by representing the state, its magistrates, and their course of action as capable of preserving the city and ensuring the survival of its inhabitants” (56). Claudio Povolo’s concluding study looks at early efforts, post 1797, at writing the history of the no-longer independent Venice. The myth of paternalistic good government that emerged served to maintain an idealized continuity to the present day.

Despite some losses between the two volumes—no one in the later one examines the church the way Paolo Prodi did in Hale’s volume, and economic history receives little treatment—this is a welcome and illuminating book, especially to those who have found Venetian history dominated by an insular and self-congratulatory tone.

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This volume is a collection of essays about the Italian silk industry. In their introduction, the editors describe their goal as an attempt “to formulate a comprehensive vision of the sericulture, from the raw material to its transformation into thread and then cloth, and to its marketing and its consumption (x).” The authors of these nineteen essays, predominantly Italian, represent a broad spectrum of scholarly interests: specialists on the technology of silk production, economic historians, and authorities on the religious and cultural history of medieval and early modern Italy. Among the more solid and informative historical essays are Flavio Crippo’s and David Jacoby’s surveys of the introduction and early development of sericulture into Italy from the Levant; Danilo Gasparini’s study of the industry in the Trevisano in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; Edoardo Demo’s comparable work on the Vincentino; and a comprehensive effort by Francesco Battistini to trace the evolution of Italian silk production from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

These studies amply demonstrate the critical importance of sericulture to the Italian economy during those centuries when so many other sectors were in decline. Equally significant was the role of women and children in the basic stages of silk production, from the care and feeding of silkworms to the spinning of their filaments. Without the paltry earnings from their labors in the silk industry, the living conditions of the urban and rural poor would have been even bleaker.

The evidence for these historical studies of the silk industry come from a wide variety of sources: contemporary treatises on aspects of sericulture, gabelle records, notarial and judicial protocols, and mercantile correspondence. From the account book of a fifteenth-century Venetian merchant, Giacomo Badoer, Dominique Cardon discovered that he had
shipped 380,760 kilos of cochinels (insects used to make a scarlet dye) from the Levant to Venice, a cargo valued at 2,832 kilos of gold (68).

The editors made a serious effort to expand the parameters of their subject beyond the more conventional studies of production and marketing, to explore the role of silk in Italian culture. Daria Perocco combed the literary corpus from Dante to Ariosto for references to that precious filament, which (so one sixteenth-century observer reported) “adorns all of the habitanti gentilhuomini cittadini” of Venice (233). The wearing of silk garments attracted the attention of Italian authorities who, Maria Giuseppina Muzzarelli argues, sought “to link the apparel of individuals to their social status (211).” Very few silken tessili have survived the ravages of time, but Doretta Davanzo Poli has discovered a few examples among the liturgical paraphernalia of Venetian churches and convents. In one of the most informative and wide-ranging articles in this mélange, Zanier describes how silk workers in northern Italy and southern France adopted San Giobbe (Job) as their patron saint.

In his essay on the Florentine silk industry during the Renaissance, Franco Franceschi deplored the lack of sustained scholarly research, despite the existence of “numerous contributions of uneven quality, for the most part on limited and disparate themes (402).” That criticism could be applied to this collection of essays. It would have been helpful if the editors had written an epilogue, summarizing what these studies contribute to the historiography of their subject, as well as the lacunae that need to be addressed. The most valuable section of the book is Zanier’s comprehensive bibliography on Italian sericulture and the silk industry (511–540).

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Venice and the Slavs: The Discovery of Dalmatia in the Age of Enlightenment.
By Larry Wolff (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2001) 362 pp. $49.50

The burgeoning literature about “encounters with the Other” has concentrated on European reactions to the very Other, the peoples of distant Africa, the Near East, Asia, and the Americas. Wolff’s original contribution is to consider Western perceptions of a culture that was near to hand yet largely alien, familiar yet mysterious—that of the Dalmatian coast and Slavic hinterland, threshold between West and East. He has firm control of high theory, which he applies in a lucid and sensible manner, and he has—judging from generous quotation and summarization—rich material with which to work.

The “discovery” of the title is not intended literally, as Venice had ruled most of Dalmatia for centuries and had long recruited workers from it, but Wolff points out correctly that only in the eighteenth century—after annexation of a large new chunk of the region, containing the fierce and strange people known as the Morlacchi—did Venetians