

EARLY MODERN LITERARY STUDIES



The Correspondence of Isaac Casaubon in England, ed. by Paul Botley and Máté Vince, 4 vols (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2018) 587pp+533pp+579pp+593pp. ISBN 9 782 6000 5888 9

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‘It is not a custom among the English to invite from abroad men distinguished in learning’ (*non est mos Anglorum ut viros eruditione claros aliunde accersant*, III: p. 341), Isaac Casaubon wrote in February 1613. Casaubon, however, who was regarded as one of the most learned scholars of his age, was himself an obvious exception, having by this time already relocated to England, where he spent his final years, at the invitation of King James I.¹ The four volumes under review, the Leverhulme-funded effort of Paul Botley and Máté Vince, provide a critical edition of Casaubon’s correspondence from this period, ranging from 19 October 1610, the day after his landing in Dover, to 23 June 1614, a week before his death.

James induced Casaubon to divert his energies from the study of classical texts, the work that had brought him his scholarly renown, to matters of theological controversy: Casaubon wrote to one correspondent that ‘all my previous studies have become utterly lost. For the greatest and most literate King is so captivated by a single genre of literature that he detains his own talents and those of his subjects in it’ (*omnia priora studia mea funditus interiisse. Nam maximus Rex et literatissimus unico genere literarum sic capitur ut suum et suorum ingenia in illo detineat*, II: pp. 7–8). In England therefore Casaubon devoted his philological and critical talents to that single genre favored by the monarch, producing two

¹ On this period of Casaubon’s life see Mark Pattison, *Isaac Casaubon 1559–1614* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1875), pp. 294–525 as well as the section ‘England, 1610–1614’ in John Considine, ‘Casaubon, Isaac (1559–1614)’, *ODNB*, last updated 17 September 2015.

works in defense of James, the *Epistola ad Frontonem Ducaeum* (1611) and the *Responsio ad epistolam Cardinalis Perronii* (1612), as well as the more ambitious *Exercitationes* (1614) written in response to the *Annales ecclesiastici* of Cardinal Baronio.

Casaubon was at this time ‘at the height of his international fame’ (I: p. 53), one of two reasons that Botley and Vince provide for limiting their editorial purview to his years in England. The other reason is more practical. The editors’ inventory of the complete correspondence counts 2554 letters in total, including some 360 correspondents: as the four volumes of this edition contain 731 letters, Botley and Vince estimate that a similar edition of Casaubon’s earlier correspondence would require around ten volumes, in addition to many more years of scholarly labor.

The editorial procedure closely follows that of the 2012 edition of the correspondence of Joseph Scaliger produced by Botley together with Dirk van Miert.² Generally, the texts of the letters are based on autograph manuscripts, where extant — several volumes of Casaubon’s autograph letters, assembled by his son Meric, are now held by the British Library in the Burney collection — or, where no manuscripts survive, on the first publication in print. The editors have carefully collated the various manuscript and print sources, with differences meticulously noted in the textual apparatus (even many that are trivial, including orthographical variations).

Headnotes for each letter supply as many as eight kinds of information: the title, including the date, the sender, the recipient, and the locations from which and to which the letter was sent; indication of the sources of the letter, both in manuscript and in print; indication of any letters to which the letter in question responds, or which were sent in response to it; a clarification of the date; a note on the text and the nature of the extant sources; the address, where supplied; a note on the early fortunes of the letter, usually quite short but in some cases stretching to several pages to cover some larger issue in the correspondence (e.g. I: pp. 115–119); and, finally, a synopsis of the letter in English.

As with the Scaliger correspondence, the synopsis is a crucial feature meant to serve as ‘a map of the letter for the reader, and an index in miniature’ (I: p. 70). Most of the 731 letters included in this edition are written in Latin, with a significant minority in French, as well as a handful each in Greek and Italian and one in Arabic. Translations, one assumes, would

² *The Correspondence of Joseph Justus Scaliger*, ed. by Paul Botley and Dirk van Miert, 8 vols (Geneva: Libraire Droz, 2012).

have been prohibitive in terms of both time and space, so the synopses offer an essential aid to the reader of this edition, as do the many footnotes. Greek words and phrases in the Latin and vernacular letters are always glossed, though the Greek letters exchanged between Casaubon and Andrew Downes are left untranslated. The one Arabic letter, from Marcos Dobelio, has been translated by Iman Sheeha, but, curiously, not the Arabic phrases in the Latin letters of Thomas Erpenius (see for example I: p. 505).

The correspondence is preceded in the first volume by an introduction that touches on Casaubon's life, the works that he completed in England, his library, his letters, and the principles of the edition. At the end of the fourth volume are two brief appendices, listing lost letters and Casaubon's correspondents, respectively, as well as an index. Since most readers will probably approach this work through the index, its extent, at over a hundred pages, is welcome, though the inclusion of more subject entries, in addition to the many names, might have made the edition more easily navigable.

Inevitably in a work of such scope there are some points with which one might quibble. For instance, checking the index for a current interest of mine, Longinus, purported author of the Greek treatise *De sublimitate* — which Casaubon, on the title page of his copy of the *editio princeps*, described as a 'golden book' (*liber aureus*)³ — I find that where David Hoeschel, writing to Casaubon in March 1612, mentions a work written by the German controversialist Caspar Schoppe 'against Dionysius Longinus' (*contra Dionysium Longinum*, II: pp. 268–269), the editors comment: 'No treatment by Schoppe has come to light of the ancient treatise *De sublimitate* attributed to Dionysius Longinus' (II: p. 269, n.17). Yet surely the piece to which Hoeschel refers is Schoppe's *Aspasio Crocippi ad Dionysium Longinum Paraenesis*, rather than a lost treatment of the *De sublimitate*.⁴ Overwhelmingly, however, the quality of this edition is excellent, the text fluent and clear, the notes accurate and informative.

Before the appearance of this edition scholars have had to rely upon early collections of the correspondence, the latest and most extensive of which is the 1709 folio published by Theodore Janson ab Almeloveen.⁵ Not only are these incomplete — nearly half of the

³ British Library, shelfmark 1088.m.2.

⁴ Caspar Schoppe, *Aspasio Crocippi Paedagogus Paedagogorum. Sive Paraenesis ad assiduam, veram ac fructuosam SS Bibliorum lectionem* ([s.l.], 1611), pp. 1–39. Why Schoppe named the addressee of his exhortation Dionysius Longinus is unclear: if it is not, like Aspasius Crocippus (Casparus Scioppius), an anagram, the name may have been chosen because of Longinus' praise of Moses at *De sublimitate* 9.9.

⁵ *Isaaci Casauboni Epistolae*, ed. by Theodore Janson ab Almeloveen (Rotterdam, 1709).

letters in the present edition have not been previously published — but they have also, as Botley and Vince have discovered, been subject to various forms of censorship.⁶ Some of these interventions serve to moderate the tone of Casaubon’s religious polemics: in, for example, a letter to Jacques Auguste de Thou, Casaubon’s most prolific correspondent during this period, the early editions have Casaubon castigating the ‘errors’ (*errores*) of Cardinal Baronio, whereas in the autograph manuscript these are called, rather more strongly, ‘asinine ineptitudes’ (*ineptias asininas*, IV: p. 59). Other interventions, less expectedly perhaps, remove references to Casaubon’s family, including his wife Florence, daughter of the philologist Henri Estienne; Botley and Vince restore these omissions, making this towering figure of scholarship appear a little less isolated, a little more human.

There are few traces of the regular correspondence conducted between Casaubon and his wife, who spent much of her husband’s final years in France — someone in the family may have destroyed their letters at some point — but the editors do provide the uniquely surviving letter — really two fragments, which may or may not belong to the same letter — addressed by Casaubon to Florence several days before Christmas 1610, wherein he writes of his plans to ‘take communion in the English church’ (*communier en l’église angloise*) and shares his early impressions of English *çavants*, whom he finds ‘so moderate that it seems to me that I am in paradise when I see these great personages ridiculing and rejecting many novelties that holy and venerable antiquity could not have supported’ (*si moderés que il me semble que je suis en paradis quand je voy ces grands personages se mocquer et rejeter plusieurs nouveautés que la sainte et venerable antiquité n’eust peu supporter*, I: p. 164). Limited though it is, this letter gives us a rare look into Casaubon’s relationship with his wife,⁷ while letters sent by Casaubon to his son Jean, a Catholic convert, together with various passing references throughout the correspondence, give a fuller sense of the scholar’s familial relationships.

But this is only one aspect of Casaubon’s life that the present edition promises to illuminate: the hundreds of letters made available here will surely be mined by scholars for many years to come, offering insights into, among many other things, the genesis and reception of Casaubon’s final works, his transition from philological scholarship to ecclesiology and theology, his struggles to recover his library from France — ‘Scarcely without tears can I recall that I have been away from my books for so long’ (*A libris autem meis abesse me tam diu, vix sine lacrymis recordari possum*, I: p. 442), he writes in an

⁶ See the fascinating section on the censorship of the correspondence in the introduction at I: pp. 60–67.

⁷ See also the note to Florence included at I: pp. 329–32.

August 1611 letter to de Thou — and his relations with James and the English court. Yet the correspondence should attract the attention of others besides students of Casaubon.

Casaubon, who liked to quip that his *amici* ('friends') were the *inimici* ('enemies') of his studies,⁸ nevertheless cultivated a vast network of acquaintances from across Europe, and the editing of these epistolary interactions constitutes a major contribution to the study of the early modern republic of letters and indeed to intellectual history more generally.

Paul Botley and Máté Vince are to be commended for the fastidious labor and critical discrimination that so clearly went into the making of this edition. As they recognize, and as their work here highlights, an edition — or editions — of the earlier correspondence of Casaubon remains a desideratum. Until then, the present edition offers a treasury of material not only for those interested in Casaubon in particular, but also for historians of early modern scholarship, theology, politics, and literature.

⁸ See e.g. *Ephemerides Isaaci Casauboni*, ed. by John Russell, 2 vols (Oxford, 1850), I: pp. 45, 71.