



The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question (Studies on the History of Society and Culture)

Nelson J. Moe

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The vexed relationship between the two parts of Italy, often referred to as the Southern Question, has shaped that nation's political, social, and cultural life throughout the twentieth century. But how did southern Italy become "the south," a place and people seen as different from and inferior to the rest of the nation? Writing at the rich juncture of literature, history, and cultural theory, Nelson Moe explores how Italy's Mezzogiorno became both backward and picturesque, an alternately troubling and fascinating borderland between Europe and its others. This finely crafted book shows that the Southern Question is far from just an Italian issue, for its origins are deeply connected to the formation of European cultural identity between the mid-eighteenth and late nineteenth centuries.

Moe examines an exciting range of unfamiliar texts and visual representations including travel writing, political discourse, literary texts, and etchings to illuminate the imaginative geography that shaped the divide between north and south. His narrative moves from a broad examination of the representation of the south in European culture to close readings of the literary works of Leopardi and Giovanni Verga. This groundbreaking investigation into the origins of the modern vision of the Mezzogiorno is made all the more urgent by the emergence of separatism in Italy in the 1990s.

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