Environment and Landscape as Heritage

The Alpine Club, the Touring Club of France, and the Society for the Protection of the Landscapes of France. The pressure these associations put on the government ultimately led to concrete legislation that was passed in various stages between the 1860s and the 1930s, providing a blueprint for landscape protection in metropolitan France well into the twentieth century. However, what was first articulated in a discourse that was at once patriotic and aesthetic, while focusing on metropolitan France, gradually became international in its focus and was extended to France’s colonies from the first decade of the twentieth century to World War II.

In France, heritage or patrimoine, was defined in material and juridical terms and linked to ancestral inheritance from the French Revolution onward. As it came to be articulated over time, only those monuments or objects that transmitted a shared tradition and recalled a common past—and which were privileged or venerated as a result—would be considered as such. As Dominique Poulot and the authors associated with Pierre Nora’s seven-volume Les lieux de mémoire have suggested, the French conception of patrimoine has been a work in progress since the French Revolution. France’s earliest sense of its patrimoine had long been associated with Abbé Grégoire’s call to protect the nation’s pre-revolutionary monuments and religious objects from vandalism during the French Revolution, a call that laid the groundwork for the creation of France’s Musée national des monuments français in 1795. This museum confined itself early on to the project of historical conservation within the borders of metropolitan France. During the July Monarchy, in 1830 to be more precise, François Guizot established the post of inspector of historical monuments. Thus, the year 1834 saw the creation of the Comité des arts, which was soon replaced by the Commission des monuments français. Under the direction of Ludovic Vitet and Prosper Mené, the commission established a set of administrative procedures as well as links to learned societies and local archeological commissions.

The French brought this notion of patrimoine, which centered on venerable objects and historical monuments, to Algeria in the 1840s when architects, including Amable Ravaudé and Charles Texier, prepared inventories of various archeological sites. Legislation governing the preservation of historical monuments and the protection of a national patrimoine was passed slowly during the course of the nineteenth century in metropolitan France. In May 1840 the liberal Catholic Charles de Montalembert argued before the Chamber of Peers that the government should clasify historical monuments as having a utilité public and that they should be subject to expropriation by the state. A ministerial circular of 14 August 1876 called for the
publication of a general inventory of “richesses d'art de la France.” This circular prompted the creation of a departmental commission in Algiers charged with doing an inventory there. It was at this moment that the Académie de l'Instruction publique et des beaux-arts urged the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts to apply heritage legislation to Algeria that would protect the colony's ancient ruins. The ministry immediately pleaded a lack of financial resources, even though the Chamber of Deputies began to discuss the passage of a law regarding the preservation of historical monuments in France, with special provisions for Algeria and France's protectorates, in June 1886.

These initiatives were helped by the founding of a number of private associations. One of the most important was the Société des amis des monuments parisiens, which was established in the late 1870s. Charles Normand, son of the architect Alfred Normand, was its principal spokesman, and, significantly, the society elected Albert Lenoir, son of Alexandre Lenoir, who had founded the Revolution's Museum of French National Monuments, as its first president.

Soon after the founding of the Parisian society and an analogue in Rouen, a nationwide Comité des arts et monuments was created, along with a periodical, L'Ami des Monuments. The publication represented a new departure in that it sought to inform the public and the state about endangered objects, buildings, and natural landscapes in France. On 30 March 1887 the Chamber passed a law relative to the conservation of monuments and art objects that had historical and artistic interest. Article 16 of the legislation made the law applicable to Algeria and to France's protectorates. Although many years later André Malraux, France's first minister of culture, attempted to broaden the definition of patrimoine soon after France's Ministry of Culture was created in 1960, understandings of the term were intimately bound up with historical and architectural "monuments," and this association was eventually extended to "natural monuments" on French soil.

While preservationist societies were being founded in Paris and other urban centers in France, a small coterie of artists and a Parisian bourgeoisie were behind the first attempts to extend the notion of patrimoine to natural sites in a more comprehensive way. They began to frequent the pathways of the royal forest of Fontainebleau as temporary residents and as day visitors once train lines were extended from Paris to the capital's environs after 1840, and the historic forest came to occupy an iconic place in the French bourgeois imagination by midcentury.

Fontainebleau was transformed from a place for hunting and harvesting wood into an object of inspiration, a spectacle, a place for spiritual renewal, a natural haven from industrial life, a refuge from political turmoil, and a national icon. It also became a landscape of nostalgia, reflecting a new relationship between town and country as well as between the French landscape and the national past. However, ironically, the early impulse behind the protection of so-called natural landscapes in France was born in a forest that was one of the least wild, having long been a royal forest.

For the Parisian bourgeoisie, which had experienced political turmoil several times between 1870 and 1848, the forest took on new meanings. In their growing concern about social and political unrest, pollution and disease, they looked to Fontainebleau as a particular kind of space for rejuvenation, a refuge from social strife and the vicissitudes of urban politics. Moreover, the pastorality of the French countryside, which had long been associated with disorder and violence, gradually came to be nostalgically romanticized as the embodiment of order and social stability. Indeed, it was this selfsame pastoralism that/rooted the Parisian working class during the June Days of 1848 under the command of General Cavaignac. When the novelist Gustave Flaubert's anarchist, Frédéric Moreau, and his mistress flee Paris in the midst of the Revolution of 1848, they go to Fontainebleau. In L'éducation sentimentale they find in the royal forest a "spectacle of nature":

The different trees afforded a fascinating spectacle. The beeches, with their smooth white bark, mingled their foliage; ashes gently curved their grey-green boughs in the hornbeam copse; there nestled holly bushes that seemed to be made of bronze; then came a line of slender birches, bent in elegant attitudes; and the pines, as symmetrical as organ pipes, seemed to sing as they swayed continuously to and fro. Flage flung out its rose convolvulus out of the ground, embedded one another, and solidly established on their trunk-like trunks, threw out their bare arms in desperate appeals and furious thorns, like a group of Titans struck muteless in their anger.

Soon the "solemny of the forest" took hold of them both, and "abandoning themselves to the gentle rocking of the springs, they lay sunk in calm intoxication."
occupies 25,000 hectares, while the forest of Fontainebleau's surface area was approximately 18,917 hectares in 1850. Its vegetation is varied and very poor in places, which accounts for a heavy concentration of pine trees, which were introduced in the eighteenth century as part of reforestation project. About 44 percent of the forest still consists of oak trees, and the landscape is punctuated by scenic gorges and rock formations.

The forest was originally a royal game preserve attached to the château of Fontainebleau, which was built by François I during the Renaissance. While hunting was the exclusive right of the king and the nobility, residents of Barbizon had the right to graze animals and to gather fallen wood. Once a royal forest that was out of bounds for the casual visitor, Fontainebleau and its historic landscapes were "discovered" by a middle-class urban public with the development of local tourism from the 1830s and 1840s onward. The advent of the July Monarchy in 1830 marked a "rupture in the way of perceiving the landscape." The extension of train lines from Paris to Fontainebleau, which would make it easily accessible to Parisians in search of "wild nature," was facilitated by the municipal council of Fontainebleau's deliberations on 8 August 1844, when a proposal to place a train stop several hundred meters from the town was approved.

As Nicholas Green has argued, the discovery of Fontainebleau was intimately bound up with both rapid urbanization and industrialization in and around Paris and with the anxieties they provoked among city planners, hygienists, and the general public. From the 1840s onward trips out of Paris to the capital's immediate environs increased in number, as did the number of maisons de campagne (country houses or secondary residences), creating new patterns of leisure, recreation, and local tourism for the middle classes, who tried to imitate the manners of the aristocracy on a more modest scale. As the extension of train lines made Fontainebleau more accessible, the limited number of hotels and inns expanded in the area surrounding it. Tourists from Paris came to Fontainebleau in droves after 1840, when the railway arrived at Corbeil. The mayor estimated that the number of visitors increased from 25,000 in the late 1830s to 70,000 in 1842 and then to 140,000 in 1844 and 319,448 by 1867. The census of 1856 counted fourteen Bellfontains who declared themselves to be innkeepers, and by 1848 the number of inns had increased to seventeen, employing forty-two persons, before declining slightly in 1846. The hôtel particulier gradually transformed itself into the more specialized hôtel des voyageurs, the grandest of them being the Grand Hôtel de France et d'Angleterre. Indeed, houses (hôtels) associated with some of the oldest aristocratic families of France—

de Ségur, de Beaufort, de Rohan, and de la Rochefoucauld—provided the structures and building materials for the new accommodation. The forest of Fontainebleau had its popularizers, who contributed to a new kind of travel writing that was intended for commercial, popular consumption. The writers did not attempt to introduce strange peoples and unfamiliar lands while presenting personal impressions of far-off places, but rather they attempted to provide practical advice and a hands-on guide to local places. Early examples of the guidebook, which served to introduce the reader to the history of sites and monuments, could be published in expensive periodicals ranging from La France pittoresque to Le magasin pittoresque. Some of the earliest local guides to Fontainebleau included Charles Rémond's Le guide du voyageur à Fontainebleau (1820) and Etienne Janin's Quatre promenades (1839), published before the guidebook became a commercial industry under the direction of Adolphe Joanne in France and Karl Baedeker in Germany.

The most influential writer of local guidebooks was Claude-François Denecourt, who became a kind of forest impresario. Born in 1788 in humble circumstances in the Haute-Saône, a border region of France, he pursued a military career, fighting in the Napoleonic Wars and serving as a porter-cartaker at Versailles during the Restoration. He supported the Revolution and the Empire before embracing the Restoration, with which he soon became disillusioned. Soon after the beginning of the July Monarchy he was expelled from the army for his political views and embarked on a new career, setting himself up as a wholesale wine and cognac merchant in the town of Fontainebleau, where he came to make a profitable living.

Denecourt's real vocation became that of a "lover of the forest of Fontainebleau" and its cicerone or guide. The forest became a haven and a refuge to which the sybarite, or man of the forest, increasingly retreated. He came to meet other denizens of the forest, among them the carpenter-poet Alexis Durand, who shared Denecourt's passion for mapping and surveying. Durand introduced him to Etienne Janin, a clerk at the château, who wrote his own local guide. While they initially collaborated, their collaboration turned into rivalry when the success of Denecourt's guides incited Janin's envy.

Following the lead of Janin and Rémond, Denecourt published his first guide to Fontainebleau in 1839. It was such a success that the Guides Richard commissioned him to write in its collection, wishing to have him as one of its contributors. These guides were followed by the publication of smaller brochures between 1842 and 1853 that reproduced excerpted
The nineteenth century was the heyday of landscape painting and a period when French landscape painting came into its own. Aesthetic appreciation of the picturesque that was brought to bear on French landscape painting was reflected in its evolution. By 1867 one critic, writing about the work of these painters, argued that “through landscape, art becomes national... it takes possession of France, of the ground, of the air, of the sky, of the French landscape. This land that has borne us, the air that we breathe, this harmonious and sweet whole that constitutes the face of the mother country, we carry it in our soul.”

Denecourt came to plead both in his guidebooks and in letters to Napoleon III for the protection of Fontainebleau as a treasured landscape. He wrote two letters to the emperor in defense of Fontainebleau. One was an actual petition calling for the protection of part of the forest that might be defined as artistique and pittoresque in the form of “artistic reserves.” The other was a more general entreaty, which called on the emperor to consider the forest of Fontainebleau as a “precious museum.” “Grace for that which remains of the most valuable bequests of forests! Grace in the name of artists, in the name of poets, in the name of all intelligent men and women who appreciate the sentiment of beauty, the sentiment of conservation of the most beautiful things that France possesses!” He argued that parts of the forest of Fontainebleau should not be considered land to be exploited but rather as comprising “galleries of the most precious museum of sites and of landscapes that France possesses and whose conservation should with reason be assimilated into that of historical monuments” worthy of being protected. Denecourt identified specific sites as worthy of protection and provided criteria for their classification. They included sites that had particularly impressive perspectives, sites that were favored by painters, and particular tree and rock formations. He saw in the forest of Fontainebleau a “national museum” and one of the most beloved and frequented places in Europe, calling it “this unique forest among all forests and at the same time one of the most [beautiful] jewels in the crown.” For Denecourt the forest was not simply a natural monument but also a cultural monument, and the forest’s paths could be compared to the corridors between galleries in a museum.

The forest of Fontainebleau’s embrace by Denecourt or by Frédéric in Flaubert’s Sentimental Education was one that was shared by a whole generation of bourgeois artists, writers, and tourists who left the capital for the countryside surrounding Paris in the mid-nineteenth century. What they encountered was a highly charged “spectacle,” as Flaubert called it, a landscape that resembled organ pipes singing in the wind, muscular trees, and
bushes made of bronze. It was an enchanted landscape that induced intoxication, sensuality, and a deep connection with history and the nation's past. The celebration of Fontainebleau was at the center of the work of both Romantic and realist writers during the nineteenth century, and forty-two writers and poets contributed to a volume that was assembled by Fernand Desnoyers in tribute to Dorecourt and Fontainebleau in 1853. They included Théodore de Banville, Victor Hugo, Alphonse de Lamartine, Théophile Gautier, and Jules Jassin, among others. The volume's introduction declared that “everyone today knows Fontainebleau. Above all for Parisians, the Lyon railway has made it into a suburb.” While most of the contributions celebrated the beauty of the forest in some form, there was one notable exception. Charles Baudelaire contributed to the volume, but his poem remained focused on the urban environment, and he felt compelled to write to Desnoyers to rail against the “new religion” of nature:

You ask me for verses for your little volume, verses about Nature, do you not? About trees, tall oaks, greenery, insects, the sun, no doubt? But you know well that I am not adept at being moved by plants, and that my soul rebels against this singular new Religion, which will always have, it seems to me, for any spiritual being something shocking [about it]. I will never believe that the spirit of the Gods lives in plants, and even if it lives in them, I would care little, and consider mine to be much more highly prized than that of uncultivated vegetables.

Baudelaire was nonetheless forced to acknowledge the degree to which Fontainebleau, forests, and the cult of nature more generally had captured the imagination of his fellow poets from the early nineteenth century onward. Etienne Ferror de Séancourtois' 1841 Oehrens, which was in part set in a forest, came to the attention of a broad French public when it was reissued in 1833; the year the novelist Georges Sand came to Fontainebleau for the first time. Jules Michelet spent time in Fontainebleau with his wife in 1869 as he finished a draft of L’Europe, while Flaubert was to complete his masterwork, L’Education sentimentale, there in 1869.

The evocative nature of the forest captured in Flaubert’s prose was one that was also borne out in a series of paintings undertaken by Théodore Rousseau, Diaz de la Peña, Jean-François Millet, and others associated with a group of painters who established themselves in Barbizon, a village on the edge of the forest of Fontainebleau during the same period. These painters did much to celebrate and popularize the French landscape in their paintings of the rocks, oak trees, sandy dunes, and clearings in the forest. Some of the forest’s most notable landmarks—Bex Béau, Écouettes, the gorges of Apremont and Franchin, Bellevaux, the plain of Malesin, Reine Blanche—became the focus of their attention. While they were excluded from the salons of the Académie des beaux-arts during the July Monarchy, their work was purchased by the bourgeoisie of Paris. The industrialist Paul Casimir-Périer, the brother of the deputy Auguste Casimir-Périer, who made a fortune from his investments in railways, decided to invest some of his profits in the work of Rousseau, Dapré, and Diaz. After 1848 the academy and salons began to recognize the work of the Barbizon school painters, and in 1852 Théodore Rousseau was awarded the Légion d’honneur. Three years later the painters exhibited their work at the Universal Exposition.

Artists had already come to the forest of Fontainebleau in the eighteenth century, but it was only in the 1850s that a particular group of artists began to spend extended periods of time there. Rousseau first stayed in Chailly in 1833–1834 and came to Barbizon on a regular basis from 1835 to 1840, staying at Pierre Ganne’s inn as well as in a woodcutter’s cabin. Diaz and his family did the same in 1835. Rousseau began renting a house in Barbizon in 1847, and he was joined by Millet, who fled the dirt, poverty, and diseases of Paris. The artists became close, and other painters visited in subsequent years, including the famous caricaturist Honoré Daumier and Antoine-Louis Barye. The painters of Barbizon, who were labeled “naturalists,” lived out their bohemian existence far from Paris and depicted not only the natural beauty of the forest but also sectors of a rural economy that was disintegrating under the pressure of tourism and agricultural modernization. They included grazing and wood gathering, which were parts of a disappearing rural world.

In the 1840s Barbizon had a population of about 100, which consisted of landowners, shepherds, and small shopkeepers, as well as some forest guards, and the village had one street. It was surrounded by open fields where wheat, barley, oats, and potatoes were grown. More than Rousseau, it was Millet who captured the rhythms and landscape of Barbizon and its fields, which provided the backdrop for some of his most famous subjects: The Angelus, The Gleaners, and Man with a Hoe.

A growing ecological awareness affected these painters’ art, which was expressed in their concern about how the forest was being managed and cared for. In his analysis of Théodore Rousseau’s landscapes, the art historian Greg Thomas has stressed their ecological characteristics, arguing that “calling a mode of representation ecological” is “complicated by the fact that ecology has two distinct sides to it,” the scientific and the political; he stresses that this is further complicated by the “ambiguous relationship that existed between both early ecological science and romanticism and between early environmental politics and capitalism.”

One of the earliest articles to address the environmental integrity of the forest of Fontainebleau was published in L’Artiste in 1839. Signed by A.S.,
"La forêt de Fontainebleau: Désavantages" (The forest of Fontainebleau: Destructors), the article, ironically, criticized, in particular, foresters associated with the forest service (Eaux et Forêts), who had done so much to preserve the integrity of wooded areas since the seventeenth century, for the utilitarian way in which they managed the forest and for making it into a resource for profit. For the author and the artists associated with Fontainebleau, the forest should be preserved as an aesthetic refuge, a monastic retreat revealing an rich historic past, bearing out Madame de Staël’s view that “the most beautiful landscapes in the world, if they evoke no memory, if they bear no trace to any notable event, are uninteresting compared to historic landscapes.” The article suggested in no uncertain terms that artists and poets were the true guardians of the forest. "For them, a forest is a needed sacred oasis in the midst of impious invasions of a destructive and imprudent civilization...a magnificent studio where grandiose inspirations reveal themselves...a majestic temple where the most beautiful harmonies of nature unite in a worthy manner to praise the Creator." The author then went on to make the claim that "as all artists attest, the forest of Fontainebleau is Europe’s most beautiful; it is the only one in France where one can see some vestiges of the virgin forest, crossed in addition by convenient and picturesque roads." He attributed the slow destruction of the forest, which he characterized as vandalism, to three initiatives undertaken by the forest service: the draining of swamps, the cutting of old oak and beech trees, and the planting of pine trees, "this sad exotic vegetation." A number of artists documented these initiatives in their work. Jules Dupré, for example, created a series of paintings whose central subjects were felled trees, including Felled Trees, 1840, and Rousseau painted Clearing of Trees in the Isle of Croissy in 1847. A.S. saw the situation unfolding in Fontainebleau as one that was about "conserving for France, and even for Europe, a natural monument, without equal." While the author of the article in L’Artiste remained anonymous, it has been argued that Théodore Rousseau was responsible for its publication. Indeed, Rousseau made the protection of the forest of Fontainebleau into a mission, which was reflected in his art. Born in 1812, Rousseau developed a form of landscape painting that set him apart from the academic painters of the period. In paintings that included Edge of the Forest, The Priest, and The Footbridge, Rousseau idealized "the rural world as a unified whole," a world in which rural people and the landscape interacted with one another. His art was, like that of many of the other Romantic Barbizon school painters, "intensely nostalgic," as a desire to conserve is bound up with an understanding of the threat of a world passing away.

Making a distinction between the "historic" trees of Fontainebleau, which included oaks and beeches, and "newcomers" [pines], Rousseau argued for the preservation of only certain kinds of forested landscape. He established a hierarchy of trees that was based on their history and age rather than on "nature." Oaks were the most valuable, and the incursion of pines to be lamented. They were allegedly introduced into the forest by Marie-Antoinette’s doctors, Louis Guillaume Lemoine, who brought seedlings from the Baltic, but the high point of the plantings came under the stewardship of Marisier de Bois d’Hyver, who transformed many aspects the forest between 1830 and 1847. By 1888 old-growth trees covered only about half of the forest, and empty spaces had to all intents and purposes disappeared as the result of the planting of pines.

Forests and plant life were not valued in and of themselves but rather as an expression of the past, of history. For the artists, pines were an aesthetic monstrosity, representing a foreign invasive species, and the painters would gather in a local inn close to Fontainebleau to combat the forest service’s plantations as early as the 1830s. As the artist Émile Miché wrote in 1859:

"Relations with the forest administration were not very courteous. Following the plantation of resolute trees, its agents were held as enemies, deserving the most unfriendly epithets. The landscape painters had declared war on them and to oppose the replanting that they judged unseemly, it was agreed that one would be allowed to the evening meal only under the express condition of bringing back to the inn at least a pair of young pines pulled up in the plantations: pine to dine, according to the adopted formula." The forest administration retaliated. Around 1852 the forest guards caught François-Henri Nazon engaging in the practice, and he barely escaped imprisonment. John Croumbie Brown, however, who wrote extensively on forest practices in France and in Europe during this period, noted that 98 percent of the soil in Fontainebleau was sand, and asserted that the area would be a "drifting desert" without trees, which included pines.

By 1832 Rousseau was sufficiently exercised about what he saw happening in the forest of Fontainebleau that he penned his own petition, probably with his friend Alfred Sensier, to the new emperor, Napoleon III. He claimed that artists had been "deeply saddened" for the past thirty years by the deeds of the forest administration and that the forest was the "only living souvereign that remains from the heroic times of the Fatherland from Charlemagne to Napoleon." He lamented the "systematic felling, clear-cuts, and unintelligent plantations," about which artists had complained many times during the July Monarchy without having been heeded: "Under your
government, Mme. de Genlis, is a system continuously the forest administration indiscriminately cuts down trees whose act ages, fame, and artistic beauty should make them respected, and in other areas of the forest they grow in profusion. Unaccountable quantities of Northern Pines that are whipping out this forest's old Gaul character and will soon give us the severe and sad look of Russian forests.448

Although Rousseau held the forest administration chiefly responsible for the destruction of the forest of Fontainebleau, he also laid blame at the feet of Denecourt, who did so much to popularize it and capitalize on it: "A resident of Fontainebleau, a manical old man named Mr. Denecourt, smitten in the wrong way with the beauties of the forest, is going off seeking aid from all quarters and using it to lay out useless trails, to build ridiculous platforms, to make [walls] of grass, to cover with paint, numbers, and inscriptions the forest's most beautiful trees, which he is despoiling and dishonoring."449

What Rousseau came to propose was that the parts of the forest that artists admired and incorporated into their paintings be placed beyond the reach of the forest administration, and he identified the following sites: Bas-Reau, the oldest part of the forest; the Apremont Gorges; the plateau of Belle Croy; and the Gorge of the Wolves. In short, he concluded that "if we recognize that the monuments of men, old churches and old palaces, must be respectfully preserved, would it not be just as reasonable to command that the most sublime monuments of nature be like them a tranquil edge?"

The foresters, in turn, pilloried the artists and responded by arguing that they foresaw the "ruin" of Fontainebleau. Without judicious cutting and replanting, the trees would choke one another and die. One forest official wrote in the Revue des États et Forêts of 1877 that "there is no forest without a forester, any more than there is a garden without a gardener. The virgin forest is nothing other than a poetic fiction."452

The artists, Denecourt, and his tourists had other critics as well. Arthur Mangin wrote:

Despite its enormous trees, its rudely broken surface, its stags and roe-deer, reserved for imperial sport; despite its adders and problematical vipers, it is now little better than a rendezvous for amateur artists and lustful idlers. Its well-paved avenues resound with rapid wheels, and you can scarcely stir a step without finding the associations of the place interrupted by the stalls of vendors of cakes, or the apparatus of clandestine gamblers.453

The artists were deeply critical of the foresters, who themselves claimed to be agents of responsible conservation, but they did not criticize or remark on the presence of the peasants who gathered wood, grazed their sheep, or attacked forest guards. These were the very peasants who fought pitched battles with the state over communal rights, which was crystallized in the so-called War of the Demesniers in 1839. Foresters had railed against peasants and the devastation that they wrought since the French Revolution.

The peasants, however, figure prominently in the paintings of Daz, Rousseau, and especially Millet, where they are portrayed heroically. Indeed, the peasants, with whom the French state had waged several century-long battles for control over forests, became an integral part of the landscape, which represented a way of life. The domesticated landscapes, which included peasants, constituted landscapes of nostalgia, where local peasant practices appeared to pose no threat. Indeed, the painters came to idealize the existing pastoral tradition. In one painting, one has a snapshot of practices in the forest that would be in clear violation of the law. Arthur Melville's Figure Gathering depicts a woman brandishing a metal hatchet that she obviously intends to use. The law only allowed for the gathering of fallen wood by women, and any form of cutting was strictly forbidden. The human presence in the forest did not appear to be decreed by the painters as long as that presence reflected an older rural economy.

Ironically, three different constituencies, notably artists, foresters, and tour guides, who were all ostensibly devoted to the preservation of the forest of Fontainebleau, fought pitched battles with one another, and none won these battles completely. Rousseau had a sympathetic ear in the Due de Monty, an art collector and half-brother of Napoleon III. Monty had helped to orchestrate Napoleon III's coup d'état and served as a minister of the interior under the new regime. Rousseau submitted his petition to him and was given a dinner invitation in response. He articulated his argument for the preservation of Fontainebleau in patriotic language and in terms of the innate rights of the natural world. A year later a report was prepared on the future management of the forest, and the report's plan was then instituted by imperial decree eight years later, in 1861. It provided for the protection of twelve areas of the forest, which would not be managed by the forest administration and which would be at the disposition of the artists. Eight of these areas had been mentioned by Rousseau. In all, 1,097 hectares (6.66 percent of the entire forest) were set aside as a réserve artistique.459

The emperor's decree of 13 August 1861 divided the forest into three sections, with 13,724 hectares subject to a new system of clear-cutting, 1,618 managed under the old system of spot-cutting, and 1,651 hectares that were not to be managed. The hectares devoted to the réserve artistique had been increased from an earlier recommendation to 1,097 hectares. Moreover, the so-called Moscow pines were to be banished from the Apremont Gorges and Bas-Reau, which were so highly prized by Rousseau and other artists. The old oak groves were preserved and off limits to further cutting. The battle over vegetation and landscape appeared to have been won, and Bois
d'Hyver's scheme to systematically sow pines, which grew rapidly, at the expense of oak trees between 1830 and 1848, when he was in charge of the forest, was reversed. The oak tree regained its status as a kind of national tree of France, while the decree, in effect, constituted France's first governmental measure to protect a specific natural landscape. It would have far-reaching consequences for determining which landscapes would be protected in metropolitan France in the future and how landscapes would come to be protected subsequently by the state.

In a broad sense, both foresters and artists expressed the desire to protect and safeguard the natural world. However, foresters conceived of landscape protection in terms of conservation. They wished to manage and use the forest as a natural resource judiciously. The artists focused on preservation, which is "postponed on the principle of non-utilitarianism," demanding "the prevention of any active interference whatsoever. The conservationist approach was well established in France, but the idea of setting aside significant segments of state forests from any form of management and considering these forests as heritage and history soon took hold. As David Lowenthal has suggested, preservation ultimately became a "principal mode of appreciating the past." France, of course, was not the only country in Europe or North America that began to turn its attention to forest and landscape conservation in the nineteenth century. Natural resources were seen as a "barometer of the health of American society." What was to be conserved in the United States, however, was the "wild country," which, in the words of William Cronon, "became a place not just of religious redemption but of national renewal, the quintessential location for experiencing what it meant to be an American."

**The Valorization of the Forest of Fontainebleau as an Aesthetic and Historic Landscape**

The valorization of the forest of Fontainebleau as an aesthetic and historic landscape paved the way for more general later legislation governing the protection of natural sites and monuments. The battle waged among artists, foresters, and tourists, however, pointed to tensions and disputes about how the forest should be protected and for whom. The growing horde of tourists also gave rise to new pursuits, which included outdoor sports from the 1870s onward. The forest soon became a locale for cycling and rock climbing, which were encouraged by the founding of a number of voluntary associations that came to embrace the cause of landscape and nature protection. They included the Club alpin français (1875) and the Touring Club de France (1890). These associations and the Société pour la protection des paysages de France (SPPF, Society for the Protection of the Landscapes of France), founded in 1901, began to spearhead more comprehensive legislation governing the protection of natural sites. While some of these associations were oriented toward particular kinds of causes, all shared a common concern about preserving the beauty of the natural environment. All of these associations, which were established during or after 1870, recruited members from among the middle class, including the liberal professions, civil servants, men of letters, and increasingly from what the politician Léon Gambetta called the nouvelles couches sociales, a rising petite bourgeoisie, which included primary school teachers, the "black hussars of the Republic."

The French Alpine Club, which was initially founded by a group of French alpinists and officially created on 4 April 1874 with the motto "For country, for the mountain," is a case in point. Its membership, which ranged from 3,500 to 7,500, was largely made up of civil servants and the liberal professions, and it was, like the other associations founded in this period, almost overwhelmingly male. Only 1.6 percent of its members were women in 1875, and only 3.8 percent of new members from 1876 to 1881 were women. Georges Sand was one of the Alpine Club's few female members, but she was a founding member, perhaps attesting to her early enthusiasm for mountainous landscapes following stays in Gstaad in 1824 and her journey to Chamonix in 1836. Other adherents to the organization included the architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, Ondesime and Eliére Redon, Adolphe Joanne, an author of some of the most popular guidebooks of the period; the publisher Georges Hachette; and Alexandre Surrill, the Ponts et Chaussées engineer. They began to call for the protection of mountainous terrain as both scientific and cultural heritage.

The 1890s saw the foundation of new organizations, including the Société des amis des arbres (the Society of the Friends of Trees), which was established in Nice and transferred to Paris in 1894, while in 1898 some of the members of the club created an offshoot, the Société des peintres de montagne (the Society of Mountain Painters). These diverse and interlinked organizations were dedicated to the preservation of forests and mountainous regions, but their motivations differed from those of the foresters and engineers. They regarded the forests of the Alps from an aesthetic and touristic perspective.

The Touring Club de France, which was founded on 16 January 1890 in Neuilly-sur-Seine, had as its explicit purpose the promotion of tourism in all of its forms. However, it was also devoted to the protection of everything that a tourist might consider picturesque or aesthetic. The SPF was founded some years later, on 7 March 1901, and its aim was more generalized in that it envisioned the protection of the diverse regions of France and the safeguarding of their beauty from the ravages of industrialization and
public advertising: "First article.—The Society for the Protection of the Landscapes of France has the general goal of spreading and developing the notion that all natural beauty, as a whole or in part, can be the object of public utility...necessary to the honor and wealth of the country." The SPFF was involved in a number of early initiatives to protect specific sites, which included the Giverny cascade and the valley of the Granges. While it claimed to be a proponent of the railway, its members declared themselves to be against the effects of industrialization and the advocates of legislation designed to sanction those who would destroy France's natural environment. In 1901 Henri Cazalis, a doctor and a poet who published on a wide variety of subjects under the pseudonym Jean Lafosse, issued a kind of manifesto for the SPFF. Its epigraph was a quote from Edmund Monet: "Man of the nineteenth century entered nature like an executioner." He declared that not only historical monuments should be protected. For him it was also necessary to protect and save "our mountains, our valleys, our forests, our terroirs," which were also "sublime" and imperilled "monuments of nature." This mission, according to Cazalis, should be done in the name of saving France's patrimoine, or heritage. But he defended his project in aesthetic terms too, and cited the efforts of the Barbizon school painters and the creation of Yellowstone Park in 1872. For Cazalis, the culprit responsible for the destruction of natural landscapes were industrials and merchants, and he drew particular attention to new commercial practices, which included advertising posters. He also targeted tourists and railways. In his view, industry should not destroy the landscapes of France, and if industry and individuals have rights, "nature and beauty also have theirs." Cazalis, however, went beyond the confines of France in declaring the necessity of "international measures," which, he argued, needed to be studied and pursued, and he cited initiatives taken by the czar to protect Russia's steppes. Some respects the SPFF was an outgrowth of an earlier, more generalized organization, the Société pour la protection de l'esthétique de la France, and a specific event triggered its founding: a court case that was successfully won for the protection and surveillance of the sources of the river Lison in the Doubs. The goals of the SPFF were close to those of its sister organization, the Bureau d'Hygiène, founded in Germany a few years later, in 1904, and it was intimately associated with France's regionalist movement, absorbing much of the membership of that movement's organizations. Jean Charles-Brun, the president of the Fédération régionaliste française, was also a founding member of the SPFF, and the goal of his organization was to preserve the regional traditions and cultures of France, which were threat-
creation of commissions composed of artists, members of the Alpine and Touring clubs, and members of the conseil général in different localities and of the municipal councils in all of the departments of France. The commissions would be charged with classifying sites to be protected by the state. Beauquyer came to his own views about landscape protection early on. At the age of thirty-three he published Philosophie de la musique in which he likened instrumental music to landscape painting. He was a member of the League for the Protection of Birds and one of the co-founders in 1901 of the SPFF serving as its president from 1901 to 1915. He declared in the Chamber of Deputies on 4 March 1902 that public opinion had been mobilized in favor of landscape protection and that it was not possible to suppose that "in a country like France, which pretends to march at the head of civilization, one allows natural beauty to be degraded and suppressed."

Three separate pieces of legislation were drawn up in 1901 and 1902. The first, of 28 March 1902, was put before parliament by Beauquyer. The proposed legislation called for drawing up an inventory of sites of natural beauty in each department in France by a commission to be named by the conseil général and the conseil municipal of each department's main administrative center as well as by artists, art amateurs, members of the Alpine Club and the Touring Club, and persons to be named by the government. The sites classified by the commission would then be evaluated by inspectors from the Ministry of Fine Arts and provision made for the payment of indemnities to property owners.

The second legislative proposal was signed by several other deputies and left the initiative to the department or commune, which would present its requests for classification to the Ministry of Fine Arts. A commission consisting of the prefect as president, the department's chief engineer, two conseillers généraux, and five members chosen by the prefect from the region's artistic and literary notables would be convened only in case of a dispute.

The third proposal came from the president of the Touring Club of France, Abel Bollot, and called for the application of articles 7 through 12, and 13 of the law of 30 March 1887, governing historic monuments, to sites of artistic, geological, and historic interest. He proposed the formation of a commission that was far more diverse in terms of its membership and called on communes to assume much of the financial responsibility for the law.

At the heart of these initiatives was a concern about probable cases of resistance on the part of property owners and the cost of protecting natural sites and monuments. Some proposals allowed for the principle of expropriation and drew on the authority of the state. While the proposals went through a number of modifications, the Chamber of Deputies voted for passage of the law on 2 February 1905. It then went to the Senate, where on 6 March 1906 Maurice Faure, who was a member of the Radical Party and a senator from the Drôme, presented a report on the law that suggested minor modifications. He pleaded for the passage of the law in a language of patriotism:

"Patriotism, gentleness, is not only a moral entity, an abstract conception, a geographical and historical conception. It is in some way the maternal and visible representation of the country itself, with particular physical characters and its diverse elements, with its mountains, its forests, its plains, its rivers, its shores with the multiple and varied aspects of its soil, such as they were formed and transmitted by the long succession of centuries."

The Senate ultimately passed the law proposed by Beauquyer with an amendment for its application in Algeria and other colonies on 27 March 1906, and the law was finally ratified by the Chamber of Deputies on 10 April 1906 and promulgated on 21 April 1906. The so-called Beauquyer Law consisted of six articles. The first instituted a commission for natural sites and monuments in each department, over which the prefect presided and which was composed of the department's chief engineer for Ponts et Chaussées, the chef de service for Eaux et Forêts, elected members of the conseil général, five members chosen from among the artistic, scientific, and literary notability, and representatives of the Touring Club, the Alpine Club, and the SPFF. Articles 2 through 6 of the law set out the task of the commission in terms of identifying sites for protection and the rights of the state and property owners in matters of classification.

Drawing on the work of John Ruskin and Hippolyte Taine, Fernand Cross-Mayresville, who would come to play an important role in SPFF and in the movement for the protection of nature more generally, defended a thesis at the Faculty of Law at the University of Paris on the protection of historical and natural monuments a year after the Beauquyer Law was passed. He followed Faure's logic and argued that monuments and beautiful sites "develop national pride, elevate ideas."

Defining what made natural monuments distinct from historical monuments, he took up the articulation of the concept by Raoul de Clermont, an agronomist and lawyer, who also became a member of the SPFF. A group of elements resulting from nature, like rocks, trees, sudden and accidental changes in the appearance of terrain and other transformations which, separately or together, form an impressive aspect, a landscape worthy of being conserved. A landscape is a part of nature presenting an aesthetic character through the disposition of its contours, forms and colors. A site is a part of a landscape whose aspect is particularly interesting."
The devastation engendered by World War I and lacunae in the law led some to push for the rewriting of the Beauquier Law. Pragmatic arguments in favor of new legislation were also put forward by the Touring Club de France and the Office national du tourisme. The latter, which kept statistics on foreign tourists, estimated that in 1930 France welcomed 850,000 from England, 200,000 from North America, 400,000 from South America, and 600,000 from other parts of the world. These figures did not include internal tourism, and it was estimated that 500,000 in France earned their living from tourism. While the economic importance of tourism was continually emphasized, other considerations came into play:

It must be admitted finally that the role of tourism is not exclusively economic. It also has—and here is its most novel aspect—an intellectual impact. Travel not only shapes the young, but also a public of any age. It develops its culture, its curiosity and desire to understand. Thus conceived, tourism comes to perfect, most fortunately, general education. With the museum and the monument, the site becomes a complement of the school.

Indeed, the pedagogical role played by the museum of nature and the economic stimuli provided by the development of tourism began to shape renewed debates about the passage of more expansive legislation concerning the protection of natural sites and monuments. Pierre Leroux de la Roche wrote in 1932 that many arguments could be made for protecting France’s natural sites and landscapes, but the most decisive was one of an “economic order”: “It’s worthwhile in effect to emphasize the important place of tourism in the national economy, for it is in ensuring the safeguard of our aesthetic capital through the rational protection of our sites and landscapes that we give tourism its raison d’être.” He stressed that tourism was an activity pursued not only by elites but also by the masses and that World War I had “exerted a decisive influence on its evolution.”

Such sentiment inspired the 2 May 1930 law that reorganized the institutions charged with the protection of natural sites and monuments for their artistic, historical, scientific, legendary, and picturesque significance, replacing the Beauquier Law of 21 April 1906. Along with the law of 31 December 1915 pertaining to the protection of natural monuments, the 1930 law expanded the 1906 law to include sites and monuments with a zoological, botanical, geological, and mineralogical significance, indicating that the law had now moved beyond primarily aesthetic considerations. In this way the law marked a change with respect to which kinds of landscapes were considered worthy of protection and how landscape preservation was justified. Why did this shift occur? Part of the answer lies in the gradual “internationalization” of the movement to protect natural landscapes and nature more generally.

The SFPI, the Touring Club, and other associations that were founded at the turn of the century were both aware of and in contact with their counterparts in Europe and North America. Raoul de Clermont documented international organizations and initiatives in commenting on the founding of Heimatschutz in Germany in 1904, which was prompted by concerns about the Rhine River, and on the Ligue suisse pour la protection de la beauté, which was founded by Marguerite Burnat-Provins. This had been preceded by Theodore Roosevelt’s presidential decree to designate Pelican Island as a U.S. federal reserve in 1903. Indeed, as early as 1900 the first steps toward the internationalization of nature protection were taken, and France took the lead in 1909, 1923, and 1931 by sponsoring international conferences devoted to the protection of the natural world. These meetings brought together a variety of European and non-European nations, but what was clearly discernible with time was that international agreements that were forged came to be increasingly directed to the non-European continents of the world.