Noel Malcolm

Agents of Empire: Knights, Corsairs, Jesuits and Spies in the Sixteenth-Century Mediterranean World. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. xxviii + 604. Hb, \$34.95.

When I used to walk out the front door of the Gregorian University in Rome during the one year I taught there nearly two decades ago, I sometimes turned left down the Via della Pilotta. A long city block away, I would come, on my right, to what seemed to be the servants' entrance or back door of the Palazzo Colonna, a magnificent structure that fronted on the Piazza dei Santi Apostoli. Through that unobtrusive rear portal, but only on Saturday mornings, one could for a fee enter the palace of the family that provided the church with many distinguished men and women over several centuries. That family included not only Oddone Colonna, Pope Martin V, whose ascent to the Chair of Saint Peter ended the Great Western Schism in 1417, but also the poet Vittoria Colonna (1492–1547), spiritual confidante of both Ignatius of Loyola and Michelangelo Buonarroti. The stupendously beautiful Colonna Gallery, reached by ascending stairs from that back door, commemorates the achievements of yet another distinguished member of that family, Vittoria's nephew, Marcantonio II Colonna. As commander of the papal fleet that joined with the larger Spanish and Venetian fleets in the Holy League to deal a crushing blow to the Ottoman navy off Lepanto in Greece on October 7, 1571, Marcantonio II is commemorated in every corner of the gallery, from the vast fresco on the ceiling to the marble tables supported by muscular figures of the European and African slaves who rowed the Ottoman galleys.

One of the enslaved Ottoman oarsmen who died on that day in 1571 was Giovanni Bruni, the Catholic archbishop of Bar in what is now Montenegro. Archbishop Bruni met his death at the hands of Spanish Catholic sailors who had boarded the flagship of the Ottoman fleet, the *Sultana*, men so intent on rapine that they never heard or heeded his protestations that he was a bishop and a Christian enslaved after the Ottoman capture of Bar. Venetian Albania, as parts of the Adriatic coastline of what is now Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Albania were then considered, was the homeland of two intermarried families, the Brutis and the Brunis. Albanians by ethnicity, their Italianate surnames notwithstanding, the sixteenth-century Bruni and Bruti provide the focus for Sir Noel Malcolm's history of that border area between Catholic southern Europe and the Muslim Ottoman Empire. The Muslim-Christian encounters on the eastern shore of the Adriatic eerily foreshadow the Muslim-Christian tensions that eventuated in the same area two

decades ago, to say nothing of contemporary interreligious tragedies on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean today.

Another of the Brunis central to Malcolm's narrative is Fra Gasparo Bruni, a Knight of Malta. To Fra Gasparo's credit, he fought valiantly that day off Lepanto, unaware of the plight of his prelate uncle reduced to slavery below decks. Fra Gasparo also educated the illegitimate son he had brought into this world long before his midlife induction into the celibate Knights of Malta. Young Antonio Bruni, Fra Gasparo's son and the grand-nephew of Archbishop Bruni, was an early beneficiary of Jesuit education in Rome. He received his humanistic education at the Seminario Romano as a lay student in the 1570s. In describing Jesuit pedagogy in those early years, Malcolm inaccurately asserts that "from the moment of their official foundation in 1540, the Jesuits had included education among their leading aims" (300), but the turn towards education as a principal apostolate did develop before the death of Ignatius. Malcolm makes reference to John O'Malley's 2013 work on the Council of Trent, but should also have consulted O'Malley's *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press: 1993). Towards the end of the sixteenth century, after much further education, Antonio Bruni authored a brief but accurate description of the religious and ethnic complexity of his Albanian homeland at that time, a text on which Malcolm draws considerably.

The Venetian-Albanian in-laws of the Brunis, the Brutis, also bridged the boundaries between Christians and Muslims in Venetian Albania and such Ottoman provinces as Wallachia and Moldavia. Bartolomeo Bruti served the grand vizir in the Ottoman court, Sinan Pasha, an Albanian cousin who had once been a Christian. Later in his career Bartolomeo served as a spy for the Spanish Habsburgs, but came to a bad end when the Ottoman ruler of Moldavia cut his nose off and had him strangled as a punishment for his life as a double agent. Another member of the Bruti family, Cristoforo, served as a dragoman (interpreter) for the Ottomans in their dealings with Venice. The title of Malcolm's book is appropriate, although the *Empire* could well be *Empires*. The sea-going power of Venice and the expanding Ottoman state are not the only major players in this drama of the sixteenth-century Mediterranean; the Holy Roman Empire, the Spanish Habsburgs both in Spain and the Two Sicilies, the French, English, Russian, and even Persian empires of that century all impinge on the action to greater or lesser degrees. The papacy, especially in the era of Pius V, and the Knights of Malta also play large roles in this Mediterranean turmoil. While anxious to cobble together a fleet to defeat the Ottomans under Sultan Selim II, Pope Pius distrusted the morals of naval officers of every nationality and the papal nuncio in Spanish-ruled Messina "positioned himself with a group of Capuchins on the quayside, preventing 'beardless boys' from embarking" (158).

It was the Ottoman-Venetian war between 1537 and 1540 that prevented Ignatius and his companions from leaving for the Holy Land and finally prompted them to present themselves to Pope Paul III to serve the universal church wherever he would send them. This excellent book, apart from its treatment of Antonio Bruni's education with the Jesuits, deals only minimally with Jesuit history. Nevertheless, it does describe in great detail the Ottoman horizon against which Ignatius saw the Mediterranean world—a world of subtle and sometimes shifting religious allegiance. It may also help explain some of the imagery of the *Spiritual Exercises* as well as the concern Ignatius felt for Christians living as minorities in Muslim territory.

Patrick J. Ryan, S.J.

Fordham University

ryansj@fordham.edu

DOI 10.1163/22141332-00303008-08