventeenth-century Londoners suffered from chimney smoke, or since Richard Grove's eighteenth-century colonial islanders warned against tropical deforestation, or since Richard Judd's nineteenth-century New England common folk over-harvested their woods and waters. But only since George Perkins Marsh have people seen themselves to be damaging the earth indirectly and unintentionally. After Marsh, the mere presence of people would be seen to activate a long chain of damaging events. After *Man and Nature*, man, not nature, became the ultimate cause of disturbed harmonies. Thereafter, the only certain way to avoid degradation was to keep people off the land. Restoration became the best measure for degraded lands, and preservation the best measure for unpeopled lands.<sup>22</sup>

I hope that alongside Leopold, Muir, or even Thoreau, verbose and polymathic Marsh will be added to the list of America's wilderness originals. Marsh's American nature allowed him to find special praise for the wild, and to find special blame in people for damaging the wild. As one of *Man and Nature's* first reviewers declared, Marsh shows how man and nature, although 'naturally friendly, become hostile for want of mutual understanding'. The more we learned to blame people, the more we learned to revere wilderness. If the time has finally come for us to rethink our love affair with wilderness, because it leads us to ignore and neglect ordinary landscapes, then it may be time to rethink Marsh's view he gave us of degradation. It may therefore be time to reconsider his assumption that we are 'everywhere a disturbing agent'. At least in some cases, it would seem that humans do not turn all of nature's harmonies to discords.<sup>23</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Wilbur Zelinsky, *Exploring the Beloved Country* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994), 268; George Perkins Marsh, 'Oration' [before the New Hampshire State Agricultural Society, 10 October 1856], in *Transactions of the New Hampshire State Agricultural Society, 1856* (Concord, NH: Amos Hadley, 1857), 39–41.

<sup>2</sup> George P. Marsh, *Address delivered before the Agricultural Society of Rutland County, Sept. 30, 1847* (Rutland, VT, 1848), 1.

<sup>3</sup> George P. Marsh, 'The Study of Nature', *The Christian Examiner* 68 (January–March 1861), 49; George P. Marsh, *Man and Nature; Or, Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action* ([New York: Charles Scribner, 1864] Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1965, foreword by David Lowenthal), 260, 203. For an overview of Marsh's conservation debt to Italy see Marcus Hall, 'Restoring the Countryside: George Perkins Marsh and the Italian Land Ethic (1861–1882)', *Environment and History* 4,1 (1998), 91–103.

<sup>4</sup> The best known perpetrators of this theme are Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture: Landscape and Painting, 1825–1875* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) and Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (NY: Knopf, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Marsh, *Man and Nature*, 361–2.

<sup>6</sup> Marsh 'The Study of Nature', 34; Marsh, *Man and Nature*, 203.

<sup>7</sup> Marsh 'The Study of Nature', 51; *American Dictionary of the English Language*, compiled by Noah Webster (1828; reprinted by the Foundation for American Christian Education, 2000); *Le piu Belle pagine di Carlo Cattaneo*, ed. Gaetano Salvemini, (1845; Roma: Donzelli, 1993), 49–57.

<sup>8</sup> Francesco Mengotti, *Idraulica Fisica e Sperimentale; ossia saggio sull'aque correnti*, 2 vols (Venezia: Francesco Andreola, 1816); Alexandre Surell, *Étude sur les Torrents Hautes-Alpes* (1841; Paris: Dunod, 1870); 'Man and Nature', *The Atlantic Monthly* 14: 82 (August 1864), 262; Marsh, *Man and Nature*, 36.

<sup>9</sup> Marsh, *Man and Nature*, 459–62.

<sup>10</sup> *Informative de' Signori Intendente del Piemonte sulla Materia de' Boschi*, Relazione dei intendente delle Provincie di Piemonte su boschi e selva, I (1784): 161–202 [in

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‘Controllo Generale, Boschi e Selve’, mazzo 392, Sezioni Riunite, Archivio dello Stato di Torino, Italy].

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 189–92. See also Alfonso Bogge, ‘I boschi e la loro conservazione nel Cuneese verso la fine del secolo XVIII’, in *Agricoltura e mondo rurale nella storia della Provincia di Cuneo*, Bollettino della Società per gli Studi Storici Archeologici ed Artistici della Provincia di Cuneo, 85:2 (Sept. 1981): 189–212.

<sup>12</sup> Fabienne O. Vallino, ‘Un Ricco Intreccio di Teorie Scientifiche alle Spalle: Il Pensiero di Marsh sulla Natura’, in George P. Marsh, *L’Uomo e la Natura* (1870; 1872; foreword by Fabienne O. Vallino, 1993), LXXXVII; Buffon quoted in Clarence Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 495; Marcus Hall, ‘Finding Blame for Piedmont’s Floods, 18–20th century (Italy)’, in Antonio Lazzarini, ed., *Diboscamento montano e politiche territoriali. Alpi e Appennini dal Settecento al Duemila* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2002).

<sup>13</sup> Marsh, *Man and Nature*, 456.

<sup>14</sup> David Lowenthal, *George Perkins Marsh: Prophet of Conservation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000). Of the 90 instances that ‘restoration’ occurs in this American conservation literature, 23 of these appear in *Man and Nature*. See the Library of Congress’s ‘The Evolution of the Conservation Movement, 1850–1920’ located at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amrvhtml/conshome.html> on 5 February 2003.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Man and Nature’, *The Bibliotheca Sacra* 21 (1864): 882–3; ‘Man and Nature’, *New York Times*, July 25, 1864, 2. See also J. R. Lowell, ‘Man and Nature’, *North American Review* 99:104 (July 1864): 318–20; J. H. Allen, ‘Man and Nature’, *Christian Examiner* LXXVII (1865): 65–73.

<sup>16</sup> Adolphe de Circourt, ‘Man and Nature’, *Nouvelles Annales des Voyages de la Géographie, de l’Histoire et de l’Archéologie* 1 (1865), 216–17; G. F. Baruffi, ‘Man and Nature’, *Gazzetta Ufficiale* 16 Dec. 1864; Gerolamo Boccardo, *l’Indipendenza Italiana* 19 Dec. 1864; ‘l’Uomo e la Natura’, *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, 11 Dec. 1865, 1. For a British review, see ‘Man and Nature’, *The Edinburgh Review or Critical Journal* 120 (1864), 478, 492.

<sup>17</sup> Adolfo Di Bérenger, *Studii di Archeologia Forestale: Dell’Antica Storia e Giurisprudenza Forestale in Italia* (Treviso e Venezia: G. Longo, 1859–1863; Ristampata, Firenze: 1965); Marsh’s quote is in H. L. Koopman, ed., *Catalogue of the Library of George Perkins Marsh* (Burlington: University of Vermont, 1892).

<sup>18</sup> Francesco Carega di Muricce, ‘I nostri monti ed il loro rimboscimento’, *Giornale Agrario Italiano* XIV: 1–2 (1880): 1–7.

<sup>19</sup> Francesco Carega di Muricce, *In America (1871–72)* (Firenze: Banco Annunzi, 1875), 2 vols; Francesco Carega di Muricce, ‘Saggio di Economia rurale Americana, applicato all’Italia’, in *Atti della Reale Accademia Economico-Agraria dei Georgofili di Firenze* IV serie, III (1873): 63–110.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 71, 80, 94.

<sup>21</sup> Marsh, ‘Oration’, 76–7; Carega, ‘Saggio di Economia rurale Americana, applicato all’Italia’, (1873), 94–5. For a comparison of Italian and American conservation goals, see Marcus Hall, ‘Comparing Damages: American and Italian Concepts of Restoration’, in M. Agnoletti and S. Anderson, eds, *Methods and Approaches in Forest History* (Wallingford, UK: CAB International, 2000): 145–52.

<sup>22</sup> John Evelyn, *Fumifugium: or, The Inconvenience of the Aer, and Smoake of London Dissipated. Together With Some Remedies humbly proposed* (London: W. Godbid, et al., 1661); Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Richard W. Judd, *Common Lands, Common People: The Origins of Conservation in Northern New England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

<sup>23</sup> 'Man and Nature', *The North American Review* 99:104 (July 1864), 319.