



## The Oxford Handbook of the History of the Book in Early Modern England

Adam Smyth (ed.)

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### CHAPTER

## 1 An Introduction: Thinking about the History of the Book

Adam Smyth

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### Abstract

This chapter considers the different ways in which bibliographers and book historians have in the past responded to one astonishingly popular book, *Eikon Basilike: The Pourtrature of His Sacred Majestie in His Solitudes and Sufferings*, in order to survey the kinds of stories scholars have in the past told about the production, circulation, and consumption of books. The chapter reflects critically on these stories, and considers other possible ways of thinking about books. The chapter concludes by considering the ‘politics of citation’, and the way bibliography and book history have in the past rehearsed an unhelpfully narrow and excluding narrative of its origins and development.

**Keywords:** [Eikon Basilike](#), [book history](#), [bibliography](#), [bibliographical description](#), [copy-specificity](#), [sociology of texts](#), [feminist bibliography](#), [politics of citation](#)

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THERE are different stories to be told about the books we study from the past: it is the task of this present volume to present some of the ways we have for accounting for, describing, analysing, and imagining the lives of books considered as physical objects. My aim in editing this collection is not to hand out a set of fixed procedures, but to convey a subject that is, in the best sense, in flux. In this opening chapter I want to take the example of one intensely popular seventeenth-century printed book to suggest some of the different frames available for studying this bibliographical object. I want then, at the conclusion, to say something about the scope and ambition of the *Handbook*: to say what’s included, and what isn’t, and why this might be.

The book we call *Eikon Basilike*, which was quickly known on publication as the ‘King’s Book’, was in fact titled *Εἰκὼν Βασιλική*, or the ‘Royal Portrait’, or, in its subtitle, *The Pourtrature of His Sacred Majestie in His Solitudes and Sufferings*. It was an international bestseller, and also a bibliographical problem: there are uncertainties and

omissions in the history of this book. The date is probably best regarded as an attributable element (not all the imprints with 1649 or 1648 need have been printed that year), and not all editions with a London imprint were necessarily printed in London. Authorship, too, is infamously not what it seems in this book. The book offered itself as something like King Charles I's spiritual (auto)biography, and claimed to have been written by the king some time before his execution outside the Banqueting House in Whitehall, London, on 30 January 1649. By the end of the seventeenth century, John Gauden, Bishop of Exeter, was considered the most likely author–editor—Gauden seems to have included documents written by the King along with his own plentiful additions—and the attribution to him is generally accepted today. Libraries respond in different ways to the trickiness of these questions of attribution: the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC, [estc.bl.uk](http://estc.bl.uk)) and the Universal Short Title Catalogue (USTC, [www.ustc.ac.uk](http://www.ustc.ac.uk)) attribute the work to Gauden; the Library of Congress ([catalog.loc.gov](http://catalog.loc.gov)) has Charles I as 'supposed author' and Gauden as 'attributed author'; the Bodleian Library's SOLO catalogue ([solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk](http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk)) assigns the book to Gauden, with Charles I noted as an 'attributed name'.

In a manner that might surprise us, print could be a rapid and nimble technology: copies of *Eikon Basilike* appeared by the day of the King's execution, perhaps even before, and by the end of 1649, at least thirty-five editions had been printed in England. That's worth repeating: thirty-five editions in less than a single year, creating, to put it mildly, a tension between the lonely monarch described in the text, 'in his solitudes and sufferings', and the wildly quick distribution of the book out to the public, across England and beyond. The rapid production and distribution of tens of thousands of copies (if not more) of the many editions of this book constituted a process of canon formation: in the words of Helmer J. Helmers, 'the *Eikon* gained the status of an appendix to the Bible', and soon became a central text for what is known as the Cult of Charles the Martyr—the book seen as a relic of a martyr, alongside the handkerchiefs dipped in the King's blood that were reported to have wrought miracles.<sup>1</sup> What happens to a relic when everyone can get hold of a copy?<sup>2</sup>

The success of *Eikon Basilike* was also an international phenomenon. English-language editions were printed in England, Ireland, Holland, and France, and there were also translations. By early March—less than five weeks after the regicide—the first Dutch edition was published by Joost Hartgers in Amsterdam, titled *Konincklike memoriael* ('Royal Memorial'); there were eight Dutch editions in 1649 alone, of which Hartgers published five.<sup>3</sup> Editions appeared also quickly in French (the first printed for Jean Berthelin at Rouen), Danish (printed in Copenhagen), Latin (translated by Charles II's tutor John Earle, and printed at The Hague by Samuel Browne), and German (translated from the Latin).<sup>4</sup> An incomplete Welsh translation by the poet Rowland Vaughan survives in manuscript from about 1650.<sup>5</sup> Thomas Wagstaffe, writing in defence of the King as the author of *Eikon Basilike*, caught this sense of a sudden, flaring popularity:

The Book was no sooner publish'd, but it flew not only all over the Nation, but almost all over *Europe*, all Mens Mouths were full of it, and it was translated into several Languages, into *Greek*, *Latin*, *French* and *Italian*.<sup>6</sup>

A Greek and Italian translation looks like a rhetorical flourish: there is no further evidence of these. But Wagstaffe's point about a book flying national boundaries, even as, in a stifling counter-image, it stuffs up mouths, aptly captures the sense of a book in motion. Among its many significances, *Eikon Basilike* is a reminder for book historians to raise their eyes from the local, domestic, and national to take on the international, multilingual nature of print, even for a book so powerfully associated with the centripetal force of English monarchy.

## Book-Writing

Perhaps the most obvious way to engage with *Eikon Basilike* is to recall the etymology of ‘bibliography’ (from the Greek, *biblion* (book) and *graphos* (drawn or written)), and to describe the book. How can we convey *Eikon Basilike* in words? What do we include, and what do we exclude? What are the limits of our description? We can start with a bibliographical description in the most technical sense: the book described across a number of categories, in this case five, which answer these and other questions. Although the practice of bibliographical description varies, this might mean providing a quasi-facsimile title-page transcription, showing line breaks and typefaces; a format and collation formula; a note of signature positions, catchwords, type, paper, and plates; brief details of the book’s contents; and a list of individual copies examined and their location. This is a process of measuring, counting, listing—although it’s worth noting that the sheer *practical difficulty* of parts of the process (how should one measure a deckle edge?) makes the task of objective description seem immediately elusive. Few books have been the recipient of the level of bibliographical description enjoyed, or endured, by *Eikon Basilike*, seen most vividly in Edward Almack’s *A Bibliography of the King’s Book or Eikon Basilike* (1896) and Francis F. Madan’s *A New Bibliography of the Eikon Basilike of King Charles the First, with a Note on the Authorship* (1950).<sup>7</sup>

Crucially, a bibliographical description pins down not any individual copy, but an ideal copy, based on the consultation of as many copies as possible—although in practice, and because in principle bibliographical descriptions should be derived from physical examination, this meant the consultation of copies in a relatively small number of prestigious libraries. The description of an ideal copy is a product of the conversion or accumulation of the features of individual copies into a generalized ideal that, in the uncharacteristically breezy words of Fredson Bowers, represents ‘the most perfect state of the book as the printer or publisher finally intended to issue it’. This bibliographical description of an ideal copy ‘aims to provide a standard against which individual copies can be measured’: a bibliographical description of an ideal copy is both an attempt to tell us something about what was intended in the printing house and a benchmark against which to measure (or identify) a copy. But because the ideal is often conjectural, it is frequently the case that no extant copies exactly match it.<sup>8</sup> Our careful description of a book at rest before us has quickly become an imaginary object, or at least an object very close to, but not exactly the same as, the physical copies we might be able to consult; and the paradox of bibliographical description is that it is a minutely detailed description of a book that may not exist in this form. And while bibliographical description very usefully produces a way of talking about the concept of an edition, it is also ideological: it is a process of description that establishes a normative text which serves as a model against which other texts can be assessed, and found variously lacking, aberrant, or deficient. We see this registered in an often moralized language: bibliographical description, according to G. T. Tanselle, ‘rises above the limitations of a single copy by reporting what emerges as standard’. It is a form of book-description in which ‘defects’, ‘deficiencies of individual copies’, and anything that is ‘abnormal or defective in a given copy’ ‘must be purged’.<sup>9</sup>

To focus briefly on one element of bibliographical description: the collation formula is a description of the structure of the book, recording the format, the ordering of gatherings, and the number of leaves, as they appear in the conjectural ideal of this book. For the first issue of the first edition, translating *Eikon Basilike* into a collation formula produces this:

8o: A4 [frontispiece after A4], B–S8 [S8 blank]

Like reading difficult Latin, we probably need to take things slowly to parse this strange piece of text. The formula conveys that the ideal copy of the first edition of *Eikon Basilike*—from which extant copies might depart—is octavo in format, and is composed of eighteen gatherings labelled A to S (J not being used), with a half-sheet A gathering composed of four leaves, and gatherings B to S each of eight leaves. A separately printed

frontispiece is tipped in between the A and B gatherings, and the final leaf is blank. By the time we get to the ideal copy of the tenth edition of *Eikon Basilike*, the collation formula looks like this:

12<sup>o</sup>:  $\pi^2$  [with frontispiece between the two leaves], [A]–I<sup>12</sup> [portrait between I4 and I5], K<sup>10</sup> [K10 blank], L<sup>6</sup> [L5 and L6 blank]

To translate: this duodecimo (12<sup>o</sup>) book starts with two blank leaves ( $\pi^2$ ), before nine gatherings of twelve leaves each, one of ten, and one of six. Collation formulae like these suggest the reassurances of scientific rigour, although through their relation to ideal copies, they work to a particular agenda.

If this kind of bibliographical description—we encounter it most frequently in catalogues such as the ESTC—has been traditionally concerned with the establishment of edition-level norms, more recent work within bibliographical studies has been preoccupied with the opposite: that is, with the copy-specific. Copy-specificity means thinking about books not at the level of the edition (where the useful fiction of a single ideal lets a whole edition run be conjured as one), but rather of the individual copy; it means attending to physical and textual features of particular copies, generally without the moralized language of defect or corruption. Indeed, the register of much recent work has been a delighted investment in granularity and difference and ‘the forever unfinished character of these books’<sup>10</sup>—although, of course, a critique of the book as unitary and stable is itself an ideological position. A loud narrative within the history of the book for the last thirty years has emphasized that the printing press was an imperfect technology for duplication, and that earlier claims for the capacity of print to fix texts through the production of identical copies, a position often associated with Elizabeth Eisenstein’s formative *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (1979),<sup>11</sup> need revision. This attention to the particular has grown in part because of an increasing interest over the last few decades in readers and, thus by extension, in their individual copies; and it’s been encouraged, too, by the capacity of social media, particularly Twitter, to rapidly and widely disseminate images of copy-specific features found in libraries and archives to a liking audience.

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We can see this paradigm playing out in a number of exciting, and at the time of writing, contemporary, projects. Zachary Lesser’s work with Adam G. Hooks on *The Shakespeare Census* ([www.shakespearecensus.org](http://www.shakespearecensus.org)), inspired by the early twentieth-century labours of bibliographer Henrietta Bartlett (1873–1963), is an attempt to identify and describe all existing copies of Shakespeare’s works up until 1700. An awareness of the potential for copies to vary within a single edition was always there in bibliographical description, but in resources like the Shakespeare Census there is a strong sense of the need to fully reckon with, rather than efface, the implications of these individual traits. Lesser’s book on the Pavier Quartos (1619)—often seen as Thomas Pavier’s attempt at a one-volume edition of Shakespeare’s collected plays, four years before the ‘First Folio’—sustains this methodology. By examining ‘three bibliographic clues’—faint ghost images carried from one page to an adjacent page; holes indicating prior stab-stitching; and marks of post-printing erasure—Lesser finds, among other things, that copies of the third edition of Thomas Heywood’s *A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1617) were often included in, but were subsequently removed from, this ‘Shakespearean’ collection.<sup>12</sup> As a result, Lesser is able to revise the traditional, edition-level story that has been told about this crucial collection, and, more fundamentally, to shift the scale of bibliographical analysis. This is close looking as much as close reading, and rather than read one copy, Lesser reads all 313 that he could find, often with visual enhancement technologies such as multispectral imaging not available to earlier bibliographers. This requires a certain kind of scholarship: for reasons of time, money, and carbon emissions, the future of this kind of work is surely collaborative, relying, in its maximal version, on thousands of volunteers with access to libraries and collections across the globe.

Copy-specific descriptions of *Eikon Basilike* are, compared to most volumes from the period, intensely detailed, and the care may be a version of the former Royalist reverence for a book that was also a relic (Almack, describing the bindings of *Eikon Basilike*, writes of volumes ‘to this moment wearing mourning for Charles the First’).<sup>13</sup> Here, for instance, is the description of one copy held in the Royal Collection:

Black goatskin binding; both boards and spine re-backed onto a darker goatskin. Identical design on left and right boards. Gold-tooled all over. Left and right boards contain a panel design, formed of an outer roll-tooled border of semi-circles and double fillet lines and an inner boarder of double fillet lines; central inner panel contains an additional diamond-shaped dotted roll border, with large floral stamps on each of the points. Inner panel profusely decorated with floral, feather and swirling stamps. Spine re-backed but contemporary with the right and left boards. ↪ Flat with no raised bands; outer roll-tooled border of semi-circles and double fillet lines identical to left and right boards. Diamond-shaped floral stamps at the head and tail and centre of spine, and six horizontal stamps as if to give the impression of bands. Silk ties fixed to the boards through pairs of holes on either side. Inside of left and right boards contain modern (20<sup>th</sup> century?) pastedown and flyleaves, so that fixture of the ties on the inside of boards is not visible. 20.3 × 12.9 × 3.2.<sup>14</sup>

The book here is a site on which ornament plays out: the description is rather magnificently uninterested in the contents of the volume (W. W. Greg defined bibliography as ‘the study of books as material objects irrespective of their contents’<sup>15</sup>), and is instead shaped by the technical language of bookbinding: a vocabulary of tooling (the ornamentation of a leather book cover with designs impressed by heated tools); rolls (wheel-shaped tools with patterns engraved around the rim to create a continuous band of decoration); fillets (wheel-tools for pressing lines rather than patterns in the leather); and bands (threads sewn around a strip of leather and attached to the text-block at the top and bottom, providing strength and decoration). This genre of book-writing is both highly specialized and, to most readers, fairly inaccessible, but it is also celebratory, both in the sheer fact of its sustained attention and in the meticulous enumeration of markers of expertise and worth (‘Gold-tooled all over’). This register of restrained celebration speaks partly to the world of book auctions and buyers: an environment that since the seventeenth century has been crucial for the development of the way books are described, encouraging an attention to copy-specificity, completeness, imperfection, uniqueness, rarity, and value.<sup>16</sup>

These descriptions are the product of a careful gaze that can appear myopic, but in these static portraits there is an expansive potential. Such descriptions can encourage us to understand a book not only in relation to other books, but also in relation to a broader non-bibliographical material culture. The floral stamps pressed into the leather, for example, or the double fillet lines running round the edges of the covers, speak not to the insides of the book but rather to design conventions moving across Europe within crafts such as furniture design, metalwork, and architecture. The book is suddenly reframed, and might be placed in groups of different kinds of object. With a similar sense of expansion, the interlocking foliage or abstract designs of geometrical symmetry often found on oval or lozenge-shaped centrepieces represent a so-called ‘arabesque’ (or ‘moresque’) design which found its origins in Islamic bookbinding from the fourteenth century. That Islamic aesthetic spread across Europe from the fifteenth century via the Italian trading ports, flowing along the routes carved out by money and the movement of goods, before reaching the shores of England, as so often belatedly, around the time of Elizabeth I—finding expression first in high-end workshops in London (the centre of the book trade), and then quickly filtering out more widely to Oxford and Cambridge, and beyond. The gold leaf used to produce the gilded tooling followed a similar trajectory: from the Arab world in the early thirteenth century, if not before, through Europe and then to England in the sixteenth century.<sup>17</sup>

## Book People

One way, then, to respond to *Eikon Basilike* is to describe it as an object, although, as I have tried to show, that process is not as simple as we might assume. Another is to give an account of the various agents of bookmaking. This means uncovering what D. F. McKenzie called the sociology of the book's creation: 'a sociology...directs us to consider the human motives and interactions which texts involve at every stage of their production, transmission, and consumption'.<sup>18</sup> Here the author is only one origin point among many. Who made *Eikon Basilike*? What were they trying to do? How can we describe this community?

*Eikon Basilike* presents a challenge on this front. Banned by Parliament, *Eikon Basilike*'s title page didn't carry much of the detail we might normally expect: many editions feature the terse imprint 'In R.M. Anno. Dom. 1648' ('In memory of the King, 1648/1649'). Since title pages have long been used by bibliographers as a crucial site of information about book production—New Bibliographical resources such as the Short Title Catalogue (STC) depended on title pages for their data, and newer digital resources in turn often rely on these underlying tools—bibliographers have responded to this absence in part by studying the detail of type and decorative initials in order to discern the work of particular printers.

The book's first publisher was London Stationer Richard Royston, whose office in Ivy Lane was a well-known focus of Royalist activity, and who was in frequent trouble with the Council of State. Royston wrote that on 23 December 1648 he received the manuscript of the text from the King's chaplain, Edward Simmons, and had the printer John Grismond, with whom he regularly collaborated, produce an octavo, 269-page first edition. Proof-sheets were at Simmons's house by early-to-mid-January, but the process of book production was interrupted and slowed by Parliament's raiding of Royston's print shop and destruction of the books. Royston shifted his press outside the city and produced 2,000 copies, sold in the streets by itinerant hawkers whose names we no longer know. Demand was, in Madan's words, 'insatiable'. Royston was summoned before the Council of State in May and was banned from further publication of the book, but in 1650 he published four editions of the works of King Charles, including the text of *Eikon Basilike*. A second wave of *Eikon Basilikes* was published in March 1649 by Francis Eglesfield, printed by William Dugard, headmaster of the Merchant Taylors' School who worked in his private house in Suffolk Street, next to the school buildings. Dugard employed one Dr Edward Hooker as corrector to his press. This edition included a number of new passages of text, including four prayers of the King. Dugard was arrested for printing this edition on 16 March, and was, in 1650, dismissed from his position at Merchant Taylors' School and flung in prison. Stationer John Williams defied this climate of censorship around June 1649 by publishing a series of five miniature duodecimo editions, printed by William Bentley, which might be easily concealed: the average binding measurement of these is about  $4 \frac{1}{8}$  inches (10.5 cm)  $\times$   $2 \frac{1}{8}$  inches (5.4 cm). The famous engraved frontispiece to the first edition—the kneeling martyr-king in prayer, holding a crown of thorns before a richly allegorical landscape of palm trees weighted down and rocks buffeted by waves and windows—is the work of William Marshall, probably working to a design by Gauden. Marshall would have carved the design onto a copperplate with a tool called a burin, and the plate would have been inked and passed through a rolling press. The image survives in at least seven subtly distinct states produced by Marshall for different editions, suggesting the image, in great demand, was worn down by frequent printing and re-engraving. Versions based on Marshall's original work were cut by engravers including Robert Vaughan, Thomas Rawlins, and Wenceslaus Hollar.<sup>19</sup>

In place of a singular author, however uncertain his identity, we have a community of bookmakers, and we can think about those makers both in terms of roles which require particular competencies (transcriber, compositor, pressman, illustrator, engraver, proofreader, corrector, binder, distributor, financier, seller), and in terms of the individuals who filled those positions, with all their talents, traits, flaws, and unknowable subjectivities: Richard Royston, Edward Simmons, John Gauden, John Grismond, Francis Eglesfield, William Dugard, Edward Hooker, John Williams, William Bentley, William Marshall, to name some, but not all. Such individuals need not always occupy the same role at all times: a printer could be a publisher could be a

bookseller could be a bookbinder, and so on. Of course, the establishment of a group raises the question of its extent—the exclusions and the inclusions—particularly in the light of recent work on women and the early modern book trade. One of the defining features of the early modern book trade was the entangling of professional and familial connections, where ‘widow’ and ‘son-in-law’ could often signify ‘stationer’ and ‘apprentice’, and where businesses were also often domestic households. We see these entwining of family and profession played out particularly vividly in stationers’ wills, like Francis Eglesfield’s, which declares that ‘my said loving wife ffances shall have the full and sole benefit and profit [from]...my...stock of one hundred and sixty pounds in the Hall or Company of Stationers in the City of London’. Royston also left much to his wife and made her executor.<sup>20</sup> Helen Smith, Alan Farmer, and Sarah Neville, among others, have written recently on the ways women’s book trade agency has been systematically under-represented in discussions of the book trade, not least because tools like the STC lean heavily on patronymic imprints where women’s lives were overwritten.<sup>21</sup>

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How might we conceptualize and map this sprawlingly collaborative publication history? While early twentieth-century scholarship was often organized around the short individual biography,<sup>22</sup> Robert Darnton famously drew the agents of bookmaking into ‘The Communications Circuit’, a formidably titled diagram that visualized the movement of text from author, to publisher, to printers, to shippers, to booksellers, to readers, and back to authors again. ‘So the circuit runs full cycle,’ Darnton writes, in lines that seem to mix the cadences of T. S. Eliot with a radio instructional manual, as it ‘transmits messages, transforming them en route, as they pass from thought to writing to printed characters and back to thought again.’<sup>23</sup> The language of the ‘circuit’ and the ‘diagram’ has more recently been replaced by the ‘network’, a term drawn from the digital world, which produces models for relations between agents that need not be enclosed or completed, but open to expansion; that can function on different scales, from the very local to the national to the international; that can, following the lead of Bruno Latour’s Actor Network Theory (ANT), include agential objects as well as people in its map of relations; and which tends to promote a notion of bookwork that is collaborative and cooperative.<sup>24</sup> Digital tools promise to map these networks with new range, precision, and visual flair.<sup>25</sup> But while network maps are effective in conveying connection and even collegiality, they seem less able to map competition, hierarchy, and differentials of power. It is also a tautological problem that networks can only connect the already networked: they tend to discover their own condition. Caroline Levine may be right that ‘[i]t is the rule, not the exception, to be enmeshed,’<sup>26</sup> but not everyone follows the rule: off-road, or off-grid, the lines of a network falter and die.

Plotting a network of bookmakers assumes we know when the process of bookmaking starts and when it ends, but recent book-historical work has understood the book as a continually-being-made, always-in-process object. An older version of bibliography as a return to a book’s origin has been challenged by recent feminist and ecocritical work that radically questions the notion of a book’s originary moment. If books were made from paper made from pulp made from rags gathered by female rag collectors, why do we exclude these women from the story of the book’s beginnings?<sup>27</sup> And if, more expansively still, we follow the lead of Joshua Calhoun and trace the materials that composed the paper, boards, and bindings—thinking as much about flaxseeds and ecological deep time as octavo formats and the Stationers’ Register—then the book becomes not a bibliographical object with a prompt and tidy moment of beginning in January 1649, but ‘a provisional state in the circulation of matter’.<sup>28</sup>

Alongside this reassessment of the beginnings of books has come work that conceives of bibliography not as the return to a moment of production but as an account of the long and ongoing life of books, through time. This means, among other things, understanding readers and owners as agents in the history of bookmaking. For *Eikon Basilike*, this could mean noting owner names or bookplates, or handwritten annotations to the text, or any number of copy-specific alterations and interventions: the name ‘Geo Green’, and the pen trials and notes written in the margins of one copy; or the evidence of another copy passing between family members (‘Mary Shephard 1668’ and ‘Joseph Shephard 1668’); or the widespread annotations by female readers

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including ‘Sarah Needham 1712’, ‘Eliza Fay’, and ‘Eliza Moore’.<sup>29</sup> This study of book use—and ‘use’ is a more capacious term than ‘reading’—could include an account of bindings, often (but by no means always) commissioned by readers after they had purchased the book, and one of the most striking ways in which copy-specificity announces itself.<sup>30</sup> Many copies of *Eikon Basilike* carry the gilt monogram ‘CR’ (for *Carolus Rex*), often accompanied with a memento mori crown and skull, but there is a diversity of other embodiments, from the relatively simple—seventeenth-century vellum over pasteboard, with yapp edges, and blue sprinkled text-block edges—to more elaborate work with gold-tooled stamps and centrepiece, concentric panel designs, corner fleurons, and gilded text-block.<sup>31</sup> A desire to trace the onwards lives of copies of this book might end up in one of the many collections of *Eikon Basilike* that exist, including the sixty-five volumes at Cambridge University Library, bequeathed by Francis Falconer Madan, that form the core of a collection of works about Charles I.

## Political Bibliography

If, then, we distinguish between a version of bibliography which is concerned with the origins of books, and another—something like bibliography 2.0, which some might prefer to call book history<sup>32</sup>—concerned with the life story of books as they move and circulate, we might think, too, of the political and ideological work that the material book was asked to perform. *Eikon Basilike* can give us an example of this, thanks in part to the work of David Ransome. In 1649, the religious community of Little Gidding, near Cambridge, exported lavishly bound copies of *Eikon Basilike* to the American colonies in an attempt both to make a profit (agents were to sell copies in return for tobacco or ‘any Commoditys they can’<sup>33</sup>) and, more urgently, to spread abroad the version of Anglican Royalism conveyed in the King’s book. This was both a commercial and an ideological project. We know an unusual amount about this because detailed records survive in the Ferrar Papers at Magdalene College, Cambridge.<sup>34</sup>

The community at Little Gidding was established by the charismatic and domineering Nicholas Ferrar in 1625 as a mixture of domestic retreat, Anglican monastery, and bookmaking workshop; it offers a striking instance of book production and the domestic sphere overlapping. The community became famous for the production of cut-and-paste ‘Biblical Harmonies’: printed copies of the Gospels were cut up and glued back together in a new and it was hoped harmonious order, often luxuriously bound in velvet, and often with images added. These huge folio books were part print, part manuscript, the work of scissors and glue as well as pen and ink, and each one unique: they represent the kind of spectacular, exceptional text that, in challenging traditional bibliographical categories, has recently caught the attention of book historians. In their 1630s moment, they also earned Little Gidding a gathering fame: news spread to such an extent that King Charles I requested a copy in 1633 to borrow, and ordered another to be made for himself and his sons.

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After Nicholas’s death in 1637, leadership of the community passed to his elder brother John, who had been deputy of the Virginia Company of London in 1619, before its collapse in 1624. Ferrar began his aspiring export business just months after the publication of *Eikon Basilike*: his earliest note is for 30 June 1649. Ferrar worked with his daughter Virginia (named after the colony), his niece Mary Collett, and a network of family members, neighbours, and agents in London and the American colonies: five in Virginia; two in Barbados; and one in the Somers Islands (Bermuda). Records suggest that Ferrar ordered 246 pre-bound copies and sets of quires of *Eikon Basilike*; that these books were often lavishly bound by Virginia Ferrar and Mary Collett at Little Gidding; and that 197 books were shipped overseas at a cost of £12, from which Ferrar hoped to receive £19. (As David Ransome has shown, Ferrar was no great accountant, and some of his arithmetic looks off.) Ferrar deals with three editions of *Eikon Basilike*: in his own words, ‘3 Dozen of a Midd Sorte bound after up in Vellume all’ (octavo); ‘7 Dozen of the larger in Blacke leather’ (large octavo); and ‘2 Dozen and 2 Small ones Least Sorte in Blacke leather’ (duodecimo).<sup>35</sup> The large octavos, supplied by Richard Wodenoth in London, were made up of five dozen ‘Sent w[i]th King Picture Gould head: in Blacke leather w[hi]ch we stringed’, and two dozen in quires.

Of the copies in quires, Ferrar distinguished between ‘1 Dosen in quires he sent w[hi]ch MF [Mary Collett, often known as Mary Ferrar] bound up in Blacke leather C.R gilded Stringed’, and ‘1 Dozen he sent in quires but I sent them backe a gaine w[hi]ch he bound in leath[er] and w[i]th kings head gilded one [sic] them we Stringed them w[i]th Rib[bi]n’.<sup>36</sup> (Stringing, here, means attaching ribbon to the book’s fore-edges, rather like the clasps which fell out of fashion on English books around the mid-sixteenth century.<sup>37</sup>) These descriptions of books are examples of how a biblio-savvy individual trafficking in texts c.1649 might talk and write about books. The descriptions suggest not the lingering cadences of the connoisseur, but a bookmaker using material traits to distinguish between copies, and calibrating bibliographical features to potential readers.

Once the binding and stringing had been done at Little Gidding, the volumes were despatched overseas: among them, ‘in a Bundell of Browne paper’, a dozen volumes ‘in Vellume grene and white w[i]th Ribbins in Midell, and Button’, sent to John Stirrup in York parish on the Charles River ‘In Mr Cookes ship the Hettie and John’, to be sold at 20 pence each.<sup>38</sup> In addition to these 197, forty-one volumes were sent as gifts or ‘tokens’ to powerful individuals, including the Governor, Sir William Berkeley, who was given ‘1 largest of the K [Kings’ Book]: In Blacke Velvett w[i]th the K. Pictur in Gould plate in Midell of it the Velvett guild the Strings Egged [edged] w[i]th Guld in a Case Cost 7 sh[illings]’.<sup>39</sup>

In comparison to the 20,000 books a year that were by about 1700 shipped from England to the American colonies, Ferrar’s attempt to sell domestically bound copies of *Eikon Basilike* to the colonial population was a modest operation. It also failed: ‘I bileve they would accept of them if they were given them,’ wrote one correspondent, ‘but to give 8 or ten pounds of tobacka apec [a piece] for them they will rather Let them alone.’<sup>40</sup> Today there are no known Little Gidding copies of *Eikon Basilike* that survive, although some—and this is a feature of a book-historical research world that is connected online—may well turn up. But Ferrar’s *Eikon Basilike* experiment, with its careful attention to the binding and physical make-up of the book, reminds us of the transatlantic nature of the book trade, and the book as a commodity that could be shipped abroad beyond England’s borders to be traded for profit. Ferrar’s experiment shows also that *Eikon Basilike* was in this context understood not only as the portrait of a king, but also as a fungible object, available for exchange with, and so understood as equivalent to, commodities like tobacco, sugar, rice, or indigo;<sup>41</sup> and that the book held out the potential to perform ideological work. The twenty-six copies of *Eikon Basilike* that were bound and despatched to the Somers Islands were expressions of the same colonialist energy which drove the Company of the Somers Isles to rule the English colony as a commercial venture from 1615.<sup>42</sup>

## The Politics of Citation

What I hope to have offered in this introduction is a by no means definitive selection of book-historical and bibliographical frames through which we can begin to approach *Eikon Basilike*. The most important implication is less in the particular details I have described, and more in the realization that there are many ways to think about books as material objects in the world. Book-historical work within the last five years, and particularly since 2020, has developed a powerfully self-reflective quality which was absent from much (but not all) bibliographical work across the twentieth century, characterized as it often was by a kind of positivism and a resistance to theoretical reflection—although there was, it must be noted, some hard thinking about the ‘theory’ of bibliography by Greg, Bowers, and latterly Tanselle, among others.<sup>43</sup> National lockdowns and the closure of libraries and universities in 2020–1 forced book historians to think harder about materiality, mediation, and access; debates about institutional racial inequalities prompted scholars to reconsider their discipline’s relationship to exclusion and inequality, and the complicity, or not, of their own work.<sup>44</sup> One of the most resonant recent reflections is Kate Ozment’s ‘Rationale for Feminist Bibliography’, which, in considering the question ‘what does book history value?’, lays out the tendency for book-historical work to rehearse a narrow story of its development which excludes much scholarly work on books, and in particular to overlook systematically women’s work.<sup>45</sup> (I use the word ‘work’ rather than ‘scholarship’ because Ozment shows the crucial contributions of librarians, cataloguers, indexers, and archivists, alongside more conventional academic researchers.) Ozment’s point is not only that we need to acknowledge book historical work performed by women, but more fundamentally that we need to think about how it is that book history has been created as a discipline that has perpetuated these and other exclusions. This means reflecting on the experiences of book production that are afforded significance (until recently, booksellers, printers, and printed authors), and those that are not. Why, in many book-historical overview discussions is more space not given to conservationists (like Nikki Tomkins in this present volume), or curators (like Caroline Duroselle-Melish and Kathryn James, also in this volume), or librarians and cataloguers (like, for a later period, Dorothy B. Porter) who, in the most profound sense, organize, materialize, and enable the book-historical field?<sup>46</sup> It means also, and crucially, assuming a relation of continual critique, revision, and scepticism—a kind of critical anti-monumentality—in relation to the histories that are told about our disciplines. Bibliography has repeated a loud and powerful origin story that draws from a small group of white male scholars, usually including some or all of the names W. W. Greg, Alfred W. Pollard, Robert Darnton, D. F. McKenzie, Peter Blayney, and Roger Chartier. All of these scholars are vital, enriching figures for the histories of book history, bibliography, textual studies, or all three, but to reassert in the manner of a chant this exclusive coterie shuts off any number of other possible versions of book-historical work, particularly work written by women and scholars of colour. To give one alternative vista: the Women in Book History Bibliography ([www.womensbookhistory.org](http://www.womensbookhistory.org)) records more than 1,600 items, and the resource constitutes, in Ozment’s rather understated words, ‘a useful foil to the field as generally represented’.<sup>47</sup>

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As Brandi K. Adams, in relation to race, and Claire M. L. Bourne, in relation to gender, describe in this current volume, there are other names we need to acknowledge and learn from, and there are other ways of organizing research on material texts. This handbook sustains this mode of self-reflection. It has been written and edited with an awareness that there are many introductions to book history available—starting with the excellent *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain* (2002), edited by John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie with Maureen Bell—and that repeating material and topics that have already been discussed and indeed repeated serves little purpose. There is little or no need for more short summaries of already well-known topics organized in familiar ways; the history of the book is too fast-moving, and too dynamic, to fall back unthinkingly on old paradigms. Rather, part and chapter topics have been chosen to enable fresh, critical-analytical perspectives of topics within the history of the book. This means that some topics which previous companions have treated very well are not repeated; that some important topics which might have been organized as separate chapters—a history of bookbinding, for example—are found distributed across a number of chapters in order to bring

out fresh possibilities; and that many new topics for discussion are addressed head-on for the first time. At the time of publication, the List of Contributors contains both established names in the field and many scholars at or near the start of their careers.

Most fundamentally, this volume aims to do two things: first, to analyse in a lively manner the nature and role of the book in early modern England (we might think of this as ‘content’); and second, to consider critically *how* we talk about the history of book (we might think of this as ‘approaches’). These two ambitions are not separated out into distinct parts, but rather run through all the chapters. It is hoped that, on finishing the *Handbook*, the reader will not only know much more about the early modern book, but she or he will also have a strong sense of how and why that object has been studied, and the scope for the development of new questions.

One powerfully clarifying idea in recent discussions of disciplinary formations and exclusions has been what the feminist theorist Sara Ahmed, among others, has called ‘the politics of citation’. Ahmed considers the practice of citing other scholars as ‘a rather successful reproductive technology’, a technique of selection that makes ‘certain bodies and thematics core to the discipline, and others not even part’.<sup>48</sup> Citation can be ‘a problematic technology’ that sustains the dominance of a particular group and a particular kind of work, and Ozment finds this practice playing out with particular influence in handbooks, companions, and the metalevel surveys that are crucial for disciplinary definition. ‘To cite narrowly,’ write Carrie Motta and Daniel Cockayne, in their discussion of citation, ‘to only cite white men...or to only cite established scholars’, results in the ‘uneven reproduction of academic and disciplinary...knowledge’.<sup>49</sup> ↵ But more thoughtfully and purposefully deployed, citation—and we can think of citation in broad terms, as the names and works we invoke to explain and locate our intervention—can also be a mechanism for creating new directions, recognizing new work, and imagining the paths not yet taken by the history of the book: to consider, in the words of Brandi K. Adams in this volume, ‘what is next, what is visible, and what is possible’.

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