Terroir after the Terror: Landscape and Representation in Nineteenth-Century France

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SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ARCHITECTURE:
HISTORY AND THEORY OF ART

AT THE
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

SEPTEMBER 2017

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Submitted to the Department of Architecture on July 11, 2017, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Architecture: History and Theory of Art

**Abstract**

In the decades following the French Revolution, landscape paintings appeared at exhibitions in greater numbers than ever before and with more critical approval; at the same time, France’s actual landscapes were being reconfigured, in both physical and symbolic ways. This dissertation investigates the relationship between land reform and landscape representation following the French Revolution through to the early Third Republic (1790-circa 1880), combining object study with environmental history to draw out the political stakes of seemingly picturesque scenes. Looking beyond painting to include an analysis of decorative arts and visual culture, this study challenges established hierarchies of fine and decorative arts, canonical and non-canonical artists, and attention to Paris over the provinces. My first chapter considers the role of mountains, and their depiction, in defining France’s “natural limits”; the second, state-supported representations of ports, from images of the nation’s coastal strongholds painted by Joseph Vernet in the eighteenth century to engravings produced by his nineteenth-century successor, Louis Garneray, as a form of visual border control; the third, the impact of a stringent forestry code passed in 1827 on Barbizon artists’ aesthetic and material choices; and finally, the state’s decision, in 1857, to drain wetlands in the southwest and the resulting effort on the part of local photographer Félix Arnaudin to preserve that disappearing landscape in images. Taken together, these chapters evidence the active role images played in renegotiating the meaning of land in post-Revolutionary France, and I argue for a more expansive view of the promise and possibility of landscape representation in both consolidating the nation and registering local reaction.

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This project could not have happened anywhere but MIT. The dynamic and critical environment of the History, Theory and Criticism program shaped and expanded my perspective on art history immensely, and I feel so lucky to have been a part of this community. Thanks go first to my committee. Richard Taws’s astute observations will be essential to the continual evolution of this work. Mark Jarzombek is one of the most creative teachers I know, and his incisive grasp of history and method helps me to always think bigger. Caroline Jones is a fount of brilliant ideas. Her ability to distill the argument in a mess of scattered thoughts is unparalleled. I am especially grateful to Kristel Smentek for trusting in this sometimes-unwieldy project and in my ability to carry it out. She has been the most supportive advisor one could ask for, and her patient comments made every page of this dissertation better.

Institutional support enabled me to conduct research across the US and France, and I am thankful to Harvard’s Center for European Studies, the Bourse Chateaubriand, the Social Science Research Council, the Getty Foundation, and the Huntington Library, in addition to sources of funding within MIT, including the Center for International Studies, MISTI France, and the Schlossman Research Fellowship. Opportunities to share this work, at various stages, with colleagues at Harvard’s Mahindra Center for the Humanities, the College Art Association Annual Conference, and the British Library, provided welcome feedback and dialogue.

My fellow students in HTC were constant sources of engagement and enjoyment. I am grateful to have had Irina Chernyokova, Chris Ketcham, Deepa Ramaswamy, Azra Dawood, Albert Lopez, Jesse Feiman and Christianna Bonin with me in coursework and after. Dariel Cobb and Nick Stoutt shared their warm and beautiful home in Cambridge, and their company kept me going in the crazed final weeks of writing. Nisa Ari and Stephanie Tuerk each provided invaluable assistance in the last days, in addition to being great friends. Catherine Clark has been both a friend and a mentor, and I am very glad to have her counsel. David made Paris magical. Ana Maria Leon and Niko Vicario offered guidance and assurance that it could be done, and I was inspired by their example. Monica Bravo drove me to my master’s and has supported me in more ways than I can name ever since. Jennifer Chuong has been one of my most insightful readers and dearest friends throughout this process; without our weekly agraphia chats there may well have been no words.

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Introduction

In September 1789, Jacques-Guillaume Thouret, head of the Committee on the Division of French Territory following the Revolution, used a map to illustrate his proposed redistribution of the state’s administrative units (Figure 1). The provinces of the ancien regime were decried as “a monstrous and contradictory pile of inequalities, that time, hazard, abuse, privilege, and the favor of despotism have composed out of chaos” and the Revolutionaries sought to replace them with a more rational system possessing “clear and precise boundaries.”¹ In Thouret’s proposal, a strict grid is overlaid atop the outline of France, without regard for existing natural or cultural boundaries. It divides the nation into eighty administrative “departments”—shown through the alternation of green and uncolored boxes—with nine equal-sized communes divided further into four cantons, each taking the form of a perfectly rational square. These squares were indifferent to mountains and rivers; they grouped citizens speaking different languages. The administration privileged abstract order over the realities of place, and though this was not the plan ultimately adopted, it demonstrates a tension between state and site that would characterize land use over the course of the nineteenth century.

As a visual rendering of an administrative idea of place, the 1789 map reveals that images were active agents in renegotiating the meaning of land and shaping perspectives on the physical landscape. This dissertation asks how landscape imagery, including maps, prints, porcelain plates, paintings and photographs, participated in redefining France as a republic after the 1789 Revolution. It spans nearly a century, traversing the fall of Napoleon, two subsequent revolutions, and a coup d’état to articulate a broader shift in the role of landscape representation.

It was during this unstable period, when the post-Revolutionary nation’s internal and external boundaries and land use policies were shifting, that ideas about land still persisting in France today were actively worked out. It was also during this period that the role and importance of landscape in visual representation was entirely overhauled. Beginning when the French state sought to draw new departmental boundaries, through to engineering’s triumph over the nation’s physical terrain in managing its forests and draining its wetlands, images and aesthetic concerns intersected with administrative and political ones at critical junctures.

The redivision of territory was not merely an organizational matter; Thouret went so far as to claim, “A plan for the division of a great Empire is almost unto itself the Constitution.” A print from 1792 (Figure 2) emphasized the ties between rational geography and equality in post-Revolutionary France. It shows the provinces falling away as female allegories of reason and genius redraw the nation’s map; a placard within the image suggests equal rights are tied to the draftsman’s compass. When they were formed, many of the departments were given the names of landscape features, including 51 rivers (Ardèche, Oise, Doubs...), five mountain ranges, two forests (Ardennes, Yvelines), a gulf (Morbihan), a spring (Vaucluse), rocky islets (Calvados) and more. Yet the general disregard for geographic features in the division of the nation meant the names were largely token gestures. After the redivision, which was not well received by citizens accustomed to their provinces, one detractor complained, “Your committee has cut France like a piece of cloth into 81 pieces.” This writing over of place was part of a larger trend in administrative land reform after the Revolution; Edmond Burke, observing from a distance,

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lamented "I cannot conceive how any man can... consider his country nothing but carte blanche upon which he may scribble whatever he pleases." As a visual carte blanche, the 1789 map exemplifies one of the first arguments of this dissertation: in the nineteenth century, visual order was linked to social order. The state sought to make things appear rationally in the hope that land and people alike would behave as such. In Paris, as is well known, this culminated in the efforts of Baron Haussmann to make of the city a new Rome. In greater France, this amounted to replanting forests with orderly pines, draining wetlands, digging canals, and building roads and railways: in sum, the project we have come to call modernization.

Land reform was particularly significant in the aftermath of the Revolution. Revolutionaries themselves acknowledged the importance of altering the nation’s physical form. One deputy, advocating for the drainage of ponds, which had been associated with the monarchy and the clergy, declared in 1793: “A single pond left behind would be a waiting stone saved from the sinking ship to bring back the ancien régime.” This claim directly links land and politics. The post-Revolutionary nation needed a new landscape. Changes intended to make land more productive and orderly were not, however, universally welcomed, and images could also be a way to challenge them. In many instances, nineteenth-century reforms interfered with use rights that had sustained peasants for centuries. A close study of images can reveal the conflicts that resulted between a centralized administration and local users of land.

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5 Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France (London, 1821), 54.
6 The best account of this process is David Harvey, Paris, Capital of Modernity (New York: Routledge, 2004).
7 "Un seul étang laissé en arrière seroit une pierre d’attente sauvee du naufrage, pour revenir à l’Ancien Régime." A pierre d’attente is a theatrical element that is difficult to translate; it consists of an object seen early on in a play that will reappear at the end; it is also an architectural element, known in English as a "toothing stone." Jacques-Antoine Boudin, Mémoire sur le desséchement et la mise en culture des étangs de la Sologne, de la Bresse, de la Brenne, etc., ... Lu à la Commission des subsistances et approvisionnements de la République, au Comité de salut public et au Comité d’agriculture, les 16 et 22 brumaire IIe de la République (Paris, an II), 113. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.
Historians of cartography have suggested mapping did not just picture but participated in making territory; I argue other kinds of images could do the same. The nation was formulated through porcelain plates as much as maps, in paintings and prints as much as water tables. After the departments were created, they were commemorated in a table service produced at the state porcelain manufacturer, Sèvres. The service was an attempt to give identity to departments born of geometry, and it relied on landscape images to do so. Formerly tasked with supplying the monarchy with luxury goods, Sèvres managed to survive the Revolution and was put to new purposes in the nineteenth century; the *Service of the Departments* was one of these. Beginning in 1824, Sèvres intended to produce an 86 plate series to pay tribute to the departments. Each plate would feature a central landscape view surrounded by characteristic regional personages and elements of industry along the rim (Figure 3). Even the form of the plates’ gilded vegetal frames, each one based on a regional plant, was to reflect its department. Colonial holdings would, notably, also be represented. The set was united through consistent borders and framing elements, creating a holistic vision of the nation while celebrating its distinct regions. In the homogeneity of their form, the plates echoed the administration of the departments themselves: standardized units whose particularity remained subordinate to a stringent overarching structure. The project was never finished due to the immense amount of research required; much of France remained unknown to those in the capital. It was still, at the time of the *Service*, quite difficult to travel and divisions in language and culture between regions proved problematic. In the nineteenth century, efforts were undertaken to make the nation known to its citizens and to

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reconcile its diverse parts into a coherent whole. Though incomplete, the *Service of the Departments* exemplifies the potential for landscape imagery to ground and stabilize identity.

In this dissertation the fine arts are understood as in dialogue with decorative objects and visual culture, as they were for many figures in the nineteenth century, including painters of the Barbizon school who began their careers in porcelain factories, porcelain artists who drew heavily on lithographic prints for source imagery, and collectors who owned a range of objects. Emphasizing the interconnections between art forms and their mutual participation in cultural change is an essential step in moving towards what Shelly Errington termed “a nontrivial global art history,” one that would “give up the hierarchy of the fine arts.”¹⁰ Such an approach offers opportunities to consider non-canonical artworks as part of a more holistic view of the impact of landscape imagery across society.

Looking beyond painting is especially important in France, as when seen within the longer history of landscape as a subject for painting, French artists took up the genre somewhat belatedly. Landscape flourished in the seventeenth-century Netherlands, fueled by the patronage of the merchant classes. In the late eighteenth century it was adopted in England to naturalize the position of the landed gentry.¹¹ In France, however, landscape had been considered a minor and lowly genre of painting prior to the nineteenth century. Within the strict hierarchies of the French Academy of Art, it was an unworthy subject. Landscape, it was perceived, could not serve the state as directly as history painting. Yet the genre became increasingly popular in the decades


after the French Revolution, fueled, in part, by changes in the country’s territorial structure. By 1817, it was sufficiently pervasive that a Prix de Rome, the French Academy’s top prize for art students, facilitating their studies in Rome, was dedicated to historical landscapes. Beyond academic painting, landscapes appeared in decorative arts and popular culture, including on teacups and plates, wallpaper and textiles, snuffboxes and watch faces, in lavish print volumes, and as part of spectacular panoramas. Unlike the idyllic pastoral scenes or classicizing Italianate vistas preferred by eighteenth-century viewers, these landscapes were distinct, recognizable, and predominantly French.¹² They pictured, among many other subjects, the distinctive geological features of the Pyrenees, the old oaks of the Fontainebleau forest, and the historic fortifications of the nation’s coasts.

To date, the emphasis on the specificity of nineteenth-century French landscape imagery—what Greg Thomas terms “topographical” representation¹³—has been explained by art historians in two principal ways. The first pertains to a nascent nationalism.¹⁴ In the early nineteenth century, the French were viewing their country, over which the Revolution gave them a new sense of collective ownership, for the first time. As the prominent nineteenth-century historian Jules Michelet wrote of the effects of the Revolution:

"Man had not only reconquered his rights, but he had reentered upon his possession of nature. Several of these writings [records of poems and hymns read at a provincial festival of the Revolution] testify to the emotion which those poor

¹² Scott Schaefer has described this transition as “a long, difficult, and bloodless revolution,” a revolution he and many others see as culminating in Impressionism. Scott Schaefer, “The French Landscape Sensibility,” in A Day in the Country, Impressionism and the French Landscape (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1984), 53.


people felt on beholding their country for the first time. Strange to relate! Those rivers, mountains, and noble landscapes, where they were constantly passing, were discovered by them on that day: they had never seen them before.¹⁵

The landscape was newly visible in this period, but it was not necessarily recognizable as “French.” Post-Revolutionary France was a cacophony of disparate languages and cultures. Much of the physical area of the nation was still unmapped, and a cadaster (land survey) project remained unfinished well into the nineteenth century.¹⁶ Parisian administrators and intellectuals fretted over how little they knew of France outside of Paris, and the nation’s diversity became a subject for cultural representation. “La France profonde,” or “deep France,” referring to rural regions far from Paris, was frequently represented in both literary and pictorial terms. Honoré de Balzac’s La Comédie humaine was a monumental literary effort valorizing the plurality of local cultures; Victor Hugo similarly emphasized the value of locality, writing “People are beginning to understand in our day that exact localization is one of the first elements of reality.”¹⁷ That “exact localization” increasingly meant an attention to France itself. As painters eschewed the Grand Tour in favor of the French countryside, they joined a cultural movement that turned inward after the upheaval of the previous decades.

The French were introduced to the diversity of their nation through images. Volumes known as voyages pittoresques were lavishly illustrated albums designed to promote and encourage the preservation of French patrimony, taking readers on a tour through France and

¹⁶ For the struggle to complete the cadaster, due in part to failure to adopt the meter and local resistance to cartographers sent in from Paris, see Alvaro Santana-Acuña, The Making of a National Cadastre (1763-1807): State Uniformization, Nature Valuation, and Organizational Change in France, PhD dissertation, Harvard, 2014.
highlighting remarkable landscapes, monuments, and buildings.\textsuperscript{18} These volumes were understood as filling gaps in history and inciting nationalist pride. As one contemporary wrote in 1834, “we are managing finally to put together a general history of France, which the nation still lacks, even in the nineteenth century... When the French know their country well, they will love it even more.”\textsuperscript{19} Focused primarily on artifacts of the Middle Ages, the \textit{voyages pittoresques} were tinged with nostalgia, produced in the wake of the revolutionary destruction that had threatened the nation’s cultural heritage. Historian Stéphane Gerson has charted the emergence of a “cult of local memories” in the 1830s,\textsuperscript{20} even as Jules Michelet argued “the local spirit has disappeared each day; the influence of the soil, of climate, of race, has ceded to social and political action. The inevitability of place has been conquered.”\textsuperscript{21} In these narratives, the local became important precisely at the moment it was being lost.\textsuperscript{22}

The concept of \textit{terroir} formed as a response to these fears, valorizing, preserving, and marketing nostalgic notions of the local. A means of describing the characteristics of a given


\textsuperscript{21} “L’esprit local a disparu chaque jour; l’influence du sol, du climat, de la race, a cédé à l’action sociale et politique. La fatalité des lieux a été vaincue, l’homme a échappé à la tyrannie des circonstances matérielles. Le Français du Nord a goûté le Midi, s’est animé à son soleil ; le Méridional a pris quelque chose de la ténacité, du sérieux, de la réflexion du Nord. La société, la liberté, ont dompté la nature, l’histoire a effacé la géographie. Dans cette transformation merveilleuse, l’esprit a triomphé de la matière, le général du particulier, et l’idée du réel. L’homme individuel est matérialiste, il s’attache volontiers à l’intérêt local et privé ; la société humaine est spiritualiste, elle tend à s’affranchir sans cesse des misères de l’existence locale, à atteindre la haute et abstraite unité de la patrie.” Jules Michelet, \textit{Tableau de la France} (Paris: Lacroix, 1875), 82.

\textsuperscript{22} For a sociological perspective on the incorporation of a bevy of regional cultures into an iconography of greater France see Jean-Claude Chamboredon, “L’édification de la nation: Naissance, diffusion, et circulation de quelques motifs iconographiques,” \textit{Ethnologie française} 24, no. 2 (1994), 187-197.
environment, *terroir* is often related to environmental influence on gastronomic products but it was equally applicable, in the nineteenth century, to people and culture. It emerged as rural regional traditions were disappearing. French sociologist Martin La Soudière has written of the passage from the church bell, which had served as the focus of rural villages in the *ancien régime*, to *terroir*, as a new definition of locality after the Revolution. The passage constitutes a secularization but also a shift in perspective. A society oriented around bells is inherently inward looking, as villagers come from the fields to the church. *Terroir* corresponded to a reorientation outwards: in its products, as image, folklore, or wine, *terroir* can be packaged and sold to those not from the region. The concept was codified in the nineteenth century, resulting in the denomination *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* (Controlled Designation of Origin), an administration of the natural. Historian Kolleen Guy has traced the relationship between *terroir* and national pride, locating the origin of the concept in the early part of the century. She highlights the increasing importance of *terroir* as the nation became more urban, suggesting that *terroir* was a substitute for more tangible engagements with land. In this dissertation, *terroir* emerges as a way to symbolically evoke regional particularities even as efforts were underway to produce a homogenous territory.

The second, related, art historical explanation for the focus on local landscapes in French visual culture concerns the rise of tourism. A new emphasis on leisure tourism can be attributed

23 The Littré *Dictionnaire de la langue française* in 1873 includes the following usage, suggesting that *terroir*, a positive quality when applied to wine, could be derogatory when applied to persons: “Cet homme sent le terroir, il a les défauts qu'on attribue aux gens de son pays.” It also refers to “ouvrages d'esprit”: “Sentir le terroir, se dit aussi des ouvrages d'esprit qui ont des défauts attribués aux habitudes du pays où l'auteur est né, a vécu.” *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (Paris: Littré, 1873), accessed through the online repository, “Dictionnaires d'autrefois,” https://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/dictionnaires-dautrefois, 1 May 2017.


both to a growing interest in nature on the part of city dwellers and the increased facility of travel made possible by the advent of railroads. As a lens through which to read images of nature, however, tourism suffers from a reliance on a divide between city and country that flattens the countryside. 26 While several regions maintained their distinct characteristics, including Brittany and Normandy, the emphasis in such studies is on a unified idea of the countryside. 27 Nicholas Green wrote, in his seminal account of the spectacularization of nature in modernity, that in the nineteenth century "the experience of nature was molded by those structures of looking that were peculiar to the contemporary city—by a fusion of consumerism and environmental awareness." 28 This claim, while productive for understanding the role of landscape imagery for an urban audience, does not account for the diversity of the land itself. France has one of the most varied terrains in Europe, ranging from volcanic mountains to lush fields to marshy swampland, and its landscapes cannot be reduced to one "nature." Green’s contributions focused on an urban mode of looking that was not necessarily attuned to the particularities of the countryside. His model set the tone for much subsequent scholarship. Greg Thomas used a study of guidebooks to articulate a particular topographical aesthetic inherent to travel. 29 John House has similarly written about

26 Raymond Williams’s work on the divide between city and country, while focused on England, has also contributed to this bias; see his *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).
29 Greg M. Thomas, “The Topographical Aesthetic.” Nancy Austin attributes the specificity of place names in painting’s titles to the spread of the railroad, and correlated frequently represented sites with
the commodification of the landscape for a Parisian consumer, and Robert Herbert emphasized the essential role of tourism for Claude Monet. Art historians look far more rarely in the other direction—from the country to the city, that is, examining the ways in which the landscape and its inhabitants resisted transformation imposed by the state. Instead of relying primarily on the perspective of the city-dweller, I bring images of land into dialogue with the forces that were actively reshaping those sites: legislation, administrative reform, the spread of bureaucracy, theories of land use, and the economics of resource division. These activities collectively changed the French landscape in the nineteenth century and contributed to the formation of the modern nation state.

Creating a national landscape was a process, as theorists including Arjun Appadurai and James Scott have argued, of abstraction and homogenization. Appadurai points to the construction of a "flat, contiguous and homogenous space of nationness;" Scott extended the concept to include not just space but also identified "a uniform, homogeneous citizenship."

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32 Arjun Appadurai, Modernity at Large (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 189.

number of thinkers, including Henri Lefebvre, have identified the French Revolution as the moment when this abstraction of space was introduced, and the nineteenth century as the period of its implementation. In the nineteenth century, land, further, became tied to citizenship. Property, rather than privilege, dictated the new social order; as social historian William Sewell describes, “citizenship was affixed to the surface of the earth and made to correspond perfectly with parcels of transformed nature.” While the ideological claims of the Revolution advocated for the distribution of property to the masses, the practicalities of dividing the nation into individual parcels of land meant this was never fully realized. Instead, former aristocratic properties became floating currency with the introduction of the assignat, paper money backed by land.

Particular state entities contributed to measuring and controlling France’s lands following the Revolution, effectively producing its territory. The civil engineering service, the Ponts et Chaussées (Bridges and Roads), first founded in 1747, was in a particularly good position to contribute to the formation of a new landscape, accustomed as they were to a philosophy of reason over nature. As historian Antoine Picon argued, it was the Ponts et Chaussées that put the “tattered shreds” of France back together after the Revolution, focusing on elements of interconnection, like roads and railways. The Ponts et Chaussées was emblematic of an administration that saw its purpose as managing the natural. The ordering of presumably unruly

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37 Paul Alliès highlights the measure and control of land in France as part of the technology of territory, and suggests that it was the administration that produced territory, emphasizing the pragmatic channels by which the state consolidated power over the land. Paul Alliès, *L’invention du territoire* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1980).
nature affected France’s mountains, where built structures countered erosion; its ports, whose infrastructure was expanded in a “victory over the sea”; its forests, increasingly regulated in the nineteenth century; and its wetlands, considered insalubrious and drained.

The images discussed in this dissertation were not immediate critical successes. Théodore Rousseau’s paintings were rejected from the Salon so many times he became le grand refusé, the great refused. Yet in the Third Republic, his paintings were newly acceptable, part of a growing interest on the part of the state in landscape. Bradley Fratello has charted the shifting reception of Rousseau’s fellow Barbizon artist, Jean-François Millet, in relation to the creation of what he termed a “fluid republican national identity in France.” These paintings were initially seen as challenges to the state. That they were eventually celebrated as emblems of the nation indicates that their political charge had dissipated, and the source of consternation, tensions over the land itself, had been resolved. By the Third Republic, many of the efforts to consolidate the French nation were completed, including the standardization of language and schooling, the spread of the railroad, and the establishment of comprehensive infrastructure and bureaucracy. It was also in the 1870s that the most popular and well-studied period of landscape painting emerged: that of the Impressionists.

Historians of landscape in France have focused primarily on two movements: Romanticism and Impressionism. Both movements privileged individual subjective experience. Scholars of Romanticism, including Kermit Champa, Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner, emphasize the renewed importance of nature as a source of inspiration for artists, though what

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constituted that "nature" is often taken for granted. Far from an untouched site open to artistic expression, the natural landscape was the subject of significant conflict in this period—conflict that would have been unavoidable for artists painting *en plein air*. While Romanticism valorized nature, Impressionism used nature to champion painting. Historians of Impressionism often focus on its painterly aesthetic, understanding it as a development in the formation of an autonomous art, no longer in service to the state. Social historians of the movement, including T.J. Clark and John House, point to the class implications of particular landscapes and their uses, and their scholarship is foundational to a sustained engagement with the politics of the landscapes themselves.

My study deliberately does not consider Impressionism, instead calling attention to an earlier moment when the promise of *en plein air* painting collided with sensitive and politically charged debates concerning the nature of French territory. While Impressionist artists engaged with the incursion of modernity into the countryside, particularly in the suburbs of Paris, the perspective taken involved individual, subjective experience rather than collective debates about land. Even in the nineteenth century, Impressionism was seen as removed from the land itself. The critic Jules Castagnary summarized the artists' focus on sensation rather than site: "They are 'impressionists' in the sense that they render not the landscape, but the sensation produced by the landscape." Impressionism was a movement of individuals, because the landscape itself had become individualized, taken from common holding, managed by the state, and sold to private

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industrialists. As such, it did not participate in renegotiating the shape of the nation as images produced earlier in the century had. As T.J. Clark described it, “[The Impressionists] seemed to believe—the belief was not often stated explicitly, but the drift of practice is unmistakable—that nature possessed consistency now, in a way that nothing else did.”

This dissertation traces the development of that “consistent nature,” through both images and land reform. It is divided into two parts, Borders and Terrain, focusing on four landscape typologies: mountains, ports, forests, and wetlands.

Part I: Borders

Part I is concerned with borders, and the ways in which images were used to symbolically delimit the nation. In the immediate aftermath of the Revolution, ideals of universal rights and commonality prevailed. The military and political events of the early nineteenth century, however, placed renewed emphasis on the nation’s borders, both for internal coherence and in the face of external threats. I interrogate how images made visible and reinforced two types of borders, mountains and ports. These first two chapters take a long view, establishing first the diverse ways in which representation could be used to visualize a landscape and then examining the state’s attempts to mobilize that representation at different historical moments.

The first chapter, “Mountains,” describes the rise of landscape painting in France and the development of printing technologies that facilitated its reproduction, focusing particularly on the representational difficulties mountains posed. In so doing, I challenge the romantic reading of mountains as universalized emblems of the sublime. Instead, I articulate the distinct aesthetics that were formulated in response to the political and cultural significance of different mountain ranges. Mountains formed the nation’s “natural limits,” and images addressed this border

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condition—yet as mountains were increasingly understood through geology and visual representation, their status as a border became less clear.

While mountains were intended to be "solid" borders, ports, the subject of the second chapter, are necessarily permeable sites. Ports were one of the first sites to be depicted topographically in France; they are also the form of landscape most frequently commissioned directly by the state. Images of ports needed to cultivate their dual character, as sites that at once protect the nation and open it to the world. The state first sponsored the representation of ports in the ancien regime through Joseph Vernet's extensive, and expensive, Ports of France series. In the nineteenth century, the creation of an Official Painter of the Navy institutionalized the production of landscape imagery. Tracing the diverse ways in which the state sought to make the navy visible to those in the capital reveals a responsive effort to shifting maritime policy.

**Part II: Terrain**

Part II considers the physical transformation of France’s landscapes, and its two chapters focus in more depth on particular instances of land reform. The reforms followed an ideology of aménagement, a policy that sought to organize land according to rational principles of economic gain. Aménagement was practiced first and most effectively in the forests, discussed in chapter three. As a valuable material resource, forests were central to land management efforts as early as the seventeenth century, when, fearing there would not be enough timber for the royal navy, Colbert implemented an ordonnance dictating forest use rights. That ordonnance was overturned with the Revolution, only to be reinstated in modern form in 1827. Its policies generated an abstracted vision of a forest, far removed from the realities of place. Artists painting in the forest

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challenged this abstraction by creating dense, materially specific artworks. The painters of the Barbizon school, including Théodore Rousseau and Jean-François Millet, not only campaigned for the preservation of the nation’s forests; they also gave it a palpable presence in representation.

Chapter four analyzes one of the most successful land reform projects in the nineteenth century, the drainage of southwest France. Formerly covered in vast marshes, the region today is filled with pine trees, which stabilize the soil and provide industry. While relatively unvisited in the early part of the century, in the 1840s artists Jules Dupré and Théodore Rousseau traveled to paint the region, bringing it into view in the capital. After seeing one of Rousseau’s canvases, Napoleon III became involved with drainage efforts, visiting himself and passing a law mandating reform. As a result, over 120,000 hectares of wetland were lost. In the midst of their disappearance, amateur photographer Félix Arnaudin produced over 3,000 glass-plate negatives of the terrain, working to preserve the memory of the landscape.

Together, these chapters offer an answer to the question: what was landscape representation doing in nineteenth-century France? What need was it responding to? Rather than taking the genre’s perpetuation for granted, I reopen the narrative that usually culminates in Impressionism and instead focus on restoring images to their historical context and highlighting their impact beyond the domain of art. Images were an essential site on which to negotiate the meaning and use of land. They could make visible the nation and its limits, mobilize those views in support of the state, articulate a rational landscape aesthetic, and celebrate the progress of reforms. They could also reveal the complexities of the real landscape, point to sites of resistance within it, and record alternate possibilities for land use. As such, nineteenth-century landscape
representation can only be understood in dialogue with the physical and symbolic changes to France’s landscapes.
PART I: BORDERS
Nature, always prodigious in form and inexhaustible in variety, smiles at the observer; she is
deal to the eyes of those who see only, in the mountains, heaps of mass, fracas and debris.
Pierre Henri de Valenciennes, 1799

Mountains seem until now to have defied art. Is it possible to frame them in a painting?
We doubt it. Théophile Gautier, 1869

CHAPTER ONE
Mountains

The most renowned mountain painter in France is undoubtedly Paul Cézanne, whose
sustained investigations into Aix-en-Provence’s Mont Sainte-Victoire constitute one of the most
substantial explorations of any landscape in modern painting. His obsessive working and
reworking of the subject, in nine major paintings, seventeen watercolors, and a number of
sketches, made Sainte-Victoire one of the best-known mountains in the history of European art.
Through paintings like Mont Sainte-Victoire (1902-4, Figure 1) we come to know the contours of
the mountain peak: its dips and valleys; its slight pull to the right (southward from his studio); its
bluish undertones and blush highlights; its wooded base; the small, characteristically-Provençal
houses that surround it. Indeed, Cézanne’s stature as a landscape painter is so great it has been
claimed that there were few representations of mountains in France prior to his work.45 However,
the nearly exclusive focus on Cézanne has thus far obscured the broader and more complex
history of mountains as artistic subjects in nineteenth-century France, as well as their importance
in the formation of ideas of the nation.

Beyond the draw of Cézanne, the Romantic reading of mountains, as the quintessential
subject of awe-inspiring sublimity, has also overshadowed the specific role individual mountain
ranges played in the nineteenth century. Long considered stubborn deformities on the surface of

Kendall (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 109-112; François Fosca also claimed French artists
neglected the mountains in his La Montagne et les peintres (Lausanne: Editions Rencontre, 1965).
the earth, mountains only became a subject of art in the late eighteenth century. They went from emblems of fear and terror to icons of the awe-inspiring sublime. This “shift in taste,” outlined in Marjorie Hope Nicolson’s seminal book on the subject, is often understood as a defining moment in modern European aesthetics. Nicolson charts the passage from an understanding of mountains as monstrous (“mountain gloom”) to their embrace as emblems of the sublime (“mountain glory”), particularly in Romantic poetry. Visually, in England, mountains appeared in John Ruskin’s watercolor studies and in Joseph Mallord William Turner’s depictions of the Alps. In Germany, they served as religious symbols, most notably in the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich. There has not yet been, however, a significant claim for what mountains represented to the French. I argue mountains in France served primarily to articulate the nation’s “natural limits.” Further, mountains were not generic but particular signifiers, and I emphasize the distinct meanings of different ranges. These meanings were manifest in visual representation.

This chapter studies changes to the representation of mountains brought about by geological study and increased representational attention, changes that emphasized the material specificity of particular mountain ranges. It moves from the earliest moments of en plein air study with Pierre Henri de Valenciennes, through the proliferation of lithographic landscape views, largely unstudied to date, to the genre’s perceived culmination in Cézanne; it also traces the transition

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48 Discussion of France’s “natural limits” began as early as the seventeenth century; in 1793, Danton proclaimed that the Republic’s limits “sont marqués par la nature” and cited the Ocean, the Rhine, the Alps, and the Pyrenees as determining the territory’s form. Danton, *Déclaration à la Convention* (31 January 1793).

from an understanding of mountains as distant and immovable borders to mountains as sites of
human intervention.

Images of actual places participated in formulating an idea of the French nation after the
Revolution. Yet those real landscapes could also challenge representation—particularly in the
case of mountains, whose sheer scale and surfeit of details seemed to surpass any attempt at
picturing. Mountains became nationalist signifiers through images—but images could also reveal
some of the problems inherent in making a natural feature stand for the nation. The more
mountains were seen, the less clearly they appeared; still today geologists struggle to agree on a
definition of “mountain.” They are generally understood as a “topographic contrast,” an area that
stands higher than its surrounding terrain. Inherently relative, it was becoming apparent in the
nineteenth century that not all mountains were the same, and this chapter pays particular
attention to distinctions that emerged between the Alps, associated with the sublime and the
Pyrenees, the site of a contested frontier with Spain. These distinctions pertained not only to the
appearance of mountains but also to the media of their representation. While the Alps had long
been the subject of paintings, in the Pyrenees lithography was the privileged mode of
representation. When Mont Blanc was restored to France in the 1860s, photographs were used to
bring it into the nation.

As mountain landscapes became increasingly visualized, and in some ways made real, they
were also subject to increasing reform. By the late nineteenth century, efforts were underway to
“restore” the Mont Blanc, in a program for land management articulated by architect and

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50 Bernard Debarbieux and Gilles Rudaz, tr. Jane Marie Todd, *The Mountain: A Political History from the
51 The idea that mountains were made real through images will be discussed below, in the context of the
“invention” of the Pyrenees; in this I follow Bernard Debarbieux and Gilles Rudaz, who argue “the
mountain, far from being a given of nature on which these representations and imaginaries come to be
grafted, deserves to be studied as a notion in itself, as the product of a social and political construction.”
engineer Eugène Viollet-le-Duc and effected by the state forestry service. It is only after this and related interventions into their mass that mountains as a subject became available to individual signification, open to appropriation by artists like Cézanne and Gustave Courbet.

The "Real Structure" of Mountain Ranges

Mountains first appeared as symbolic objects in modern France during the Revolution: the Jacobins were nicknamed the Montagnards (the Mountain), for their position high atop the bleachers in the assembly hall. They adopted this nomination in their self-representation, erecting a mountain for the Festival of the Supreme Being in 1793. Nature became a powerful metaphor for human action during this time, through mountains and, in more explosive periods, volcanoes. In celebrations and revolutionary festivals, the figure of liberty often stood atop a generic peak made of wood and paper mâché, its shape evoking a sense of summit and triumph (Figure 2). Yet by the mid-nineteenth century, the symbolic import of mountains had shifted from their formal qualities to their material substance. In 1844, the sculptor David d'Angers found revolutionary fervor in a granite boulder. Barely transformed through the addition of Robespierre's name, a liberty cap, and a star, D'Angers' monument emphasized the solidity rather than the shape of the mountain. This shift toward mountains' materiality was prompted by both increased geological knowledge and intensified representational attention to the complexity of mountain forms.

Geology as a discipline originated alongside mountaineering, and mountains were initially its primary focus. The School of Mines, founded by Louis XVI in 1783 to produce mining engineers, encouraged the exploration of mountains’ material richness, and these explorations also led to early understandings of mountains’ geological structure. In 1838, a Gallery of Mineralogy was established within Paris’s Natural History Museum, and mountain landscapes were commissioned as part of the interior décor. The geologist and savant Alexandre Brongniart was partially responsible for the commission, which was awarded to the genre painter and Arctic explorer François-Auguste Biard. Brongniart insisted that the images be geologically precise renderings of actual locations, intending them as study tools as much as decoration (Figure 3). The resulting paintings link the physical samples of minerals to the larger landscapes of their origin, uniting materials and structure. Brongniart’s father, an architect during the French Revolution, had proposed the construction of an artificial mountain within a church in Bordeaux as part of the generic celebration of summits (Figure 4). Alexandre’s emphasis on real and precise landscapes demonstrates how, within only a few decades, mountains had transformed from spectacles created through imagination to material, geologic entities that were objects of both artistic and scientific study.

Geologist Émile de Laveleye, lamenting the eighteenth-century’s misunderstanding of mountains, claimed that studies from that period had failed to grasp the geologic features’ “real

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structure,” and saw this ignorance in visual terms. He wrote in *La Revue des Deux Mondes* in 1865:

> To understand the extent to which we were ignorant of the real structure of mountain ranges and uprisings that comprise the relief of earth’s crust, it suffices to glance at a map dating to the last century. Mountain chains are represented by a series of small isolated mounts, seen in profile, each with its shadow, without a link attaching one to the next.\(^{57}\)

For Laveleye, misunderstanding mountains was to misunderstand the very surface of the Earth. It followed that advanced knowledge of mountains available in the nineteenth century would require novel means of depiction. For Laveleye, this meant a new representational technique for maps, but the reconceptualization of mountains from a scientific perspective would prompt changes in a wide variety of visual forms.

The study of mountain forms also compelled the development of vocabulary to describe previously unknown geologic features. Much of this language was borrowed from another visual discipline: architecture.\(^{58}\) Words like *amphithéâtre, arène, banquette, cirque* and others were used to articulate the nuances of mountain structure.\(^{59}\) Victor Hugo, marveling at the seemingly unnatural regularity of the Cirque de Gavarnie in the Pyrenees, specifically referred to it as *masonry.*\(^{60}\) These references to man-made structures demystify mountains, bringing them closer to human construction and, eventually, intervention. Prior to this moment, it had been unclear

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\(^{57}\) “Pour comprendre à quel point l’on ignorait la structure véritable des massifs et des rides de soulèvement qui constituent le relief de la croûte terrestre, il suffit de jeter un coup d’œil sur une carte qui date du siècle dernier. Les chaînes de montagnes sont représentées par une série de petits monticules isolés, vus de profil, ayant chacun son ombre portée, sans lien qui les rattache les uns aux autres....” Emile de Laveleye, “Le Mont-Rose et Les Alpes Pennines, Souvenirs de Voyage,” *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, 15 juin 1865, 820 [my emphasis].


\(^{59}\) In his linguistic analysis, Farrington suggests over 65 percent of words describing mountains are derived from architecture, and especially military architecture. Farrington, “Words as New as the Hills,” 48.

what a mountain even was, as the term could describe anything from a hill to a continent; the so-called Montagne Sainte-Geneviève, a small hill in central Paris, is an example of this lack of clear denomination. The adoption of structural terminology in the nineteenth century corresponded with an increased ability to visualize and to picture the contours of mountains.

Geologic, geographic and artistic attention to mountains was initially focused on the Alps. Beginning with Swiss savant Horace-Bénédict de Saussure, the Alps were scaled and mapped in an effort to make known previously impenetrable masses. Saussure’s expeditions, and their dissemination in publications beginning in the 1760s, drew a great deal of attention to the region, and he is commonly known as the father of “Alpinism.” At the same time, Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s fictional account of the peaks in *La nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) incited popular interest in the mountains. Countless explorers, artists and tourists would follow the lead of these mountain pioneers throughout the nineteenth century.

Saussure focused particular attention on the Mont Blanc. He was one of the first to ascend the summit, on August 3, 1787, and he published an account of it shortly thereafter. Saussure departed from naturalists before him in seeking to gain a holistic view of mountains. He complained that most voyagers, who would walk with their eyes down, focused on details but remained ignorant of the large masses and their interrelationship. Saussure urged an integration

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61 Farrington, “Words as New as the Hills,” 45.
63 Though he tried to claim the conquest, he was not in fact the first to scale the peak, as chronicled by Martin Rudwick in his *The Reconstruction of Geohistory in the Age of Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
64 “Les yeux fixés sur la terre, amassant ça et là de petits morceaux sans viser à des observations générales…. Ce n’est point que je conseille de négliger les observations de détails ; je les regarde au contraire comme l’unique base d’une connaissance solide ; mais je voudrais qu’en observant ces détails, on ne perdût jamais de vue les grandes masses et les ensembles ; et que la connaissance des grands objets et de leur rapport fût toujours le but que l’on se proposât en étudiant leurs petites parties.” Horace-Bénédict de Saussure, cited in Armand Brulhart, *E. Viollet-Le-Duc et le massif du Mont-Blanc: 1868-1879* (Lausanne: Payot, 1988), 48.
of detail and distanced view. Further, it was only from the top of the peak, Saussure asserted, that he could confirm his understanding: “What I came to see, and what I saw with the greatest clarity was the ensemble of all the high peaks, whose arrangement I had for so long wanted to understand.”

For Saussure and the tradition of geography that followed from his work, mountains were comprehensible from a distance and from their summit; in the middle, however, they were a mere muddle of material. It was this “middle view” that would most challenge artists seeking to represent mountains.

Alpinism was an aesthetic movement as much as a scientific one. Saussure was himself inspired by visual representation. He described descending a particular path in search of a view painted by fellow Alpinist Marc-Théodore Bourrit. He later produced a widely-read account of the pleasures of mountain exploration, *Travels in the Alps* (1779-96), in which he united geologic and geographic discussion with moments of aesthetic delight. He described the “pleasant surprises” of a walk in an otherwise craggy area of peaks: “But in the midst of this debris, in the saddest and most savage part of the world, we are pleasantly surprised to find a charming nook, forming the most singular contrast with its surroundings.” In his description of “ce joli morceau,” Saussure encapsulated the larger shift toward the appreciation of mountain landscapes. Although he quickly moved on to a detailed technical discussion of the types of

65 “Ce que je venois voir, et ce que je vis avec la plus grande clarté, c’est l’ensemble de toutes les hautes cimes dont je désirois depuis si longtemps de connaître l’organisation. Je n’en croyois pas mes yeux, il me semblloit que c’étoit un rêve, lorsque je voyois sous mes pieds ces cimes majestueuses.” Horace-Bénédict de Saussure, *Relation abrégée d’un voyage à la cime du Mont-Blanc* (Geneva, 1787), 15.


67 “Mais au milieu de ces débris, dans la région du monde la plus triste et la plus sauvage, on est agréablement surpris de trouve un réduit charmant, qui forme le plus singulier contraste avec se environs.” Horace Bénédict de Saussure, *Voyage dans les Alpes* (Geneva, 1796), 6.
granite to be found in the area, this alternation between visual splendor and material components was an important innovation in mountain understanding. Saussure underlined the material importance of mountains, bringing back a sample of granite he termed the “top of Mont Blanc” (Figure 5). The provenance of the piece of granite is doubtful, but it suggests a desire to possess the mountain materially, and that a piece of its mass was capable of standing in for its whole. Historians of this watershed moment in geology often focus on its implications for an understanding of time. Art historians have followed suit; less emphasis has been given to the way geologic and geographic exploration combined visual and material knowledge. Knowledge of the stuff of mountains went hand-in-hand with a picture of the ranges; this was as truc in art as it was in science.

The nineteenth-century geologist Laveleye similarly linked geology and the arts, citing the poetry of Lord Byron, Friedrich Schelling, and other Romantics who wrote of the mountains. Laveleye sought to affirm, however, the preeminence of geology in bringing about this aesthetic appreciation:

It is also geology above all that familiarized us with and made us love the mountains. Since we have been able to make out their origins, their mode of formation, we grasp the raison d'être of their structure, of their direction, of their

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68 “En sortant de cette plaine on trouve des blocs et des débris, non plus de granit ordinaire, mais d’un granit composé seulement de deux espèces de pierre, dont l’une est du schorl en lames noires et brillantes, l’autre, du feld-spath d’un blanc mat, consusément crystallisé.” Saussure, Voyage dans les Alpes, 7.

69 The sample is displayed at the Teylers Museum in the Netherlands.


entanglement. They are no longer *to our eyes* unformed masses, gigantic piles of silent rock; they are eloquent witnesses that speak to us of the epochs when humans were not yet around, and that recount the history of the planet where we live... If people today rush in crowds to the mountains, that in earlier times we fled in horror, it is science and letters that have called them there.  

Laveleye’s comments speak to familiar tropes of Enlightenment, with knowledge leading to understanding through vision. When mountains are understood, they will look differently to the observer. Laveleye tied this understanding to modernity itself, calling orography, the branch of physical geography that studies the features of mountains, “a completely modern science.”  

Laveleye’s emphasis on transcending the matter of the mountain to obtain visual clarity, however, oversimplifies the state of orogenic knowledge in his time. Mountains had not quite been conquered in 1865, when he was writing, and while much new material had been observed, only a small amount had been understood. His emphatically descriptive terms—“gigantic piles of silent rock”—perhaps betrays an insecurity on the part of the discipline. Visual representation similarly struggled to find the “eloquent witness” in the “unformed masses.”

**Mountain Representation**  

In France, mountains became the focus of painterly representation in the late eighteenth century, and attention to their geologic features accompanied the development of *en plein air* painting. Mountains had appeared in earlier paintings, including those of Nicolas Poussin in the seventeenth century, but they served primarily as background, rather than object of study. As

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72 “Aussi est-ce la géologie surtout qui nous a fait connaître, qui nous a fait aimer les montagnes. Depuis qu’on entrevoit leur origine, leur mode de formation, on saisit la raison d’être de leur structure, de leur direction, de leur enchevêtrement. Ce ne sont plus à nos yeux des masses informes, des amas gigantesques de rochers muets, ce sont des témoins éloquents qui nous parlent des époques où l’espèce humaine n’était pas encore, et qui nous racontent l’histoire de la planète que nous habitons. Si les hommes de la génération actuelle accourent en foule vers les montagnes, qu’on fuyait jadis avec épouvante, c’est que la science et les lettres les y ont conviés.” Laveleye, “Le Mont Rose,” 821 [my emphasis].

artists became more attentive to the actual features of the real landscape, mountains’ infinite variety meant it was impossible to rely on conventions. Pierre Henri de Valenciennes, one of the first French artists to write substantially about the value of working directly from nature, was also an early advocate for mountain representation. The history of mountain depiction is tied to the emergence of *plein-air* painting as a practice, but mountains could also reveal the limits of landscape representations to adequately convey their subject.

While artists had painted and sketched outdoors in the eighteenth century, it was largely as a preparatory exercise rather than as a final product. Roger de Piles mentioned the direct study of nature in a 1708 treatise on painting, and his assertion of its usefulness was echoed several times in the eighteenth century. Joseph Vernet told his students that nature studies could serve them when creating finished paintings in their studios. In his work, Valenciennes similarly used outdoor sketches only as studies for a final, idealized vision. Valenciennes’ writing, however, had influence well beyond his personal practice and his theories were used to promote and justify the nineteenth-century interest in landscape. In his widely read and reproduced treatise, *Elements of Practical Perspective* (1800), Valenciennes claimed that mountain forms were so diverse that artists must study them as they exist in nature.

After visiting the Pyrenees, Valenciennes was struck by the visual complexity of the landscape. He marveled:

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76 “Les montagnes et les rochers n’offrent pas autant de difficulté que les rivières; mais ils ont des formes trop variées pour qu’on ne soit pas obligé de les étudier d’après nature.” Pierre Henri de Valenciennes, *Elemens de Perspective Pratique* (Paris, 1800), 222.
The eyes scatter and rest simultaneously upon this infinity of objects as varied as sublime... We endure this agreeable embarrassment given to the spirit by the abundance of objects, before the eye manages to sort them out. Nature, always prodigious in form and inexhaustible in variety, smiles at the observer; she is dead to the eyes of those who see only, in the mountains, heaps of mass, fracas and debris.\textsuperscript{77}

Valenciennes encouraged artists to look carefully at the mountains, seeing beyond their mute masses and embracing the infinity of objects on view in the landscape. Nature would be activated and transformed by the artist’s gaze. Valenciennes himself produced a large number of studies, and his sketches alternate between distant views, tracing the peaks in delicate pencil line, and closer views done in color. The pencil drawings appear in a pocket-sized sketchbook, with pages just over 13 x 18 centimeters, which he had taken on his travels through Switzerland and Italy in 1781. Given his location, quite a few of the images focus on mountain chains. In his writing, he encouraged artists to take a model from nature “extremely quickly,” and this rapidity is apparent in his images.\textsuperscript{78} They trace, hastily, what we might call the skyline, outlining the top of the range and occasionally dipping down to follow crags and fractures. Small and sparse, these sketches are nevertheless attentive to the specificity of mountain geology. In “View of Saint-Maurice” (Figure 6), the town’s location in a Swiss mountain pass is indicated with expert economy. Two curved lines form the bend of the road, winding into town. The village is summarily rendered, with three rectangular buildings, one topped with a triangular roof. The mountains rising up on either side of the town fill the majority of the page, and the artist has included just enough

\textsuperscript{77} “Les yeux se promènent et se reposent à la fois sur cette infinité d’objets aussi variés que sublimes. Un immense horizon embrasse, comme dans un grand plan, les plaines fertiles du Bigorre et du Béarn; l’Océan, le cours brillant et sinueux de la Garonne et le mont Canigou, forment la perspective la plus éloignée. Dans la comparaison, aucune des plus hautes montagnes, sans en excepter le Mont-Blanc, ne présente des objets aussi étendus et autant de magnificence. On éprouve cet agréable embarras que donne à l’esprit l’abondance des objets, avant que l’œil soit parvenu à les débrouiller. La Nature, toujours prodigue de formes et inépuisable en variétés, sourit à l’observateur; elle est morte aux yeux de celui qui ne voit, dans les montagnes, qu’entassement de masses, fracas et débris...” Valenciennes, \textit{Elemens de Perspective Pratique}, 623-624.

\textsuperscript{78} Valenciennes, \textit{Elemens de Perspective Pratique}, 408.
shading to make the white of the paper appear to take on form and mass. There is not one mountain, but instead a series of sloping, overlapping forms that regress into the background. A second “View of Saint-Maurice” (Figure 7) gets closer to the base of the range, filling the right half of the image with squiggly curls of vegetation and a few scattered buildings. The mountains rise at a steep angle to the left, indicating they continue well beyond what is presented in the composition.

What comes from the direct study of nature, Valenciennes’ sketches indicate, is an awareness of the interconnection of mountain ranges. Just as Laveleye had complained of eighteenth-century maps, with their isolated and scattered mounts, artists relying on conventions rather than nature had almost always depicted individual mountains, in isolation from any others (Poussin’s Landscape with Polyphemous from 1649 is a good example, Figure 8). Emphasizing instead the unity of peaks in a range, and their integration with the surroundings, Valenciennes sketched mountains not as discrete objects but as though they arose from the land itself—as, indeed, they do.

Valenciennes further urged artists to study not only the form, but also the mineral content of mountains, as the two were inextricably linked: “One must first know the nature of the different substances that make up the lodes or the veins of mountains... the forms of mountains depend on the nature of substances that comprise them.” In painted oil studies, he demonstrated an attention to the substantial nature of his subject. City Wall at the Foot of a Mountain (n.d., Figure 9) breaks the landscape down into a series of small, colored strokes, indicating the varied components of the mass. Carefully placed touches of orange, taupe, violet, green and gray constitute the contours of the peaks. The city wall in the foreground is produced with the same

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79 “Il faut d’abord connaitre la nature des différentes substances qui composit les filons ou les veines des montagnes... les formes des montagnes dépendent de la nature des substances qui les composent.” Valenciennes, Elemens de Perspective Pratique, 223.
palette, uniting the material of the massif with a human creation likely built from it. Here, even more than in the pencil sketches, the mountains are an integral part of the overall scene, gradually rising up from the tree-covered ground. Swaths of vegetation extend into the range, further uniting the fore- and background of the image.

City Wall at the Foot of a Mountain, it should be noted, is not a great painting. It is crowded, almost claustrophobic. The brushwork feels heavy and unsubtle. Valenciennes, of course, would never have considered it a painting at all. In his more finished, classicizing works, he transformed the mountains into elegant masses that participate in historical or mythological narratives. Mountains are put to particular uses, as in Italian Landscape with Bathers (1790, Figure 10), which relies on the geologic features to create a sense of intimacy in the enclosed pond. While it is evident that certain adaptations were required to transform mountains into art, the lessons that Valenciennes took from his nature studies are fully present: the cliffs in the foreground feel substantive and material, and the mountains are no longer the distinct entities of eighteenth-century landscapes but rather the interconnected slopes of a range.

Valenciennes did not definitively resolve the challenges of mountain representation; painters struggled with questions of how to best depict them well into the nineteenth century. Elisabeth Vigée Lebrun proclaimed, faced with Mont Blanc in 1807, “I wanted to paint this reflection; I gathered my pastels; but alas! Impossible. There was neither a palette nor colors that could render these radiant tones.”80 In his 1845 visit to the Pyrenees region to take the water at Eaux-Bonnes, Eugène Delacroix found the subject similarly elusive. Despite suffering from

80 "Je voulus peindre ce reflet; je saisis mes pastels ; mais hélas ! Impossible ; il n'y avait ni palette ni couleurs qui puisse rendre ces tons radieux...." Souvenirs of Vigée Lebrun, ed. 1835-1837 (Paris: Hachette Livre-BNF, 2012), 3:272.
tubercular laryngitis, he produced a number of studies of the region, grouped in a *carnet*. His images are extremely fragmented, providing seemingly uncomposed glimpses into the texture and topography of the mountains. Particularly in watercolor studies like Figure 11, Delacroix focused on the way elements of the landscape interrelate: the valleys between slopes, and a tree growing out of a crack of rock. In another he emphasized a stream cutting through two sheared cliffs (Figure 12). Written annotations concerning color and light suggest he had plans to take the sketches further. Though some aspects of the images may appear in finished paintings, Delacroix never produced a completed tableau of the Pyrenees region. He complained of the difficulty the mountains posed to the artist, a difficulty that was both visual and material. Though he found them “majestic,” when writing to his student Gaultron during his 1845 stay in the region, he lamented, “The beauty of the nature of the Pyrenees is not the kind that we could hope to successfully render with painting. Aside from the impossibility of sustained work, all of that is too gigantic and one does not know where to begin in the midst of all these masses and this multitude of details.” He wrote in a similar vein that same year to François Villot, saying “there is nothing I can do... the details are so numerous, patience could never triumph.” He further cited material limitations for the artist: “There is never paper large enough to give an idea of these masses.”

81 A facsimile of the carnet was recently published. Eugène Delacroix, *Carnet “des Pyrénées”* (Paris: Louvre éditions, 2016).
84 “Toute cette belle nature qui m’entoure m’est profondément indifférente. J’admire par moments, mais je ne peux rien en faire. D’abord le gigantesque de tout cela me déconcerte. Il n’y a jamais papier assez grand pour donner l’idée de ces masses et les détails sont si nombreux qu’il n’est pas patience qui puisse en triompher. En second lieu, et c’est là le grand obstacle, le nécessaire de se soigner fait qu’on ne peut se livrer à un travail qui vous applique tant soit peu... Je reviendrai sans avoir vu les plus belles parties des
The sheer scale of mountain representation proved problematic to artists. Some apparently restored to a study of much smaller rocks, as noted by the Baron Jean Baptiste de Boutard who, in the early part of the nineteenth century, complained, "so many artists, taking the easy route, make use of a rock drawn on site to create, in the finished canvas, a mountain." As Delacroix would later describe, even the most "obstinate realist" had to concede to compositional conventions. When producing a landscape, mountains may be read as an impediment to the view, blocking the eye. Yet they were increasingly brought into focus, and made the object of, rather than the obstruction to, the gaze. This was all the more pertinent when they became the subject of political discourse.

The Pyrenees as Frontier

It was not painting but prints that first made mountains widely visible in France. Lithography, which revolutionized the transmission of images in the nineteenth century, was especially important in representing the Pyrenees. The new reproductive technology developed at the same time that attention was drawn to the uncertain border between France and Spain—not definitively fixed until 1868—and prints became a way to visually survey and secure the region. The 1789 Revolution sought to abolish frontiers and unite humanity as, in Alexis de

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Pyrénées... Vous êtes heureux de pouvoir peindre: je suis affamé de palette et de pinceaux; mais ici, cela me serait impossible.” Eugène Delacroix, letter to François Villot, August 5, 1845. Reproduced in Ancely, “Un voyage d’Eugène Delacroix,” 355.

85 The French were not the only ones to struggle with mountain representation; English novelist and critic Aldous Huxley wrote, “Mountains exist, and we have learned to love them. Then why are there so few good mountains in art?... If mountains are so seldom painted, it is because, except for a few unusually gifted artists, they are just too much of a good thing.” Cited in Thurman Wilkins, Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 4.

86 "comme trop d’artistes en prennent la facilité, se servir d’un rocher dessiné sur place pour en faire, la toile venue, une montagne.” Baron Jean Baptiste de Boutard, “Paysage,” in Dictionnaire des arts du dessin (Paris, 1826), 499.


Tocqueville’s terms, “an intellectual common country of which men of all nations might become citizens.” Yet in the early nineteenth century this universalist dream was replaced with an emphasis on the French nation, increasingly identified territorially and within its “natural limits” as a hexagon, in part through its mountain ranges. As Ernest Renan would later write in his definition of the nation, “Geography is one of the essential factors of history. Rivers have distributed the races; mountains have stopped them.” The politics of the border determined how the mountains were seen, mapped, and pictured. In the Pyrenees, an emphasis on the objectivity of representations, especially concerning prints, was allied with a need for an accurate picture of the nation’s limits to assuage the anxieties raised by this ambiguous border.

Lithography is a planographic process that relies on the chemical repulsion of oil and water, and the distinct properties of fine-grained limestone, sourced first from Bavaria and after 1851 quarried in France. Because it does not require digging into the surface of a plate, lithography allows artists to work more freely, drawing directly onto the stone. It was also possible to transfer an image onto the stone from specially prepared paper, circumventing the reversal typically inherent in printing. One of Valenciennes’ students is reported to be the first to have brought lithography to France in the early nineteenth century, though the process originated with the German playwright Alois Senefelder in 1796. While in Munich on a campaign in 1806, Louis-François Lejeune, a Napoleonic general and the artist who had studied with Valenciennes, visited Senefelder’s studio, where he made a sketch on a lithographic stone. Senefelder later sent

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91 French lithographic stone was first displayed at the 1851 Great Exhibition in London. See Charles Wentworth Dilke, Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations (London, 1852), 28.
Lejeune the stone and twenty prints, which he brought back with him to Paris. Lejeune had written elsewhere in his memoirs of his artistic experiments during his travels: "These Cossacks were many of them handsome fellows, and much to their amusement I took portraits of several on a bit of paper." Lejeune’s "amusement" was printed by Senefelder and became one of the earliest examples of the technology introduced to the French (Figure 13). The lithograph shows a Cossack atop a horse, stepping delicately over a vanquished enemy. Despite being an amateur, Lejeune’s lithograph makes use of the different types of line made possible by the printing technique, combining sharp details like the looped and twirling strap of the bayonet and the horse’s bridle, with more diffuse shading, including darker shadows cast onto the figures and lighter, faded indications of the background landscape. "Un cosaque" is written neatly at the bottom. Senefelder was perhaps employing a transfer process, meaning Lejeune would have had no need to write the caption in reverse. These distinct marks and the facility for even an untrained artist to produce a successful image were central to lithography’s promise and perpetuation.

Lithography would transform the representation of the Pyrenees, where Lejeune himself returned after his military days were over. He became head of the School of Fine Arts in Toulouse and later was elected the city’s mayor. He spent years studying the Pyrenees, and gathered his images in a bound sketchbook. The sketchbook has both blue and tan paper, and Lejeune employed graphite, wash, and white gouache to create images ranging from hasty sketches to highly-detailed studies with carefully applied highlights (Figure 14). Following Valenciennes, his images demonstrate a close interest in newly apparent geologic and geographic

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93 Lejeune, Memoirs, 1:52.
principles. Lejeune’s devotion to the mountainous landscape was part of a period of intense attention brought to the Pyrenees in the first half of the nineteenth century.

While the Alps were flooded with tourists—one 1835 traveler decried them as “rococo” and “worn out”\textsuperscript{94}—the Pyrenees offered a distinctly French sight of interest. Many nineteenth-century travelers were interested in the folklore and particular regional types to be found amongst the numerous villages, including ossalois, barégeois and castillonais shepherds.\textsuperscript{95} Visiting in 1835, Michelet understood the difference between the two ranges in geologic terms: “The Pyrenees, daughters of fire, do not have the youth of the Alps, nor their abundant waters. They are rich in metals, marble, hot springs, lively and bracing. They are rich above all in light.”\textsuperscript{96} The Alsatian geologist and botanist Louis Ramond de Carbonnières was one of the first to focus on the Pyrenees. He wrote, lamenting the lack of attention they had received thus far, “Where are our masters, when the Pyrenees offer such beautiful subjects of study? ... Do they believe these mountains are unworthy of their gaze? My sketch will disabuse them of this idea.”\textsuperscript{97} Commonly known as the “inventor” of the Pyrenees, Ramond published his lifelong study of the mountain range beginning in 1801, with Observations made in the Pyrenees. Ramond’s images, taken directly from nature and labeled Ramond ad Naturam fecit when engraved, set a precedent for Pyrenees iconography (Figure 15). He was the first to represent (and name) the famed Cirque de Gavarnie, which became a favored theme of prints. Despite,

\textsuperscript{94} “Un voyage en Suisse! C’est si rococo, si usé!” Agalé de Corday, Dix mois en Suisse (Louviers, 1835), vi.
\textsuperscript{95} Serge Briffaud, Naissance d’un paysage: la montagne pyrénéenne à la croisée des regards (Tarbes: Association Guillaume Moran, Archives des Hautes-Pyrénées, 1994), 360.
\textsuperscript{96} “Les Pyrénées, filles du feu, n’ont pas la jeunesse des Alpes, n’ont pas leurs abondantes eaux. Ellse sont riches de métal, de marbres, d’eaux chaudes, vivantes, vivifiantes. Ells sont riches surtout de lumière.” Jules Michelet, La Montagne (Paris, 1868), 81.
\textsuperscript{97} “Où sont nos maîtres quand les Pyrénées leur offrent de si beaux sujets de méditation? Je les cherche sur les glaces du Mont-Blanc, les basalts d’Antrim, les laves de l’Etna... Ils sont partout; et je suis seul ici, et le Mont-Perdu n’a vue que moi! Ont-ils cru ces montagnes indignes de leurs regards? Que mon esquisse les désabuse.” Ramond de Carbonnières, Voyage au Mont-Perdu (Geneva: Slatkine, 1978), 338.
however, his interest in direct observation and working from nature, when he mapped the region the most prominent feature was an imaginary one: the boundary line (Figure 16). Ramond simplified secondary massifs and foothills to create a clearer appearance of the frontier, presaging lithographic views that would fixate on the border in the ensuing decades.  

Ramond’s volume is known today as one of the founding texts of “Pyreneism.” Author Henri Beraldi coined the term “Pyreneism” as a counterpoint to Alpinism in his 1901 celebration of Ramond’s work, One Hundred Years of the Pyrenees. In that text, he described the “invention” of the mountain range, writing, “The Pyrenees have only existed for one hundred years. They are ‘modern.’ The Pyrenees were invented by Ramond.” With the first volume of One Hundred Years published on the centenary of Ramond’s text, Beraldi saw his work as the culmination of a century of investigation into the Pyrenees region: “Picturesque knowledge of the Pyrenees... is today complete.” Beraldi positioned the Pyrenees as a distinct site of representation particular to the nineteenth century, and indicated that the mountains only existed, in some part, through their representation. Despite having existed for millennia, mountains are, in this sense, a modern landscape. Mentioning the famous claim attributed to Louis XIV that “The Pyrenees are no more,” made after his grandson ascended to the Spanish throne to indicate that the border no longer mattered, Beraldi suggested instead that the declaration should have been, “The Pyrenees are not yet,” as the mountains would become both increasingly important as a border and increasingly visualized, understood, and made real.

98 Debarieux and Rudaz, The Mountain, 53.
100 “La connaissance pittoresque des Pyrénées... est aujourd’hui complet.” Beraldi, Cent ans, 1:v.
101 The quote, if not apocryphal, is more likely attributed to Castel dos Rios; it stands, however, as a widely-appreciated claim to the role of mountains as dividers of nations.
102 Beraldi, Cent ans, 1:v.
Differences between the two mountain ranges registered in the media of their representation. Serge Briffaud, chronicler of Pyrenean imagery, contrasted the Alps, often depicted in painting, with the engraved and lithographed Pyrenees. Renowned artists such as Auguste-François and Rosa Bonheur, Narcisse Diaz, and Théodore Rousseau, among others, eventually traveled to paint the Pyrenees, but their output is dwarfed by the number of lithographs that were produced. The *Fonds Pyrénéen*, held today at the Musée Paul Dupuy in Toulouse, contains over 8,000 prints and albums dedicated to the region, many of them produced in the nineteenth century and most of them lithographs (Figure 17). The sheer scale of the French representational legacy of the Pyrenees speaks to their importance as site and subject for imagery. The prints are organized by mountain valley, a criterion that evidences their topographical specificity: the sites depicted are identifiable and can be located today. Certain tropes and famed vistas appear with frequency: notably, the so-called Pont d’Espagne (Figure 18) and the Cirque de Gavarnie (Figure 19). Images show towns and landmarks in addition to more general views. Many of the images are peopled, serving as *staffage* but also as indications of the growing tourist industry in the region, prompted both by enthusiasm for mountain views and a desire to take the thermal waters on offer in many locations. Most all of the prints evidence an interest in topographical and geographic accuracy. Eugene Ciceri’s “General View of Eaux-Bonnes” (date unknown, Figure 20) is exemplary, using a numerical annotation system to label the distinct peaks and their heights and incorporating geographic information into an album otherwise intended for the amateur admirer.

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104 These tropes would later be further codified in postcards, the successor to lithographic prints.
After Ramond’s images, the Pyrenees were represented in engravings and lithographs as part of the broader exploration of French landscapes encompassed in *voyages pittoresques*, albums offering textual and visual tours of particular regions. *Voyages pittoresques* had existed in the eighteenth century, but those volumes primarily showed foreign lands, particularly classical sites like Greece and Italy. In the nineteenth century, attention turned to representing France itself. While numerous publications claimed to offer picturesque travel accounts through France, the most renowned and sustained *voyage pittoresque* was that initiated by Baron Isidore Taylor (1789-1879). A true child of the Revolution, Baron Taylor’s project was a means of preserving aspects of French heritage that had survived the destruction and vandalism of that period. He commissioned the Romantic author Charles Nodier to write the text and various artists (over 150 all told) were asked to provide illustrations over the project’s long gestation. The ambitious Taylor sought to represent all of France but in the end he and his team only managed to complete nine of the traditional provinces. Those nine took nearly sixty years to produce (publication began in 1820 with the final volume released in 1878) and resulted in around twenty volumes. 106 Taylor and Nodier’s project had countless imitators. 107 These collections of images were motivated by a new interest on the part of the French in France itself, a collective desire to make the nation known and visible to its citizens.

The surfeit of available lithographs was not universally admired. One rather cranky English critic, whose letters were published in French translation in 1825, lamented: “now that lithography is so widespread, Paris will soon be flooded with odious compositions that both

106 As the organization by provinces—rather than the newly-formed departments—indicates, the *voyages pittoresques* were often reactionary and royalist in their politics, appealing to proponents of the old France.

deteriorate art and corrupt morals. The circulation of such merchandise, at a low price, and of such poor quality, is really deplorable. Even in the cases that approach art, lithography can only have dire effects.”¹⁰⁸ The French editor of the volume stated his disagreement with the English author in a footnote, citing Taylor and Nodier's project as evidence of French advances in the medium.¹⁰⁹ Still, even Nodier himself doubted its acceptability in 1820, prevaricating: “The new process known as lithography has not obtained the unanimous approval of people of taste.”¹¹⁰ While the questionable taste of lithographs did not prevent thousands of them from being printed in the nineteenth century, it has meant that they are less often studied. Consequently, the current art historical understanding of mountain representation in France does not reflect the ideas embedded in this vast corpus of work.

Issues of artistic merit aside, the lithographs were staking out the French nation. One of the earliest and most popular lithographic volumes featuring the Pyrenees, Cervini de Macerata and Ignace Melling’s *Voyage pittoresque in the French Pyrenees* published 1826-30, explicitly claimed that images could affect citizens’ relationship to their nation. They cited the widespread effect of the *voyages pittoresques* in bringing travelers to far-flung regions of France:

> Artist who have published *voyages pittoresques* in diverse regions of France have obtained in the past few years the most honorable and useful success: that of powerfully exciting the attention and the interest of friends of the arts for the richness that adorns all the parts of the soil and all the aspects of our beautiful patrimony: already, thanks to the favorable influence of these brilliant works, travelers who formerly went to foreign countries hasten today to visit our


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provinces, rendered famous by this type of volume.\textsuperscript{111}

When they published their volume, the Pyrenees remained little known and the authors understood their work as bringing much needed attention to a worthy region. Melling had previously produced a \textit{voyage pittoresque} of Constantinople (\textit{Voyage pittoresque of Constantinople and the Banks of the Bosphorous}, 1804), yet with the Pyrenees volume, he turned to glorifying the nation’s patrimony—a patrimony that newly included natural features, including mountains.

The Pyrenees’ most defining characteristic, particularly in the early part of the century, was their status as a border. They guarded France from the inevitable otherness across the way; some, including Victor Hugo, saw them as the last stop before Africa. Alexandre Dumas agreed, “Africa begins at the Pyrenees.”\textsuperscript{112} Michelet emphasized the abruptness of the transition to “this Africa that we call Spain. Absolute divorce, unequivocal, that no gradation prepares you for…Upon leaving Toulouse, below the Pyrenees, you have traversed a world.”\textsuperscript{113} These claims persisted late into the century. A student of renowned geographer Paul Vidal de la Blache affirmed in 1893, “One could say, without too much exaggeration, that Africa begins at the base of the Pyrenees.”\textsuperscript{114} A British traveler to the Basses-Pyrenees in the early twentieth century

\textsuperscript{111} “Les artistes qui ont publié des Voyages pittoresques dans diverses parties de la France ont obtenu depuis quelques années le succès le plus honorable et le plus utile, celui d’exciter puissamment l’attention et l’intérêt des amis des arts sur les richesses qui ornent de toutes parts le sol et les aspects de notre belle patrie: déjà, par l’heureuse influence de ces brillants travaux, les voyageurs qui se dirigeaient autrefois vers les contrées étrangères s’empressent aujourd’hui de visiter nos provinces rendues plus célébres par ce genre d’ouvrages.” Cervini de Macerata and Ignace Melling, \textit{Voyage pittoresque dans les pyrénées françaises} (Paris, 1826), 1.

\textsuperscript{112} This may be an apocryphal quote, as it is variously attributed to Dumas père, Théophile Gautier and Voltaire. Still it conveys the sense of frontier understood by those in Paris. Kathleen Bulgin, \textit{The Making of an Artist: Gautier’s Voyage en Espagne} (Birmingham: Summa Publications, 1988), 12.

\textsuperscript{113} “cette Afrique qu’on nomme Espagne. Divorce absolu, tranché, que nulle gradation ne prépare…Si parti de Toulouse, par-dessus les Pyrénées, vous avez franchi un monde.” Michelet, \textit{La Montagne}, 81.

proclaimed, “We are in a part of France thoroughly French, yet within a few hours of a country strikingly contrasted with it; manners, customs, modes of thought, institutions radically different,” indicating that nationalist norms were well in place in the region. Upon closer inspection, however, the mountain border was neither as uniform nor as binding as was assumed. Historian Peter Sahlins has called attention to border communities, living in between the two nations culturally as well as physically. Well into the nineteenth century, people moved back and forth in an undefined, zonal region. The physical demarcation was understood as the watershed line, an uncertain denomination that prompted the French ambassador to Madrid to proclaim in 1795, “There is nothing more vague than such a phrase, ‘the summit of the Pyrenees.’” The Pyrenees are not one line of mountains: they are actually comprised of two orogenic systems, meaning there are two parallel watershed lines that intersect where the systems overlap. They have a depth ranging from 6 to nearly 80 miles across, so are less a line and more of a region. When viewed from a distance, mountains may appear as a solid border, but as geologic and artistic interest increasingly promoted close, direct observation, the uncertainties of the summit became more apparent.

Their status as a vague border conditioned representations of the Pyrenees. Nowhere is this more in evidence than in an album entitled Album of the Two Frontiers. Published circa 1860, just before the border was definitively fixed, the album has two parts, France and Spain, indicating the duality of the frontier. Seventeen lithographs are dedicated to France and eleven to Spain. The images were primarily produced by a woman, Blanche Feillet-Hennebutte (1815-)

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116 Sahlins, Boundaries, 188.
117 Jean Bourgoing, 22 thermidor AN III. Cited in Sahlins, Boundaries, 188.
1886), between 1846 and 1860. Blanche Feillet was born in Paris. She eventually became the
director of Bayonne’s school of drawing. In producing the album, Blanche was aided by her
sister, Hélène Feillet (1812-1889), who had studied with Ary Scheffer and exhibited paintings at
the Salon in Paris. Blanche’s husband, Charles Hennebutte, published the images and
produced a series of tourist guidebooks to the region. Many of the images from Album of the Two
Frontiers were also incorporated into a more involved volume, titled Description of the
Surroundings of Bayonne and Saint-Sébastien, published in 1851 in Bayonne by Charles. As
with the voyages pittoresques, the Description combined text and image to take the reader on a
tour of the region. In his introduction to the Description, Charles Hennebutte indicated that the
landscape views were essential to each country’s character, as “nothing makes felt the character
of a country, nothing conveys better its form, nothing impresses more strongly or can be more
interesting than the exact rendering of its most remarkable sights.” His emphasis on exactitude
is linked to a direct study of nature. As is often noted in the prints’ captions, Blanche had
composed the images on site, “dessiné d’après nature.”

The frontispiece to the first part of the Album of the Two Frontiers, dedicated to the
French frontier, features the English cemetery near Bayonne (Figure 21). The bucolic scene was
the site of an 1814 battle towards the end of the Napoleonic wars. Despite the picturesque
character of the view, the memory of battle underscores the political connotations of picturing
the nation, particularly at the physical point of contact with another. Beyond the symbolic
undercurrents of certain sites, the images in the Album invoke the border in their very form.

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119 Hélène and Blanche were recently celebrated at an exhibition at the Musée Basque de Bayonne;
biographical information comes from the museum’s press release. “Hélène et Blanche Feillet,” dossier de
presse, Musée Basque et de l’histoire de Bayonne, 6 November 2015-31 January 2016.
120 “Rien ne fait sentir le caractère d’un pays, ne rend mieux sa physionomie, n’impressionne plus
vivement, n’intéresse davantage, que le relevé exact des lieux les plus remarquables.” Charles
Hennebutte, Description des environs de Bayonne et de Saint-Sébastien (Bayonne, 1851), iii [my
emphasis].
Many of the scenes exhibit a compositional divide between foreground and distance; this is most striking in “Pierced Rock at Biarritz,” a daring and unusual composition (Figure 22). It uses a geologic feature of the Biarritz coast, an archway formed out of rock, to frame and organize the view. Through the rock, Biarritz’s lighthouse is evident in the distance, but as the viewer we are separated from it. Beyond highlighting a notable geologic feature, this image enacts the partitioning of a border. It puts the viewer on one side of a divide, and it gives material weight to that division: the rock arch is craggy, and carefully articulated, not just a frame but an object in its own right.

This deliberate compositional split repeats in images across the two albums. The “View of the Villa Eugenie” looks onto its subject from over a row of brushy treetops, which extends across the entire print and screens the lower portion of the scene from view (Figure 23). The Villa Eugenie was built for the empress (who came from Spain) in 1855; the imperial couple’s summer visits transformed the city into a destination resort. The vegetal barrier in the print, unusual for such scenes and contrary to strategies of picturesque representation, again thematizes the border condition of the region. The trees visually connect to a fence that runs along the curve of the coast: another border, this time a sign of privatization and ownership over the landscape. The “View of the Old Port,” also at Biarritz, similarly relies on a strong, if less literal, divide between foreground and distance (Figure 24). A darkly shaded hilltop in the lower right corner of the image provides a viewpoint out across the old port. A number of barriers appear in the details, from the rather ineffectual ropeway along the foreground cliff, to a row of fisherman’s huts set back from the water, to the hanging nets just behind them. The divides continue, as “View of Bayonne” uses the city’s canal to push the viewer back from the city setting; a boat placed in the center foreground creates even more distance (Figure 25). Images from the Spanish
side of the border also participate in the visual conceit. The “View of Saint Sébastien” combines the darkened foreground with a treetop border (Figure 26). The scene is further divided with a long causeway bridge that cuts across it diagonally.

While internalizing the frontier, Hennebutte’s album, notably, shows very little of the physical border itself: the curtain of mountains. Instead, she produced a more removed view, focusing on towns and sights in the border region. The absence of mountain scenes attests to the visual ambiguity of the border. Mountain topography confuses straight lines and clear order. Backing away from the source of uncertainty, Hennebutte placed attention on what could be definitively understood as France or Spain.

Another album, produced by Eugène Ciceri (1813-1890), focused more explicitly on the mountains themselves. His album also demonstrates the potential for lithography to offer a fuller picture of the landscape than painting could. While Delacroix complained there was not paper large enough to show the peaks, Ciceri’s albums allow the partial views on the many pages of his volumes to accumulate for the viewer, who may mentally combine detailed depictions and panoramic scans. Ciceri began his career as a decorative painter before turning to landscape, inspired by his uncle, Eugène Isabey. The album, titled The Pyrenees, Drawn after nature and lithographed by Eugène Ciceri, was published in two parts in Luchon by Lafont. A gold-foil frontispiece opens the album, indicating its luxury status (Figure 27). Texts of the sort frequently contained in voyages pittoresques announce each site pictured, giving historical context, pointing out notable monuments, and stating geologic and geographic facts.

The first volume is dedicated to the area around Luchon, a French commune 20 kilometers from the Spanish border. In a series of 23 lithographs, Ciceri exploited the full range of representational possibilities afforded by the medium. In addition to the picturesque sites that

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121 The exact publication date of this album is uncertain. Those cited range from 1840 to the late 1860s.

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had become characteristic of mountain views, he produced multi-page spreads denoting specific peaks, in which pages unfold to provide wider views. Ciceri also created an experience of progression and surprise for the reader: at certain moments within the album, he shifted to a vertical orientation. After maps of the region and descriptions of each site, the album features a panorama of the Bagnères-de-Luchon, a two-page spread that positions the town amongst nearby peaks (Figure 28). Picturesque views of the town and its attractions are followed by more remote views. Then, the reader comes to a folded page, which opens to reveal the dizzying heights of a cascading waterfall, shown from the highest peaks of the waterline down to the smallest pebbles at the base. As the reader unfolds the image she must also rotate the book to take in the expanded depiction of the “Waterfall and Chasm of Hell,” generating a participatory and embodied experience of looking (Figure 29)—the name “chasm of hell” a holdover from the previous century’s “mountain gloom”. The mountains’ waterline, notably, was intended to be the precise demarcation of the border with Spain. In showing the source of the waterfall, Ciceri’s image participates in the delimitation of the border. Even as it attends to picturesque effects, the scene remains precise in its geolocation. Its peaks are labeled and their heights are given. In Ciceri’s final view in the Luchon volume, he used four full-page lengths to illustrate a panoramic vista of the Pyrenees, again with careful attention to the geologic features of the site (Figure 30). The image is titled simply “The Pyrenees,” and it is noted in the legend that the view is taken from the summit of Entenac.

In the second volume, dedicated to the High and Low Pyrenees, Ciceri took a similar strategy, combining panoramas with alternating viewpoints and changes of scale and perspective. This region was more populated than Luchon, and Ciceri’s views correspondingly show more villages and infrastructure. The second volume ends with panoramic views of Bayonne and
Biarritz, pointing out notable sights, like the Villa Eugenie, using the same numeric labeling system Ciceri had employed to designate mountain peaks. The effect of the albums’ varied techniques is to suggest that the reader has indeed seen the Pyrenees, and has had an encounter with the landscape despite likely being very far away. The temporal experience of turning the pages, combined with the physical rotation and alternation between detail and distance, responds to the challenges painters faced when representing mountains and speaks to the potential of topographic lithography.

Ciceri and Hennebutte’s albums participated in a kind of border frenzy, a period of intense visual attention, emphasizing accurate representation, that addressed the uncertainty of the national frontier. The surfeit of prints produced in this period papered over the border’s ambiguity. Lithographs further made mountains available and accessible to great numbers of people; mountains could be, after the 1830s, possessed in image. The deluge of topographical Pyrenees lithography slowed in the 1860s and 70s. In the 1850s, a commission had been established to determine the border with Spain. The treaties of Bayonne—a series of discussions between the two nations held between 1854 and 1868—led to the definitive affixing of stones along the borderline in 1868, solidifying the place of the Pyrenees.122 While the region continued to be a site for tourism and bathing, French representational attention shifted back to the Alps.

Claiming the Mont Blanc

In 1841, an illustrator for the Magasin Pittoresque reported that Napoleon’s profile had been identified in the face of Mont Blanc (Figure 31). The summit formed the point of the emperor’s characteristic bicorn hat; his nose was suggested by a bulge known as the “shoulder” of the

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122 Sahlins, Boundaries, 302.
mountain. More than a trivial whimsy, the episode is indicative of both the increased attention to the specific features of mountains, necessary to look closely enough to find a profile within the range, and to the important political position of the Mont Blanc. The peak had been taken from the Dutchy of Savoy by the French in 1792, but was lost with Napoleon’s defeat in 1815. It was restored to France in 1860. Michelet, uniting geography and history, saw it as a thermometer for the moral and political state of the world: “It is on the face of Mont-Blanc, more or less covered in ice, that we read the future, the fortune of Europe, times of peace and brutal shocks that overturn empires and bring new dynasties.” Representations heightened the symbolic importance of the mountain, but also pointed to complexities in the real landscape that would eventually prompt intervention into its form.

In 1860, amidst Italian unification efforts, Napoleon III arranged a deal with the Prime Minister of Sardinia to annex the Duchy of Savoy and the County of Nice. The exchange placed Mont Blanc, the white mountain and the highest peak in the Alps, on the newly-negotiated border between France and Italy. In describing the accomplishment, Napoleon III referred back to ideas of natural limits. As with the Pyrenees, this border condition encouraged representational inquiry. Unlike the Pyrenees, however, the Alps could not be assumed to be innately French because they historically had not been. Visual representation, particularly photographs, served not to confirm ideas of a primordial French nation, but rather to integrate this great conquest into the conception of France.

123 “C’est sur le front du Mont-Blanc, plus ou moins chargé de glaces que se lit le future destin, la fortune de l’Europe, et les temps de la paix sereine, et les brusques cataclysmes qui renversent les empires, emportent les dynasties.” Michelet, La Montagne, 39.
Photography offered two advantages in the representation of mountains. First, its presumed objectivity in this historical moment meant that it could guarantee the accuracy promised in lithographs made after nature. Better than a caption stating “dessiné d’après nature,” photography was a medium only possible on site. Secondly, mechanical reproduction meant a photograph could record what Delacroix had earlier described as both the “gigantic” aspect of mountains and their “multitude of details.” Delacroix had stated that no man possessed patience enough to capture both the scale and material of a mountain range, but the camera did.

Napoleon III had already demonstrated an investment in photography in 1851, with the Heliographic Mission, a series of photographic documentation of the nation’s monuments. In the 1860s, when the emperor and the Empress Eugenie went on a tour of the newly-annexed regions, they were accompanied by the Bisson frères, Louis-Auguste and Auguste-Rosalie, who had a renowned photography studio on the Boulevard des Capucines. It was not the first time the Bisson brothers had journeyed to the Alps. They had previously visited in 1854 at the behest of Alsatian industrialist Daniel Dollfus-Ausset, who was attempting to prove a theory of glacial movement and wanted to obtain visual evidence, which was increasingly provided by photography in matters of geological exploration. The brothers continued to travel regularly to the region and produced some of the century’s most spectacular landscape photographs.

\[125\] Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison discuss the importance of objectivity, increasingly assured through mechanical reproduction, for nineteenth-century science in their *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2010).
\[126\] “D’abord le gigantesque de tout cela me déconcerte. Il n’y a jamais papier assez grand pour donner l’idée de ces masses et les détails sont si nombreux qu’il n’est pas patience qui puisse en triompher.” Eugène Delacroix, *op. cit.*
\[127\] Napoleon III made a number of voyages throughout French provinces, from which a number of published accounts were made. Many of these accounts are gathered in Alexandry d’Oregiani, *Voyage en Savoie de l’empereur Napoléon III et de l’impératrice Eugénie, 27 août-5 septembre 1860: récit authentique d’après les documents de l’époque* (Paris, 1911).
The Bissons’ 1860 Imperial trip resulted in a souvenir album of 24 photographs, *Mont Blanc and her Glaciers, Souvenirs from the Voyage of the Emperor and the Empress* (Figure 32). The most overt claim for nationalism is an image of the French flag planted in a glacier, the so-called “Pyramid of the Empress” (Figure 33). Other than the flag, there is no sign of human presence, no marker of civilization that might guarantee the Frenchness of the site. It appears as though it were the very edge of the known world. The image, in its minimalism, is a powerful statement of the appropriation of nature for the state. Yet it also reveals the limits of that appropriation. The French flag, not billowing in the wind but hanging limply, looks small and somewhat inconsequential. The complex topography of the glacial peak, further, makes it hard to read this as the image of a “border,” if a border is understood as a line that can be drawn on a map.

The focus of the souvenir album’s images is on the mountain’s substance, rather than its form. The “Mont Blanc seen from Chamonix,” (Figure 34), shows the mountain from an oblique angle, revealing the layered textures of its material components: darkly shadowed areas, the crystalline sheen of the glacier, the soft contours of the snow-capped peaks. In “Mont Blanc, Seen from the Garden,” (Figure 35), the peak is pictured frontally, though it does not conform to an imagined ideal of a peak as a single sloping inverted V. Instead, we see a number of summits, clustered around the glacier that slowly winds down and through them. The medium, a silver gelatin photographic print, feels especially appropriate here, with the darks of the mountain’s mineral masses rendered in silver salts and the white reflection of its snowy peaks produced through the action of light. The emphasis is on contrast and presence, but as a result the scene does not read clearly as either a frontier or as France.

The expedition with the imperial couple failed to reach the summit of Mont Blanc, but on July 25th, 1861 Auguste-Rosalie Bisson and a team of twenty-five porters ascended the peak.
Critic Ernest Lacan wrote of the challenges the expedition faced. The climb was strenuous enough, but with the addition of heavy photographic equipment, Lacan marveled, "the difficulties are colossal if not insurmountable." The triumph then was both over the physical and the visual problematics of mountain representation. Images from Auguste-Rosalie’s ascent of the peak take a different tone from those produced for the emperor. They are less about the peak, in its brute presence, and more about human conquest. The photographs are relentlessly peopled, showing the team of explorers trudging up cliff faces (Figures 36 and 37) or perching amongst the rocks. In *Ascension of Mont Blanc, Les Grands-Mulets* (1861, Figure 38), in particular, we see physical evidence of human presence in the landscape: a refuge built into the rocks, accessed with the help of a series of ropes anchored into the slope. One figure sits atop the refuge, and others are staggered across the image. This image inaugurates a new relationship to mountains, not as emblems of fear and terror but as land, subject to manipulation and, eventually, reform.

Photography seemed, for some critics, to resolve the difficulties in mountain representation that earlier artists had faced. Théophile Gautier, after having spent time in the Vosges and Swiss Alps, admired the Bisson frères’ work and claimed the peaks had never before been pictured so appropriately. As quoted in this chapter’s epigraph:

Mountains seem until now to have defied art. Is it possible to frame them in a painting? We doubt it, even looking at the canvases of Calame [Swiss artist Alexandre Calame, known for his romantic mountain paintings]. Their dimension surpasses every scale; a subtle ridge astride a slope is a valley; that which seems to be a patch of brown moss is a forest of pines two hundred feet tall; this little touch of fog spreads into an immense cloud. Furthermore, the verticality of the plane changes every notion of perspective to which the eye is accustomed. Instead of withdrawing to the horizon, the alpine landscape rises up before you, accumulating its high indentations one after the other.\(^{130}\)

\(^{129}\) Cited in Kelly, ed. *Impressionist France*, 250.

\(^{130}\) "Les montagnes semblent jusqu’à présent avoir défie l’art. Est-il possible de les encadrer dans un tableau? Nous en doutons, même après les toiles de Calame. Leur dimension dépasse toute échelle; une
Gautier articulated the perspectival challenges of mountain representation that earlier artists and geographers had struggled with. Painting, Gautier further suggested, could not be done at mountains’ highest peaks: the conditions were too harsh, and the paints would freeze to the palette. Consequently, paintings had thus far showed mountain peaks primarily as background; the feat of the Bisson frères was to bring that background to the fore, and to provide detailed views of what had formerly been understood only distantly. Gautier wrote, “Photography has just accomplished that which the writer and the artist could not.” The critic compared the experience of looking at the Bissons’ photographs to seeing the moon in a telescope, a revelation of unknown lands through technological means.

Once seen, however, Mont Blanc’s position as a powerful symbol of the nation wavered. Its import as an individual peak contrasted with the reality of its position within the chain of the Alps. The anarchist geographer Elisée Reclus pointed this out in 1876, noting that the peak, “one of the principle political boundaries of Europe,” was less substantial than several Swiss massifs, including the Mont Rose and the Oberland. Reclus also challenged the Alps’ position as a

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131 “Eh bien! ce que ni l’écrivain ni l’artiste ne sauraient faire, la photographie vient de l’exécuter.”


“natural frontier,” calling attention to the permeability of the mountain range. While Reclus insisted that the Pyrenees offered a clear border between France and Spain, he found the division less evident in the Alps:

Let us take as an example of political separation a so-called natural frontier, like that of the Alps between France and Italy, and we can see that the sloping escarpments, the height of the passes, the abundance of snow and the exhaustion of climbing are hardly sufficient to make a border, in comparison with customs and military posts... In the past, mountain dwellers moved freely from slope to slope for much of the year.  

Natural features, once studied, were not the solid walls they had previously been seen to be. Reclus’s awareness of the artificiality of state-imposed borders meant delineation of those borders, particularly in maps, was even more important.

The architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc—who owned one of the Bisson frères’ souvenir albums—was one figure working to solidify the place of Mont Blanc, visually, in a map, and physically, through the mountain’s “restoration.” Best known for his restoration of medieval architecture, including Notre-Dame de Paris, Viollet-le-Duc was also a mountain explorer. After having visited the Auvergne and the Pyrenees in his youth, he cultivated his interest in mineralogy and geology under the influence of a family friend: Alexandre Brongniart, who had participated in the creation of the Gallery of Mineralogy in Paris. Viollet returned to mountaineering at the end of his life and committed himself to producing an accurate map of

136 Que l’on prenne pour exemple de séparation politique une frontière dite naturelle, comme celle des Alpes entre la France et l’Italie, et l’on reconnaîtra que l’escarpement des pentes, la hauteur des cols, l’abondance des neiges, la fatigue des escalades sont peu de choses en fait de limites, en comparison aux cordons de douanes et de postes militaires. Autrefois les montagnards communiquaient librement de versant à versant pendant une grande moitié de l’année. Elisée Reclus, L’Homme et La Terre (Paris, 1905), 310.
137 Kelly, ed. Impressionist France, 252.
Mont Blanc. He found earlier maps lacking, and the peak’s changed status as part of France required a renewed vision. The architect traveled to the region each summer from 1868 to 1875, sketching and taking notes, and he published a map and an extended theoretical text on the Mont Blanc in 1876.\textsuperscript{139}

In producing his map, Viollet-le-Duc pointed to the difficulty, experienced by Saussure, Delacroix, and others before him, of understanding mountains at close hand.\textsuperscript{140} When approaching an area to get a better look, the peaks’ steep incline blocked the range from sight. Viollet relied on a new technology, the teleiconograph (Figure 39), to help him obtain the “exact configuration” of the peaks.\textsuperscript{141} Combining a telescope and a camera lucida, the teleiconograph was invented by the architect Henri Révoil in his study of Roman ruins.\textsuperscript{142} It provided a close-up view from a distance, and allowed Viollet-le-Duc to produce detailed studies of rocks (Figure 40), which he then used to analyze the structural formation of the mountain. He also relied on photographs by the Bisson frères and Aimé Civiale, and on prior maps, primarily military ones.

Viollet-le-Duc employed new technologies in the dissemination of his map as well. He was insistent on the quality of the reproduction, spending six months exchanging proofs with his editor, Jules Baudry. After initially testing lithography, and finding it insufficiently precise, they settled on copper engravings reproduced through photolithography.\textsuperscript{143} His goal was to “present an image of the massif as exact as possible, as could be given by a series of photographs taken a dozen kilometers from the earth’s surface.”\textsuperscript{144} Photography had introduced a new standard of

\textsuperscript{139} Pierre A. Frey, ed., \textit{Viollet-le-Duc et la montagne} (Grenoble: Glénat, 1993).
\textsuperscript{141} Viollet-le-Duc, \textit{Mont Blanc}, 9.
\textsuperscript{142} “The Teleiconograph,” in \textit{The Architect} (September 18, 1869), 139.
\textsuperscript{143} Brulhart-Danna, “La Carte du Massif,” 54.
\textsuperscript{144} “présenter une image aussi exacte que possible du massif comme pourraient le donner une série de photographies prises normalement à une dizaine de kilomètres de la surface terrestre.” Eugène Viollet-le-
exactitude for both art and cartography. Viollet-le-Duc’s project evokes the relationship between
mapping, often driven by the state, and artistic mastery over the landscape. The historian
Michael Biggs has suggested that the state itself came into being through the process of
mapping; the state became real through its cartographic representation.\textsuperscript{145} While he relied on state
archives as a basis for his map, Viollet-le-Duc’s status as a private citizen highlights the
augmented role private individuals would play in land reform efforts in the late nineteenth
century.

Viollet-le-Duc’s study revealed the peak had been subject to the movement of time,
through glacial erosion. He reified the use of architectural terminology to describe mountain
geology, claiming, “our globe is, in fact, only a great edifice.”\textsuperscript{146} The world, viewed as a
building, would be equally subject to wearing and improvement, and in his treatise, Viollet-le-
Duc repeatedly emphasized the mountains’ current state of “ruin,” describing “vast solitudes of
snow, from which shattered rocks stand out—gigantic ruins, which the imagination endeavors to
restore.”\textsuperscript{147} While the first part of the century saw the passage in mountain geology from
imagination to material, Viollet-le-Duc returned imagination to the subject, though in a way that
was more integrated with the reality of the mountain’s physical presence. Seeking to restore the
peaks’ grandeur, he identified processes of erosion and extrapolated from what he saw to
recreate what he understood to be the mountain’s ideal original form, a paragon of straight lines
and regular geometry (Figure 41). He treated the Mont Blanc as though it were a cathedral,
another material remnant of the nation’s patrimony and one in need of its protection.

Duc, “Nouvelle carte topographique du Mont-Blanc,” \textit{Bulletin de la Société géographique de Paris}
(1874), 43.
\textsuperscript{145} Michael Biggs, “Putting the State on the Map: Cartography, Territory, and European State Formation,”
\textit{Comparative Studies in Society and History} 41, no. 2 (April 1999), 374-405.
\textsuperscript{146} Viollet-le-Duc, \textit{Mont Blanc}, 12.
\textsuperscript{147} Viollet-le-Duc, \textit{Mont Blanc}, 12.
Architectural historian Martin Bressani described the proposed restoration of Mont Blanc as Viollet-le-Duc’s “most elaborate and spectacular restoration project.” The erosion, Viollet-le-Duc and others engaged in the study of mountainous landscapes argued, could be slowed through the planting of trees, which would anchor the soil and solidify the mountain’s form. Viollet-le-Duc campaigned on behalf of the mountains, and supported state efforts at forestation. Once known as the Mont Maudit (the cursed mountain), by the late nineteenth century Mont Blanc—and mountains in general—was seen as entirely within human’s purview.

**State Intervention and Individual Proprietors**

Viollet-le-Duc’s calls for forestation were echoed across the French administration in the 1860s and 70s. While the architect’s primary concern was formal, the state was engaged with the environmental and economic consequences of erosion. Extensive flooding in plains regions in the 1850s had been attributed to deforestation in mountains, and subsequently great campaigns for reforestation were undertaken. Napoleon III passed a stringent law in 1860 that encouraged these efforts. The law would allow for the expropriation of land from common holding for public utility, and its subsequent alienation to private industry, tying land reform to privatization. Mountains were no longer symbols, but territory, subject to the dictates of the

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150 Forests in general were privatized in the nineteenth century, as discussed in chapter three. See Kieko Matteson, *Forests in Revolutionary France: Conservation, Community and Conflict, 1669-1848* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
state. Representation, and photography in particular, continued to be influential as mountains were physically transformed.

As they were subject to increasing study, mountain regions became notorious for their unproductivity; historian Graham Robb suggests mountains were perceived as “wastelands that happened to be vertical.” The transformation of mountain regions had social consequences, and the process was similar to one undertaken in the nation’s forests and wetlands. Environmental reforms drove the elimination of mountain commons, which peasants living in the mountains had used to pasture their animals. Improving the wasteland meant removing peasant populations, and historian Tamara Whited has argued, “An image of fully forested mountains required the erasure of alpine peasants.” As peasants’ pastures were taken and transformed into forest, they lost their means of survival and relocated. One nineteenth-century sociologist pointed to a potential collusion between mountain expropriation and colonization, noting that those mountainous populations driven out by forestry efforts would be forced to move to the colonies.

After a second law concerning the reform of the mountains passed in 1882, a distinct politic of mountain restoration through forestry emerged under the rubric of the Restoration of Mountain Terrain (RTM), a faction of the state forestry service. Policy was largely based on the theories of A.C. Surrell, a Ponts et Chaussées engineer and advocate for reforestation. After

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151 Stuart Elden defines “territory” as “a distinctive mode of social/spatial organization, one that is historically and geographically limited and dependent.” See his The Birth of Territory. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013). I am equally interested in Paul Alliès’s claims that administration produced territory, in his L’Invention du territoire (Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 1980).
155 Bernard Debarbieux and Gilles Rudaz discuss Surell and theories of nature in The Mountain, 89-96.
studying the ecology of the Hautes-Alpes in the 1830s, Surell posited a symbiotic relationship between forest and mountain landscapes. He published his findings in a treatise in 1841, but it would take several more seasons of extreme flooding before they became policy. Surrell, in describing human interventions into the landscape designed to stop torrents, used the term “ouvrages d’art.” Interception, prompted initially by visual representation and study, was itself seen as a form of art.

Photography was central to land management efforts. Edouard Baldus had documented the flooding in photographs in the 1850s, particularly around Lyon, and that documentation brought the inundation to the emperor’s attention (Figure 42). Beyond documentation, however, photography became a tool for foresters. Aimé Civiale’s application of photography to Alpine geology in the 1860s had demonstrated the medium’s usefulness. In contrast to the Bisson frères, whose images were inclined to show the spectacular character of the peaks, Civiale took a distinctly scientific bent, working to produce “a complete idea of the great Alpine chain” through a photographic panorama. The result was a four-meter long 360-degree view from the summit of Bella Tolla (Figures 43 and 44). One of Civiale’s contemporaries, the geologist Charles Saint-Claire Deville, observed in 1866 that there was a gap in Alpine knowledge, and suggested “This gap can be filled in an irreprensible manner only by photography.”

The belief in photography’s usefulness as a tool led to its incorporation into the state’s methodology for reform. Photographic archives were developed to chart erosion and the progress

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of reforms—the Haute-Alpes departmental archives holds over 3,300 photographs. Beginning in 1887, photography classes were mandatory for state forestry agents. Each regional forestry service was issued an 18 x 24 centimeter portable photographic chamber. The images frequently take a comparative approach, showing the same view before and after tree plantations (Figure 45); success was measured in visible terms. In the case of reforestation efforts, photography was chosen for its association with truth: Prosper Demontzey, a forester and prominent advocate for photography, insisted, “if we have adopted photography as the preferred means of representing torrents and the work we have executed on them, it is because of the irrefutable authenticity... of the images obtained by it.” The forester-photographers were guided by standards of objectivity but also of art. Eugène Trutat, a naturalist and photographer, noted of mountain photography that, “the union was quickly made, and if the landscape painter initially asked photography to come to his assistance, in turn, photography found itself asking art to lead the way.” Photographs produced by the RTM celebrated human intervention into the mountains through views inspired by landscapists.

Photography was used not only for study but also for the display of mountains and forests, particularly at the popular Universal Exhibitions. The pavilion of forests had historically displayed the tools and methods of forestry, but the reforestation efforts constituted a new,

163 “L’union s’est vite faite, et si le paysagiste a demandé à la Photographie de lui venir en aide, à son tour la Photographie s’est trouvée en droit de demander à l’art de diriger ses travaux.” Eugène Trutat, La Photographie en Montagne (Paris, 1894), 44.
modern regime of forest management, and the state sought new means to represent its achievement accordingly. Photography offered, according to one reviewer, a way to bring the forests into the pavilion "in a palpable material form."\textsuperscript{164} The exhibition of 1878 had an elaborate presentation of reforestation efforts in alpine France, including a series of large-scale photographs by Eugene Charles de Gayffier.\textsuperscript{165} Gayffier, a member of the forestry service, was head of the reforestation project, and his images demonstrated the success of the work across the Alps and the Pyrenees. Gayffier had also produced a photographic herbarium, replacing the earlier technique of pasting dried specimens to pages. This exchange between thing and image further emphasized photography’s perceived ability to evoke material presence. Beyond photography, other innovative modes of display were employed. For the exposition of 1889, a certain Gabin traveled through the Alps and Pyrenees, studying the process of erosion. He produced huge dioramas representing the region, 8 meters high by 35 meters long. Although simply painted, the dioramas nevertheless included enough atmospheric details that a reviewer found, "they let us believe... that we are really seeing some valleys of the Alps."\textsuperscript{166} The inclusion of multiple modes of display suggests that as valuable as it was, photography alone was inadequate in mountain representation. A discussion in the bulletin of the Society of Geography in 1866 had pointed to the necessary interrelation of multiple media, describing three-dimensional maps produced with the aid of photographs, including some by the Bisson frères, termed “photo-sculpture.” Those relief maps were then themselves photographed to aid in the reading of topographical maps. The author proclaimed, "a good map is a good relief map,”


\textsuperscript{165} A prospectus exists for the publication of Gayffier’s images but it seems not to have been realized. The prospectus describing the photographs is included in the front matter of Prosper Demontzey, \textit{Traité pratique du reboisement et du gazonnement des montagnes} (Paris, 1882).

demonstrating that understanding mountains required at once two- and three-dimensional approaches, form and substance.\textsuperscript{167} The multi-media displays at the Universal Exhibitions were intended to present and promote work of the RTM, work that was claiming control over mountainous landscapes.

The RTM produced visible incursions into the mountainous landscape, including dams to slow the flood of rivers, screens to hold soil in place, and stone retaining walls. What is most striking in the photographic documentation is the geometric regularity of the interventions. A photograph of Saint-Pons, in the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence from 1899, shows a series of regularly posed dams, their horizontal and rectangular form visually anchoring and stabilizing the less clearly defined peaks in the background (Figure 46). Water runs neatly down the path provided for it. An image of Moustiers, also from Alpes-de-Haute-Provence in 1904, shows the use of gridded wattling (a kind of fencing) to hold the mountain’s soil in place (Figure 47). An image of Val-de-Prés, in the Haute-Alpes, has parallel lines of retaining walls catching loose stones sliding down the cliff face (Figure 48). Collectively, the images evoke a sense of a mountain as a fragile structure rather than a solid mass.

It is in the context of this shift, to mountains as subject to state intervention, that we need to read Cézanne’s depictions of Mont Sainte-Victoire.\textsuperscript{168} Mountain reforestation efforts were well underway when he took up the motif in the 1870s. The RTM increasingly relied on private individuals to cultivate its alpine forests, and mountains became available for individual

\footnote{\textsuperscript{167} "Tant vaut la carte, tant vaut la plan-relief." M. Bardin, “Plans-reliefs des montagnes françaises,” \textit{Bulletin de la Société de géographie} 5, no. 11 (1866), 246.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{168} Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer has written of Cézanne’s interest in the geology of Mont Sainte-Victoire, and his closeness with the scientist Antoine-Fortune Marion, in her chapter “Sainte-Victoire and the End of Time,” \textit{Cézanne and Provence} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 149-184.}
speculation. This privatization of the mountain facilitated the artist’s private vision. Cézanne was not the first to paint Sainte-Victoire; the mountain held symbolic significance for those living in Aix-en-Provence and it was featured in the work of regional landscapists, including François-Marius Granet (1775-1849). For Granet, however, the mountain was a subject. For Cézanne, it was a motif. Cézanne’s visual investigations treated the mountain as an empty experimental site, in much the same way foresters had approached the mountain. There is a mythology of Cézanne as fleeing the progress of industry, a mythology he himself participated in cultivating, complaining of “the rule of the engineers, the republic of straight lines.” His principle motif, however, was the product of modernity. Cézanne could visually carve up the geometric contours of the mountain and rebuild them in paint because in some ways mountains had already been subject to physical restructuring as part of France’s consolidation as a nation. Though he does not include evidence of the RTM’s work in his paintings, his very practice is indebted to an ideology of mountains as matter, mass and material, as not separate from but part of the landscape and subject to human intervention. In Mont Sainte-Victoire (1902-06, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Figure 49) especially, he made the mountain into geometric form, like Viollet le Duc, subject to his ordering imagination. This is an especially angular rendering of the peak, with sharp edges and bold lines (Figure 50). What T.J. Clark termed Cézanne’s integral


\[170\] Albert Boime discusses Cézanne’s ownership of private property in relation to his desire to possess the landscape visually, though he focuses on the artist’s own estate and does not investigate the particular changes to mountain property. Albert Boime, “Cézanne’s Real and Imaginary Estate,” Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte 61 (1998), 552-567.

\[171\] Granet’s work and the significance of Mont Sainte-Victoire for the Aixois is discussed in Carol Solomon, Paul Cézanne, François-Marius Granet and the Provençal landscape tradition, PhD dissertation (University of Pittsburgh, 1987).

\[172\] Nina Athanassoglou-Kallmyer suggests Cézanne evicts even the viewer from the landscape. Kallmyer, Cézanne and Provence, 152.

\[173\] “le règne des ingénieurs, la république des lignes plates,” Cited in Joachim Gasquez, Cézanne (Paris: Bernheim-Jeune, 1921), 34.
relation of form to content, “a moment of felt adequacy between a statement of form and content,” depended on an alliance of mountains’ matter and shape, an alliance forged through prior geologic and artistic study.\textsuperscript{174} We should see in Cézanne’s mountain the efficient study of Valenciennes, the “eloquent witness” of Laveleye, and the nationalism of \textit{voyages pittoresques} and lithographic volumes—but we should also see how the artist subsumed all these factors into his own pictorial program. When art historian Philip Conisbee says of Sainte-Victoire, “Cézanne made the mountain his own,” there is a sense of \textit{ownership} about the claim, an ownership that would not have been possible a century prior.\textsuperscript{175}

Cézanne did not master the mountains any more than the RTM was able to stop glacial erosion. He, more than anyone, recognized the difficulty of painting after nature, claiming, “I wanted to copy nature but failed.”\textsuperscript{176} He continually worked and reworked the mountain, as the state forestry service had and still does. Thinking of mountains’ materiality as a product of labor—both the intellectual labor that made them real and visible sites and the physical labor that managed their form—calls our attention to another artist engaged in their representation: Gustave Courbet. Photographs from the RTM of stonebreakers quarrying material to build retaining walls (Figure 51) directly evoke Courbet’s famed socialist paintings. In many cases, the laborers building these structures were the very peasants whose pastures were being eliminated as a result of the work.\textsuperscript{177} In his representations of mountains, however, rather than aligning himself with

\textsuperscript{176} “La nature, disait Cézanne, j’ai voulu la copier, je n’arrivai pas.” The citation was recorded by fellow artist Maurice Denis. Cited in John House, \textit{Impressionism}, 231 note 22.
the peasant laborers, Courbet appropriated the land as a personal signifier. As with Cézanne, this was more in keeping with the bourgeois actors of state agency.\textsuperscript{178}

Courbet identified himself as a mountain man. From the rocky Jura region, part of France's Massif Central, he once told Victor Hugo, "I have the fierce independence of the mountain-born."\textsuperscript{179} His claim referred to mountains as a refuge for rebels and to his self-positioning as an outsider.\textsuperscript{180} Michael Fried has described Courbet's self-identification with the landscape of his birth.\textsuperscript{181} Like Cézanne, Courbet painted the Jura with a sense of personal ownership—and he owned land in the region.\textsuperscript{182} His paintings demonstrate an investigation of geology, particularly in his depictions of Jura cliffs.\textsuperscript{183} He conveyed an awareness of their material presence in images like the Source of the Lison (1864, Figure 52). The painting reveals an intimate familiarity with limestone, an understanding of its coloring and striations. He used a palette knife and a spatula to place thick patches of color, placing rather than painting the different material components of the scene. The image presents the cliff face almost as a living object, covered in green moss, with vegetation growing from its cracks, and water smoothing its surface: this is a landscape that is deeply known. In this image, the artist succeeds in finding meaning in the "middle view" of mountains: while earlier in the century artists such as Valenciennes managed to represent chains of interconnected summits from a distance, and

\textsuperscript{178} See Paul Alliès on the role of the bourgeoisie in implementing administrative management of territory. Alliès, \textit{L'Invention du territoire}.


\textsuperscript{181} Fried, \textit{Courbet's Realism}.

\textsuperscript{182} T.J. Clark describes Courbet's father's accumulation of property in his \textit{Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 114.

geologists such as Saussure could survey the form of ranges from their peaks, it would require a personal engagement and a material response to find a composition within the unformed mass of a mountain at close range.

Courbet’s late landscapes, those he painted while in exile in Switzerland, have been little studied, and they offer another perspective on mountains as subjects. In a small, unusually luminous canvas, *The Chalet in the Mountain* (1874, Figure 53), Courbet abruptly juxtaposed two styles of mountain representation. One, for which he was known, comprises the foreground: a palette knifed study of cliffs at close range, composed of browns and tans. Another, more unusual for him, was the study of distant white-capped peaks. There is little transition between the two zones. The peaks feel ghostly, hovering over and haunting the scene below. Sent to Switzerland late in his life, following his involvement with the Paris Commune, Courbet did not know the Alps in an embodied way, as he had the cliffs of the Jura, and consequently his representation of them is distant and unfamiliar. Courbet’s last major work was a *Panoramic View of the Alps* (1877, Figure 54), intended for the 1878 universal exposition. Again he relied on a stylistic divide between the foreground and distance, emphasizing the otherness of the Alps. Here the mountains feel utterly inaccessible. The peaks in *Panoramic View* rise straight up from the midground of the canvas, closing off the view, offering an obstinate sheared face to the viewer’s gaze, and the artist’s liberty. This was not his landscape, and he could not claim it pictorially as he had the Jura. This other kind of mountain, this foreign mountain, stands as a symbol of his exile, dominating and imposing. In picturing these two kinds of mountains, Courbet’s work is the product of the nineteenth century’s differentiation of mountain forms and meanings.
Courbet and Cézanne are both painters known for their sculptural tendencies: Courbet in his thick, material brushwork and Cézanne in his geometric investigation of form. This coalition of two- and three-dimensional representation meant they were uniquely positioned to capture mountains, but they also benefited from the visual and geologic explorations of the early part of the century. Cézanne and Courbet’s work evokes the accretion of symbolic value and visual investigation overlaid on the landscape’s surface. Mountains went from heaps of fracas and debris to emblems of nation and self through a process driven by images. Learning to see mountains was part of learning to view and articulate a landscape amidst the fullness of the world. It meant no longer relying on assumed or perceived knowledge, and required employing new visual technologies: lithography, photography, teleiconography. Art was one kind of image processing France’s landscapes in the nineteenth century; integrating a study of paintings into that larger process revives and heightens our understanding of those paintings’ significance. Courbet and Cézanne’s work was, in this sense, made possible by the thousands of lithographs that delineated the Pyrenees, and by the photographic, mapping, and imaginative efforts that rendered the Mont Blanc French. It was equally made possible by the work of the RTM in physically securing the peaks. It was only once mountain landscapes were under control, in terms of fixed borders and affixed soil, that they were available to be visually interpreted as personal signifiers.
How to paint ports? … It is, in effect, the most ungrateful subject, the one that seems to leave the least freedom to the brush, the least space for the imagination. M. Desprat, 1853

As landscape makes progress, maritime painting, a genre that has never had great success in France since Vernet, loses ground each day. Charles Perrier, 1855

CHAPTER TWO

Ports

When reviewing the Universal Exhibition of 1855, the critic Charles Perrier placed landscape and maritime painting in opposition. Though landscape as a genre continued to gain momentum over the course of the nineteenth century, appearing in greater numbers at exhibitions and with greater critical approval, maritime painting was increasingly dismissed. In his analysis, Perrier referred to Joseph Vernet, whose famed Ports of France series (1753-1765), a royal commission to document the nation’s ports and maritime activities, was one of the most successful instances of maritime representation in eighteenth-century France. The widespread renown and reproduction of Vernet’s paintings meant ensuing production was measured against them, and he was a model for nineteenth-century maritime artists and their new patron: the state.

As a genre that was largely dependent on state-sponsorship, maritime painting offers an alternative to history painting in studying the use of art to represent the nation. Yet it is often

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184 “À mesure que le paysage fait des progrès, la marine, un genre qui depuis Vernet n’a jamais eu en France un bien grand éclat, perd tous les jours du terrain.” Charles Perrier, “Exposition Universelle des Beaux-Arts,” L’Artiste 5, no.15 (22 July 1855), 156.


186 Other efforts underway to nuance our understanding of state patronage include Katie Hornstein’s investigation into military paintings, forthcoming, and her edited volume on Horace Vernet, who combined genre and history painting to deliver what Julia Thoma termed the “deathblow” to history painting in the Second Empire. Daniel Harkett and Katie Hornstein, eds. Horace Vernet and the
overlooked in the historiography, which tends to skip from Vernet to Impressionism, ignoring a strong tradition of representation, evidenced by countless images of the sea, ships, maritime battles, and views of ports and harbors submitted to the Salons and reproduced in illustrated journals. This neglect is symptomatic of a larger disregard for the sea in the French national image, as France has been popularly understood as primarily continental. Even Vernet’s series, the most important maritime commission in France, demonstrates a continental bias. His *The Port of Toulon seen from Mont Faron* (1756, Figure 1) gives instead the impression of a garden fête galante, with an opulent terrace populated by diverse and elegantly dressed figures. The painting is certainly oriented towards the sea, with the manicured French garden’s hedges drawing sharp lines of perspective that lead our eye to the blue water and ships’ masts in the distance. Still, Vernet puts the viewer at a secure distance from the ocean itself, grounding us in a characteristically and delightfully eighteenth-century French genre scene. Other images are more distinctly nautical, as in *The Port of Dieppe* (1765, Figure 2), but still the focus is on the presence of those nautical activities on land. Aspects of maritime trade and fishery fill the foreground, but Vernet used architecture and distant cliffs to close off the view to the open ocean, showing instead only an enclosed bay of still water. The *Entrance to the Port of Marseille*

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Several other projects addressing this lacuna include Meredith Martin and Gillian Weiss’s co-authored book project, *The Sun King at Sea: Maritime Art and Slavery during the Reign of Louis XIV* and Hannah Baader’s exploration of maritime votive offerings as part of the “Art, Space and Mobility” research group at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence.
(1754, Figure 3) focuses even more emphatically on the topographical landscape—highlighting that city’s elaborate system of coastal defenses and fortified walls rather than the seascape.

Perrier’s claim overlooked the possibility—a possibility evident in Vernet’s images—that maritime painting was a kind of landscape. This was especially true in France, where representation often focused on the site where the marine came into contact with the nation: the port.89 Picturing France did not only involve fields and haystacks, and representational attention was particularly important in places where the state’s hold was fuzzier and less secure: its edges and limits, its borders and coasts. Picturing the nation also meant depicting its reach and its influence beyond its own bounds. Unlike mountains, images of ports fulfilled both goals, offering a vision of security at home and engagement abroad. Beginning with Vernet and continuing through the Second Empire, representations of ports were a way for the state to mobilize landscape in the service of its image, creating a sense of a diverse but unified nation with commercial, colonial and naval strengths. This chapter focuses on three specific moments in that history: the inclusion of three-dimensional models of ports in a maritime museum, designed to make the nation’s marine more publicly visible; the institution, in 1817, of an Official Painter of the Navy, the first of whom tasked himself with updating Vernet’s series; and Napoleon III’s commission of an expensive maritime triptych to express his expansionist ambition. In this analysis, I take a particular interest in the failure of images to generate a lasting maritime identity for France, and ask why the nineteenth-century state, despite investing considerable resources, was unable to produce a maritime iconography to rival that of Vernet. As Perrier intimated, the images discussed in this chapter were not critical successes. While subsequent chapters will posit

89 The word for navy in French, marine, can also refer to other maritime interests, including commerce and colonialism, and we see the entanglement of these diverse senses of the word in port representations. The initiatives discussed in this chapter were largely organized around and funded by the navy (the Minister of the Marine), and thus should be understood as indications of the navy’s self-positioning through image.
landscape as a potential site of resistance to state policy, the practicalities of maritime representation—requiring access to restricted harbors, ships, and voyages—meant artists were less able to openly challenge the state. Unlike a scene of a victorious naval battle, however, the representation of ports was more open to betraying weaknesses in France’s maritime position. Leaving, as the critic Desprat suggested, little “freedom to the brush” or “space for the imagination,” ports were perhaps all the more revealing of the actual position of the state.\textsuperscript{190} No longer the absolute monarchy of the \textit{ancien régime}, the nineteenth-century state needed to negotiate popular appeal at home with international posturing and its reduced position as a secondary naval power after the Napoleonic wars. Images were a way of doing so.

Maritime Painting in France

The importance of Vernet’s \textit{Ports of France}, in both their continued display and as a paragon for other artists, make them essential to understanding nineteenth-century maritime representation. The series was commissioned by the French crown in 1753.\textsuperscript{191} Orchestrated by the Director-General of Royal Buildings, the marquis de Marigny, it was the most significant

\textsuperscript{190} “Comment peindre des ports? Si on élève le point de vue, on fait une carte d’ingénieur hydrographe; si on l’abaisse, on n’a plus qu’un horizon plat, des lignes malheureuses et un ciel immense à remplir. C’est, en effet, le sujet le plus ingrat, celui qui semble laisser le moins de liberté au pinceau, le moins d’espace à l’imagination. Les ports, dirait-on volontiers, sont toujours absolument les mêmes, une mer calme ou houleuse, quelques vaisseaux amarrés, une barque luttant contre la marée, des maisons sur la rive, tel est le programme du tableau dont il semble qu’on ne puisse pas plus s’écarter que d’un programme officiel.” M. Desprat, “Revue de l’Exposition,” \textit{Gazette des Beaux-Arts} (1853), 135.

painting project undertaken under Louis XV. Uniting France’s maritime interests, it encompassed military, commercial and fishing ports. Production of the series was interrupted by the disastrous conclusion to the Seven Years War (1754-63), and the project was abandoned in 1765 due to lack of funds, but the fifteen images that were completed assured Vernet’s legacy. As the canvases were finished, they were shown at the Salons, and were generally well-received by critics and audiences. The paintings were engraved by Charles-Nicolas Cochin and are reputedly one of the most widely reproduced sets of images in the ancien régime. They show regional architecture, costume, and trade, focusing with topographical accuracy on the specifics of the site. Each painting is nearly five by eight feet, and their scale immerses the viewer in the experience of each port. Yet the paintings are also united, through a shared horizon line, which links the ports together and suggests they form a consistent whole: France.

Vernet’s task was to balance art and documentation, to be at once pleasing and accurate. In their correspondence, Marigny wrote, “Your paintings must combine two virtues, that of picturesque beauty and that of likeness.” While some critics initially found the surfeit of details distracting, others, including Denis Diderot, saw it as a strength of the project. Describing Vernet’s work in 1767, Diderot exclaimed, “all is true!” Accurate representation became a trope of state-sponsored landscape production in the nineteenth century, seen as a way to visually

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192 The initial command was for paintings of Antibes, Toulon, Marseille, Bandol, Sète, Bayonne, Bordeaux, La Rochelle, Rochefort, Lorient, Brest, Saint Malo, Le Havre, Calais, and Dunkirk, at the rate of 6,000 livres per canvas. Virginie Alliot-Duchène, “Peintre de marines de Sa Majesté le roi,” in Joseph Vernet, 1714-1789, Les Vues des Ports de France (Paris: Musée de la Marine, 2011), 12.

193 He painted the ports of Marseille (two views), Sète, Toulon (three views), Antibes, Dieppe, La Rochelle, Rochefort, Bordeaux (two views), Bayonne (two views), and Bandol. Virginie Alliot-Duchène, “Peintre de marines de Sa Majesté le roi,” 21.

194 It is not clear where the paintings were displayed after the Salons; they seem to have been divided between the palaces in Versailles and Paris.


secure a site. As permeable borders, ports were a source of anxiety for the state. Vernet’s
paintings had shown that anxiety might be quelled through images. Scenes like The Port of
Toulon from the Artillery Park (1755, Figure 4) foreground the nation’s naval defenses, with
officers stacking cannon balls and readying gunpowder. When presented with evidence of the
diminution of his navy following the Seven Years War, Louis XV is said to have responded,
“There can be no navy in France other than that of M. Vernet.” Though apocryphal, Louis
XV’s claim for the power of images resonated in the nineteenth century, and picturing ports was
a way of symbolically shoring up the nation's defenses, even if the reality did not follow.

Vernet’s series continued to be visible in the nineteenth century. Though it glorified
France and the crown, it managed to transcend its political purpose and was admired during the
Revolutionary period. The paintings were displayed to acclaim in the Louvre; in 1877, they
were considered by a writer in the Musée universel as “one of the beautiful riches of the Louvre
museum.” While 1789 was a rupture in many ways, the Ports of France were reprised in 1791
by Jean-François Hue, marking a point of continuity in representational strategy between the
ancien régime and the nineteenth-century state. Hue was commissioned by the Constitutional

197 “Il ne peut y avoir en France de marine que celle de M. Vernet.” Louis XV was supposedly speaking to
his minister, Choiseul. The citation was known in the nineteenth century, and it appears in Alexandre
Lambert de Sainte-Croix, Essai sur l'histoire de l'administration de la marine de France, 1689-1792
(Paris, 1892), 251. The quote is often repeated without clear attribution; it appears in Hervé Coutau-
Twentieth Century, ed. N.A. Rodger (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1996), 59. It has alternately
been reported as “il n'y aura jamais en France d'autres marines que celle du peintre Vernet.” Marie-Pierre
Demarcq, “Éduquer pour rénober: la politique maritime au Siècle des lumières,” in Joseph Vernet, 1714-
1789, 23.

198 See Yveline Cantarel-Bresson, La Naissance du Musee du Louvre, 2 volumes (Paris: Réunion des

199 “une des belles richesses de notre musée du Louvre.” A. G., “Joseph Vernet,” Musée Universel 10
(1877), 133.

200 The navy is nicknamed “La Royale,” a further sign of continuity with the ancien régime. For a
discussion of the history of this moniker, see Michel Mollat Du Jourdin, “Le Front de Mer.” in Lieux de
Assembly to paint Brest (three views) and Lorient. He has since been entirely overshadowed by Vernet, but the artist continued to be an important figure in maritime imagery in the early nineteenth century. He later produced views of Saint-Malo, Granville, and Boulogne, and also painted the conquest of Grenada and the combat of the Bayonnaise. These last images, not quite fitting within the larger projects, were nevertheless included when his and Vernet’s paintings were reproduced in a print edition of the *Ports of France* in 1812.

The 1812 edition was designed to be a smaller and more affordable reproduction than that of Cochin, making the images further accessible to a nineteenth-century audience. Hue’s *View and Conquest of the Island of Grenada* (circa 1790s, Figure 5) refers to a 1779 French siege of a British-held island in the West Indies as part of the American Revolutionary War. The basic formal elements of the composition echo Vernet’s formula, visible in *Entrance to the Port of Marseille* (Figure 3), with a curved harbor on the left and an articulation of the landscape’s topography on the right. Hue’s image is activated, however, by the presence of hundreds of soldiers marching across the coast and up to cliff side fortifications, where gunfire and launching rockets create the appearance of an erupting volcano. Including this image in the 1812 book invokes a spectrum of representation, passing from a passive depiction of a port to an active event.  

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201 Virginie Alliot-Duchêne, “Peintre de marines de Sa Majesté le roi,” 21.
202 Three of his paintings are in the Musée de la Marine, though only one is on view, and it is shown separately from Vernet’s. Hue’s work is discussed briefly, though he is referred to as a “lesser artist,” by Colin Bailey in his *Patriotic Taste: Collecting Modern Art in Pre-Revolutionary Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 131.
204 Jill Casid discusses Hue’s view, and the taking of Grenada, in her *Sowing Empire: Landscape and Colonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 234.
engagement of power. It further reveals the potential for port representation to visually claim sites as part of France.

The success of Vernet's series is an anomaly; the sea has not been central to the French national image. Though France has extensive Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts, the nation's form is more commonly attributed to the mountain ranges framing it. Historian of the *Annales* School Fernand Braudel observed,

> Studies devoted to frontiers rarely mention the sea... And yet if a frontier means a break, a discontinuity in space, what traveller, leaving Calais, or arriving in Dover, could fail to think that he was leaving one frontier and meeting another? ... The sea exists, the coastline exists, and sailors and fleets too. And so do maritime frontiers, the most unarguably natural of all.\(^{205}\)

Political theorist Carl Schmitt cited Louis XIV's dismissal in 1672 of Colbert as secretary of the navy as the moment when the French state's "choice in favor of the land element became irreversible."\(^{206}\) In 1853, the journal *La France Maritime*, funded by the Minister of the Marine, insisted that France was "maritime by the character of its populations and the length of its coast, bathed in two seas, maritime by the demands of its industry and the glorious memories of its history," even as it lamented its status as the first and only national publication dedicated to naval navigation.\(^{207}\) Historians have taken pains to point out that France had a robust navy, but popular conceptions of the nation as oriented towards the continental persist; one naval historian forlornly concluded in a recent essay, "France has had little just cause to be ashamed of her navy; the navy may have had some just cause to be ashamed of France."\(^{208}\) The lack of historical and

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\(^{207}\) "maritime par le caractère de ses populations et l'étendue de son littoral baigné par deux mers, maritime par les exigences de son industrie et les souvenirs glorieux de son histoire," Amédé Gréhan, "Introduction," *La France maritime*, 1 (1853), i.

political emphasis on the sea in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries has impacted the study of French maritime representation. In 1997, even the then Director of Paris’s Musée national de la Marine, François Bellec, referred to France as “profoundly terrestrial.” The French art historian Pierre Miquel similarly claimed, “The navy has never had an important place in French national preoccupations, because the life of the nation never seemed to depend objectively on it.” In turn, he continued, “Painters of the sea are rare. France’s destiny has meant that continental preoccupations have distracted us from our maritime interests.” Painters of the sea were not, in fact, rare, but they were rarely studied.

As Perrier’s elevation of landscape painting over maritime imagery demonstrated, this bias against maritime imagery was rooted in the nineteenth century. The Prix de Rome for historical landscapes excluded maritime scenes. Separate medals were awarded for the categories landscape and marine at the Paris Salons, with far more medals being awarded in landscape. Treatises on landscape further referred to marine painting as requiring special training. Pierre Henri de Valenciennes, in his foundational essay on landscape painting published in 1800, called marine painting “a very different genre” requiring “specific study that occupies the entire life of an artist.” He observed that not only must marine painters have traveled along the coast but...
they need “to have been in the open sea for some time and to have sailed some distance after having lost sight of land.” The marine painter is separated from the ordinary landscapist, cast out to sea where light and shade work differently against the open water. Vernet himself played into these tropes, legendarilly binding himself to a ship’s mast during a storm to observe firsthand the angry seas. Apocryphal though the tale may be, it demonstrates a belief that the landscapist required baptism into a new, and thus separate, genre of representation.

The genre was aligned with the state from the outset, as maritime artists required exposure to ships, permission to accompany the navy on voyages, and access to ports. It was not always evident, however, how the genre could best represent the nation, especially in periods of peace, when there were no triumphant battles to record. The unbound image of the open water did not serve the state. Legally, French territory extended into the sea only the distance a cannon could fire from the coast, a measure that links the nation’s sovereignty to its defensive capacity. The sea belongs to no one, so painters focused on proximal sites: ships, for example. In international law, ships were and are still “floating territory of the flag-State.” Boats flying the French flag could extend the nation beyond its borders, and representing them was a means of representing French territory. When the state sought to give a public face to the navy through

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216 George Levitine analyzes what he terms this bit of “folklore” in his “Vernet Tied to a Mast in a Storm: The Evolution of an Episode of Art Historical Romantic Folklore,” *The Art Bulletin* 49, no. 2 (1967), 93-100.


219 “La souveraineté sur la mer territoriale s’étend jusqu’à la portée du canon qui serait tiré de la terre.” Ferdinand de Cornot Cussy, *Phases et causes célèbres du droit maritime des nations* (Leipzig, 1856), 1: 96, emphasis in original.

a museum, model ships were at the center of its collections. Model ports would further offer a way to localize the nation’s maritime interests.

The Marine on View

Paris’s Musée national de la Marine, where Vernet’s paintings now hang, developed as a public institution in the nineteenth century. It was ostensibly intended to make France’s maritime prowess visible in the landlocked capital, but the state struggled to find ways of picturing that prowess, which was necessarily diffuse and distant. The history of the museum reveals an administrative uncertainty as to its purpose. In the nineteenth century, however, relief maps known as plans-reliefs offered a way to use landscape representation to visualize maritime strength through the nation’s ports. While the British fixated wholly on their fleet as a floating line of defense, France had historically divided its attention between ships and shoreline fortifications. These fortifications were an important element of the nation’s security, a bastion against potential invasion and a visual register of strength. Models of port cities highlighted their elaborate coastal structures, augmenting the nation’s naval defenses. Once considered state secrets, the outdated models’ exhibition in the museum was part of a growing awareness that objects like maps could not only document but also actively construct the way a site was read.

Even in its earliest incarnation, the museum was caught—like Vernet’s paintings—between scientific rigor and artful arrangement. The Musée national de la Marine originated in 1748


222 At various moments in history the museum is referred to as the Musée Dauphin, the Musée de marine, Musée de la marine or Musée naval. Today it is known as the Musée national de la marine, its title linking it to the nation.
with a donation of model ships from naval engineer and renowned natural scientist Henri-Louis Duhamel du Monceau. The initial collections were intended for study, open only to officers of the navy, but that did not prevent them from being dramatically displayed. Architect Jacques-François Blondel described their presentation after they were installed in the Louvre in 1752 in his *French Architecture*. The models were set atop tables colored blue to look like the sea. The tables themselves were bordered by quays and set against painted background panels, suggesting a seaport. Elements of a naval construction site were incorporated, including scaffolding, galleys, masts, rafts, smaller ships, and “everything related to the boats’ construction.” Partially completed boats added to the sense of production and activity. The installation also had a deliberately international character, including a model of a yacht owned by the king of England and a Chinese-style junk. Such an arrangement already begins to suggest the uncertain mission of the Musée. It was, and is, both technical and spectacular, for study and for show.

Part of the difficulty in clearly establishing the museum’s purpose was that representation has been viewed as antithetical to action. The Musée was seen in the nineteenth century as a “peacetime leisure,” as though it were a way to spend time and resources when those resources were not otherwise engaged in warfare. More recently, François Bellec, former director of the Musée, remarked, “the major works of our national patrimony, witnesses to the majesty and the permanence of our maritime destiny, were always painted in moments when that destiny...”

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223 This section is indebted to Alain Niderlinder’s research, published in *Neptunia*, the journal of the Musée de la Marine. Additional research was conducted in the Archives National, AN F21 series. Alain Niderlinder, “Le Musée de la Marine et ses Collections.” *Neptunia* 193 (March 1994), 45-49; 194 (June 1994), 49-57; 195 (September 1994), 41-50; 197 (December 1994), 33-40.


225 Blondel in Niderlinder, “Le Musée de la Marine,” 47.

wavered.” While Bellec’s claims counter Pierre Miquel’s assertion that France’s destiny was continental, both presented marine representation as a passive gesture that was counter to, rather than concomitant with, marine activity. I suggest that we instead consider representation as another kind of activity, and one just as crucial. France’s navy had a long history of entanglement with aesthetics. In the seventeenth century, Louis XIV’s favorite sculptor, Pierre Puget, was commissioned to carve elaborate figureheads for the royal ships (Figure 6). When battles were fought at close range, these elegant objects glorified France in the face of her enemies. As combat was increasingly fought at a distance, the nation’s naval glory had to be demonstrated elsewhere and in other ways, and the museum was one of them. The production and presentation of a visible image of maritime power contributed to both nationalistic aims and international posturing.

In the nineteenth-century Musée de la Marine, Vernet’s paintings replaced other powerful symbols, indicating the mounting importance of landscape to the state. In December 1789, as a consequence of the Revolution, the Ministry of the Marine was transferred from Versailles to Paris, and installed in the sumptuous building on the Place de la Concorde that it occupied until very recently. In 1801, the museum was transferred there as well. It filled three large rooms and a gallery, and presented both paintings and model ships, making both readily accessible for the first time. The Journal des débats celebrated the move, stating that those interested in the navy would be consoled after having been deprived for many years of these objects, which had

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227 “Les œuvres majeures de notre patrimoine national, témoignages de la majesté et de la pérennité de notre destin maritime ont toutes été peintes au moment où il vacillait.” Bellec, “L’art, témoin discret,” 132.
228 Bellec, “L’art, témoin discret,” 127.
229 The Ministry of the Marine is no longer its own independent entity; after WWII it was merged with the Ministry of War to form the Ministry of National Defense. The section focused on the marine remained in its historic location on Place de la Concorde until 2015, when it was transferred to the Hexagone Balard, a new construction uniting all of France’s defense forces. The “hexagon” both trumps the US pentagon and invokes France’s presumed “natural” form.
been secluded in the Louvre and very difficult to access. Vernet’s *Ports of France* formed part of the collections, and when they were installed they replaced the “rich tapestries of the Crown” that had previously adorned the space. The substitution suggests that a picture of a port could bespeak power as succinctly as the sumptuous products of a royal manufactory like the Gobelins. This is a condensed and concretized instance of a larger shift: in the nineteenth century, landscape imagery came to replace more literal symbols of power.

By 1803, the museum had closed without explanation, and the collections were again seeking a home. In the meantime, Vernet’s paintings and those of his successor in the *Ports of France* project, Jean-François Hue, were shown in the art museum in the Luxembourg Palace, indicating that at that time they were considered an example of “fine art” rather than as illustrations of France’s seaports. Vernet’s work in particular continually oscillated between marine representation and painting *tout court*, and the locations in which it was displayed shifted accordingly. The mandate that Vernet’s work be both accurate and pleasant points to an ambivalence in maritime representation, an ambivalence that persisted in the nineteenth century: was maritime painting art? Or was it an instrument of the state? As the shifting display of the *Ports of France*—moved back and forth between the fine arts galleries of the Louvre and Luxembourg museums and the more state-oriented Musée de la Marine—indicates, the question remained unresolved for much of the nineteenth century. Further, the museum itself shifted in purpose. After the 1848 Revolution the museum administration, previously divided between the ministries of the Marine and Fine Arts, was classified exclusively under the jurisdiction of Fine Arts. It would be returned to the Marine in 1919 and then in 1920 organized under their “historic service,” where it remains. These bureaucratic shifts correspond to the changing status of the

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230 *Journal des débats*, 4 August 1801, 4.
231 *Journal des débats*, 4 August 1801, 4.
institution, and also indicate its uncertain place in French cultural heritage. The museum today continues to negotiate with the Louvre over the loan of paintings. Those deemed to be of sufficiently high artistic quality are kept at the Louvre; those understood as illustrative of naval history are lent to the Marine. In 1953, thirteen of Vernet’s paintings were transferred back to the Musée de la Marine; two remain in the Louvre.²³²

The political instability of the nineteenth century meant that the museum’s position, as an institution tied to the state, was never solid. In 1818, its location remained unsettled, and comte Molé, acting Minister of the Marine, lamented, “The navy alone [amongst the armed forces] remains absolutely unknown to inhabitants of the capital.”²³³ He requested a room at the Louvre. The first plans for a dedicated space in the Louvre appeared in the architect Pierre Fontaine’s journal in February of 1827, and the museum was formally decreed by Charles X on December 27, 1827.²³⁴ It was designed as an extension of the Louvre and referred to as the Musée Dauphin, tying the navy, and naval representation, to the crown. There are extensive plans for proposed ceiling decorations in the National Archives.²³⁵ They were to be primarily focused on representations of the monarchy: Louis XVI, Louis XVIII and Charles X, painted by Horace Vernet, a certain Pinchon and Merry-Joseph Blondel. Opulent vitrines were prepared by Jacob-Desmalter fils, adorned with bronzes by Delafontaine and Richard & Quesnel. The museum was provisionally installed in January of 1830, but in July revolution would close it again. When it was eventually finished, the circumstances were far less prestigious: no longer associated with

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²³² The Entrance to the Point of Marseille (1754) and the Second View of Toulon, Seen from Mont Faron (1755) are in the Louvre; the rest at the Musée de la Marine. It is not clear how or why this arrangement was reached.
²³⁴ Niderlinder, “Musée de la Marine,” 54.
²³⁵ AN 20144780; I do not think these were ever completed.
the Dauphin, the museum was allotted fewer funds and less space. It nevertheless managed to attract a public, and by 1832 the director, Pierre Zédé, requested an expansion:

The Musée de Marine finds itself narrowly confined by the spaces allocated to it in the Louvre, and will need new rooms to properly arrange the curious and interesting collections that are currently shut away... The Musée de Marine is also important for having, since the start, excited public curiosity and attracted the attention of foreigners, above all the English.236

The international aspect of the museum, and the director’s allusion to rivalry with the English, indicate it was understood as tied to a sense of national identity. This association was reaffirmed by a review of the museum in *L’Artiste* in 1836, which referred to its “national merit.”237 Model ships and ports, along with paintings of battles, shipwrecks and harbors, participated in making national identity—particularly in this moment, when France’s maritime interests were expanding and its destiny had not yet been definitively inscribed as continental. Desperate to improve the site in order to impress visiting dignitaries, Zédé eventually committed fraud and was removed from his post in 1836.238

Zédé was perhaps right to complain, as in 1836 the museum still had empty galleries and lacked a proper entrance. A small painted sign dating to 1827 is extant, but it was evidently a provisional gesture (Figure 7). The writer in *L’Artiste* objected, “Why doesn’t a sculpted ship’s figurehead on the pediment of the entry door indicate its distinguished destination? Why don’t emblems prepare the spirit for the emotions it will feel? At the mosque the crescent moon, at the

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236 “Le musée de Marine se trouvant fort à l’étroit dans les localités qui lui ont été accordées jusqu’à ce jour dans le Louvre, aurait besoin de nouvelles salles pour disposer convenablement les collections aussi curieuses qu’intéressantes qu’il renferme et doit contenir... Le musée de Marine est assez important pour avoir depuis sa formation vivement excité la curiosité publique et déjà fixé l’attention des étrangers, surtout des Anglais.” Letter from P. Zédé to the Comte de Forbin, 13 February 1830, AL.EM1. Cited in Niderlinder, “Musée de la Marine,” *Neptunia* 194 (June 1994), 57.


238 Niderlinder, “Musée de la Marine,” *Neptunia* 195 (September 1994), 42.
church the cross, at the museum the frontispiece. Monuments are languages: speak clearly."

The lack of a visual announcement of the museum was related to a larger visibility problem: Eugène Pacini, writing in 1844, called it “the invisible naval museum of Paris.” In 1842, the museum was moved to the second floor of the Louvre, where it was partially open to the public daily from ten in the morning until four in the afternoon, Mondays excepted. The physical museum remained installed in the Louvre until 1938, when it moved to the Palais de Chaillot, constructed for the 1937 International Exhibition. As the Minister of the Marine continued to emphasize the navy’s visibility to the public, marine museums were established in other port cities: Brest (1826), Port-Louis (?), Lorient (1839), Rochefort (1822), Cherbourg (1836), and Toulon (1814).

The museum of the nineteenth century combined du Monceau’s original donation of model ships and Vernet’s paintings with new model ships, relief maps, paintings, engravings, and the ethnographic objects acquired by the navy in the course of its voyages. Paintings are hardly mentioned in descriptions of the museum and appear secondary to its overall arrangement. An illustration from Adolphe Joanne’s 1863 Paris Illustre does indicate that some paintings were included in the collections (Figure 8). They appear to be port representations, though they cannot be Vernet’s, which we know to have been installed in 1839 in the paintings galleries of the Louvre. Ethnographic objects formed a significant part of the museum’s holdings; according to an 1832 inventory, one-third of the objects in the museum related to the navy, while the

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remaining two-thirds comprised the ethnographic collections. The vitrines in which the objects were held were those made by Jacob-Desmalter in 1827. They were carved from African mahogany and amaranth wood from Guyane, the materials themselves speaking to the mobility and prowess of the navy. A second plate from Joanne’s Paris Illustré, showing the ethnographic section of the museum, indicates the mélange of objects presented, including tribal statues and artfully arranged spears, suggesting a cabinet of curiosities rather than the more organized presentations we have come to associate with the nineteenth-century museum (Figure 9). The naval collections had neither a chronological or a thematic arrangement, but were rather shown based on the size of the objects and the space available.

The biggest aspect of the museum, physically, were the relief maps. Due to their sheer size—that of Cherbourg measures 100 meters squared (Figure 10)—the relief maps took up a large amount of the available space in the galleries. They highlighted the French state’s historic investment in fortification, making visible the nation’s defenses. Though not exclusively dedicated to ports, ports were frequently fortified, and thus often modeled, sites. Their scale was standardized at 1:600, meaning the maquettes can be quite detailed. They show architecture, urban spaces, and surrounding terrain. In some instances the environs are much more expansive than the site itself—up to twenty times larger, in the most extreme cases—and landscape is an integral part of the relief map. The “relief” aspect of the objects can be especially pronounced: Villefranche-de-Conflent, a town in the Pyrenees, required almost two meters of height to adequately represent its position in the mountains (Figure 11). Initially intended as strategic tools of control, the relief maps far outlived their usefulness and served, in the nineteenth century, primarily as landscape representations.

Niderlinder, “Musée de la Marine,” 57.
The production of relief maps dates to the late seventeenth century, and they are commonly cited as the initiative of Louis XIV’s Minister of War, marquis de Louvois. Both French and foreign locations were included. Fifty models were built during Louis XIV’s reign. More were produced under Louis XV and later Napoleon. In 1706 they were installed in the Grande Galerie of the Louvre, considered a state secret and protected by military guards. They were of such importance that in 1737, when academicians sought to revive the Salon after a period of interruption and exhibit their paintings in the Grande Galerie, they were deferred to the Salon Carré as the relief maps took precedence. Those early models held strategic importance, but by the nineteenth century other mapping technologies had replaced them. Instead, the models were increasingly being used to record significant moments of military battle rather than to plan future interventions. The model of Toulon was built after the victorious siege of that city by Republican forces in 1794, as celebration rather than strategy. The Revolutionaries adopted the ancien régime technique to commemorate their defeat of a royalist rebellion, further indicating that the Revolution was not a complete break in representational strategies. Napoleon encouraged the commemorative status of the relief maps, seeing them as an important element of propaganda and nationalist prestige. After naval victories in Brest and Cherbourg, he ordered models of each port as souvenirs, as though the topography of the site could itself bespeak triumph, just as much as a history painting. Eighteen relief maps were constructed in the nineteenth century, long after their strategic value had waned. Existing models were also updated as port infrastructure expanded. Costly and labor intensive, the relief maps represent a significant investment by the state. They symbolically evoked the state’s dominance over its

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244 Brisac, *Le Musée des plans-reliefs*, 11.
ports, emphasizing the importance of specific places in generating an idea of the marine. Yet they seem not to have the intended effect, and were never marveled over as Vernet’s ports had been.

Despite the emphasis on the accurate rendering of each site, the relief maps were constructed out of a limited number of materials, and the resulting products feel generic. They are composed of wooden tables, sculpted to indicate the contours of the landscape, then coated with sand and silk for texture. Buildings are made of wood or paper mâché. Trees are wire and silk. Architectural elements are painted a warm taupe with black rectangular windows. Soil is brown, water is blue, countryside is green. There are apparently several identifiable tree species, but their primary effect is to create a swath of textured vegetation. Tending toward abstraction, and lacking the picturesque quality Vernet brought to his series, the relief maps were never popular. A writer in *L’Artiste* in 1836 found them “extremely ridiculous.” For the journal’s critic, the selection of ports displayed felt arbitrary and the lack of a complete set made the existing models generally useless. While the model ships could be used as reference tools for artists, the relief maps were too crude to serve such a purpose, and the critic saw them as “necessarily incomplete.” He further wrote, “this collection will never be more than a schoolboy’s toy, a good woman’s entertainment; we might as well have model sailors made of gingerbread.” “Ridiculous,” without strategic import, and no longer considered instruments of power and control, I suggest their role in the nineteenth century was instead to incorporate place into the image of the navy. The counterpart to the ethnographic objects, which projected the navy out into the world, the relief maps brought it home, to Brest, Cherbourg, Toulon, and elsewhere.

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246 “nécessairement incomplète, cette collection ne sera jamais qu’un jouet d’écolier, un amusement de bonne femme ; autant vaudrait avoir aussi des modèles de marins en pain d’épice.” Gozlan, “Musée de la Marine,” 204.
locating the navy in and of France itself. Giving a sense of locality to an entity designed for the
distant seas, the representation of ports could ground and cohere a maritime identity for the
nation, before its coasts would be fully embraced as a site of tourism and leisure.247

Views of the Marine

The state formally institutionalized the production of maritime imagery in 1817, with the
creation of an official posting for a painter within the navy. While Joseph Vernet was at times
referred to as a naval painter by his contemporaries, there was no state sanctioned position prior
to the nineteenth century. Originally titled Painter of the Navy of the Duke d’Angoulême, the
post evolved into the Official Painter of the Navy in 1830 and remains in place today.248 The
naval painter was distinct from those artists recruited by the army to create maps or record
strategic positions; instead, the institution of a Painter of the Navy can be understood as a
strategy of using art to propagate an image of the French marine to a wider public. 1817 was
also, and not incidentally, the year France was divided into administrative maritime districts
(arrondissements), each with its own distinctive pavilion or maritime flag, as an attempt to give
order to the sea.249 The spread of administrative bureaucracy throughout the state and the
production of visual imagery of the nation went hand in hand. The official painters provided
detailed renderings of ships, retrospective representations of historic battles and shipwrecks, and
maritime landscapes.

247 On the changing concept of the seaside in popular consciousness, see Alain Corbin, The Lure of the
Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World, 1750-1840 (Berkeley: University of California
Press, 1994).
248 Today there are around three dozen Peintres officiels; they have the right to board ships, wear a
uniform, and follow their signature with an anchor.
249 “Ordonnance du Roi, Règlement sur les pavillons des navires du commerce,” 29 décembre 1817 in
Collection complète des lois, décrets, ordonnances, règlements, avis du conseil-d’état, ed. J.B. Duvergier
(Paris, 1837), 21: 239.
An open competition to determine the first official painter was held in 1817, and the post was awarded to Louis Garneray, a former sailor and the son of an artist who had studied with Jacques Louis David. Garneray himself was untrained, and had only begun painting while imprisoned on a pontoon in England for eight years during the Napoleonic wars. There he met Louis-François Lejeune, a student of Valenciennes' responsible for introducing lithography to France, who encouraged his artistic pursuits. Garneray was and remains better known for his experiences as a sailor; he published the more dramatic episodes from his time at sea in a series of memoirs, including My Pontoons, in the 1850s. His portrait in the journal France Maritime reflects his self-identification as a seaman (Figure 12). Dressed in coveralls, arms crossed, he marked himself as distinct from more bourgeois-outfitted artists. Comparing his image with another Official Painter, Théodore Gudin (Figure 13), Garneray evokes a brawny and capable spirit, while Gudin appears affected and intellectual. This frank self-positioning echoed Garneray's stated desire to give an "accurate" rendering of the French coast, as though his images, like himself, lacked artifice. Yet Garneray's aesthetic choices served a clear political purpose. He was broke, as numerous letters asking for money attest, and eager to please his benefactors. He himself was a Bonapartist, reluctantly adapting to the emperor's defeat and the more conservative naval policy of the restoration monarchy.

251 Louis Garneray, Mes Pontons (Paris, 1851).
252 For example, Louis Garneray, "Letter to the Duc de Montmorency" (8 October 1842), Getty Research Institute, 850844.
One of the first and most significant projects Garneray tasked himself with was updating Vernet’s *Ports*. He claimed that Vernet’s series was not only incomplete but also out of date, and he began his version, entitled *Views of the Coasts of France*, in 1820. Referring to “coasts” rather than ports, Garneray had a more expansive purview and covered significantly more ground than Vernet. Supported by the state, with privileged access to ships and ports, he set sail across France, recording his impressions in sketchbooks and in small paintings. He covered a range of ports, oceanic and fluvial, large and small, Atlantic and Mediterranean. He produced a series of 24 paintings as studies and 64 engraved views. Garneray engraved the images himself and they were distributed in 16 installments of four views apiece between 1823 and 1832. Subscribers could collect only their region, places they had visited, or the entire set. The images could later be bound in volumes. Garneray intended his images to reach a wide public. A reviewer of the volume agreed: sailors would appreciate the ships, locals would enjoy seeing their region depicted, and women and children could practice drawing by copying them.

Comparing the *Views of the Coasts of France* to Vernet’s work, as Garneray intended, reveals the changed position of the nineteenth-century navy. Garneray was working in a different political climate than Vernet, and his views are, without question, less grand. While France continued to recover from the Napoleonic Wars, in the 1820s the French fell definitively behind the British Royal Navy in terms of fleet size and number of sailors. Following Napoleon’s

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254 There is no evidence that the state requested Garneray undertake this project, but he certainly received financial and tactical assistance from the administration.
255 It is not clear how many such volumes were produced, but the BNF, the INHA and the British Library each possess a copy, indicating they were fairly prevalent.
257 On the rise of the British Royal Navy during the Napoleonic Wars, see James Davey, *In Nelson’s Wake: The Navy and the Napoleonic Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); Britain’s blockade of Scandinavia impeded French access to timber and tar, further contributing to the diminution of its navy. See Rear Admiral Raja Menon, *Maritime Strategy and Continental Wars* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 56; for French attempts to outpace the British through technological innovation, to compensate for
defeat, the French navy shrunk to half as many ships as the British. Vernet’s paintings were done at the bequest of the king, to glorify his sovereignty, and they are filled with bustling activity and overflowing arsenals. Garneray showed instead quiet coasts, uneventful towns, and undisturbed vistas. While Vernet’s images were intended as prestigious documents of France’s maritime power, in both military and merchant marines, Garneray’s depictions offered a form of patrol. His is a vision of a nation that is more tentative in its reach, more circumspect in its projection, and more peaceable in its politics.

The View’s banality is not incidental but integral to their function. In Hendaye, for example, the first port in the Views, Garneray presented a bright, calm day, perhaps late morning (Figure 14). Two ships sail along flat seas, a dozen more linger at the docks. The view unfolds from a vista, high above the port, where the artist has included a small self-portrait, sketching the very scene represented. A shepherd behind him gestures toward the water, gently leading the gaze outward, to the open sea. The rooftops of the town are articulated; a church steeple rises up across the bay. To the left a journeyman hands a letter to an officer. Not much happens in this scene, nor is there any indication that the site is of particular importance or interest. The tone of the image is decidedly unremarkable, and it seems designed to convey an impression of the everyday rather than the extraordinary. Hendaye is characteristic of the majority of the views; rarely do they show anything that can be described as eventful.

The views are accompanied by text written by Garneray’s friend and academician, Étienne Jouy, who had traveled alongside Garneray on his voyage. Jouy’s narrative reads like a travelogue, and invites the reader to imaginatively sail along the coast with them. His tone is

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casual and familiar as he writes, “It’s a Sunday, late in the day, when we debark at Royan.”259 Or “The shortest and most agreeable route for the traveler who, leaving Quilleboeuf, is searching new aspects and new pleasures, is to navigate the Seine.”260 Jouy remarked in his text upon industry, population count, history, and notable monuments, elaborating on Garneray’s image. He also took care to indicate changes brought about by the Revolution, including both signs of destruction and newly built infrastructure.

Published by Panckoucke—noted even in the title page to the Views as the publisher of the Description de l’Egypte, the encyclopedic account of Egyptian culture as seen by the French, first published in 1809—Garneray’s project was associated from the outset with pretensions to scientific accuracy (Figure 15). He went to great lengths to record in detail the regional specificity of each port, including inhabitants, customs, industry and trade, types of boats, style of architecture, landscape and natural features. One reviewer tellingly claimed that Garneray had “collected everything worthy of attention” on his trip along the coast, a phrasing that indicates a possessiveness redolent of encyclopedic projects.261 The Views were celebrated in a fashion magazine for Garneray’s representation of local costume; the reviewer claimed, “site, naval vessels, costume, all is true in his compositions, and done in such a way as to satisfy both the sailor and the man of the world.”262

The veracity of Garneray’s representation was a point continually remarked upon by both supporters and critics. His images were noted as being “faithful portraits” rendered on site.263 The engravings combine a lush, wash-like technique with precise linear elements. The rigging of a ship’s sails, for example, is crisp and taut, while the boat’s reflection in the water is soft and fluid.

261 “France,” Galigani’s Messenger (7 November 1821), n.p. [my emphasis].
262 “Vues des côtes de France…,” Costumes Parisiens 23 (1825), 363.
They are both detailed records and atmospheric scenes. Beyond having seen each port with his own eyes, it was in engraving the works himself that Garneray seemed to offer the greatest guarantee of their accuracy. He thereby managed to preserve, according to one author, "a rare quality of exactitude and sentiment which is always lost when the original is submitted to the burin of the engraver." Veracity, or rather the impression thereof, is frequently taken to be a sign of a lack of imagination, perspective or politic and, for these reasons, Garneray’s views have been dismissed by art historians as documentary. Garneray and Jouy themselves proclaimed the views to be non-political. The preface to the volume affirms, "No political reflection will inflict its gravity or sadness on this project." Jouy had been imprisoned for three months in 1823 for his liberal tendencies, so the caution was warranted. Yet any image that engages with the specificity of place has the potential to be political.

In some cases the political import of Garneray’s Views is obvious: even the selection of what to include or not to include in the volume was subject to fluctuating geopolitical relations. Preparations were made, for instance, for the port of Anvers (or as it is known today, Antwerp) around 1830, when it appeared it would be reclaimed by the French, but the engraving was not included in the final series (Figure 17). Direct symbols of nationality also enter the picture: when the French tricolor flag was reinstated following the 1830 Revolution, it found its way into Garneray’s painting of Le Havre (one of the later ports in the series), allowing him to more definitively denote the site as French (Figure 18). He also deployed the tricolor frequently in late-edition, hand-colored versions of the engravings, replacing previously blank or solid colored flags. For example, an early hand-colored engraving of the port of Saint-Jean de Luz has a small

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264 France Maritime, 147.
265 Alain Corbin specifically dismissed Garneray’s views as “didactic art,” while citing “documentary” evidence from Jouy’s text. Corbin, The Lure of the Sea, 192.
267 Today it is classified with “foreign ports” at the BNF.
white flag in the center; in a later edition, Garneray has transformed that white flag into the tricolor (Figures 19 and 20).

Differences between Garneray’s painted studies and the published engravings can also be telling as to their political content: an American flag that fluttered high above the fort of Saint Nicolas in Marseille in Garneray’s painting, signaling the port’s internationalism, was lowered in the engraving, which was intended for wide distribution. His images of Toulon offers another example, as it required significant repositioning to accord with the unfavorable view of Napoleon taken by the Restoration monarchy. Napoleon had had his first decisive military triumph during the siege of Toulon, a well-known event. While Garneray’s preparatory painting borrowed Vernet’s focus on the port’s military resources (Figure 4), showing mounds of cannonballs in a well-stocked and active arsenal, in Garneray’s two engravings of the port the viewer is positioned instead at a distance (Figures 21 and 22). The second view even offers a small vignette with travelers resting on abandoned cannons; Garneray replaces purposeful activity with picturesque ruin. His shift away from Vernet’s more militaristic tone was also a shift away from the site’s association with Napoleon’s victory.

Even within the anecdotal vignettes that animate Garneray’s Views, reference is made to the state: customs officers figure in several ports, imposing an aura of control and regulation. Yet the majority of Garneray’s scenes convey an overwhelming dailiness, a lack of exceptional activity. Jouy himself had to admit in the text that when it comes to Royan, a small estuary port north of Bordeaux, “there is not a single remarkable monument.” Garneray’s Royan (Figure 23) is a scene of leisure, focused on picnics on the grass, the only ships pictured having docked for the day in the shallow tide; not much happens, but in some ways that is the point. These slow,

watchful renderings proffer the topographic as a mode of patrol. Garneray and Jouy’s detailed tour of France thus acted as a kind of “border control,” a visual policing of the nation’s limits.

The images’ role as a form of border control is tacitly acknowledged and reinforced in the order of their presentation: as mentioned above, the first image in the Views is of Hendaye, a small town in Southwest France. Its significance lies not in its status as a port but rather in its location on the border between France and Spain. In his description of the scene, Jouy alerts us to the fact that we, as spectators, stand “precisely on the extreme limit of French soil.” In constructing this image, Garneray placed himself, in order to place us, as viewers, on the border between France and Spain—and it is from this point that we enter into his oeuvre. We then move, via the text and engravings, north along the Atlantic, occasionally veering inland, before turning to the Mediterranean and circling back. The comprehensiveness of the ports pictured, including many lesser-known sites, also contributed to the sense that in Garneray’s Views he was participating in the construction of a national image.

The effect of a succession of 64 images that circle France in geographic order, beginning at its furthest edge, is to trace the contours of the nation, to declare what does and does not belong. The sheer quantity of images Garneray produced contributes to the Views’ effect. So many ports, so carefully rendered, can overwhelm the viewer. The surplus of detail makes it paradoxically difficult to focus on any one detail, and instead we leave with a sense of surveyance, of watchfulness. Garneray and Jouy’s pretension to a comprehensive yet neutral account is its most potent political statement. The attentiveness to detail inherent in the topographic renderings, combined with an emphasis on the larger national context implied by a series of views, allowed for a subtle politics of place that particularly suited the nineteenth-century state.

Looking again at Hendaye, a particularity in Garneray’s iconographic program is apparent: for a picture of a port, we see in fact very little of the port itself. We are located, as Jouy emphasized, on French soil—not in the French sea. Despite a vignette in the volume’s preface showing Garneray sketching from the hull of a small boat (Figure 24), in the majority of images the viewer is positioned on land. This territorial aspect is part of a compositional strategy that allowed Garneray to indicate simultaneously the Frenchness of each port while gesturing toward its necessary function as a site of exchange and openness. Like Vernet, Garneray was subject to the ambivalence of French strategy, split between land and sea. Yet Garneray reveals an even more circumspect position regarding the open waters. In contrast to the frontality of Vernet’s compositions, which offer a stage-like view (Figure 1 is a good example), Garneray often has the viewer facing the curved harbor, resulting in a composition divided between land and sea. In Honfleur, for example, the view is from atop a hill, astride a road leading down into the port (Figure 25). A detailed rendering of the town and the lush vegetation surrounding it fills the right half of the image. A sweeping coastline gives way to a calm sea dappled with distant ships on the left. Again with Etretat and Fecamp (Figures 26 and 27), the images are divided along the midline. Garneray cleverly constructed a balance between France and elsewhere, land and sea. Garneray’s project was indicative of a reconfigured marine painting in France, one less about triumphant splendor and more about quiet watchfulness.

In devising this divided structure, Garneray responded to both political demands and to the compositional challenges of port painting. The critic Desprat, writing in the Gazette des Beaux-Arts in 1853, found ports to be particularly difficult to represent. They required a fairly rigid perspective to avoid looking like a map or giving over too much of the composition to the sky:
How to paint ports? If you raise the point of view, you make a hydrographic engineering map; if you lower it, you have only a flat horizon, unhappy lines and an immense sky to fill. It is, in effect, the most ungrateful subject, the one that seems to leave the least freedom to the brush, the least space for the imagination. Ports, let us say it openly, are always absolutely the same, a calm or howling sea, several moored ships, a barque fighting against the tide, houses along the coast, such is the program for the painting, which it seems can be no more evaded than if it were an official program. 270

Desprat highlighted a real problem, and one Garneray did not entirely resolve. 271 Even in the eighteenth century, this difficulty was acknowledged; one author, responding to criticism of Vernet’s work, affirmed, "M. Vernet had views of ports to paint; these are truly sterile objects that have never made beautiful paintings." Garneray’s ports do have a remarkable sameness, a consistency that I argued was productive in his political moment but less so afterwards. The difficulties of painting ports are part of what makes them such a telling subject. Bound by compositional constraints and an imperative for accuracy, artists were less able to direct the narrative than they would be with a history painting. As a result, images like Garneray’s, despite being intended to glorify the state, could reveal its weakened position.

The trajectory of Garneray’s own career reflects the shifting winds of naval representation; by the 1850s and 60s, under the Second Empire, more triumphal images would again be called for and he would receive fewer and fewer commissions. Eventually he turned to decorative arts, as his encyclopedic style resonated with work Alexander Brongniart was

270 "Comment peindre des ports? Si on élève le point de vue, on fait une carte d’ingénieur hydrographe; si on l’abaisse, on n’a plus qu’un horizon plat, des lignes malheureuses et un ciel immense à remplir. C’est, en effet, le sujet le plus ingrat, celui qui semble laisser le moins de liberté au pinceau, le moins d’espace à l’imagination. Les ports, dirait-on volontiers, sont toujours absolument les mêmes, une mer calme ou houleuse, quelques vaisseaux amarrés, une barque luttant contre la marée, des maisons sur la rive, tel est le programme du tableau dont il semble qu’on ne puisse pas plus s’écarter que d’un programme officiel." M. Desprat, "Revue de l’Exposition," Gazette des Beaux-Arts (1853), 135.

271 It is interesting to note that Valenciennes specifically mentioned "les ports de mer les plus considérables" as one of the genres of landscapes that would benefit from the invention of the panorama. Valenciennes, Eléments de perspective, 343.

272 "M. Vernet avait des vues de port à peindre; ce n’eût été que des objets bien stériles et qui n’eussent jamais fait de beaux tableaux." Réponse à une lettre adressée à un partisan du bon gout, sur l’exposition des Tableaux faite dans le grand Salon du Louvre, le 28 aout 1755 (Paris, 1755), 11.
undertaking at Sèvres. In 1839, Brongniart, director of the state porcelain manufactory, commissioned Garneray to decorate a series of plates in a style in keeping with the Views. The resulting Fisheries Service presents characteristic regional fishery practices set against a backdrop of ports from France and abroad. Between 1839 and 1852, Garneray completed 96 plates and 12 compote pieces. One shows sea bass fishing in Toulon, and it is evident Garneray drew on his experience producing the Views, borrowing the form of the mountain and the outline of the harbor from his engraving, and perhaps even copying the same warship (Figure 28). The Fisheries Service exemplifies the spread and reach of topographic imagery designed to serve the nation, demonstrating that it held popular appeal, at least for a time.

The “border control” articulated in Garneray’s images became especially pertinent in depictions of Algeria, considered France’s “second Mediterranean coast” after its conquest in the 1830s. Garneray himself traveled to observe the battle of Algiers, though his style was already falling out of favor and he was not the artist selected for the official commission. France had first bombarded Algiers in the seventeenth century; it was a refuge for pirates. Images from the early modern period show the city as an impermeable fortress, emphasizing its defensive walls, ascending vertically to create a barrier to entry (Figure 29). In the nineteenth century, scenes of the Algerian coastline initially focused on the site of conflict, showing Algiers from a strategic distance (Figure 30). This view, facing the city from the distant sea, became, in demilitarized form, the standard representational trope and persisted well into the period of French rule.

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273 Vernet had featured tuna fishing in his scene of Bandol, and in adopting the theme for his porcelain service Garneray may have been paying further tribute to—or seeking to rival—the eighteenth-century master.

274 A recent exhibition of images of Algeria held in Cannes took the title Les peintres de l’autre rive (Cannes: Musée de la Castre, 2003).

275 Manoeuvre, Louis Garneray, 97.
While the conquest of Algeria evolved into an inland war, it began as a naval bombardment. It was sailors who planted the French flag in the soil, illustrated in a composition reminiscent of Delacroix’s *Liberty Leading the People* (Figure 31). In Gabriel Esquer’s celebrated 1930 iconography of Algeria, published on the centenary of the conquest, when the colony still formed part of France, thirteen images are dedicated to ships.²⁷⁶ Ships were integral to French Algeria, as they were what brought it into France’s possession and tied it to the mainland. When the French could not manage to maintain enough transport boats within the colony, foreign ships were required to fly the French flag, marking them as French territory. Yet as France’s hold became more secure, and the focus turned to attracting colonists, images soon passed to picturesque representation. The conventions Garneray developed to produce a quiet French coastline were replicated in paintings of Algiers. Adrien Champel’s (1806-?) *View of the Harbor of Algiers* (1842, Figure 32) adopts the curved harbor, the calm seas with a smattering of ships, and a lush landscape to present Algiers as a port akin to any other in France. Similarly, books of illustrated views, in the model of *voyages pittoresques*, almost invariably open with the approach from the sea, replicating the experience of the traveller arriving from the metropole.

Another Official Painter of the Navy, Antoine Leon Morel-Fatio (1810-1871), published a series of views in an album entitled *Algiers, Views Drawn After Nature* (circa 1840). The first image combines the frontal view of military strategy with the anecdotal vignette of the artist on a small ship, presumably a nod to Garneray’s *Views* (Figure 33). Morel-Fatio follows with a closer view of the harbor (Figure 34), emphasizing the now-breached defensive wall. In the lower center of the image, a prominent and seemingly out-of-place anchor may be a reference to the anchor that accompanies the official painter’s signature, marking Morel-Fatio’s— and France’s— presence in the scene.

When Napoleon III and the Empress Eugenie visited Algiers in 1860 the port was visually transformed into a site of celebratory arrival, captured in the journal *L’Illustration* (Figure 35). The city, its maze of buildings whitewashed by the hot sun, fills the background of the image; hoards of waving welcomers, both Algerians and settlers, line the harbor in the foreground, doffing their caps to the emperor, who is presumably aboard his *canot* (a small, highly ornate barge used to approach shore). A cluster of ships stationed along the harbor rival the density of the city itself. Algiers is rendered as a hybrid, located between the stable elements and the mobile ships. The emperor’s presence activated the site. No longer content with quiet patrol, Napoleon III made ports into sites of spectacle and commissioned more grandiose forms of representation to reflect his ambition.

**Picturing Maritime Empire**

Declaring the Second Empire in 1852, Napoleon III inaugurated a more expansionist maritime policy. Wary, however, of upsetting the British, who had dominated the seas for decades, the emperor publicly professed an investment in the freedom of the seas, even as he sought to extend France’s reach. As the political geographer Philip Steinberg has pointed out, the “freedom of the seas” is a myth, founded on the strength of the state. He writes, “Freedom requires policing and mobility requires fixity, and both of these activities require continual efforts to striate the ideally smooth ocean.” Images produced under the Second Empire enacted

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277 The emperor worked to create a union of powers who could collectively rival the British fleet, though he asserted, this union “could not present any danger to themselves or to the rest of Europe because obviously they would not unite to promote selfish French projects, only for the freedom of the seas from Britain’s overweening power.” As recorded in Otto von Bismarck’s memoirs, cited in Rolf Hobson, *Imperialism at Sea: Naval Strategic Thought, the Ideology of Sea Power, and the Tirpitz Plan, 1875-1914* (Boston: Brill, 2002), 60.

this alternation between, and interdependence of, elements of mobility and fixity. As the emperor himself put greater emphasis on mobility, however, images strained to maintain a visual balance between the two forces.

In the summer of 1858, Napoleon III and the Empress Eugénie set out on a tour of Brittany and Normandy by sea. The trip was heavily documented. They arrived in Brest on August 9th, and their arrival was painted by Auguste Mayer (1805-1890), a native of Brest and instructor of drawing at the naval academy there. The resulting image (circa 1858, Figure 36) is caught between France’s historic land-based strength and Napoleon III’s more mobile stance, capturing a transition in the emperor’s maritime policy. While the early part of his rule had been focused on domestic issues, in the late 1850s Napoleon III turned attention to overseas ventures. Mayer showed the emperor approaching the port on a canot first used by his uncle Napoleon I (now in the collection of the Musée de la Marine, Figure 37). The artist framed the view such that the emperor’s barge aligns with the fortress of Brest. First fortified by the Romans in the third century, Brest was historically a naval stronghold. The military engineer marquis de Vauban expanded the fortifications in the late seventeenth century. Though almost entirely destroyed in World War II, they had been memorialized in a relief map commissioned by Napoleon I in 1811 (Figure 38). Mayer paid tribute to this important structure, but also created a visual identification between the site and the presence of the emperor. The barge and the fort are similar in color, and their superposition results in a kind of slippage between the one and the other. The crown atop the barge echoes the crenellated towers of the fort; the flag on the fort ties into the three on the barge. The three tricolor on the barge are matched by the flag atop the fort.

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279 J-M Poulain Combion, *Récit du voyage de leur majesté l'empereur et l’impératrice en Normandie et Bretagne* (Paris: Amyot Éditeur, 1858); see also the illustrated magazine *l’Illustration* (August 1860) and numerous paintings and prints.

The viewer's attention flickers between an elision of *canot* and fort and a recognition of the *canot* as a separate entity. The image itself seems to hesitate between two visions of France: one based in coastal fortification and oriented towards the continent, and the other, incarnated in the emperor's presence, mobile and expansionist.

On the same voyage, Napoleon III commissioned three paintings from an Official Painter of the Navy, Théodore Gudin, the affected figure compared above to brawny Garneray. The emperor financed the project through the *Encouragement of the Fine Arts*, a fund used for projects like murals in government institutions and other large-scale paintings.²⁸¹ He seems, significantly, to have selected the themes himself, despite having otherwise shown little direct interest in the arts.²⁸² The first two to be painted, *The Arrival of the Queen of England to Cherbourg in 1858* (Figure 39) and *The French Fleet Traveling from Cherbourg to Brest in 1858* (Figure 43) were both completed in 1861 and garnered Gudin the enormous sum of 20,000 francs each.²⁸³ The third tableau, *Visit of Napoleon III to Genoa, 1859* (Figure 45), for which Gudin also received 20,000 francs, was finished in 1865. In his career, Gudin received over 90 commissions for paintings to adorn the history museum at Versailles, paid through the “civil list,” a budget intended for the glorification of the sovereign.²⁸⁴ These three, however, seem to be the only commissions that came directly from the emperor, and were unique in remaining in the


²⁸² The emperor’s utilitarian stance on art was summarized in an anecdote by Maxime du Camp: “[L’empereur] parcourt les salles au pas accéléré, sans dire un mot, sans faire une observation, passant devant les meilleures toiles avec une indifférence qu’il ne cherchait pas à dissimuler…. Il s’arrêta tout à coup devant un tableau qui représentait le Mont-Blanc. C’était pitoyable et ça donnait l’idée d’un groupe de pains de sucre de diverses dimensions. Longtemps il resta immobile, contemplant cette croûte, puis, se tournant vers Moriny… il lui dit, ‘Le peintre aurait dû indiquer les hauteurs comparatives.’” Maxime du Camp, *Souvenirs*, cited in Granger, *L’empereur et les arts*, 119.

²⁸³ AN O/5/1712 30 avril 1861, cited in McQueen, “Le legs de l’impératrice Eugénie,” 57.

²⁸⁴ The “civil list” is discussed in detail in Granger, *L’Empereur et les Arts*. 125
empress's personal possessions after his death. She later donated them to the Musée de la Marine. Nearly forgotten today, Gudin's reception was lukewarm even in his time; one member of the government urged his fellows to reject an 1851 proposal on the part of the Minister of the Interior to purchase several of Gudin's paintings, suggesting not only were they not considered worthy of appearing in France's museums, but that the nation already possessed 60 of his works and they had not proven to be very valuable. Gudin's selection for this large and costly project was perhaps driven more by the artist's willingness to acquiesce to the state's desires than his artistic prowess. Still, created just before the Franco-Prussian War definitively sealed the fate of the French navy, the paintings' critical failure speaks as much to a dissonance within Napoleon III's policy as to Gudin's talent. The images, taken together, manifest the limits of maritime imagery as propaganda, and of landscape to evoke empire.

Gudin's first painting is set in Cherbourg. The emperor's visit to the port in 1858 coincided with the completion of significant infrastructural work at that harbor, and he invited Queen Victoria of England to attend the inauguration. The port, located on the English Channel, had been an important site for meetings between the two nations since the seventeenth century, and earned the moniker “port aux princes” for the numerous royals who arrived there. Its position facing England also made it, according to the marquis de Vauban, “one of the most important keys to the State.” Beginning during Louis XVI's reign, attempts were made to create a sheltered harbor for boats. The engineering was complicated, and the site was subject to repeated attacks by the English. The work was not completed until the Second Empire, when

285 McQueen, *Empress Eugenie et les Arts*, 322.
286 M. Chanay, “Discussion du projet de loi tendant à ouvrir au ministre de l'intérieur, sur l'exercice de 1851, un crédit extraordinaire de 43,670 Fr. applicable à l'acquisition de tableaux de Gudin et de Géricault,” *Compte Rendu des Séances de l'Assemblée Nationale* 16 (Paris, 1851), 463.
Napoleon III made it a project of central importance. The achievement was declared a “victory over the sea,” the phrase itself linking infrastructure at home to triumph in a wider geopolitical arena. The emperor described his accomplishment, aligning himself with earlier sovereigns: “the giant work begun by Louis XIV, continued by Louis XVI in peacetime with a view to war, pursued by Napoleon I in wartime with a view to war, and realized under the current reign in peacetime with a view to peace.” Bringing Queen Victoria to the inauguration was ostensibly a gesture of openness and goodwill intended to ensure the “peaceful” character he sought. In one possibly apocryphal story, the gesture backfired, and she rushed home angered and envious of the work he had accomplished. The Queen’s visit was captured by a number of painters, both French and British, as the Queen seems to have brought her own artists. Napoleon III also had the port’s relief map updated to reflect the changes (Figure 10).

Gudin’s *The Arrival of the Queen of England to Cherbourg in 1858* (1861, Figure 38) features the moment of the Queen’s arrival, but the near-illegibility of the composition confuses the emperor’s message. The canvas is large, over nine by twelve feet, making it the scale of a history painting, though without the compositional structure and narrative elements of that more established genre. It is not necessarily a landscape, either—in fact, with the exception of two rounded fortifications visible in the midground, we see very little of the site. At first glance, in fact, it appears to be a battle scene. Smoke clouds a line of French and British ships in the distance; bursts of orange cannon fire are reflected in the waves. Only the details reveal this to be

292 Several representations of the visit are in London’s National Maritime Museum, including paintings by Arthur Wellington Fowles and Jules Achilles Noel.
a picture of welcome rather than war. The cannon fire is meant to be celebratory. In the foreground, small ships are filled with waving figures, presumably locals, eager for a glimpse of the monarchs.

In commissioning these paintings, Napoleon III may have been aligning himself with Louis XV and Vernet’s *Ports*, seeking to produce a popular image of the nation’s naval strengths in peacetime. The presence of the English monarch evokes another point of potential comparison: Joseph Mallord William Turner’s depictions of ports, particularly the French ports of Dieppe and Brest, with Gudin’s cannon fire as a prosaic counter to Turner’s fiery sunset waters. The painting is certainly concerned with rivalry with the English: the nations are indicated by their ships, and for every vessel flying a Union Jack there is one with a tricolor alongside. While France realistically sought to achieve a 2:3 ratio of French-allied to British ships in general, Gudin’s image suggests parity between the two powers. To visually accommodate so many ships, Gudin pushed the action into the midground of the painting, and relied on a diagonal composition, ship after ship receding into the distance. As a result, much of the painting is empty, a dramatic sky reflected on the relatively still waters.

Such an important event required multiple representations, and another Official Painter of the Navy, Antoine Leon Morel-Fatio, produced a closer view—though far from resolving the tension between spectacle and topography, he exacerbated it. His *The Queen Victoria at Cherbourg, August 6, 1858* (1859, Figure 39) is a crowded, chaotic painting. Like Gudin, Morel-Fatio filled the canvas with festive smoke, waving flags, and eager spectators in rowboats. He depicted the moment when the Queen and Prince Albert, aboard a small barge, approached the large French ship, the *Bretagne*, where they were received. What he did not show, again like Gudin, is the port, or indeed any details of the site itself. The trip to Cherbourg was meant to...

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293 Coutau-Bégarie, “French Naval Strategy.”
celebrate infrastructure as a “victory over the sea.” In Gudin and Morel-Fatio’s images, however, that infrastructure is eclipsed by the festivities of the Queen’s arrival. The images belie the emperor’s claims to peace, distracting from the presumed focus of the event, the harbor. Both pull away from the coast, focusing on more mobile forms of power.

Photographs of the Queen’s visit show a less spectacular scene, but they still emphasize mobile power over the topography of the port. Edouard Baldus was the official photographer for the event, part of Napoleon III’s ongoing support for the medium. He captured the array of ships with a view taken from shore, the foreground filled with rocky coast, the midground a line of ships, French and British intermingled and indistinguishable one from the other (Figure 41). Gustave Le Gray, newly famous at that time for his seascapes, was also on site. His The French Fleet at Cherbourg, a print of which was in the Queen’s own collection, was also taken from land, looking out to the open sea (Figure 42). Six large French ships are anchored in the harbor; a number of smaller transport boats move between them. The turn away from topographical accuracy is evident in the original mislabeling of a copy of Le Gray’s print: on the verso of the example held today at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, “Brest” (another site where Le Gray photographed the fleet) is crossed out, and “Cherbourg” written in instead. This scene is calmer, lacking in the festivities and spectacle that animated the paintings. Yet it is still about mobile power: those ships are naval vessels, rendered all the more powerfully in Le Gray’s sparer scene. Gudin further emphasized that mobile power in the second canvas produced for the emperor, The French Fleet Traveling from Cherbourg to Brest in 1858 (1861, Figure 43). This is

also a large canvas, nine by twelve feet, and it features seven ships traveling from Cherbourg to Brest, a port that would become the focus of the emperor’s attention and receive infrastructural upgrades in the 1860s. The leading ship, the *Bretagne*, flies the imperial flag, indicating the emperor and the empress are on board. The ships are hybrids, between sail and steam. They are themselves indicative of a transitional moment within France’s naval strategy, as steamships became increasingly prevalent. They are also, unusually, presented frontally. Showing ships from the side was generally preferred, as it revealed more of their detail. Arranging them frontally, in charge, adds motion and directionality to the image. Smaller boats dapple the scene, also waving the French flag. It is possible that this painting’s composition derived from an image by Ludolf Backhuysen, which Gudin could have seen at the Louvre (Figure 44).²⁹⁷ As the vogue for seventeenth-century Dutch pictures exploded amongst nineteenth-century collectors, so did their influence on painters.²⁹⁸ The journal *La France Maritime* noted this, claiming “maritime painting was not really cultivated in France before the middle of the last [eighteenth] century, with the inspiration of the Dutch school that, at its height, brought the genre to its perfection.”²⁹⁹ An effort was being made to renew maritime commerce under the Second Empire, and the Dutch offered a shining example.

²⁹⁹ “La peinture maritime ne fut guère cultivée en France avant le milieu du siècle dernier, sur les inspirations de l’école hollandaise, qui, au temps de son plus grand éclat, avait porté ce genre à sa perfection.” “Peintres de Marine: Louis Garneray,” *France Maritime* 3 (1855), 146.
The steamships in *The French Fleet* were further part of Napoleon III’s modernization of the French Navy in his project of empire in Indochina and elsewhere.\(^{300}\) Despite evoking Cherbourg and Brest in the title, this image is principally concerned with making a claim to the open sea. Political theorist Carl Schmitt observed, in his study of the construction of territory at sea, “on the waves there is nothing but waves.”\(^{301}\) Schmitt highlighted the challenge the sea posed to state territorial order, the securing of which was increasingly important in the nineteenth century. Yet contemporary political geographer Philip Steinberg offers a corrective to Schmitt’s early twentieth century reading, emphasizing the ways in which places could be constituted at sea: “The ocean is not a world of stable places that are impacted by moving forces. Rather, in the ocean, moving matter *constitutes* places, and these places are specifically mobile.”\(^{302}\) Thought of in this way, the fleet in *The French Fleet* constitutes French territory; this is an image attempting to *make* place, and to visually establish France as a mobile and global power.

In Gudin’s third painting, we see France’s international presence as Napoleon III heroically arrives in Genoa (Figure 45). He brought his troops to the aid of the Northern Italians, declaring war with Austria as part of the Second Italian War of Independence (also known as the Franco-Austrian War, 1859). Upon his arrival in Genoa, a contemporary recorded the splendor:

> all the city was on the alert to receive with every demonstration of love and gratitude, the powerful emperor who was hastening to rescue them from servitude to the Austrian… the harbor of Genoa was filled with vessels and boats of every variety… all crowded with spectators, and gaily decorated… The applause was now incessant, and enthusiastic in the highest degree. The barge was gorgeously decorated with flowers, the tricolor—white, red, and blue. Even the path of the

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\(^{300}\) In 1860, Napoleon III eliminated the Minister of Colonies and put the Marine in charge of colonies, indicating that he saw colonialism as primarily a naval endeavor. Second Empire colonial endeavors, and their impact on culture, are discussed in Sandrine Lemaire, Pascal Blanchard and Nicolas Bancel, “Milestones in Colonial Culture under the Second Empire,” in *Colonial Culture in France Since the Revolution*, eds. Pascal Blanchard et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 75-89.


\(^{302}\) Steinberg, “Free Sea,” 272.
barge, as it was rowed between the lines of boats, seemed to be but one bed of flowers.\(^{303}\)

Gudin captured this effusive welcome in paint. To encompass the crowds on either side of the canal, without overwhelming the emperor himself, Gudin used a wider format than he had in the previous images. Nearly six feet tall and over fifteen feet long, the canvas is overflowing with grateful Genoans, tossing flowers at the emperor and holding their babes aloft. These figures line the edges of the scene; the center offers an expanse of relative calm, where the emperor stoically sits in his canot. As with Mayer’s scene of Brest, there is a visual link between the flagpole on the canot and the lighthouse of Genoa in the distance: though here what is being claimed is not French but foreign territory. Genoa had been a French protectorate in Napoleon I’s Empire; beyond liberating the Genoans, Napoleon III may have sought to reclaim the territory. While flags from other nations appear on the ships at harbor, the tricolor is at the center of the scene. In a fantastical addition to his painting, Gudin included three mermen emerging in the foreground with a second French flag and the imperial crown—as if France were waiting there all along, latent beneath Italy (Figure 46). Across the three paintings, Gudin used the tricolor with abandon. Without reference to France’s topography, the artist relied on the flag as a more solid signifier of the nation. Seemingly unable to make the Italian site itself read as French, Gudin resorted to fantasy. The dark-skinned mermen may further refer to Africa, and the emperor’s colonial interests there. Gudin’s paintings worked to create a fluid vision of Empire, one that would allow the navy to transcend any one site, and in so doing blurred distinctions between places.

The Genoa painting, in its overly effusive presence, a presence that spilled over the edges of the earlier paintings’ format, was a product of the difficulty in making landscape speak for the

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state, especially a state set on expanding beyond its bounds. Rather than securing France’s ports in tranquility, as Garneray had, Gudin’s images destabilized them. The festivities at Cherbourg, evidence of the emperor’s ambition, overwrote the topography of the harbor. And in transforming the Italian port into a French spectacle, Gudin’s final image betrayed the mutability of any port. No longer a site on which to picture the nation, ports were a place from which it might be overtaken. That could mean the expansion of Napoleon III’s empire but, as the Franco-Prussian war revealed, invasion could go the other way. If Vernet’s series reassured Louis XV, Gudin’s paintings evidenced the emperor’s wavering hold on his empire. They manifest both the said and the unsaid of the emperor’s policies: the desire for peace and the freedom of seas, but also the ambition for greater empire that would soon lead France to disaster in Mexico.

Gudin’s triptych—the expensive, spectacular culmination of the nineteenth-century state’s maritime commissions—was not a critical success. Seeing The Arrival of Queen Victoria at Cherbourg at the Universal Exhibition of 1867, Théodore Duret complained about the artifice of the image, referring to ships of “blown glass” and the sea of “crystal.” He saw the painting, clouded with cannon fire, as evidence of the “failure and absolute powerlessness of any work of art commissioned by the state.” Crystal and steam, smoke and mirrors, Napoleon III’s plans would soon come to naught. The emperor’s colonial ambitions were stalled with the failed Mexican Expedition in 1866; his efforts to create a naval power were further diminished after the war with Prussia in 1871. As one naval historian wrote, “The French navy’s age-old dream of

304 "voyez encore au Champ-de-Mars l'Arrivée de la reine d'Angleterre à Cherbourg, une marine de Gudin dont les navires sont en verre soufflé et la mer en cristal, et vous conviendrez alors que l’avortement et l’impuissance absolue qui s’affirment dans toutes les œuvres commandées par l’Etat suggérant, comme dernière réflexion sur l’art officiel, au critique, la remarque qu’on a fort malheureusement pour eux détournée vers cette voie des peintres qui eussent trouvé ailleurs un bien meilleur emploi de leur temps et de leurs facultés, et, au contribuable, le regret que l’argent du budget destiné à payer de pareilles œuvres et à en encourager la production, soit si mal dépensé et si inutilement jeté par les fenêtres.” Théodore Duret, Les peintres français en 1867 (Paris, 1867), 151.
achieving parity with the British in capital ships... died along with the Second Empire."  

In 1872, after crushing defeat, the Minister of the Marine conceded that the Navy must “sacrifice itself on the altar of the nation,” leading to severe budget cuts.  

Marine painting of the kind discussed in this chapter went with it. By the end of the Second Empire, the genre was already fading; Théophile Gautier referred to it as “this nearly lost art.” Writing in 1861, the critic Jules Castagnary was more dramatic, “marine painting is dying, marine painting is dead.” Instead, the 1870s gave way to another form of maritime representation: Impressionist scenes of the sea.

Writing about the relationship of the sea to the origins of Impressionism, the art historians Joseph Rishel and Douglas Druick have claimed, “Marine painting—transient and fluid by its very nature—is a particularly potent, perhaps the most liberating, genre.” Such an attitude ignores a tradition of state-sponsored maritime representation that was anything but transient and fluid; the history of the genre in France might be better understood as a quest for fixity. Vernet’s ports, the relief maps, and Garneray’s coasts were visual efforts to ground and control the uncertainty of the open water at the site where it meets the state, using landscape to generate a secure vision of the nation’s maritime presence. Even Gudin’s images strove to establish a sense of fixity, making reference to specific locales despite the emperor’s clear desire for mobile power. The French coastline was only liberated as a subject of artistic representation after the state had abandoned it.

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305 Sondhaus, Navies in Modern World History, 57.
PART II: TERRAIN
If we continue on the path we have opened, Fontainebleau will be no more, in some time, than a vulgar wood market, and no one in France is yet accustomed to considering, in this view, the treasures of grandeur and magnificence the crown possesses.

A.S., *L'Artiste*, 1839

The area of France's forest has doubled since 1850 and today covers approximately 15 million hectares, so a quarter of our territory. The French forest is the number one leafy forest in Europe. It is essentially private (74%), with 3.8 million owners, of which 200,000 own more than 10 hectares (representing 68% of the terrain)… All public forests and private forests greater than 10 to 25 hectares (depending on the region) must present a management plan to the state. The greatest part of the French forest is intended to produce quality wood.

Stéphane Le Foll, Minister of Agriculture, Agrifood and Forestry, 2016

Forests

Théodore Rousseau began painting *The Forest in Winter* in 1846 (Figure 1). While Rousseau considered it unfinished at the time of his death in 1867, the painting exhibits complexity and richness. The scene is a sous-bois, meaning it is set in the midst of the forest, under the tree canopy, and the large canvas is dominated by leafless oaks. Gnarled, tangled branches fill the scene with deep brown tones, while carefully applied red highlights give it the fiery appeal of an early winter sunset. Two small figures in the center of the image provide a sense of scale, amplifying for the viewer the height, and thus the age, of the trees. Those figures and the crows flying above are the only signs of life; their forward thrust is countered by the dead repoussoir

310 “Si l'on continue dans la voie qu'on a frayée, Fontainebleau ne sera plus, dans quelques lustres, qu'un vulgaire marché de bois, et personne en France ne s'est encore accoutumé à considérer sous ce point de vue, les trésors de grandeur et de magnificence dont la couronne conserve le dépôt.” A.S. “La Forêt de Fontainebleau,” *L’Artiste* 2 (1839), 292.

trunk at the far right. Despite the dense detail of the scene, the image does not feel claustrophobic. Rousseau’s work was described by his contemporaries as a tapestry, and the intricate, careful weaving implied by that term captures the effect of *The Forest in Winter*. The tree branches are entangled but not arbitrarily, nor hastily. There is a patience embedded in the image; consider the time Rousseau must have spent looking, discerning, following a branch as it wound through and around others. The painting overturns all sense of distinction between fore, middle, and background—Rousseau gives simply ground, extension, presence, and the fullness of field we experience in the woods.

Other (favorable) critics referred to Rousseau’s work as a mosaic, a term that again combines material weight with a meticulous, circumscribed process. It is as though he has recreated the forest bit by bit. Rousseau was not conveying the dark, heavy sensation of just any forest; he emphatically, insistently gave us this forest, his favorite forest, the old oak section of Fontainebleau (Bas-Bréau). This careful, patient, detailed looking is neither incidental nor merely aesthetic. Such specificity is precisely what made Rousseau’s work political. In this historical moment, as France was attempting to bring all of its forests under an overarching policy exemplified by the implementation, in 1827, of a new Forest Code, the aesthetics of forest representation were intrinsically linked to the politics of forest management. Rousseau was not only working in the context of a romantic exploration of nature; his work was inflected by forest politics being fervently debated at the time. Rousseau’s technique also speaks to an engagement with specific locales rather than generic landscapes that would come to characterize early nineteenth-century landscape representation. Picturing specific locales was a way of commenting

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on the politics of transformation in the French landscape. Further, that specific engagement pertained to both the subject and the material of representation. This chapter reveals that the different material properties of a range of media—the flat sheen of porcelain, or the thick richness of bitumen—were leveraged by diverse actors in the nineteenth century to convey different conceptions of the forest. Artists emphasized the materiality of the site in contrast to an abstracted administrative ideal, but ultimately an emphasis on forest as image, rather than place, had a profound impact on the actual land.

The Changing Shape of The Woods

Far from being a neutral or obvious representation of French woods, the forest pictured in Rousseau’s *Forest in Winter* was a highly contested site subject to ongoing land reform. Prior to the French Revolution, Fontainebleau, like much of France’s forested lands, had been symbolically understood as the king’s domain and the site of the royal hunt. Its main function was as a royal game preserve. A 1738 representation of Fontainebleau by Jean-Baptiste Oudry is characteristic (Figure 2). Oudry positioned the woods as the generic backdrop to bustling scenes of uniformed officers and scampering hounds. In Oudry’s paintings and tapestry designs, the action of the hunt consistently filled the foreground, while allusions to forests themselves were relegated to the distance. In contrast, as Rousseau’s *Forest in Winter* exemplifies, nineteenth-century artists tended to do the opposite, bringing the forest itself to the fore. Artists thus participated in a renegotiation of the meaning of the site—not as locus of activity but as a place, an entity valid in its own right. Further, that place was not a fixed image, but one that emerged through a series of decisions and debates. If Rousseau and his fellow Barbizon artists appear to have achieved a set of conventions for depicting the forest by the 1860s, with trees filling the
frame and light falling askew on long alleys, this was not at all the case in the beginning of the century. Developing a vision of the forest was not a straightforward operation but rather the product of continued experimentation, conducted in dialogue with physical and administrative changes being made to the French woods.

With the Revolutionary reclamation of monarchical property, royal woods became biens nationaux, national goods—lands belonging to the nation. Yet the question of who, exactly, comprised the nation and how their resources were best managed remained unsettled for several decades. A number of often-contradictory theories—in legislation, in forestry journals, in a new sylvicultural school founded at Nancy, and in images—emerged about how a forest should be both managed and represented. It was clear that declaring the woods open to the people of France would only result in rapid deforestation and mismanagement of resources; but how could the woods be managed in a republican fashion? Without a suitable answer, many of the monarchical statutes regulating the use of the woods were restored in 1827, when a landmark Forestry Code was passed. Further, following the strengthening of the state apparatus under Napoleon, these regulations were enforced to an unprecedented degree. Rather than liberating the woods for the people, the Revolution ironically enabled more restrictive policies and set the stage for capitalist exploitation under the guise of environmental preservation. Claims to preserve the woods were often pretexts for private ownership rather than communal use. A rift opened between new property holders, eager to protect what they saw as theirs, and peasants who had been accustomed to having use rights and access to the forests.

The early nineteenth century also saw the implementation of new, scientific forestry methods designed to maximize the production of timber. Such methods resulted in a literal

314 Kieko Matteson charts the process by which an ideology of private property overtook customary use rights in her Forests in Revolutionary France: Conservation, Community and Conflict 1669-1848 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).
reshaping of the woods and shifted the concept of the forest from an intractable place to an abstracted space of production. Scientific sylvicultural methods were developed at a specialized school dedicated to the forests, founded in Nancy—near the vast and Germanic-style woods of Eastern France—in 1824. The school provided the rationale and enforcement for official policy, and helped to generate an administrative aesthetic through maps, projections and, eventually, displays at the Universal Exhibitions. Environmental scholars have shown the forests to be a critical site in the formation of the modern state. Much recent French environmental history has focused on the forests, as forest policy can serve as an indicator for state power more generally. Legal scholar and historian of forest policy François Lormant claimed that historically, “forest law, more than even criminal or business law, is a reflection of the public power of the sovereign.” An investigation into the aesthetics driving forest reform is thus also a comment on the aesthetic aspects of state formation.

Images, both “official” representations produced by state agents and “unofficial” depictions by artists and amateurs, engaged with these ongoing changes to the forests. Rousseau’s work offers a particularly intense example of this kind of engagement, given his longstanding relationship with the forest of Fontainebleau, where he lived, worked, and campaigned for forest preservation. As forest policy shifted, Rousseau’s own conception of a forest evolved. His early forest images, including Edge of a Clearing, Forest of Compiègne

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315 Hamish Graham, for example, suggests, “it was precisely the elaboration and implementation of forestry policies that helped to create the modern state.” Hamish Graham, “The Crown and the Community: Communal Woodlands and State Forestry in the Landes during the Eighteenth Century,” French History and Civilization: Papers from the George Rudé Seminar 3 (2009), 34. James Scott also relies on forest history as an indicator of state formation. James Scott, Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).


(1833, Figure 3) depict a very different forest from *Forest in Winter* (1846-67). In *Edge of a Clearing*, the forest is one part of a more complex economy. The composition of Rousseau's image emphasized divisions in the land as it is segregated into purpose-driven areas. In the foreground, a furrow separates a grassy knoll with cottages from a tilled field, while in the background the neat edge of a tree line confronts freshly cleared ground. The forest is offered as material resource, perhaps the very wood being burned in the cottage with chimney smoke on the left edge of the scene. In *Edge of a Clearing*, the forest serves as a compositional element, subjected to an overall ordering, rather than producing the composition, the way it does in *Forest in Winter*. Following the evolution of Rousseau's iconography from *Edge of a Clearing* to *Forest in Winter* reveals that Rousseau's later style corresponds to an ideal of the French forest that was formulated through painting; an ideal that, ironically, has come to stand for the natural to such an extent that now forests are being rearranged to resemble more closely such images.\(^{318}\) Forest conservation efforts throughout the twentieth century sought to “restore” the vision of the woods that came to characterize Barbizon images, despite the clear cultural, rather than natural, source of that vision.

Author, art critic and collector Alfred Sensier’s mythologized account of the Barbizon school, formulated in the 1860s and 70s, has until recently persisted in scholarship that positions Barbizon artists as precursors to the Impressionists.\(^{319}\) Sensier can also be credited with the formation of a group identity, the Barbizon “school,” for what was actually a loose collective of artists who came together in the small town of Barbizon. Sensier, an early collector of paintings


by Rousseau, Dupré, Constant Troyon, and others, helped to cement the importance of these artists through his publication of biographies and criticism. Sensier’s efforts eventually inflated the artists’ works’ value beyond his capacity to purchase them. His primary critical intervention was to cast Barbizon imagery as an expression of the artists’ love of nature, emphasizing through selected excerpts of the artists’ letters their passion for the raw woods. Yet Sensier’s claims for the “savage” and “virgin” character of the French landscape are complicated by his authorship of a volume on Olivier de Serres, a sixteenth-century agronomist who first popularized the idea of land management. Published under the pseudonym Reisnes (Sensier backwards), the volume was illustrated with a portrait of Serres by Jean-François Millet, further implicating the artists at Barbizon in an awareness of agronomic issues. Serres’s conviction that land required intervention to thrive runs counter to the parallel mythology of untouched nature, and these competing visions of the role of humans in the landscape are apparent in close examination of Barbizon paintings.

Unpacking the construction of the Barbizon myth helps to reveal some of the more pointed and politically charged aspects of their work, aspects which have been smoothed over by narratives of romantic nature. Rather than seeing the material qualities of Rousseau’s *The Forest in Winter* as harbingers of Impressionism, they can be read as direct responses to the conditions of this contextual moment, when larger tensions were emerging between state and local forest management. Greg Thomas has previously invoked Rousseau’s “ecology,” and I expand on his claims to position Rousseau not as a transcendent ecologist but instead as an astute commentator on the particular problems facing Fontainebleau in the 1830s, ’40s and ’50s. Rousseau may

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have fought to preserve his vision of Fontainebleau, but at this moment preservation was entangled with state power in ways that complicate the politics of nascent environmentalism.  

There is nothing “natural” about this forest—or its representation. Far from untouched nature, forests in France are a controlled ecosystem that requires management, a fact that was known in the nineteenth century. In 1876 a forest official declared, “there is no forest without a forester, any more than there is a garden without a gardener.” Another French forester elaborated on the question of nature, seeing intervention as enhancing rather than distracting from it. He suggested, “To avoid sylvan landscapes becoming miserable, all blemishes must be removed, so as to clean up the forest. A forest maintained with care will become even more natural than nature, becoming more purely forest.” The reference to “blemishes” indicates that a normative ideal of forests was in place, and it was an ideal directly tied to human intervention. “Becoming more purely forest” was a process that was inherently visual and increasingly culturally driven. Recognizing the complexities of the “natural” in the forest, complexities that were the subject of much discussion and debate in Rousseau’s time, forces us to reconsider our assessment of his work as an evocation of “savage” or “unruly” nature, instead understanding Rousseau as one of many agents actively producing a particular vision of the forest.

State Management and Local Reactions

322 Kieko Matteson makes a strong claim for the relationship between conservation and conflict: “By seeking to rationalize rural access and impose uniform restrictions upon woodland resources, often in cooperation with private or industrial interests, the state frequently aggravated the very problems it sought to resolve. In this way, conservation and conflict were mutually constituted, and woodland ecosystems suffered the consequences.” *Forests in Revolutionary France*, 13.


324 “Pour que le paysage sylvestre ne prenne pas un petit air mitieux, il faut en ôter tout ce qui serait souillure et faire pour ainsi dire le ménage de la forêt. Une forêt entretenue avec soin devient encore plus intensément naturelle que nature, devient encore plus purement forêt.” Cited in Bernard Kalaora, *Musée vert ou le tourisme en forêt* (Paris: Anthros, 1981), 192.
In Euro-American history, forests are perpetually positioned ambivalently between nature and society. While they retain their longstanding associations with fairy tales, places of darkness and crime, wild and savage, they have also long been subject to human intervention—one historian has gone so far as to claim that the forest has not been “savage” since the Neolithic period. Over the course of the nineteenth century they were definitively transformed into an administrative, and an administered, space, understood as a territoire special, a landscape requiring particular intervention. That intervention took the form of aménagement, a practice understood broadly as the rational management of land for economic gain. While it was framed as a land management policy, aménagement also involved a great deal of policing: the primary nineteenth-century historian of the Fontainebleau forest, Paul Domet, insisted: “In one word, before aménagement, administration and the police.”

Forest management in France was formally instituted in 1669 when, following fears that there would not be enough wood for the royal navy, Colbert implemented sweeping policies regulating which trees could be cut and when. The 1669 ordinance has been seen as tremendously important historically, a touchstone in forest legislation. It was a bid to simultaneously ensure sufficient timber for ships and infrastructure and to claim increased

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325 This position is summarily invoked in the title of a forest history conference: Forêts, entre nature et société. The proceedings were published in the Bulletin de l’Association de géographes français 78 (2001).
control for the administration. This control came through both mapping efforts, which recorded all the trees in the kingdom, and the imposition of regulations limiting cutting.\textsuperscript{330} These regulations had always been loosely enforced, but they collapsed entirely with the Revolution. Royal woods were declared national property, a shift that opened forests to the constant threat of deforestation and transformation into arable land. A \textit{légende noire} describing unparalleled destruction developed, casting the peasants as anarchists ransacking the woods. The conflict, and the ensuing vandalism, was real: in 1793 half the \textit{baillages} (an administrative unit) in France reported disputes over forest use.\textsuperscript{331} Peasant attacks on the forest would become the stuff of later nineteenth-century lore: the prominent nineteenth-century historian Jules Michelet called it a “work of destruction” and declared peasants’ irreverence for the forest to be such that they would cut two pines to make a pair of sandals.\textsuperscript{332} Another nineteenth-century historian claimed, “The wood of these forests is, like the grass of the pastures… the property of whoever comes to take it.”\textsuperscript{333} Forest disputes derived in part from a disjunction between revolutionary rhetoric claiming the land for the people and the actuality of preservation efforts. As historian Richard Cobb has written, “Much of this forest land had been the hunting preserve of the Princes of the Blood; and these lands were duly confiscated and became, nominally at least, the property of the Nation. The inhabitants of woodland areas were liable to interpret this change quite literally. Were they not the nation?”\textsuperscript{334} Vandalism was a question of perception for those who thought the forests


\textsuperscript{333} H. Castillon, \textit{Histoire d’Ax et de la Vallée d’Andorre} (Toulouse and Foix, 1851), 102.

\textsuperscript{334} Richard Cobb, \textit{Paris and Its Provinces}, 1792-1802 (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 47. The question of how the forests could serve as national property without literally being carried off by
belonged to them. Recent historians, however, have suggested that the extent of the vandalism was greatly exaggerated, even at the time, serving as a fear-mongering tactic that helped to justify the severity of the new regulations and enable private landowners to consolidate their holdings.\textsuperscript{335}

Regardless of the extent of the vandalism, deforestation was a concern following the Revolution, and a number of provisional measures were put in place to stop it. These included a ban on forest clearing instituted by Napoleon in 1803 and set to last 25 years. Yet in the 1820s, still no agreement had been reached on an overarching policy. The need for a new, comprehensive code was strongly felt: “We are not afraid to say that the most urgent law for the France of today, for the France of the future, is a forest code,” declared one lawmaker.\textsuperscript{336} With the ban on clearing set to expire in 1828, legislators were under intense pressure to end years of deliberation. The \textit{Code forestier} was approved just in time on May 21, 1827 and the official decree made on August 1\textsuperscript{st}.\textsuperscript{337} At that point, the situation was urgent and the policies were correspondingly draconian. The Code severely limited practices crucial for peasants’ sustenance, including the right to gather wood and pasture animals. The authors of the new code saw such rights as an “all consuming” threat to forest ecology and sought to systematically eliminate them.\textsuperscript{338} Traditionally the forest had furnished a great deal of material for peasants’ livelihood. It offered nutrition, medicinal plants, food for animals, leaves for litter in sheepfolds, humus for

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\textsuperscript{336} Issac-Philibert Ardant, \textit{Projet de code rural et de code forestier} (Paris: Imprimerie Testu, 1819), 2.

\textsuperscript{337} \textit{Bulletin des lois} 176 (21 May 1827).

\textsuperscript{338} According to the minister charged with the legislation, usage rights were “dévorantes servitudes.” Martignac, (1827). Cited in Arlette Brosselin, “Pour une histoire de la forêt française au XIXe siècle,” \textit{Revue d’histoire économique et sociale} 55 (1977), 96.
fertilizer, dead wood for heating, and an important site for grazing animals.  

This integral economy of place was threatened as the forest was transformed into private property, protected by the state.

The Code was published under multiple imprints, often with additional author commentary. The most reputable and frequently cited is that of Jacques-Joseph Baudrillart, an influential figure in the administration and an early advocate for the founding of a forestry school. Baudrillart’s version appears in two volumes, including his own commentary and accounts of all of the discussion and debates leading up to the Code’s passage (Figure 4). The text of the Code itself begins by outlining which woods were subject to its statutes, which includes all forests belonging to the state, to the crown (reinstated in 1815), to communes, to public establishments, or forests of which any part belongs to the above entities. Despite revolutionary claims for decentralization and the liberation of forests from the monarchy, the 1827 Code was based on and in many ways reinstituted the statutes from the 1669 Ordonnance. Though it had rarely been enforced, the Ordonnance was highly regarded; an 1819 commentator on the state of the forests called it “a monument to the wisdom and foresight of our fathers, regarded as a masterpiece of reason, justice, and policy.” However, legislators recognized that it could not be effective without a strong administrative presence in the forests: the code “would be worthless if it was not implemented by an administration that is enlightened, preservation-

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339 Laurent Simon, “Forestry Disputes in Provincial France during the Nineteenth Century: The Case of the Montagne de Lure,” Journal of Historical Geography 33, no. 2 (2007), 335-351.
341 M. Ardant, Projet de code rural et de code forestier (Paris, 1819), 1.
minded, supervisory and strong.”  The forestry school founded at Nancy in 1824 formed an essential complement to the legislation, providing agents who would implement it on the ground. Forest guards, often recruited from the ranks of former soldiers, were trained and sent out across France to enforce the Code’s policies.

The result of increased enforcement was increased revolt. As historian Peter Sahlins chronicled, uprisings by peasants against these new restrictions, like those of the “desmoiselles” in the Ariège region in 1830, meant the Code’s policies and politics were widely discussed and publicly known. Violence against forest guards was common. Guards were killed in the Forests of Chaux, the Ariège, Ardèche, Meuse, Lorraine, and Versailles, with at least one assassination every year from 1840 forward. Peasants continued to subvert the code but were increasingly punished: by one account there were 135,000 prosecutions for Code infringements each year in the 1840s. Yet local administrators, including mayors, were often on the side of the peasants, and refused to assist prosecutors. Even the “official” response to forests was fractured in the nineteenth century, as the issue pitted centrally dispatched forest guards against local political institutions.

Artists painting in the forest of Fontainebleau could not have avoided encountering these politics; indeed their awareness of the increased policing is indicated in the representation of a forest guard on the walls of the Auberge Ganne, a popular inn in central Barbizon with easy access to the forest where many artists stayed (Figure 5). While the author of the guard image is

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343 The “demoiselles” were a band of locals who dressed as women to stage their resistance to incoming forestry guards. Peter Sahlins, Forest Rites: The War of the Desmoiselles in Nineteenth-Century France (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 224.
anonymous, Théodore Rousseau, Narcisse Diaz, and Jean-François Millet were among those artists who doodled on the inn’s walls and furniture when inclement weather prevented them from painting outdoors. Such a guard would have been one of many sent in to enforce the Code. In Fontainebleau in particular, conflicts ensued between forest guards and local peasants concerning the pasturing of animals in the forest, the right to sell collected wood for heating, and the right to gather wild wheat. The inclusion of peasants engaged in recently outlawed or controversially regulated activities in paintings of the forest is the most direct way in which Barbizon artists engaged with changing forest politics. Returning to Rousseau’s *The Forest in Winter* (Figure 1), the figures who may have initially appeared arbitrary or happenstance indicators of scale can now be read as references to these ongoing political events. Shoulderng bundles of twigs, the women are faggot gatherers, collecting bits of wood from the forest to sell as firewood. Faggot gathering, which had always been a meager profession, was increasingly limited and restricted by the 1827 Code. While previously peasants were permitted to cut off small, low boughs, the Code allowed only the gathering of fallen wood. According to article 198, any cutting or use of implements was outlawed and could result in imprisonment; after 1835, only those who registered at the mayor’s office could collect wood, and the use of wheelbarrows was forbidden—peasants could take only what could be carried on their backs. Ultimately, only the wives and children of registered indigents were permitted in the forest. The figures in Rousseau’s painting, then, register their presence as a threatened population that was the subject of ongoing political debate. A mayor lamented on behalf of his citizens sometime after 1835: “I have seen this [forest] administration, trampling underfoot the simplest rules of humanity, pitilessly condemn widows, orphans, the crippled, the old to carry *on their shoulders* from the

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346 Domet, *Histoire*, 120.
347 Baudrillart, *Code forestier*, 408.
The mayor’s sympathies register the complexities of implementing the new policies.

While Rousseau showed a distanced view of the peasants, placing them within a larger scene, Jean-François Millet produced detailed studies of peasants at work. The hunched, broken figures appear in numerous representations of faggot gatherers in the 1840s and 50s. In a drawing from circa 1854 (Figure 6), Millet studied three women exiting the woods bearing heavy burdens. Done in conté crayon on wove paper, the image is a soft, sparse evocation of the forest. Trees are composed of parallel vertical marks, not distinguished individually but rather offering a curtain of material against which the female figures emerge. They walk bent under the weight of large bundles of twigs. The scene is not one of happy coexistence between rural resident and the landscape. Instead the forest is portrayed as a source of wood, to be gathered with efficiency and economy. The visual symmetry between the wood bundles and the tree trunks, both rendered in the same summary vertical strokes, encourages a reading of the trees not as integral elements of site but rather as material resource, as they were increasingly becoming.

Art historians often read Millet’s woodgatherers as abstracted representations of labor and ignore the specific conditions of their representation. T.J. Clark referred to woodcutters and faggot-gatherers as “the proletariat of the woods,” and “men without land,” but these characterizations takes on heightened significance when acknowledging that, until the 1827 reforms, these men did have land. Not in the sense of individual property, cordoned off and defined as we would imagine today, but land as a place where they lived, gathered, moved, and

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interacted. Picturing the peasant in the woods after the 1827 Code meant also picturing their enforced separation from the woods. Paradoxically, the distribution of property to the people after the Revolution foreclosed a number of customary peasant use rights. As common land and use rights disappeared, the state increasingly considered the forest as an abstract entity.

The Abstracted Forest and Material Responses

The forest envisioned by the administration, institutionalized in the forestry school at Nancy and forwarded by the 1827 Code, was the product of scientific sylvicultural models imported from Germany, models that saw a forest primarily as a volume of timber and required it to be assessed in purely quantitative terms. The first three directors of the French forestry school had been trained in Germany and students were required to study the German language so that they might read important sylvicultural manuals in the original. These manuals proposed a method of ordering based in rigid geometric principles. Forest historian Henry E. Lowood classified German forestry as producing a “neat chessboard” of “well-measured” and “rational” nature:

The German forest became an archetype for imposing on disorderly nature the neatly arranged constructs of science. Witness the forest Cotta [a German forester] chose as an example of his new science: over the decades, his plan transformed a ragged patchwork into a neat chessboard. Practical goals had encouraged mathematical utilitarianism, which seemed, in turn, to promote geometric perfection as the outward sign of the well-managed forest; in turn, the

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350 The redistribution of property after the Revolution is a highly complex issue; briefly, the concept of property underwent a radical shift from something concerned with rights and privileges to a bounded quantity of land. Further, attempts to give peasants small parcels of land were at odds with agro-industrial capitalism, and these tensions persisted throughout the nineteenth century. See Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, *The Fruits of Revolution: Property Rights, Litigation and French Agriculture, 1700-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
rationally ordered arrangement of trees offered new possibilities for controlling nature.\(^{351}\)

In this model, and in the French adoption of it, geometric perfection is presumed to lead to control, both ecological and social. Aesthetic questions became conflated with managerial issues.

In an effort to maximize timber production in the French forest in accordance with the German model, the 1827 Code called for a physical transformation of the terrain, following a philosophy of economic gain. The traditional method of forest management, which had persisted informally in France for centuries, was known as jardï¿½nage or gardening. Jardï¿½nage pursued a selective, scattered removal of mature trees within a diversely-populated woods. It was a vernacular practice primarily associated with the peasants, and its eradication was more politically motivated than actually beneficial to the forest.\(^{352}\) Jardï¿½nage was not detrimental to the forest; environmental historian Andrï¿½e Corvol, in fact, claims that the peasants were the most responsible stewards of the forests, and their methods would ultimately have been better for the land than the official forest policy.\(^{353}\) Yet forest administrators complained jardï¿½nage was aesthetically disorderly. Aesthetic order was privileged, and French woods were progressively converted to single-species plots that would be harvested in regulated grids of even-aged trees, a method known as tire-et-aï¿½re. Pines were the preferred species, as they grew quickly and could be cut young—they might turn a profit after as little as five years.\(^{354}\) Following these tenets, the evolution of the French forest in the nineteenth century generated an increasingly homogenized landscape in which any activity other than the growth and harvest of trees was limited. The result


\(^{352}\) Whited, *Forests and Peasant Politics*, 29.


\(^{354}\) B.E. Fernow, *A Brief History of Forestry in Europe, the United States and Other Countries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1907).
was a woods where, according to a leading nineteenth-century forest administrator, “the growth is regular and easy to guard.” Establishing an ordered method of cutting against the disorder of jardinage represents an aesthetic framing of a political issue, a way of using visible ordering to perpetuate administrative order.

The state’s forest aesthetic privileged quantifiability, abstraction, and universality. These principles are apparent in the code’s very imprint—its only images are two tables, one a running tabulation of fines for trees wrongly felled, the other sectioning the nation into distinct forest administrations (Figure 7). The first effectuates the transformation of nature into capital; the second marks an utter disregard for the particularities of place in favor of regular administrative units. These tables also de-visualized the woods, translating it into legible information. In his study of forest administration, James Scott claimed that this was the goal. For administrators, “at the limit, the forest itself would not even have to be seen; it could be ‘read’ accurately from the tables and maps in the forester’s office.” Complaints from an earlier generation of foresters suggest that Scott’s hypothetical scenario was an actual occurrence—one writer lamented that younger foresters were less inclined to go into the woods, and that they were “trop messieurs,” lacking “the taste of the forest.”

The state’s forest ideal was exemplified in an illustrated plan for forest management, titled “Project for Perpetual Avenues” (Figure 8). Published in the state-sponsored forestry

355 Etienne Dralet, *Traité de l’aménagement des bois et forêts* (Paris, 1812). Dralet ties visual order not only to economic gain but also to moral regulation—just as Haussmann’s wide boulevards precluded revolutionary barricades, gridded stands of pines exposed bandits, outlaws, and even those peasants seeking deadwood to warm their homes, to the newly-trained guards patrolling the woods.


357 Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 15.

journal, the *Annales forestière*, in 1808, the plan projected 120 years of tree growth along a wide straight path, showing a cycle of cutting and replanting with an extraordinary degree of precision and order. There is almost no concern for site. The “forest” is rendered as a dimensionless ground line, with several decorative shrubs but nothing to interrupt the vertical specimens and their regimented, diagonal fall. It is an image of the future rather than the present, a projection of capital growth. The implementation of models like this one characterize the state’s efforts to shift the concept of the forest from an intractable place to an abstracted space of production, resulting in what forest historian Arlette Brosselin has described as “a rupture… between the forest and the land.”359

The *Project for Perpetual Avenues* foregrounds the essential place-less-ness of the state’s forest. In order to be applicable to all the forests in France, the 1827 Code necessarily generalized and smoothed out differences between them, producing an abstracted ideal. The Code made no provisions for the very different types of forests in mountainous areas versus plains, for example. One contemporary complained about the plan’s indifference to place, citing the specific aspects of mountain regions that went unaccounted for in official rhetoric:

> It is easy to understand, in effect, that woods of the plain … could be submitted to the forest regime. But how is one to understand that alpine woods, situated in a different climate, subjected to rigorous inclemency, to enormous masses of snow; that these woods, I say, which vary with each step like the soil; which are interspersed with empty lands, grasses, bizarrely wooded rocks, precipices, ravines, communal and private pastures, passages for livestock… encumbered by the miserable local population with a multitude of imperious needs attached to their agricultural industry, or better said their existence; [how is it that these woods] could be subjected to the theories of the forestry school, which has never understood those needs and which has never calculated the difference between the difficulties of managing woods in the mountain and those on the plain?360

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Claims like this one challenge the coherence of the category “forest,” a landscape that changed “with each step.” The theories of the forestry school were removed from the specific needs of the people who lived in the woods, because they were intended for a generalized and abstracted forest. Even Algeria was subjected to the same policies and procedures; it was not until 1903 that a revised forestry code was passed that accounted for its climate. This is standard practice for legislative governance, as James Scott has cogently argued. In *Seeing Like a State*, Scott addresses the importance of objectification for effective state management, noting a “radically narrowed vision” is requisite. For Scott, the “simplification, legibility, and manipulation” that operated in this kind of forest management serve as a metaphor for the state bureaucracy and powerful institutions generally.  

In *The Forest in Winter*, Rousseau offered a clear contrast to the abstracted state model. A narrowed state vision could not account for the fullness of field Rousseau described in his painting. Rousseau further counteracted this model—the neat removal of trees and their effortless replacement—in *The Rock Oak* (ca. 1860-1861; Figure 9). The scene is dense, denser even than *The Forest in Winter*, as the branches are not bare but leafy. Théophile Thori called it “knitted” (*tricoté*) but such a description, while accounting for the tight weave of the brushwork, fails to acknowledge the depth of the canvas.  

Its heaviness is relieved by patches of blue sky, visible through tangled branches, and beams of sunlight that illuminate the forest floor in the foreground. Beyond the titular oak and rocks is a mess of autumnal vegetation, with reds, oranges and ochers carpeting the scene. The ground is rough and uneven, a far cry from the straight line of *Perpetual Avenue*—one can hardly imagine planting in a straight line here, certainly as huge immovable boulders block much of the way.

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The Rock Oak refuses to differentiate tree from ground, subject from site. The roots of the oak twist through and around the rocks, locked in a structural union that mocks the easy toppling of trees in the Perpetual Avenue. Rousseau’s methodology, his careful re-creation of the intertwined aspects of the forest landscape, emphasized a politics of integrality. This is one of only four paintings Rousseau etched himself, and the reduction of the painted image to its linear aspects put further emphasis on the entanglement and indissociability of the marks comprising tree, rock, and ground (Figure 10). The Rock Oak espoused a vision of the forest that was partisan and loaded. It reemphasized the obvious but increasingly forgotten rootedness of the tree as it relates to the specific context of Fontainebleau and its transformation in accordance with new sylvicultural ideals. The tree does not grow on the terrain but is part of it, its limbs comprising the forest floor. This painting typifies Rousseau’s investment in what Greg Thomas terms an “ecological vision,” a holistic view of the environment. The tree, like the rocks and the peasants, contributes to an overall sense of placemaking. The forest is not a neutral site—a blank space on a map—but a rich tapestry of time and activity. The Oak in the Rock is not a picture of inert land but a true landscape, in the sense cultural geographer Barbara Bender gives it: “Landscapes refuse to be disciplined. They make a mockery of the oppositions we create between time (History) and space (Geography), or between nature (Science) and culture (Social Anthropology).” Rousseau’s tree is temporal and spatial at once, natural and cultural both. This is not a tree that will be easily felled and replaced, and this is not a forest that will easily conform to centralized administrative dictates. Indeed aménagement always remained an unrealizable ideal when faced with the reality of the forest.

Rousseau’s *The Rock Oak* points to another point of contention between the Barbizon artists and the state concerning tree species: while artists preferred oaks, the state was partial to pines. Oaks seemed to represent old France, its great heritage and natural splendor dating back to Celtic times, whereas pines were seen as invading, unaesthetic, and frankly un-French.\(^{365}\) Oaks were associated with the history of France;\(^{366}\) they were the preferred species of “liberty tree” planted during the Revolution.\(^{367}\) When Monsieur Le Roy was advocating for forest conservation in the *Encyclopédie*, he invoked the superstitious reverence people held for oaks:

> Our oaks no longer proffer oracles, and we no longer ask of them the sacred mistletoe; we must replace this cult by care; and whatever advantage one may previously have found in this respect that one had for forests, one can expect even more success from vigilance and economy.\(^{368}\)

Tensions between the sacred nature of the oak and the practical necessity of wood came to a head in Rousseau’s time. While pines were re-introduced into Fontainebleau beginning in 1786 (pines had in fact been indigenous to the region thousands of year earlier),\(^{369}\) it was under the July Monarchy that the greatest expansion of resinous species happened. Pines were brought to Fontainebleau and planted in orderly rows, generating a great deal of criticism across all levels of society. Laborers who were accustomed to the expensive (and thus profitable) planting of deciduous species were outraged by the easy and economical resinous plantations, and they organized a protest against the administration.\(^{370}\) Partisans and critics took the side of laborers,

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\(^{365}\) Pines were often popularly classified as Russian or Nordic.

\(^{366}\) Oaks were also taken as a symbol of the Germans in opposition to the French, see Jeffrey Wilson, *The German Forest: Nature, Identity, and the Contestation of a National Symbol, 1871-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).


\(^{369}\) The introduction of pines in 1786 seems to have been more about experimentation with transplanting species than an interest in changing the character of the woods; see Vincent Morinaux, “A History of the French Coniferous Forest,” in *Forest History: International Studies on Socioeconomic and Forest Ecosystems*, ed. Mauro Agnoletti and Steven Anderson (Wallingford: CABI, 2000), 367.

augmenting the critique. Artists aligned themselves with this faction, petitioning for the 
preservation of old oak sections of Fontainebleau. Rousseau, generally assumed to be the author 
of the petition, implied that oaks were significant elements of French patrimony. He called the 
tree “l’arbre national.”

Similarly, when Charles-François Denecourt mapped Fontainebleau to 
produce his celebrated series of guidebooks beginning in the 1830s, he named oak trees after the 
nation’s great kings, including Charlemagne and Henri IV. Oaks were given a history and 
content in a way that pines were not; a popular tract published in 1839, for example, told the 
animated story of An Old Oak and her Fourteen Children.372 Oaks were seen as personal and part 
of the nation’s patrimony; pines were timber, cut before they could acquire a history.

A porcelain service dedicated to the world’s trees affirmed the visible order the state 
sought to establish in its woods. Begun in 1834 at the state-sponsored manufactory at Sèvres, the 
Forestry Service was one of director Alexander Brongniart’s great encyclopedic projects.373 It 
was designed to showcase the forests of the world through landscape imagery: 136 plates were 
completed over a period of six years, along with additional compote pieces.374 Each plate features 
a central, hand-painted landscape image, giving a view of a famed forest from around the world 
as signified by a characteristic tree species. The scenes often included a vignette of productive 
human activity. In one, a group gathers to admire the Chipstead Elm, part of the pleasure 
grounds of George Polhill in England—an extraordinarily managed landscape (Figure 11).

371 Cited in Sensier, Souvenirs, 173.
372 Louis-Etienne-François Héricart de Thury, Histoire d’un vieux cheîne et de ses quatorze enfants (Paris, 
1839).
373 Others include the Service des Départements and the Service des Péches, discussed in the Introduction 
and Chapter Two.
374 The program for the Forestry service was described by Brongniart in 1834: “Vue des arbres forestiers 
célèbres et des forêts les plus remarquables pour la nature de leurs arbres, la disposition et les accidents 
du sol tels que rochers, cavernes, lacs, cascades, etc... les arbres et forêts caractérisés par les habitations, 
costumes d’habitants, actions et scènes qui peuvent s’y rencontrer ou s’y passer pris sur toute la terre.” 
Arch. MNS, carton Pb8, liasse 1.
Including such a manicured scene in an homage to forests indicates the state’s vision of the forest was far from the wilderness of popular imagination. The plates are aggressively bordered, first with a solid gold line, then an intricate gilded fencing, another solid gold line, a cobalt blue and golden ornate lip, and a final gilded edge. The borders serve to both contain the landscape—denying the spreading branches that push past the edges of Rousseau’s canvases—and to generate unity across the set.

The ornamental friezes along the plates’ borders are based on foliage, abstracted and twisted into connecting patterns. These friezes were transfer printed and printing plates were created for 43 distinct arboreal species (Figure 12). The patterns could be combined, but at most two would be included for a given forest. In the end only 28 tree species were featured in the service. There are over 100,000 varieties of tree—certainly Brongniart could not be expected to offer even a fraction of that, and this was not a botanical project. Yet Brongniart’s insistence on scientific rigor, and the simultaneous reduction of species in the actual forests, makes the limited number of trees ultimately selected significant. The ornamentation, like the depicted scenes, focused on limiting the forest to a legible and thus manageable entity.

The material qualities of porcelain furthered the legibility of the state’s aesthetic. As a medium, porcelain offered an enduringly bright, exceptionally precise image. Copies of oil

375 Erable champêtre; tremble; pin du Nord; Erica cinera G Buryère des bois de France; Fougère Pteris aquilina; Palmier cocotier; Chêne à Liège; Noyer noir d’amérique; Ajone; Cyprès commun; Acacia arabica ou mimosa; Genévrier; Genêt commun; Bruyère du cap; Casuarina; Cactus gradiflorus; Tilleul; Phormium tenax lin de la Nlle Zélande; Olivier; Bambo; Sycamore d’Egypte; Houx; Orme; Chêne vert; Platane d’Orient; Laurier franc; Oranger; Sapin; Merisier; Châtaignier; Hêtre; Bouleau; Chêne commun; Charme; Cèdre; Palmier Dattier; Bananier; Peuplier baumier d’Americie; Fresne; Pasayer; Arlocape ou Saquier (arbre à pain); Lalania

376 Prints of each plate are included in the Sèvres’ archives, MNS carton Pb8, liasse 1.
377 Oak; hornbeam; chestnut; holly; Casuarina; bracken; laurel; orange; banana; coconut; date; mimosa; heather; pine; American black walnut; rushes; ferns; birch; beech; elm; tenax; ash; prickly pear; bamboo; breadfruit; Latania; poplar; balsam.
378 Most varieties of trees are found in the tropics, but Brongniart did claim to represent tropical woods. Even in Europe there are suggested to be 124 identified species. Interestingly Europe is one of the regions of the world with the fewest number of tree species—a direct result of forestry practices.
paintings on porcelain plaques were popular at this time as it was presumed that the colors would never fade; the true glory of a master like Raphael would be realized in his porcelain reproduction. Porcelain painters would even take liberties to “restore” a painting’s tones to a presumed original state. Writing about a copy of a Ruysdael painting by porcelain artist Langlacé, an appreciative buyer claimed “M. Langlacé has *reestablished* in the azure of the sky the tone that it must have been before the old varnish yellowed and rendered it almost green.” Porcelain endured, without aging, like the stands of pines harvested and replaced before they had time to grow old. It further, in *reestablishing* what was lost, had the power to restore mismanaged entities, like a painting or a forest.

Floating atop the translucent purity of porcelain, the painted landscapes of the *Forestry Service* have none of the heaviness of Rousseau’s bitumen-laden scenes, destined to thicken, age, and crack, like the woods themselves. The porcelain landscapes offer woods depicted rather than felt, managed from a distance rather than experienced in person. The Sèvres plates suggest a transcendent forest form—any woods, anywhere, can be depicted on their luminous surface.

Brongniart harnessed the local and brought it into the service of the universal, making each particular forest fit visually and conceptually within the confines of his larger project. This is the forest managed and subsumed to the larger ideology of the whole; the forest, in short, as the state wanted it.

Porcelain’s ethereal qualities were produced, ironically, through the consumption of wood. An 1811 treatise published by Brongniart affirmed the superiority of wood firing to coal: “It is possible and even probable that porcelain could be fired in this way [using coal], but it seems to me very likely that despite any precautions taken the porcelain would always be less

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white than that which we fire with wood." 380 Porcelain’s sublimation of wood is in sharp contrast to Rousseau’s paintings on panel, paintings that insist on their substantive character, as with In the Woods, painted on oak (no date, Figure 13). In this image the wood itself provides the mid-tone of the image, trees not entirely painted but rather made of trees, as it were. Rousseau allowed the properties of wood to dictate his composition even further in Effects of Rain (c. 1858-60, Figure 14). In this panel painting, the contours of the wood grain determine the features of the ground. Rousseau traced over areas to create emphasis, but relied on the natural patterns of the panel itself. The wood, purchased from a Barbizon supplier, likely came from the very site he was representing. Far from offering a transcendent vision, these panel paintings insist on their locality through their material specificity.

Throughout his career, Rousseau emphasized particular, specific sites, irreducible to a general idea of “woods.” His Descent of the Cows in the Haut-Jura (1836, Figure 15) is one of his most potent evocations of site. The monumental canvas—it is over eight feet tall—features the transhumance, the annual passage of cattle from their summer to winter pasturage through an alpine forest. Rousseau saw this scene while en route to La Faucille, France in 1834. He had intended to go to Switzerland to paint the Alps, but was convinced by friend and fellow Barbizon painter Jules Dupré to remain in France and paint the mountainous view from the Jura, a decision that echoes the increasing turn to French territory occurring across visual representation in the early nineteenth century. Rousseau came across the yearly ritual of the descent in Gex and was, in Sensier’s words, “strongly struck” by the sight. His traveling companion, Lorentz, described it as a vibrant and intense scene:

A parade of people could not be more moving. It was like a stream of velvets that carried with it pink muzzles, black eyes, stalactites of silver slobber and thousands or horned heads often adorned with superb bouquets or the costumes of

380 Cited in Préaud, ed. The Sèvres Porcelain Manufactory, 55.
shepherds. The flowers and ornaments that were spread across the front [of the parade] between the horns of two chosen cows were attached to the legs of a wooden stool that allowed the shepherds to milk as swiftly as possible 50 cows; it is a hard job for these montagnards who have the arms of Hercules and skin so milky white that our most stylish ladies would pay thousands for it.381

Rousseau was so moved by the sight of cattle and peasants descending, he produced at least three versions of this scene: a small sketch (Mesdag), a large ébauche (Amiens), and a finished canvas (Mesdag).382 There is also an engraved copy of the work published by Amand-Durand and Goupil, and a later canvas featuring the same subject, now at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.

In the finished canvas, now at the Mesdag Galerie, Rousseau used excessive quantities of bitumen, and it is nearly illegible today. Each version of the scene has roughly the same composition, a vertically oriented chain of cattle winding their way down through trees.

However, a shift in the placement of the horizon line between the sketch and the ébauche makes the scene feel increasingly dramatic. While the sketch gives an horizon line about three-quarters of the way up the painting, the ébauche, like the finished version, shifts the horizon to the very top of the composition, plunging the spectator down into the base of the mountain. The result is disorienting, a precipitous sensation that recalls what it might have been like to witness the spectacular herd.

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381 "Un défilé de peuple n’est pas plus émouvant. C’était comme un torrent de velours variés, qui charriaient des museaux roses, des yeux noirs, des stalactites de baves d’argent et des milliers de têtes cornues souvent ornées des superbes bouquets ou de costumes de bergers et de bergères. Les fleurs et les ornements qui s’étalaient sur le frontal, entre les deux cornes de vaches prédilectionnées, étaient plantés sur la tige des tabourets de bois qui servent aux bergers pour faire, le plus vivement possible, la traite d’une cinquantaine de vaches ; ce qui est un rude travail pour ces montagnards qui ont des bras d’Hercule et une peau d’un blanc de lait que nos plus coquettes viveuses paieraient de bien de mille et mille francs." Letter from Lorentz to Sensier, cited in Alfred Sensier, Souvenirs sur Theodore Rousseau (Paris: Le’on Techener, 1872), 71.

That cattle’s journey took several days, and a hint of a path in the background of Rousseau’s image suggests the distance traveled. The cows have daubs of bright red that punctuate the scene, floating, as Lorentz had described, on a sea of velvety brown. In the foreground a shepherd leans on his walking stick and blows a trumpet; several more figures are interspersed amongst the parading cattle. The trumpet indicates the sounds that accompanied the visual display, with bells clinking and cows baying. The scene was raucous and sensorially stimulating, and it offered what Sensier termed a “link to representing a scene as grand as the soil on which it takes place.” Sensier’s turn of phrase here, “train d’union” or literally “hyphen” between scene and soil, emphasized the sitedness of the scene. There is a fundamental quality to the cows’ descent that came about through years of practiced ritual, and in representing it Rousseau emphasizes the extent to which the activity and the scene are inseparable.

Rousseau painted in brown on brown, creating an essential relationship between figure and ground. In their analysis of the Amiens canvas in 2001, conservators at the Van Gogh museum confirmed through technical study that Rousseau had used a transparent reddish-brown layer to cover the ground, and then worked wet-in-wet using the same color in thicker layers to build up figures. In some places, the cows are not painted on to the scene but were instead made by scraping away or removing a paint layer, revealing a lighter tan tone underneath. Such a process reverses the usual procedure of working from dark to light, and implies Rousseau was digging into the image rather than building up the scene. In his very method, he reinforced the integrality of the subject with its site. Yet it is precisely these specific, integral encounters that

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383 "Un trait d’union pour reproduire une scène aussi grandiose que le sol où elle s’agit.” Sensier, *Souvenirs*, 71.
were in the process of being eliminated in favor of generalizable and abstracted ideals.\textsuperscript{385} For residents of the Jura region where the descent took place, forests were not separate spaces but one aspect of an agro-sylvo-pastoral economy—forest, field and pasture existed within a continuum and were mutually constitutive. The singular vision of the forest administration was unable to account for this plurality of purpose, and such passages were increasingly outlawed.\textsuperscript{386}

Rousseau made a sketch at the scene (Sensier suggests there were several sketches, though only one has been identified), and then began a large painting upon return to his studio in Paris. The size of his studio proved inadequate to capture the grandeur of the moment, and Ary Scheffer, after viewing the sketch, invited Rousseau to use the physically larger space in his. Scheffer's involvement would continue after the painting had been rejected from the Salon in 1836, as he took it upon himself to exhibit it and eventually, when it found no buyer, to purchase it (sometime prior to the 1850s, as it was in his daughter's possession in 1858).\textsuperscript{387} The painting was given a number of titles at different moments, but for an 1867 catalogue of his work exhibited at the Cercle des Arts. Rousseau specified it as \textit{La descente des vaches, dans les montagnes du Haut-Jura}. This precision of locale is an essential part of the painting's political content. Yet, ironically, critics tried to situate it outside France: Gustave Planche described the scene as "like that of a virgin forest of South America."\textsuperscript{388} The perpetuation of an orderly forest ideal was so effective in France that a more entangled woods was becoming unrecognizable.

\textsuperscript{385} Despite what Sensier and other supporters claimed, the subject was not entirely original—Marie-Thérèse de Forges notes that Jadin had shown a "descente des vaches à l'abreuvoir" in 1834, nicknamed by critics the "descente des vaches aux enfers." It is reproduced in \textit{Le Musée, revue du Salon de 1834} by Alexandre Decamp with the title \textit{La Mare}. In the Salon booklet it is referred to as no. 1013, \textit{Plaine de Montfort-l'Amaury, Seine-et-Oise. Des Vaches descendent à une mare}.

\textsuperscript{386} Whited, \textit{Forests and Peasant Politics}, 17.


Resistance to the Frenchness of such an image is further indicated in its later appropriation: Rousseau’s friend and follower Narcisse Diaz borrowed the composition of Descent less than a decade later (1844, Figure 16), swapping the cows for bohemians en route to a fête. Diaz’s painting was both accepted by the salon and widely celebrated. Critics praised the “exuberant joy” of Diaz’s Descent of the Bohemians, a joy that effectively erased the hardship and struggle evoked by Rousseau. Diaz brought a welcome exoticism to the scene, inserting a more palatable other into the landscape, a move he would repeat again and again with images of Oriental figures in the French countryside. The bohemians in Descent were praised for wearing the “costumes of every country”—all the countries except France, that is. This substitution serves to further emphasize the provocation inherent in Rousseau’s original image and the challenge the traipsing cattle posed to the new order of the forests.

In another version of Rousseau’s painting of the descent, the one held today at the Mesdag Galerie (Figure 17), Rousseau relied heavily on bitumen, a choice that proved ruinous for the canvas. Bitumen, a component of asphalt, is a dark viscous substance that offers a warmer alternative to black, and retains a transparency that prevents a painting from looking ‘muddy.’ A nineteenth-century color manual described it as “a pitch black, a shining facture, of resinous nature, that naturally pools.” The tarry material, similar in quality to the resin produced by the pines in Rousseau’s image, gave the painting an organic, earthy quality. The dangers of bitumen, however, were known even in Rousseau’s time: it never fully dries, resulting in what Sensier termed an “underlayer of constant agitation” and causing extensive darkening and crackelure. But the thick, tacky quality of bitumen offered Rousseau a way of capturing the substance of the

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389 Théophile Thoré, Le Salon de 1844 (Paris, 1844), 36.
391 Sensier, Souvenirs, 77-79.
scene, producing a kind of material mimesis. With its brown-on-brown tones, Descent suggests the intractability of a forest.

Even before the degradation of the bituminous pigments, the picture was difficult to interpret—especially for those accustomed to luminous, classicizing Italianate landscapes. The critic Théophile Thoré, who defended Rousseau, was even forced to admit, "the beasts are confused with the vegetation," though he saw this as an "easily correctible fault." Yet far from being a flaw, this merging of cow and forest, the way their forms fit perfectly into the well-worn splices between rocky ground, cows who appear carved out of the terrain they move through, reinforces an integration of ritual and place that the new forest regulations threatened to undo. Rousseau’s material gestures an evocation of the forest’s own resistance to abstraction.

Rousseau was not the only artist conjuring a tangible experience of the forest. The critic Félix Pyat made a similar assertion concerning Corot’s Forest of Fontainebleau (Salon of 1834, Figure 18), accusing the artist of using the “dirt from his boots” as paint. The idea that the forest, or landscape in general, required a tactile response would be taken up again later in the century in ceramics inspired by Barbizon paintings. In Barbotine-style pottery, slip is used to create three-dimensional decorative elements. It can be subtle, as in a Charles Volkmar vase produced circa 1879 (Figure 19). Volkmar had studied with the Barbizon artist Henri Harpignies, and his composition draws on many of the conventions developed in Barbizon paintings: a cluster of trees, a reflective element, a study of the sky. He introduced texture to the image, however, building up certain areas to add dimension, depth, and shadow. The technique was taken much further by Edouard Gilles, a ceramicist from Choisy La Roi. He created images of such high relief that in places they detach from the base, as in the winding branch of a tree on a

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pair of vases (Figure 20). In the foreground, rocky ground provides a three-dimensional support for painted vegetation. The result is a thick, materially-mimetic mode of representation, in which the earthen clay suggests an affinity between medium and subject similar to Rousseau’s paintings of trees on wood.

**Preservation and Display**

Rousseau’s material gestures, like his political efforts, had their limits. Despite his stated intentions, Barbizon artists’ paintings and, especially, printed reproductions (the primary way in which their images were distributed to a larger public) contributed to the transformation of Fontainebleau into an image. This idealized vision of the woods further resulted in a new leisure activity for Parisians: nature tourism. The influx of urban tourists famously threatened the forest ecosystem and led to the creation of the first preserved landscape in France in a section of Fontainebleau. Rousseau, the Barbizon artists, and the popular guidebook author Charles-François Denecourt were implicated in bringing the tourists to the forest, and in producing an image of the woods that would eventually overwrite the actuality of the place.

A former Napoleonic soldier, Denecourt was instrumental in making the image of the forest popularized by the Barbizon artists accessible to tourists through visually-oriented guidebooks.

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394 Simon Kelly questions the validity of Rousseau’s ecological vision, suggesting he was far more commercially-inclined. I do not want to comment on his environmentalism here, but instead suggest that material engagement could only resist the idealization of the forest for a brief period. Simon Kelly, “Review of Greg Thomas, Art and Ecology in Nineteenth-Century France,” *The Burlington Magazine* 142, no. 1171 (October, 2000), 643-644.


396 Much study has already been devoted to the role of Barbizon images in nineteenth-century nature tourism, the discovery of Fontainebleau by Parisians tired of their urban environment, and the eventual efforts of Rousseau and others to protect Fontainebleau from the hordes of weekend visitors to the forest. See the work of Nicholas Green, Robert Herbet, Bernard Kalaora, and Greg Thomas, among others, op. cit.
Following his military service, Denecourt found himself unemployed and on the wrong side of politics. He moved to Fontainebleau in the early 1830s and devoted his life to the forest, mapping its vast passageways, painting blue arrows on its trees to direct visitors along prescriptive walks, and producing his famed guidebooks. Known at the time as the “sylvan of Fontainebleau,” he was a veritable entrepreneur of nature tourism. Denecourt’s first guidebook, the *Guide for Travelers in the Forest of Fontainebleau: Selection of the Most Picturesque Walks Along Forested Alleys*, appeared in 1839 and already indicates in its reference to the “picturesque” its visually-driven premise. Denecourt’s were not the first guides to Fontainebleau—E. Jamin had published maps of four walks through the woods in 1837, but Denecourt’s volumes achieved an unprecedented degree of popularity. By 1850, Denecourt was marketing to both the visitor and the artist, the forest having become a renowned destination for amateur sketchers and watercolorists, visual consumers of the landscape (Figure 21).

Denecourt’s forest was addressed first and foremost to sight, as indicated in the introduction to a later edition of the guidebook:

> O you whose heart and soul rejoice at the sight of everything pleasing, everything that charms! You who love to see, to explore beautiful things; you who, finally, come to Fontainebleau to experience sweet impressions of travel and to leave with genuine memories, precise and indelible…

He relies repeatedly on words associated with vision, and it is the view of the forest he was promoting. His goal was to create routes through the pre-existing forest paths that would lead the

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308 E. Jamin, *Quatre promenades dans la forêt de Fontainebleau, ou Description physique et topographique de cette forêt royale* (Fontainebleau, 1837).
309 “O vous dont le coeur et l’âme se réjouissent à la vue de tout ce qui plaît, de tout ce qui charme! vous qui aimez à bien voir, à bien explorer les belles choses; vous qui, enfin, venez à Fontainebleau pour y éprouver de suaves impressions de voyages et en repartir avec des souvenirs réellement exacts et ineffaçables…” Charles-François Denecourt, *Souvenirs historiques et pittoresques de Fontainebleau, avec l’itinéraire descriptif du palais et de la forêt* (Fontainebleau, 1853), iii.
viewer to celebrated vistas. Without his guidance, Denecourt tells his reader, “the vast forest... is nothing other than an immense and admirable pell-mell.” Denecourt’s need to control and direct the visual experience of the forest parallels the plays of perspective at work in monarchical gardens, as points of view were structured and controlled to produce maximum effect on the viewer. Denecourt might be accused of making of Fontainebleau a rustic Versailles. In the 1840s, he received permission from the Administration of Water and Forests to drive new paths through the woods, thus physically altering the terrain in search of more pleasant visual experiences. In keeping with the contemporaneous emphasis in visual representation on specific rather than generic landscapes, Denecourt emphasized a “precise” experience of place, and he accordingly gave names to the views he highlighted. Trees, rocks, notable sites, and places where artists had painted were given titles, recorded and classified. Such naming helped the visitor to narrow the vision, to point to a specific thing, and to see the tree through the forest. It was Denecourt who first called for Fontainebleau to be made a “national museum,” a type of institution associated with looking above all. Together, Denecourt and the Barbizon artists transformed Fontainebleau into image, distilling a complex ecological system into what sociologist Bernard Kalaora termed a “visual tableaux.” Denecourt’s guides participated in the naturalization of a specific image that was first formulated in painting, not nature.

The importance of the image of the forest shifts our reading of artists’ preference of oaks over pines. Beyond their associations with French history, in large part, the preference for oaks was a visual preference. Despite his claims for oaks’ patrimonial significance, what Rousseau really despised about pines was their stark, linear uniformity. He lamented pine plantations for

400 Cited in Green, Spectacle, 176.
402 Kalaora, Musée vert, 130.
403 Kalaora, Musée vert, 130.
their “large monotonous color, extending without form or taste across the immensity of the plane. It is a dye that offends the eye and suffocates the breath.” Greg Thomas has noted that the oak tree was aesthetically “more emotive than other of France’s common species” due to their imposing character and individuality. Unlike uniform firs, oaks, especially as they age, become more nuanced and varied, gnarled and knotted. Pictures of oaks helped perpetuate their picturesque renown, which led to calls for their preservation, opening a dialogue between image and actuality.

It was the Swiss artist Karl Bodmer’s representation of one of the grand oaks of Fontainebleau in the Salon of 1850 that gave the tree its name. The tree was later represented by Claude Monet in *The Bodmer Oak, Fontainebleau* (1865, Figure 22), solidifying its place in art history and forest lore. While Bodmer’s image has been all but forgotten, the oak has not. *The Bodmer Oak* is an exquisite portrait of the tree. Monet’s oak, in contrast to Rousseau’s forest, stands out from the background of the image. It is not entangled in place but highlighted and set apart, slightly darker than the lesser, lighter tree behind it. It determines and structures the composition, its branches spanning the width of the canvas, its trunk stretching to its height. Monet engaged in a process of selection that paradoxically de-naturalized the forest. One tree does not make a forest, but it does seem to make an image of it. The visual importance of oaks is directly tied to their perceived importance in preservation efforts.

As forest historian has Vincent Morinaux charted, the nineteenth-century French people were (and remain today) principally opposed to the fast-growing, quick-profiting pine stands.

Indeed, the incursion of pines and the consequent reduction of oak trees in the forest of Fontainebleau led to calls for their preservation, opening a dialogue between image and actuality.

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406 I have not been able to locate Bodmer’s painting, though etchings after it exist.
Fontainebleau was the primary instigator for the Barbizon artists to agitate for its preservation as a landscape. Rousseau poetically claimed that the oaks were a public cause:

> Until now, it has been the state which has preserved the sacred tree, symbolizing the force and persistence of the soil; that national tree which formerly served as the natural cathedral for the celebration of the mysteries of our ancestors. If the state destroys them, it is up to public opinion to protect their remaining descendants.  

Rousseau clearly indicated the state as the enemy of the oak, but whether it was really the tree of his ancestors is unclear. In fact, pine trees had been present in Fontainebleau for centuries. When Lemmonier, Marie-Antoinette’s doctor, brought pines to Fontainebleau in 1786 he was actually re-introducing the species to the woods—one reason its integration was so successful. The oak was not naturally superior to the pine, but was instead made so culturally. The area of Fontainebleau famously preserved in 1861 was no more natural than the stands of pines Rousseau railed against. In rhetoric surrounding the preservation, the forest is not treated as a natural element. Rather, as Denecourt had called for a “national museum,” other documents refer to the woods as a work of architecture or a monument, a labyrinth of galleries. Such denominations were made official when a section of Fontainebleau was declared a preserved landscape; it was known as an “artistic reserve.” Nature had passed over into culture via the image.

Bringing the history of forest representation full circle, the image of the forest was eventually deployed by the administration in an attempt to appeal to the populace, particularly in

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410 For Rousseau and other Barbizon artists’ activities on behalf of the old oaks in Fontainebleau, see Greg Thomas, op. cit.
411 Kalaora, Musée vert, 134.
the context of the popular Universal Exhibitions. Universal Exhibitions could not, of course, present actual forests. Instead they showed stylized displays of forest paraphernalia, like a scene of “aménagement” from the 1878 expo (Figure 23). A photographic album reveals a wall of tools arranged ornamentally, hung so as to make pleasant shapes and patterns, effectively neutralizing their purpose. The administration seems to have taken pains to hide timber cutting operations, as public opinion shifted toward the image of the woods popularized by the Barbizon school and Denecourt’s guidebooks. After the 1867 expo, foresters had lamented, “This industry, producing more than 200 million of raw materials annually, does not have a space on the Champ de Mars proportional to its importance. It is being erased, to put it bluntly, before the official science represented by the forest administration and the school from which it recruits its members.”

Spectacular displays replaced more data-driven representations of forest policy. In a witty commentary about the extremes of these presentations at the 1867 Universal Exhibition, G. Serval jested:

An Englishman, named Hyett, found a way to give growing trees any color he wished. He has recently convinced the royal school of agriculture at Cirencester. He exposed to numerous publics shavings of diverse varietals and fragments of planks wearing all imaginable colors. ... Mr. Hyett uses compositions of metallic salts that, when introduced into the sap of the plant, gradually produce veritable wonders worthy of admiration. We will see one day, according to the journal Vignoble, entire forests transformed according to the taste and imagination of painters and opera decorators; one spectacle deserves another. Do our readers think that a red or blue forest is more beautiful than a simply green one?


413 “Un anglais, nommé Hyett, a trouvé le moyen de faire prendre aux arbres en pleine croissance la teinte qu’il lui plaît de leur donner. On a pu, dernièrement, s’en convaincre au collège royal d’agriculture de Cirencester. Des copeaux d’essences diverses, des fragments de planches revêtant toutes les couleurs imaginables ont été exposés aux regards d’un public nombreux. La découverte de M. Hyett se rattache à celle qui a été faite il y a plus de vingt ans par le docteur Boucherie, de Bordeaux. Elle en diffère en ce que ce dernier opérait sur des pièces de bois déjà arrachées du sol, et qu’il cherchait, non pas à produire différentes couleurs dans le bois, mais à le rendre plus durable. M. Hyett emploie des compositions...
Serval plays on the absurdity of a forest determined by aesthetics, yet ignored the evident irony that a forest comprised of gridded plots of pines is no less spectacularly unnatural than a forest in red or blue.

Aesthetics would also become the driving factor behind later forest preservation efforts, including pamphlets produced in the early twentieth century by the Touring Club of France, an association dedicated to the promotion and preservation of nature. Articles with titles like “The Charms of the Forest” encouraged reforestation efforts. By 1905 it was understood that “even [forest’s] beauty is an object of public utility.” By the end of the nineteenth century, forests’ perceived value shifted from material resource to visual display, leaving the state with greater liberty to manipulate the actual woods, as long as an image was preserved.

Forest Resistance

Despite these efforts to visualize the forest, to preserve and display it, to create of it an enduring image, there remained—and still remain—intractable elements of place that eluded capture by both artists and administrators. In addition to its political charge, as a refutation of the state’s increasingly dematerialized woods, the material evocation practiced by Barbizon artists was also a response to the limits of representation. These limits are made evident in a persistent forest trope: that of the edge. Rousseau and his fellow Barbizon artists returned again and again the edge as a focal point for their compositions, and as a way of dealing with the fullness of field

salines métalliques qui, introduites dans la sève du végétal, opèrent insensiblement des merveilles véritables dignes d’admiration. On verra un jour, dit le journal le Vignoble, des forêts entières transformées selon le goût et la fantaisie des peintres et des décorateurs d’opéra; ce spectacle en vaudra bien un autre. Nos lecteurs pensent-ils qu’une forêt rouge ou bleue soit plus belle qu’une forêt verte tout bonnement?” G. Serval, “Chronique Forestière.” *Annales forestières* (1867), 199.

the forest offered. Critics interpreted attention to the edge as a matter of aesthetics, noting “In contrast to most situations, the forest is most beautiful at the very site where it ends.”416 Yet the emphasis on the edge was actually a response to a real challenge to composition the forest presented.

Forests do not offer the framing elements and degradation of distance that nineteenth-century artists, critics and landscape theorists saw as requisite to make a landscape painting not only legible but pleasant to the eye. The fullness of a forest makes it difficult to find a vista. This basic difficulty was understood by one of the earliest proponents of landscape painting in France, Pierre Henri de Valenciennes. He had encouraged his students to study trees in winter to see their structure, and thus avoid the confusion and obfuscation fully-leafed branches produced.417 Edges provided a site where the forest made itself known. Fontainebleau famously culminated in the vast plains of Chailly to the east, providing a stark contrast between two visual and ecological registers. Millet most frequently painted this area. Both Rousseau and Diaz painted the western limit, at Monts-Girard, and their paintings demonstrate the compositional possibilities offered by the edge. In *Edge of the Woods at Monts-Girard* (1868, Figure 24), Diaz divided his canvas between a tangle of trees to the right and an open, stormy sky on the left. He created a clear border between forest and not forest, and used that border to help construct a view.

Artists and the administration were allied in the difficulties of picturing the forest. Despite the strictures of the Code, its applicability was dependent on knowing where a forest began and ended—yet even in the mid-nineteenth century state agents often had only an approximate idea of the borders of their forests. Title III, Article 8 of the forestry code addressed


the delimitation of forests, as established first under Francois I”, and reevaluated under the law of 29 September 1791. Yet the prominent forest administrator Baudrillart commented, “despite these provisions, a large number of forests do not have clear limits.”418 Even as great efforts were being made to map the lands of France, with the expansion of the cadaster product, the forest zones remained ambiguous. Numerous articles in the forestry journals Annales Forestières and the later Revue des Eaux et Forêts were dedicated to fixing the limits of the forest, indicating it was a topic of crucial interest.419.

Forestry manuals from the nineteenth century emphasized the way the forest upset existing cartographic strategies: the slope of the terrain and the height of the trees interrupted the visual dominion necessary for triangulation. The state, as a result, mapped not the forest but passages through the forest, resulting in angular geometric plans, images whose clean crispness dissimulates the very unknowability of the woods (Figure 25). Despite the visual precision of forest maps, charting the bounds of a forest was a more complex and approximate procedure than administrators would have liked. As drawings instructor Paul Laurent described in the 1830s, forests in particular resisted the triangulation methods used for the official cadaster project; while typically three points of interest were required, in the forest, “It is very rare that it is possible to see at the same time multiple points of interest; on the contrary, it is often the case that from point A we can only see to the nearby summits of B and F, while the angles AC, AD, etc. are

419 An anonymous forest administrator laments the difficulty of the undertaking in “Mesures prescrites pour la reconnoissance et la fixation des limites des forêts, au moment du levé des plans du cadastre,” Annales Forestier 427 (1810), 469-472.
interrupted by the sinuosity of the terrain or the height of the trees.\textsuperscript{420} The forest deflected sight; it resisted its own visualization.

Forests resisted administrative control in other, more physical ways. One of the most persistent motifs found in representations of the forest, particularly in Fontainebleau, are rocks. Even in Oudry’s scenes of the hunt from the previous century, the hunting dogs scampered across the forest’s famous boulders. Fontainebleau is still today a popular site for “bouldering,” a style of climbing that relies on low, bulbous rocks. These brute, material objects disrupted orderly plantations of trees, and frustrated foresters while providing a subject of intense study for artists. The attention artists gave to the forest’s rocks is exemplified in Camille Corot’s small sketch of 1835, \textit{Artist Sketching in the Forest of Fontainebleau} (Figure 26). The drawing shows an artist-figure nestled amongst an enclave of trees—but his back is turned to them. He is at work on a large sheet, and his body is directed instead towards the loose pile of rocks in the lower right of the image. Left unfinished, the rocks in the sketch emphasize the artist’s attention to them. Corot returned to the rock motif later in a finished oil painting, \textit{Rocks in Fontainebleau} (1860-65, Figure 27), indicating a persistent interest in the subject that was echoed by his Barbizon colleagues. In Diaz’s depiction of \textit{Monts-Girard}, rocks line the foreground of the image, mediating between painting and real space. In Rousseau’s \textit{Oak in the Rock}, the rock is as integral to the scene as the oak, grounding and anchoring both tree and image. Rousseau’s interest in rocks had begun almost as soon as he arrived in Fontainebleau: an 1829 oil study of rocks and trees is a veritable portrait of a boulder draped with moss, a small sapling emerging from its cracks (Figure 28). The image could be about time—the boulder, tens of thousands of

\textsuperscript{420} “Il est bien rare alors qu’il soit possible de voir en même temps plusieurs des points remarquables placés autour de celle-ci; bien souvent, au contraire, d’un point A on ne peut diriger de rayons visuels que vers les deux sommets voisins B et F, les rayons AC, AD, etc., sont arrêtés par les sinuosités du terrain ou par la hauteur des arbres.” Paul Laurent, \textit{Précis des leçons de travail graphique et de constructions forestières données à l’École royale forestière} (Nancy, 1830), 15.
years old, harboring the tiny, tentative tree—if it was not so literal, so visceral. Instead I think it is about place and perhaps to some extent Rousseau’s frustration at being unable to fully capture that place. By turning his attention to one thing that seemed solid, one tree, one named site, one edge, one rock, he could bring it more clearly into focus.

The artists’ emphasis on rocks responded to the changing role of the forest and its management in two ways. The first is that their obdurate and unproductive presence resists an administration focused on productivity. When the forest was being redefined as a quantifiable volume of usable (or taxable) wood, rocks registered as dead zones, wasted space. Their girth meant they were literally immovable in the nineteenth century. The rocks also urge us to think about a forest’s definition. Is it only a volume of wood that could be removed and regrown? What remains when the trees fall? In a popular treatise on landscape published in 1818, C.J.F. Lecarpentier suggested that rocks “follow the place where nature has positioned them.” Rocks, whose forms are determined by their site as much as their mineral composition, can be a cipher for place. Seemingly immovable, they are also deeply local. The interest in rocks suggests a forest is different from a field of wheat in that its presence as a site depends on more than what is grown and harvested upon it. The forest is a place, a rich terrain invested with history and memory, and the rock paintings insist upon that emplacement.

While paintings produced by Barbizon school artists may not render the forest as such, they can mark the landscape’s resistance to picturing and signal its material presence. Their work does not reveal a “true” vision of the forest—as those preservationists seeking to remake the woods to conform to Barbizon paintings might imply. Instead, they encourage attention to the complex reality of any place, and urge greater awareness of the complex status of nature in this

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422 For another perspective on the politicization of rocks in representation, see Ellen Macfarlane, “Group f.64, Rocks, and the Limits of the Political Photograph,” *American Art* 30, no. 3 (Fall 2016), 26-53.
period. When the town of Barbizon sought to immortalize Rousseau and Millet, they did so in the forest’s rocks. Installed in 1884, a bronze plaque featuring the busts of the two artists by Henri Chapu was supported by a public subscription (Figure 29). Set within a large boulder near the entrance to the forest, the sculpture works to integrate the two artists into the site in the most solid way imaginable. This final tribute is a fitting metaphor for the ways in which artists engaged with intractable, material indicators of place as a means of challenging an administration intent on achieving abstracted ideals.
CHAPTER FOUR

Wetlands

Jules Dupré’s *Sun Setting Over a Swamp* (Figure 1) is a radiant, unbounded image. Horizontal bands of color stretch across the canvas, without interruption. The terrain is covered in tangled vegetation. Water pools across the midground, reflecting the golden sky above. Several cows gather to drink but the focus of the image is the brilliant setting sun. It is the sun that gives the scene its title, its rays fanning out across an animated sky. The painting was unusual for its time, unusual even within Dupré’s own oeuvre, for its lack of compositional guides and framing elements. Dupré’s image is a testament to the visual potential of the region of southwest France known as the Landes de Gascogne, an open and vast terrain flooded for much of the year—yet when Dupré painted this scene in 1852, those wetlands were in the process of disappearing.

Wetlands were seen as a problematic territory in the nineteenth century: disorderly, unproductive and insalubrious, and the French state endeavored to drain them. The administration’s ambition to create a more uniform and productive landscape meant stagnant waters across the country were replaced with arable land or forest. The Landes de Gascogne was

\[423\] “Maintenant, la lande n’existe plus.” Félix Arnaudin, *Chants populaires de la Grande Lande* (Labouheyre, 1912), 1.

acutely affected by drainage, particularly after Napoleon III took a personal interest in the region in the 1850s. This chapter considers the ways in which the Landes, initially understood as antithetical to picturing, were brought into view, and how that increased visibility corresponded with increasing land reform in the region. It also looks at aesthetic motivations undergirding that transformation. Images bear witness to the pre-existence of a viable landscape and peasant economy that was in the process of being overwritten by the state in its pursuit of an ideal landscape. The process of drainage and privatization amounted to an internal colonization, and practices of ordering endemic to colonization were at work in Southwest France. After the physical transformation of the Landes was underway, pictures served to reclaim former visions of the place, and this chapter ends with a consideration of “after images.” The drainage of wetlands, and the picturing that accompanied that drainage, is an instance of the visual and physical management of territory in nineteenth-century France by both artists and the state.

Early Views of the Landes

The region depicted in Dupré’s painting is a triangular expanse running along the Atlantic coast of France, starting around Soulac, passing beneath Bordeaux, and continuing inland to Nérac before extending down nearly to Bayonne (Figure 2). Today, the Department of the Landes occupies only a portion of the area originally known as the Landes de Gascogne, a detail that hints at a divorce between nature and state that was enacted in the nineteenth century (Figure 3). The word landes first described a type of terrain: moor or heath, sometimes flooded and often understood as “waste” as it did not conform to norms of productivity. The term seems to come originally from the German, wherein Land describes a rich and cultivated terrain. A nineteenth-century treatise jested that the word could only be understood “ironically” in French,
as it “designates the poorest and most sterile of regions.”425 The landes, as a kind of landscape, were eliminated and Landes stands as a denatured administrative term.426

As the wetlands were drained, the region was progressively planted with pines. The roots of the pines anchor the ground and help stabilize the soil; further, they provide industry, primarily through the production of resin (Figure 4). The landscape today is almost entirely the product of engineering and administrative decisions made in the nineteenth century. The region is known, and celebrated, for these pine forests, as a French administrator recently declared in the speech used for this chapter’s epigraph: “We have transformed this unhealthy region, once dreaded and avoided... The forest of the Landes of Gascony has become one of the primary sources of economic wealth in the Aquitaine region, a cultural legacy and an exceptional environment.”427 The mythology of triumph over the landscape persists in France; revisiting the history of that transformation points to both the construction of the natural and the complicity of images in reframing place.

Southwest France had been described since the twelfth century as a desolate terrain: guides for pilgrims travelling to Compostela in Spain warned it was “a sorry country lacking in everything.”428 The Landes were physically and conceptually distant from Paris, and were approached by visitors from the capital with the mentality of an explorer. One of the first full

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426 When Landes is capitalized in this chapter, it refers to the specific geographic region in southwest France, known in the ancien regime as the Landes of Gascogne and the Landes of Bordeaux, part of the provinces of Guyenne and Gascony. After the restructuring of administrative units in 1790, the area known as the Landes was split between the departments of Landes, Gironde, Lot-et-Garonne, Gers, and Pyrénées-Atlantiques. In lowercase, landes refers to the kind of terrain which had covered the Landes and lent them its name: marshy, uncultivated moors.
accounts of the region was written by Jacques Grasset de Saint-Sauveur (1757-1810), a writer and diplomat who had already produced travelogues of Europe, Asia, Africa and America. His *Les Landes de Bordeaux* (1796) offers a cursory description of this “vast desert, sad and wild.” By the early nineteenth century the region was widely known to be “a tractless desert” and “a vast solitude;” one deputy affirmed “everything is sad, everything is dead in this unhappy region.” Such claims persisted unchallenged for centuries, in part because the Landes were little visited. A map of the area by Claude Masse from c. 1700 (Figure 5) is riddled with uncertainty, including areas marked as “impassible swamps,” “impassible swamps that are nearly always flooded,” and sections that may be either “swamp or ponds” depending on the season. The delineation of the coastline was also unclear, and it figures as a series of irregular blobs. Sandy dunes and high winds continually eroded the Atlantic border, and nineteenth-century administrators intent on fixing France’s physical contours sought to arrest the erosion and create firmer boundaries.

The state directed significant attention to stabilizing these coastal dunes, efforts that point to a larger interest in achieving an immovable image of France and a corresponding fear of any unfixed land. An 1858 treatise warned that if the erosion was not stopped, “an immense sandy zone will surround France... at that time, France and England, already united in the past (as indicated by underwater forests), will become a single country; the Channel will have


disappeared, and geographers will count one less sea and one fewer kingdom on the planet.  

Such fears tie the fate of the land to that of the nation. Starting in the late eighteenth century, it was determined that the sand could be “affixed” by planting pines, which thrived in the environment and whose roots held the dunes in place. In the nineteenth century, a State Commission of Dunes was founded, and from 1806 to 1862, 49,000 hectares of pines were planted.

The unfixity and uncertainty of terrain in Masse’s map responded to the ontological challenge of wetlands, which resist easy categorization due to their fluctuating nature. There was a larger problem of definition in the wetlands, a problem that ecologist Ann Vileisis sees as persisting today, when despite clear ecological benefits swamps continue to connote the unwanted and unwelcome. A nineteenth-century traveller to the Landes de Gascogne described the extremes through which the landscape oscillated: “In winter, everything there is submerged; it has the aspect of a universal flood. In other seasons, it is, truly, the picture of an absolute drought.” Even the engineers of the state service charged with the drainage were frequently unclear as to their object; historian J.M. Derex notes wryly that “the term marais remained inconsistent even for the engineers of the Ponts et Chaussées who contented themselves with techniques of drainage without fixing the precise definition of what it is they were improving.”

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431 “Une immense zone sablonneuse environnera la France... À cette époque la France et l’Angleterre, unies déjà dans des remis reculés (comme l’indiquent les forêts sous-marines), la France et l’Angleterre ne feront plus qu’un seul pays ; la Manche aura disparu, les géographes compteront une mer de moins et un royaume de plus sur le continent.” Ozanam, *Le Pays des Landes*, 10.


433 Ann Vileisis, *Discovering the Unknown Landscape: A History Of America’s Wetlands* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1999); see also the 2016 presidential campaign promise to “drain the swamp” of Washington, D.C.

434 “Pendant l’hiver, tout y est submergé ; c’est l’aspect de délieu universel. Dans les autres saisons, c’est, à la vérité, souvent le tableau de la plus complète sécheresse.” Saint-Amans, *Voyage agricole*, 40.

435 “La dénomination marais restera fluctuante même pour les ingénieurs des Ponts et Chaussées qui se contentèrent d’indiquer les techniques de dessèchemen sans fixer de définition précise à l’objet de leur
Wetlands were often viewed as a flaw or oversight in the distribution of land mass; an 1858 treatise cast them in quasi-religious terms, proclaiming “the separation of water and land was not really done in the Landes; it seems that God had stopped his work on the second day of creation.” The religious connotations speak to the symbolic import of landscape in the nineteenth century, and indicate that reforms were not purely rationally driven. As Vittoria Di Palma has shown in the English context, improvement was an aesthetic and moral project as much as a modernizing one.

Whether the work of Creation could be finished by human beings was unclear, as the naturalist and antiquarian Jean Florimond Boudon de Saint-Amans argued in 1812, “It is perhaps not the work of man; ... it requires the Creator to separate water from water a second time, that he makes the land firm, that he binds the winds, that he raises mountains, that he makes springs overflow; it requires a new Creation.” Others, however, saw the Landes as precisely the place, and the post-Revolutionary period as precisely the right moment, for human interaction. Joseph Lavallée, in his 1796 history of the region, affirmed, “We have arrived at that happy epoch where, to put it clearly, the limits of man have been broken... What he wants, he does.”

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drainage was not technologically or politically possible in 1796, the triumphant attitude Lavallée prematurely evoked came to fruition in the later nineteenth century.

The region’s connotation as “poor” and “deserted” corresponded to its perceived visual poverty in the early nineteenth century. The vastness of the region was seen as a fault to eyes accustomed to picturesquely framed views. In the Landes, nothing offered itself to the gaze, as Jean Baptiste La Lanne’s 1800 poem recited:

Silence and death cover this savage land;
Not a single shrub lends its shadow.
Across the distance, nothing offers itself to your eyes.\textsuperscript{440}

The claim that there was nothing to see was elaborated and expanded upon repeatedly in the decades that followed, particularly in travelogues. The vogue for descriptive accounts of travel in this period emerged in tandem with the increased accessibility of prints. The advent of lithography made them cheaper and faster to produce, and travel writers were often pictorially-driven in their descriptions. The Landes could not accord with the pictorial expectations of these writers, and they frequently reported that there was simply nothing to see, as in Jean-Florimond Boudon de Saint-Amans’ 1812 description:

Soon, however, we enter the landes, the vast landes, these landes as far as the eye can see, where nothing offers rest for the eye, other than the heather, where nothing catches your eye in the distance, other than a few scraggy flocks, driven by half-savage shepherds.\textsuperscript{441}

\textsuperscript{440} “Le silence et la mort couvrent ce lieu sauvage; Pas un seul arbrisseau n’y prête son ombrage. Vous avancez au loin; rien ne s’offre à vos yeux.” Jean-Baptiste La Lanne, \textit{Le potager, essai didactique} (Paris, 1800), 17.

\textsuperscript{441} “Bientôt, cependant, nous rentrons dans ces landes, ces immenses landes, ces landes à perte de vue, où rien ne repose les yeux, si ce n’est la bruyère, où rien ne les fixe au loin, si ce ne sont quelques troupeaux décharnés, conduits par des bergers à demi-sauvages.” Jean-Florimond Boudon de Saint-Amans, “Voyage agricole, botanique et pittoresque dans une partie des Landes de Lot-et-Garonne et de celles de la Gironde” in \textit{Annales des voyages de la géographie et de l’histoire ou collection}, vol. 18, ed. M. Malte-Brun (Paris, 1812), 33.
Alternately the Landes were seen as too grand and expansive. In 1837, closer to the time of Dupré's visit, the problem was not of too little but too much: "The eye cannot grasp the extent of the vast plains." This made the Landes difficult to measure, record, and map, as an 1858 observer noted: "the eye loses its ability to measure distances, unable to find a point of reference." The Landes were a blight to those who wanted to admire the Pyrenees, newly defined as a tourist attraction themselves, as an 1865 text lamented: "When one travels through these beautiful regions, the eye is painfully afflicted by the view of these landes." Such descriptions indicate by negative association that expectations of landscape in early nineteenth-century France encompassed focal points, framing elements and variations of scale. These expectations were based on both the classical landscapes of Claude Lorrain and Nicolas Poussin and the rising popularity of Dutch Golden Age images among nineteenth-century collectors, writers, and artists.

This absence or even denial of representation was not an oversight. The Landes' perceived challenge to visual depiction was a key factor in the physical reforms later carried out in the region—reforms that were described by both contemporaries and twentieth century historians as an internal colonization. A resistance to picturing, a refusal to offer itself up to the

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442 "Ce sont de vastes plaines dont l'œil ne peut embrasser l'étendue." Yzarn-Freissinet, Coup d'œil, 6.
443 "L'œil perd la faculté de mesurer les distances, faute de trouver un point de comparaison." Ozanam, Le pays des Landes, 1.
444 "Lorsque l'on parcourt ces belles contrées, l'œil est péniblement affecté par la vue de ces landes." "La Prime d'Honneur des Basses-Pyrénées en 1864," Journal d'Agriculture Pratique 1 (1865), 352.
445 The Dutch examples is particularly relevant as another site where land was reclaimed, providing a model for a reinvented terrain understood through images. Petra Chu charts the rising influence of Dutch art on French taste in her French Realism and the Dutch Masters; Thomas Puttfarken has outlined how conventions of composition came to be standardized through the French Academy in his The Discovery of Pictorial Composition: Theories of Visual Order in Painting (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).
sight lines of the Western gaze, is a typical feature of colonial landscapes, or landscapes seen as
in need of colonization. Deborah Cherry has analyzed Algeria’s resistance to visual
representation for the nineteenth-century British viewer in these terms. Landscape
representation’s ability to visually transform raw earth into civilized world was a central part of
the Western Imperial project. Bringing landscapes presumed to be difficult, immeasurable or
un-picturesque into view is one of the fundamental gestures of colonization.

Indeed, after the 1830s, as France expanded its empire into Algeria, its tone towards internal
projects shifted. The Landes, in particular, were increasingly exoticized and made ‘other’. They
were frequently compared to colonized landscapes; they were “our African Sahara: a desert
where the Gallic cock could only sharpen his spurs.” They were cast as increasingly remote,
“We rarely visit the Landes, these monotonous and sad plains are generally as unknown to
inhabitants of Bordeaux as the deserts of Kamchatka or the sands of Libya.” They were linked
to other areas where France had colonial interests, despite very different climatologic conditions.
It was declared: “It’s Tahiti several kilometers from Bordeaux, the savage life only a gunshot
from the center of civilization.” They were “more unknown than the savannas of America and
the steppes of Ukraine.” Such rhetoric helped to justify physical reforms, casting the wetland
terrain outside the nation, which was being defined by its productive and orderly landscapes.

447 Deborah Cherry, “Earth into World, Land into Landscape: The ‘Worlding’ of Algeria in Nineteenth-
Century British Feminism,” in Orientalism’s Interlocutors, eds. Jill Beaulieu and Mary Roberts (Durham:
449 “On visite peu les Landes; ses plaines si monotones et si tristes sont généralement aussi inconnues des
Bordelais que les déserts du Kamtschatka ou les sables de la Lybie.” Yzarn- Freissinet, Coup d’œil, 21.
450 “C’est Taïti à quelques kilomètres de Bordeaux, la vie sauvage à une portée de fusil du foyer de la
451 “plus inconnues que les savanes d’Amérique et les steppes de l’Ukraine.” Théophile Gautier, 1847,
cited in Peindre les Landes, de Hossegor à Soulac, ed. Jean-Roger Soubiran and Dominique Dussol
(Bordeaux: Le Festin, 2012), 7.
The reforms undertaken in the Landes de Gascogne echo practices of colonization, as described by postcolonial philosopher Frantz Fanon: "Colonialism turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it, devaluing pre-colonial history. It is the colonist who makes history: 'This land, it is we who made it.' Fanon posits a relationship between history and land that historian Eugen Weber expanded on in his account of post-Revolutionary France. As art historian John Zarobell has argued concerning Algeria, France’s colonial practices were most heavily invested in redefining territory. This redefinition comprised all elements of the landscape, from place names to the quality of the soil to the Algerians’ very “conceptions of space.” Much the same process of “redefinition” was at work in the Landes.

In addition to these structural similarities, the Landes were directly compared to Algeria. The conquest of the Landes was explicitly described as a colonization by contemporaries. The Landes were known as “a precious conquest... ten times the greater than Algeria.” In 1859 Henri Ribadieu made comparisons between French intervention in the Landes and the United States government’s treatment of Native Americans: “These last savages are destined to disappear without return. Civilization, in effect, is driving them out, as American colonization did in the United States.” It was a Landais deputy who was selected for a parliamentary commission to Algeria, presumably based on his familiarity with the landscape. He brought camels back with him to the Landes, as though he himself had been convinced the two terrains were

454 John Zarobell, Empire of Landscape: Space and Ideology in French Colonial Algeria (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 3-5.
456 “Ces derniers sauvages sont destinés à disparaître sans retour. La civilisation, en effet, les chasse devant elle, comme fait aux États-Unis la colonisation américaine.” Ribadieu, Un voyage, 89.
interchangeable. In 1865, a “villa Algerienne” was constructed in the Landes as a holiday resort for entrepreneur Leon Lesca, who had made his fortune in Algeria. Later commentators would refer to the successful resin industry in Southwest France as a potential model for the North African colony.

As these claims for conquest evidence, the Landes were generally presumed to not really be French. An 1838 note in the journal *Le Pelerin* speculated on the apparent foreignness of the landscape:

If a foreigner thrown by a storm upon the coasts of Gascony, after having crossed with difficulty the dunes that border the region, was thrust into the immense and sterile desert that stretches from Dax to Bordeaux, would he believe that he has entered into this beautiful France, celebrated for the fertility of its soil and its progress in civilization? Would he not instead imagine that he has found himself at the mercy of a savage people, and the strange costumes of the few inhabitants would contribute as much as their barbaric language to prolong his confusion.

Exoticizing descriptions, this passage makes clear, applied not only to the place but also to the people of the Landes. Descriptions continually proffered other possible identifications for the region’s inhabitants, linking them to distant regions through their costume or manner. Saint-Amans noted in 1812, “Decked out in lambskin, the wool facing outwards, wearing a brown beret, these shepherds wear the coat of monks of Thébaïde [a solitary retreat] or of Upper Egypt, and the hat of ancient Greeks.”

A departmental statistician observed in 1837, “The Landais

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460 “Si un étranger jeté par la tempête sur les côtes du golfe de Gascogne, après avoir franchi péniblement les dunes qui le bordent, s’enfonçait dans le désert immense et stérile qui s’étend de Dax jusqu’aux portes de Bordeaux, pourrait-il croire qu’il pénètre dans l’intérieur de cette belle France, également célèbre par la fertilité de son sol et par ses progrès dans la civilisation? Ne s’imagerait-il pas plutôt qu’il se trouve à la merci d’une peuplade sauvage, et la bizarrerie des costumes du petit nombre de pâtres qu’il rencontrerait, ne contribuerait-elle pas autant que leur jargon barbare à prolonger son erreur.” *Le Pelerin* 9 (20 March 1838).
have something of the Arab in physique and morale," another claimed the people living there were "wandering like Arabs in the desert."

While the Landes resisted picturing, the harshness of the landscape was registered instead on the bodies of its inhabitants. Despite claims for the region's deserted and abandoned status, it was inhabited. There was an agropastoral system in place, one that relied on transient herds of sheep moving between patches of dry ground and fertilizing pastures. A local newspaper cited the presence, in the 1850s, of "an entire economic system, faulty and undoubtedly barely productive, but existing, deeply rooted, functioning for centuries and consequently comprising significant rights acquired for usage and for property." The Landais spoke Gascon, a dialogue of Occitan, the "barbaric language" referred to by Le Pelerin. Peasants had adapted to the unstable terrain with a clever and unique innovation: they marched through their wetlands on stilts.

The stilts were a practical innovation that kept shepherds herding their sheep dry, helped them to quickly traverse unstable ground, and allowed them to monitor their flocks from on high. It is in the figure of the shepherd on stilts that the Landes most frequently entered into visual representation prior to the 1830s. With the addition of a long walking stick, the stilts formed a sort of tripod upon which the shepherd could perch comfortably. The stick could also be used to propel them over gaps or areas of particularly deep flooding. Observers remarked on the extent

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463 "errants comme les Arabes du desert." H. Gorgan, Nouveau panorama de la Gironde et de la Garonne (Auch, 1845), 14.
to which “the use of stilts is advantageous in this peaty and drowned terrain.” The stilts were so effective that before the railroad arrived in 1853 a shepherd on stilts was the fastest way to send an urgent message.

Stilts became an emblem of the Landes. Grasset de Saint-Sauveur’s 1796 travel account included stilts in two of the six plates illustrating the Bordeaux region (Figures 6 and 7; images from the 1804 edition). One shows a man headed for the city, seen as a distant skyline; another has a shepherd in conversation with a tenant farmer, surrounded by a flock of sheep. In his text, Grasset de Saint-Sauveur, despite his general contempt for the Landais, admits they are impressive for “the agility with which they walk, perched on stakes, is astonishing; a horse, at a trot, could not catch them.” Grasset de Saint-Sauveur’s images are akin to the costume plates he produced for other seemingly exotic regions, like the Americas, and their tight cropping and focus on the figure means they give little indication of the landscape. Later images provided a fuller picture, as in an 1829 album featuring the Bordeaux region by native artist Gustave de Galard (1779-1841). Like Grasset de Saint-Sauveur, Galard began his career representing distant lands, spending part of his youth in America, England and Switzerland before settling in Bordeaux. He started as a portraitist, making images of wealthy city dwellers. At the same time, he produced engravings for a larger public, focusing on popular “types,” and it is in this context that he produced his first images of the Landes. Galard created a costume plate in the vein of Grasset de Saint-Sauveur, published as part of a subscription series on the costumes of the Bordeaux region, in 1818-1819 (Figure 8), and already in that image he included more of the

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466 The other plates show a woman in typical regional costume, and a sheep vendor.
surrounding vegetation than his predecessor, detailing some reddened bushes in the foreground and opening up the distance with several scaled shepherds in the background. In the 1820s, Galard expanded his focus still further with views in the style of *voyages pittoresques* gaining popularity across France. The *voyages pittoresques* were illustrated volumes highlighting characteristic aspects of French landscape and patrimony, intended as a way for the French to become familiar with France beyond their own region, part of wider efforts to visualize the nation as a whole. Galard’s *Departmental Album of Bordeaux and its Surroundings* of 1829 included a view of the Landes, featuring a house and a fenced in area where several cows are pasturing (Figure 9). Still, it is the stilted shepherds that most define the scene and locate it in the Landes.

The stilts demonstrate the Landais’ integration into their landscape: an integration that was unwelcome in a modernizing society that saw civilization as the victory of human ingenuity over nature, rather than adaptation to it. As a result of their close relationship to their landscape, the negative aspects of the Landes region were projected onto its people. As early as 1714 the residents of the Landes were described as uncivilized: “The residents of the Landes are a savage species, in figure, mood and spirit.” The same tropes appeared in 1857, in descriptions of “the half-savage race that stagnates in this desert.” They were also reported to be notoriously superstitious and sickly. They were presumed to have “the barrenness and the dryness of the

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climate in which they live.” In 1837, the man of letters and regional commentator Vicomte d’Yzarn-Freissinet put it simply: “This deterioration of the soil has brought about the degradation of the man.” An 1888 treatise offered a more detailed account of the interaction between soil and self:

The pliancy of the soil, in acting too weakly although constantly on the muscular action of the peasant and enforcing a monotonous and uniform movement, has contributed to produce a general sluggishness, this weakening that characterizes the fiber of the Landais and perpetuates his state of lethargy and constitutional infirmity.

As the terms “lethargy” and “constitutional infirmity” suggest, discussions quickly passed from an objective account of climate to a subjective judgment about the state and fitness of the Landais.

The most remarkable and egregious claims regarding the Landais challenged their very humanity. They were decried as bestial in 1825, “of an intelligence so limited that they differ from animals only in form.” This, notably, deprived them of their rights, as the author continues: “these men without rights, without obligations, without temple or cult, ignorant even of the name of their sovereign.” In the 1830s, rumors spread that residents of the Landes, having walked on stilts for centuries, had developed an opposable joint in their toes, much like a thumb. They were seen as potentially the “missing link long searched for between man and

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474 “Cette sorte de dégradation du sol a opéré la dégradation de l’homme.” Yzarn-Freissinet, Coup d’œil, 8.
477 Sargos, Histoire de la forêt, 61.
monkey." These claims harken back to the eighteenth-century naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon's environmental determination, which charted the impact of environmental conditions on species' form. It can further be related to physiognomic tenets prevalent at the time, including theories of criminology and degeneracy. The myth of the quadrumanous Landais furthered the state's imperative to bring all land (and consequently inhabitants) in line with a French ideal, and suggested the stakes of resisting transformation.

**Motivations for Reform**

The motivations driving the wetlands' drainage were plural and varied. They included their presumed insalubrity; a suspicion of instability and a corresponding need to create order and legibility by separating water from land; a call to privatize the region (and territory in France more generally); and the formation of a new, unified national landscape after the Revolution. A desire to cultivate the wetlands had been expressed as early as the sixteenth century. Henri IV passed an edict in 1559 ordering their drainage and proposing to settle the region with Moors fleeing Spain. When he further demanded the Moors convert to Christianity, they went to North Africa instead and the project was abandoned. Attempts at drainage were reprised in the

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eighteenth century, but the complex legal structure of the *ancien regime* and the lack of a central organizing force hindered this sign of progress. 483

The 1789 Revolution precipitated new motivations for drainage: stagnant waters were associated with the monarchy. Ponds in particular were decried as the "fruit of despotism." 484 Artificially created to raise carp for the wealthy and/or for monastic orders abstaining from meat, ponds had diminished the amount of arable land available for the production of wheat. Revolutionaries perceived them as signs of greed and tyranny, and their drainage was proposed in one of the first acts of the Convention. A report from the year II (1793) asserted:

Feudalism subjugated to its empire all territorial properties: pride and interest are the stars of its principle satellites: always active, always awake, as are tyrants, seigneurs, fiefs seeking opportunities to enrich themselves and dominate; nature had intended several streams of water to fertilize prairies, to fatten streams and rivers. Greedy men stopped them, and made vast ponds. Without limit in their greed, and without humanity for the inhabitants, they have successfully mounted embankments... Monarchy, worthy companion to feudalism, has also created ponds; though it mixed into its invasion the cause of religion, and its invasion was religiously respected. 485

These associations colored the understanding of wetlands more generally, which were seen as depriving the nation of productive land. 486 The Convention’s act also shows the extent to which land itself was politically coded. It became a patriotic cause to rid the nation of stagnant waters. As one deputy proclaimed to the committee on public health and agriculture in 1793, “A single

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486 See also Georges Sand’s *La Mare au diable* (1846) for an example of the cultural connotations of ponds.
pond left behind would ... bring back the *ancien régime.*  

The new nation needed a new landscape.

The aftermath of the 1789 Revolution also meant that the administration was in a better position to effect reform. Following the revolutionary restructuring of regional government, and thanks to the strictures of the Napoleonic regime, France emerged with a strong centralized authority better prepared to take on large projects such as the Landes. Engineers from the state engineering service, the Ponts et Chaussées, were dispatched to dig canals, rerouting the water gradually. When steam-driven machinery was developed, it was used to more effectively pump water to higher ground. Pines were planted to stabilize the soil, as they had with the sand dunes. Such interventions, however, were costly. A number of collective enterprises were founded to pool resources, including the *General Company for the Drainage of Swamps, Lakes, Ponds, and Foreshore* (1828) and the *Company for the Exploitation and Colonization of the Landes of Bordeaux* (1834). Progressive efforts over the course of the nineteenth century meant that more and more land was reclaimed, but the work was unsteady and never completed: wetlands were seemingly destined to flood.

Progress in drainage was recorded in an atlas in 1853, produced by Joseph-Bernard Abadie (1824-1876), a resident of Tarbes, a city in the Southwest outside the Landes itself. The atlas primarily celebrates the work of M. Clouchet, a man of private industry who was invested in the region. The difficulty of the undertaking, particularly for an individual, meant that in ten years he had only managed to convert 25 hectares within a vast 10,000-hectare plain of sterile landes. It

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487 Jacques-Antoine Boudin, *Mémoire sur le dessèchement et la mise en culture des étangs de la Sologne, de la Bresse, de la Brenne, etc., ... Lu à la Commission des subsistances et approvisionnements de la République, au Comité de salut public et au Comité d'agriculture, les 16 et 22 brumaire Ile de la République* (Paris, an II), 113.


489 *Journal d'Agriculture Pratique* 1 (1865), 353.
was clear that real change would require increased state intervention, but Clouchet’s efforts were nonetheless celebrated. He was awarded a silver medal by the regional agricultural council of the Basses-Pyrénées department in 1864, “recognizing the energy of his efforts and the great example he had provided.”

Titled *Success in the Draining of Swamps*, the atlas is comprised of a series of maps, showing units of land before and after the drainage effected by Clouchet and several other independent investors. Interspersed between the maps are lithographs of innovative machinery, new factories, and industry brought to the region. Eight units of land were represented, each in a two-page spread. In most cases the left-hand side shows the parcel before reform and the right side presents its transformation. The parcels are represented at the same scale to allow for a direct comparison (see Figures 10 and 11). The ‘before’ images, notably, were not given titles. In Figure 10, for example, the image on the right shows the “Agricultural Establishment of Saint-Jeanne.” The left side of the page is simply denominated, “what was the terrain that is represented after;,” an awkward phrasing that echoes the presumed awkwardness of the landscape. Naming was a way of bringing the landscape into view and giving meaning to undefined wastes: when drainage engineers were discussing progress in the region, the head of the project, Henri Crouzet, complained that numerous streams were unlabeled and declared “all these little rivers should have a name.”

In addition to creating named sites, in the atlas transformation was aesthetically coded in the passage from squiggly, undefined regions to neatly bounded, rigidly linear parcels. In the “after” images, parallel lines mark order, and thick dots create boundaries. Color was also used to

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*Journal d’Agriculture Pratique*, 353.

“Ce qu’était le terrain représenté après.”

“tous ces petits ruisseaux doivent avoir un nom.” Letter from Crouzet to the head engineer of the Ponts et Chaussées, (13 ? 1864), Archives Départementales des Landes, Mont-de-Marsan, A.N.2813
indicate reorganization. On the left-hand side of Figure 10, colors are mixed in a loose, brushy manner. Pinks, blues and greens intermingle in a style reminiscent of abstract watercolors. On the right, those colors have been properly separated into neat, discrete forms, with only a small unformed area remaining at the upper left, and carefully hedged from the rest of the image.

Wetland drainage, as the atlas images suggest, was driven by aesthetic concerns. The nineteenth-century state repeatedly endeavored to enact a visual ordering, one that was presumed to correspond to a social and political order. Wetlands, as neither water nor land, regions in constant flux, were inherently disorderly, and draining them was a method of imposing order. The term the state used to describe clearance efforts, défrichement, evoked “taming,” as though the wetlands were a potentially out-of-control force.\(^\text{493}\)

Clouchet’s efforts not only transformed the quality of the land; he also brought new industry to the region. Accordingly, the images in the atlas show both the transition from disorder to order and they document the shift from useless to useful spaces. The “after” images are full of productive spaces; even former gardens, under Clouchet’s regime, became plaster factories, baths, public washing stations and habitation (Figure 12). In Figure 11, land that Clouchet had acquired from multiple individuals included a “marl source.” Marl is a clay and lime soil typically used as a fertilizer, though it can be transformed into plaster. In Clouchet’s transformation, the marl source was renamed a “plaster quarry” while retaining its form. Raw material became industrialized, and everything was oriented towards a purpose. Each map in the atlas is accompanied by a letter from the local mayor testifying to its accuracy and to the incontestable merit of the work that had been accomplished; the scripted nature of the letters was

such that each one relies on the same phrase. The changes, each mayor declared, had been “unquestionably good for the country.”

Clouchet’s work is an example of the heightened role of private investment in the Landes, and demonstrates how drainage paved the way for privatization. For centuries, peasants without land had relied on use rights, meaning they could do things like gather deadwood in forests and pasture their livestock in open fields. Prior to the drainage, the people of the Landes subsisted in an agropastoral economy with complex property relations that governed the extensive use of communal land. Yet such communal lands and shared use rights were increasingly disparaged in the post-Revolutionary period, where property was tied to citizenship. One regional prefect decried communal land in 1826 as part of a “deplorable collective regime, last vestige of centuries of barbarism, which still enslaves these immense plains.” Communal lands covered 14.8% of the Gironde and 29% of the Landes regions, making them prime targets for reforms that had privatization as one of their goals. The use rights of the Landais were largely ignored, and in an 1859 text they were described as having “neither property nor patrimony,” a claim that affirmed links between private property and participation in the nation. When drainage was mandated by law in 1857, municipal governments that could not finance the costly process were forced to sell their commons, an indirect but extremely effective means of eliminating centuries of communal use and eradicating a way of life to which the Landais were deeply wedded. Their stubborn attachment provided resistance to drainage efforts, and they were increasingly

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495 See William Sewell, Work and Revolution in France.
denigrated for it. An agricultural journal in 1865 complained that the Landais, “with his ingrained routine, his ignorance and his short-sightedness, the peasant holds to his landes, convinced that without them there could be no grazing, nor any litter for the stable.”

There were, further, issues of health and danger in the Landes. Wetlands were seen to spread disease, in keeping with the miasmatic germ theory prevalent until the late nineteenth century. An eighteenth-century physician decried marshes as “immense cloacae, from which infection spreads countless diseases.” A newspaper article from 1838 concurred, “In the summer, miasmas escaping the swamps corrupt the air and in the end irritate the sparse and meager population that stagnates in these atrocious solitudes.” In 1846 stagnant waters were akin to “pestilent lagoons” emanating “putrid fevers” and “miasmatic exhalations.”

The potential negative effects of a landscape on its inhabitants were given visual form in 1850, when academic artist Ernest Hébert (1817-1908) exhibited a painting of the Italian Pontine marshes in the Salon (Figure 13). Hébert was a student of Paul Delaroche and David d’Angers, and this was his first entry into the Salon. The painting, titled Mal’aria (malaria but also, literally, bad air) shows a family fleeing the region during the height of malaria season. Hébert’s painting condenses a number of issues concerning the salubrity of wetlands, the place of humans in the landscape, and the relationship between aesthetics and health. As contemporary literature

499 “Avec sa routine invétérée, son ignorance et sa courte vue, le paysan tient à ses touyas, bien persuade que sans eux il n’y a pas de pacage possible, ni de litière à l’étable.” “La Prime d’Honneur,” 352.
500 For miasma and the spread of disease, see David S. Barnes, The Great Stink of Paris and the Nineteenth-Century Struggle Against Filth and Germs (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).
501 “cloaques immenses, don’t l’infection répand des maladies sans nombre.” Jean-François Essuile, Traité politique et économique des communes ou observations sur l’agriculture, sur l’origine, la destination et l’état actuel des biens communs (Paris, 1770), 59.
502 “Durant l’été les miasmes qui s’échappent des marais corrompent l’air et achèvent d’énerver la population aussi rare que chétive qui végète dans ces affreuses solitudes.” Le Pelerin 9 (20 March 1838).
and accounts of the painting indicate, Hébert’s image, and the Pontine marshes more generally, served as sites on which larger debates about the fate of wetlands might take place. Critical responses to the painting indicate the ways in which images participated in and even prompted discussions concerning land use.

In Mal’aria, three women, two men and an infant are aboard a barge in a nearly stagnant stream; reflections on the surface of the water are untroubled by any current. One of the men stands at the front of the boat, using a long stick to propel the barge along. There is a high, uneven embankment, suggesting shifting water levels. The predominant tones of the image are brown; some green brush appears in the landscape but the most vibrant colors come from a hoard of vegetables stashed in the front of the boat, suggesting that cultivation results in healthier vegetation than nature alone. One of the women, wrapped in a brown cloth, is clearly unwell, and her illness is marked by a small religious icon at her side. The way the cloth drapes across her body echoes the brown contours of the landscape in the background, forming a visual and conceptual identification between her and the site, reminding the viewer that it is the land that has brought about the illness. In 1850 it was not mosquitos but miasma that spread disease, and this painting is heavy with its bad air. Working in a subtly blurred manner, with details softened as though seen through a fog, Hébert made visible the invisible danger of the site.

The painting was a huge success at the Salon, where Parisian viewers perhaps aligned its sad message with their own fears regarding the recent cholera outbreak in 1849.504 It was “very remarkable and very remarked upon,” according to journalist Anatole de la Forge.505

found in the relation between the personages an escapist romantic fantasy, but other critics focused on the setting. For Théophile Gautier, the painting precipitated questions about the natural that were integral to nineteenth-century improvement efforts. Gautier asked,

Is it nature that wants to take back this land that man has overused and put to rest by the fallowness of death? Or is it, on the contrary, abandoned land that distills in silence poisons of solitude, in order to show that where the human community expands its family, there is life and health?

Gautier’s speculations on the relationship between man and nature, prompted by Hebert’s painting, indicate that in the nineteenth century art was a forum for discussing issues of nature.

The questions prompted by Hébert’s painting were evidently not seen as contradictory to the French administration’s position on land reform, as Mal’aria was purchased by the state in 1851 and sent to the Luxembourg museum, where it was visible to the nation’s senators who shared the building. In 1862, de la Forge described the painting’s continuing influence on political discussions in the Senate, particularly concerning the state of Italy and the situation of the capital, where the seat of power of the Risorgimento and the role of the popes in Rome was being questioned: “It is true, the melancholy painting of M. Hébert is hung in the gallery of Luxembourg beneath the gaze of Messieurs the Senators as though inviting them to reflect on the Roman question.” De la Forge’s statement confirms landscape representation’s ability to participate in potent political debates. Other critics similarly linked the image to ongoing efforts at Italian unification, passing from land reform to fervent political issues. Alfred d’Aunay wrote

506 De la Forge, La peinture contemporaine, 235.
507 “Est-ce la nature qui veut reprendre cette terre que l’homme a trop fatiguée et la reposer par une jachère de mort? Est-ce au contraire le sol abandonné qui distille dans le silence les poisons de la solitude, pour montrer que là où la communauté humaine étend sa famille, là sont la vie et la santé?” Cited in Kearns, Théophile Gautier, 173.
509 “C’est vrai, la mélancolique tableau d’Hébert placé dans la galerie du Luxembourg sous les yeux de MM. les sénateurs comme pour les inviter à réfléchir à la question romaine...” Anatole de la Forge, Les Utopistes en Italie (Paris, 1862), 36.
of the painting in 1865, when Naples and Florence (but not yet Rome) had been incorporated in the emerging Italian nation state, that for the figures, “what their land needs, what their sky needs, is not an ordinary process of drainage and sanitization, but a bit of that air that is no longer missing for Neapolitans and Florentines, who were only yesterday dreaming, like them, with sadness, in descending the river of life on the raft of solitude.” D’Aunay’s comments suggest wetlands offered a commonly understood metaphor for political action.

The problem of wetlands was not unique to France, and the Pontine Marshes Hébert featured in his painting had long provided a symbolic shadowy other to the civilization of the eternal city, much as the Landes and the Landais were being positioned as France’s other, something outside the fertile and civilized norm. The Romans never managed to successfully drain the Pontine Marshes, and countless Italian leaders made drainage a goal. Goethe visited the region in February of 1787 and is thought to have incorporated the marshes into his play, Faust. He may be referring to them when the elder Faust speaks in his last act, “A marsh lies by the mountain there, / And poisons all we’ve gained already; / To drain away that foul pool too, / The last would be the highest conquest.” A British traveler in 1826 noted their recalcitrance to human intervention: “These marshes have defied the attempts of consuls, emperors, and popes, for more than two thousand years, to drain them.”

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510 “Ce qu’il faut à leur terre, à leur ciel, ce n’est pas un procédé de dessèchement, d’assainissement quelconque, mais un peu de cet air qui ne manque plus aux Napolitans et aux Florentins, qui hier rêvaient comme eux, avec tristesse, en descendant la fleuve de la vie sur le radeau de la servitude.” Alfred d’Aunay, “Hebert, La Mal’aria,” Revue historique illustrée (5 November 1865).
514 “Journey from Rome to Naples—Pontine Marshes-Conduct of the Postillon—Custom Houses and Passports—Weather at Naples,” *The Kaleidoscope, or, Literary and Scientific Mirror*, May 9, 1826.
The actual effects of the Pontine Marshes were perhaps exaggerated in their cultural representation, indicating that wetlands could be a scapegoat for a host of other issues. Some, in fact, found the swamps beautiful, including Hans Christian Anderson, who in 1845 remarked:

Many people imagine the Pontine Marshes are only marshy ground, a dreary extent of stagnant, slimy water, a melancholy road to travel over: on the contrary, the marshes have more resemblance to the rich plains of Lombardy; yes, they are like them, rich to abundance; grass and herbage grow here with a succulence and luxuriance which the north of Italy cannot exhibit. 515

Responses to wetlands proved to be extremely subjective. The French author of a voyage pittoresque to the region suggested the marshes “are not nearly as harmful as is said.”516 The same author, however, claimed the French Landes were much worse: “I have found in the Landes areas that were sorrier and unhappier, without a single shrub in an even vaster expanse.”517

Mal’aria also provoked discussions concerning the relationship between beauty and danger; the painting was widely understood as beautiful but sad, possessing “a moral beauty.”518 As d’Aunay articulated it, the sorry family was fleeing a lost paradise “These peasants of the Pontine Marshes are feverish, as Adam and Eve must have been in leaving paradise. They give the impression of a lost grandeur. This Roman countryside, whose miasmas are killing their bodies. They feel that it was beautiful, that a free, opulent and happy people, masters of the

515 Cited in Sallares, Malaria in Rome, 174.
516 “n’est pas péricieux au loin où on le dit.” Adolphe Pezant, Voyage pittoresque à Pompei, Herculanum, au Vésuve, à Rome et à Naples (Paris, 1839), 200.
517 “J’ai trouvé dans des Landes des régions d’un aspect plus triste et plus malheureux, et où on ne recontrais pas un abrisseau dans une plus vaste étendue de pays.” Pezant, Voyage pittoresque, 200.
world, frolicked there under flowering orange blossoms." Separating the beautiful and the
good, d’Aunay’s comments position wetlands as a lost or fallen paradise.

The debates circulating around the painting paralleled those happening outside it, particularly
concerning the Landes. The idea of attractive yet dangerous landscapes spread in the 1850s, as
artists were increasingly drawn to “savage” spaces. A proponent of drainage and critic of the
wetlands, Doctor Ozanam, described the latent dangers of the beautiful in 1858:

> We often, in our hectic cities, miss the pure air of the country; we sigh after the
> breeze perfumed with flowers; it seems that each gust of wind gives strength and
> health. But nature is a cruel mother, who sells her goods for a high price while
> seeming to give them away; be wary of these forests with deep shadows, these
> grasses wet with the tears of dawn, and these lakes reflecting the purple hues of
> the setting sun. Each of these poetic pictures hides a danger; we set out to admire
> them, but the cold reaches you, the fever takes hold of you, and you return to
> suffer.  

Ozanam highlights a concept of nature as picture (tableau), indicating the embeddedness of
aesthetics in questions of territory. Exposing and condemning the hidden danger of the poetic
landscape, Ozanam’s warning was particularly pertinent in the 1850s because the region had
recently been made more visible by visiting painters.

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519 “Ces paysans des Marais-Pontins ont la fièvre, comme devaient l’avoir Adam et Eve lorsqu’ils
quittèrent le paradis. Ils ont le sentiment d’une grandeur déchue. Cette campagne romaine, dont les
miasmes tuent leurs corps, ils sentent qu’elle a été belle, qu’un peuple libre, opulent, heureux, maître du
monde, y circulait sous les orangers en fleurs.” D’Aunay, “Hebert, La Mal’aria,” np.

520 “On se prend souvent, dans nos villes tumultueuses, à regretter l’air pur des campagnes; on soupire
après cette brise embaumée par les fleurs; il semble que chaque souffle du vent va donner la force et la
santé. Mais la nature est une marâtre, qui vend bien cher tous les biens qu’elle semble nous donner;
défiez-vous de ces forêts aux ombrages profonds, de ces herbes mouillées par les pleurs de l’aurore, et de
ces lacs qui reflètent les teintes empourprées du soleil couchant. Chacun de ces poétiques tableaux cache
un danger; on part pour admirer, mais le froid vous gagne, la fièvre vous saisit, on rentre pour souffrir.”
Artists in the Landes

Returning to Dupré’s *Soleil Couchant*, the absence of figures is notable. Wittingly or not, his image is complicit in the state’s description of the region as vast, barren and empty. In its full, colorful presence, it counters, however, claims that there was ‘nothing to see’. The image was painted during a trip to Southwest France in 1844 with fellow Barbizon artist Théodore Rousseau. Drawn to the region for precisely the reasons it had been detested by earlier commentators—its vast openness, its savage character—Dupré and Rousseau revealed the Landes’ potential for artistic interpretation. They helped to make the region visible, particularly to those in Paris making decisions about the fate of the *landes*. Still, both Dupré and Rousseau struggled to picture this unfamiliar terrain. The conventions for landscape painting they had developed in the forest of Fontainebleau relied on framing elements, graduated lighting, and gentle recessions in depth of field. The open, light-flooded spaces of the Southwest prompted experimental stylistic choices—or, alternately, pushed the artists to generate a more managed (and manageable) vision.

The Landes were rendered accessible to Dupré and Rousseau thanks to increased infrastructure related to drainage projects: the Paris Bordeaux railway opened 1840, and inroads were being constructed through the *landes*. As a result, they arrived at a moment when transformation had begun, and drainage efforts were underway, but they were not yet complete. Alfred Sensier, biographer and critical supporter of the Barbizon school, recounted the artists’ initial motivations for visiting the region. They had, he claims, heard of this region, “abandoned

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and even less cultivated than the deserts of the Sologne [another marshy region of France].

Dupré apparently declared to Sensier, “That must be beautiful,” and the artists gathered funds to leave in April of 1844.

Sensier cites Dupré’s initial reaction to the region: “What man can touch he can master, but this sky without clouds, these wells of light, are a problem as discouraging for the painter as they are impossible to measure.” It was, according to Sensier, “the mirage of an unrealizable world.” The inability to grasp the scene led Dupré to produce the unbounded Sun Setting, relying on color, effects of atmosphere, and light to structure his painting. Dupré offered a second vision of the Landes plains in Les Landes (the redness of autumn) (circa 1845-50, Figure 14). Like Sun Setting, Les Landes does not rely on framing elements. Dupré focused on the unfixed elements of the landscape and the openness of the space. Though a small house is apparent to the right along the horizon line, the image is primarily a scene of ground and sky. The painting is subtitled “the redness of autumn” and the seasonality of the scene comes through in the color, as the tall grasses and scratchy bramble have begun to deepen in hue. Even the sky takes on the red tone, in sketchy strokes through the clouds. It is one of Dupré’s most thickly painted images, filled with greens, reds, ochers, warm browns and lighter tans. It is as if Dupré was working to counter his inability to grasp the landscape with the repeated touch of brush to canvas, to render the mirage material through pigment and medium. Particularly in the foreground, Dupré built up layers of color, dragging his brush across an already dense ground to

522 "On leur avait raconté que des landes de Gascogne étaient un pays abandonné et plus inculte encore que les deserts de la Sologne." Sensier, Souvenirs, 142.
523 Sensier, Souvenirs, 142.
524 "Ce que l’homme touche il peut en devenir le maître, mais ce ciel sans nuages, ce puits de lumière, est un problème aussi désespérant à peindre qu’impossible à mesurer; cette demi-teinte lumineuse, toujours douce à l’œil, toujours effrayante à la pensée, est un chaos et un sphinx merveilleux." Sensier, Souvenirs, 146.
525 "le mirage d’un monde irréalisable," Sensier, Souvenirs, 146.

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create the stippled effect of heather and broom (Figure 15). When Dupré’s painting was etched—
prints being the primary means by which Barbizon images circulated—that thick, rich smear of
brown, registered instead as absence, a blank, recording only the pressure of the unetched portion
of the plate against the white ground (Figure 16). The print visually emptied the region of its
problematic and slippery materiality, transforming it into something more legible for a Parisian
audience.

Rousseau similarly found himself overwhelmed by the region’s potential; Sensier remarked
that he was drawn to the blue of the sky but found it “evasive.”526 David Croal Thompson further
claimed, “He felt the strength of the color in this new country so much that he did not trust
himself at first to paint with a full palette, but he worked in a sort of monotone or grisaille.”527
While in the Landes Rousseau produced a large monochromatic oil sketch, combining charcoal
drawing with thin paint to add emphasis. It is a scene set not in the vast marshy Landes but on
their more fertile fringes, a site that offered Rousseau more familiar motifs, including twisting
oaks and rustic fences (Figure 17). Some scholars have suggested the grisaille was done en plein
air, though Scott Allan has recently contended that the existence of preparatory sketches
suggests otherwise.528 The painting related to the grisaille is one of Rousseau’s most labored
canvas, Farm in the Landes, which he worked on for over two decades (Figure 18). Despite
being a commission from his most supportive patron, Frédéric Hartmann, an Alsatian
industrialist, the painting was not finished in Rousseau’s lifetime.529 The Landes were not

526 “insaisissible,” Sensier, Souvenirs, 146.
527 David Croal Thomson, The Barbizon School of Painters (London: Chapman and Hall Limited, 1891),
122.
529 Simon Kelly discusses the details of the commission, Rousseau’s communication with Hartmann, and
the finishing of the painting by Jean-François Millet in his “Ferme dans les Landes: A Re-Discovered
Painting by Théodore Rousseau.” The Burlington Magazine 143, no. 1184 (Nov. 2001), 687-690.
immediately productive for Rousseau, and the landscape did not inspire the expression he sought.

On returning to the studio, Rousseau did manage to produce a luminous canvas, packed with his impressions of the distinct light and its doubled reflection in the swampy terrain. *Swamp in the Landes* (Figure 19, circa 1846, now at the Walters and referred to as such to avoid confusion) is a small canvas with an open view across a flooded plain. A path of highlighting in the center foreground leads the viewer's eye into the scene, without directing it anywhere specific. In contrast to Dupré, whose watery ground was thick, a shallow pool with a muddy base, Rousseau's water is ethereal. Silvery white brushstrokes glance over the ground of the image without gathering into any defined area. Dragging a thinly loaded brush horizontally across the canvas in short strokes, he evokes the sparse, fleeing sensations of this liminal region (Figure 20). Two-thirds of the canvas is devoted to the sky, but it is a sky that is in intense dialogue with the ground below, picking up on those waterways and creating parallel streams of light and dark above. There are no foreground framing elements; on the contrary, the foreground seems to dissolve hazily into midground and distance without clear delineation. The scene has regional details: the scrawny Atlantic pine, a loosely penned in area with what seem to be cattle, and in the far distance what could be sails, as though our gaze might extend to the ocean. It is difficult to measure or grasp the distance covered: the details serve not to establish scale but instead to open up the image outwards. Rousseau created an expansive scene, a positive counterpart to the uneasy vastness experienced by earlier travel writers.

When Rousseau painted the Walters' *Swamp* in 1846, it was the height of his notorious series of refusals from the Salon; Champfleury wrote in that year, "Rousseau no longer sends work to
the salon due to the number of rejections he has been through.\textsuperscript{530} It was therefore not the Walters’ painting that the public saw, but a later depiction, again titled \textit{Swamp in the Landes}, painted in 1852 and accepted to the Salon of 1853 (Figure 21; now at the Louvre). Like its 1845 predecessor, \textit{Farm in the Landes}, the 1852 painting shows Rousseau returning to some familiar compositional strategies. There are framing elements, clearer indications of scale, and more coherent narrative components. Cows pasture in the foreground, overseen by a small figure in a kind of pastoral vignette. This figure notably stands \textit{not} on stilts, but instead atop a wooden platform, imposing on rather than adapting to the terrain. There is a view of the distant Pyrenees mountains along the horizon, helping to give definition to the wetlands through opposition and to create a border, arresting the gaze and interrupting the vast expanses. The ground is marshy, but in a contained way: brushstrokes do not fan across the surface as they do in the Walters’ painting, but instead gather in discrete pools that neatly reflect the cows above. The Louvre \textit{Swamp} is, overall, much more finely painted than Rousseau’s earlier work. This corresponds to a larger stylistic shift in Rousseau’s oeuvre in the 1850s, as he returned to the Salon, and is an instance of what art historian Greg Thomas has called a “defusing of Rousseau’s subversive potential.”\textsuperscript{531}

Beyond these formal choices, Rousseau has given over the right portion of the image to a stand of planted pines, the very species whose incursion he had fought against at Fontainebleau. The state increasingly encouraged the plantation of fast-growing pines in forests across France, but Rousseau and fellow artists saw them as unwelcome and frankly unaesthetic invasions. Rousseau lamented their “monotonous color,” “without form or taste,” and penned a letter to the


emperor protesting their plantation and calling for the preservation of old oaks, a nobler and more French species. Yet they appear here in his *Landes*, markers of the region’s transformation.

In addition to stabilizing the soil, the pines planted in the Landes were primarily intended for the production of resin, a vast industry that was active in Southwest France until the early 1990s when crude oil substitutes took over. Resin is obtained by tapping a tree until it “bleeds” sap; the raw resin is then processed to produce rosin, used in adhesives and turpentine, used, quite notably in this case, to thin paints and clean brushes. In his thinly painted image, Rousseau seems to have capitulated to the changing character of France’s landscapes. Scholars have read the Louvre painting as nostalgic, but I suggest instead that Rousseau’s image was aligned with modernization efforts underway in the region, presenting a managed landscape in a way that was acceptable to the state. In creating a more structured composition, Rousseau ignored the region’s potential for indefiniteness and expansiveness—qualities he had highlighted in the Walters painting. Rousseau stylistically drained the region of its discomfiting instability, and the completion of actual drainage efforts was not far behind.

The Louvre painting was not only accepted to the Salon in 1853; it was highly praised. Critic Théophile Gautier saw it as “perhaps the most perfect work of the master;” the art historian Charles Saunier agreed, seeing it as “the culminating moment of his career.” Edmond About, a critic and novelist who had written a fictional account of the drainage in the Landes, celebrating the conquest of engineering, loved what he called this “radiant little canvas, where the water mirrors, the sun gleams, the flowers blow, and the cows play joyfully. Nothing can be

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simpler, or more true, or more delicious than this picture. And it is finished—note that." The question of finish will come up again below, but About’s admiration makes clear Rousseau had transformed the Landes into a suitable landscape. In a final triumph, the painting was purchased by the state in 1881. At its auction, as the audience repeatedly asked, “Who is the purchaser?”… “Is it a foreigner, is it a Frenchman, or is it for the nation?” the auctioneer is said to have replied:

‘In the face of your repeated questions … I can no longer continue to keep the secret. It is for the French nation that I have been charged to buy this picture.’ The applause was immense. ‘It is France who keeps the chef d’oeuvre. It is the Louvre who has become the proprietor.’ ‘Bravo!’ said everyone. All the connoisseurs were greatly delighted.

In the 1880s, land and the Landes were for the French nation, in more ways than one. Rousseau’s painting brought them aesthetically into line, while ongoing land reform brought the terrain in keeping with national standards for fertile and productive landscapes.

In 1855, the Louvre painting was shown at France’s first Universal Exhibition (and the first to have a dedicated “Beaux-Arts” pavilion) where it intersected with the state’s growing interest in transforming the Landes region. In the agricultural portion of the exhibition that year, an engineer named Jules Chambrelent from the state engineering service had mounted a display featuring trunks of pines he had successfully planted in the Landes in 1850, just five years earlier. The jury was so struck by Chambrelent’s display, and so haunted by prior failures to cultivate the Landes, they planned a mission to the region to investigate for themselves. The emperor Napoleon III was on the exhibition jury. He saw both Rousseau’s painting and Chambrelent’s display, and together they contributed to his personal interest in the region: Rousseau showing its promise, Chambrelent its possibility. Two years later, in 1857, drainage of

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535 Cited in Théodore Rousseau (Masters in Art Series) (Boston: Bates and Guild, 1907), 460.
the wetlands was mandated by law. Art’s work was done, it had made visible and aesthetically managed the region, and its reform was now a matter of public policy.

Reform

In 1853, Raymond Esbrat painted Napoleon III’s visit to a model farm that had been created in another marshy region of France, the Sologne (Figure 22). The emperor is posed in the center of the scene in a top hat and coat. The image is filled with sheep and cattle; the setting is verdant and flourishing. To the right of the emperor, the architects and engineers of the empire contemplate blueprints. A gaggle of cheering villagers approach, gratefully receiving the emperor’s modernizing initiatives, which included canals, agricultural roads, and model farms like the one shown. Esbrat’s image stands as a reminder that as much as Napoleon III wanted empire, he was also dedicated to cultivating territory at home. The Second Empire was the most intense period of transformation in the Landes. Reforms were already well underway when Napoleon III became involved, but his efforts generated increased attention. He also made reform a legal imperative, passing a law in 1857 mandating drainage.

The emperor’s attitude towards the landscape is succinctly summarized in a claim he made to the Corps législatif in 1857 during a period of flooding: “On my honor, in France the rivers will return to their bed and not come out.”537 In the Second Empire, the Landes became an experimental landscape where the dominating powers of the state could be tested, providing a spectacularized vision of triumph in the region.538 Napoleon III saw himself as completing work that Napoleon I, with his more active international agenda, had been unable to. The law passed on 19 June 1857, known as the “Law for the Clearing and the Valorization of the Landes of

537 “Je tiens a honneur qu'en France les fleuves rentrent dans leur lit et qu'ils n'en puissent plus sortir.” “Discours Prononcé par l'Empereur des Français,” *Journal historique et littéraire* 23 (1837), 541.
538 The spectacle of Napoleon III’s reign has recently been articulated in an exhibition and related catalogue at the Musée d’Orsay, Guy Cogeval, ed. *The Spectacular Second Empire* (Paris: Éditions Skira, 2016).
Gascony.\textsuperscript{539} It claimed all communal lands were to be progressively drained and wooded, and that funding for the drainage should come from partial sale. If sufficient funds were not obtained, the state would intervene. State-funded roads would also be constructed to bring equipment and supplies to the drainage sites. The project was to be completed within twelve years. Napoleon III further committed to help private companies that collaborated to purchase common land and pool resources to fund its drainage.\textsuperscript{540} He himself purchased 7,000 hectares from the communes of Commensacq, Escource, Labouheyre, Lüe, Morcenx, Onesse, and Sabres. The land he bought was "in the most unhealthy and deserted section," a deliberate challenge for his engineers to overcome.\textsuperscript{541} He created an experimental farm named Solferino, after his recent military victory against the Austrian army in Italy. Solferino was further entangled with the military as former soldiers were sent to work there in peacetime. Henri Crouzet, a Ponts et Chaussées engineer, was Solferino’s director, charged with creating a paradigm for the region.\textsuperscript{542} The experimental farm was a model for investors, and the Landes increasingly became the subject of land speculation.\textsuperscript{543} According to a local historian, after the emperor’s example, "everyone dreamed of doing good [in the region] while making a lot of money, as with the stock exchange."\textsuperscript{544} The Landes became a landscape of speculation.

In August of 1857, Napoleon III traveled to the region. His visit engendered great ceremony.\textsuperscript{545} The town of Labouheyre, where the emperor arrived, was elaborately decorated, featuring young pines—the tree that would transform the region—hung with ornaments. Large

\textsuperscript{539} Loi d'assainissement et de mise en culture des Landes de Gascogne.
\textsuperscript{540} Sutton, "Reclamation of Wasteland," 251.
\textsuperscript{542} Thievaud, La Compagnie des Landes, 98.
\textsuperscript{544} "Jean Tucoo-Chala, "Introduction," in Lescarret, Le dernier Pasteur, 26.
\textsuperscript{545} The festivities and decorations are described in the Journal des Landes, 27 August 1857.
painted murals showed flourishing fields of corn bordered by oaks and pines, anticipating the success of Napoleon’s fertilization efforts. There was a welcome cortege, and it included several groups of shepherds on stilts: they were considered an emblem of the region, despite the purpose of the emperor’s visit being the eradication of their lifestyle. Banners proclaimed “Colonization” and “Fertilization,” making explicit the emperor’s ambitions, an internal colonization, and the means of achieving it, land reform. The arrival ceremony enacted a symbolic representation of the changes to come. As described by a regional newspaper, the *Journal des Landes*, the emperor was first led to a “rustic balcony,” from which one could see “a long view of the naked *lande*, ending vaguely at the horizon, like a still ocean with waves of sand and heather.” Opposite was another balcony, “of a richer style, more elegant, an ironwork balustrade,” which offered a “picturesque view” “of the green cornfields, of the thicket and the gardens, of the new and beautiful construction of the train station, of a *lande* fertilized and enriched by the work of man.”

It was from the rustic balcony, “the side of the sterile plain,” that the presentations to the Emperor were made. Posing himself on the threshold of change, the Emperor was to usher the region from aridity to picturesque fertility. This pomp and ceremony is indicative of the Landes’ position as, in historian Samuel Temple’s words, a “theater for imperial power.” The colonializing rhetoric of the 1830s and 40s gave way to a triumphant, spectacular display of state order and managed land in the 1850s.

In official accounts, the Landais welcomed Napoleon III’s visit and interventions. A toast published in the *Journal des Landes* emphasized the emperor’s transformative powers:

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546 “une profonde perspective de la lande nue se perdant vaguement à l’horizon, comme un Océan immobile aux ondes de sable et de bruyère.” “d’un style plus riche, plus élégant, à balustrade en fer” “sur les champs de mais vert, sur des taillis et des jardins, sur les fraîches et coquettes construction de la Gare, sur la lande fécondé et enrichie par le travail de l’homme.” *Journal des Landes*, 27 August 1857.


...To he who makes appear / The dawn of prosperity / To the poor fields that saw born / The hero of charity! / To he who came in person / To fertilize this arid soil / ... Calm your human uproar / The greatest step towards order is done / France's eagle of conquest / Joins the dove of good works! 549

A speech given on the occasion by Charles Corta, the president of the Conseil general des Landes and a member of the legislative assembly, recalled a promise Napoleon III made while in Bordeaux in 1852 to fulfill the potential his uncle Napoleon had seen in the Landes. Napoleon I is claimed to have said “I want to make the Landes one of the best departments of France,” but he never managed to devote the necessary attention. Corta claimed the triumph for the second emperor, “With the establishment of the railroads and agricultural routes, with the implementation of the law for the drainage and cultivation of the Landes, with the regulation of the waterways, the foreseen destiny has been achieved; the poor lands are elevated to the level of splendor of the most beautiful départements and, in their extent, they give to France the peaceful conquest of an interior colony.” 551 Those who stood to profit from the reforms—those with capital, like Corta—welcomed the colonization.

The Emperor's response to Corta notably borrowed the language of painting; he stated that the work he wanted to do “was only a sketch, but the people could count on his perseverance

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549 “... A celui qui fait apparaître / L’aube de la prospérité / Aux pauvres champs qui virent naître / Le héros de la charité! / A celui qui vient en personne / Féconder cet aride sol / ... Calmez-vous humaines tempêtes / Le plus grand pas de l’ordre est fait : / La France à l’aigle des conquêtes / Joint la colombe du bienfait !” A. Brussaut, “Toste d’un Landais à l’Empereur Napoleon III,” Journal des Landes, 27 August 1857.


to complete his *oeuvre*. The idea of the *ébauche*, the sketch, was a contested category of representation, often evoked by critics. In its original meaning, the *ébauche* constituted the first strokes on a painting, outlining the basic forms of the overall composition, to be overlaid with a more finished style, elaborating details and adding effects of light and shade. In the nineteenth century, avant-garde artists began exhibiting work that blurred the line between *ébauche* and finished painting, to the chagrin of classically-trained academic painters. By projecting to finish the “sketch” of the Landes, Napoleon III also referred to a finished landscape aesthetic.

The spectacle of Napoleon’s arrival was ephemeral, but one image of his visit remains. It is a square, cast-iron plaque stamped with a single boot print (Figure 17). To the left of the boot is a sprig of wheat, to the right a small spade. The boot registers Napoleon III’s presence in the Landes and his desire to transform them, to have them recast in his image. The plaque proclaims “Napoleon III is the first French sovereign to step foot on this arid land, with the noble thought of fertilizing it.” The boot print stands as an act of erasure, stamping out earlier visions and alternate possibilities for the Landes. Napoleon III’s efforts and the law of 1857 resulted in over 120,000 hectares of communal land being sold and drained.

Napoleon III’s interest made the Landes the focus of national, rather than regional, attention. The drainage, along with other land reform projects, was a great state undertaking that served as a source of pride for the nation. In the 1850s, the region was the subject of so much discussion that Edmond About, who was in the process of writing a book on the Landes,

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554 “Napoléon III est le premier souverain français qui ait posé le pied sur cette lande aride dans la noble pensée de la fertiliser – 23 août 1857.”
compared them to the building of a cathedral, a significant occupation for the monarchy and a source of pride for the nation in the medieval period:

I entered a bookstore and asked for the most recent publications regarding cultivation in the Landes. I was given a bundle of books and pamphlets, the enormity of which shamed and scared me at the same time. What! I said to myself, I nearly rushed headlong into a question of such importance as the cathedral of Coutances once was!  

The transformation of the Landes and their assimilation into the national landscape was described as a "patriotic enterprise." A fictional account of the region's transformation published in 1858 compared it directly to the French Revolution: "The application of steam to cultivation was for Henri Gossard [a fictional engineer possibly modeled on Henri Crouzet] a revolution perhaps as fecund as that of '89, and one that had the advantage, over the latter, of having been accomplished without battle or fight." Land reform was part and parcel of the remaking of the nation.  

By the 1860s, the transformation was deemed complete: an article in the 1867 issue of the state forestry journal proclaimed "I give you the example of a land covered in sand, the poorest, the most miserable, the unhealthiest of France, the Landes, and I add that, thanks to reforestation, this department is today one of the richest and healthiest of the empire." Emile Zola captured

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556 "J'entrai chez un libraire et je demandai les dernières publications relatives à la culture des Landes. On m'offrit un ballot de livres et de brochures dont l'énormité me fit honte et peur en même temps. Quoi! disais-je en moi-même, j'ai failli passer étourdiment devant une question si importante, comme autrefois devant la cathédrale de Coutances!" Edmond About, Maître Pierre (Paris: L. Hachette, 1858), 17.  
557 Yzarn-Freissinet, Coup d'oeil, 37.  
558 "L'application de la vapeur à la culture de la terre était pour Henri Gossard une révolution aussi féconde peut-être que celle de 89, et qui avait l'avantage, sur cette dernière, de pouvoir s'accomplir sans luttes, sans combats." Lescarret, Le dernier Pasteur, 97.  
559 "Je vous citais l'exemple d'un pays couvert de sable, le plus pauvre, le plus misérable, le plus insalubre de la France, les Landes, et j'ajoutais que, grâce au reboisement, ce département était aujourd'hui un des plus riches, un des plus salubres de l'empire." "Le Reboisement et les Inondations," Revue des Eaux et Forêts 6 (1867), 13.
the spirit of triumph that motivated land reform, and cast the creation of land as administrative miracle, in Son Excellence Eugène Rougon (1876), writing of a fictional bureaucrat who had:

a great scheme of an altogether fresh life: a voluntary exile to the Landes of Gascony, the clearing of several square leagues of ground, and the founding of a new town amidst the conquered territory... In the Landes of Gascony he would be like the conquering king of a new territory. He would have people under him.... For the last fortnight... he had been reading technical treatises. And in imagination he had been reclaiming marshes, clearing the soil of stones with the aid of powerful machines, checking the advance of the sandhills by plantations of pines, and dowering France with a tract of wonderfully fertile country. 560

In 1878, the engineer Jules Chambrelent again mounted a display at the Universal Exhibition, this time not proposing but celebrating his achievement. In what was declared by the jury to be “a national work of the first class,” he exhibited specimens of the pines flourishing in the region.561

Chambrelent was later honored by the Touring Club de France—a club dedicated to appreciating the natural landscape—with a monument in 1907 (Figure 24). The inauguration was marked by now-familiar tropes:

If we cast our minds back sixty years, this vast region appeared completely sterile, with a miserable and sparse population suffering from deplorable health conditions, amid stunted herds, swamps, and arid deserts... With the arrival of Chambrelent, a new era dawned on this deprived country. Today we see it covered in beautiful forests whose products are destined for distant markets and inhabited by an industrious and robust population that has come to know comfort and health. This is the legacy of Chambrelent in the Landes.562

From sterility to robust health, the Landes were and remain a marker of state power; in the 1920s, historians Bruhnes and Deffointaines argued that the drainage had “the unique value of symbolizing that which should always and everywhere be the role of the State: brazen instructor,

560 Emile Zola, tr. Ernest A. Vizetelly, His Excellency (London, 1897), 137.
permitting and arousing in others free and profitable initiatives."\(^{563}\) By justifying the state’s intervention in the Landes, the drainage project also participated in the spread of state power and capitalism through bureaucracy and the administration of land use.\(^{564}\)

**After Images**

In the 1870s, after the transformation of the region of was largely completed, images representing the Landes were divided between those celebrating its regeneration and others lamenting the loss of its distinctive terrain. The former category was exemplified in the paintings of the school of Bordeaux; the latter in the oeuvre of amateur photographer Félix Arnaudin. These “after images” serve as a coda to the narrative of the Landes’ transformation, emphasizing the continuing belief in the ability of images to negotiate landscape’s meaning.

The Bordeaux school was founded circa 1860, and led by Louis-Augustin Auguin (1824-1903). The critic Théophile Thord described the formation of regional schools during the Second Empire, asking “Who would believe that, despite the political and administrative centralization, art is tending to decentralize? Numerous cities have nearly indigenous schools: Bordeaux, Marseille, Lyon.”\(^{565}\) Artists in Bordeaux were supported by two interrelated developments: the


\(^{564}\) The narrative of triumph over unhealthy regions, while still dominant today, has detractors, primarily those from the region. Historian Jacques Sargos is among those who refutes the tale of success and instead condemns what he terms a substitution of despotism by engineering. Jean-Pierre Lescarret, descendant of the author of the fictional account of the “last landais shepherd” claims engineering rhetoric was combined with a culture of speculation to produce official propaganda, preying on “the vulnerability of rural society in the face of a centralized power.” Others, including Samuel Temple, suggest the Landais were themselves involved and invested in the transformation, and reform was a negotiation rather than an imposition. Jacques Sargos, *Histoire de la forêt landaise*; Lescarret, “Parcs, bordes, parcours et bergers”; Temple, “The Natures of Nation.”

formation of a Society of the Friends of the Arts in 1851 to support production and the expanded
collection of the art museum (founded in 1801 by painter Pierre Lacour). Bordeaux’s Musée des
Beaux Arts featured work by Corot, Daubigny, and other members of the Barbizon school, and
these images became models for the Bordeaux painters. The Society hosted a yearly salon, which
provided a forum for local artists to exhibit and enabled the museum to acquire new works by
both regional and Parisian painters. The Society’s purchases were dominated by landscape
painting; between 1851 and 1939 they acquired more than 20,000 landscapes.566 Painters of the
Bordeaux school focused on nearby landscapes—yet, for the most part, they notably avoided any
remaining areas of landes.567 They show dunes, coastal views, and wooded areas. Frequently, the
areas they represent are those reclaimed from the wetlands, dappled with pines.

In highlighting the pine as a natural feature of the southwest, the Bordeaux school
achieved in aesthetic representation what the Success of the Drainage atlas did in cartographic: it
normalized the internal colonization of the region, formulating an image to naturalize the cultural
incursion. In Auguin’s Landscape in the Landes (Figure 25), he focuses on the edge of a stand of
pines. Two trees are set apart, standing almost as specimens, demonstrating the growth and form
of the species. A small pond is visible to the right edge, adding a reflective element. Several
cows stand in the foreground. These tropes, taken directly from Barbizon painting, are subtly
adapted to the region, while at the same time they serve to make the region adhere to a vision
that had been formulated of larger France and the national landscape. Another artist working in
the region, Amédée Baudit (1825-1890), in his Landais Pond (Figure 26, no date), shows sheep
grazing around a small, neatly bordered pond. Along the horizon line, parallel brown trunks
indicate stands of planted pines. In Wooded Dunes in the Landes (Figure 27, circa 1870-1880),

566 Dominique Dussol, Art et bourgeoisie: la société des amis des arts de Bordeaux (1851-1939),
(Bordeaux: Le Festin, 1997), 195.
567 Dussol, Art et bourgeoisie, 195.
Baudit again features the pine tree, showing the stabilized sands that had threatened the coastal border, now lush with greenery.

Critics recognized and celebrated the extent to which the Bordeaux school borrowed from Barbizon artists; Auguin was a follower of Corot, and the art critic Henry Devier noted “M. Auguin belongs to the school of Corot; he is poetic, and gracious like the master; the light always floods his superb skies; air circulates throughout; the horizon is immense; but he is more of a colorist than Corot.” Auguin clearly borrowed Corot’s characteristic fluttering leaves in another Landscape (Figure 28, no date), using a rapidly posed, sparsely loaded brush to give the impression of movement in a cluster of deciduous trees. Such a deliberate delocalization of the image, applying the conventions of one landscape to another region entirely, is in direct contrast with the aims of the Barbizon school, for whom preserving the material specificity of a given landscape was paramount.

While the Bordeaux school highlighted and celebrated the pines, another artist, working simultaneously, resented what he saw as an invasive species and tried to remove it from view. Amateur photographer Félix Arnaudin (1844-1921) was a native of the Landes, and in his visual representation he revived motifs of earlier images: the shepherd on stilts and the vast empty plains. Arnaudin was born in 1844 in Labouheyre, the very town where Napoleon III had celebrated his presence in the region in 1857. His father was landowning, and he was educated in the nearby town of Mont-de-Marsan. In the 1870s, as he approached thirty, he began to regret the loss of the distinctive landscape and culture of his native region. He decided to dedicate himself to its preservation in ethnographic interviews and surveys, recordings of local focal tales and songs, copies of archival registers, and images. He began as a folklorist, documenting songs that

568 “M. Auguin appartient à l’école de Corot; il est poétique, et gracieux comme le maître; la lumière inonde toujours son ciel superbe; l’air court partout; l’horizon est immense; mais il est plus coloriste que Corot.” Henry Devier, “Exposition de la Société des Amis des Arts.” La Gironde (25 May 1863).
were part of an unrecorded oral tradition. He then expanded and attempted a more systematic survey, distributing questionnaires and trying to gather information on all of the region’s residents. He eventually began taking photographic portraits, but soon moved on to landscape representation, which forms the bulk of his photographic output.

In the summer of 1874, Arnaudin got his first camera. He taught himself to take pictures through subscription to the French Society of Photography and the purchase of several photographic texts. Though Arnaudin insisted on his amateur status, describing himself as “a photographer distant from any center and without connections in the world of science,” it is clear he had significant exposure to advanced principles of photo making and editing. Until 1881, he applied the collodion to his plates himself, demonstrating an understanding of the chemical principles at work. He used a 13 x 18 centimeter plate for most of his career, as his goal was to publish the images full size in a popular volume. He produced over 3,000 glass-plate negatives in his lifetime, an enormous output that indicates his commitment to the project.

The bulk of his photographs focus on the landscape itself, as he sought to capture, in his words, “the physiognomy of the old country [pays].” Arnaudin’s photographs are often taken as the predominant representation of the early nineteenth-century Landes today, and are used to illustrate countless histories—despite their having been produced half a century later. Nearly every text on the region’s former wetlands includes one of his images, proffered as proof or illustration. Part of his archive is held at the Écomusée des Grandes Landes, as though it were natural, rather than art, history. His vision has become the defining vision of the region—but the

motivations behind that construct have gone largely unchallenged. Scholars have cast Arnaudin as an objective or documentary recorder, aligning his images with his ethnographic activities.\textsuperscript{571}

Arnaudin boasted of having all the issues of the bulletin of the French Society of Photography from 1854-64, and was in correspondence with the director of the society.\textsuperscript{572} The bulletins offered technical advice, chemical recommendations and debates about method. They discussed content much more rarely, but in the transcript from the May 18\textsuperscript{th}, 1855 meeting of the society, Stéphane Geoffray read aloud a letter proposing photography as a means of preserving and presenting French patrimony.\textsuperscript{573} This proposal echoed the ongoing Mission Héliographique initiated in 1851 by the Commission for Historic Monuments. The Mission Héliographique was a state-sponsored photographic survey of France’s architectural heritage, intended to help guide preservation efforts and make visible far-flung monuments to administrators in Paris. The use of photography to direct attention and encourage preservation may have inspired Arnaudin’s own efforts. Arnaudin wrote of the Landes in a letter to the director of the Society as a “pays perdu,” playing on the image of the lost Landes to attract interest and give his project weight.\textsuperscript{574} He sought to frame the landscape as an important aspect of French patrimony, even as it was clear the state did not agree.

Arnaudin may also have read an early article in the bulletin about photographic explorations of Jerusalem. In the article, photographer Auguste Salzmann was praised for both his exactitude and the picturesque quality of his work; a painter first, Salzmann was able to “capture as much of the picturesque, in choosing with his artistic sensibility, the happiest effect

\textsuperscript{571} Félix Arnaudin, oeuvre photographique, 1874-1921 (Bordeaux: Editions Confluences, 2015).
\textsuperscript{572} Vanessa Doutreleau, Catherine Vigneron, et. al., Félix Arnaudin.
of lines and light." Arnaudin echoed these sentiments in his letter to the director of the society, claiming, "My desire would be, as you can understand, to show things as exactly and at the same time as artistically as possible." Unlike earlier images engaging with land through near-topographic accuracy, Arnaudin’s quest for the artistic would lead him further and further from the “exact,” and his intention to reproduce the landscape he remembered meant Arnaudin subjected his photographs to significant manipulation.

The vast majority of Arnaudin’s landscape photographs follow a strict compositional program: unframed views, divided horizontally along the midline to offer equal quantities of land and sky (there are hundreds of these images; see Figures 29 through 33). Some include pools of water, forming oblong gaps in the scratchy surface of the image. Others have pathways running through them, or houses dotting the horizon, or sheep pasturing, but mostly we see open, uninterrupted plains. They recall Dupré’s *Soleil Couchant* in composition, but they lack the sun that held the gaze and the cows that animated Dupré’s image. They are like Gustave le Gray’s photographs in aspect, but Arnaudin did not use Le Gray’s dual-negative technique, wherein le Gray exposed his images twice to allow both the sea and the sky to register. As a result, Arnaudin’s skies are blank, mute counters to the brushy but undifferentiated ground. In rare instances when Arnaudin allowed his exposure to take in the sky (Figure 33), the land becomes blurred. For the most part he left his skies blank, suggesting what he privileged was the ground itself.

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Like early commentators who pled an inability to “see” the Landes, Arnaudin initially found himself dizzied by the open spaces he sought to photograph. Despite having grown up in the region, it was in attempting to picture in that he came to realize its “strangeness”:

I’m writing at the base of the lagoon. In lifting my head I had several moments of this vertigo, specific to our immense plains, at the end of an endless daydream that had absorbed my thought; my gaze, for a long while lowered to the ground, was lifted and, suddenly thrown off by the uniformity of the lande and its empty edges, I found myself beset by an astonishment full of strangeness that lasted longer than one would believe: often a long moment passes before the eye orients itself and puts back in their familiar arrangement the few pens that are the only incidents on the immense and empty horizon.\(^{577}\)

Arnaudin resolved this compositional dilemma and reconciled the strangeness of the landscape through repetition, producing countless photographs and eventually dedicating himself entirely to the landscape’s vastness.

Arnaudin took advantage of the uniformity of the landscape to create eleven panoramas between 1874 and 1876. To ensure the consistency of view, he drew a horizontal line across his lens, thus reifying his compositional dynamic.\(^{578}\) He linked up to six photographs along this horizon line, fixating on the expansive emptiness that he romanticized in the region (Figure 34). Arnaudin’s panorama was the opposite of the panoramas popular in Paris in the earlier part of the nineteenth century, whose delights depended on movement and change, and a diversity of effects. Combining images, in Arnaudin’s case, gave no more information about the place, but instead generated an extended stillness. Arnaudin’s stubborn insistence on one effect made his

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\(^{577}\) “J’écrivais au pied de la lagune. En relevant la tête j’ai eu quelques instants ce vertige, particulier à nos immenses plaines, au sortir d’une rêverie sans fin qui avait absorbé ma pensée ; mon regard, longtemps baissé vers la terre, se relève et, de primesaut dérouté par l’uniformité de la lande et de ses bords vides, se trouve en proie à un étonnement plein d’étrangeté qui dure souvent plus qu’on ne voudrait le croire ; souvent un long moment se passe avant que l’œil s’oriente et replace dans leur arrangement familier les rares parcs qui sont les seuls accidents de l’immense horizon vide.” Félix Arnaudin, “29 August 1875,” *Journal* (Bordeaux: Confluences, 2003), 99.

\(^{578}\) Vanessa Doutreleau, Catherine Vigneron, et al., *Félix Arnaudin*, 18.
oeuvre both singular and largely overlooked by both his contemporaries and later historians.\textsuperscript{579} His biographers have compared his peculiar insistence on representing a singular landscape to “a nearly neurotic perfectionism.”\textsuperscript{580} Yet it might better be attributed to the quality of the landscape itself, a slippery site that resisted picturing.

A feeling of monotony and repetitiveness stretches across Arnaudin’s oeuvre, from the 1870s to the early 1900s, from one end of the Landes to the other. While Arnaudin was meticulous in his documentation, and his images are labeled with very particular locations, it is next to impossible to visually distinguish between sites (Lande de Salles, Figure 30, versus Lande de l’Outarde, Figure 31, for example). The glass-plate negatives offer remarkable precision and clarity, but the vegetation nevertheless runs together and offers only subtle distinctions in patterns of light and shade. It is further difficult to differentiate between images taken at different moments, as Arnaudin created an experience of timelessness. Despite what we know of the rapid transformation of the region, scenes from 1874 are almost indistinguishable from those taken in 1907. Arnaudin’s obsessive monotony, Dupré and Rousseau’s struggle and eventual abandonment of the motif, and the state’s eventual transformation of the terrain to one that was more easily seen and managed, can be read as parallel symptoms of the particular terrain of the Landes.

Arnaudin wrote in the only illustrated volume published in his lifetime of “the lande itself” as being primarily defined by its vastness, a vastness that was under threat:

\textsuperscript{579} In the historical literature, Arnaudin is best known as an ethnographer. See William G. Pooley, “Folklore’s Horizon: The French Legacy of Félix Arnaudin,” \textit{Our Europe} 4 (2015), 73-84. The exception is a recent exhibition of his photographic output, with related scholarship produced in the catalogue cited above.

the infinite lande! left without division to the pastoral life, and asleep—forever, it seemed, but the new age has come to brutally shatter its charm,—in its former dream of immensity and solitude... now, the lande no longer exists. To the magnificent desert, delight of our ancestors, unfolding under the desert sky the nakedness of earlier times, to the gliding expanse, without limits, where the eye was perpetually dazzled by the emptiness, where the soul expanded, intoxicated, soon overcome with new and childlike joy, soon ruined in inexpressible and dear sadnesses, is succeeded by the forest,—the industrial forest! With all its ugliness, including the suffocating curtain, stretched wherever once reigned such serene and radiant clarity, relentlessly bordering the view, stupefying thought, and abolishing any flourishing.581

When Arnaudin could not find a setting vast enough for his imagination, he manufactured this infinite emptiness using white gouache to white out parts of his photograph, covering over features of the landscape that he found limiting or unappealing. He was particularly opposed to the pine trees being planted en masse to stabilize the landscape, “the suffocating curtain,” and we see evidence of this erasure in numerous prints. In a portrait of a shepherdess on stilts with a small flock of sheep, thick white gouache runs along the horizon line (Figure 35)—covering the parallel stands of pines Baudit had featured in Landais Pond. Arnaudin also wrote across the top of the print “better with stilts,” as though he had first tried the scene without them. A year later he produced another portrait of another shepherdess, with a nearly identical composition, and again the pines needed to be whitened out (Figure 36).

Arnaudin’s image of Jeanne Salem presents a particularly triumphant vision of the region and people’s integration into it (Figure 37). She stands in the foreground, to the right of the image, gazing outwards in the same direction as a small dog perched beneath her. She is elevated

581 la lande infinie! abandonnée sans partage à la vie pastorale, et endormie—à jamais, semblait-il, mais des temps nouveaux sont venus brutalement briser le charme,—dans son vieux rêve d’immensité et de solitude... maintenant, la lande n’existe plus. Au désert magnifique, enchantement des âges, dévalant sous le désert du ciel sa nudité des premiers âges, à l’étendue plane, sans limites, où l’œil avait le perpétuel éblouissement du vide, où l’âme élargie, enivrée, tantôt débordait de joies neuves et enfantsines, tantôt s’abîmait dans d’ineffables et si chères tristesses, a succédé la forêt,—la forêt industrielle! avec toutes ses laideurs, dont l’étouffant rideau, partout étendu où régnait tant de sereine et radieuse clarté, borne implacablement la vue, hébète la pensée, en abolit tout essor. Félix Arnaudin, Chants populaires de la Grande-Lande (Labouheyre, 1912), 1-li.
on stilts, stabilized with a walking stick. She wears the traditional sheepskin cloak, echoing the herd of sheep in the mid-ground behind her. Arnaudin revived stereotypes visible in the costume plates of the early 1800s. Yet Jeanne’s identity as iconic figure trapped in time is complicated by a second image: posed with her family, arranged in front of what is presumably their house, countering legends of the Landais’ incessant nomadism (Figure 38). Jeanne is seated; her husband and child stand beside her. They look quite bourgeois; Jeanne’s husband wears a three-piece suit and a hat, she is in a dress with rather elaborate embroidery. These two pictures of Jeanne are in tension, as Arnaudin’s vision was in tension with the actuality of his subject.

In many ways, the extensiveness of Arnaudin’s photographic project meant he often undermined himself. He frequently wavered between his desire for a documentary and an artistic mode of representation: other portraits show the ethnographer in him endeavoring to separate subject from site. He hung a white cloth, attempting to neutralize the background and perhaps contribute more rigor to his efforts to catalogue the region’s inhabitants. The images were not always, however, perfectly cropped, and frequently reveal the wooden slats of a house, or the brushy grasses of the ground. The rift in photographs like Seated Woman, Le Monge (1889; Figure 39), between a desire to set the figure apart and an inevitable nod to place, is reflective of a larger ambiguity in Arnaudin’s practice: he seems torn between a desire to conduct a comprehensive scientific survey, both statistically and pictorially, and an urge to convey what he saw as a deeper truth about the region and its landscape.

Beyond simply erasing unwelcome elements with gouache, Arnaudin was actively creating the image he sought. For the few images he published in his lifetime, he took extensive liberties in representation, sketching and staging his scenes in advance, and even cutting and pasting elements to create collaged images. In a scene of shepherds on stilts, the figures are
staged and paid; he has drawn in a small house, which he will add in a subsequent version; and he has again used gouache to white out the stands of planted pines that lined the horizon (Figure 40). For a representation of female weeders (sarcleuses), Arnaudin took 49 photographs over a period of 5 years (1894-98). There are extensive notes regarding the women’s poses, including a scaled sketch (Figure 41). On some prints, when the figures are insufficiently distinguished from the ground, Arnaudin has used graphite to add shading and emphasis (Figure 42). There are also small cut-out buildings in his archives, evidence of his collaged method (Figure 43). Arnaudin’s cut-and-paste, staging, and gouache techniques combined to create an incredibly strange scene (Figure 44). The ground of the image follows the familiar pattern, divided between brushy ground and sky. Most of the pines along the horizon have been whited out, but some remain, particularly to the right edge. People, at work with their tools, appear to have been dropped directly into the image. They are clearly staged, and their stiff poses make the whole scene feel utterly unnatural and improbable. It seems Arnaudin wanted so much to show the place that he inadvertently alienated those who lived there, and he had to patch them back in. As the state cast the Landais out, so did aesthetics.

The scale of Arnaudin’s project suggests a nearly obsessive effort to produce a comprehensive visual map, a desire to catalogue each site and preserve it in image, if not in actuality. Returning to it now, Arnaudin’s oeuvre evinces a belief in the promise of images, their ability to capture and mediate place: a possibility that was formulated earlier in the century by artists like Dupré and Rousseau. The irony of Arnaudin’s method, the consistency of his representations across time and space, is that it de-specified his subject. Instead of a physiognomy, he produced a typology. The image of the region he produced is static and fixed, and it encourages us to ask whether any image could capture the Landes. This process of affixing
the transient is echoed in Arnaudin’s medium and practice. In addition to each individual image’s passage from wet emulsion to dry negative, inscribing a fixed image of the fluid Landes, there was a larger shift toward dryness in Arnaudin’s career. In 1881, Arnaudin stopped applying collodion to his plates himself (a process that required bringing the entire darkroom out into the field) and instead purchased pre-prepared dry plates. The switch is symbolically significant in the context of the region: his images shift from something hand poured, with ripples of uneven collodion in the corners (Figure 29), to something industrially produced, smooth and homogenous (Figure 33). With the dry plates, Arnaudin could produce more images, faster, but this paradoxically did not enable him to offer a better sense of the Landes. Indeed the dry plates seem to have put greater distance between Arnaudin and the landscape he sought to capture. The wet emulsion process required time, and tactile engagement. In certain instances Arnaudin took advantage of the method to scratch his exact location into the plate, making notes tying picture to place (Figure 45). With the prepared dry plates, Arnaudin was further removed from a physical experience of the landscape, even as he pictured more of it. Pines slipped in more easily, locations were more often left unknown (Figure 46).

Arnaudin, Rousseau and Dupré all struggled to depict an unstable region, and grappled with the meaning and the consequences of that picturing; each of them, willingly or not, was part of a drying up of the *landes*, a symbolic and physical shift towards a more managed landscape. It is only in considering these works in relation to ongoing land reform that their interrelation becomes apparent, and it becomes evident that artists participated in larger conversations about how the French landscape should appear. Analyzing the relationship of pictures to the places they depict is essential to understanding the changed, and the politically charged, role of images in this moment. Images did not merely illustrate or accompany land reform, they prompted and
processed it, demonstrating the essential role of representation in renegotiating the meaning of land in nineteenth-century France.
Through landscape painting, art becomes indigenous, and finds its essential character... it takes possession of France, of the soil, the air, the sky, the landscape of France.

Jules Castagnary, 1867

It is landscape painting that will illustrate the French School of the nineteenth century. Théophile Thoré, 1867

CONCLUSION

By 1867, the nation’s departments, so problematically introduced in 1790, had become fully integrated into an administrative rhetoric of order. They were the primary organizing device at that year’s Universal Exhibition, whose central pavilion consisted of a large oval with a series of radiating halls named after France’s fifty largest cities and entrance gates featuring their respective departments (Figure 1). Edouard Manet painted a view of the exhibition from the Buttes Chaumont, a rustic park built atop a former quarry, refuse dump, and onetime execution grounds—and itself a showpiece of the Exhibition (Figure 2). The park featured the latest in construction techniques, including an imitation grotto and ornamental rocks made of concrete. Far from the Barbizon artists’ valorization of rocks as markers of place and history, the built environment of the Buttes Chaumont suggests nature itself could be entirely constructed, because an idea and an ideal of the natural had already been formulated. That same year, Théodore Rousseau, le grand refusé, was elected president of the exhibition jury and appointed to the Legion of Honor, France’s highest order of merit, an outward display of administrative acceptance for modern landscape representation. The Prix de Rome for historic landscape had

583 William Burger [Théophile Thoré], Salons, II: 354.
been abolished in 1863; landscape was no longer concerned with France’s past but its present. As the critics Castagnary and Thoré indicated, in 1867, landscape was definitively part of French national identity.

The rapid and widespread acceptance of landscape representation after 1867 has overshadowed its problematic status earlier in the century. This dissertation has returned to that earlier moment to reassess the role of landscape in the formation of modern painting and in modernization. It highlights both tensions concerning the use and management of land and difficulties inherent in the representation of actual landscapes in all their material specificity. Representing mountains accurately was essential to their status as the nation’s “natural limits,” but their scale and visual complexity proved problematic. Artists explored the potential of different media, including painting, prints, and photography, increasingly emphasizing the materiality of particular mountain ranges. The state commissioned artists to create a visual representation of the nation’s maritime interests through depictions of its ports, but those images had to balance a sense of the open sea with France’s historic strength in coastal defenses, and that ambivalence meant that they were not always successful. Artists painting the woods used a materially specific aesthetic to counter an administration intent on abstract policy. Both artists and the state, however, struggled to picture and map the fullness of the visual field in the forests. The marshy landscape of the Southwest was often cast as unpicturesque and resistant to sight. Artists brought it into view, but also aesthetically managed it in a way that prefigured administrative management.

It is precisely the difficulties encountered when painting directly from nature that makes landscape representation so revealing of debates concerning land, debates that have in some cases gone otherwise unrecorded. Without relying on conventions, artists were forced to confront
elements of tension that registered on the landscape itself, seeing and making visible complexities in the physical and social aspects of land. Artists depicting mountains expressed the visual confusion of the peaks and the resulting uncertainty of the nation's borders; those painting the forest witnessed conflicts between forestry agents and peasant use rights. The lack of developed conventions also meant images had a more active role in determining how landscapes would be read and understood. Théodore Rousseau's *Swamp in the Landes* (1852), one of the first images of the region to be shown in Paris, at the Universal Exhibition in 1855, both defined the terrain of Southwest France and prompted the intervention of the emperor. By combining the study of familiar and lesser-studied landscape representations with historical research into the use of land, this dissertation redefines the role of landscape in nineteenth-century France, positioning it within the politics of land reform.

When artists began representing real places with detail and specificity, landscape became embroiled in questions of land use in ways that transcended any single regime. Napoleon III's land reform efforts appear across the chapters: he reforested the mountains, supported port infrastructure, and commanded the drainage of the wetlands. He took a spectacular approach to these reforms, emphasizing aspects of display and celebration, as with his arrival to the Landes region in 1857 and his welcoming of Queen Victoria at Cherbourg in 1858. These initiatives provide the provincial counterpart to Haussmannization in Paris, and Napoleon III himself could be read as ushering in the modern landscape. Such a claim, however, would undermine what I see as a larger paradigm shift in the role of landscape in modern visual representation.

Pursuing an alternate history of landscape representation, one that does not lead seamlessly to Impressionism, foregrounds the importance of a number of previously understudied figures—figures who frequently encountered one another. The scientist and
director of the Sèvres porcelain manufactory, Alexandre Brongniart, worked with marine painter Louis Garneray, and was a family friend to architect and mountain chronicler Eugène Viollet-le-Duc. Brongniart was responsible for the implementation of topographical landscape motifs on porcelain plates, enabling the so-called decorative arts to participate in debates about actual places. Louis-François Lejeune, who brought lithography to France and encouraged the representation of the Pyrenees, was a student of Louis Garneray’s father. Garneray and Lejeune met on a naval barge in 1811, where Lejeune reportedly encouraged Garneray’s burgeoning artistic interest. Presumably minor figures actually had a large impact on the spread of landscape as a genre, and acknowledging the interconnections between them reveals a network of influences and exchanges that link fine and decorative arts, Paris and the provinces, and state and non-state actors.

Novel representational technologies impacted the formation of landscape as a genre. Lithography allowed for widespread reproduction, garnering popular support for landscapes as subjects. The advent of photography in 1839 offered new possibilities for both artists, for whom it could be a study tool or a work of art, and the state, for whom it offered new means of tracking land reform and displaying progress. Artists picturing the landscape often came up against material limitations, and in several instances they themselves produced innovative responses: Louis Garneray found the salty air and the damp conditions aboard a ship corrupted the pigments of his paintings, changing their color overnight. To combat this, he developed and patented a coated canvas that would not warp. Paul Laurent, drawing instructor at the French Forestry School in Nancy in the mid-nineteenth century, found that lithography was not precise enough for forest maps. He designed a method that would reproduce lines as fine as copper plate

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586 Bulletin de la Société d’encouragement pour l’industrie nationale 50 (1851), 368.
engraving, but more rapidly and at a lower cost.587 These and other innovations indicate that a desire to represent the actual landscape drove formal exploration.

A tangible outcome of the process outlined in this dissertation, by which images came to address France’s landscapes, was landscape preservation. This was directly the case when Barbizon artists campaigned to save the Fontainebleau forest where they painted from destruction, resulting in the first preserved landscape in France. Today, preservation efforts in that forest rely in part on Barbizon images to reconstruct its supposedly natural terrain. More indirectly, landscape was made patrimony through its image. Clubs like the Touring Club of France emerged to support and protect landscape—though as their monument to Jules Chambrelent, an engineer partially responsible for the drainage of the Landes, indicates, the landscape they chose to celebrate was a modern one, produced and determined by the nineteenth-century state. In 1906, as further legislation was passed ensuring the protection of nature, the politician Maurice Faure affirmed that landscape could be an expression of the nation. As he read in a decree to the Senate, patrimony was:

not only traditions, intellectual products, institutions and laws. [Patrimony] is also, in addition to artworks of all types and architectural monuments that tell the history and attest to the genius of the country, the picturesque sites and natural monuments that give to certain regions an impressive character of real beauty.588

The very title of the law Faure was speaking in support of—“Law relative to the protection of sites and natural monuments of an artistic character”—refers to art, linking nature to its

588 “Ce qui constitue ce patrimoine commun, ce ne sont pas seulement les traditions, les productions intellectuelles, les institutions et les lois, ce sont encore, en même temps que les œuvres d’art de tous genres et les monuments de toutes architectures qui racontent l’histoire et attestent le génie du pays, les sites pittoresques et les monuments naturels qui donnent à certaines régions un caractère impressionnant de réelle beauté.” Maurice Faure, “Adoption d’une proposition de loi relative à la protection des sites et monuments naturels de caractère artistique,” in Annales du Sénat: Débats parlementaires 69 (1906), 340.
representation. A particular version of the natural had been claimed for France, and its preservation was a direct result of the images that rendered it visible and valued. The homogenization of France’s actual landscapes, however, made to correspond to an ideal of the natural based on a rational and productive model, meant that preservation efforts, along with the eventual acceptance of once-controversial landscape paintings and the valorization of terroir, stand as largely compensatory gestures.

Images of the Algerian landscape, in particular, reveal the tensions between a centralized administration and the realities of place. The colony was considered French soil; as such it was subject to the same policies and modes of governance carried out in the metropole. Depictions of Algeria further emphasize links between the military and land reform, offering a new lens through which to read images of the Algeria landscape. The military hovered in the background of metropolitan land reform efforts, with army units producing maps of mountains and soldiers retiring to a model farm in the Landes. In Algeria the ties were explicit and visible. An image from an 1865 album shows early soldier-colonists in the region, dropping their plows and taking up their rifles (Figure 3). Another image from the same volume unites a French farmer, a French soldier, and a native Algerian under the sign of the Empire (Figure 4). Adrian Dauzat’s images of French inland expeditions reveal soldiers carving their names into the colony’s mountains, using a natural feature to claim the site as their own (Figure 5). These images suggest a study the relationship between land reform and landscape representation in France has implications for other contexts.

Land—and the way it is viewed and pictured—still matters in France. The landscape is tied to an idea of being French and of French culture to such an extent that it figures in political discourse. Recent president Nicolas Sarkozy featured the French countryside in his campaign
posters (Figure 6), presenting an image indebted to the tropes of green pastures and wooded forests developed between the French Revolution and the Third Republic. In the nineteenth century, out of a jumble of local particularities, an ideal of the French landscape was articulated across a wide body of imagery, an ideal that remains deeply embedded in the cultural imaginary. When 2017 presidential hopeful (and now president elect) Emmanuel Macron tried to express the existence of a plurality of French cultures, retorts invoked Cézanne as clear evidence of a strong French culture, grafting Macron’s image in front of a painting of the Mont Sainte-Victoire (Figure 7). Cézanne’s painting, like most of the images discussed here, has become an uncontested image of national identity—despite the very contested reality of that identity in the nineteenth century. Continuing to emphasize the complexity of nineteenth-century landscape representation is essential in formulating a clearer picture of its role historically and today.

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