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MAPPING THE USE OF THE “REPUBLIC OF LETTERS” IN THE CORRESPONDENCE OF CASAUBON AND OF SCALIGER*

On 18 January 1609, Isaac Casaubon addressed a desperate letter to his friend Joseph Scaliger, who would die just three days later:

I am very concerned for my private interests, but even more so for the sake of the entire Republic of Letters, which you, great old man, nearly alone among mortal men, have adorned for so many years with your dignity and which you have enlightened with the light of your divine innate brilliance. ... I pray and humbly beseech our Lord Jesus to have mercy on the Republic of Letters and to grant that virtuous people and students of true learning may benefit from you still longer. Everybody here who loves learning relentlessly asks God for your well-being, together with me.¹

Casaubon's distress is palpable. Indeed, his subsequent despair over Scaliger's death and loss to the Republic of Letters pervades the letters that he wrote in the following months. It calls into question what kind of importance this “Republic of Letters” had for him and his correspondents: did he simply mean to say that scholarship in general had lost a great mind? Or was it a particular sub-community he was thinking of? What exactly was the effect of sharing loss and grief within this community? Indeed, what was the *respublica literaria* to people such as Casaubon and Scaliger – why did they use the phrase in the first place?

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¹ Isaac Casaubon to Joseph Scaliger, 18 January 1609, in: Joseph Justus Scaliger, *The Correspondence of Joseph Justus Scaliger*, ed. Paul Botley and Dirk van Miert, 8 vols (Geneva: Droz, 2012) [henceforth: Scaliger, *Correspondence*], vol. 7, p. 659, ll. 9-12, 15-18: “Neque vero meo privatim periculo magis moveor, quam universae reipublicae literariae, quam tu, magne senex, solus prope mortalium tot iam annos dignitate ornas, et divini ingenii tui luce illustras. ... Oro venerorque supplex Dominum Iesum ut reipublicae literariae misereatur, tuique usuram diuturniorem bonis et verae doctrinae studiosis velit concedere. Nemo hic est qui literas amet, quin Deum pro salute tua mecum fatiget.”

Modern interpretations of the term “Republic of Letters” range from “the European intellectual world”² to “a network of the scholarly and scientific community”,³ from “a system of communication”⁴ to “a palimpsest of translucent and permeable layers”.⁵ Many past and present historians have used the phrase as a catch-all for the entire early modern world of learning and have argued that the “Republic of Letters” was a vital category for scholars such as Casaubon. Due the variety of meanings attached to the term, however, adopting the phrase to categorize every epistolary exchange that took place between learned men and women in the early modern period actually clouds our vision of the literary and learned past in two ways. First of all, it blinds us to the vicissitudes in the popularity of this actor’s category. We run the risk of associating individuals, learned groups, and even whole communities with a discursive ideal that they might not have strongly identified with. Second, our casual use of the term fails to acknowledge the flexibility of the understanding and appropriation of the term by historical actors themselves. Typically, we read the *Respublica litteraria* of Erasmus, which rested on the notion of *amicitia*, through the lens of Pierre Bayle’s *République des Lettres*: we project Enlightened ideals of tolerance on a scholarly community that operated in a completely different intellectual universe. Even the avowedly non-political seventeenth-century Republic of Letters has been understood anachronistically as a political entity.⁶ Geographically, we have also failed to discover regional variations that matter and we are prone to overlook the differences between individual scholars. No historian has traced how popular the idea of a “Republic of Letters” actually was over time. In short, a conceptual history is still missing.⁷

It is the aim of this article to present a conceptual history of the term “Republic of Letters” by looking at the occurrence of this particular concept

² Hans Bots, *De Republiek der Letteren. De Europese intellectuele wereld, 1500-1760* (Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2018).

³ Dirk van Miert, “What was the Republic of Letters? A brief introduction to a long history (1417-2008)”, *Groniek* 204/205 (2016), p. 269-287 (270).

⁴ Peter Burke, “The Republic of Letters as a Communication System: An Essay in Periodisation”, *Media History* 18: 3-4 (2012), p. 395-407.

⁵ Carol Pal, *Republic of Women: Rethinking the Republic of Letters in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 12.

⁶ Noel Malcolm, *Aspects of Hobbes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002, p. 539; *Id.*, “Private and Public Knowledge. Kircher, Esotericism, and the Republic of Letters”, in: Paula Findlen (ed.), *Athanasius Kircher: The Last Man Who Knew Everything* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 297-310, at 300-301.

⁷ This was pointed out already by Marc Fumaroli in 1996, see Marc Fumaroli, *La République des Lettres* (Paris: Gallimard, 2015), p. 54.

in the correspondence of members of the early modern learned community. In doing so, we can confirm as well as correct our present-day intuitions about the phrase. How important was this term for Scaliger, Casaubon, and their many correspondents? In other words: how did they use the term, when did they employ it, and under what circumstances? A more critical and historical approach to the “Republic of Letters” not only promises to bring forth a nuanced understanding of how scholars themselves conceptualised their commonality but will also provide an access point to a study of the relations between scholars. In addition, it might shine a light on a kind of hierarchy that is otherwise difficult to map in the self-proclaimed meritocracy of the learned world. Finally, an analysis of the use of the phrase “Republic of Letters” brings into focus alternative terms to which modern historians have grown oblivious. Historical actors did use other expressions to reference their scholarly commonality: for instance, the term “*orbis literarius*” (learned world). This less pronounced expression references the same social reality of people, institutions, and books tied together by correspondences, erudite practices, and learned commerce.

In this piece of conceptual history of the “Republic of Letters”, we analyse its use in the letters of two scholars who were regarded by their contemporary friends and foes as leading scholars of Europe: Joseph Scaliger and Isaac Casaubon.⁸ Although they were close friends, they operated in different locations, approached their sources in distinct ways, and had very different personalities. Scaliger and Casaubon thus provide a good test case for our study. Because they inhabited the same discursive sphere, our comparison will allow us to explain differences in their use of the expression in terms of the different contexts in which they wrote. Through their correspondences, we are also able to take on board how many of their correspondents used the term “Republic of Letters”.

⁸ Together with Justus Lipsius they have been styled a “learned triumvirate” or “triumvirat of the Republic of Letters” (Charles Nisard, *Le Triumvirat littéraire au xv^e siècle. Juste Lipse, Joseph Scaliger et Isaac Casaubon* (Paris: Amyot, [1852])). This is yet another projection, expanding the republican connotations of the “Republic” of Letters. Nisard took his cue from Antoine Teissier, *Les éloges des hommes scavans tirez de l’Histoire de M. de Thou, avec des additions*, vol. 2 (Utrecht: François Halma, 1697), p. 446: “Lui-même [i.e. Lipsius] étoit un Prince parmi les doctes de son temps, et Scaliger, Casaubon, et lui étoient les Triumvirs, comme on les nommoit, de la République des Lettres”. Teissier gives no source. In 1605, the German poet Friedrich Taubmann dedicated his edition of Plautus to “Optimis maximis reipublicae litterariae triumviris Iosepho Scaligero, Iusto Lipsio, Isaaco Casaubono” (Taubmann to Scaliger, Lipsius and Casaubon, 22 July 1605, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 6, p. 98, ll. 1-2; and likewise p. 98, l. 13, and p. 99-100, ll. 55, 74 and 82). Scaliger responded by warning Taubmann to be aware of the *nebulo* (scoundrel) Kaspar Schoppe, who took it on himself “to bark with the most impudent writings against the Triumvirs to whom you sent your Plautus-edition” (Scaliger to Taubmann, 19 June 1606, in: *ibid.*, p. 444, ll. 11-12: “...triumviro illos quibus Plautum tuum misisti impudentissimis scriptis allatrare instituit [sc. Schoppus].”).

We have tested two main intuitions about the “Republic of Letters”. First, that it was an actor’s category that scholars often used. The question is of course what “often” implies. We want to offer a baseline for measuring the popularity of the term by counting average numbers of occurrences. A second intuition is that the phrase had variable uses or meanings for its users. This ability to change and adapt would partly explain the persistence of the term throughout the early modern period. Our qualitative analysis offers a method to distinguish between different functionalities of the term “Republic of Letters” – categories that work for both correspondents. We expect they can be applied to other learned letters. Ultimately, an experiment like the one we present here will provide us with additional information about the individual scholars’ personal and socio-political situations. In addition, the quantitative results of our research will act as baseline for further comparisons with other collections. The cases of Scaliger and Casaubon will thus act to establish a typology of the qualitative and quantitative patterns of the conceptual history of the term “Republic of Letters”. Before we look at the uses of the term “Republic of Letters” in the correspondences of Scaliger and Casaubon (in that order), we will first describe the nature of our corpus and of the implications of this nature for the method used in the analysis.

SOURCES AND METHOD

Our analysis is based on letters, written to and by Casaubon and Scaliger, that have been preserved to the present day. Scaliger’s extant correspondence, of which 1663 letters were examined, can be easily interrogated, thanks to the edition of 2012.⁹ We examined 1140 of Casaubon’s letters, which were printed and published in 1709 and were taken from the online publication forum CERA (*Corpus Epistolicum Recentioris Aevi*). We believe that the chances of survival of the correspondence of these two comparable figures are similar: their autographs were coveted objects to be found in the same collections in London, Paris, Leiden, Hamburg, and Munich. Just as Leiden University was bound to keep Scaliger’s letters, those of Casaubon were sought after in England. One could, of course, argue that archives are biased (and this is true for Casaubon’s letters; the 1709 edition for instance largely ignored his French correspondence), or that posterity had more reasons to keep certain types of letters and discard others, or that the archives in later ages and in very different circumstances

⁹ Scaliger, *Correspondence*, 8 vols.

were responsible for different patterns of survival. However, whether or not the phrase “Republic of Letters” occurred in the text of the letter was certainly never a criterion affecting its chance of survival.

We build our analysis on the tradition of conventional conceptual history as developed by Reinhart Koselleck. Koselleck focused on political and social concepts that have defined the discourse of modernity. The “Republic of Letters” seems to dovetail easily with this type of traditional conceptual history, since it is a political metaphor for a social construct. “Metaphors can become concepts”, as Koselleck demonstrated for the concept of *Aufklärung*, a period most often associated with the “Republic of Letters”.¹⁰ In the 1990s, cultural historical approaches to conceptual history led to a number of collective volumes, each dedicated to such terms as Fatherland, Citizen, and Freedom. We easily associate these terms with the Republic of Letters, e.g. in such key Latin expressions such as “*Patria Musarum*”, “*Civis mundi esse cupio*”, and “*Libertas philosophandi*”. However, we do not attempt to develop a cultural-historical approach to key concepts by looking at texts that consciously reflect on the concept in philosophical or theoretical ways. Rather, we have classified the way a key concept such as “Republic of Letters” was *functionally* applied by the people using it, whether they did so consciously or not. Our conceptual history, therefore, describes social and communicational practices and not theories. We regard the use of the term “Republic of Letters” as a speech act; that is, its use is intended to modify the relationship between sender and recipient. As such, our conceptual history is practical rather than ideological. Following Koselleck, we agree that “the historical uniqueness of speech acts, which might appear to make any history of concepts impossible, in fact creates the necessity to recycle past conceptualizations”.¹¹ The intended meaning of Casaubon and Scaliger’s use of *Respublica litteraria* differs from the way Aldo Manuzio used it to establish the philological and linguistic foundation of learning. Their usage differed also from that of Erasmus, in whose time the metaphor could replace the idea of an undivided *respublica christiana*. Moving forward in time, the *Respublica litteraria* also differs from the politically and socially explicit understandings of Bayle and Voltaire in a later period. As Koselleck noticed, “Historians of early modern learning have not yet fully acknowledged that any assertion about continuities in the use of concepts must be supported by evidence based upon concrete,

¹⁰ Reinhart Koselleck, “A Response to Comments on the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*”, in: Hartmut Lehmann and Melvin Richter (eds.), *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts. New Studies on Begriffsgeschichte* (Washington D.C.: German Historical Institute, 1996), p. 59-70 (60).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

iterative usages of the vocabulary”.¹² The lack of attention to precisely those concrete and repeated usages of the phrase “Republic of Letters” has led scholars to project Baylian ideas of learning on Erasmus’ social world. This is obviously a problem of terminological or onomasiological stability, which obfuscates the semantic or semasiological variations in which the vague idea of a “republic” of “learning” might be re-appropriated time and again.

We acknowledge that the effect of the metaphor “Republic of Letters” that Scaliger, Casaubon, and their correspondents wanted to create might also have been made possible through metaphors such as “world of learning” or “circle of erudites”. Therefore, we have opted for the onomasiological approach and focused solely on the “Republic of Letters”, a metaphor which in itself already has dozens of variants due to variations in spelling, declension, and word order. We have also limited ourselves to a synchronic analysis, and have not studied the development of the use of the phrase over time. As such, this article is part of a larger series of synchronic analyses, facilitating a diachronic view of a long-term semiotic process that remains sensitive to different historical and linguistic contexts.¹³

To what extent we need to regard the “Republic of Letters” as a *basic* concept (*Grundbegriff*) instead of a normal concept, remains to be seen. Basic concepts are highly complex, and hence controversial and contested, as Koselleck understands them.¹⁴ This seems, indeed, to apply to the socio-political metaphor of a transcendent Republic of Letters, that functioned both as a description of practices (the exchange of learning) and as a discursive ideal (the imperative to serve the learned community). The question of what the Republic of Letters *was* or should be, only came to be posed from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards. As mentioned earlier, this has forced us to look at the “Republic of Letters” not as a concept or an idea, but as a performative speech act that functions within the discourse in the world of learning.

Despite the rise in text-mining techniques to automatically map the frequency of terms and the semantic fields in which they operate, an automated approach beyond a simple ctrl-f search proved unsuited for our relatively small and, therefore, manually manageable corpus of 2803

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 64.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 64. See Dirk van Miert, “Regulating the exchange of knowledge: the ‘Republic of Letters’ as discursive practice”, in: Fokko Jan Dijksterhuis, ed., *Regulating Knowledge in an Entangled World* (London: Routledge, 2022) [forthcoming]; Karen Hollewand, “The concept *Respublica literaria* in the correspondences of German scholars and humanists” [forthcoming].

¹⁴ Koselleck, “A Response”, p. 64.

letters. Yet, even to conduct a key-word search of the composite Latin expression for “Republic of Letters” sounds more straightforward than it is. That this is a laborious task is exemplified by Table 1. It outlines some of the many different instances of the term in Latin: *respublica literaria* to *litterarum re publica*. In addition to the Latin terms, early modern scholars also used vernacular forms, such as *Repubblica delle lettere*, *República de las letras*, *Gelehrtenrepublik*, *Republik der letteren*, and *Commonwealth of Learning*. The “Republic of Letters” was sometimes simply referenced as *Respublica* (“the” Republic). Connected to the main concept, there also exists a whole variety of related terms: from the Learned World to the Kingdom or Empire of the Learned.

Table 1. Instances of the term “Republic of Letters” in Latin

respublica lit(t)eraria	lit(t)eraria respublica	respublica lit(t)erarum	lit(t)erarum respublica
respublica literaria reipublicae literariae republicam litterariam <i>respublica literaria</i> <i>respublica litteraria</i> <i>reipublicae literariae</i> republicam litterariam respublica litteraria	literaria respublica literariae reipublicae litterariam republicam literaria respublica litteraria respublica litterariae reipublicae litterariam republicam litteraria publica	respublica litterarum reipublicae litterarum republicam litterarum respublica litterarum respublica litterarum reipublicae litterarum republicam litterarum respublica litterarum	litterarum respublica litterarum reipublicae litterarum republicam litterarum respublica litterarum respublica litterarum reipublicae litterarum republicam litterarum respublica
res publica lit(t)eraria	lit(t)eraria res publica	res publica lit(t)erarum	lit(t)erarum res publica
<i>res publica literaria</i> <i>rei publicae literariae</i> <i>rem publicam</i> litterariam <i>re publica literaria</i> <i>res publica litteraria</i> <i>rei publicae</i> litterariae <i>rem publicam</i> litterariam re publica litteraria	literaria res publica literariae rei publicae litterariam rem publicam literaria re publica litteraria res publica litterariae rei publicae litterariam rem publicam litteraria re publica	res publica litterarum rei publicae litterarum rem publicam litterarum re publica litterarum res publica litterarum rei publicae litterarum rem publicam litterarum re publica litterarum	litterarum res publica litterarum rei publicae litterarum rem publicam litterarum re publica litterarum res publica litterarum rei publicae litterarum rem publicam litterarum re publica
resp. lit(t)eraria	li(t)eraria resp.	resp. lit(t)erarum	lit(t)erarum resp.
<i>resp. literaria</i> <i>reip. literariae</i> <i>remp. litterariam</i> <i>rep. literaria</i> <i>resp. litteraria</i> <i>reip. litterariae</i> <i>remp. litterariam</i> <i>rep. literaria</i>	literaria resp. litterariae reip. litterariam remp. litteraria rep. litteraria resp litterariae reip. litterariam remp. litteraria rep.	resp. litterarum reip. litterarum remp. litterarum rep. litterarum resp. litterarum reip. litterarum remp. litterarum rep. litterarum	litterarum resp. litterarum reip. litterarum remp. litterarum rep. litterarum resp. litterarum reip. litterarum remp. litterarum rep.

Since the corpus in this case study consists almost exclusively of Latin and French letters, we limited ourselves to the various conjugations of *lit(t)eraria*, *re(s)publica*, as well as the terms *République* and *Lettres*. To ensure that no mentions were overlooked, we shortened the words making up the term to *lit**, *let**, *rep**, *res**, and *remp** and analyzed the letters, composed in Latin and French, using Voyant, a web-based text reading and analysis environment, and AntConc, a freeware corpus analysis toolkit for concordancing and text analysis.¹⁵ Next, the (combinations of) words that occurred were analyzed via close reading, i.e. we studied the term in the context of the letter in which it appeared to decide whether it denoted the “Republic of Letters”. None of the uses of the “Republic of Letters” in our corpus reflected explicitly on the term itself. Therefore, we have drawn up our own categories based on the functional context in which the term was used, distinguishing between two general categories: (1) the creation or confirmation of mutual bonds, and (2) the more activating context in which the recipient is encouraged to *do* something. As presented in the appendices, we counted the number of letters in which the term occurred, the number of occurrences (in certain letters the term was used more than once), and the number of uses (one occurrence could exhibit more than one type of use). We also looked at the term itself, i.e. the word or combination of words used. In the context of the correspondence, we took into account the date, language, recipient, and sender of each letter (to or from Casaubon or Scaliger respectively).

THE “REPUBLIC OF LETTERS” IN SCALIGER’S AND CASaubON’S CORRESPONDENCES

Scholars, letters, and the “Republic of Letters”

The classical scholar and chronologist Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540-1609) studied in Bordeaux and Paris before taking a position as companion to the nobleman Louis Chasteigner, with whom he travelled to Italy, England, and Scotland. After returning to France, Scaliger studied in Valence and, following the massacre of St Bartholomew in 1572, briefly took up a professorship in Geneva. He resumed his service with Chasteigner, living in various places in the Poitou during the Wars of Religion. He settled in Leiden in 1593, where he, with no obligation to lecture, devoted his time to research until his death in 1609.

¹⁵ <https://voyant-tools.org/> and <http://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/>

For our study, we relied on the modern edition of Scaliger’s extant letters, which contains 1670 letters in total, and selected 1663 of them (we discarded the letters composed in Hebrew and Italian).¹⁶ These letters amount to approximately 715,000 words and they were exchanged between 1561 and 1609 with a wide variety of other scholars: for example Johannes Kepler, Justus Lipsius, and of course Isaac Casaubon. We discovered the term “Republic of Letters” in 78 letters of the selected letters of the correspondence: in one French letter (0.2%) and 77 Latin letters (7.5%), adding up to 4.7% of the total number of 1663 letters. The term is used by Scaliger himself but more often by his correspondents (37% against 62%). In the 78 letters, the term emerges 92 times. These 92 occurrences were connected to 99 uses, since in certain letters the occurrence of the term served more than one function. These figures are further specified in the table below (see also Appendix 1).

	Letters from Scaliger				Letters to Scaliger				Total Scaliger correspondence			
	No. letters	Occurrence of term*			No. letters	Occurrence of term*			No. letters	Occurrence of term*		
		No. letters	% of letters	No. Occurrences		No. letters	% of letters	No. Occurrences		No. letters	% of letters	No. Occurrences
Latin	599	33	5.51	34	424	44	10.38	57	1023	77	7.53	91
French	316	0	0	0	324	1,0	0.31	1	640	1	0.16	1
Total	915	33	5.51	34	748	45	10.69	58	1663	78	4.69	92

The first significant result is that Scaliger and his correspondents mainly used the term “Republic of Letters” when they wrote in Latin. Despite the significant number of French letters in the correspondence (640), only one of them contains the term. There is a 4.7% chance of encountering the term in any given letter from the correspondence, but in a given Latin letter, this jumps to 7.5%. People writing *to* Scaliger were almost twice as likely to use the term as Scaliger himself (10.7% against 5.5%). This would indicate that Scaliger’s correspondents, unlike Scaliger himself, wanted to stress their relationship with their recipient through the term or to get something done from him.

The classical scholar and ecclesiastical controversialist Isaac Casaubon (1559-1614) started his academic career as a student at the University of Geneva, where he was appointed as a Professor of Greek and Latin Literature in the 1580s. He moved to Montpellier in 1597, and to Paris in 1599 at the invitation of King Henri IV. After the assassination of the king

¹⁶ Scaliger, *Correspondence*, 8 vols.

in 1610, Casaubon spent the final years of his life in the service of James I in London, where he died in 1614. Casaubon's letters (1554 of which have been preserved) have not been published or edited in full: a recently published critical edition in four volumes, comprising some seven hundred letters, covers the last four years of his life in England.¹⁷ We have neglected this edition and looked instead at the 1140 letters that were published in an early modern edition of his correspondence that was printed in 1709, since it was available via the online *Corpus Episticum Recentioris Aevi*.¹⁸ The selected letters, mostly in Latin (1113) with a small number in French (27), amount to roughly 410,000 words. They were written between 1584 and 1613, with 60 letters written to, and 1080 letters written by Casaubon. They were exchanged with an array of different scholars such as Jacques Auguste de Thou, Daniel Heinsius, and Scaliger. The phrase "Republic of Letters" appears in 9.47% of the letters in Casaubon's correspondence: in 108 letters, out of a total of 1140, the term occurs 129 times. Casaubon used it himself in 98 letters, with other scholars employing it in 10 letters.¹⁹ The 129 occurrences were connected to 138 uses. The numbers are displayed in the table below (see also Appendix 1).

	Letters from Casaubon				Letters to Casaubon				Total Casaubon correspondence			
	No. letters	Occurrence of term*			No. letters	Occurrence of term*			No. letters	Occurrence of term*		
		No. letters	% of letters	No. occurrences		No. letters	% of letters	No. occurrences		No. letters	% of letters	No. occurrences
Latin	1061	97	9.14	118	52	10	19.23	10	1113	107	9.61	128
French	19	1	5.26	1	8	0	0	0	27	1	3.70	1
Total	1080	98	9.07	119	60	10	16.67	10	1140	108	9.47	129

¹⁷ Many of these letters appeared before 1709 in the first and second editions (Isaac Casaubon, *Epistolae quotquot reperiri potuerunt, nunc primum iunctim editae*, ed. Johannes Fredericus Gronovius [and André Rivet] (The Hague: ex officina Theodori Maire, 1638); and id., *Epistolae, editio secunda, LXXXII epistolis auctior, et iuxta seriem temporum digesta*, ed. Johannes Georgius Graevius (Magdeburg, Helmstedt, Brunswick: Christianus Gelrachus, Simon Brekensteinus and Andreas Dunckerus, 1656). The third edition of 1709 by Almeloveen (see next note) is the most comprehensive.

¹⁸ Isaac Casaubon, *Epistolae, insertis ad easdem responsionibus...* ed. Theodorus Janssonius ab Almeloveen (Rotterdam: Caspar Fritsch and Michael Bohm, 1709) [henceforth: Casaubon, *Epistolae*]. It has been digitized on the Corpus Episticum Recentioris Aevi of the CAMENA project of the University of Mannheim: http://mateo.uni-mannheim.de/cera/autoren/casaubon_cera.html (last consulted: 11 December 2020).

¹⁹ It was used twice in 10 letters, three times in 4 letters, four times in 1 letter, and six times in 1 letter.

The same tendency to use the phrase in Latin and not in French (9.6% against 3.7%) shows up in our selection of Casaubon’s correspondence, although the result is far less significant due to the small number of French letters in this set. People writing *to* Casaubon seem to have been more likely to use the term than Casaubon himself (16.7% against 9.1%) but this also could be mainly due to the bias in the data (only 5.6% of the letters in the correspondence were written *to* Casaubon, which means that the letters to Casaubon are unlikely to fairly represent the whole body of the correspondents’ prose).

The specific terms used by Scaliger, Casaubon, and their correspondents are similar (see Appendix 2). In both sets of letters only Latin terms are chosen to refer to the “Republic of Letters”, even in the two French letters that contain the phrase. Most often, the scholars use the genitive or dative declension *reipublicae lit(t)erariae*: it describes an attributive relationship (the decline *of* the Republic of Letters or the leader *of* the Republic of Letters, for example) or it is used when something is done, or must be done, *for* or *to* the learned community. In the Scaliger correspondence, we encounter these declensions 32 times, out of a total of 92 occurrences (34.8%); the number is similar in the Casaubon set: 43 out of 129 occurrences (33.3%). If we add the shortened version of this term, *reipublicae*, which is the third most-often-used form, these percentages climb to 41.9% (54 out of 129) and 50.0% (46 out of 92). The next case on the list that we encountered regularly is the accusative *republicam literariam*. This, together with its shortened version *republicam*, makes up for 17.4% of the occurrences in the Scaliger correspondence against 24.0% in the Casaubon letters. The declinations chosen in Latin are in line with the different uses of the term “Republic of Letters” in letters sent to and from Scaliger and Casaubon, to which we will turn below.

We encountered the shortened version of the term, *reipublicae*, *republicam*, *republica*, or *respublica*, commonly in the letters under discussion. In the Scaliger correspondence, 31.5% of the occurrences consist of a denotation of “Republic”, against 16.3% of the occurrences in the letters to and from Casaubon. When used on its own, the word Republic can evidently refer not only to the Republic of Letters but also to other entities, from the ancient Roman state to Cicero’s Republic to the early modern Dutch Republic, or the political realm more generally. When we studied these terms more closely, in the context of each letter, at times the specific context was immediately clear. When Scaliger writes to Casaubon in 1597 to urge him to finish a certain work for example, he implored his friend to do so first and foremost for the good of the Republic of Letters:

You must share [your work on] Spartianus, together with other authors, with the Republic and with the good people who have a very high opinion of you.

Spartianum cum aliis debes reipublicae et bonis omnibus qui te plurimi faciunt.²⁰

Yet, in the majority of cases, when only the word Republic was used, the context of the letters failed to shed more light on which republic the author was referring to: the Republic of Letters or a different Republic. In such cases, the correspondent used the term in a more general sense. A good example of this issue is the letter Scaliger sent to scholar Carolus Labbaeus (1582-1657):

I have written a response to your previous letter, which you will receive together with this one. I don't know what I should add to that one, because I have no news. I write often to the paper-seller [Guillaume le Bé]. I wish I could help him as much as I desire or as much as he has deserved of **the Republic**! My workload does not allow me to help him out. As soon as I have wrestled my way out of this series of tasks, I will see what I can do for him. For I will never deny anything to those who devote all their efforts to the public service.

Prioribus literis tuis respondi, quas una cum istis accipies. Quid ad illas adiungam, equidem nescio. Nihil enim novi habebam. Papyropolae abunde scribo. Utinam tam possem iuvare quam aut ego cupio aut ille de **republica** est meritis! Occupationes meae non sinunt me hanc illi operam dare. Quum haec catenata negotia eluctatus fuero, experiar quid eius gratia possim. Nihil enim unquam negabo illis qui omnes labores suos ad publicam utilitatem conferunt.²¹

Later on in the letter, Scaliger refers to the Republic again:

I am very pleased that you are concentrating on the court of law. Whoever neglects to make an effort in that arena, will be unfit to embark on governing **the Republic**. Just as the poets claim that Hope is the last of the gods to have abandoned the earth, so too this type of learned man will be the only survivor after the exile of learning. And when these die out, then the greatest barbarity will settle upon the earth. Already things are falling apart. From my watch tower I soon see the downfall of all of humanity and proper learning. In the meantime, I do not want to let you down.

Gratum est mihi quod te in dryphracta forensia concluderis. Qui illi palaestrae operam non dederunt, frustra se ad **republicam** gerendam conferent. Ut poetae fingunt ultimam Spem post omnes deos terras reliquisse, ita hoc genus hominum doctorum soli post exilium literarum supersunt; et quum illi defecerint, tunc summa barbaries terris incubabit. Iam res in praecipiti est. Propediem ruinam

²⁰ Scaliger (Leiden) to Casaubon (Montpellier), 18 August 1597, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 3, p. 54, ll. 36-37. Another example can be found in Scaliger (Leiden) to Casaubon (Paris), 22 September 1606, Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 7, p. 561, ll. 32-36: "Nobis tui maior cura est quam nostri. Nam nos, quo magis senes, ut ille ait, eo magis bullae sumus. Tu in ipso statu et vigore ingenii es ut nunquam magis opera tua necessaria reipublicae quam nunc. Faxit Deus ne illa lues ad tractus in quos divertistis perveniat."

²¹ Scaliger (Leiden) to Carolus Labbaeus [Paris], 11 May 1604, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 5, p. 316, ll. 3-8.

totius humanitatis ac bonorum studiorum e specula video. Interea noli deesse tibi.²²

In this case, and in many of the other letters that merely refer to a Republic, the word denotes not one republic as such but a broader sphere, a more general common good. In these instances, *respublica* seems to have been used as a general term for the literary, scholarly community as well as the political realm, denoting a more general Republic to identify with, and contribute towards, a greater common good. This is an important observation, since modern historians tend to distinguish between the two almost categorically as mutually exclusive, while early modern learned men, such as Scaliger and Casaubon, seem to have believed you could belong to, and should be useful to, both, not as separate entities but as one larger domain. As has recently been affirmed, “far from constituting itself as a counter-power, the Republic of Letters was careful to operate within the pre-established hierarchies and political norms”.²³ Nicholas Hardy has recently forcefully demonstrated that scholars who participated in the Republic of Letters in the first half of the seventeenth century were often partisan in their confessional stances.²⁴ Of course, there were those who strove for ecumenism, but the irenicism of Erasmus, Cassander, Castellio, Grotius, and Dury was not absolute. After all, “different people wanted irenicism on different terms”.²⁵ Before the notion of a “Respublica Literaria” became the object of explicit reflection from the last decades of the seventeenth century onwards, it could be unproblematically appropriated for one’s own vision of what was good – even if it was a partisan political or religious interpretation or identity.

Uses of the term

In the tables below, the uses of the term “Republic of Letters” in the correspondence of Scaliger and Casaubon are outlined by category.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 316, ll. 9-15.

²³ Anna Borowski, “Republic of Letters”. in: Dana Jalobeanu and C.T. Wolfe, eds, *Encyclopedia of Early Modern Philosophy and the Sciences* (Springer: Cham, 2021). https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-20791-9_627-1?page=6

²⁴ Nicholas Hardy, *Criticism and Confession. The Bible in the Seventeenth Century Republic of Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 5-8.

²⁵ Anthony Milton, “The Unchanged Peacemaker? John Dury and the politics of Irencism in England, 1628-1643”, in Mark Greengrass, ed., *Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation: Studies in Intellectual Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 95-116 (96).

Type of use by Casaubon	Uses	% total	to Casaubon	from Casaubon
Praise	55	39,86	4	51
Titles of honour	8	5,80	1	7
Services to RoL	41	29,71	3	38
Praised by another	1	0,72	0	1
Self-praise	5	3,62	0	5
State of the Republic of Letters	50	36,23	6	44
Negative	42	30,43	5	37
Prayer to keep safe	10	7,25	0	10
Fear of loss	3	2,17	0	3
Mourning	17	12,32	2	15
General complaints	11	7,97	3	8
Himself and the Republic	1	0,72	0	1
Positive	8	5,80	1	7
General comments	2	1,45	0	2
In interest of Republic	6	4,35	1	5
Calls to action	32	23,19	3	29
Republic must have something	24	17,39	2	22
General duty to benefit the Republic	8	5,80	1	7
Other	1	0,72	0	1

Type of use by Scaliger	Uses	% total	to Scaliger	from Scaliger
Praise	37	37,37	28	9
Titles of honour	7	7,07	6	1
Services to RoL	27	27,27	13	14
Praised by another	2	2,02	2	0
Self-praise	1	1,01	1	0
State of the Republic of Letters	39	39,39	21	18
Negative	20	20,20	12	8
Prayer to keep safe	7	7,07	7	0
Fear of loss	2	2,02	1	1
Mourning	7	7,07	4	3
General complaints	4	4,04	0	4
Himself and the Republic	0	0,00	0	0
Positive	19	19,19	9	10
General comments	7	7,07	5	2
In interest of Republic	12	12,12	4	8
Calls to action	23	23,23	11	12
Republic must have something	12	12,12	6	6
General duty to benefit the Republic	11	11,11	5	6
Other	0	0,00	0	0

In both correspondences, the term “Republic of Letters” is often used by scholars to praise each other: in almost 39% of the letters (37.4% of Scaliger’s uses, 39.9% of Casaubon’s uses). When we look at Scaliger’s letters, it is clear that correspondents more often praised Scaliger than he praised others, pointing to his high position in the intellectual hierarchy of the Republic of Letters. He was called the “first among the nobles” and “distinguished summit” of the Republic of Letters²⁶ and was praised for his many services dedicated to the learned community.²⁷

Scaliger did sometimes employ the term when complimenting his correspondents: he praised David Hoeschel for his work on Greek writers,²⁸ commented on Janus Gruterus’s outstanding reputation in the Republic of Letters,²⁹ and wrote to Casaubon that Casaubon had never published anything that was not “extraordinary, outstanding and extremely fruitful to the Republic of Letters”.³⁰ Casaubon, in turn, referred to the Republic of Letters frequently when praising Scaliger: he stated for example, in a letter written in 1594, that the Republic of Letters was indebted to Scaliger,³¹ concluded a year later that his own accomplishments for the Republic of Letters were unequal to Scaliger’s,³² and prayed that God give the Republic of Letters more people like Scaliger.³³ He also used the term when complimenting others. It features, for instance, in a compliment made to Conradus Ritterhusius in 1604, whose great accomplishments he

²⁶ “inter proceres reipublicae literariae (quorum tu princeps es).” Casaubon to Scaliger, 4 March 1594, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, p. 367, l. 31; “Literae tuae, vir illustris et reipublicae literariae insigne columen”, Sethus Calvisius to Scaliger, 15 January 1606, *ibid.* vol. 2, p. 277, l. 3.

²⁷ For example in: Dominicus Badius to Scaliger, 19 June 1591, *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 189; Johannes Crato a Crafftheim to Scaliger, [January] 1576, *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 158-159; Casaubon to Scaliger, 29 August 1595, *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 541.

²⁸ “Tu qui tot bonis scriptoribus Graecis rempublicam literariam iuivisti.” Scaliger to David Hoeschelius, 26 November 1601, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, p. 121, ll. 23-24.

²⁹ “Nihil neque e republica literaria, neque ex existimatione tua praestantius facere potes.” Scaliger to Janus Gruterus, 20 October 1604, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 5, p. 433, ll. 6-7.

³⁰ “quum a te nihil prodierit, quod non eximum, praestantissimum et reipublicae literariae fructuosissimum sit.” Scaliger to Casaubon, 5 October 1601, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, p. 80-81, ll. 15-16.

³¹ “Tantum denique alacritatis ad scribendum adiecisti, ut quicquid unquam mihi respublica literaria debeat (si quid debitura est) id totum uni tibi in solidum acceptum ferri debeat.” Casaubon to Scaliger, 1 October 1594, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, p. 438, ll. 8-10.

³² “Cum omnia fecero, nullam partem assecutus fuero tuorum in rempublicam literariam et privatim in me maximorum meritorum.” Casaubon to Scaliger, 29 August 1595, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, p. 541, ll. 45-46.

³³ “Deus reipublicae literariae Scaligeros donet.” Scaliger (Leiden) to Casaubon (Paris), 28 August 1608, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 7, p. 604.

praised by stating that “the Republic of Letters owes many things to you already, because of the eminent tokens of your talent, through which you have enriched and adorned her.”³⁴ The following statement from a letter to Thomas Erpenius is a good example of Casaubon’s frequent use of titles in relation to the learned community, with Casaubon thanking God “that He preserved for me such a great friend and for the Republic of Letters such a great defender.”³⁵

Most just as routinely, we encounter the term as the correspondents discuss the state of learning at the time: this is the most frequent use in the Scaliger correspondence (39.4%) and is almost as regularly found in the letters sent to and from Casaubon (36.2%). Usually the comments are negative (26.2% overall, Scaliger 20.2%, Casaubon 30.4%), but the letters also discuss positive developments in the learned community, especially in Scaliger’s correspondence (11.4% overall, Scaliger 19.2%, Casaubon 5.8%). In the letters of both, we come across comments on something that has been accomplished in the interest of the learned community. References were made in passing: for example, when Scaliger told Marcus Welser that “As regards [the manuscript of] Georgius Syncellus, I agree with you that it should be published in the interest of the Republic.”³⁶ At other times, Scaliger used the term with deliberate emphasis: in 1604, he congratulated Conradus Rittershusius, “or rather the Republic of Letters”, on the discovery of a certain treasure. “Nothing better could have happened for the Republic of Letters than that the work should fall into the hands of someone who will not only publish it, but also present a corrected version...”³⁷ In Casaubon’s correspondence, too, some letters reflect positively on the Republic’s condition or discuss the interests of the learned world. In a letter to Franciscus Junius the Elder, written in 1591, Casaubon expressed how happy he was that Junius had recovered from a recent illness, stating “I am happy for you from the bottom of my

³⁴ “Multa quidem tibi jam Respublica literaria debet, propter egregia ingenii tui monumenta, quibus illam auxisti, ornasti.” Casaubon to Conradus Ritterhusius, 3 September 1604, in: Casaubon, *Epistolae*, no. CCCCIX, p. 218.

³⁵ “Sustuli in coelum manus, et Deo immortalī gratias egi, quod mihi tantum amicum, Reipublicae literariae tantum vindicem servasset. Oro illum toto pectore, ut pergat tibi et conatibus tuis benedicere.” Casaubon to Thomas Erpenius, 9 July 1612, in: Casaubon, *Epistolae*, no. DCCCXX, p. 477.

³⁶ “De Georgio Syncello, assentior tibi interesse reipublicae eum publicari.” Scaliger to Marcus Welser, 8 December 1602, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, p. 493, l. 16.

³⁷ “De thesauro invento tibi, vel potius reipublicae literariae, gratulor. Non potuit illi melius contingere quam in illius manus incidere qui non solum illum publicare, sed etiam meliorem dare potest” Scaliger to Conradus Rittershusius, 27 August 1604, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 5, p. 397, ll. 3-6.

heart, and not just for you, but indeed for the whole of the Republic.”³⁸ To Kaspar von Barth he explained that, as a reward for his own hard work and sleepless nights, he only wanted “to be useful to the Republic of Letters” and “to promote the studies of learned men”.³⁹

However, negative comments about the state of the Republic of Letters recur more frequently in Casaubon’s correspondence than in Scaliger’s. Casaubon complained in a letter to Dominicus Badius that too many talented men chose to practice law and did not dedicate themselves to scholarship, to the detriment of the Republic of Letters.⁴⁰ The dedication of his edition of Polybius (1609), mentions the damage done to the learned community, referring to the fact that Polybius remained unpublished in the previous centuries as “a wound inflicted on the Republic of Letters”, adding that it is difficult to say what harmed the Republic of Letters more: neglect of scholarship or bad judgement.⁴¹

In both sets of correspondence, the term Republic of Letters is often employed when mourning the passing of a fellow scholar. After the death of scholars Pierre Pithou, Janus Dousa Filius, and Florent Chrestien, Scaliger shared his grief with Casaubon: “Let us cry, cry over the death of these men,

³⁸ “intelligeremus te Dei Opt. Max. beneficio ex eo morbo convaluisse, et pristinam sanitatem recuperasse; quo nomine et Deo grates agimus immortales, et tibi ex animo gratulamur; nec tibi tantum, sed toti adeo Reipublicae.” Casaubon to Franciscus Junius, 3 January 1591, in: Casaubon, *Epistolae*, no. DCCCCLXVIII, p. 566.

³⁹ “Soleo inter studiorum fructus hunc censere cum primis, neque ego aliam mercedem vigiliarum mearum mihi proposui, nisi hanc, ut Reipublicae literariae prodesse, et eruditorum hominum studia possem promereri.” Casaubon to Casparus Barthius, 29 August 1606, in: Casaubon, *Epistolae*, no. DXXIII, p. 274.

⁴⁰ “Quod autem novum vitae genus institueris, et ad colendas Musas, tam propitias tibi Deas, totum te contuleris, ita vivam, mi Baudi, ut ex ea re gaudium insanum magnum capio. Bene sit viris illis magnis, qui tibi isthic manum injecerunt, et in tua te castra, etsi fortasse obtorto collo, reducerunt. Quantam enim passura fuit Respublica literarum jacturam, si tam excellens ingenium in tenebris et inter forenses rabulas, aut aulae alicujus mancipia consensisset?” Casaubon to Dominicus Badius, 23 December 1602, in: Casaubon, *Epistolae*, no. CCCXXII, p. 170.

⁴¹ “At quam dolendum, nec sine indignatione summa memorandum, quod auctoris tanti tam excellens opus superiorum saeculorum Barbara ignorantia magna ex parte nobis invidit? Quando id vulnus Reip[ublicae] literariae fuerit impositum, difficile est pro certo affirmare. Constantinum Porphyrogenitum, Pandectarum Politicarum ex historiis compositorem, integrum opus habuisse, nullus dubito.” Casaubon’s dedication to Henri IV of *Πολυβίου τον Ανκόρτα Μεγαλοπολίτου Ιστοριών τα σωζόμενα. Polybii Lycortae F. Megalopolitani Historiarum libri qui supersunt. Isaacus Casaubonus ex antiquis libris emendavit, Latine vertit, et commentariis illustravit* (Paris: Hieronymus Drouardus, 1609), p. [xxxv]; “Fuit et tanti mali caussa, studiosorum partim incuria artium honestarum, partim iudicium fatali quasdam caecitate depravatum: quorum duorum vitiorum, utrum sit Reipub[licae] literariae pernitiosius, haut dictu promptum.” *Ibid.*, p. [xiv].

my Casaubon; we cannot control the pain.”⁴² He continues by summoning his friend to keep working: “It is enough that we are crying, and that you are preserved for the Republic of Letters, which needs your work and your help so desperately, in order to sustain learning in the bereavement of scholarship.”⁴³ Casaubon, in turn, confided to Jacques Auguste de Thou in 1597 that De Thou alone could make up for the damage caused by the deaths of Jacques Cujas, who had died in 1590, and Pierre Pithou, who had passed away in 1596. He praised De Thou as one of the three sons of the Republic of Letters, along with Scaliger and Beza.⁴⁴ When Scaliger himself died in 1609, Casaubon was grief stricken. He comments on his sorrow in multiple letters, writing for instance to Paul Dumay that the news has shattered him, that he has trouble accepting the death of Scaliger, whom he worshipped as the most important man in the Republic of Letters and who treated him like a son.⁴⁵ Regularly moved by the death of other scholars, as our table points out, Scaliger, Casaubon, and their correspondents also used the term when praying for the safekeeping of their colleagues for the good of the learned community. In the final sentence of a letter sent in 1598, for example, Tycho Brahe expresses the wish that Scaliger will live a long and happy life for the Republic of Letters,⁴⁶ and four years later Casaubon implores Scaliger to keep himself safe with God’s help – “for us, or rather for the Republic of Letters”.⁴⁷

⁴² “Flemus, flemus eos, mi Casaubone, neque dolori moderari possumus.” Scaliger to Casaubon, 21 February 1597, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 3, p. 20, ll. 36-37.

⁴³ “Satis est nos flere, et te reipublicae literariae reservari, quae maxime opera et ope tua indiget, ad literas sublevandas in hac orbitate studiorum.” Scaliger to Casaubon, 21 February 1597, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 3, p. 21, ll. 38-39.

⁴⁴ “Tu in his, Thuane doctissime, qui unus, si gravissima et ad summam Rempublicam pertinentia negotia permetterent, Cujacium et Pithoeum potuisti exprimere, ac velut redivivos sistere, et damnum, quod morte eorum οἱ φιλομαθεῖς τῶν ἀνδρῶν fecerunt, sarcire. . . . τὸν γὰρ ἔσχατον χιτῶνα, ut vocant Plato et Tacitus τὴν φιλοτιμίαν, mature exuere incipimus: utique postquam a vobis, qui Reipublicae literariae tres veluti soles estis, te, Scaligero, et sene optimo nostro, longe adeo recessi.” Casaubon to Jacques-Auguste de Thou, 21 March 1597, in: Casaubon, *Epistolae*, no. CXXIV, p. 68.

⁴⁵ “Non clam te est, opinor, magni Scaligeri obitus, quo equidem nuntio sic sum afflicto, ut vix tristiozem, aut molestiozem accipere potuisse videar. Colebam illum pro summis ipsius in Rempublicam literariam meritis, et insigni erga me benevolentia, pari pietate, ac si meus parens fuisset.” Casaubon to Paulus du Majus, 1609, in: Casaubon, *Epistolae*, no. DCXXII, p. 327. Other letters in which Casaubon mourned Scaliger are for example: to Daniel Heinsius, 23 February 1609, *ibid.*, no. DCXXI, p. 326; to Claudius Salmasius, 25 March 1609, *ibid.*, no. DCXXVI, p. 328-329; to David Hoeschelius, 25 March 1609, *ibid.*, no. DCXXVII, p. 329; Fridericus Taubmannus, 27 March 1609, *ibid.*, no. DCXXIX, p. 330.

⁴⁶ “Vale, vir illustris et magne, ac reipublicae literariae diu ac feliciter vive.” Tycho Brahe to Scaliger, 2 September 1598, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 3, p. 191, l. 333.

⁴⁷ “teque cum bono Deo nobis, imo reipublicae literariae, serves incolumem.” Casaubon to Scaliger, 4 December 1602, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 4, p. 485, ll. 37-38.

A third reason for scholars to use the term “Republic of Letters” is to achieve something: the addressee is urged to work on a particular study, publish a certain book, lend someone a specific manuscript, or is generally admonished to fulfill his duty to the Republic. Casaubon, for example, urged Theodor Canter to share his findings with him, not only for Casaubon’s personal advantage but also, possibly, for the benefit of the Republic of Letters.⁴⁸ He asks Marquard Freher, in a letter sent in 1595, when he is going to publish an important source, adding: “I beseech you, my Freher, now that you have started, bless us with this gift, and so continue in this way to deserve well of the Republic of Letters.”⁴⁹ Others urged Scaliger directly to contribute to the learned community. “You should continue to help the Republic of Letters, whose dignity you alone sustain among the French, with only very few other people indeed; if you have something, seize this opportunity!”, Dominicus Baudius writes to Scaliger in 1595, adding “You would be unjust if you doubt that I handle everything with the trust and care which I know that you desire”.⁵⁰ In turn, Scaliger asked his colleagues to serve the Republic. Scaliger reassured Justus Lipsius that everyone in Leiden loved Lipsius for his services to the Republic of Letters;⁵¹ he warned Janus Gruterus twice in 1605 that he owed his work on the inscriptions of coins to the Republic;⁵² and he urged

⁴⁸ “Quare oro obsecroque te, feras mihi opem, et quicquid habueris quod usui esse possit versanti in eo negotio, id mecum communices: feceris mihi rem gratissimam, fortasse etiam reipublicae literariae non inutilem.” Casaubon to Theodor Canter, 28 August 1596, in: Casaubon, *Epistolae*, no. LXXXVIII, p. 49.

⁴⁹ “Itane vero, exibat in lucem ille Thesaurus? Obsecro te, mi Frehere, quia semel coepisti, bea nos munere, et de literaria Republica etiam sic bene mereri perge.” Casaubon to Marquard Freher, 29 August 1595, in: Casaubon, *Epistolae*, no. DCCCXCIV, p. 580.

⁵⁰ “Si quid habes qui rempublicam literariam pergas iuvare – cuius tu dignitatem in Gallis solus, certe cum paucissimis, sustines – arripe hanc occasionem. Iniurius sis, si dubites quin a me omnia fient cum fide et cura quae te velle cognovero.” Dominicus Baudius to Scaliger, 19 June 1591, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, p. 189, ll. 8-11.

⁵¹ “Vide num ubi magnus est proventus disquisitorum magicarum fabularum, ibi potius natum sit quam hic, ubi nemo est quin ita ut dignus es de te sentiat, ita amet ut tua in rempublicam literariam beneficia postulant; in quibus ego nomen primus profiteor meum.” Scaliger to Justus Lipsius, 25 February 1605, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 5, p. 559, ll. 22-25.

⁵² “Interea inscriptiones numismatum, quia levis labor est, potes addere, ita tamen ut in praefatione lectorem instituti tui certiore facias de commentario in indicem a te instituto. Certe hoc debes reipublicae literariae, quia bene ac pro dignitate hoc praestare potes.” Scaliger to Janus Gruterus, 17 March 1605, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 5, p. 578, ll. 5-8; “Non opus est repetere quae postremis meis literis adhibui ad iuvandum desiderium tuum, vel potius ad te hortandum ut illum indicem inscriptionum numismatum conficias. Nihil enim est, neque quod editioni maiori inscriptionum accommodatus, neque quod reipublicae literariae utilius, neque quod studiosis gratius futurum sit.” Scaliger to Janus Gruterus, 27 August 1605, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 6, p. 128, ll. 3-7.

Melchior Goldast to send him his copy of a manuscript on chronology, since “with this kindness you will serve not only us but also the Republic of Letters.”⁵³ Scaliger also prompted Casaubon to fulfill his duty to the learned community: he wrote to Casaubon in 1597 that his friend owed the Republic of Letters his Spartianus, part of the *Historia Augusta*, as we saw above.⁵⁴ Likewise, when Casaubon sent his edition of Suetonius to Scaliger, he said the edition was not meant to edify Scaliger, who knew everything already, but to render a service to the Republic of Letters.⁵⁵

Results

Comparing our findings in both sets of correspondence, we see that in letters to and from Casaubon, the term “Republic of Letters” is used almost twice as often as in the letters of the Scaliger correspondence (9.5% against 4.7%, even if part of these figures overlap because they used the phrase in their letters to each other). If we limit ourselves to the Latin correspondence, however, the figures become more even: 9.6% and 7.5% respectively. We encounter the term much more frequently in the Latin letters present in the two collections of letters (8.6% contain the term) than the French letters (0.3% contains the term). This difference can only be partly explained by the bias in the data, since the collection contains more Latin than French letters (23.8% French against 76.2% Latin letters). If we compare the two scholars as letter writers, there is 9.1% chance of coming across the phrase in a random letter from Casaubon, as compared to 3.6% in Scaliger’s correspondence. Limiting ourselves to the Latin letters, the numbers again change for Scaliger: we encounter the term in 9.1% of Casaubon’s Latin letters against 5.5% of Scaliger’s Latin letters. Scaliger’s correspondents use the term in 6.0% of all their letters, or 10.4% of their Latin letters. For the 1709 edition, the letters which Almeloveen selected

⁵³ “Oro te, mi Goldaste, ut tui mihi copiam facias, et per mercatores qui ex nundinis revertentur, fac ut quamprimum accipiam. Hoc beneficio non solum de nobis, sed etiam de republica literaria bene merebere.” Scaliger to Melchior Goldast, 11 March 1608, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 7, p. 445, ll. 7-9.

⁵⁴ “Spartianum cum aliis debes reipublicae et bonis omnibus qui te plurimi faciunt.” Scaliger to Casaubon, 18 August 1597, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 3, p. 54, ll. 36-37. Casaubon began work on the *Augustan History* in 1596. His edition of the work was published in 1603 (Paris: A. and H. Drouart).

⁵⁵ “Promissum Suetonium anno ecce mitto tibi, vir maxime; opus exspectatione tua tanto inferius quanto amor tuus in me maior est meritis meis, non dicam in te, quae nulla sunt nec possunt esse, sed in rempublicam literariam, quae sunt oppido tenuia. Quid facerem?” Casaubon to Scaliger, 29 August 1595, in: Scaliger, *Correspondence*, vol. 2, p. 539, ll. 3-6.

that were sent to Casaubon used the phrase more often: in 16.7% of the total number of letters and in 19.2% of the Latin letters.

The Latin terms chosen to refer to the Republic of Letters are comparable in both correspondences: in most cases Scaliger, Casaubon, and their colleagues used the genitive or dative declensions of the term, *reipublicae* (*lit(t)erariae*), or chose the accusative form, *republicam* (*literariam*). These declinations align with the different uses of the term “Republic of Letters”, the context in which the term was employed in the letters under discussion. Of the three main categories of use, praise is the most frequent: in 49.5% of the total number of letters that contain the term and in 3.3% of the total number of letters studied. The phrase is usually employed to praise a person’s services to the learned community (36.6% of the letters that contain the term and 2.4% of the total numbers of letters analyzed). Secondly, we encounter the phrase when the current or future state of the “Republic of Letters” is considered (in 47.9% of the letters with the term, 3.2% of the letters in total), usually to comment on or express apprehension about its decline (33.3%, and 2.2% respectively) but also to discuss positive developments (14.5%, and 1.0%). Third, the term is employed when urging an addressee to act, e.g. to finish a book or fulfill a different duty to the Republic (29.6%, and 1.7%). Looking at these numbers, we may conclude that the phrase is most often adhered to by scholars to cement relations within the world of learning (75.3%, and 5.0%), when they are building or relying on a shared identity as they praise a correspondent or discuss the state of the world of learning. A second motive to employ the term is to get something done (33.9%, and 2.3%): by referring to the benefit it will bring the Republic of Letters, scholars urge their colleagues to public a book, copy a certain manuscript, or introduce themselves to a particular person, for example.

The uses of the term in both collections of letters are comparable. In Casaubon’s correspondence, scholars do offer a more negative opinion on the state of affairs in the Republic of Letters and urge each other to strengthen the Republic of Letters, while Scaliger and his correspondents are more positive about the prospects of the learned community. Both scholars used the phrase “Republic of Letters” most frequently to establish and emphasize common bonds in the learned community, with Scaliger doing this less often in his own letters than his contacts did in their letters to him. Scaliger is also praised much more often than he praises other scholars, while Casaubon praised his contacts and himself more frequently than he was praised by others.

DISCUSSION

In addition to our immediate findings, this analysis of the use of the term “Republic of Letters” in learned correspondence results in a number of additional conclusions and new observations.

First and foremost, our study has provided new insight into the use of the term by early modern scholars. Modern historians put emphasis on the term when discussing the early modern learned community, and it is clear from the correspondences of Scaliger and Casaubon that the “Republic of Letters” was a vital actor’s category. However, our study raises a question about the significance the early modern learned community ascribed to this term. The question as to how often a term should be used before we assign a significant cultural meaning to it, is probably impossible to answer, since there is no measure to compare it with. It is only in the comparison that we gain insight into the relative meanings of quantitative analysis. It is here that this study offers a baseline for comparisons with other learned correspondences.

Second, if we compare the two corpora in the present analysis, it appears that the differences between Scaliger and Casaubon are small but conspicuous. A first explanation as to why Scaliger might have used the term less frequently was because he was less eager to make friends and felt less need to expand his network. This would tie in with Scaliger’s less positive view of relations overall: he was unmarried, and had given up on trying to convince adversaries (if ever he made the effort to do so). This is basically a psychological explanation. Such was Scaliger’s character: not inclined to waste much time and space on rhetoric in his letters, he moved quickly to the point. This would imply that people who used the term less often were also less inclined to inscribe themselves socially in the commonwealth of learning, for more or less personal or psychological reasons. Does this mean that Scaliger was more sceptical about the Republic of Letters than Casaubon? Things appear more complicated than that, however, because we have also observed that Scaliger, *when* he employed the phrase, used it in a more optimistic sense than Casaubon. This is somewhat unexpected, considering the harsh reputation of Scaliger and the well-known tact of Casaubon. It would appear that Casaubon was the more gloomy character of the two when considering the state of affairs in the world of learning. Indeed, Scaliger’s unreserved scorn for his enemies might have had the psychological effect of releasing negative emotions, while Casaubon’s diary shows him as a more depressed figure, whose anxieties turn inward, permanently seeking God’s support. A second reason why Scaliger used the phrase less often is related to the first but is

sociological rather than psychological. The pattern that occurred confirms a generalized intuition: Casaubon moved with much more caution than Scaliger did in the international arena of scholarship. He was also more tightly bound into both Catholic and Protestant networks, a balancing act he sustained until 1610. Much more than Scaliger, he engaged with ecclesiastical history and with the church fathers. Scaliger may have relied on the support of Chasteigner or (in Holland) on the powerful pensionary Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, but Casaubon depended on much more powerful kings such as Henri IV and James I. During the final four years of his life, he had to define his own position in relation to a variety of politico-theological parties: King James I, Dutch Arminianism, Huguenot France, Ultramontanism, and Gallicanism. Invoking the “Republic of Letters”, therefore, would appear to have been a sign of caution and of dependence. Privately, Casaubon may have harboured just as few illusions about the high-minded ideals of the Republic of Letters as Scaliger, but in his letters he played the game of the international arena with more care and caution than Scaliger bothered to do. More often than Scaliger, Casaubon felt the need to create a common ground between different people: an imaginary space that facilitated negotiation. His frequent use of the term therefore betrays the precariousness of his position.

A third conclusion is that there were two main applications of the term: scholars used it to praise each other and comment on the state of the learned community, but also to urge their recipients to act in order to contribute to the Republic of Letters. Looking at the praises and complaints, it appears that the use of the term was performative: it was a standard expression, used almost unthinkingly; yet, at the same time it can be regarded as a speech-act, since its use served a clear purpose. Invoking the Republic meant creating bonds of trust or solidifying existing relations. The most dominant function of the phrase is the act of praising the interlocutor, conventionally at the start or end of a letter. The learned community was also often referenced as a collective entity in relation to anxiety: a threat or an expression of sadness felt by both sender and recipient and impacting the cause of learning. Complaints about the sorry state of affairs in the Republic of Letters have the effect of turning correspondent and recipient into two besieged warriors defending the fortress of learning. This effect affirmed a common identity. The addition of an urgent common cause more effectively deepened the mutual bonds than the mere praising of one another. Other anxieties are also present: correspondents affirm their bonds by grieving over the death of a scholar, which is represented as a loss to the learned community. In remembering his services, scholars rehearsed the repertoire of scholarly virtues. At this stage, it is difficult to

explain the fact that in the French letters, we do not find a translation of the Latin term, but the Latin term itself. Perhaps it means that Latin was still far more than French associated with the World of Learning, and the Republic of Letters was at that time exclusively associated with the Latin tradition: if this explanation holds true, we should expect that the career of the term *République des Lettres* not only connotes the rise of the reputation of French as a language of science and scholarship, but perhaps also signals a watering down of the Latin paradigm in the early modern learned world. Turning to the urge to act, we notice that the second application of the term was also performative, but more directed to making something happen. In these cases, the Republic was invoked to get something done from the addressee: the recipient was encouraged to send information, not for the private sake of the writer of the letter, but for the greater cause of the world of learning or even the broader commonwealth. This pattern, in which an individual stood in for the collective, is widespread in situations in which the author has little to offer in return, for example because he is still young and inexperienced (bridging a generation gap; Casaubon evidently regarded Scaliger as his intellectual parent). In short, these two speech-acts are crucial: on the one hand, solidifying relations by praising contributions to the Republic of Letters and on the other, getting things done by invoking the imperative to serve the Republic of Letters.

A fourth conclusion is that Scaliger, Casaubon, and their contemporaries not only denoted the community of the learned by the term “Republic of Letters” but also used many other terms. In the Latin letters, we have come across the terms *orbis literatus*, *litteratum commercium*, and *communio studiorum* but also *imperium literarum*, *litterarium regnum*, and *litterarum societas*. The French letters speak of *homme de bonnes lettres*, *gens de lettres*, *reputation des lettres*, and related terms. A first glance at the occurrence of other terms that refer to the world of learning suggests that these phrases are used less frequently and less purposefully, but more research needs to be done to before anything can be concluded about the significance and different meanings of these terms in relation to the term under discussion here. Yet, what emerges from studying the usage of the term on this micro level is that the “Republic” is at times defined in a broader sense, referring not to the good of one particular political Republic or the Republic of Letters but to both. It seems to have been used as a general term for the common good, with political and learned interest coming together.

CONCLUSION

So what is the value of all this quantification? First, instead of presenting unsubstantiated intuitions, based on years of reading the letters of these men, we can check our intuitions using numbers derived from exactly the same sources. In Scaliger’s and Casaubon’s correspondences, the use of the phrase “Republic of Letters” is first and foremost linked to identity, to creating a common ground of trust, a mutual bond, a sharing of similar aims and goals but also joy and pain. We assume that whoever used the “Republic of Letters” used it in a positive sense, even if he (mostly he) deplored its dismal state. To use the term is to praise it, and to praise it is to identify with it as something desirable. The Republic of Letters was a “good” idea. As far as we can tell, there are no known examples from this period that reject the whole notion of a Republic of Letters as a bad thing – at most it could be looked upon as a naive ideal. Casaubon never did so and even Scaliger, a man with few illusions, regarded the Republic of Letters as a common good. At the same time, we also find the term used in a more active and more pragmatic manner. Scholars use it to stress an obligation to the Republic of Letters, to get something done for the common good for the whole learned community: publish that book, work on those transcriptions, let me borrow that manuscript. Despite its variations, there is a common core in the employment of the term: to establish, emphasize, and extend the common ground of scholars, and thus to facilitate the communication of knowledge.

Because of our study, we can now be much more precise about the differentiation of the term when we look at Casaubon and Scaliger. Based on the correspondence of two figures who dominated cutting-edge scholarly discussions in Europe around 1600, we now have a baseline. We can repeat this exercise with other letter collections written by people we know little about and the quantitative results can predict patterns about people’s precarious social positions or character straight, without reading all those letters, but focussing only on the phrase “Republic of Letters”. In fact, it can give an objective measure of those. On a more general level, the more cases we gather, the more we learn about the strength and the attraction of the idea of a Republic of Letters: the ups and downs throughout history, throughout space and throughout the confessions and perhaps even the disciplines. One telling example is our study of the twenty-thousand letters in the ePistolarium, which encompasses the correspondences of Constantijn Huygens, Christiaan Huygens, Hugo Grotius, Caspar Barlaeus, Isaac Beeckman, René Descartes, Antoni van Leeuwenhoek, Jan Swammerdam, and Dirk Rembrandtsz. van Nierop.

The phrase is used 44 times in this immense corpus, which stretches from the last decade of the sixteenth century to the first decade of the eighteenth century, with the bulk of the material dating from the 1640s. Although the phrase occurs in French, the likelihood of an occurrence in Latin is more than four times higher. Across this corpus, then, that covers much of the Dutch part of the Republic of Letters, the currency of the term drops in the course of the seventeenth century, which runs entirely counter to the established conviction that the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic is the heyday of the Republic of Letters.⁵⁶ Of course, this raises all sorts of questions about possible explanations for these differences – it may be the dataset, in which the correspondences of humanists like Gerard Vossius and Daniel Heinsius and their sons are missing. But it also may be found in certain historical circumstances, such as the institutional protection offered by universities, or a gradual integration of scholarly and non-scholarly epistolary contacts. This is something for future research to investigate. What has becoming clear, though, is that if we were to study more cases using the methodology outlined in this article, we can not only imagine how scholars themselves created a sense of community, how they experienced it and how they used it to their advantage; it will also lead to a more nuanced *longue durée* history of the Republic of Letters and its vicissitudes.

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⁵⁶ Bots, *De Republiek der Letteren*, *passim*.

Appendix 1. Summary table of the use of “Republic of Letters” in the correspondences Scaliger and Casaubon

From Scaliger				To Scaliger				Total Scaliger							
No.letters	Occurrence of term*			No.letters	Occurrence of term*			No.letters	Occurrence of term*						
	No. of letters	% of letters	No. of occurrences		No. %	No. of occurrences	% of letters		No. %	No. of occurrences	% of letters				
Latin	599	33	5.51	34	5.68	424	44	10.38	57	13.44	1023	77	7.53	91	8.90
French	316	0	0	0	0	324	1	0.31	1	0.31	640	1	0.16	1	0.16
Total	915	33	5.51	34	5.68	748	45	10.69	58	13.75	1663	78	4.69	92	5.53
From Casaubon				To Casaubon				Total Casaubon							
No.letters	Occurrence of term*			No.letters	Occurrence of term*			No.letters	Occurrence of term*						
	No. %	No. of occurrences	% of letters		No. %	No. of occurrences	% of letters		No. %	No. of occurrences	% of letters				
Latin	1061	97	9.14	118	11.12	52	10	19.23	10	19.23	1113	107	9.61	128	11.50
French	19	1	5.26	1	5.26	8	0	0	0	0	27	1	3.70	1	3.70
Total	1080	98	9.07	119	11.02	60	10	16.67	10	16.67	1140	108	9.47	129	11.32
Total corpus				Total corpus				Total corpus							
No.letters	Occurrence of term*			No.letters	Occurrence of term*			No.letters	Occurrence of term*						
	No. %	No. of occurrences	% of letters		No. %	No. of occurrences	% of letters		No. %	No. of occurrences	% of letters				
Latin						2136					184			219	
French						667					2			2	
						2803					186			221	

Appendix 2. Summary table of the terms used to refer to the RoL in correspondences Scaliger and Casaubon

Terms	Casaubon	%	Scaliger	%	Casaubon and Scaliger	% of total
republicae	11	8.53	14	15.22	25	11.31%
rei literariae	1	0.78	1	1.09	2	0.90%
reipublicae lit(t)erariae	43	33.33	32	34.78	75	33.93%
reipublicae literarum	4	3.10	1	1.09	5	2.26%
publicae rei literariae	5	3.88	1	1.09	6	2.71%
reipublicae nostrae	1	0.78	0	0.00	1	0.45%
reipublicae vestrae	2	1.55	2	2.17	4	1.81%
	67	51.94	51	55.43	118	53.39%
republicanum	2	1.55	9	9.78	11	4.98%
republicanum literarium*	31	24.03	16	17.39	47	21.27%
republicanum literarum	0	0	1	1.09	1	0.45%
	33	25.58	26	28.26	59	26.70%
republica	4	3.10	4	4.35	8	3.62%
re(s)publica lit(t)eraria [^]	21	16.28	11	11.96	32	14.48%
respublica literarum	3	2.33	0	0.00	3	1.36%
vestra republica	1	0.78	0	0.00	1	0.45%
	29	22.48	15	16.30	44	19.91%
	129		92		221	

* including *literarium republicanum* (1) and *republica literaria* (3)[^] including *lit(t)eraria republica* (2) and *respublica literaria* (1)

Appendix 3. Uses of the term RoL in the correspondences of Casaubon and Scaliger

Uses of the term RoL in the correspondences of Casaubon and Scaliger															
	Casaubon total		to		from	Scaliger total	to		from	total	to	from	% total	% to	% from
Praise	55	4	51	37	22	15	92	26	66	38.82	43.84	36.59			
Titles of honour	8	1	7	7	6	1	15	7	8	6.33	9.59	4.88			
Services to RoL	41	3	38	27	13	14	68	16	52	28.69	21.92	31.71			
Praised by another	1	0	1	2	2	0	3	2	1	1.27	2.74	0.61			
Self-praise	5	0	5	1	1	0	6	1	5	2.53	1.37	3.05			
State of RoL	50	6	44	39	21	18	89	27	62	37.55	36.99	37.80			
State (negative)	42	5	37	20	12	8	62	17	45	26.16	23.29	27.44			
Prayer to keep	10	0	10	7	7	0	17	7	10	7.17	9.59	6.10			
Fear of loss in RoL	3	0	3	2	1	1	5	1	4	2.11	1.37	2.44			
Mourning scholars	17	2	15	7	4	3	24	6	18	10.13	8.22	10.98			
General complaints	11	3	8	4	0	4	15	3	12	6.33	4.11	7.32			
Himself and the RoL	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.42	0.00	0.61			
State of RoL (positive)	8	1	7	19	9	10	27	10	17	11.39	13.70	10.37			
General comments	2	0	2	7	5	2	9	5	4	3.80	6.85	2.44			
In interest of RoL	6	1	5	12	4	8	18	5	13	7.59	6.85	7.93			
Other	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.42	0.00	0.61			
Calls to action	32	3	29	23	11	12	55	14	41	23.21	19.18	25.00			
RoL must have it	24	2	22	12	6	6	36	8	28	15.19	10.96	17.07			
Duty to benefit RoL	8	1	7	11	5	6	19	6	13	8.02	8.22	7.93			