

Tyler Fyotek and Winfried Schleiner, eds. *Corona Regia*.

Trans. Tyler Fyotek. Travaux du Grand Siècle 36. Geneva: Librairie Droz S.A., 2010. 110 pp. index. bibl. \$50. ISBN: 978-2-600-01417-5.

Scholars familiar with the letters and diplomatic dispatches of William Trumbull the Elder, King James the First's ambassador to the Spanish Netherlands, have no doubt encountered the repeated mention of a book entitled *Corona Regia*. Curiosity piqued, the researchers inevitably embarked on a fevered bibliographical search, only to find, to their disappointment, that no completed translation into an easily accessible vernacular exists for the intriguing Neo-Latin text. Fortunately, historians and literary critics familiar with *Corona Regia* may now consult a translation of the work in its entirety thanks to the collaborate efforts of Winfried Schleiner and Tyler Fyotek.

In brief, *Corona Regia* first appeared at the 1615 Frankfurt book fair, the work was falsely attributed to the Protestant polemicist Isaac Casaubon, and bore the false imprimatur of John Bill, the royal printer in London. The book's elegant introduction explains the work as a collection of fragmentary observations of Casaubon's patron, King James, discovered in Casaubon's study upon his death, and published posthumously as an elegy to Casaubon and his service to King James. At first glance, all seems well with *Corona Regia*, but the anodyne expressions of praise extolling King James's accomplishments, his intellectual fitness, and his political acumen gracing the prologue of *Corona Regia* soon thereafter yield to a scathing mock panegyric that questioned James's legitimacy to the throne, derided his efforts at religious conciliation and, for the first time in print, made explicit allegations of King James's homosexual behavior. In a glittering example of pornography in service of the political, the author employs a marvelous tautology equating King James to a whale, a phallus, and a coward, "that raises itself like a pillar and violently discharges a deluge taller than the sails of ships. . . Ungainly to turn, helpless to fight back . . . it knows but one recourse when assailed . . . to escape to the deep and to protect itself with the whole of the ocean" (77). James was suitably enraged.

This compact volume includes an introductory chapter describing what Schleiner appropriately deems "the most intense early modern detective story involving a book" (6) and Fyotek's translation into English with the original Latin text set on the opposite page, as well as annotations defining classical references and pointing to examples of clever wordplay and sophisticated tropes that add depth to the already florid text. In Schleiner's brief introduction, he describes both the ordinary and extraordinary measure taken by James and his agents in their prolonged investigation to discover and bring to justice the author and printer of *Corona Regia*.

Fortunately for us, William Trumbull, the agent charged with prosecuting the investigation, is one of the foremost sources consulted by historians of early modern England, celebrated not only for the sheer volume of his correspondence but also for his assiduous intelligence gathering and his meticulous reporting of events. Trumbull's first task in determining the author of the text depended on finding

the printer who, in theory more than practice, would reveal the author. His investigation chasing the alleged printer led him on a tortuous path throughout the Spanish Netherlands and the German lands, ultimately losing him in the fog of the Thirty Years' War. Trumbull, undaunted, relied on his bibliographical instincts for ascertaining the author by setting his sights on professor of rhetoric at the University of Louvain and notoriously anti-English polemicist, Erycius Puteanus. As it happens, Puteanus's connections at the royal court were many and Archduke Albert had granted him several honoraria for his work as an historian of the Habsburg dynasty. In the nine years of his investigation (1615–24), Trumbull pursued every formal avenue of redress repeatedly before the Archdukes' council in Brussels, but the council obfuscated on each occasion citing insufficient evidence and breaches of protocol. Undeterred, Trumbull launched a series of covert actions in his shadow investigation that included bribery, kidnapping, torture, piracy, and an early modern example of extreme rendition. All Trumbull's attempts ultimately failed, and the mystery of *Corona Regia* ends rather anticlimactically in May 1624 with Trumbull's final report (attached to an invoice for his expenses) conceding that the author was in fact a deceased student of Puteanus.

This edition also represents the conclusion of an intense detective investigation by Professor Schleiner, who has written over the years several articles on Gaspar Schoppe and his supposed connection to the libel. Fyotek's elegant translation will prove a significant contribution to our understanding of how Neo-Latin texts, an oft-overlooked source, functioned in early modern political culture. *Corona Regia* is unequivocally the most sensational piece of Catholic propaganda produced in the early modern period, and further studies might examine how homosexual slander translated into a political idiom, the institutions responsible for the Jesuit propaganda machine aimed at destabilizing English Protestantism and, indeed, the effectiveness of the early modern states' abilities to censor the burgeoning print trade.

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