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Enclosing Water: Nature and Political Economy in a Mediterranean Valley, 1796–1916

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Enclosing Water is an environmental history of the Industrial Revolution, as inscribed on the Liri valley in Italy's Central Apennines. Amid forces of revolution and empire, and Enlightenment discourses of "improvement" and political economy, the Liri's natural wealth—water power—generated sweeping changes in its landscape and working and living environments. This book tells the story of how defining water as property—both materially and discursively—led to the emergence of an industrial riverscape and of a concomitant new ecological consciousness; to heightened environmental risks and awareness of those risks. A dramatic century in the Liri's socio-environmental history, with its cast of new industrial bourgeoisie, engineers, and civil servants, illuminates how material developments and ideological currents completely reshaped the relationship between society and nature at the periphery of nineteenth-century Europe. By integrating political economy into the narrative of European environmental history, this pioneering book offers a critical new view of discourses of water disorder and environmental politics in the Mediterranean region.

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