comes to visit, the old man gambles all night, and the poor girl suffers a variety of ailments due to depression. While describing her bodily functions in great detail, he reveals that "she is extremely constipated, and when she evacuates without receiving any treatment, we rejoice as if she had given birth to a baby boy" (245). In another letter, her father, Lorenzo de' Medici, is promised a red stone from a swallow's stomach that he can sew under the left armpit of his jacket as a cure for joint pain. Another section contains the erotic description of a festive banquet in Constantinople. By the end of the sourcebook, the reader has been given a privileged view of life as it was experienced at the height of the Renaissance.

For this reader, at least, the sourcebook goes beyond its modest aim to "illustrate the richness of diplomatic documents" to illuminate the craft of history itself (5–6). As each author mines the sources to explore a particular interest, the real show is not the source material itself, but rather the variety of ways historians have engaged with it. *Italian Renaissance Diplomacy* provides a vivid portrait of the old adage that what we bring to the source matters as much as what the source brings to us.

Rebecca Boone, *Lamar University*

The Limits of Identity: Early Modern Venice, Dalmatia, and the Representation of Difference. Karen-edis Barzman.
Art and Material Culture in Medieval and Renaissance Europe 7. Leiden: Brill, 2017. xvii + 316 pp. + 52 color pls. $167.

The aim of *The Limits of Identity* is to inquire into "Venetian-ness" across the transregional dominion of Venice's overseas Empire, especially in the eastern periphery where it met the Ottoman Empire. "In short, the book is about *venezianità* as measured against the perceived alterity of 'the Ottoman Turk'" (4). In particular it is aimed at "the Venetian fixation on two related practices, beheading and dismemberment . . . which emerge across multiple discourses and genres of cultural production as favored tropes for Ottoman brutality and violent excess—[which is] one of the quintessential differences upon which Venetian identity turned" (13). The book makes clear that Venetians' sense of their own justice and honorable behavior in battle is constructed against the foil of the Ottoman Empire. In their position as a cultural opposite, the Ottomans are cast as animal-like and barbarian, and their justice is understood as cruel, fickle, and authoritarian.

There was, at the time, nothing unusual about massacres or capital punishment (including beheading). Indeed, Barzman provides more than one chapter on the use and understanding of decapitation in Venice, and thus demonstrates that the practice was given different interpretations depending on who was performing it. Today we can read these sources not as objective truths but rather, as Barzman suggests, as forms

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of oppositional identity construction that vilify the other and celebrate the self. Potentially this builds community at home and encourages opposition to those elsewhere.

The book is organized thematically and begins with chapters examining the use of decapitation, first in Italian sources about Turkish examples, and second in Venice. This is followed by a study of iconography of Judith, Justice, and Venetia in Venice, and then of the production and reception of Torquato Tasso's epic *Gerusalemme Liberata* with its various beheadings. The final chapter explores the representation of the Morlacchi, a marginal community of the Dinaric Alps, and how their occupation of a space between the empires is negotiated in their Venetian representations. The book's scope extends from the fall of Constantinople to the end of the seventeenth century but focuses on the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In the introduction, Barzman acknowledges Edward Said (*Orientalism* [1979]) as an influence on this study. A key observation of Said's book, that the construction of identities in opposition to a false conception of the other justified and encouraged wars of profit, is especially relevant here. The profit motive, however, is not explored in *The Limits of Identity*. While acknowledging that the focus of Barzman's book is on the construction of Venetian identity in opposition to a vilified Ottoman Empire, the discussion would have been enriched by some engagement with who was profiting and how, which would explain why they promoted (often indirectly) this version of *venezianità* and prejudicial ideas about the Ottomans.

With a narrow focus and sophisticated prose introduced by its theoretical influences, this book is self-evidently aimed at scholars. Most undergraduates and the general reader would find its topic too limited and its concepts too abstract. There is, however, enough introduction and context to understand the text without extensive prior knowledge, and a good student would find it useful. It is abundantly referenced and well illustrated, with fifty-four black-and-white figures and a group of fifty-two color plates at the back of the book. The vast majority of these images are not regularly reproduced elsewhere so they are a necessary adjunct to the text. The footnotes make the references quick and easy to check and they are often discursive and illuminating.

There has been a substantial amount of work on Venice and its relations (both peaceable and warlike) with the so-called East and the extensive bibliography provided by Barzman is a useful resource for anyone wishing to pursue the topic further. This book extends our knowledge of Venice's Dalmatian territories and the processes behind their identity construction. It makes particularly good reading in companionship with Stephen Ortega's *Negotiating Transcultural Relations in the Early Modern Mediterranean: Ottoman-Venetian Encounters* (2014).

Joseph Hammond, *American University of Beirut*

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