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Writing *Man and Nature* (1864) in Italy: George and Caroline Marsh on Human-Environmental Relations

Scrivere *Man and Nature* (1864) in Italia: George e Caroline Marsh sulle relazioni uomo-ambiente

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Abstract. George Perkins Marsh (1801-1882), first US Minister to the Kingdom of Italy, is also known as a father of environmentalism, due to his book, *Man and Nature; or, Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action* (1864). The book includes environmental changes George witnessed during his New England years and as he and his wife Caroline lived and traveled abroad. Caroline's diaries written in Italy attest to her partnership in the book's composition and to its role among their ambassadorial duties.

Keywords: George Perkins Marsh, Caroline Crane Marsh, *Man and Nature*, environment, diaries.

Riassunto. George Perkins Marsh (1801-1882), primo ambasciatore statunitense presso il Regno d'Italia, è noto anche come padre dell'ambientalismo, grazie al suo libro *Man and Nature; or, Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action* (1864). Il libro tratta dei cambiamenti ambientali di cui George fu testimone durante gli anni trascorsi nel New England e quando, insieme a sua moglie Caroline, visse e viaggiò all'estero. I diari di Caroline scritti in Italia attestano la sua collaborazione alla composizione del libro e il ruolo che esso ebbe tra i loro compiti di ambasciatori.

Parole chiave: George Perkins Marsh, Caroline Crane Marsh, *Man and Nature*, ambiente, diari.

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Introduction

George Perkins Marsh (1801-1882), the first US Minister Plenipotentiary to the unified Kingdom of Italy, has been lauded for his career as a politician, statesman, and philologist.[1] Those interested in political science and history have analyzed his correspondence and dispatches to assert how Marsh fostered US-Italian diplomatic relations.[2] But he also is celebrated as a father of environmentalism, for having written *Man and Nature; or, Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action* (1864). As the book's subtitle indicates, its key theme is the human impact on the natural environment. Biographer David Lowenthal has explained that, alongside Charles Darwin's famous *Origin of Species*, Marsh's volume "was the most influential text of its time to link culture with nature, science with society, landscape with history."[3] More recently, the work has been seen as "the fountainhead of the conservation movement."[4] The book anticipated what we now refer to as the "Anthropocene"--that "epoch of geological time during which human activity is considered to be the dominant influence on the environment, climate, and ecology of the earth."[5] Although the Anthropocene period generally is considered to have taken off in the mid-twentieth century, some acknowledge that it began with the nineteenth-century Industrial Revolution. Marsh witnessed these changes first during his New England childhood and young adulthood and then later as he traveled, culminating in his 1864 publication.

Growing attention to the Anthropocene and to Marsh's work during the last two decades, manifested in part by reprint editions of *Man and Nature*, conferences and articles on Marsh, has been well-deserved.[6] This essay contributes to these recent conversations in two ways. First, it reinforces what Lowenthal has written about the impact of Marsh's travels abroad – especially in Italy – but with added attention to how the theories of the human impact on the natural environment drew from these experiences.[7] Additionally, though, and more important, it attests to the role of George's wife, Caroline Crane Marsh, in this watershed publication. Without her partnership and assistance, George likely would not have com-

[1] Lowenthal, *George Perkins Marsh*, provides the most comprehensive account of Marsh's life and work. A 2014 American Academy in Rome event is but one example of Marsh celebrations during the last decade. See Bowes and Rutelli, "The Legacy."
[2] Fiorentino, "International Design"; Ducci, *George P. Marsh Correspondence*.
[3] Lowenthal, *George Perkins Marsh*, xv.
[4] Lewis Mumford, qtd. in Lowenthal, *George Perkins Marsh*, xvi.
[5] "Anthropocene, n. and adj." OED Online.
[6] See Marchi; Baltieri; Bowes.
[7] Lowenthal dedicates a chapter of his biography *George Perkins Marsh* (267-312) to the composition of *Man and Nature*.

posed the volume in its existing form. Caroline and George loved the time they were able to devote to what they both called his "work."[8] Although it may seem disconnected from George's legation responsibilities, they both saw the creation of *Man and Nature* as part of their ambassadorial roles.

To elaborate: without first-hand experience of the couple's travels during George's appointments as a statesman, his book would not have been written. In route to Turkey in 1850, where George would serve as US Minister Plenipotentiary to the Ottoman Empire until 1853, the couple observed varied agricultural practices and terrain throughout the Italian peninsula and witnessed Vesuvius's eruption. The "geographical breadth and historical depth" of George's knowledge of human interactions and environmental change was expanded through his Mediterranean and "Eastern" travels and in return through Sicily, where he observed Mount Etna and the surrounding volcanic soil.[9] All the while, Caroline usually travelled with him. Although he made some expeditions alone, George preferred not to travel without her. Later, while serving in unified Italy, the couple planned and executed explorations of Italian mountains, valleys, plains, and deltas. In sum, Caroline contributed to his book work as a sounding board, proofreader, and indexer. And even before that, she instigated the writing.[10]

Coupled with the literal words on the book's pages, Caroline's extensive diaries and some of the couple's letters provide insights to the volume's composition, as I will note here. These sources also make evident that they discussed their observations of the environment and the works they read together, all contributing to what ended up on the page and influencing readers today. Their experiences abroad influenced what has come to be known as environmental science. As Sean Cocco has written about landscapes, noting specifically those around Mount Vesuvius, they "are of nature and the mind, sustaining myths that explain, empower, and identify cultures and peoples."[11] George Marsh's book of "science" helped him to understand the vast history and cultures he experienced (on and off the page) during travels with Caroline. Writing the book helped him explain these ideas to himself, to his wife, and to his imagined readers. Meanwhile Caroline's witness – especially of volcanoes, mountains, seas, and birds – and her journal entries deepened the myths she held in her mind and shared with her husband about humans' relationships with the natural world.

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[8] C. Marsh, Journals, July 6, 10-11, 1863. January 23, 1863.
[9] Lowenthal, *George Perkins Marsh*, 276.
[10] *Ibid.*, 268-269.
[11] Cocco, *Watching Vesuvius*, 2.

Man and Nature: Background

Marsh's interest in environmental topics emerged prior to his time in Italy. As a youth in rural New England, he had walked in the woods and hiked the mountains as well as devoted studies to ancient history. As a young man he witnessed and invested in the development of woolen mills and the railroads, which changed the landscape of Vermont, between Woodstock, the town of his childhood, and Burlington, the city where he began his career as an attorney and statesman.[12] Following his years as a US congressman, he and his wife Caroline crossed the Atlantic for the first time in 1849, when he was named US Minister to the Ottoman Empire. The Marshes' letters, written to friends and family in the US during that period as they crossed Europe, demonstrate how they approached what they saw. Caroline and George carried in their minds what they had read about northern France, the Rhone valley, the Mediterranean coast, Pisa and the Arno River, Florence, Rome, and the Bay of Naples. As they witnessed these regions first-hand – both the human and the natural environment – they also compared the sites with what they knew at home: the low-lying coastal areas where Caroline was raised in Berkley, Massachusetts, and Providence, Rhode Island; the mountains and valleys of rural Vermont of George's childhood and their early married years; and the urban areas of Boston, New York, and Washington, DC, where they lived and traveled during George's career as a US congressman.[13]

In the months and weeks ashore in Europe between their arrival in Le Havre, France, in October 1849 and their departure from Naples in mid-February 1850, George and Caroline noted the landscape in their lengthy letters to family and friends. George continually compared the cultivation of grapes, for example, and the narrow terraces to Vermont agriculture, and he noted how the tending of sheep and cattle differed.[14]

Vesuvius, Volcanoes, and the East

Beyond these observations, though, the Marshes' witness of Vesuvius erupting while they were in Naples was a life-changing moment for

[12] Lowenthal, *George Perkins Marsh*, 273-74.

[13] On Caroline's life and writings, see Crane, *Caroline Crane Marsh*; Lowenthal, "'Marriage of Choice'"; Lowenthal and Quartermaine, "Introduction"; Quartermaine, "Views from Beyond;" and Madden, "Ambasciatrice, Activist, Auntie, Author;" *Engaging Italy*; "Travels, Translations, and Limitations."

[14] G. Marsh, "To Charles Marsh," October 25, 1849; "To His Mother," December 9, 1849; "To Charles Marsh," February 3, 1850. C. Marsh, "To Mrs. Charles Marsh 'Mother,'" November 4, 1849.

them, as it was for many others. George wrote an essay on the event for the Smithsonian, and they wrote to family and friends as well.[15] Caroline wrote that her Vesuvius experiences were those among her travels of which she was most proud.[16] The volcano and the history of the civilization around it have contributed to both insiders' and outsiders' views of science and of the relationships between culture and environment.[17] In the seventeenth century, writings about Vesuvius's eruptions intertwined "empiricism, rhetorical persuasion, and natural philosophy" – that is, humanism and the natural world.[18] The same was true in the nineteenth century when the Marshes and their contemporaries visited and imagined it. The Marshes fell into this pattern of storytelling about Vesuvius and the South. The volcano's "latency and activity" precluded any completely "Arcadian vision" of this part of the Italian landscape. Instead, travel writing and "natural inquiry" captured this "alternation of indolence and explosiveness" as connected to human nature and the environment.[19] Marsh intertwined the two as he wrote of both Vesuvius and Etna in *Man and Nature*. He underscored that volcanic soil could be (and was being) used to human advantages in Italy, highlighting it as environmental "improvement" without waste and destruction, an idea which was central to his text.

After visiting Vesuvius the Marshes went on to travel extensively in the "East" for several years, until George's appointment ended late in 1853. The varied terrain along the Nile, along with the ancient artifacts, added to the rugged geography of the Mediterranean and varied agriculture they witnessed. George sent specimens back to the Smithsonian Institution, helping to establish its collection in the natural sciences. And then, during their return, a stopover in Sicily, including visits to Mount Etna, contributed to insights on volcanoes, soil, and other topography and environmental change.[20]

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[15] G. Marsh, "Notes on Vesuvius"; "To Charles Marsh," 3 February 1850; C. Marsh, "To 'Mother'," 12 March 1850.
[16] C. Marsh, Journals, July 6, 1862.
[17] Cocco, *Watching Vesuvius*, 2-3, 10.
[18] *Ibid.*, 20. Cocco argues also "that the creation of Vesuvius as a cosmopolitan object is a story not unrelated to that of the portrayal of southern Italy as exotic" (21).
[19] Cocco, *Watching Vesuvius*, 20. See also di Mauro, "*Il Vulcano*" and Pagano, "Grand Tour."
[20] Lowenthal, *George Perkins Marsh*, 151. After their visits to the peninsula and to the island of Sicily during and after George's Ottoman appointment, the Marshes did not return to southern Italy. Their planned excursions related to the book circled around the Alps and the Maremma. Even after *Man and Nature* was completed, when the Italian government seat moved from Turin to Florence and then to Rome, Caroline and George preferred to be further north. They maintained their villa in Florence through George's death in 1882, while also maintaining a residence in Rome for George's ambassadorial duties.

Upon returning from the Ottoman Empire, the Marshes dedicated themselves to literary and linguistic endeavors. For George, the study of language was the study of civilization and culture. He wrote as such in his *Lectures on the English Language* (1860). Caroline translated *The Hallig; or, the Sheepfold of the Waters*, a tale of the low-lying lands of northern Germany, where flooding regularly destroys the human attempts to live on the coast (1856).[21] The villagers' earthen dams and levees testify to these admirable but often futile attempts. Both these published volumes reflect the couple's interest in the natural environment and human interactions with it.

When George was called to serve again as a US Minister abroad in 1861 – this time to the Kingdom of Italy – the couple brought with them to Turin their prior knowledge of the Italian peninsula with its varied topography, agriculture, and animal life. What exactly prompted George to begin what would become *Man and Nature* while he was employed as an ambassador? At least his passion for understanding the larger picture of what we now call the Anthropocene. Additionally, Caroline "insisted" that George share his knowledge and gave him "no peace" until he began the "great volume" – a phrase which George employed to refer to size rather than to value of its contents.[22] And what drove Caroline to help him? Not only her spousal duties and a heartfelt admiration for and a deep relationship with her husband.[23] Additionally, she, too, had an affinity for the natural world. As she wrote in late December 1861, six months into their first year in Turin, "with the spring we may hope for a release from these social duties, and the mountains and the sea will once more be our kingdoms."[24]

Man and Nature: Overview

If the Marshes saw society and government as demanding and fickle – full of its "social duties" and upheaval – they saw "Nature" in its purest form as relatively stable. George wrote as such in the introduction to *Man and Nature*. A basic set of organic and inorganic items support themselves in a healthy cycle, he explained. Even volcanoes and earthquakes, with their seemingly unpredictable and "destructive" actions, are "phenomena of decomposition and recomposition" – in spite of their "most convulsive

[21] Madden, "Travels, Translations and Limitations."
[22] G. Marsh, "To Caroline Estcourt," 18 February 1863. Qtd. in Lowenthal, *George Perkins Marsh*, 268.
[23] Lowenthal, *George Perkins Marsh*, 377-379.
[24] C. Marsh, Journals, December 23, 1861.

throes" (35).[25] Some slow, inevitable geological changes, such as the work of glaciers, George saw as stable and enduring over time. The only possibly flaw in this cycle of "decomposition and recomposition": the human impact upon it. Humans should imitate nature herself, guarding against "the absolute destruction of any of her elementary matter, the raw material of her works" (35). Therefore, he advised, as "organized commonwealth[s]" are established, "It is […] a matter of the first importance, that, in commencing the process of fitting them for permanent civilized occupation, the transforming operations should be so conducted as not unnecessarily to derange and destroy what, in too many cases, it is beyond the power of man to rectify or restore" (34). "Consumption" and "profligate waste" should never be the norm; the ideal, rather, is "usufruct" practice – wherein humans enjoy the advantages of nature but not to the point of destruction (34). This thread lays the groundwork for the rest of the volume.

After the introduction the volume continues for another five chapters: "Transfer, Modification, and Extirpation of Vegetable and of Animal Species," "The Woods," "The Waters," "The Sands," and "Projected or Possible Geographical Changes by Man." The first edition ran for 576 pages, including a nine-page bibliography and an index. Marsh's written sources included numerous contemporary studies, such as the eight-volume *Annali di Agricoltura, Industria e Commercio*, published in Turin during the years he was composing his book, as well as seventeenth- and eighteenth-century texts. For example, Paolo Frisi's work on the means of regulating rivers and streams, published in Lucca (1762), underpins Marsh's writings on the changes to the Maremma region, an area whose improvements impressed him. The contemporary volumes, however, indicate that Marsh's research included recent experiments as well as readings in history.

The narrative, typical of the nineteenth century, is not without personal opinions. These often appear in the text's extensive footnotes and reflect Marsh's scientific practice of widely gathering ideas. One example is his writing about swallows. These opinionated comments merited space in both the footnotes and the body of the text; therefore, they deserve attention here.

Swallows as Signs of the Anthropocene

Readers might expect that within a chapter on the "extirpation" of "animal species" Marsh might note the disappearance of swallows. His comments about these birds' importance, however, is not that they are in

[25] Hereafter, all references from *Man and Nature* are noted within the essay.

danger of extinction. Rather, Marsh points to swallows as a sign of environmental health within his chapter on "Waters"; swallows are connected to other organisms beyond themselves, including humans. As Marsh writes about low-lying areas in which stagnant water contributes to ill-health, he notes that swallows will not inhabit these regions. He asks readers, is it the miasma of the swamps that keeps the sparrows away, or is it rather the absence of people, who cannot live in the unhealthy area, which keeps the birds away? These little birds, he explains, have been esteemed in many cultures through the centuries. "The Romans considered the swallow as consecrated to the Penates, or household gods, and according to Peretti, the Lombard Peasantry think it a sin to kill them" (418).[26] In Lombardy the people refer to swallows as "*le gallinelle del Signore*," or "the little chickens of the Lord," Marsh notes (418).

Marsh also includes a nursery rhyme (or *ripietto*) from Gradi's *Racconti Popolari*, which he believes "well expresses the feeling of the peasantry toward this bird" (418). He provides both the original Italian and an English translation:

O rondinella che passi lo mare
Torna 'ndietro, vo' dirti du' parole;
Dammi 'na penna delle tue bell'ale
Vo' scrivere 'na lettera 'n cara bella,
Ti rendero' la penna, o rondinella;
E quando l'avro' scritta 'n carta bianca,
Ti rendero' la penna che ti manca;
E quand l'avro' scritta in carta d'oro,
Ti rendero' la penna al tuo bel volo.[27]

O swallow, that fliest beyond the sea,
Turn back! I would fain have a word with thee.
A feather oh grant, from thy wing so bright!
For I to my sweetheart a letter would write;
And when it is written on paper fine
I'll give thee, O swallow, that feather of thine;
--On paper so white, and I'll give thee back,
O pretty swallow, the pen thou dost lack;
--On paper of gold, and then I'll restore
To thy beautiful pinion the feather once more. (418)

The poem captures the human-swallow connection through references to the exchange of feather, wanted as pen for writing, and to the bird's

[26] Marsh cites Peretti, *Le Serate del Villaggio*, 168.
[27] Marsh cites Gradi, *Racconti Popolari*, 33.

transport of the written message. The understanding of the "usufruct" and interdependent relation of the two is central.

Marsh then adds to this example from the Italian rhyme and Lombard traditions a personal connection from his New England youth, which also comments on the swallows' value:

> Popular traditions and superstitions are so closely connected with localities, that, though an emigrant people may carry them to a foreign land, they seldom survive a second generation. The swallow, however, is still protected in New England by prejudices of transatlantic origin; and I remember hearing, in my childhood, that if the swallows were killed, the cows would give bloody milk. (419)

Here the anecdote connects not only humans and swallows but cattle as well, since even the cow's milk would be harmed by the death of a swallow. While Marsh demystifies the Roman and Lombard theology and New England folklore by explaining the mythology and fables being handed down, he renders valuable the understanding of the relations among animals and reveals how his personal experiences influence his "science" about "man and nature."

The anecdote and the poem also raise a question, though, of how much of these comments may have been provided by Caroline? She read a collection of Gradi's *Racconti* with niece Carrie, and she translated poetry, as well as composed verses.[28] It is easy to imagine the couple at least having a conversation about these pages of *Man and Nature*, even if these are not Caroline's words which made it onto the page.

A Woman's Role: Records of Pegli, Piobesi, and the Piedmont Period

The swallow passages, the poetry, and the reference to Gradi's *Racconti* direct us to Caroline's extensive diaries, which give both details and insights into these topics as well as to George's work and her involvement in it. First, though, related to Caroline's role in her husband's work, note that Luisa Quartermaine's translation of Caroline's diaries refer to George's wife as an *ambasciatrice*. While the Italian word employs the diminutive and feminine-gendered ending, it also signifies a female ambassador. Overall, it underscores Caroline's important role while she lived abroad with her husband. Additionally, within the journals, Caroline refers to herself twice within her first year in Turin as a "doyenne" – the

[28] Madden, "Travels, Translations, and Limitations."

most important woman within a specific field – in this case, within "the diplomatic corps."[29] In the first instance she's writing of the role the Belgian minister's wife must take, following his unexpected death; Caroline imagined herself in a similar situation, should her older husband die suddenly. In the second instance Caroline writes of preparing for her presentation at court. As recent studies of ambassadors' wives have shown, the women's roles were significant, as they were expected to perform officially certain functions while abroad and, as such, contribute to cultural exchange.[30] While authorial collaboration is not listed among the expected "diplomatic functions" of "reportage, mediation and representation" and the formal conversations, dinners, and charitable events so typical of women fulfilling spousal duties as ambassadors' wives, the correspondence of Abigail and John Adams and the diaries of other wives show how crucial a wife's thinking and exchange was with her more-famous husband.[31] Caroline stimulated her husband's thinking, challenged some of his ideas, and questioned some of his wording. These activities occurred while he read to her and as she proofread his pages. She also prepared the index for *Man and Nature*.[32] Perhaps she contributed more to what appeared in the volume than has been credited. Her name is neither on the title page nor in any acknowledgements.

Concentrated work on the volume began when the Marshes moved to Pegli, on the Ligurian coast just west of Genoa, in November 1862. Although George frequently traveled by train back to Turin for Legation work, he and Caroline both enjoyed the natural environment surrounding them at Pegli. Caroline loved what she considered the "society" of the sea and its varied moods, which she observed from the windows of their hotel rooms. George preferred the mountains and enjoyed exploring the hillsides, streams, and valleys above Pegli, noting human impacts on the environment, such as tunnels and an abandoned copper foundry. He and niece Carrie also visited the formal Pallavicini gardens. These gardens, a recent design meant to provide visitors a trip around the world without leaving Pegli, are a prime example of the human impact on the natural environment.[33] Most of all he loved the time he was able to devote to what they both called his "work" – writing the book, which seems to have been disconnected from his legation responsibilities.[34] The couple were able to continue this shared work when they moved back inland and closer to

[29] "Doyenne," OED Online; C. Marsh, Journals, September 5, 1861; December 14, 1861.
[30] Kennedy, "Encountering Liston's Turkish Journals."
[31] Fenzi, *Married*, xvii-xviii; Weisbrode, "The Diplomatic Context."
[32] C. Marsh, Journals, July 6, 10-11, 1863.
[33] C. Marsh, Journals, November 7, 1862; February 6, 1863; March 10, 1863.
[34] *Ibid.*, January 23, 1863.

Turin, to what was called the "castle" at Piobesi. Here, from early April through early July 1863, George and Caroline dedicated themselves to finishing up the book. George sometimes put in twelve-hour days, and Caroline, with her niece Carrie's help, finished up the index before the manuscript was shipped off on July 13.

The Maremma – Human Impacts on Water and Soil

In addition to providing this general overview of the book's composition, Caroline's diaries include details which speak to the volume's specific contents. For example, although the couple traveled through Tuscany on their first trip abroad in the fall of 1849, and they noted how the terrain along the Arno differed from that between Genoa and Carrara, George became more interested in the Tuscan river valleys as he learned about the historic changes in the Val di Chiana and the Maremma while the couple lived in the Piedmont. Within a few months of their arrival in Turin in June of 1861, George's developing relationship with Baron Bettino Ricasoli, the head of the new parliament, included conversations about the Maremma – "especially about the drainage and recovery."[35] Ricasoli, "much pleased to find some one [sic] who felt an interest in what he himself had so much at heart," offered to help George access as much as possible about the work there, including arranging an invitation to visit.

Another aspect of the Baron's help was an introduction to Antonio Salvagnoli, the chief engineer responsible for more recent changes. Salvagnoli also brought George books to read in preparation for the visit the next spring. The two were mutually delighted with their introduction and shared interest.[36] We know that George discussed these ideas with Caroline, because she recorded them in her diary, along with her desires to travel with her husband and the necessity of such first-hand observations. This witnessing and collection of information would enable the Marshes to be "infinitely more useful to our country and this," Caroline wrote.[37] Her comment demonstrates that for the couple, the environmental writing was not disconnected from the ministerial work. Rather, the two were intertwined aspects for both husband and wife in their ambassadorial roles.

The results of this study of the Maremma appear in part within the book's chapters on "Water." George wrote of what he came to under-

[35] *Ibid.*, November 5, 1861.
[36] *Ibid.*, November 22, 1861.
[37] *Ibid*. Unfortunately, Caroline also noted that a previous trip to Florence had taught them "that even if no ten days rule existed" about time out of the office," their "salary would not allow … these excursions." But they took excursions nonetheless.

stand as the impressive and fascinating diversion of the watershed that had caused the Tiber flooding. He celebrated the Etruscan's impressive "hydraulic works" but noted that once Rome invaded Etruria, they stopped taking care of or destroyed "the public improvements" of the waterways and cleared "the upland forests, to satisfy the demand for wood at Rome for domestic, industrial, and military purposes" (425). To the city of Rome's benefit, parts of the Tuscan interior (the Val di Chiana) and the seaside and plains of the Arno valley became intolerable and pestilential. The problems continued after the fall of Rome with others who ruled. But at the same time, through the effluvia in these low-lying valleys, the soil became enriched for cultivation.

George cited numerous sources as he described this human impact on water and soil, giving references not only to size and population but also to how others had seen the area as unhealthy and to the number of illnesses and death. He also referred to more recent history, beginning with the improvements around 1827, with notable changes from 1842 and 1844 in the reduction of fever cases. "Viareggio," he wrote, "is now much frequented for its sea baths and its general salubrity, at a season when formerly it was justly shunned as the abode of disease and death" (428-29). Caroline would later take sea baths on the Maremma coast for her health.[38]

An "Invalid's" Excursions: Mountains, Glaciers, and Avalanches

Caroline, a chronic "invalid," became the chief secretary for the couple's expeditions to the mountains, from May through October during their Piedmont years, exploring glaciers, their movements, and the shapes of stones. Caroline's "invalidism," including vision problems, impacted her ability to observe nature and her social interactions. She could not stand for the necessary time for her presentation at court, and she was not always able to read and write. She relied on her niece Carrie to serve as an amanuensis and a reader, and George often read to her as well. Likewise, she could not "hike" on the mountain expeditions as George and Carrie did. And yet, she went along anyway, riding on a horse or donkey whenever possible, and being carried in a chair or in a makeshift litter, when necessary. Sometimes George would not go if Caroline would or could not go. Caroline often felt she could not go but mustered her strength and went anyway.

Early during their second year in Turin, for example, Caroline wrote extensively of the expeditions to Wengern Alp near Grindelwold; Schilt-

[38] Madden, *Engaging Italy*, 68.

horn, above Mürren, and other peaks in Switzerland, north of Turin and Milan. After one seven-hour journey over not-so-interesting paths, during which they hoped to observe an avalanche, Caroline wrote of her response to George's fervor following an overnight rest. She wrote,

> My surprise was not small on waking a little after 7 to find that Mr. Marsh's enthusiasm for glaciers had been nursed into a fresh flame by an hour's contemplation of the grand one just before our windows, and he begged to know if I was willing to go up to the Jardin or Eismeer, before setting out for the Faulhorn.[39]

He estimated they might make one point in the morning, before going to Faulhorn in the afternoon. She "saw at once that if we did not go to the Eismeer it would always be a regret for him." Caroline "assented" immediately. That day they witnessed an avalanche, which she classified with the eruption of Vesuvius:

> From eight to ten minutes the awful cataract continued to flow with almost unabated volume and while the thunder-like roar that attended it, seemed to threaten the utter destruction of both the Eiger & the Mettenberg. Among the sublime natural phenomena which I have been fortunate enough to witness, I shall place this avalanche beside the eruption of Vesuvius in the winter of '49-'50.[40]

Two months earlier, in July 1862, Caroline recorded their arduous journey to the Becca di Nona in the Val d'Aosta. Some days she was unable to travel. Others she gathered her emotional strength and determination to accompany her husband and to witness these natural phenomena. The detailed journal entries of their successful ascent not only influenced *Man and Nature* but also reappeared elsewhere. (Even after the volume's completion, the mountain expeditions and Caroline's records of them continued).[41]

As they journeyed in the mountains and discussed what they observed, Caroline did not always agree with George. Before their climb to the Becca, for example, when they crossed a ridge between Biella and La Serra and came across a moraine, she doubted George's ideas about how the stones in this area had been influenced by water and glaciers.[42] Nonetheless, he shared his theories on the region in the volume (252, 390).

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[39] *Ibid.*, September 27, 1862.
[40] *Ibid.*
[41] C. Marsh, Journals, July 6-12, 1862; Crane, *Caroline Crane Marsh*, 59-67. For a recent summary of their expedition on Monviso and the Val Pellice in July of 1863, just after *Man and Nature* was completed, see Baltieri, "incontro tra val Pellice," 41-46.
[42] C. Marsh, Journals, July 3, 1862.

An "Invalid's" Birds and the Anthropocene

George seems to have listened to Caroline, however, noting her keen social and auditory awareness. Caroline's vision and mobility issues likely enhanced her auditory awareness, which factored into her diary entries about the natural world. She captured the sounds of the avalanche. She wrote extensively about the changing sounds of the sea during their winter at Pegli. And she often noted the birds singing at Piobesi. If the sea had been her society at Pegli, birds became part of the family at Piobesi. During the months there Caroline marveled at the birds swooping around their garden and terrace and roosting in the medieval tower. She referred to their home as the "starling castle."[43] They "watched the swallows as they flew in dancing circles," they noted "the bright finches," and listened for the nightingales and the owls as "the human sounds from the village died away."[44] Their home became an "aviary," hosting "about fifty birds" Carrie and others of the household gathered. These foundlings seemed "too young to fly or feed themselves."[45] Caroline noted among the "hundreds of swallows" one "pair" that sat "every evening … on a wire, in front of the drawing room balcony."[46] This avian couple afforded them "an excellent opportunity to study all their little ways."

One June evening near solstice, as she and George were wrapping up work on *Man and Nature*, they witnessed from their terrace a scene which captures Caroline's views of the interrelation of the birds and other animals with the human:

> It was wonderful to watch the retreat of one species of animal life and the reappearance of another as the twilight deepened. First the stornelli disappeared about sunset, then the finches by degrees ceased their noisy chirping in the plane trees & hazles, but the swallows, which now go to their nests much later than in the spring, continued their swift circles and sweeps, and their twittering and the sharp shrill cry they utter at this season, for at least half an hour after sunset. Then came the notes of the nightingales on our right and on our left – then a distant owl – and even the far-off croak of the frogs was not an unpleasant discord in this evening hymn. A little later, and hundreds of bats sallied out and chased the few mosquitoes that visit our premises, the great night beetles began to whiz over our heads, now and then a village dog barked sharply, a belated market cart rattled heavily over the paved piazza, and then came a pause to be broken anew, but every successive

[43] *Ibid.*, May 24, 1863.
[44] *Ibid.*, May 30, 1863.
[45] *Ibid.*, June 20, 1863.
[46] *Ibid.*, June 21, 1863.

> one becoming longer & deeper than the preceding – How wonderfully soothing is the influence of nature![47]

Here the market cart, a human invention, is notably present but subsumed by the "longer & deeper" sounds of what Caroline refers to as "nature."

This reverence for nature she shared with others – not just George – when they complained. The Baron Gautier, for example, "complained grievously of the great number of birds around his chateau" and his inability to clear them. Caroline "confessed [to him] of rather liking them" and noted "the pity [she] felt" for him.[48] She wrote of the same day as "balmy and musical" on the terrace in the evening, thanks to "the alternate voices of the owl and the nightingale," and the nightingales' "clear, soft piping, or their delicious gushing warble." She knew of birds' potential to carry disease, and that they were considered a nuisance by others, but she respected the birds nonetheless as creatures relevant to the cycle of life. Caroline spoke up about their value.

Conclusion

One of Caroline's journal entries about birds, written during the final months of the composition of *Man and Nature*, serves as an apt conclusion to this exposition of her influence on George's book ideas. On a late-April evening, while the couple were in the throes of finishing up the book, Caroline noted the cries of an owl near the medieval tower that caused their villa at Piobesi to be called a castle:

> In the evening we were struck by the particularly melancholy hooting of an owl in one of the old windows. The servants told us that the gardener had shot its mate during the day, because he believed the creature destroyed his cherries while they were in blossom. We were vexed at the stupidity as well as the cruelty of this act, and I suppose we shall try in vain to convince the gardener that owls do not eat his cherry blossoms, and that on the contrary – they would be a great protection to him against the moles of which he complains so bitterly. The 'voices of the night' last night were most plaintive, the frogs sang their loneliest and most monotonous song, and the poor desolate owl cried in a way to make one's heart ache.[49]

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[47] *Ibid.*, June 22, 1863.
[48] *Ibid.*, May 15, 1863.
[49] *Ibid.*, April 21, 1863.

The couple "were struck" by what seemed to be unnecessary "cruelty" but also the destructive or non-usufruct behavior. The action of ignorance (i.e. "stupidity") touched other living creatures around them – not just the humans on the terrace but the frogs as well as "the poor desolate owl."

As Caroline noted the sad cry of the one who had been left alone, perhaps she reflected on how her mate would not have been able to bring "their work" to a close, had he been alone at Piobesi. Perhaps Caroline's sensitivity to the sounds of nature in general and to birds in particular led to the insertion of the extensive comments and nursery rhyme within *Man and Nature* on swallows as signs of environmental health. Certainly, she contributed to its composition in other ways – from protecting her husband's time to accompanying him on expeditions to explore the natural environment.

Finally, Caroline referred to George as an owl during the writing phase, and he accepted the metaphor – not as one who was wise but rather as one who made noise and looked at the world pessimistically.[50] Seen as an owl by Caroline and himself, and labeled a "prophet" by others,[51] Marsh wrote in *Man and Nature* what resonates today – primarily because he called attention to the human impact upon the natural environment. But his account and Caroline's involvement in its composition also resonate for the ways in which the natural environment speaks to people – if they will only look and listen. The couple's personal observations and experiences motivated them to spread the word as part of the ambassadorial work husband and wife shared in order to improve their own and other cultures.

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[50] G. Marsh, "To Hiram Powers, March 31, 1863, qtd. in Lowenthal, *George Perkins Marsh*, 378.
[51] See Lowenthal, Baltieri, Marchi.

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