Church, Censorship and Culture in Early Modern Italy. Ed. Gigliola Fragnito. Trans. Adrian Felton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. ix, 264 Pp.

At the most recent meeting of the American Historical Association, as I prowled the splendid book fair, I took advantage of the presence of so many editors to talk to some of them about their presses' abiding commitment, if any, to good writing. Among my interlocutors was a highly regarded senior editor at Cambridge. He told me that, at Cambridge, these days, close editing is a luxury furnished only on request. Most readers and most authors, should texts falter, no longer seem to care. In this case, that *nonchalance* comes home to grievous roost, for the volume weds Cambridge virtues – a clean text, a scrupulous and handy index, a page of capsule biographies of contributors, to a set of rather common Italian flaws – foggy argument, hermetic texts, and occasional spates of near-autism. For what we have here resembles that familiar Italian product, the convegno gone to print, but translated for English readers. Such ventures work best if guided, and even whipped, by a ferocious editor, but, when scholars, as here, are senior and hard to bully, it is a rare editor who has the stature, grit, and patience to pull it off. That said, the collection also has the virtues of Italian scholarship: deep erudition, canny archival work, rich footnotes.

Thus, we have a text full of rich detail, and tantalizing leads, but short of clarity of larger vision. Yet not all its problems are editorial; they stem as well from the nature of a field in flux. The collection's subject, Counter-Reformation censorship, is not new, but its vision is enriched, bedazzled, and confused by the opening, in 1998, of the archives of the Inquisition, which hold the records not only of the Holy Office, but also those of its collaborator and trenchant rival, the Congregation of the Index. So rich are these holdings, and so revelatory of the methods, procedures, and debates of censors in Rome and Italy that it will take scholars decades to set the picture straight.

So far, what image emerges? As Gigliola Fragnito, the editor, points out in her introductory essay, itself quite clear, Counter Reformation censorship was bedeviled by the immensity of the task it set itself — to vet, to block, to expunge, or to improve all books in Italy, and, it hoped vainly, in Catholic Christendom. Not only new books, in press, but old ones in the libraries of monastic houses, noble palaces, and private homes and in the humble collections of the literate, working laity. So vast an undertaking required coordination and delegation to pious, reasonably learned workers, paid or otherwise, up and down the peninsula. As Fragnito and many of her contributors point out, the whole enterprise was undermined by the institutional hostility between the Holy Office, on the one hand, rigorous, dogmatic, and careless of economic consequences, and a somewhat more pragmatic and flexible Congregation of the Index. The rivalry, and the magnitude of the task retarded the publication of official Indexes: there were only three from Rome. The first, in 1559, bore the marks of the severity of Paul IV and of his beloved Inquisition. The second, in 1564, was Tridentine, and, like Pius IV, more supple. The third, in 1596, under Clement VIII, though issued by the

Congregation, in many ways signalled an Inquisition victory, as it reserved the Holy Office's binding right to ban henceforth whatever it desired.

As Fragnito, seconded by her contributors, points out, a central failure of the entire enterprise was the misbegotten campaign to expurgate a horde of books. The notion surfaced in 1564, and resurfaced in 1596; both indexes banned a host of writings 'donec corrigantur'. But, when, after some forty years, at last the elephant of pious drudgery laboured to give birth to corrected books, it brought forth a measly mouse – 50 expurgated tomes. And then the elephant expired. The consequence, for Italian civilization, was dire: a hecatomb of literature consigned, for want of censors, to oblivion, as if the entire peninsula's cultural memory had suffered a massive stroke.

The single essays explore assorted issues: Luigi Balsamo traces the censorious universal bibliography of the Jesuit Possevino —Gesner bowdlerized; Ugo Baldini discusses the mixed fate the several branches of astrology; Edoardo Barbieri, somewhat an apologist, reviews the movement of spiritual literature toward vapid moralism; Claudio Donati, an expert on nobility, observes the semi-eclipse of books on duelling and 'scienza cavalleresca'— treatises survived disguised as tracts on avoiding fights; Fausto Parente chronicles the slow, lugubrious fate of the Talmud; Ugo Rozzo deplors the devastation wrought on Italian literature; Rodolfo Savelli, in an essay of exemplary obscurity, ruminates on law books.

Among the essays, Parente's, on the Talmud, stands out, a cynosure and a sign of what the others should have done. It is a handsomely disciplined piece of scholarly writing, tracing, step by agonizing step, memorandum by meeting-minutes by petition by memorial, the process by which the Inquisition triumphed and the Italian Jews lost their book of law. For decades, Jews and moderates aimed for expurgation, a thankless, almost hopeless task, for the Jewish text brims with references to goyim and idolaters, words deemed insulting to the Christian faith.

For all its flaws, the volume remains a fascinating collection, good for mining and suggestive, as we scholars say, of future work and serious reflection on the depth and breadth and lasting impact of a massive work of cultural distortion and destruction.

THOMAS V. COHEN
York University

Giuliano-Dalmati in Australia. Contributi e testimonianze per una storia, a cura di Gianfranco Cresciani. Trieste: Associazione Giuliani nel Mondo, 1999. Pp. 238.

Il volume *Giuliano-Dalmati in Australia* è il frutto di due convegni di studi (Melbourne, 1995, e Trieste, 1996) organizzati dall'Associazione Giuliani nel Mondo (AGnM) che ha, tra l'altro, il compito di preservare, valorizzare e divulgare la storia della comunità giuliana, istriana, e dalmata. Il libro, curato dallo stori-