



Pilgrimage to Vallombrosa: From Vermont to Italy in the Footsteps of George Perkins Marsh (Under the Sign of Nature)

John Elder

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"Set aside your *Bella Tuscanys* and *Year in Provinces* for a different kind of travel book. *Pilgrimage to Vallombrosa* puts a walking stick in your hand and *Marsh's Man and Nature* in your knapsack, exploring how Italians have managed their natural and cultural heritage in ways that sustain both. John Elder's poetic meditations on land and life demonstrate that only by searching beyond our familiar boundaries can we discover better ways of living back at home."—Marcus Hall, author of *Earth Repair: A Transatlantic History of Environmental Restoration*

"This collaboration—between George Perkins Marsh and John Elder, between Vermont and Italy, between maple and olive—is one of the smartest, soundest, deepest books about the relationship between people and nature that I've ever read. It will be a classic."—Bill McKibben, author of *The End of Nature*

"Elder's impassioned pilgrimage shows us how to delight in messy wilderness, to secure a curative habitation of the world, and, with Marsh, to lend ecological nous to our gravest task: knowing ourselves and respecting one another. Let the maple seeds and olive stones of Elder's visionary harvest restore to us a reflective and redemptory future."—from the foreword by David Lowenthal

The pivotal figure in *Pilgrimage to Vallombrosa* is the nineteenth-century diplomat and writer George Perkins Marsh, generally regarded as America's first environmentalist. Like Elder, Marsh was a Vermonter, and his diplomatic career took him for some years to Italy, where, witnessing the ecological devastation wrought upon the landscape by runaway deforestation and the plundering of other natural resources, he was moved to produce his famous manifesto, *Man and Nature*. Marsh drew parallels between the despoiled Italian environment and his home landscape of Vermont, warning that the latter was vulnerable to ecological woes of a similar magnitude if not carefully maintained and protected. In short, his was a prescient voice for stewardship.

Elder follows in Marsh's footsteps along a trajectory running from Vermont to Italy, and at length fetches up at the managed forest of Vallombrosa. Punctuated throughout with learned and genial considerations of the poetry of Wordsworth, Basho, Dante, and Frost, Elder's narrative takes up issues of sustainability as practiced locally, reports on family doings, and returns finally—as did Marsh's—to Vermont, where he measures traditional stewardship values against more aggressive conservation-oriented measures such as the expansion of wilderness areas.

John Elder, Professor of English and Environmental Studies at Middlebury College, is the author of *Reading the Mountains of Home* and *The Frog Run*.

Under the Sign of Nature: Explorations in Ecocriticism

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Phyllis Granger:

Spent a free time for you to be fun activity to do! A lot of people spent their down time with their family, or their very own friends. Usually they doing activity like watching television, going to beach, or picnic from the park. They actually doing ditto every week. Do you feel it? Will you something different to fill your free time/ holiday? Might be reading a book may be option to fill your free time/ holiday. The first thing that you'll ask may be what kinds of reserve that you should read. If you want to try out look for book, may be the publication untitled Pilgrimage to Vallombrosa: From Vermont to Italy in the Footsteps of George Perkins Marsh (Under the Sign of Nature) can be very good book to read. May be it may be best activity to you.

Curtis Swasey:

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