

Alessandro Carrera

Mario Mignone's Idea of the Mediterranean

The Idea of the Mediterranean is a book that Mario B. Mignone edited in 2017 after a successful 2015 conference held at Stony Brook. The form of the typical conference proceedings does not fit the book, which is much more than that. Mignone engaged thirteen scholars (actually more, but not everybody submitted their papers in time for publication) to discuss the idea of the Mediterranean and the Mediterranean as an idea. The collection of essays is remarkably free from Mediterranean "ideology," meaning the assumption that the Mediterranean cultures represent the Southern, "warm" and relaxed answer to the "cold" Northern European civilizations obsessed with efficiency and profit (it is indeed remarkable how this tired cliché has survived even in recent years by calling itself "Mediterranean thought"). Mignone would have none of it. In his introduction, he makes clear that today's Mediterranean is a place of death and violence, an open cemetery where the future of Europe (and, to a certain extent, of Africa) is at stake. Yet the Mediterranean is not just a geographical expression, an inland sea, as the Greeks would call them (as opposed to the external sea, which was the Atlantic Ocean). The Mediterranean is an idea, but not just *one* idea. The questions Mignone asks, "Is there a Mediterranean identity? Is the Mediterranean a single interactive zone? Is it still possible to conceive it that way? Is it possible to treat the Mediterranean as an autonomous subject?" have many answers. Every shore of the Mediterranean has its own "idea" (and perhaps its own ideology) of what the Mediterranean means. When Mignone speaks of the EU's lack of a cohesive response to the challenges of the Mediterranean, not to mention the absence of the Arab states on the matter, he makes it implicitly clear that the Mediterranean is now more an object than a subject, an intractable object that has been abandoned by both the North (Europe) and the South (Africa) and left to fend off for itself.

No A/V needs

Alessandro Carrera is Moores Professor of Italian Studies and World Cultures and Literatures at the University of Houston and Visiting Professor at the Università degli Studi di Brescia, Italy. He has published extensively in the fields of Italian and Comparative Literature, Italian and Continental Philosophy, music, cinema, and the arts. Recently, he has edited and introduced Massimo Cacciari's *Philosophy, Mysticism, and the Political: Essays on Dante* (SUNY Press, 2021). He has been a longtime collaborator of *Forum Italicum* and has guest-edited the "Music and Society in Italy" special issue (49, 2, August 2015). Since 2019, he is the editor-in-chief of *Gradiva. International Journal of Italian Poetry*.