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« *The King is dead, long live the King !* », *Eikon Basilike, a modern book*

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370 years ago, in January 1649, Charles I was charged with high treason and executed at Whitehall, in front of « *his people* ». And yet, his death was the beginning of a new era. On the very day of his execution, the book *Eikon Basilike* was published. This collaborative work helped to create the king's new portrait : being a father and a man rather than « God's lieutenant on earth ». But there is more to consider : readers should be seen as actors and co-creators of this new image. The reception of the text is central to understand the transformations the British monarchy was about to experience. This popular version of the king was a revolutionary way to represent royal authority and a powerful way to conquer the subjects' hearts. Royalists had already understood that new means of communication meant new strategies, such as creating empathy, appealing to emotions, strengthening the link between authors and readers. But here, we argue that « *people make kings* » : we usually called *Eikon Basilike* « the King's book ». But since readers quickly appropriated the book, it became the « people's book ». Charles I intended to die for monarchy but, in doing so, he (and his counsellors) created a new and modern form of monarchy. In the seventeenth century, the main issues were struggles for sovereignty and power : *Eikon Basilike* is a good example. To win the battle, the royalists invited people to participate in this redefinition of sovereignty. To go further, it is essential to focus on the way people appropriated the book but also on its materiality (sizes, bindings, illustrations, additional material, annotations and marks) and the objects surrounding the cult of Charles the Martyr. Thanks to changing words and imagery, 1649 guaranteed the continuity and stability – and evolution – of the British monarchy, allowing people to represent, even create, their « own king » and reinvent monarchy.

A NEW PORTRAIT : A WRITING TASK

In this propaganda work, the authors are creating the « character » of Charles I, that is to say a man, a father and a sinner rather than a divine king. They are crafting a new kind of hero, dying for the people in the name of Protestantism. The monarch himself said, on the scaffold, that he was « the martyr of the people ». As we have argued in our PhD work, there is a powerful coherence between the royalist propaganda put in place since 1648 and *Eikon Basilike*, strengthening the relationship with the subjects. But at the same time, it is crucial to notice that, even if the readers are encouraged to identify with the king's sufferings, the authors constantly remember the subjects they are reading a royal text.

A man and a father, a sinner : an « everyman »

The emphasis lies on the faith of this man, since the word « God » is used 164 times in the book : the king talks to God, confesses his sins and repents for his mischiefs. This character is a honest man who truly wants to reflect on his entire life, seeking God's mercy, hoping that he will deliver him from evil. The meditations, in italics, at the end of each chapter are essential : we enter the King's private moments with God. This is the case in this particular passage, dealing with Strafford's death :

I Hope God hath forgiven Me and them, the sinful rashness of that business. [...] forgive me that act of sinful compliance, [...] O Lord, I acknowledge my **transgression**, and **my sin** is ever before me. **Deliver me** from blood guiltiness O God, thou God of my salvation [...] Against Thee **have I sinned**, and **done this evil** in thy sight [...] **purge me** with the blood of my Redeemer, and I shall be clear¹ [...]

The religious lexical field is essential. This man accepts his fate and recognises his mistakes. He says : « *I look upon My sins, and the sins of My people, [...] as the just cause of these popular inundations*² [...] ». Showing the path for hundreds of his subjects, the king delivers his intimate prayers, thus becoming a model to follow, the example of a good Protestant, like the Foxean Martyrs. The words « prayer » is used 52 times. The book shows that facing death, the King is as vulnerable as any of his subjects, asking God to help him. He cries like any other man, the word « tears³ » is used several times in the book. The thing to remember is that this book borrows features to the spiritual autobiography, playing on the importance of religion, following the tradition of *Ars moriendi*.

Throughout the book, Charles I is depicted as a simple and vertuous man, for whom conscience and justice are the most important things. There is a complete blurring between the private and the public sphere. The text keeps repeating that he is a « man » : « *My death as a Man*⁴ », « *my failings, as a man*⁵ ». The fate of Mortality is lying on him like any of his subjects. The emotion is slowly invading the readers, for the chapters are becoming more and more personal and moving, as we witness a father saying goodbye to his children. The theme of « family » is used to present Charles I as a husband and a father, for example in chapter 7 when he talks about his wife, Henrietta-Maria, or in chapter 27, when he directly addresses his son : « *At worst, I trust I shall but go before You to a better Kingdom, which God hath prepared for Me, [...] Farewell, till we meet, if not on Earth, yet in Heaven*⁶. » The divine king is forgotten and replaced by an ordinary man, and he becomes the people's father, in Christ's style. James I wrote in *Basilikon Doron (1595)*, « [...] *it is the tongue's office to be the*

¹ *Eikon Basilike, The Portaiture of His Sacred Majesty in His Solitudes and Sufferings* (1649), éd. critique par Jim Daems et Holly Faith Nelson, Peterborough, Broadview Editions, 2006. Quoted this way : *EB*, Chapter 2, p. 55-57.

² *EB*, Chapter 4, p. 64-65.

³ *EB*, Chapter 12, p. 103, « [...] *so I might wash them in my Tears, [...]* » ; *EB*, Chapter 24, p. 175, « [...] *from an humble heart I (alone) daily offer up in holy meditations, fervent prayers, and unfeigned tears my self to thee ; [...]* » ; *EB*, Chapter 26, p. 181, « [...] *objects of my prayers and tears, [...]* » ; *EB*, Chapter 26, p. 181, « [...] *The tears they have denied me in my saddest condition, [...]* ».

⁴ *EB*, Chapter 28, p. 203.

⁵ *EB*, Chapter 28, p. 200.

⁶ *EB*, Chapter 27, p. 195.

*messenger of the mind*⁷ » and this is precisely what the royalists tried to do for this book is a mirror, revealing the king's true portraiture and feelings. The authors repeat that he is « *a Man, a Christian, and a King*⁸ », which is in perfect continuity with his behaviour at his trial and his speech on the scaffold. They create a tragic hero, accepting his fate and sufferings, offering an accessible, familiar and reassuring – popular – image⁹.

This new portrait is a complete propaganda construction, playing on theatrical devices and religious images or texts, such as psalms or gospels, to touch the people's heart and render Charles « *a man and a Christian* ».

Including the reader into the narrative

As if it was natural, the authors constantly create a dialogue between the king and the people, thanks to common experience, emotions, prayers, orality of the text. There is a real will to include the reader in the text. The readers are emerged in the king's thoughts, as if they were listening to the king's prayers and meditations from the corner of the room. The different typography helps appreciate the different tone of the text. Using the pronoun « *I* » as if he was directly addressing the reader, focusing on feelings and emotions, exaggerating *pathos*, *Eikon Basilike* often has a lyrical tone :

That I must **die** as a man ; is certain, that I may **die** a King, by the hands of My own Subjects, a **violent, sodain, and barbarous death** ; in the strength of My years ; in the midst of My Kingdoms ; My Friends and loving Subjects being **helplesse Spectators** ; My Enemies insolent Revilers and Triumphers over Me, living, **dying, and dead**, is so probable in humane reason,¹⁰ [...]

The authors try to stir emotions focusing on the character's sudden death and his family's pain. Moreover the king often laments and the reader can then identify with the king's family. The authors make sure that there is a powerful link between the reader and the king. Rhetorical questions are often used, reinforcing the dialogue between them, creating an interaction like a play :

And must I be opposed with force, because they have not reason wherewith to convince me ? O my Soul ! [...] Is this the reward and thanks that I am to receive [...] Is there no way left to make Me a glorious KING, but by My sufferings¹¹?

Several times in the book, the king questions or calls out the readers, including them in the narrative, using « *we* », « *us* » or « *our* ». He is sometimes equal to his subjects : « [...]

⁷ James I, *Basilikon Doron, Basilikon Doron Or His Maiesties instructions to his dearest sonne, Henry the Prince*. London : Imprinted by Felix Kyngston, for Iohn Norton, according to the copie, printed at Edenburgh, 1603, London, EEBO on 03/04/2018, p. 116.

⁸ *EB*, Chapter 23, p. 167.

⁹ For they have seen it a couple of weeks before on stage, and they have read his story in the most popular book of this period, the Bible. For example : « *For I acknowledge my transgressions : and my sin is ever before me* » is a copy from psalm 51. *King James Bible*, Psalm 51:3.

¹⁰ *EB*, Chapter 28, p. 197.

¹¹ *EB*, Chapter 9, p. 81.

*preserve peace among ourselves, as Men and Christians*¹² [...] ». The author's asides between brackets offer a special relationship with his readers like in this passage : « [...] *when between My own unsatisfiedness in Conscience, and a necessity (as some told me), of satisfying the importunities of some people ; I was persuaded*¹³[...] » The reader feels like the King is directly talking to him. Orality is an important characteristic of the book, for the main character keeps using « yea », « true » or « sure ». The king is using the past tense but also the present to increase this impression of immediacy, in order to touch the reader : « [...] *yet not Her absence, so much, as the scandal of that necessity, which drives her away, doth afflict Me* [...] *I fear such motions* [...] *The fault is, that she is My wife*¹⁴ ». He also often expresses his feelings without shame. We can quote « *I am sorry*¹⁵ », « *I am content*¹⁶ [...] », « *And I hope* [...] *I trust*¹⁷[...] ». « Now » is used 73 times which reveals the royalists' will to focus on the present, and not the past. Several times the authors try to influence the readers' interpretation, guiding them, showing them « the truth » : « *This tenderness and regret I find in my soul* [...] *which may (I hope) be some evidence before God and Man, to all Posterity, that I am far from bearing justly the vast load and guilt*¹⁸ [...] ». They are often called out « *my subjects*¹⁹», « *humble Christians, and loyal Subjects*²⁰ », or « *good men*²¹ » and « *sober and learned men*²² ». Each and every one is taken into account and everybody is forgiven. The writing strategy of *Eikon Basilike* clearly tries to include the reader into the king's reflections, to make them part of the narrative. The syntax and vocabulary are simple to deliver a popular and accessible text. The reader has to feel that there is a special relationship with this man, who is offering his most intimate thoughts to the people.

But still, a King.

What is striking is the absence of preface or address to the reader at the beginning of the book. What we have argued in our PhD work is that the trial, the execution and the frontispice are the preface. Since the book was published on the execution day, the king's behaviour in December and his speech are giving the subjects the keys to understand *Eikon Basilike*. This is also in perfect continuity with the royalists' strategy There is no need to say anything because the king is the author : he has a natural authority and legitimacy.

The special authority given by God is at the heart of the royalist work. God is the King's only judge and witness, that is why the king addresses God directly : « *O Lord be thou*

¹² *EB*, Chapter 18, p. 149.

¹³ *EB*, Chapter 2, p. 54.

¹⁴ *EB* Chapter 7, p. 74.

¹⁵ *EB*, Chapter 5, p. 68 ; *EB* Chapter 7, p. 74 ; *EB* Chapter 15, p. 125 ; *EB* Chapter 20, p. 155 ; *EB* Chapter 24, p. 172.

¹⁶ *EB* Chapter 7, p. 74.

¹⁷ *EB* Chapter 12, p. 106 ; *EB* Chapter 14, p. 118.

¹⁸ *EB*, Chapter 2, p. 56.

¹⁹ *EB*, Chapter 12, p. 107. The word « *subjects* » has sixty occurrences.

²⁰ *EB*, Chapter 13, p. 112.

²¹ *EB*, Chapter 14, p. 115.

²² *EB*, Chapter 16, p. 131.

*My Pilot in this dark and dangerous storm*²³, [...] » « *O Lord* » is repeated 79 times in the book. The sovereign goes further when he calls God his « witness » : « *But Thou, O Lord, art my witness in Heaven, and in my Heart*²⁴ [...] ». This reminds the people that the one who is praying has a special religious authority : he is said to be « *entrusted by God, and the Laws, with the good both of Church and State*²⁵ ». The comparisons with Christ or with David reinforce the king's authority²⁶.

Being the author also confers to the king a special authority. Flyleaves are significant, with words in red²⁷, in bold or in capital letters focusing on certain ideas of the text, like « portrait » « majesty ».



Figure 1 - *Eikon Basilike* (1649), Flyleaf, British Library

The initials « CR » and the crown are often present. In the text itself, there are numerous words relating to social hierarchy :

I	1063	My self	114
King - KING	46	Crown	10
Throne	7	Kingdom(s)	99
Oath(s)	16	My people	67
Bounds/bonds	18	Loyalty(ie)	38
Allegiances (allegiance)	8	Subjects	106
Duty(ies)	31	Obedience	12

The pronouns « I » and « my » represent authority and power, reminding people that their divine monarch is writing. Royal prerogatives and monarchy are often at the heart of the debate, trying to preserve this natural order and the sacred power of kings, for example in chapter 11 : « [...] *which last God and the Laws have sufficiently distinguished, making me*

²³ *EB*, Chapter 5, p. 69.

²⁴ *EB*, Chapter 3, p. 59.

²⁵ *EB*, Chapter 17, p. 136.

²⁶ *EB*, chapter 25, p. 176. « *I come far short of David's piety ; yet since I may equal David's afflictions, give me also the comforts and the sure mercies of David*²⁶ »

²⁷ To confirm, we can quote this 1649 elegy : « *For though Charles might not speak, His Bloud will crie*». John Birkenhead, *Loyalties tears flowing after the blood of the royal sufferer Charles the I. &c.*, Londres, 1649, p. 6.

*their Sovereign, and them my Subjects*²⁸ : [...] » « King » is often written in capital letters and « majesty » is almost always mentioned in the titles of chapters. The authors emphasised the natural bond between a monarch and his subjects²⁹. Even in prayers, this authority is put forward : « *As my power is from thee, so give me grace to use it for thee*³⁰. »

The book is based on that contradiction : Charles is half-man, half-king, accessible to people but directly linked to God. The frontispice, the very first thing readers see when they open the book, emphasises these three dimensions, « *a Man, a Christian, and a King*³¹ ». *Eikon Basilike* seems quite modern and innovative, for it succeeds in associating two opposing notions : humanity and regality. The king stops being a function only and becomes a person. The character of the king tried to become closer to his people while ensuring the monarchical principles. But the monarchy the king's councillors are trying to defend is perhaps no longer existing, for there is a redefinition of authority : by supporting this new humane version of Charles the martyr, people are validating his authority as an author, and thus, as King.

« PEOPLE MAKE KINGS » : THE RECEPTION OF EIKON BASILIKE

We suggest that readers are as important as authors. To be able to understand the impact of this book, we have to consider *Eikon Basilike* as a whole : the trial, the execution, the book – writing and reading. Reading *Eikon Basilike* was an individual but also collective experience and readers had a role to play in the creation of this new « hero » or « character ». They were involved in the representation of royal power. *Eikon Basilike* was the « Best seller » of 1649 with many editions and translations. Indeed, the royalist propaganda was helped by the explosion of the public sphere, but, we argue that *Eikon Basilike* did participate in the creation of this new public sphere : people were discovering they could be involved in politics. Understanding the reception of the book and its impact on people means understanding that politics entered the private sphere, the book being brought into houses and pubs : it means to recognize that *Eikon Basilike* was both a public and private text which redefines the way people view their sovereign.

Reactions and reception : Additional material and bindings

Thomas Forde wrote in 1659 about *Eikon Basilike* :

Is a saint more great, more true than e're / Came from the triple crown or holy chair. / We need no further for example look than unto thee, / Thou art the only book ; / Thou art the best of texts³².

²⁸ *EB*, Chapter 11, p. 95.

²⁹ *EB*, Chapter 13, p. 113. « [...] when besides the bonds of nature and Conscience, which they have to Me, all Reason and true Policy will teach them, That their chiefest interest consists in their fidelity to the Crown, [...] »

³⁰ *EB*, Chapter 17, p. 146.

³¹ *EB*, Chapter 23, p. 167.

³² Thomas Forde, *Second Anniversary of Charles I*, 1658, dans *Virtus Rediviva, a panegyrick on our late King Charles the I. &c. of ever blessed memory*, London, Printed by R. & W. Leybourn, for William Grantham, at the

Eikon Basilike was « a text to be read » or « the best of texts ». This book had a particular influence on people's life. This book became the king's legacy : legacy to his son but also legacy to all his subjects, a physical link between the people and the dead king. It gives the opportunity to reflect on the past and imagine a peaceful future. This character embodies the sufferings of the whole kingdom and all the « loyal subects » are reunited thanks to this book. Reading *Eikon Basilike* is thus a collective experience, an opportunity for mourning. But this is also a private experience for each reader can read and reflect, in silence, thanks to the King's teaching. In « *A Handkerchief For Loyal Mourners* », Thomas Warmstry overtly states that Charles is an example to follow :

[...] so we have in him likewise great patterns of Patience and Christian Resolutions,
[...] so we may learn first of Christ, and then of him too,³³ [...]

A lot of elegies are responding and imitating *Eikon Basilike*, disseminating the King's new portrait. What is worth noticing is that the text does not have a single interpretation : there are several readings for several readers, echoing to different traditions and genres, but at the same time conveying one coherent portrait of the king.

The supplementary items, the illustrations and the materiality of the book confirm the evolution of this reception. The will to add engravings, to colour the frontispice, to chose a specific size of book or to ornate the binding reveal the importance of the book for people. This book is a prayer book, a devotional book, a gospel, a textbook, in other words, a sacred text. The supplementary items (letters, prayers, epitaphs) added to the book are significant : prayers or meditations during the last days emphasize emotions and religion, the narrative of the last meeting with his children emphasizes emotions and family. These materials were added by editors and printers certainly to respond to the people's feelings and demands. The engravings, often chosen by the owner of the book, also show the sacred and personal dimension of the book. We have explored around 160 copies of *Eikon Basilike* and we have found different portraits of Charles I, portraits of his son at chapter 27 and other engravings representing the King, delivering his speech, resting in peace, praying with Juxon or with his son, in other words representing the king as a pious and religious man or as a loving father.

Bindings are also extremely important for they were made according to the purchaser's will. They demonstrate that this book was as sacred as the Bible. We have found a lot of octavos or duodecimos, even miniatures, in the archives. It was easy to hide and to carry so that people could have their textbook with them and reread it to find instructions or comfort, like a Bible. Even if these miniatures were cheaper, we have found a lot of ornated bindings. The fact that we have today a lot of available copies tells us two things : the book was extremely popular and people handled it very carefully.

sign of the Black Bear in St. Pauls Church-yard near the little north door ; and Thomas Basset, in St. Dunstans Church-yard in Fleet-street, 1660, sig. C6v.

³³ Thomas Warmstry, *A handkerchief for loyal mourners, or, A cordial for drooping spirits groaning for the bloody murther and heavy loss of our gracious King martyred by his own trayterous and rebellious subjects for the truth of Christ, and the liberties of his people / being a letter to a friend*, London, 1659, p. 7.

People often say that this work is a collaborative work, a co-creation, thinking about multiple authorship. We argue that this work is collaborative because readers are involved : reading in silence or out loud for others, adding engravings, choosing bindings. *Eikon Basilike* would never have been so powerful without its appropriation by the readers : they made it sacred.

The book as an intimate object (marks, annotations, lockers, objects)

Did early readers leave marks on the books ? Yes they did, even if they are hard to find. I was able to identify annotations, which confirm this commodification of the book, and thus, of the king's portrait. Throughout our study, we have noticed a reification of the King. Reading was not passive in early modern England. It could be noisy and collective or private and personal. But in 1649, reading was closely relating to writing in order to correct mistakes, to collect information in commonplace books, to appropriate the book or just because they needed paper. We have found different types of marks that reveal the interpretation and use of this book. First we should consider marks of ownerships, which are quite common for the period : usually a name and a date – sometimes several names and the manner the owner got it – revealing the will to appropriate the book, reinforcing the link between the owner and the book. Quite often, owners' marks are repeated several times in the book. There is often a signature or a drawing. What is striking is that we have found many men's signatures but also many women's signatures. *Eikon Basilike* was suitable for women like the Bible. We have found other annotations, such as writing or calculating exercises, scribbles, transcription of other texts, underlined passages, which reveal that the book was a domestic object, inside the house. The book was part of their everyday life, even if it was a forbidden book. Then, of course, we have found reading annotations or corrections, which demonstrate readers were reading the book very carefully. Sometimes we have words, dates or names written in marginalia. They pointed out to noteworthy essential passages thanks to manicule, flowers, tick, nota bene, sometimes letters or simply underlining relevant sentences. Finally, we have noticed that some readers copied out passages from other texts such as letters or epitaphs emphasizing martyrdom³⁴, like this one : « [...] *written by our late King and Martyr, whose majestic stile and divine conceptions not only mov'd all his readers to admire his eloquence but inclin'd some of the worst of his enemies to resent their cruelty towards him.* » It clearly shows that the rhetorical strategy which consists in playing with passions and emotions had an impact on the readers.

Obviously, the study of those marks is complex and incomplete but it seems to confirm our ideas. The reception of the book supports the new portrait, co-creates King Charles the Martyr. This text has an influence on its readers. What is also worth noticing is that those marks are found on a minority of texts. A certain number of copies are intact, without any mark. It is essential to notice what we have but even more important to notice what we do not have. To our mind we have three types of readers : those who needed to appropriate and annotate the book, those who did not know how to write, and those who considered the book as sacred and did not dare writing inside. This book may have been assimilated to Scriptures. What we can also notice is that all those marks are personal, literary

³⁴ For example this one says : « *My heart is fixed, O God my heart is fixed. I Will sing of thy righteous and my songs shall always be telling of thy honourous workes which though dost for those which met their sufferings.* »

or religious. Politics is not present and this means that the royalist strategy was successful : put the king back at the centre of the political scene without talking about politics.

This is an intimate book which seems to have been written for the private sphere : its reading was supposed to be passionate, not rational. One could admire, touch, take the book back home : the king becomes a shared object. *Eikon Basilike* even says « [...] *I put my body into their hands*³⁵ [...] ». The book embodies the king's body. One has to remember that there had been no funeral service for the king and that the tomb is far away in Windsor. So this book became his monument, his tomb, his body : the book was literally replacing the king for on 30th January Charles died and the book came to life. That is why the materiality of the book is essential. The book becomes a talisman, a sign of recognition between royalists, a sacred jewellery or a badge. On a certain number of copies, we have been able to identify clasp or ties in order to close the book or to attach ribbons. That highlights the sacred and private dimension of the book. One may have wanted to protect the book of course, but it certainly reveals the careful treatment of the book, like a Bible, and the private reading of the book like a diary. As we have shown in our PhD work, commonplace books, elegies, epitaphs and newsbooks convey the same message and the same picture of Charles : the martyr of the people. This reification went further with the sales of the King's good, all the objects, portraits, anamorphic portraits, engravings, medals and jewelries that are sold at that time. The King's image is literally everywhere in 1649. Elegies and epitaph confirm that reification of the king : « *No strain'd Hyperboles adorne thy Herse, / Thy Self art both a Monument and Verse*³⁶ ».

CONCLUSION

This article is only a small part of my detailed analysis³⁷ of that complex, hybrid and modern book and its relationship with other texts (newspapers, pamphlets, elegies). Both the authors and the readers participate in the redefinition of their monarch and monarchy. This dialogue between authors, readers and editors is new and complex : each of them participates in the democratization of the king but also, at the same time, in his resacralisation. There is a real shift in the representation of royal power. The image invented by the royalists is particularly disturbing and innovative : the king is a man and a sinner, feeling close to his subjects, a man people can identify with and suffer with. In order to impose his royal authority, the king had to cease being a king and become an « everyman ». But at the same time, it was essential to remind people of the special status of the King.

The way heroes are created and the definition of a hero itself are also changing. This new king is the hero people needed to face and answer the crisis England was facing in 1649.

³⁵ *EB*, Chapter 22, p. 164.

³⁶ Anon., *An Elegy, Sacred to the memory of our most gracious sovereigne Lord King Charles*, Londres, 1649.

³⁷ Vanessa Chaise-Brun, *Eikon Basilike (1649) : royal heroism and the narratives of history*, PhD, University of Rheims, 2018.

The reception of the book confirms that this new hero is a popular hero : Charles I's heroism and martyrdom are collective creations. People are appropriating the book and the character, so that the person of Charles I is forgotten, replaced by the book itself and then by objects. Here, the representation of power is modern : people - being involved in politics - are redefining the image of their own king, revalidating Charles's authority and legitimacy, resacralising the sovereign and the monarchy. By appropriating the book and responding to the text, they show that a public sphere is possible in 1649 in England, even encouraged by the development of the newspapers and pamphlets, and that the British people are now real actors in the political sphere, even if it is at a private level. In 1649, power and legitimacy are not coming from God only anymore : power now comes from God and people.

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