

The Mediterranean

Fernand Braudel's *The Mediterranean* was quite a bit different from our last two readings. *The Mediterranean* was not a historical narrative, but rather (or at least it seemed to be) a fairly complete historical analysis of the Mediterranean area in the age of Phillip II. I quite enjoyed the parts of the book that I read.

My first reaction to the section on mountains was along the lines of "Why would I ever want to know about the mountains surrounding the Mediterranean." I had imagined that it would be a terribly long and boring chapter on geological and ecological concerns. I was pleasantly surprised by the content. It was interesting, if a bit long.

I also felt that sometimes Braudel tended to ramble when listing various examples of what he was talking about. It seemed that at some points he felt it was more important to list all of these examples, than to get his point across. I found this tendency to be a bit distracting at times, and I would sometimes have to go back to remember what point he was trying to make.

I also found that this book was aimed at a more knowledgeable audience than myself. The constant small historical references, such as the reference to "snow water" and its relation to Saladin and Richard the Lionheart, often went over my head. These references were so common that I found it to be more than little distracting, in that I would want to know what he was talking about, but all the footnotes were only to other books, never to explanations.

All in all, I found *The Mediterranean* to be both informative, and entertaining. It is a good possibility that after the semester is over, I will read the entire book. It was also a nice change of pace to read something other than a historical narrative.