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*The View from Vermont: Tourism and the Making of an American Rural Landscape* (review)

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century art criticism, a source she effectively exploits throughout, culminates in a final chapter on Inness's "signature" pictures of the late 1880s and 1890s. She convincingly shows that the Impressionist way of seeing pushed him to emphasize the anti-realist, artificial ordering of his own compositions.

Inness was no outsider. His desire for art to elevate viewers, educating their vision away from material interests and toward lofty spiritual or social perspectives, was shared, as DeLue notes, by friends and patrons like Henry Ward Beecher and Fletcher Harper of *Harper's Weekly*, as well as by much Progressive thought of the later nineteenth century. Influential critics in New York's decorative and symbolist circles embraced Inness, which suggests that his practice of art could indeed be normalized by comparison, if not to the Hudson River School, then as DeLue implies, to artists like Albert Pinkham Ryder, John La Farge, and Louis Comfort Tiffany. They too rejected the vulgarity of the real and the eclecticism of the academy in favor of a richly-colored artful ideal unavailable to those with less godlike perceptions. Her book is thus valuable for anyone interested in how nineteenth-century spirituality and aesthetic theory, in reaction to their increasing exclusion from empirical science, converged in an effort to redefine truth and nature on their own terms.

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THE VIEW FROM VERMONT: Tourism and the Making of an American Rural Landscape. By Blake Harrison. Burlington: University of Vermont Press. 2006.

*The View from Vermont* is an interesting new addition to a growing literature on the history of rural tourism—a topic rich with implications for environmental history, the history of consumer culture, and the social history of the interactions between city and countryside. Harrison focuses on Vermont, that most quintessentially rural state, in order to explore the ways in which the cultural meanings of "rural" have been constructed (and marketed) during the twentieth century and to show the impact of those processes on the landscape.

Vermont's identity as a rural place has been central to its appeal to tourists since the second half of the nineteenth century. As Harrison points out, though, the meanings of that rural identity have been a moving target, affected by shifting interests, priorities, and technologies. One common theme that persists throughout the time period he examines, however, are the tensions between rural realities based on productive work and the desires of tourists to embrace a different and leisure-based vision of the countryside.

Harrison begins his discussion of rural tourism in Vermont with the lakeside resort hotels and exclusive fish and game clubs that catered to wealthy urban tourists during the late-nineteenth century. In addition to providing a boon for the local economy, however, these elite sportsmen's clubs began posting their land against hunting by local inhabitants, violating local customary practices and creating visible markers of class distinction.

More middle-class tourists vacationed on the farm, either by boarding with a farm family or by purchasing an abandoned farm as a summer home, and the emergence of clusters or colonies of urban professionals, writers, and academics ensconced in their vacation homes also complicated social relations in Vermont communities. As Harrison put it, "Vermont's abandoned landscape became a palimpsest on which vacationers inscribed a new rural aesthetic based on leisure and consumption rather than on productive agricultural work. As the scale of their efforts grew, as summer homes spread into communities statewide, vacationers exerted an increasing degree of power over landscape and identity in rural Vermont" (69).

The growing prevalence of the automobile after the 1920s extended that influence and power by bringing more tourists to Vermont for day and weekend trips, and they increasingly expected views from the roadside that conformed to their notions of a pristine or “unspoiled” rural landscape rather than the nitty-gritty of working farms and villages. State government accommodated them by promoting highway beautification and regulating roadside billboards, and they actively advertised the appeals of the Vermont countryside in terms of such icons as the pristine village green and church steeple or a new posterboy for rural life, the covered bridge.

The automobile also made year-round tourism more feasible, so the rural landscape took on a multi-seasonal cast that extended from maple sugaring in the spring, to apple harvests and bright foliage in the fall, and winter sports, especially skiing. Harrison ends his study with a chapter on the rise of skiing in Vermont, which exacerbated many of the tensions and contradictions of his earlier story. The appeal of skiing owed little to Vermont’s rural identity, and this led to a series of conflicts and regulatory battles against expansive ski villages and capital intensive snow-grooming and snow-producing equipment that marked the landscape in new and environmentally disruptive ways.

Harrison’s well-researched and well-written study has much to recommend it. A few of his themes and findings extend and amplify earlier studies of rural tourism in New England as well as other areas, but the particular claim that Vermont has on rural identity in American culture makes this an important work to consult.

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LINCOLN’S SPEECHES RECONSIDERED. By John Channing Briggs. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 2005.

John Channing Briggs approaches Lincoln’s oft-studied speeches with an English professor’s eye, linking them together as a continuous body of work, rather than as separate windows into other social, political, and cultural issues of the Civil War era. For Channing, Lincoln is more than an important American political figure; he is a rhetorician and intellectual of the first order. “His thought was often intricate, layered, [and] controversial,” Briggs writes, and “anyone who reads the primary record [of his speeches] in sequence runs into his paradoxical complexity” (5).

Accordingly, Channing provides a very close, meticulous reading of Lincoln’s speeches, from his Lyceum Address in 1837 (the first major public speech of his career) to his Second Inaugural Address, delivered just one month before his assassination in 1865. Channing found that Lincoln created “oratorical forms of great simplicity and death” (6), combining political and religious symbolism that was approachable and familiar to common Americans with a sophisticated and subtle dialogue concerning the most fundamental values of American life: moral decisionmaking in a majoritarian democracy, the threat of tyranny in American politics, the proper role of reform groups, the need for a “political religion” that elevates law and order above all, and the need for charity and compassion towards the Confederate enemy.

The *sine qua non* of all these efforts was, according to Channing, the institution of slavery. Unlike many other Lincoln scholars who see Lincoln coming to the subject of human bondage rather late in his career, Channing sees even his earliest speeches as efforts at grappling with the problems posed by human bondage. “For Lincoln, of course, the problem of perpetuating self-government was connected, from the earliest stages of his career, with the anomaly of slavery’s presence in a self-governing republic,” Channing argues, “In all his speeches, early and late, these issues blended into one another” (2).