

Luigi Piccioni

# The Beloved Face of the Country

The First Movement for Nature  
Protection in Italy, 1880-1934





Sample excerpt from

**THE BELOVED FACE OF THE COUNTRY:  
THE FIRST MOVEMENT FOR NATURE PROTECTION  
IN ITALY, 1880–1934**

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# INTRODUCTION

## A transnational perspective

For about ten years now, the historiography of environmentalism has been enriched by the use of the transnational approach. The studies promoted since 2008 by the German Historical Institute in Washington,<sup>1</sup> along with the works of Ian Tyrrell<sup>2</sup> and Patrick Kupper,<sup>3</sup> have opened new perspectives on the study of cultures and environmental conservation organisations, especially in the first half of the twentieth century. One of the most remarkable results of this wave of research, however, lies outside environmental history, or rather tangential to it: Astrid Swenson's book *The Rise of Heritage* published in 2013.<sup>4</sup>

In her book, Swenson explains that, starting in the 1870s, there was a strong push towards the protection of artistic and monumental heritage in the United Kingdom, France and Germany; that from 1900 to 1914 this push was accelerated, which led to the birth of many new organisations and the promulgation of numerous legislative measures; that this push was due first and foremost to a diverse group of persons in civil society, which gave rise to a genuine movement; that although heritage was generally understood in the national sense, the movement had a strong transnational character,

- 1 The Institute held two conferences, 'Civilizing Nature: National Parks in Transnational Historical Perspective' and 'Managing the Unknown: Natural Reserves in Historical Perspective', which were followed by a conference organised by Colorado State University in September 2011 titled 'National Parks Beyond the Nation'. The papers of the first conference were published in Bernhard Gissibl, Sabine Höhler and Patrick Kupper (eds), *Civilizing Nature: National Parks in Global Historical Perspective* (New York-Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012).
- 2 Ian Tyrrell, 'America's national parks: The transnational creation of national space in the progressive era', *Journal of American Studies* 46, 1 (2012): 1–21. The analysis presented in this article was developed and placed in a broader context by Tyrrell in the second chapter of his book *Crisis of the Wasteful Nation: Empire and Conservation in Theodore Roosevelt's America* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2015).
- 3 Kupper's first contribution to a transnational history of European and American national parks was 'Science and the national parks: A transatlantic perspective on the interwar years', *Environmental History* 14, 1 (2009): 58–81, which he followed up in his book *Creating Wilderness: A Transnational History of the Swiss National Park* (New York-Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014).
- 4 Astrid Swenson, *The Rise of Heritage: Preserving the Past in France, Germany and England, 1789–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Although Swenson's analysis treats only marginally the question of the protection of nature and landscape, this receives a much larger treatment in her article 'Response to Ian Tyrrell, "America's national parks: the transnational creation of national space in the Progressive Era"', *Journal of American Studies* 46, 1 (2012): 37–43.

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with transnationality being its fundamental characteristic; and that, finally, during these decades the concept of heritage expanded beyond monuments to include folklore and nature, especially in the form of the landscape.

There are two main reasons for this translation of *Il volto amato della patria* into English, twenty years after the first edition. Firstly, the book illustrates in a comprehensive and in-depth manner a national case in which there was a rather strong nature protection movement that achieved some significant successes, and can therefore serve as a useful touchstone for the study of other national cases. The second reason is that the research underlying the work led the author to consider and highlight many of the elements that were subsequently the focus of transnational studies and especially of Swenson's book. In short, *Il volto amato della patria* anticipated some analyses that were later confirmed. The publication of the book in English could therefore help to enrich the debate currently underway.

Unlike with Swenson's book, in our case the starting point is the observation that, despite views and activities at various times in history that anticipated today's concern for nature,<sup>5</sup> what can be defined as 'modern environmentalism'<sup>6</sup> only began to take shape in the 1860s, thanks to the combination of four elements:

certain attitudes of positive appreciation towards nature as such and the inclination to preserve it or to preserve certain specific aspects of it;  
certain systems of rational argumentation aimed at legitimising these attitudes;  
a number of specific objectives, which in some cases were organised into complex and far-reaching programmes;  
the willingness and ability to organise collectively and publicly to pursue these objectives.

While the interweaving of these elements constituted the unifying trait of the new movement, the theoretical positions, the programmes and the resulting organisations were quite varied and sometimes even in conflict with each other.<sup>7</sup>

5 The major books on this issue include: Clarence J. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England, 1500–1800* (London, Allen Lane: 1983); Donald E. Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism 1600–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

6 Luigi Piccioni, 'The rise of European environmentalism: a cosmopolitan wave, 1865–1914', *Ekonomika i ekohistorija* **10**, 1 (2014): 7–15, 8–9.

7 Some excellent work on past and present approaches to environmental questions is contained in David Pepper, *Modern Environmentalism: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge,

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The movement developed both in Europe and in the United States, albeit in different forms and with different sensibilities and goals. To give some well-known examples, in the UK the focus was primarily on the conservation of green spaces and commons.<sup>8</sup> In the US, the creation of the first protected natural areas<sup>9</sup> and the thesis that George Perkins Marsh developed in his book *Man and Nature: Or, Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action* were of particular importance.<sup>10</sup> In France, the *Société d'acclimatation* was a pioneer in the attention it brought to preserving nature's equilibrium,<sup>11</sup> while in Switzerland, in the early 1880s, botanists and naturalists began to mobilise collectively for the defence of forests.<sup>12</sup>

However, it was only in the years around the turn of the century, in parallel with the movement for the preservation of the historical and artistic heritage, that the movement consolidated, spread to new geographical areas and wider social groups and became more structured, both within individual nations and at a supranational level.

In this period, the already lively English scene was enriched by two great national associations: the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the National Trust.<sup>13</sup> In the US, the great clash between conservationism and preservationism began to take shape, embodied by charismatic figures such as Gifford Pinchot and John Muir.<sup>14</sup> In Germany, the *Bund für Vogelschutz* and the *Heimatschutz* were founded<sup>15</sup> and Hugo Conwentz published his

1996); and in John S. Dryzek, *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

8 Charles-François Mathis, *In Nature We Trust. Les paysages anglais à l'ère industrielle* (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2010), in particular ch. 4.

9 Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979).

10 George P. Marsh, *Man and Nature: Or Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action* (New York: Scribner, 1864). Reprint David Lowenthal (ed.) (Cambridge, MA: Belknap of Harvard University Press, 1965).

11 Rémi Luglia, *Des savants pour protéger la nature. La Société d'acclimatation (1854–1960)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2015), pp. 92 ff.

12 Lino Vaccari, 'Henry Correvon', *Chanausia* 4 (1940): 22–8.

13 Mathis, *In Nature We Trust*, ch. 5.

14 See below p. 31.

15 William Rollins, *A Greener Vision of Home: Cultural Politics and Environmental Reform in the German Heimatschutz Movement, 1904–1918* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); and Friedemann Schmoll, *Erinnerung an die Natur. Die Geschichte des Naturschutzes im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2004).

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influential work *Die Gefährdung der Naturdenkmäler*.<sup>16</sup> In Sweden, the debate that would lead to the establishment of the first European national parks began,<sup>17</sup> and in France the discussions leading eventually to the ‘*loi Beauquier*’ were underway.<sup>18</sup>

None of these processes originated solely within national borders and they did not necessarily remain confined by national borders. While the international dimension was fundamental from the beginning for the protection of fauna in colonies,<sup>19</sup> even within Europe information circulated widely and constantly across borders; contacts between protectionists, scientists and politicians from different nations were numerous and fertile; many initiatives were born under the direct influence of similar initiatives launched in other countries; and some persons became international reference points. This opening benefitted from the fact that the protection of nature, especially in the form of the landscape and natural monuments, was often understood in this period as a part or an extension of the much more widespread and popular policies for conserving historical-artistic heritage, which saw considerable growth in all Western countries from the 1870s onwards.<sup>20</sup>

More importantly, all this activity generated the Europe-wide and even global diffusion and sharing of some basic visions and approaches as well as attempts at supranational organisation.

The international congresses of botanists and zoologists, in particular those in Brussels and Graz in 1910, became important sounding boards for the dissemination of protectionist ideas and initiatives.<sup>21</sup> After the signing of the International Convention on African Wildlife in London in 1900, there was a proliferation not only of conventions, but also of protectionist congresses in the strict sense, such as the International Congress for the Protection of

16 Hugo Wilhelm Conwentz, *Die Gefährdung der Naturdenkmäler und Vorschläge zu ihrer Erhaltung* (Berlin: Borntraeger, 1904; Reprint Saarbrücken 2007).

17 Tom Mels, *Wild Landscapes: The Cultural Nature of Swedish National Parks* (Lund: Lund University Press, 1999).

18 *Loi du 21 avril 1906 organisant la protection des sites et monuments naturels de caractère artistique*. For more on the Beauquier Law, one of Europe’s first nature protection laws, see Bernard Barraqué, *Le paysage et l’administration* (Paris: Mission de la recherche urbaine, 1985), pp. 5–18; Caroline Ford, *Natural Interests: The Contest over Environment in Modern France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), ch. 4 (‘Environment and Landscape as Heritage’); and Claude Courvoisier, *Le paysage de la loi. Protection, aménagement et reconquête* (Dijon: Editions Universitaires de Dijon, 2017).

19 Corey Ross, *Ecology and Power in the Age of Empire: Europe and the Transformation of the Tropical World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), ch. 7.

20 Swenson, *The Rise of Heritage*.

21 See below pp. 164–7.



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Landscapes in Paris in 1909<sup>22</sup> and the first International Conference for the Protection of Nature in Bern in 1913.<sup>23</sup> Although the history of the international movement that developed in the years leading up to World War One has never been the subject of a specific study, several works have helped to identify its general outlines. This is true, for example, of *Les figures paysagères de la nation*<sup>24</sup> by François Walter and *Weltnaturschutz* by Anna-Katharina Wöbse.<sup>25</sup> The conferences of the German Historical Institute held in Washington in 2008 and the works of Ian Tyrrell and Patrick Kupper also show, as mentioned earlier, that the relationship between European and American environmentalism was not limited, as had long been thought, to the unilateral assumption by Europeans of the national park concept. It was, in fact, a two-way street. For his part, Ian Tyrrell<sup>26</sup> has underlined the influence exerted on some important American associations by the model of environmentalism dominant in Europe in the early twentieth century, in which heritage as well as nationalist and aesthetic components prevailed. Patrick Kupper<sup>27</sup> shows how the example offered by the Swiss National Park, established in 1914, contributed to changing the management methods of US national parks.

World War One dealt a severe blow to the widespread and promising protectionist movement of the early twentieth century and its broad international outlook. The conservation movement weakened considerably, and in some cases disappeared, as in Italy. The attempts at international coordination that culminated in the Bern congress in 1913 lost momentum and were reduced to a few agreements and a few opportunities to meet, with little appeal and practically no effectiveness.<sup>28</sup> It was only after the end of the World War Two that these congresses quickly regained momentum, but in a much-changed context. The meetings in Basel, Brunnen, Fontainebleau and Lake Success held between 1946 and 1949 represented the resumption

22 Raoul De Clermont, Fernand Cros-Mayrevieille and Louis De Nussac (eds), *Le Ier Congrès international pour la protection des paysages. Compte rendu* (Paris: Société pour la protection des paysages de France, 1910).

23 *Recueil des procès verbaux de la Conférence internationale pour la protection de la nature. Berne 17–19 nov. 1913* (Bern: Imprimerie K. J. Wyss, 1914).

24 François Walter, *Les figures paysagères de la nation. Territoire et paysage en Europe (16–20 siècle)* (Paris, Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2004).

25 Anna-Katharina Wöbse, *Weltnaturschutz: Umweltdiplomatie in Völkerbund und Vereinten Nationen 1920–1950* (Frankfurt-New York: Campus Verlag, 2012).

26 Tyrrell, *Crisis of the Wasteful Nation*, ch. 2.

27 Kupper, *Creating Wilderness*.

28 John S. McCormick, *The Global Environmental Movement* (Chichester: Wiley, 1995), pp. 27–32.

of a global dialogue. However, it was no longer Europe, but the United States, that dictated the agenda. Approaches based on national heritage and aesthetics basically had no more room.<sup>29</sup>

### The character of the research

The history that these pages attempt to reconstruct and interpret is that of a movement in the full sense of the term, with a strongly transnational character, developed between the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the 1920s. It was a richly articulated movement (although lacking a broad popular base), marked at times by deep tensions, but also by shared sensibilities and objectives.

It is interesting to retrace the history of this movement for what it reveals about Italian culture and society at the beginning of the twentieth century, for its considerable impact on laws and institutions and for a catastrophic outcome that ended up pushing the movement into oblivion for more than half a century.<sup>30</sup> In fact, the various cultures and environmental organisations of the post-war period, from the *Movimento italiano per la protezione della natura* (Italian Movement for the Protection of Nature) to the Greens, who entered Parliament in the 1980s, believed that they were gradually emerging from what they considered, evidently wrongly, to be a total absence of previous initiatives.

But let's look in detail at the elements just mentioned.

29 Yannick Mahrane, Marianna Fenzi, Céline Pessis and Christophe Bonneuil, 'De la nature à la biosphère. L'invention politique de l'environnement global 1945–1972', *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* 29, 113 (2012): 127–41.

30 This forgotten chapter of Italian history was resurrected for the first time in two pioneering publications at the end of the 1980s and in the early 1990s: Francesco Ventura, 'Alle origini della tutela delle bellezze naturali in Italia', *Storia Urbana* 11, 40 (1987): 3–41; and Attilia Peano, 'La difesa del paesaggio italiano. Formazione della coscienza nazionale, proposte di legge e contesto internazionale nel primo decennio del Novecento', *Storia urbana* 16, 61 (1992): 137–68. A brief but accurate look at this history can be found in Edgar Meyer, *I pionieri dell'ambiente. L'avventura del movimento ecologista italiano. Cento anni di storia* (Milan: Carabà, 1995), and in Luigi Piccioni, *Erminio Sipari. Origini sociali e opere dell'artefice del Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo* (Camerino: Università di Camerino, 1997). In addition, Franco Pedrotti has been gathering since the early 1970s a copious amount of data on the history of Italian scientific protectionism, primarily biographical material, but also more than that. Among the many works that Pedrotti has dedicated to this issue and that are pertinent to the argument here are: *Alle origini del Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo: le iniziative di Pietro Romualdo Pirota* (Camerino: Università degli Studi di Camerino, 1988); 'Ancora sul Pirota e sulla fondazione del Parco Nazionale d'Abruzzo', *Informatore botanico italiano* 20, 1 (1988): 508–10; *La Società Botanica Italiana per la protezione della natura (1888–1990)* (Camerino: Università degli Studi, 1992); *Il fervore dei pochi. Il movimento protezionistico italiano dal 1943 ad oggi* (Trento: Temi, 1998); in addition, there is the monumental *100 anni di ricerche botaniche in Italia* (Florence: Società Botanica Italiana, 1988), which provides much information on the protectionist initiatives of the Italian Botanical Society.

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## A movement

The fervour of debates, projects and ideas that developed in Italy between the last years of the nineteenth century and the early 1920s around the protection of nature undoubtedly had the characteristics of a movement, and was perceived as such by its protagonists.<sup>31</sup> The intentions of the protectionist initiatives of the earlier period were different, starting in particular from the early 1880s. The movement between 1925 and 1940 was also different. In the early period, it was a matter of isolated and extemporaneous positions, while in the later period it was a matter of follow-up initiatives from the previous movement, carried out primarily by high-level bureaucrats. In contrast, between 1897 and the mid-1920s the numerous groups and individual environmentalists tended to seek common bases for action, give themselves forms of organisation that were to some extent coordinated, seek mass consensus through publicity campaigns and interventions in the press and maintain a dialogue with similar movements in Europe. The most emblematic and mature outcome of these trends from the organisational point of view was the founding of the *Comitato nazionale per la difesa del paesaggio e dei monumenti italiani* (National Committee for the Defence of the Italian Landscape and Monuments), an effort promoted in the two-year period 1913–14 by the Italian Touring Club and then resumed in the period 1921–25.

An analysis of the composition of the National Committee and its internal debate<sup>32</sup> is probably the best tool to understand the organisational and cultural expression of the movement. Within the Committee, in fact, very different cultures, sensibilities and forms of organisation coexisted. A first great distinction was that between the naturalistic-scientific arm of the movement, the artistic-patriotic arm and the tourist-modernising arm.<sup>33</sup>

31 There are frequent and detailed references to the character of the first Italian protectionist movement in the contemporary literature. See Lino Vaccari, *Per la protezione della fauna italiana. Comunicazione alla Società Zoologica Italiana* (Perugia: Tipografia Bartelli, 1912) extract from *Bollettino della Società Zoologica Italiana* 3, 1 (1912): 1–4, p. 39; and Luigi Parpagliolo, *La difesa delle bellezze naturali d'Italia* (Rome: Società editrice d'arte illustrata, 1923), p. 21.

32 This debate can be reconstructed with the Touring Club's official publications, all published in Milan: *Per la difesa del paesaggio e dei monumenti italiani* (1914); *Comitato nazionale e comitati locali per la difesa dei monumenti e dei paesaggi italiani* (1921); *Il catalogo delle bellezze naturali d'Italia e la legislazione estera in materia di tutela delle bellezze naturali e del paesaggio* (1922); *I parchi nazionali. Deturpazioni di Monumenti in periodi elettorali. Le cartoline illustrate di paese* (1923).

33 The coexistence of and collaboration between these different cultural approaches characterised environmental movements in most European countries between the end of the nineteenth century and World War Two. With regard to the first protectionist movement in Belgium, Raf De Bont and Rajesh Heynicks have identified and studied a cultural and organisational profile that

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The first public stances in favour of the protection of Italy's natural heritage came from associations and personalities active in the field of scientific research and teaching. Within this movement there were always clearly distinguishable sensibilities and concerns of a naturalistic inspiration. The most significant figures in this vein were nationally prominent persons in the fields of botany, zoology and geology, such as Oreste Mattiolo, Lorenzo Camerano, Alessandro Ghigi, Giotto Dainelli, Camillo Crema, Pietro Romualdo Pirotta, Lino Vaccari and Renato Pampanini. From them came in particular the first comprehensive and conscious positions on the issue of nature protection and the first theoretical ideas on national parks. Scientific protectionism was the most open to foreign experiences, and it tried in various ways and at various times to organise public activity on a national scale, but with very limited success.

The second arm of the movement, which emerged more systematically around 1904, tended to consider the question of nature protection as part of the more general question of protecting the nation's historical and artistic heritage. Persons such as Corrado Ricci, Luigi Parpagliolo, Luigi Rava, Pompeo Molmenti, Ugo Ojetti, Guido Mazzoni and Giovanni Rosadi moved in a cultural arena profoundly different from that of their scientific colleagues. They brought to the movement concerns that found their main place of expression first in the General Directorate for Antiquities and Fine Arts of the Ministry of Education, then in the Office for Natural Beauties created at the beginning of the 1920s within the Directorate itself.

There was a third arm that saw the protection of natural beauties as an instrument of modernising society and developing the national economy, especially with a view to promoting tourism. The names of Maggiorino Ferraris, Erminio Sipari and Luigi Vittorio Bertarelli are the first to come to mind in this sense. The work of this arm of Italian protectionism found an outlet above all within important national associations such as the Italian Touring Club, the *Associazione nazionale italiana per il movimento dei forestieri* (National Association for Foreign Travellers in Italy) and, to a certain extent, ENIT – *Ente nazionale per l'incremento delle industrie turistiche* (National Board for the Development of Tourism Industries).

While the National Committee for the Defence of the Italian Landscape and Monuments was the main location in which these different sensibilities

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is similar: 'Life scientist and literary intellectuals protecting Belgium's "wilderness", 1900–1940', *Environment and History* 18 (2012): 237–60.

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came together, it was not the only one. Within different organisations, such as the Italian Alpine Club, Pro Montibus and the *Associazione nazionale per i paesaggi e i monumenti pittoreschi d'Italia* (National Association for the Picturesque Landscapes and Monuments of Italy), in some institutions such as Abruzzo National Park and in many of the same protagonists, such as and primarily Luigi Rava,<sup>34</sup> the motives that inspired the three arms coexisted to varying degrees.<sup>35</sup>

Despite the movement's strong cultural and organisational coordination, it was unable to take deep roots in civil society. This was not an inevitable destiny: when the movement 'exploded' in about 1905, the Italian Alpine Club had more than 5,000 members and the Touring Club, created just ten years earlier, had 50,000. Abroad, during the same period, even strictly environmentalist associations such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the National Trust in Great Britain and the various *Heimatschutz* organisations in German-speaking countries had thousands of members. This weakness, which was only overcome between the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s with the emergence of Italia Nostra and WWF Italy, calls into question a series of structural factors both of early protectionism and of Italian society in the liberal era, to which some brief considerations will be devoted.

The movement's inability to take root deeply in civil society despite a strong desire to do so serves to introduce the periodisation of the movement. The forced break due to World War One introduced in some protagonists the awareness that the hope of effective protection of nature through a moral reform of the country was for the moment to be put aside. The resumption of the movement in 1919 was mainly in the form of ministerial and parliamentary lobbying, while the concerns of the years 1906–14 for education in schools, for the formation of large associations and for a great push from below were relegated to the background.

On the basis of these general considerations we can roughly distinguish seven phases.

*1880–97. The Prelude.* Growth of specific sensibilities, penetration of foreign stimuli, first protests and isolated initiatives.

34 Rava was a lawyer, university lecturer, historian, MP from 1890 to 1919 and several times a minister. He was a constant presence in initiatives to protect the historical-artistic and environmental heritage from the beginning of the century to the mid-1920s. Antonella Meniconi, 'Luigi Rava', in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 2016), vol. 86 ([http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/luigi-rava\\_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/luigi-rava_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29); this web link and all the others in the book were verified on 25 April 2020).

35 I have attempted to visualise the interweaving of the movement's objectives, sensibilities and actors in the diagram at the end of this introduction.

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1897–1903. *The Base*. The foundations were laid for the real beginning of a movement through a refinement of positions, with interventions becoming more systematic.

1904–06. *The Opening Phase*. Almost suddenly and simultaneously there was a flourishing of media interest, parliamentary activity, international contacts, mobilisation of intellectuals and scientists and national associations.

1907–14. *The Belle Époque*. In the years before the war, initiatives multiplied, popular roots were sought, legislation was passed, new concepts and proposals were introduced, and coordination took place.

1915–18. *The Break*. The entire movement entered a state of total catalepsy. The only exception was the activity of Pro Montibus in favour of national parks.

1919–25. *The Resumption*. The whole movement seemed as if it could relaunch after the war years, but much had changed. The international links were broken, the climate of optimism could not be recovered, the popular momentum gave way to an efficiency supported by a greater clarity of objectives and a more pragmatic attitude than in the past. This was the era of the main achievements of the movement.

1925–35. *The Slow Agony*. The movement slowly faded on the wave of the deep psychological and cultural dynamics triggered by the authoritarianism of the new fascist regime. Only rarely was there direct repression (the repression against the two national parks, in 1933–34, was the most striking), but the drying up of the liberal democratic soil was enough to suffocate a movement that drew all its nourishment from there. This was especially true in that the culture of the new regime had no real interest in protecting the landscape and nature.

The years of the birth and flowering of Italy's first environmentalism were marked in the West by the paradoxical coexistence within each group and each individual of both a nationalist and a cosmopolitan inspiration.<sup>36</sup> Italian protectionism did not escape this apparent contradiction: it was, exactly as it is today, one of the most important consequences of an international integration carried out on a competitive basis in the decades bridging the turn of the century. A substantial and widely shared part of the rhetoric of protectionism was based on rising nationalism, providing it with legitimacy. On the other hand, Italian protectionism lived in a climate of great hopes for modernisation. It envied in a positive sense the results achieved by the

36 Swenson, *The Rise of Heritage*, pp. 329–36.

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most advanced European countries, and was in close dialogue with environmental movements abroad.

There were two ways this international integration took place: directly and indirectly.

The direct path was based on specific relations of dialogue and collaboration among groups and figures of the Italian movement with their counterparts from European countries. Some relations were launched as early as the 1880s (for example, between Italian botanists and the Swiss botanist Henry Correvon), and these were destined to grow in the following years and to remain stable and fruitful for decades. In the first years of the twentieth century, such relations became increasingly systematic. The important article written by Luigi Parpagliolo in 1905<sup>37</sup> showed a remarkable knowledge of the associative and legislative framework of most European countries. The even more important reports by Renato Pampanini and Lino Vaccari in the years 1911–12<sup>38</sup> were the result of direct contacts with the most active part of European protectionism, that network of scientists, politicians and activists able to involve the whole world, starting mainly from the Switzerland-Germany-Belgium axis.<sup>39</sup> The creation of the first Italian national parks, which came well ahead of the economically more powerful European nations,<sup>40</sup> was driven forward by a trip to Yellowstone by Giam-

37 Luigi Parpagliolo, 'La protezione del paesaggio', *Fanfulla della domenica* 27 (1905) 36, 2–3; and 37, 2–3.

38 Renato Pampanini, *Per la protezione della flora italiana. Relazione presentata alla riunione generale della Società Botanica Italiana in Roma (12–16 ottobre 1911)* (Florence: Pellas, 1911). This is an extract from *Bullettino della Società Botanica Italiana* 20, 7 (1911): 142–86 and 203–05; Vaccari, *Per la protezione della fauna italiana*.

39 The unanimously recognised heads of international protectionism were the Swiss national Paul Sarasin, the German Hugo Wilhelm Conwentz and the Belgian Jean Massart.

40 Italy came after Sweden (1909), Switzerland (1914) and Spain (1918). The large industrialised countries of Europe (France, Great Britain, Germany) had their first national parks only after World War Two. On the subject of European protected areas, see articles by Tom Mels, Lionel Laslaz and Samuel Depraz in Luigi Piccioni (ed.), *Cento anni di parchi nazionali in Europa e in Italia. Atti del colloquio tenutosi a Cosenza il 12.2.2010* (Pisa: ETS, 2011); and two articles by Patrick Kupper, 'Nationalparks in der europäischen Geschichte', in *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte (2008)* (<http://www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/fdae-1472>) and 'Translating Yellowstone: Early European national parks, Weltnaturschutz and the Swiss model', in Gissibl, Höhler and Kupper (eds), *Civilizing Nature*, pp. 123–39. A brief history of Italian national parks is in Carlo Alberto Graziani, 'National parks in Italy', in Gianfranco Tamburelli (ed.), *Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Areas: The Italian and Ukrainian Legislation* (Milan: Giuffrè, 2007), pp. 119–42.

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battista Miliani,<sup>41</sup> a visit to the US Biological Survey by Alessandro Ghigi,<sup>42</sup> a brilliant article by Henry Correvon<sup>43</sup> and an initiative by two professors from the University of Lausanne.<sup>44</sup>

The other mode of integration, which was out of the spotlight but no less important, was by involvement in the debates and controversies in the well-educated segment of international public opinion. The almost contemporary spread of protectionist associations and movements in all the countries of Europe and the initial formation of international coordination between 1897 and 1913<sup>45</sup> represented a genuine international intellectual wave that receded with the outbreak of World War One, only to reappear after World War Two. But for several years this wave had a considerable resonance in large sections of public opinion in the more advanced countries. The history of the first Italian nature protection movement owes a lot, even indirectly and often in ways not fully perceived by the protagonists, to this international wave.

All these considerations on the character of Italy's first nature protection movement necessarily mean that a comment on the method is required. In fact, the object of research of this book is strictly limited to Italian protectionism at the turn of the twentieth century: to its cultures, goals, events and protagonists. The only exceptions, and they are partial, are the analysis of some historical premises, their long-term consequences and the comparison with the situation after 1945. This means that it was not considered appropriate to look into elements and events that were certainly important with regard to nature protection, but to which the protagonists of the movement attached little or no importance.

Two examples can shed some light on this. First of all, it would be of little relevance to include the forms of protection adopted by the pre-unification Italian states. The movement had some historical interest in this, but no sense of continuity.<sup>46</sup>

41 Giambattista Miliani, 'Il grande parco nazionale di Yellowstone', *Nuova antologia* (1 May 1907): 98–112.

42 Alessandro Ghigi, *Autobiografia* (Ozzano Emilia: Istituto Nazionale per la Fauna Selvatica, 1995), pp. 79–90.

43 Henry Correvon, 'Les parcs nationaux', *Bibliothèque universelle et revue suisse* 7, 171 (1910): 541–63.

44 Pampanini, *Per la protezione della flora italiana*, p. 27–8. For this specific event, see in addition p. 184.

45 McCormick, *The Global Environmental Movement*, pp. 17–22; for more on the institutional aspect see Wöbse, *Weltnaturschutz*, pp. 36–53.

46 Pampanini, *Per la protezione della flora italiana*; Vaccari, *Per la protezione della fauna italiana*; Luigi Parpagliolo, *Codice delle antichità e degli oggetti di arte* (Rome: Loescher, 1913).



*The Beloved Face of the Country*

The second example is more delicate.

The book barely mentions topics that, in years closer to us, we have become accustomed to consider as central from the environmental point of view, such as pollution, urban planning and the management of forests, water and soil. It is true that the Italian Alpine Club and the Touring Club Italiano worked hard from the outset on the issue of the relationship between forests, water and soil;<sup>47</sup> that many of the protectionist politicians were firm backers of Francesco Saverio Nitti's programme of reforms;<sup>48</sup> that Arrigo Serpieri, the main driver of Italian policies on forests and land reclamation, was a frequent contributor to the *Pro Montibus* newspaper; that the town planning law of 1942 had among its promoters and creators some persons who had been very close to the movement; that there were serious episodes of pollution accompanied by dramatic popular protests before World War Two.<sup>49</sup> However, these facts were basically incidental to the core concerns of Italy's initial protectionism, and they were considered as such at the time.

### A litmus test

As a crossroad of various trends, Italy's first protectionism is also interesting as a litmus test of important cultural and social phenomena that characterised Italian society at the end of the nineteenth century.

With regard to associations, the movement was largely rooted in a constellation of voluntary organisations operating in various fields: sport, tourism, scientific research, local promotion, art connoisseurship. The big tent of protectionism included national associations of tens of thousands of members, organised on the basis of modern marketing techniques, such as the Touring Club, as well as small and elitist groups of art connoisseurs or scientists.

... ..

47 Mario Sulli and Alessandra Zanzi Sulli, 'La commissione nazionale di propaganda per il bosco e per il pascolo del Touring Club Italiano', in Antonio Lazzarini (ed.), *Diboscamento montano e politiche territoriali. Alpi e Appennini dal Settecento al Duemila* (Milan: Angeli, 2002), pp. 372–88.

48 Nitti was an economist, politician, a minister several times and also prime minister 1919–20.

Between 1900 and the advent of fascism he was the promoter of a wide-ranging programme of modernising reforms in agriculture and industry.

49 Guido De Luigi, Edgar Meyer and Andrea Saba, 'Nasce una coscienza ambientale? La Società italiana dell'alluminio e l'inquinamento della Val Lagarina', *Società e storia* **18**, 67 (1997): 75–109.