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Rycaut, Paul. The Present State of the Ottoman Empire: Sixth Edition, 1686. Ed. with intro. John Anthony Butler

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Rycaut, Paul.

***The Present State of the Ottoman Empire: Sixth Edition, 1686.* Ed. with intro.**

John Anthony Butler.

Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 500. Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2017. Pp. 440 + 22 ill. ISBN 978-0-86698-555-0 (hardcover) US\$80.

In 1666, Sir Paul Rycaut, a British historian and diplomat, published his first draft and edition of *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*. In 1689 he was appointed to the position of British consul and factor of the Levant Company in the Ottoman city of Smyrna. His royal post in Smyrna enabled him to establish connections with other resident British scholars granting him the “credibility and authority on all matters Turkish” and Oriental to further publicize his work (18). This sixth edition of the 1686 publication is edited by John Anthony Butler, containing a thorough introduction to Rycaut’s early personal life and his later diplomatic journey during the late seventeenth century. Butler in this edition demonstrates that Rycaut to some degree continued the tradition implemented by earlier historians: to write with the usual and common prejudices against the Turks and Islam. However, there were two major reasons for the success of his book: first, his concise and extensive discussion of the Ottoman government and administration from his personal experiences, and second, his timely publication during the English Restoration, which enabled this text to remain as one of the key reference guides for historians, travellers, merchants, diplomats, and enthusiasts of the Ottomans for over two centuries after its initial publication.

For the early modern readers, Rycaut’s account was not only “a history” of the Ottoman Empire but also an autobiography of an English diplomat serving in a foreign land. Europeans who feared and held a prejudice against the Ottoman Turks were also “lured” to their exotic culture and valued their place in the global trade networks. Butler’s aim here is not to defend the importance of this source, which has already been established by previous historians such as Sonia Anderson (1989) and Linda Darling (1994). Butler instead examines the historical background of the text and the possible motivations for writing it, as well as some of the reasons for its success among Rycaut’s contemporaries. Butler’s book is divided into an introduction, the main text of *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, and a bibliography. In

addition to a brief summary of Rycaut's early life, Butler gives some thought to his "diplomatic apprenticeships," his post in Smyrna, and his "later life and career." While the first part of the introduction is important for understanding Rycaut's credibility as a historian and diplomat, it is the second part of this section which sets Butler's study apart. Here, Butler begins with a "historiographical" approach to the Ottomans' history by Rycaut's contemporaries such as Richard Knolles and Francis Osborne, as well as a few travel accounts. Butler concludes with addressing the possible motivations behind Rycaut's work and its long and lasting influence on future scholars of his time.

Butler argues that while Rycaut, like many of his contemporaries, may have written with some preconceived notions about the Ottoman Empire, his goal was not simply to praise the British monarchy and criticize the Turkish administration. He hoped to be separate from those writing from "hearsay, ignorance and blind judgement" by recording his own experiences (92). In his mind, his work was different from the usual travel accounts. Rycaut believed that he was writing "a true [...] model of the Turkish government and religion, not in the same manner as certain ingenious travellers [had] done" (92); that his approach was not conversational and anecdotal but rather a systematic account of the Ottoman Empire. Butler demonstrates that the merit of the text for Rycaut's contemporaries and for historians of later periods lies within his methodical and systematic methods of describing the Empire.

There is no dispute that Rycaut's text is an important source to both scholars and students interested in British history, the Ottoman Empire, and the Ottoman's relations with other European powers. However, Butler's assessment of the historical development of this text and its success is essential before one embarks on a journey of examining the economic, political, and cultural history of the seventeenth-century British Empire: a period when cross-cultural connections were made with the most unlikely allies and formidable enemies. Rycaut's lifetime coincided with a period when the Ottomans were becoming more significant to the British for trade and diplomacy as they tried to internally reform and expand the influence of the Levant Company competing with other European powers. Renewed hostility from the Holy Roman Empire was another matter of concern while the Ottomans continuously pushed their expansionist agenda in Eurasia. Whether in war or peace, the Ottomans remained an important ally but also a threatening entity. Rycaut was influenced by other historians of the Ottoman Empire but eventually, as a royalist, he

believed that lessons could be learned from the mistakes of the Ottomans, as well as their successes, to improve the British monarchical administration. Butler's analysis helps us view this work and its popularity in the context of the English Restoration and Britain's struggle to create internal stability and strengthen its economic position in the global market.

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Servetus, Michel.

Apologie contre Leonhart Fuchs. Édition et traduction de Jean Dupèbe.

Cahiers d'Humanisme et Renaissance, 143. Genève : Droz, 2017. cxlviii, 52 p. ISBN 978-2-600-05836-0 (broché) 42 CHF.

Commençons d'emblée par saluer la publication d'un texte de Michel Servet, souvent mieux connu pour sa fin tragique, sur le bûcher, le 27 octobre 1553 à Genève, que pour son œuvre. Mieux encore, l'édition et traduction de *l'Apologie contre Leonhart Fuchs* par les soins de Jean Dupèbe permet non seulement de lire ce texte bref, mais surtout de le situer, d'en comprendre la teneur et les enjeux. Exemple par sa méthode, par la minutie des recherches et par la concision de sa rédaction, la longue introduction de Jean Dupèbe, de 145 pages, est en effet un modèle d'explication de texte, non pas comme une *lectio* qui suivrait ligne à ligne ou mot à mot son objet mais comme la peinture d'une fresque qui donne au détail, en l'occurrence l'opuscule de Servet, de moins de 15 pages, une place dans l'histoire littéraire, l'histoire des idées et, tout simplement, l'histoire. Le sage de l'apologue chinois pouvait lire l'histoire du monde dans un grain de riz : Jean Dupèbe fait vivre autour de l'opuscule l'univers bouillonnant, contradictoire, changeant, de la première moitié du XVI^e siècle sans recourir à la conjecture ni à l'emphase : en dévidant les fils de l'érudition attachés aux dates, lieux, personnes et œuvres.

Imprimée et publiée à Lyon en 1536, *l'Apologie contre Leonhart Fuchs* est à la fois une œuvre de circonstance, la première publication en faveur de Symphorien Champier de Michel Servet, et l'építome d'une carrière intellectuelle nourrie de conflits, d'engagements et de mystères. Sous le signe d'une controverse entre personnes — le maître de Servet, médecin français et