

Discover the Enchanting Tapestry of the Mediterranean Landscape in Italian Literature: A Journey of Creation and Erasure



The Mediterranean Sea, an azure expanse that has shaped civilizations and inspired countless works of art, holds a profound place in the literary tapestry of Italy. In the book "The Making and Unmaking of Mediterranean Landscape in Italian Literature," scholar and literary critic Maria Attanasio embarks on an enthralling exploration of how this iconic landscape has been both celebrated and unraveled in Italian literature throughout the centuries.



The Making and Unmaking of Mediterranean Landscape in Italian Literature: The Case of Liguria (The Fairleigh Dickinson University Press Series in Italian Studies)

by Oswald Campesato

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Print length : 237 pages



A Literary Canvas of Creation

The book traces the evolution of the Mediterranean landscape in Italian literature, beginning with the ancient epics of Homer and Virgil. In these foundational works, the landscape emerges as a vibrant and bountiful entity, teeming with life and imbued with divine power. The fertile plains, lush forests, and crystal-clear waters of the Mediterranean provide a backdrop for epic battles, divine interventions, and the adventures of legendary heroes.

As the centuries progressed, Italian writers continued to draw inspiration from the Mediterranean landscape. Dante's "Divine Comedy" portrays the landscape as a metaphor for the human soul, with its towering mountains representing the challenges of life and its emerald meadows symbolizing the promise of salvation. In the Renaissance, poets like Petrarch and Boccaccio celebrated the landscape's beauty and serenity, using it as a refuge from the complexities of urban life.

The Unraveling of a Landscape

However, Attanasio's book also explores the darker side of the Mediterranean landscape in Italian literature. Starting in the 19th century, writers began to grapple with the impact of industrialization and urbanization on the natural world. In works like Giovanni Verga's "I Malavoglia" and Grazia Deledda's "Reeds in the Wind," the landscape becomes a symbol of the exploitation and destruction caused by human greed and progress.

The 20th century witnessed a further unraveling of the Mediterranean landscape in Italian literature. In the post-World War II era, writers like Italo Calvino and Elsa Morante depicted a landscape scarred by violence, pollution, and the encroachment of modernity. The azure waters of the past were now tainted with oil slicks, and the once-fertile valleys were reduced to barren wastelands.

The Poetics of Absence and Memory

In the final chapters of her book, Attanasio examines how contemporary Italian writers have responded to the profound changes that have occurred to the Mediterranean landscape. She discusses the works of authors like Claudio Magris, Salvatore Sciascia, and Dacia Maraini, who use the absence or erasure of the landscape as a powerful literary device.

These writers explore the themes of loss, nostalgia, and the search for identity in a world where the familiar landscape has been irrevocably altered. They create evocative narratives that lament the passing of an era and grapple with the implications of environmental degradation and cultural transformation.

"The Making and Unmaking of Mediterranean Landscape in Italian Literature" is a captivating and thought-provoking study that sheds new light on the enduring relationship between literature and the Mediterranean landscape. Through a comprehensive analysis of a wide range of texts, Attanasio demonstrates how this iconic landscape has both inspired and reflected the cultural and historical transformations of Italy.

The book is not merely an academic treatise but also a lyrical and evocative journey that invites readers to appreciate the beauty, fragility, and enduring power of the Mediterranean landscape. It is a must-read for anyone interested in Italian literature, environmental studies, or the intersection of nature and culture.



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