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# David and Max Lowenthal – and Marsh: public intellectuals and advocates in the political landscape. A personal view

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## ABSTRACT

Taking its point of departure in the prominent, and controversial, legal, political and social engagement of David Lowenthal's lawyer father, Max Lowenthal, this article first explores the evident influence of Max Lowenthal on his son's distinctive, socially engaged approach to scholarship and writing as an academic, and as a public intellectual. It will then consider how Max Lowenthal's example facilitated David Lowenthal's subsequent lifelong involvement with the work of another publicly engaged and multifaceted lawyer, George Perkins Marsh. This background can help understand why David Lowenthal was himself a multifaceted advocate, whose work appealed to a broad readership of academics, professionals and laymen. Focusing on David Lowenthal's writings from the beginning of his career until his death in 2018, the essay will illuminate the political landscape of his thinking and doing concerning cultural and environmental heritage.

## KEYWORDS

David Lowenthal; Max Lowenthal; George Perkins Marsh; Carl Sauer; Richard Hartshorne; Political Landscape; Heritage and Environmental Studies

## Prologue

The Editor-in-Chief of Landscape Research asked if one of the contributions to this special issue could present the perspective of one of David Lowenthal's PhD students. As Hugh Clout's introductory biography to this special issue makes clear, he did not have many PhD students, but I might nevertheless fit the bill.

I met David in 1972, when he was a guest professor during the spring trimester at the University of Minnesota, and my Danish wife Karen and I were PhD students in anthropology and geography, respectively. I had switched to geography in order to do a PhD under Yi-Fu Tuan, after doing a Masters in what effectively was Nordic Philology (billed as 'Scandinavian Studies'), where I was focusing on landscape. Yi-Fu was of huge intellectual inspiration to me, but he was more a thinker than a doer, and thus not in the same position as David to act as a role model for someone of doer background (my father was a crusading journalist). Both David and Yi-Fu had studied at Carl Sauer's Berkeley geography department which, oddly enough was somewhat 'anti-academic' in the sense that academic can refer to the conventional and formal (and this, of course, rankles mainstream academics). At Sauer's department multi-disciplinarity was encouraged, and it was not necessarily seen to be an advantage to have an undergraduate background in geography—quite the opposite! Thus, it mattered not to either David or Yi-Fu that I had previously majored in philology, much as it mattered not to Sauer that David had majored in history before switching to geography—after which he switched back again to history (Yi-Fu, himself, later switched from physical to cultural geography). Yi-Fu and David were known for their interest in landscape, a focus of Berkeley

geography, and the then-emerging interest in landscape perception, so it was natural that I took a seminar course from David. Karen's regional speciality was the historical anthropology of the West Indies, so it was also natural that she gravitated to David, who had an encyclopaedic knowledge of the region and an enormous number of West Indian contacts/friends from one end of the Caribbean to the other, who opened their doors at the mention of his name.

After the trimester ended we packed our tiny black VW beetle, squeezed in our big white Samoyed sled dog, and headed to my Staten Island, NY, home on a route that brought us by the Lowenthals' Connecticut summer residence with a rustic converted farmhouse where David and Mary Alice had invited us to come to visit. There we enjoyed a delightful West Indian party at which another guest was the geographer Elizabeth Thomas-Hope, one of the contributors to this special issue. The old farm was a kind of family compound with space for many guests (and even their dogs!), suggesting that David's style of residence and hospitality was also a family inheritance. Not long thereafter Karen and I took the Staten Island ferry en route to a Manhattan pier, where we waved goodbye to the Lowenthals and Bill Mead, as they sailed off to England together. There David joined Bill as professor of geography at University College London. The Lowenthals settled in a wonderful old house in Harrow-on-the-Hill that, like the Connecticut farm, was to bring together many people, including us. We have been family friends ever since, and I have worked with David in innumerable ways, especially after we (dog included) moved to Denmark. Our experience of David as students thus was hardly desultory, unlike David's relationship with students at the London department as depicted in Clout's biography.

As chairman of 'The London Research Series in Geography,' published by George Allen and Unwin, David selected a revised version of my doctoral dissertation, entitled *Nature's Ideological Landscape: A Literary and Geographic Perspective on its Development and Preservation on Denmark's Jutland Heath*, for publication as the fifth book in the series (Hugh Clout wrote the first). Sir Unwin initially shunted the book aside because he did not think that it was geography, but David eventually got it off his table and in press. Sir Unwin's publishing house was bought up by Routledge and no longer exists, but the book is now being republished nearly forty years later at Routledge's instigation, suggesting that David might have been prescient as to what is and is not geographic (Olwig, 2020). The prefatory blurb for the London series says much about geography as David saw it:

One of geography's most salient characteristics is its close relationships with virtually all the sciences, arts and humanities. Drawing strength from other fields, it also adds to their insights. This series highlights these linkages. Besides being a vehicle for advances within geography itself, the series is designed to excite the attention of the wider community of scholars and students.

My manuscript was, at David's request, copiously and brilliantly edited by Denis Cosgrove, to whom David had also given support at a key juncture in his career. In his 2008 obituary for Denis, David mentioned his critical intervention at a time when Denis' ideas about landscape were controversial and unpopular within the geographical establishment (Lowenthal, 2008):

Cosgrove's central mission was to illuminate the dynamic interplay between the world's diverse material landscapes and equally diverse modes of imagining and exploring them. That overarching programme began with his 1976 doctoral dissertation on the Palladian townscape in Vicenza and the Veneto. As his external examiner, I had the privilege of upgrading this remarkable synthesis of architectural enterprise, land management and regional history from a BLitt to a PhD.

An example of the depth of David and Mary Alice's hospitality is that during the weeks when Denis was undergoing treatment in London for what proved to be a terminal illness, Denis stayed with them at the central London flat to which they had then moved.

The following analysis of David as public intellectual and advocate is based primarily upon written sources, but it is also informed by private conversations and observations (see also Olwig, 2019a). As a philologist, and thereby also as one who is engaged with the close and critical reading of texts, I will draw extensively upon quoted passages as evidence of the character of the influence exerted by the

heritage of Max and Marsh upon David, much as one might, for example, study the influence of Ovid and Boccaccio upon Shakespeare.

## Introduction

When Denis and I organised, at Karen's suggestion, a session in honour of David at the 2002 Los Angeles meetings of the Association of American Geographers (AAG) we ended up needing three back-to-back sessions in order to cover all his interests. Entitled 'The Lowenthal Papers' (Olwig, 2003a), the well-attended sessions drew people who might have known him as a founding figure in heritage studies, but who may not have been aware of his pioneering work on environmental perception, his contributions to the study of conservation history, his work in American and West Indian studies or in island studies. I suggest that the key to understanding David's multi-faceted oeuvre, which is exemplified in this special issue, lies in the example of his father Max, and the way his father's example facilitated David's lifelong engagement with another Course of inspiration, George Perkins Marsh.

Central to David's work is his studies of the American lawyer, politician, diplomat, philologist, geographer, environmentalist and businessman, George Perkins Marsh (1801–1882), about whom he wrote his doctoral dissertation in history at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. It was published in 1958 as *George Perkins Marsh: Versatile Vermonter* (Lowenthal 1958a) and republished in a rewritten and expanded version in 2000 as *George Perkins Marsh: Prophet of Conservation* (Lowenthal, 2000). David also edited and published the meticulously and copiously annotated, now standard version of Marsh's 1864 classic *Man and Nature: Or, Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action* (Marsh, 1965). Marsh was a lifelong passion for David, and in my experience, there is virtually nothing he has written that somehow cannot be traced back to Marsh's doings or thought. David's interest in Marsh originated with Carl Sauer who encouraged him to do a study of Marsh (Lowenthal 1958a, p. viii). Sauer's reason for suggesting this topic can be found in his 1941 presidential address to the AAG, 'Foreword to Historical Geography' (Sauer, 1969, pp. 351–79), where he stated that an ideal way of educating oneself as a geographer is to make a 'full-length biographical inquiry' into a historical figure such as notably Marsh. This, he argued, would 'provide a truly liberal geographic education, provided each [figure] is taken as a whole, and not skimmed eclectically in terms of prearranged views as to what is and is not geographic' (Sauer, 1969, pp. 355–56). It is quite remarkable that this is exactly what David did!<sup>1</sup> But why was he so drawn to Marsh that the study of his life and work became a lifelong engagement? The answer, I think, is that Marsh, like David's extraordinary father, was a socially and politically engaged 'advocate,' to use a Latin derived word for a lawyer: '1: one who pleads the cause of another, specifically: one who pleads the cause of another before a tribunal or judicial court,' and by extension, '3: one who supports or promotes the interests of a cause or group' (Merriam-Webster, 1996: advocate)—which is what both Marsh and Max did. And, I will argue, such 'advocacy' became, following his father, and by continuation Marsh, a major concern for David.

## Lowenthal the advocate

Max's advocacy gave David insight into Marsh's advocacy, but it also gives us insight into the advocacy of David, who, as I will argue, emulated his father in key ways relating particularly to his somewhat unconventional style of exposition and research, which included both popular media and scholarly works. The 1971 obituary for Max published in the *New York Times* was headlined: 'Max Lowenthal, Lawyer, Dies: Book on F.B.I. Stirred a Storm' (Times, 1971). The obituary began:

Max Lowenthal, a lawyer who served as counsel to Congressional committees in the 1930s and 1940s and who wrote a sharp critique of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1950, died yesterday. . . . All told, Mr. Lowenthal was a government employee or consultant for 38 years, a career that ended in 1950 with the publication of his book and his being called before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) to deny charges from various Midwestern Congressmen that he had "aided and abetted" Communists in Government service. Just

before Mr. Lowenthal published his book, "The Federal Bureau of Investigation," Representative George A. Dondero, Republican of Michigan, made a speech on the floor of the House in which he called Mr. Lowenthal a "menace to the best interests of America," a phrase that was coming into vogue in 1950. Although the Representative charged that the Congressional lawyer had helped Communists in the Government, much of the invective against Mr. Lowenthal was for his criticism of the F.B.I.

We are also told in the obituary that Max's FBI book (Lowenthal, 1950) had been reviewed in the *New York Times Sunday Book Review* by Cabell Phillips, a *Times* Washington correspondent, who characterised it as being the result of 'immense research and careful documentation,' and commented that 'almost for the first time ... it pulled aside the self-righteous cloak in which the F.B.I. has wrapped itself' (Times, 1971).

The former Assistant United States Attorney T. Henry Walnut's review of Max Lowenthal's 500-page book in *The University of Chicago Law Review*, had the following to say about the author's expository style (Walnut, 1952, p. 632):

The manner in which the author develops his story is indicated by the citations given above. He interposes a minimum of his own views and a maximum of cited authority taken from Congressional and court records, from reports and statements of Attorneys General, from contemporary comments of the press, of public men, and of those affected by the Bureau's doings. It is other people, not the author, who discuss the Bureau, pro and con, and from these discussions emerges an understanding of the Bureau's history and of its character which supports those "Prophets of evil" of 1908 who foresaw in the creation of the Bureau the birth of a monster.

Those familiar with David's writings should recognise that it describes David's signature style in a 'nutshell.'<sup>2</sup> It is also a description of a text reminiscent of a legal brief, presenting the objective evidence, rather than the lawyer's personal views. Even though Walnut did not agree entirely that the FBI was solely responsible for the evils identified with it, he concluded: 'What I have said should not be taken to mean that the matters described by Mr Lowenthal should not be set before us as vividly as possible, for the spotlighting of the symptom of the disease may awaken us to the disease itself. That Mr Lowenthal has done well, with the care and precision of a lawyer' (Walnut, 1952, p. 632, p. 638).

Max was not just a lawyer, he was an advocate for various causes, such as the labour movement and railroad, banking and finance reform, not only through his writing that was published in books and articles in legal journals but also as an advisor to the U.S. government and to individual members of the government, not the least Harry S. Truman. As in his texts, he tended to remain invisible as an advocate, working behind the scenes and presenting evidence. According to the *Times'* obituary, this behind-the-scenes approach led 'Westbrook Pegler, the provocative, right-wing columnist,' to characterise him as "'the mysterious New York lawyer, who now appears to have picked Harry Truman for President'" (as cited in Times, 1971). In the case of Max's FBI book, the cause he advocated was the right to freedom of speech of the American left wing, to which about one-third of the book is devoted. Walnut thus notes how the book concludes with a chapter entitled 'Investigation of Beliefs,' in which the FBI is portrayed 'as busying itself with labor movements and strikes on the theory that they were communist inspired; with alleged communists and with the Federal employees loyalty program which has become an inquisition into left wing entanglements' (Walnut, 1952, p. 633). The advantage to Max's lawyerly approach to such a sacrosanct topic as the FBI, and its post-WWII nationalistic, xenophobic, communist witch hunts, was that even though he himself was smeared through insinuations of conspiratorial guilt by association and innuendo, he was nevertheless able to marshal evidence without himself being legally identified with those accused of being communist traitors, much as a lawyer defending an accused murder suspect should not be charged for defending murder. Max was hounded for years thereafter by the FBI, but he was never charged for anything, and he maintained his convictions. The same was true of David's brother John (1925--2003), a law professor and documentary filmmaker, who defended the name and reputation of Alger Hiss, who was sent to prison in 1950 for supposedly being a communist spy. This was one of the most infamous American legal cases of the twentieth century and John was duly harassed himself by the

far right for the rest of his life, and David was actively involved in his defence, also after his brother's death.

In his own work as a scholar, David followed the family tradition both in advocating for various, sometimes controversial causes, and in doing so in such a way that the evidence was made to speak for itself. This is well exemplified by David's classic study, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Lowenthal, 1985), which as Clout notes in his biography, included 1,800 references and 2,125 footnotes and ran to 490 pages (10 less than his father's FBI study), as well as by the later, even longer, thoroughly re-written edition of the book (Lowenthal, 2015). The volume is highly esteemed as a founding work of heritage studies and was important to his being made a Fellow of the British Academy. But, as Clout's introductory biography reports, David's expository style, in particular, has been given a mixed reception by some within the emerging academic heritage studies establishment:

Many reviewers praised the depth and breadth of David's erudition, but others criticised his technique of adding example to example, sometimes ranging across several centuries and a couple of countries, even in a single, long sentence. Some readers regretted a lack of theory and rigorous analysis, and the absence of clear messages and conclusions. David's preference was to invite controversy, discussion, and debate.

Clout is right, I believe, concerning 'David's preference to invite controversy, discussion, and debate,' but I think David was actually doing more. He was, in effect, mapping out the landscape of the critical study of heritage as a field, both within and without the academy. Like his father, he set before the reader the matters as vividly as possible, thus spotlighting the symptoms of the 'disease' (in this case heritage) in order to awaken an interest in the 'disease' itself. Max's book, according to the *New York Times'* book reviewer, not only 'pulled aside the self-righteous cloak in which the FBI has wrapped itself' it did so 'almost for the first time.' What Max did, for effectively the first time, was not simply to treat the FBI as a problem, but to rather 'problematise' the FBI as the 'disease' at the core of a larger constellation of problems that infected democracy under the guise of nationalistic xenophobia. David did pretty much the same with heritage, another self-righteous topic often put to nationalistic and xenophobic ends. Finally, Max drew upon 'a maximum of cited authority taken from Congressional and court records, from reports and statements of Attorneys General, from contemporary comments of the press, of public men, and of those affected by the Bureau's doings.' He did not, in other words, only use academic sources or expert opinion, but a huge variety of both popular and official documents, partly because there was little prior academic research to draw upon when researching a new topic, partly because Max was writing for a broad public readership. Much the same could be said of David's work on, for example, heritage, which reached a much greater general and professional readership than most academic books on the subject, and this despite (or perhaps because of) his erudition. According to Mary Alice, 'Since David believed "heritage" was popular culture, he tended to use journalism (which was far more "of the moment" than ... "current scholarship")' (personal communication, February 2020). His work in my experience was greatly appreciated by practitioners, who invited him to speak, and flocked to his lectures (Kristiansen & Olwig Eds, 1989). The problem, however, with such an approach, by which the author disappears, like a catalyst, in the process of pulling together the evidence in a case, is that one risks that the defenders of the subject criticised will seek to discredit the elusive author, as they sought to discredit Max, by insinuating an invented insidious authorial identity, instead of responding to the critique. As someone who also lived in the McCarthy era, I understood why David tended to keep his politics to himself, though, as with his father, this leads to speculation.<sup>3</sup> David's advocacy involved topics less explosive than the F.B.I. in 1950, but it was no less political in character.

### **Lowenthal the public intellectual**

David, writing in his 1958 biography *George Perkins Marsh: Versatile Vermonter*, gave the following characterisation of Marsh (Lowenthal 1958a, p. vii–viii):

Lawyer, editor, farmer, manufacturer, congressman, diplomat *par excellence*, Marsh was the broadest American scholar of his day. He was at home in twenty languages, became the country's foremost authority on both Scandinavian and English linguistics, made important contributions to comparative philology, helped to found and foster the Smithsonian Institution, served as arbiter of public taste in art and architecture, established principles for railroad regulation, provided new insights into the history of man and of the earth. And from his pioneer work developed the American conservation movement.

It is possible to spy some of the same versatility in David's lawyer father Max, particularly in relation to his public service combined with his engagement as an advocate for various causes, and it was this versatility that David forefronted with Marsh despite criticism. In the 2000 republication of the book, David noted, 'Lewis Mumford, who restored Marsh to public memory in the 1920s and 1930s [as the "fountainhead of the conservation movement"] held my 1958 subtitle "Versatile Vermonter" belittling' (Lowenthal, 2000, pp. xvi-xvii). To David, however, this veritable versatility was key to understanding Marsh's importance, and David himself emulated this versatility in his own work in many different fields and places, as is also illustrated in this special issue. Indeed, David, like Marsh, was as much a public intellectual as a university academic, since he spent many of his most productive years working as a scholar and researcher, but not as a full-time university employee (the *American Geographical Society*, for which he worked much of his life, was, like Britain's *Royal Geographical Society*, historically more a broadly public institution than an academic organisation such as the *Association of American Geographers*).

Given that an aspect of Marsh's versatility was his work as politician and lawmaker, it makes sense that he viewed the landscape of conservation as a political landscape. As David pointed out, humanity, in Marsh's opinion, 'cannot struggle at once against crushing oppression and the destructive forces of inorganic nature,' which is to say that there is a connection between political oppression and a society's loss of ability to maintain the ecological viability of a landscape threatened, for example, by desertification. Marsh felt that many of the desiccated areas of the Mediterranean, which he knew firsthand, could be made fertile again through 'geographical regeneration,' but, he added, physical 'changes like these must await great political and moral revolutions in the governments and peoples by whom those regions are now possessed' (Marsh, 1965 (orig. 1864): 11–12, 45–6). Like Max, who worked on many levels ranging from railroad reform to the treatment of labour, Marsh did the same for the conservation of forests, promoting, in David's words, 'a new kind of history, comprehensive and social,' in which 'the problem of conservation [was seen] as one of interdependent social and environmental relationships' (Lowenthal, 1965, p. xv). David, likewise, saw the understanding of both environmental and heritage conservation as involving social, cultural and political understanding (Lowenthal, 2013).

Marsh was interested in both nature conservation and heritage conservation, subjects that interested Marsh, both in connection with the establishment of the Smithsonian Institution, and with regard to the landscape heritage of particularly Italy. Both nature and heritage conservation were also related interests for David, as exemplified by David's article 'Natural and Cultural Heritage' (Lowenthal, 2006). The key term here is the notion of 'conservation,' of which David saw Marsh as being a 'prophet' (Lowenthal, 2000). Both natural and cultural heritage can be 'conserved,' in the sense of the prevention of the wasteful use of a resource, and this was the idea of conservation behind the late nineteenth, early twentieth-century American *conservation* movement that Marsh helped inspire and which led, for example, to the establishment of The National Forest Service. This movement was quite different from, and even opposed to, that of *preservation*, which developed largely at the same time, where natural monuments and cultural monuments were not to be conserved for continued use, but to be preserved from change, not the least because of their perceived ideological value as national heritage. In the case of nature, this meant that the natural environment should not be conserved as a resource, but preserved (or even rewilded) as wilderness, this leading to the establishment of The National Park Service. From early in his career David, following Marsh, preferred conservation to preservation and he was thus critical of the wilderness movement (cf. Lowenthal, 1964) and by extension the ideologically based preservation of cultural heritage, as in the 2006 article, and his books on heritage.

Marsh's influence on David's work is also apparent in the last book *Quest for the Unity of Knowledge* that David wrote very much in the spirit of Marsh's parsing of the society/nature question. Like Marsh, he opposed those who would reduce environmental issues to a unified, totalising, natural science inspired, lawful causality, as in the case of environmental determinism (Lowenthal, 2018; see also Sverker Sörlin's article in this issue). The book illustrates how the multi-faceted, versatile character of his own work provided a background for his analysis that, metaphorically speaking, counterpoised 'continental' versus 'archipelagic' modes of thinking. Here he was no doubt drawing upon his research in the West Indies (see also article in this issue by Elizabeth Thomas Hope). The question of the continental versus archipelagic arose in connection with his studies at Berkeley on the three Guianas—British, Dutch, and French—which are perceived to belong culturally and politically to the Caribbean, even though they are physically part of the South American continent. It also was relevant to his active engagement with the ill-fated attempt to create a West Indian Federation by uniting the former British West Indies, comprising many islands and Guyana, into one state. Islands, thus, are not only physical phenomena, they are also cultural and social phenomena that can be made to form a unified political landscape, or which can be accepted for their relatedness within an archipelagic heterogeneity (Lowenthal, 1958b). This landscape was key to his foundational work in the area of island studies (e.g., Lowenthal & Gillis, 2007). It also provided a useful metaphor through which to think critically about the conflation and unification of scientific law and human law, as when some environmentalists reduce and unify environmental issues under the laws of natural science and bio-geographical theory (Lowenthal, 2018).

### Lowenthal and the meanings of landscape

David's writing on environmental and heritage conservation was very much concerned with landscape as understood by Carl Sauer and his colleagues. David, however, studied not only with Sauer as a Masters student, but also, before switching to history for his PhD., with the arch-critic of Sauer's landscape geography, Richard Hartshorne, professor of geography at the University of Wisconsin.

Hartshorne criticised what he viewed as the confusing understanding and application of the term landscape. Thus, the term was used in both what he regarded as a specifically German sense, where it meant 'a definitely restricted area,' and in an English sense, where it referred to 'a more or less definitely defined aspect of an unlimited extent of the earth's surface' (Hartshorne, 1939, p. 154). Neil Smith, an historian of geography, has argued that Hartshorne's critique effectively 'assassinated' the concept of landscape by branding it as being, in Hartshorne's words, of "'little or no value as a technical or scientific term,'" leading it to be 'largely excluded from theoretical discourse almost to the present day' (Hartshorne, 1939, p. 158; Smith, 1989, p. 107). Smith's judgement, though largely correct with respect to mainstream social science-oriented geography, was incorrect concerning the humanities-oriented forms of geography that aligned themselves more with history, and which David helped foster. David played an important theoretical role in reviving the study of landscape by effectively turning Hartshorne's critique on end. Hartshorne argued that in the English language landscape meant the 'appearance of a land as we perceive it' (Hartshorne, 1939, p. 150), as in reference to 'the section of the earth surface and sky that lies in our field of vision as seen in perspective from a particular point' (Hartshorne, 1939, p. 152). This sense was related, in turn, to the 'aesthetic' meanings of landscape as used in art history. This scenic, spatial sense of landscape differed from the German-inflected sense of landscape as a material area and place used by Sauer, creating the confusion that Hartshorne felt disqualified the term as a technical or scientific term because it could shift 'from the landscape as sensation to the objects that produce that sensation' (Hartshorne, 1939, p. 152). For Lowenthal, this critique was what made landscape interesting precisely because landscape provided a means of understanding how people perceive and understand the 'appearance of a land.' Here too David was clearly inspired by Marsh, who had argued (Marsh, 1965 (orig. 1864): 15):



To the natural philosopher, the descriptive poet, the painter, and the sculptor, as well as to the common observer, the power most important to cultivate, and, at the same time, hardest to acquire, is that of seeing what is before him. Sight is a faculty; seeing, an art. The eye is a physical, but not a self-acting apparatus, and in general it sees only what it seeks. Like a mirror, it reflects objects presented to it; but it may be as insensible as a mirror, and it does not necessarily perceive what it reflects.

David effectively built upon Marsh's insight in his own approach to landscape perception (e.g., Lowenthal, 1961, 1962, 1964; Lowenthal & Prince, 1964, 1965; Olwig, 2003b; see also Clout's biography in this special issue). This can be seen in relation to his critique of the 'Gothicism' of the early Marsh, and the importance of this critique to the chauvinism and racism, often masked under the guise of heritage, which affects the perception of history.

### Lowenthal and the heritage of the 'Goths'

While David admired and learned positively from Marsh, he also could be critical of him. He was distressed by Marsh's early notion of New England's 'Gothic' heritage, and the way it generated a particular perception of the natural and cultural heritage of the New England and Nordic landscape. As David wrote: 'Antiquarian pleasure in Icelandic and Old Norse was not enough, he felt a need to claim the inherent superiority of Nordic (or Gothic) languages and people. And in ascribing the same virtues to his fellow New Englanders, Marsh linked them, by descent, in a Nonconformist, racist harangue' (Lowenthal, 2000, pp. 57–61, quote 57). David illustrated this with a quote from Marsh's *The Goths in New-England* (Marsh, 1843) which reads (Lowenthal, 2000, p. 57):

The intellectual character of our Puritan forefathers is that derived by inheritance from our remote Gothic ancestry, restored by its own inherent elasticity to its primitive proportions, upon the removal of the shackles and burdens, which the spiritual and intellectual tyranny of Rome had for centuries imposed upon it ...The Goths ... are the noblest branch of the Caucasian race. We are their children. It was the blood of the Goth, that flowed at Bunker's Hill.

The myth of the natural and cultural heritage of the 'Goths' as a people whose love of freedom is determined by their origins in the difficult, cold environment of the far north, which inspired the young Marsh, can be traced back to Aristotle and is still operative as a nationalistic trope (Olwig, 2015, 2019b: 198–222; Olwig, 2020: 11–22). Marsh, however, as David pointed out, later changed his perception of environmental determinism in *Man and Nature*, which Marsh termed 'a little volume showing that whereas (others) think that the earth made man, man in fact made the earth' (Lowenthal, 1965, ix). This book, in turn, helped change the world's perception of the society/nature relationship, both through the rejection of environmental determinism, and by awakening the need for conservation and foreshadowing the present concern with the Anthropocene (Lowenthal, 2016).

David's strong reaction to this 'Gothic' narrative can be understood in terms of his Jewish descent, at a time when, for example, white Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) ideology permeated influential organisations like the *Daughters of the American Revolution* (DAR) and the question of restricting Jewish attendance at Harvard provoked a major controversy. David himself was secular in orientation, but this anti-Semitism was not so much religious, but racial. David vehemently opposed such tenuous, essentialist modes of thought, linking environmental determinism, wilderness, material culture, cultural stereotypes and heritage and, by extension, the nationalistic and tribalistic ideologies these thoughts legitimise. This is exemplified by his article 'Why Sanctions Seldom Work: Reflections on Cultural Property Internationalism' published in *The International Journal of Cultural Property* (see also Lowenthal, 1964, 2005; and footnote 3). The Gothicist narrative, however, also could be applied to religions, because Marsh's thesis involved 'a series of antitheses, pitting Protestant, democratic, pious, hard-working Goths against Catholic, despotic sensuous, lazy Romans' (Lowenthal, 2000, p. 59). This was probably a factor in David's support for Denis Cosgrove's thesis that the aesthetics of the English landscape garden stemmed largely from Italy, thereby undermining the old and still widespread idea that the English landscape garden

exemplified an organic, freedom-loving, English (implicitly Anglo-Saxon) landscape ideal that emerged in reaction to the despotic geometries of the French garden (Walpole, 1943 [1782]: 23–26, 37; see also Olwig, 2002, pp. 99–124). Cosgrove who, as a Jesuit educated, Liverpool Irish Catholic at Oxford University, had himself the bitter experience of the English version of WASP ideology.

## Conclusion

Sauer's idea, cited at the outset, that an ideal way of educating oneself as a geographer was to make a 'full-length biographical inquiry' into a historical figure because this would 'provide a truly liberal geographic education' proved prescient with regard to David's lifelong biographical inquiry into Marsh. David's reading of Marsh, however, was prefigured by the writing, and doing, of his father Max. My own work, in turn, has been prefigured to an important degree by my reading of Marsh as read by David, and by the reading of David's work. But I also, as a philologist, and as a student of Yi-Fu, had learned the humanistic arts of hermeneutics and text criticism, so my reading might be called 'critical,' much as David's reading of Marsh also was 'critical' due to his training as an historian. It was, in turn, David's critical reading that led to his critique of heritage and environmental determinism. Most of what is written in this article would probably fall outside the natural science inflected criteria for what is publishable in an academic social-scientific academic journal because it appears to be subjective and self-referential. But does this article not nevertheless provide useful insight into David's work as one of the past century's influential critical geographers and historians? It is this sort of 'hermeneutic,' as exemplified here, that I believe to be critical to understanding David's oeuvre.

## Notes

1. It is lucky, however, that David chose not to follow in the footsteps of Ephraim Ketchall, another 'early pioneer of modern geography' whom he studied, and who might be described as a Marshian alter ego (Lowenthal, 1969).
2. David loved puns, and this one is thus to his memory.
3. In an *The International Journal of Heritage Studies* (IJHS) article, co-authored by the journal's editor, and published not long after David's death, the authors imply that David was politically incorrect and insinuate that he was a supporter of 'reactionary' 'libertarianism'. They write: 'When he does engage with current debates—as he does in a 2009 article on the fate of the museum "Patrons, populists, apologists"—he tends to draw far more heavily on journalism than current scholarship, with this particular article leaning heavily on the work of the cultural commentator Josie Appleton and colleagues writing for the libertarian online journal *Spiked* (Lowenthal, 2009). Lowenthal himself contributed to this reactionary publication in a 2006 piece titled "Heritage Wars" ...' (Gentry & Smith, 2019). While it is true that Lowenthal (2009) does refer a number of times to a book edited by Appleton, the article does not 'heavily lean on' it, and the book was hardly a vehicle for 'Appleton and colleagues' at *Spiked*. The book, in fact, was a scholarly debate book that was positively reviewed in the IJHS (Dixey, 2003) and includes contributions by figures like Robert Anderson (British Museum) and Charles Saumarez Smith (National Portrait Gallery) (Appleton, 2001). An article by David was reprinted in *Spiked*, but it is clearly stated that it is an edited excerpt from an article previously published in the *International Journal of Cultural Property*—a scholarly journal that appeals to jurists (Lowenthal, 2005). 'Reactionary' is an ideological epithet applied today both to the political right, and by the right to the left. *Spiked*, in origin was an expression of left-wing opposition to the Stalinist heritage of political correctness. David was not connected to *Spiked*, and would have known it simply as the venue for free debate that it proclaims itself to be.

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