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dans l'Europe de la Renaissance

Études réunies par
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TRANSLATIONS FACING INWARDS: JAMES VI/1'S *BASILIKON DORON*

First published in 1599, then subjected to very careful revision on the part of its author, finally destined to become the protagonist of an adventurous editorial history, *Basilikon Doron* has always been a serious puzzle to editors and textual critics. James VI of Scotland, a king with no little experience of writing, attempted with this treatise the impossible task of exerting total control on his published work, and the attempt, coupled with the extraordinary political circumstances surrounding the appearance of this text, triggered its fascinating textual history. This results in a text with many variants and translations. The present work analyses two translations that are deeply embedded in James's own preoccupation with the circulation of his political work: his own transposition of the text from Middle Scots to English, in preparation for its circulation through print; and the Italian translation undertaken by John Florio, surviving in manuscript.

The readership James VI of Scotland had in mind when he first conceived his work has long been a subject of debate.¹ By the time he started working on the *Basilikon Doron*, the King was already familiar not only with composition, but with literary circulation: in the early years of his reign, once freed from tutelage, he had gathered to his court a little coterie of poets and translators,² and in 1584, barely

¹ An early (and still the most complete) study on the textual history of the *Basilikon Doron* is *The Basilikon Doron of King James VI.*, ed. James Craigie, vol. 2, Edinburgh, Blackwood, 1950. See also Stanley Rypins, "The Printing of *Basilikòn Dòron*, 1603", *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 64 (1970), p. 393-417; G.P.V. Akrigg, "The Literary Achievement of King James I", *University of Toronto Quarterly* 44 (1975), p. 115-129; Jenny Wormald, "James VI and I, *Basilikon Doron* and *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies*: The Scottish Context and the English Translation", in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 36-54; James Doelman, "'A King of Thine Own Heart': The English Reception of King James VI and I's *Basilikon Doron*", *The Seventeenth Century* 9 (1994), p. 1-9; *James I: The True Law of Free Monarchies and Basilikon Doron*, ed. Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, Toronto, Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1996; Roderick J. Lyall, "The Marketing of James VI and I: Scotland, England and the Continental Book Trade", *Quaerendo* 32 (2002), p. 204-217.

² Helena Mennie Shire, *Song, Dance and Poetry of the Court of Scotland under King James VI*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1969; Priscilla Bawcutt, "James VI's Castalian Band: A Modern Myth", *The Scottish Historical Review* 80 (2001), p. 251-259. A recent, comprehensive assessment of James's literary

eighteen years of age, he had published *Essayes of a Prentise in the Divine Art of Poesie*, a collection which included the first theoretical treatise of poetry in the history of Scottish literature, *Ane Schort Treatise Conteyning Some Reulis and Cautelis to be Observit and Eschewit in Scottis Poesie*.³ Though short and mainly derivative, the treatise shows James's consciousness of the importance of the act of writing and circulating one's own works, and his awareness of the role literature could play at court.

However, when James composed the *Basilikon Doron*, presumably in the summer of 1598, many of the preoccupations expressed in *Reulis and Cautelis* were long forgotten, and the literary coterie that had gathered in the 1580s at the Scottish court had almost completely dispersed. James's political writings were written with a widely different attitude, and publication – in the sense of free and uncontrolled circulation among an unknown readership – seems to have been far from the King's mind. This is what Jenny Wormald writes, with reference to the *Doron* and *The True Law of Free Monarchies*:

It does appear that, at least at the time of their conception, neither of James's tracts was designed for an open readership, and neither was written with an English readership particularly in mind [...] there are various clues about James's approach to writing – and to controversy – which suggest that the political tracts of 1598-99 should be viewed, initially at least, as the product of a mind at work rather than a closed and fixed one having already determined on the theme he had decided to lay before the world. Not the least of these clues is the manuscript of *Basilikon Doron* itself, a delightful piece of evidence of an author searching for words and ideal expression of arguments, scribbling, scoring out, scribbling again – and the whole lovely mess, which would call down the wrath of any tutor were a student to present it as an essay, bound up in purple velvet, and stamped in gold leaf with thistles, the Scottish emblem, and the royal initials, as befitted a king.⁴

In its original version the *Basilikon Doron* was written in Middle Scots and intended for Prince Henry, then four years old and heir apparent to the throne. The original manuscript is now London, British Library, MS Royal 18 B XV, and bears eloquent testimony to the King's revisions and corrections. In a slightly different, more anglicised form, it was printed in 1599 by Robert Waldegrave, in Edinburgh,⁵ but this first print presents some curious characteristics. It ran only to

output is offered by Jane Rickard in her *Authorship and Authority: The Writings of James VI and I*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2007; see also Steven W. May, "The Circulation in Manuscript of Poems by King James VI and I", in *Renaissance Historicism. Essays in Honor of Arthur F. Kinney*, ed. James M. Dutcher and Anne Lake Prescott, Newark, University of Delaware Press, 2008, p. 206-224.

³ *The Poems of King James VI of Scotland*, ed. James Craigie, vol. 1, Edinburgh, Blackwood, 1955, p. 1-96.

⁴ Wormald, p. 48-49. The fact that the *Basilikon Doron* was initially meant for a very intimate readership may explain why its editorial history differs from that of *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (which was, incidentally, first published in anonymous form).

⁵ James Craigie, "The *Basilikon Doron* of King James I", *The Library* 3 (1948), p. 22-32, p. 24.

seven copies, the intended recipients being identified by James Craigie with James's wife, Queen Anne of Denmark; Prince Henry's tutor, Mr Adam Newton; Lord John Hamilton, third son of the Duke of Châtelherault and a loyal servant of Mary Queen of Scots first and then of King James; and the three "Catholic Earls", that is, the Earls of Huntly, Errol and Angus, recently reconciled to the Protestant Kirk; the seventh copy probably was for the Prince himself.⁶ In an age in which the emergence of printing began to draw attention to the unique characteristics of manuscript circulation, and in which writers such as Philip Sidney or John Donne would privilege the latter in order to stop their works from falling into the wrong hands,⁷ King James essayed a different approach, by guaranteeing the uniformity and neatness of the printed copy while severely limiting and controlling its actual and potential readers. It was a self-defeating exercise, since the relevance of print consists not in its being permanent but in the possibility it offers of being reproduced, mechanically or electronically: it is a guarantee of long-term circulation, as the very vicissitudes of the *Basilikon Doron* demonstrate.

James's attempt at absolute control was doomed to failure: the very nature of kingship would make privacy and secrecy almost impossible in this context. In spite of the severely restricted number of copies and the almost domestic nature of the enterprise, it appears to have been known at the Scottish court quite soon. M. De Boissize, French ambassador, could write to King Henri IV in January 1600:

Le Roy d'Escosse [...] a composé trois livres du gouvernement de son royaume qu'il adresse à son filz. Au dernier il luy enseigne comme il faut traicter les Anglois et luy commande, s'il estoit prévenu de mort, de poursuyvre le droict qu'il y a et ne s'en désister jamais. Il y a ung autre livre icy du droit du dict Roy en la couronne d'Angleterre fait par un Anglois, lequel, ez pénultièmes Estatz, osa demander que la Royne eust à desclarer le dict Roy pour son successeur, et pour cela fut mis en la Tour où il est mort. Les dictz livres courent icy et sont ez mains de plusieurs, comme ung autre du droict de l'Infante.⁸

Far from being a secret, *Basilikon Doron* was the subject of discussion in connection with the problem of the English succession. The passage also shows that

⁶ James Craigie, «Introduction», *The Basilikon Doron of King James VI.*, vol. 2, p. 7-8.

⁷ Starting with Elizabeth L. Eisenstein's seminal work, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1979, there has been perhaps a tendency to overemphasize the unstable quality of manuscript production; at the same time, undue importance has been given to the so-called stigma of print, a hypothesis first put forward in J.W. Saunders, "The Stigma of Print: A Note on the Social Bases of Tudor Poetry", *Essays in Criticism* 1 (1951), p. 139-164. Recent contributions on the topic are too numerous to list here, but an excellent analysis focusing on John Donne is Richard B. Wollman, "The 'ress and the Fire': Print and Manuscript Culture in Donne's Circle", *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 33 (1993), p. 85-97.

⁸ *Papiers d'État. Pièces et Documents inédits ou peu connus relatifs à l'histoire de l'Écosse au XVI^e siècle*, ed. A. Teulet, vol. 3, Paris, Typographie de Henri Plon, 1860, p. 613-614.

De Boissize had identified the *real* readership of this book – not the Scottish but the English; the *Basilikon Doron* was, or would become, James’s introduction to his English subjects. On the other hand, even supposing M. De Boissize to have actually seen the book, it seems evident that he did not peruse it carefully: there is no passage in which James teaches his son “comme il faut traicter les Anglois”, nor is Henry exhorted to persevere in his father’s pursuit of the throne of England.⁹ In October of the same year, Cardinal Borghese in Rome was also informed of the existence of the book, but again the terms in which the communication is couched do not show a precise knowledge of the book’s contents on the part of the writer.¹⁰ George Nicolson, an English agent at the Scottish court, knew of this work already by October 1598, as proved by a letter he sent to Sir Robert Cecil;¹¹ by mid-February 1599, Nicolson was able to report to Cecil that he had a copy, which Cecil would see in due course.¹² It is conceivable that Nicolson had access to information either at court or at the printer’s in advance of the actual publication: a statement in contrast with the King’s own words “To the Reader” prefacing the 1603 edition (also printed by Waldegrave, again probably in Edinburgh), and recapitulating the history of the first edition:

For the purpose and mater thereof being only fit for a King, as teaching him his office; and the person whome-for it was ordayned, a Kings heire, whose secret counsellor and faithfull admonisher it must be; I thought it no waies conuenient, nor comelie, that either it should to all be proclaymed, whiche to one onely appertained (& specially being a messenger betwixt two so coniunct persons) or yet that he moulede, whereupon he should frame his future behaiour, when he comes both vnto the per-/fection of his yeares, and possession of his inheritance, should before the hande, be made common to the people, the subiect of his future happie gouernment. And therefore for the more secret, and close-keeping of them, I onely permitted seauen of them to be printed, the printer being first sworn for secrecie: and these seauen I dispersed among some of my trustiest seruands, to be kepted closelie by them.¹³

James’s attempt to exercise total control on the circulation of this work, an attempt that has often been associated with political anxiety on the part of the

⁹ On this point see Craigie, “Introduction”, p. 21.

¹⁰ Craigie, «Introduction», p. 19-21. The letter to Cardinal Borghese (partly reproduced by Craigie) was written by the Master of Gray.

¹¹ The letter, unsigned and partly in cypher, adds that the King was prompted to write the treatise after a dream he had had that Elizabeth would outlive him. See *Calendar of the State Papers, Relating to Scotland, Preserved in the State Paper Department of Her Majesty’s Public Record Office*, vol. 2, ed. Markham John Thorpe, London, Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, & Roberts, 1859, p. 759.

¹² *Calendar of State Papers*, p. 766. See also Craigie, “Introduction”, p. 6-7. An anonymous letter dated 8 June 1599 refers to the seven copies of the *Basilikon Doron*, and how they were to be distributed. See *Calendar of State Papers*, p. 770.

¹³ “To the Reader”, p. 13. The edition used throughout is *The Basilikon Doron of King James VI.*, ed. James Craigie, vol. 1, Edinburgh, Blackwood, 1944.

writer, was soon defeated. Either Queen Elizabeth's system of spies once more lived up to its legendary reputation (but news of the book leaked also outside the British Isles, as shown by the letters written by the French ambassador and to Cardinal Borghese); or, the King's avowed intention to keep his work secret was more in the nature of a gesture, meant to underline the importance of the recipients of the 1599 edition.

This edition, with its unique modalities, is a mirror image of the phenomenon described by Harold Love as *scribal publication*:¹⁴ the circulation of manuscripts in one or multiple copies, which allows a wider audience to access a text that might otherwise remain hidden. Scribal publication guarantees a modicum of control on readers (Love defines such readerships as "communities of the like-minded");¹⁵ James's elite publication was also the attempt to control his readership, as well as to define his text quite strictly. Scribal publication counterbalances the closeness between the producer of the text and its reader with the possibility for the latter to intervene in the process of transmission, by answering back to the original author/scribe or arbitrarily re-channelling further dissemination; the 1599 edition of the *Basilikon Doron*, presenting itself as a printed book, therefore as a *thing* rather than an *utterance*,¹⁶ was the immobile, definitive statement of an author who remained at the same time disturbingly close to his seven chosen readers. Yet the book took a life of its own, which made it almost inevitable for its author to think of a second, less exclusive print run.¹⁷

George Nicolson, the English agent who already in 1598 knew of the forthcoming book, was equally well informed upon the occasion of the second publication, programmed by 1603 with Waldegrave: on 22 September 1602 he wrote to Cecil that "the King's testament is to be printed".¹⁸ However, in this case the imminent publication seems to have been hardly a secret: James had no intention to stop the free circulation of his work. Less than a month later, another letter – this time from John Chamberlain, a gentleman writing from London, to Dudley Carleton – refers to the book as being at press, and gives some details on what was already a complex history:

¹⁴ Harold Love, "Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England", *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 9 (1987), p. 130-154; see also Love, *The Culture and Commerce of Texts. Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England*, Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1993.

¹⁵ Love, *The Culture and Commerce of Texts*, p. 33.

¹⁶ Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, London, Methuen, 1982, p. 131.

¹⁷ Jane Rickard notes the lavish appearance of the edition – "a quarto printed in large italic letter with generous margins on high-quality paper, an ornate title-page, and a number of printer's ornaments throughout" – and concludes that James's intentions was to make of the book "a prestigious item, suitable for a work written by a king and dedicated to his heir, and to further the link between the power of print and the authority of the monarch" (Rickard, p. 96).

¹⁸ *Calendar of State Papers*, p. 817.

I heare that king is printing a little peece of worke christened with a Greeke name in nature of his last will or remembrance to his sonne, when himself was sicke: and because yt hath gon abrode subject to many constructions and much depraved by many copies, he will now set yt out under his owne hand.¹⁹

The new, revised edition duly appeared in the following year, with a long preface in which James answered the objections of some of his critics, such as Andrew Melville, the Presbyterian minister. The event was accompanied by a curious coincidence: while the new version had obviously been composed while Queen Elizabeth was alive and presumably expected to live, the work appeared a few days before 24 March, the day on which the Queen's death was announced. A copy of this new edition had already reached London by that date. On 28 March, four days after James's proclamation as King of England, *Basilikon Doron* was entered in the Stationers' Register by the publisher John Norton and five partners – a move that should ensure copyright.²⁰ The Register's entry was noted, among others, by the Venetian ambassador Giovanni Carlo Scaramelli, who wrote that the London presses started producing copies of the treatise “within an hour of the Queen's death”.²¹ Editions began quickly to multiply: William A. Jackson speaks of at least seven London editions (“one of which [Allde's] was pirated”),²² Wormald of eight,²³ while Stanley Rypins opts for a more generic “several”, noting that at least one of them was available before the King entered England.²⁴ The closeness of some of these editions is shown by a detail: on the title-page of the Edinburgh edition we can see the woodcut of the royal arms of Scotland, exactly as we see it in one of the 1603 London editions (by Kingston for Norton); besides, there is the same error in page numbering at the end in the Edinburgh edition, as well as in all the authorised London editions.²⁵

The King had his work very much in mind, since before leaving for London, on 5 April 1603, he wrote to Prince Henry, who would join him with his mother at the end of the following month:

I sende you hearwith my booke latelie prentid, studdie & profite in it as ye wolde deserve my blessing, & as thaire can na thing happen unto you quhairof ye will not finde the generall grounde thairin, if not the verrie particulaire pointe touched, sa man ye leuell everie mannis opinions or aduyces unto you as

¹⁹ *The Letters of John Chamberlain*, ed. Norman Egbert McClure, vol. 1, Philadelphia, The American Philosophical Society, 1939, p. 167. The letter is dated 15 October 1602.

²⁰ Wormald, p. 51.

²¹ Quoted in Doelman, p. 1.

²² William A. Jackson, “Robert Waldegrave and the Books he Printed or Published in 1603”, *The Library* 13 (1958), p. 232.

²³ Wormald, p. 51.

²⁴ Rypins, p. 393. He calculates a total production of roughly 10,000 copies and refers to the incredibly “chaotic bibliographical picture presented by the 1603 printings of *Basilikon Dōron*” (p. 400).

²⁵ Craigie, “The *Basilikon Doron* of King James I”, p. 25.

ye finde thaim agree or discorde with the reulis thaire sett doun, allowing & following thaire aduyces that agrees with the same, mistrusting & frowning upon thaim that aduyces you to the contraire.²⁶

This and other references throughout James's correspondence (particularly with Prince Henry) show the extent of the King's concern with his political treatise. The book very soon took the nature of a political as well as editorial event; with the 1603 edition James had achieved a double translation, not only from Scots into English, but also from a close coterie to a wider readership.

In 1944, James Craigie published the *Basilikon Doron* for the Scottish Text Society, presenting three texts on facing pages: British Library, MS Royal 18 B xv, the 1599 edition and the 1603 Waldegrave edition. The linguistic changes shown by a comparison between the 1599 and the 1603 edition are of ideological as well as literary interest. James was a careful reviser of his own texts; throughout his life as a writer he appeared, indeed, almost obsessed with the nature and form of the text he was presenting to the public, as well as with the readership his texts were to meet: James Craigie notes that even in the passage between the manuscript now in the British Library and the 1599 print there had been a process of minute correction, since "the print differs in over ninety places from the MS".²⁷ In the main, the more relevant differences that can be observed in a comparison between these first two versions highlight a constant effort to clarify the text, even at the cost of sacrificing some of its conciseness: allusions to the Scriptures are slightly expanded, and in some cases the name of the Biblical writer is given; key concepts are developed, transforming "your office" into "your office as a King" (p. 8) and "procreation" into "procreation of children" (p. 127), while the rather dramatic image in which "a man be inuaidit be brigandis or theues" becomes the more prosaic description in which "a man of a knowne honeste life be inuaded by brigandes or theeues for his purse" (p. 138), where all the added padding dilutes the impact of the former version. Many corrections are devoted to tiny points of grammar and spelling: the distinction between *u*, *v* and *w* is made clearer throughout; *ye* is occasionally corrected to *ye*; and a number of Scottish forms are Anglicised (or perhaps normalised), so that *aneuch* becomes *ynough* (p. 28-29) and *qubilke* becomes *which* (p. 72-73). These changes show James's heightened attention to the issue of readership. The Anglicisation of the text might reveal the intervention of Robert Waldegrave's hand; this had already happened in 1597, when Waldegrave had printed *Daemonologie*, James's treatise on witchcraft.²⁸ The 1599 edition of the *Basilikon Doron* was not explicitly meant for an English

²⁶ London, British Library, Harley MS 6986, fol. 65r. The letter is printed (with modernised spelling and punctuation) in *Letters of King James VI & I*, ed. G.P.V. Akrigg, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984, p. 211-212.

²⁷ Craigie, "Introduction", p. 88. The differences are listed on p. 280-282.

²⁸ On this point see Rickard, p. 100.

audience, but “in general Waldegrave introduced a measure of Anglicization to the Scottish press, both in language and manners, such as the greater incidence of printed dedications”.²⁹

As we move from the 1599 to the 1603 edition, the changes are much more radical, so much so that we can speak of auto-translation. The revision was meant for a new and to a large extent unknown readership, who might resent either the King’s strictures or his Scotticisms. Once again, there was a revision of specifically Scottish forms in favour of more English ones, though this may be simply a development of the process initiated in the previous edition.³⁰ More interestingly, *Basilikon Doron* acquired a subtitle (*His Maiesties Instructions to his Dearest Sonne, Henry the Prince*) which established in the eye of the reader not only the *Fürstenspiegel* nature of the treatise, but also the presence of a continuous dynastic line; at the same time the first of the two sonnets prefacing the treatise (present, in another hand, in British Library Royal 18 B XV) disappeared, while the second sonnet (inserted in the 1599 edition, but not in the manuscript) was maintained. After the title-page, the text therefore opened with the words “God giues not Kings the stile of Gods in vaine”; the more intimate tones of the first sonnet – “Lo here (my Sonne) a mirrour viue and faire” were abandoned, and there was inserted instead, after the Epistle to Prince Henry, a substantial section “To the Reader”. These changes highlight James’s attempt, even in these new circumstances, to control his readership. The effort is evident in the slightly schizophrenic tone of the opening sentences of “To the Reader”: the quotation from Luke, “there is nothing so couered, that shall not be reuealed” (p. 12), highlights the fundamental dichotomy underlying the King’s writing process. The man who knows himself to be living “vpon a publicke stage” (p. 12) cannot help but be angered at the idea that copies of his book are multiplying “contrarie to my intention and expection” (p. 13), and that false copies are being circulated thanks to “the malice of the children of enuy” (p. 13). This section underlines the contrast between his solitary endeavour and his public position, between the intimate relation he wanted to establish with his son and the inevitable light his book cast on his own political practice. In so doing it also reveals the paradox at the heart of the *speculum principis* genre, evident in titles such as *Secreta Secretorum*, the compendium of political maxims that, in its various versions, enjoyed great fame in the late Middle Ages. Advice to princes should be by its own nature secret; advice couched in the form of a book is by its nature public.

The insertion of the preface to the reader could not but acknowledge the fact that the book had escaped its author’s control – a characteristic shared with a

²⁹ A. J. Mann, “Waldegrave, Robert (c.1554-1603/4)”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, online edn.

³⁰ Craigie, “Introduction”, p. 113-115.

number of prefaces in James's writings.³¹ Yet the anger of the King is directed, even more than to those who have procured for themselves unauthorised copies for vain curiosity or malicious envy, to those who have re-written the book, making extracts or distorting its sense through deliberate misquoting; he refers implicitly to the appearance, in 1602, of *The Kings Testament*, an anonymous work which paraphrased part of *Basilikon Doron* and "misrepresented the King's statements":³²

In-deede I am little beholden to the curiositie of some, who thinking it too large already (as appears) for lack of leisure to copie it, drewe some notes out of it, for speeds sake; putting in the one halfe of the purpose, and leauing out the other: not vnlike the man that alleadged that part of the Psalme, *non est Deus*; but left out the praeceeding wordes, *Dixit insipientis in corde suo*. And of these notes, making a little pamphlet (lacking both my methode and halfe of my mater) entituled it, forsooth, *the Kings Testament*: as if I had eiked a third Testament of my owne, to the two that are in the holy Scriptures (p. 20).

This outburst – together with the King's insisting, even in this public context, on the personal and private relationship between the treatise and its first reader, Prince Henry – seems to point at James's idea of writing as a solitary occupation, undertaken almost in fear of external, prying eyes. This contrasts with what we would today call the professionalism of James as a writer, and indeed with James's own statement, later on in the treatise, when he is advising Prince Henry on the art of writing:

Flatter not your selfe in your laboures, but before they be set forth, let them first be priuillie censured by some of the best skilled men in that craft, that in these workes ye meddle with. And because your writes will remain as true pictures of your minde, to all posterities; let them be free of all vn-comeliness and vn-honestie: and according to *Horace* his counsell *Nonumque premantur in annum*.³³

The contradiction may be linked simply to the different intended readership of the two utterances. With James rests the authority and authorship of the work, and he presents himself to an audience of potential subjects as the sole responsible of his text; yet his careful practice as translator of his own works does not blind him to the necessity of skilled collaborators, and we can surmise that there was such assistance and collaboration during the various stages of composition and circulation of the *Basilikon Doron*.³⁴

The idea of an actual translation in the passage from the 1599 to the 1603 editions is supported by another, less known piece of evidence. In the manuscript

³¹ Simon Wortham, "Part of my Taill is yet Untolde": James VI and I, the *Phoenix*, and the Royal Gift", in *Royal Subjects. Essays on the Writings of James VI and I*, ed. Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 2001, p. 182-204.

³² Doelman, p. 3.

³³ P. 185. I have used the 1603 edition, but there are no differences from the 1599 edition apart from spelling changes and a more correct rendering of the quotation from Horace (*De Arte Poetica*, l. 388).

³⁴ Rickard, p. 10.

collection associated with the Scottish poet and spy William Fowler (1560-1612) there are a few loose sheets headed “Noates for basilikon doron”.³⁵ Fowler had been active at King James’s court in Edinburgh, following the King as he moved to London; it is therefore not surprising that his collection (including miscellaneous material, from drafts to finished versions of poems and translations, to random notes) should also include writings more closely related to the King.³⁶ The group of sheets related to *Basilikon Doron*, bound in no particular order, is not in Fowler’s hand: clearer and more legible than Fowler’s, this hand bears some similarity with James’s own hand as it appears in the poem written upon his voyage to Denmark, in the same collection (Hawthornden MS 2065, fol. 2r), and a vaguer similarity to James’s hand as it appears in the holograph manuscript of the *Basilikon Doron* itself. The “Noates” are in fact what is left of a series of variant readings and suggested corrections to the 1599 edition. Each note is preceded by a number, corresponding to the page number of the 1599 edition; the following note is often, but by no means always, reproduced in the corresponding passage of the 1603 (Waldegrave) edition. Whether compiled by James or by one of his associates, they testify to the care and attention that accompanied this auto-translation of the work.

The frenzied activity of the printers in 1603 was but of short duration: in April the plague hit London, a dramatic occurrence which put a stop to book production for the time being. James’s treatise seems to have passed quickly out of fashion at this point: one would have to wait until 1616 for another edition in English, as part of the great edition of James’s collected works. But the curiosity of foreign readers had been awakened, as attested by the number and range of translations following the early printings. *Basilikon Doron* soon appeared in Latin (printed once in London, in 1603, and three times in Germany), and in this version it soon reached Rome, where an initially favourable reaction, shown in pamphlets such as the *Discorso del libro del Re di Scotia*, was succeeded by condemnation, as the book, in its Latin version, was placed on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* in 1606.³⁷ Other versions that soon appeared in print were in Dutch (printed in 1603 and arguably the earliest),³⁸ Welsh (printed, probably incomplete, in London in 1604), French, German (two separate

³⁵ Now Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Hawthornden MS 2064, fols 94-97. Another leaf evidently belonging to the same group appears in Hawthornden MS 2063 (fol. 121).

³⁶ On the Fowler manuscript collection as a whole, see Alessandra Petrina, *Machiavelli in the British Isles. Two Early Modern Translations of the Prince*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2009, p. 87-112, and Allison L. Steenson, *The Hawthornden Manuscripts of William Fowler and the Jacobean Court 1603-1612*, New York, Routledge, 2021.

³⁷ On the date there is no unanimity among scholars; see Antonio Rotondò, “Sul ‘Basilikon Doron’ di Giacomo I Stuart”, *Rivista Storica Italiana* 75 (1963), p. 869-881. Rotondò also discusses and edits the *Discorso del libro del Re di Scotia* (p. 873-875, 877-880), from the manuscript now in the Biblioteca Corsiniana in Rome (MS 680, fols 64r-67v).

³⁸ Astrid Stilma, *A King Translated. The Writings of James VI & I and their Interpretation in the Low Countries, 1593-1603*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2012.

translations printed in 1604), Swedish (1606), Hungarian (1612).³⁹ Beside the Italian translation mentioned at the beginning of this paper, there was also a Spanish translation that did not appear in print at the time, undertaken by one John Pembertoun of London, one of James's new English subjects.⁴⁰ The French version was officially authorised by James and "the version finally chosen was one selected from several submitted as being the least poor of them";⁴¹ the translator was Jean Hotman, Seigneur de Villiers, a scholar and diplomat of Huguenot beliefs who, as French ambassador in Scotland, had known James already in the early 1590s. Hotman had studied at Oxford, where he acquired a reputation as a polyglot, and was a friend of Sir Philip Sidney. His translation appeared in three different editions, published in the same year in Paris, Rouen, and Lyons.⁴²

The astonishingly rapid spread of the *Basilikon Doron* throughout Europe, together with its comparatively short-lived circulation in the seventeenth century, has led Roderick J. Lyall to hypothesise that "the circulation of James's writings across the Continent was in some way orchestrated, part of a deliberate campaign to promote James's policies, and his foreign policy objectives in particular".⁴³ Whether or not this hypothesis can be fully substantiated, it seems beyond doubt that the circulation of the *Doron* between 1598 and 1603 in its various versions was a matter of international concern, whose consequences might range well beyond the actual merit of the work. Lyall's analysis also supports the hypothesis that much attention was spent on the *Basilikon Doron* from the moment of its composition, and that James himself progressively widened the scope of its intended readership, going from a familiar to a Scottish to a potentially European audience.

While most of the translations listed so far appeared in print, there were also manuscript translations, both undertaken by James's new, English subjects: the already mentioned ones by John Pembertoun, who translated the text into Spanish, and by John Florio into Italian. They "were part of the economy of gift and patronage that constituted a social practice and provided one of the major political languages of James's court [...] These two manuscript translations were made into the two main languages used at court, apart from English, and that they were presented to James in manuscript further strengthens their courtly character, as scribal publication was associated with such circles".⁴⁴ One might add yet another example of translation that looks back at the original text rather than facing

³⁹ Hanna Orsolya Vincze, *The Politics of Translation and Transmission: Basilikon Doron in Hungarian Political Thought*, Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012, p. 83-130.

⁴⁰ In the first half of the twentieth century it was "in the possession of J.P.R. Lyell, Esq., of Abingdon, Berkshire" (Craigie, "The *Basilikon Doron* of King James I", p. 31).

⁴¹ Craigie, "The *Basilikon Doron* of King James I", p. 28.

⁴² Lyall, p. 208. See also David Baird Smith, "Jean de Villiers Hotman", *Scottish Historical Review* 14 (1917), p. 147-166.

⁴³ Lyall, p. 207.

⁴⁴ Vincze, p. 63.

outwards: Henry Peacham's emblem book, *Basilikon Doron in Heroica Emblemata resolutum* (now surviving in three manuscript copies: London British Library, Royal MS 12 A lxvi, dedicated to Prince Henry; Harley MS 6855 Art. 13, dedicated to James, and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson Poetry MS 146), composed between 1603 and 1610, translating James's work into a series of emblems, each accompanied by a short text in Latin.

John Florio's version (now London, British Library, Royal MS 14 A.V) took a singular route, isolating itself from the more general response.⁴⁵ Always at the margins of Elizabeth's court, living between London and Oxford, occasionally acting as a spy, Florio began to see a change in his fortunes when James became the new King of England. In 1604 he was made Groom of the Privy chamber, and appointed reader in Italian and private secretary to James's wife, Queen Anne of Denmark. He was probably also the Italian teacher of the princes, Henry and Elizabeth. The translation of the *Basilikon Doron* is closely linked to this change.⁴⁶ At the same time, it appears unique also against the background of Florio's other works. Although this is by no means his only translation, normally Florio would translate (from French, or from Italian) *into* English, which confirms the supposition that the writer, born and living in England, was in fact an English native speaker. As proved by his most important work, the Italian-English dictionary *A Worlde of Wordes* (1598), Florio felt a lively, omnivorous curiosity towards the Italian lexical variety – the dictionary includes “words from all parts of Italy (including Italian slang),”⁴⁷ and aims not so much at prescribing the use of an elegant and accepted Italian, but at exploring the wealth and diversity of a language that reflected the regional fragmentation of the country: “Florio offered the Elizabethans a vehicle for discovering Italy, its language, and its Renaissance culture without necessarily travelling to the continent”.⁴⁸ His competence in his native tongue is demonstrated by the amazing range of synonyms in English he provides for each Italian word he translates. None of this joy of discovery and linguistic exuberance is present in the *Basilikon Doron* translation.

Inevitably, Florio's career and literary enterprises should be gauged against the revival of interest for Italian culture that pervaded the English sixteenth century. Lexicographers and grammarians had early seized on this interest, appropriating for Italian a consideration that had been hitherto reserved to the classical lan-

⁴⁵ The text has been published in modern times. See Giuliano Pellegrini, *John Florio e il Basilikon Doron di James VI: un esempio inedito di versione elisabettiana*, Milano: Feltrinelli, 1961. This is the edition I use.

⁴⁶ The date of this translation cannot be definitely established. See Michael Wyatt, “John Florio's Translation of Kingship: An Italian Baptism for James VI/I's *Basilikon Doron*”, in *Exiles, Emigrés and Intermediaries. Anglo-Italian Cultural Transactions*, ed. Barbara Schaff, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2010, p. 71-84.

⁴⁷ Desmond O'Connor, “Florio, John (1553-1625)”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, online edn.

⁴⁸ O'Connor, online.

guages, and highlighting the comparative accessibility of the vernacular, as is shown by this passage by William Thomas, written approximately half a century before Florio undertook his translation:

Wheras bothe the Greeke and Latine require long tyme and studie, the Italian is in short space and easelie obtaigned. And as experience sheweth, howe much those twoe [i.e., Greek and Latin] haue flourished, remainyng yet (as they dooe) in great estimacion: so seemeth this nowe to growe as a third towards them. For besides the auctours of this tyme (whereof there bee manie woorthie) you shall almoste finde no parte of the sciences, no part of any woorthie historie, no parte of eloquence, nor any parte of fine poesie, that ye haue not in the Italian tongue. So that if the Italians folowe other tenne yeres the diligence, that in these tenne yeres passed they haue used: surelie their tongue will be as plentifull as anie of the other.⁴⁹

We can almost hear the advertising tone of the peddler here. By the time Florio translated the *Basilikon Doron*, however, this interest was decidedly on the wane. Italy was no longer the garden of eloquence and art, being in fact perceived as a dangerous locus of intrigue, decadence, and Popish tyranny: a perception exacerbated by the increasing tensions between Catholic and Protestant Europe, and possibly by the presence of an Italian community in England that had escaped religious persecution. This is shown, for instance, by the new tone adopted by Jacobean playwrights, such as Ben Jonson, writing in 1606:

SIR POLITICK WOULD BE
Did your instructor
In the dear tongues, never discourse to you
Of the Italian mountebanks?
[...] They are the only knowing-men of Europe!
Great general scholars, excellent physicians,
Most admired statesmen, profess'd favourites,
And cabinet-counsellors to the greate princes!
The only languag's men of all the world!
PEREGRINE
And, I have heard, they are the most lewd impostors.⁵⁰

In this context, Florio's work, with its choice of a no longer fashionable language, appears slightly antiquarian, and serves no political purpose: the real interest in James's work in the Italian courts, and especially in Rome, was expressed by the Latin translation, which circulated in southern Europe and provoked the insertion

⁴⁹ William Thomas, *Principal rules of the Italian Grammer, with a Dictionarie for the better understanding of Boccace, Petrarcha, and Dante*, London, 1550, Dedicatory epistle.

⁵⁰ Ben Jonson, *Volpone*, ed. Philip Brockbank, London, Benn, 1968, II.ii.2-14. Donatella Montini implicitly suggests an allusion to Florio by setting this passage at the beginning of her "John/Giovanni: Florio mezzano e intercessore della lingua italiana", *Memoria di Shakespeare* 6 (2008), p. 47-59.

of the book in the *Index*. Unlike this version, and the other printed translations circulating shortly after the 1603 publication of the treatise, Florio's work does not seem to reach out to an audience, whether in England or in Italy, but to look back at the original author of the work. Much has been made of Florio's role as a go-between, a literary figure with two languages and two souls, forever on the move between Italy and England, and this is probably correct, especially as concerns the first part of his life and of his literary production. His most famous translation, indeed, does not have anything to do with Italian, as he translated Montaigne's *Essais* from French into English (1603), prefacing his work with a defence of translation; in this choice I believe we see once again the restless choice of the polyglot explorer of different cultures. The translation of the *Basilikon Doron* suggests otherwise: the knowledge of Italian translates into a stilted version, extremely careful to reproduce the original as closely as possible, as if the foreign language was no longer an opportunity to explore a different culture but simply a means to put an artificially exotic veneer on the text.

Florio's translation is based on the 1603 print and presents some interesting characteristics. It shows extreme fidelity to the original, closely reproducing James's decisions in the passage from the 1599 to the 1603 version; as noted by Vincze,

The characteristics of Elizabethan style that we have already met in the case of the 1603 English version [...] were present here as well. Adjectives were introduced, alliterations, doublets, rhymes were created [...] As compared to his very free rendering of Montaigne [...] Florio's *Basilikon Doron* was almost a word for word translation [...] The courtier treated the book of the king with deference. After all, he was presenting it to a king very sensitive about the readings of his texts.⁵¹

Indeed, the translation is occasionally stilted in its effort not to deviate from the original. The similarities are not limited to the actual text, but concern also the paratextual apparatus. In the manuscript version that has survived, conceivably the presentation copy, Florio carefully reproduces the layout of the printed frontispiece, with the title in Greek letters (as in the printed version), reserving for the translator's name the humble space at the bottom, where the 1603 version had the printer's name. Of the two opening sonnets, the first (James's sonnet to his son) disappears, as it had disappeared in 1603; the second, present in the two printed versions, is translated, carefully highlighting in the Italian the pre-eminence of the king. Thus the phrase *A' Rè* appears in the opening position at lines 1 and 4, creating an anaphoric effect that is echoed on line 6, opening with *Del Rè*. From this point on Florio speaks with the King's first person and translates the

⁵¹ Vincze, p. 65. Alterations to the original go usually in the direction of clarification and emphasis: see Donatella Montini, "Education and Power: Shakespeare, Florio and the *Basilikon Doron*", in *Shakespearean Interdisciplinary Variations*, ed. Giuseppe Massara, Roma, Roma nel Rinascimento, 2017, p. 107-121.

prologue to Henry, though not the more polemical prologue to the reader; then, in the text, he maintains all the marginalia that had been inserted in the 1603 version.

These choices make for an obsessively faithful yet intimate version. The long prologue to the reader in the English version discussed the issue of dissemination and misreading, and saw James addressing not his domestic or family circle, but a potentially unknown public. By choosing to omit it and substituting for it a very short dedication addressed to the King, Florio proposes a translation that does not look outward, at a possible Italian readership; he rather attempts to reflect further glory on James's text, closely imitating all its characteristics and explicitly proposing a homage to a king who subsumes in himself all political thought: the centre towards which all advice writing converges, and from which it will spring again in different idioms. How much of this attitude is due to Florio – who was probably seeing in his newly conquered position at court the crowning of his career and the supreme achievement of his life-long efforts – and how much to James's positing of his own work as an immovable structure, remains to be seen.

The dedicatory letter (fol. 2r-v) is worth quoting in full:

Alla Sacratissima, et Serenissima Maestà d'Inghilterra, di Scotia, di Francia, et d'Irlandia, longa felicità et felicissimo regno.

Come a Cesare, così (perdonimi la S. V. Maestà) mi pare si possa dire a l'Emulo di ogni Cesarea Maestà; Chi non ardisce di parlarle, non conosce la sua Clemenza; ma chi l'ardisce, non ha risentimento della Maestà. Questa arditezza mi fa maggiore, anzi miglior' animo, conciosiache non altre compositioni che le sue ho preso baldanza di presentare a quella sacra Maestà, la quale come ha fatto cose grandissime da scriuersi da' grandi, così ha scritto concetti mirabili da leggersi da ognuno: cosa da riadempire la felicità di Plinio. I fatti, benché vittoriosi (disse Catone) sono utili, e durano solo una età; ma scritti cotanto ripieni d'ogni prudentia, ogni secolo. Questa Cyropaedia di Zenophonte, questi comentarij di Cesare, questo testamento di Carolo quinto da tradursi in ogni lingua; anzi queste istruzioni di Costantino Leone al Cesareo suo figliuolo (fin' al dì d'hoggi in Venetia, come un Tesoro, riserbate) anzi in iscritto, aspettandone la censura, che per istampa, presumendo della sufficiencia, humilissimamente inchinandosi alla sacrata mano la offerisce il

Di S.S. Maestà

hum.^{mo} e fedelissimo suddito

et seruitore

Giouanni Florio.

To the Most Sacred and Serene Majesty of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, happiness and a happy reign.

As of Caesar, so (with Your Majesty's pardon) I think it may be said of you, the Disciple of all Caesarean Majesty, he who does not dare speak to you, does not know your Mercy; but he who dares, suffers no resentment from Your Majesty. Such daring gives me greater, better hope, since I have attempted to offer you no other works but your own. As you have written great things to be read by the great, so you have written wondrous things to be read by everybody; Pliny

would rejoice. Facts, although victorious (as Cato said), are useful, and last only one age; such wise writings last every century. This Cyropaedia of Xenophon, these commentaries of Caesar, this testament of Charles V to be translated in every language; nay, these instructions by Constantine Leo for his Caesarean son (so far preserved in Venice, like a Treasure), are penned in manuscript, as I await your censorship, rather than in print, since I presume them to be sufficient, and humbly bowing present them to Your Majesty's sacred hand.
Your humble and most obedient subject and servant
Giovanni Florio.

There is no indication that the King acknowledged the translation so explicitly dedicated to him,⁵² so that we cannot know whether Florio's bid for patronage was successful. In this kind of bid, the prospective patron is always told what he presumably wishes to hear. In the case of James, Florio made an obvious appeal to his conception of statecraft as deeply entrenched in theoretical knowledge, while at the same time pandering to the King's urge for control over his literary output. *Basilikon Doron* has rightly been called "a learned synthesis, a composite portrait, of commonplaces regarding kingship and statescraft".⁵³ Its aphoristic structure favours such a composite nature – the text is a *summa* of all that is best in political advice. The sources James draws from "range from Plato and Aristotle to Cicero, Quintilian, Isocrates, Xenophon, Plutarch, Thucydides, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and so forth":⁵⁴ this is part of James's normal practice (in his youthful treatise on poetry, *Reulis and Cautelis*, James had drawn on Joachim du Bellay's theoretical writings), and indeed of the normal practice of an early modern political writer. By proposing itself as a compendium, the *Basilikon Doron* also posits itself as a point of arrival, the point on which all advice literature converges. This is well captured by Florio's dedicatory preface, which evokes a cohort of great rulers of the past, all building James's greatness. Even the father-son relationship underlying the text has precedents: in his French translation, Jean Hotman, Seigneur de Villiers, had referred to Basil I, Constantine VII, and Manuel II (all Byzantine emperors) as James's models, but it is much more probable, as Florio notes, that James's immediate precedent was Charles V, who had written a political treatise in the form of a testament dedicated to his son in 1555. This text, too, had been translated into Italian in 1592 by Giacomo Castelvetro, then living at the Scottish court, and the manuscript dedicated to the King.⁵⁵

⁵² Wyatt, p. 75. I do not agree with Wyatt's suggestion that the translation might have been prepared as a language exercise for Prince Henry; the hypothesis would not explain the extremely careful layout of the manuscript.

⁵³ Fischlin and Fortier, "Introduction", p. 29.

⁵⁴ Fischlin and Fortier, "Introduction", p. 27.

⁵⁵ Now Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS 23.1.6. The hypothesis that Charles' treatise may be a source for James was first advanced by Wormald, p. 47. Castelvetro claimed in his dedication that James had expressed curiosity about this work.

Florio's work then would appear an elaborate act of homage that was not meant to circulate beyond the court; but if this was the translator's intention, once more it proved impossible to control the dissemination of a text. The *Calendar of State Papers, Venice* includes a summary of a dispatch sent by the Venetian Secretary in England Giovanni Carlo Scaramelli to the Doge and Senate on 24 April 1603. In it he mentions the publication of the *Basilikon Doron* (which had been published, as noted above, on 28 March), and his allusions make it possible to hypothesize that he knew Florio's version, or even that at some stage there was a plan for its publication:

[...] un libro composto da sua M.^{ta} in lingua Inglese che fu posto qui sotto al Torchio della stampa la prima hora che la Regina morì, nel qual libro formando una instrutione al Principe Henrico suo p.^{mo} genito per la presente successione lo ammonisce a guardarsi da i superbi Vescovi Papisti, che così dice, et nomina vera peste i Puritani, che è una seta simile, ma peggiore dei Calvinisti. Con tutto questo, ogniuno che viene di Scotia afferma che la Religione ch'è in questo Reame non riceverà altra alteratione, se non che i Cat^{ci}, chiamati ricusanti che consentono di pagar' ogni mese secondo le facolta loro buona soma di denari alla Corona per non andare alle chiese heretiche potranno forse esser liberati da questo obbligo di pagamento, et non perseguitati nelle priuate loro attioni di Religione, che se così succedesse, non cercheriano essi Catholici nel prossimo Parlamento altro di più per hora che la reuocatione della legge fatta dalla Regina Lisabetta che dispone che qualunque Inglese si faccia in qual si uoglia parte del mondo Religioso Latino cada in pena capitale di lesa M^{ta}. Le quali cose mentre mi peruengono con fondamento io non lascio di rappresentare a V. Ser. così per la importanza come per la conseguenza loro.⁵⁶

The *Calendar of State Papers* presents this (slightly abridged) version:

[...] a book published by his Majesty in the English tongue, and sent to press here within an hour of the Queen's death. In this book he drew up regulations for the guidance of his eldest son Prince Henry, and incidentally warned him to beware of the proud Bishops of the Papacy, and calls the Puritans a very plague. For all that, everyone who comes here from Scotland affirms that the religion of this country will not be changed, except that the recusant Catholics who have agreed to pay to the Crown a large sum every month in lieu of attendance at heretical services, may perhaps be relieved of that payment and freed from persecution for their religious acts in private. If that takes place then in the next Parliament the Catholics will attempt nothing further than the revocation of that law of Elizabeth, which makes it the capital crime of *lesa Majestas* for any Englishman in any part of the world to enter Latin orders. As all this reaches me with some positiveness I must not fail to report it to your Serenity.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Venice, Archivio di Stato, Senato, Dispacci degli Ambasciatori e Residenti, Inghilterra, filza 2, 18.

⁵⁷ *Calendar of State Papers Relating to English Affairs in the Archives of Venice, Volume 10, 1603-1607*, London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1900, 24 April 1603.

The phrase “et nomina vera peste i Puritani” refers to James’s “very pestes”, used with reference to Puritans both in the holograph and in the 1599 and 1603 versions.⁵⁸ Florio translates the passage in a similar way: “Puritani, vera specie di peste”.⁵⁹ We also read “vera [...] peste” in the Latin translation.⁶⁰ Scaramelli’s use of the phrase “superbi Vescovi Papisti”, translating James’s “proude Papall Bishops”,⁶¹ also might have some analogy with Florio’s “orgogliosi o papali vescovi”.⁶² The Latin version has “insulos & insolentes Pontifices, seu papales Episcopos”,⁶³ and it is actually closer to Florio’s version than to the original. These details may lead us to hypothesize that the Italian translation was not simply a personal homage to the king, but part of James’s policy for disseminating the treatise in Venice, while the Latin version would be more effective in Rome. As Warren Boutcher notes, “The mention of ms and print in the dedication [...] makes it likely Florio was thinking James might want a faithful Italian vernacular version of his text disseminated in print in Venetian circles”.⁶⁴ In this case, Florio’s translation might, with or without the author’s consent or the translator’s awareness, have become a vehicle for James’s ideology.

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⁵⁸ *The Basilicon Doron of King James VI.*, vol. 1, p. 78-79.

⁵⁹ Pellegrini, p. 76.

⁶⁰ *Iacobi Primi [...] Basilikon Doron, Sive Regia Institutio*, London: John Norton, 1604, p. 44.

⁶¹ *The Basilicon Doron of King James VI.*, vol. 1, p. 80-81.

⁶² Pellegrini, p. 78.

⁶³ *Iacobi Primi*, p. 46.

⁶⁴ Warren Boutcher, personal communication. I wish to thank Warren, who mentioned Scaramelli’s dispatch in the paper offered at the Paris colloquium Traduire à la renaissance/Tradurre nel Rinascimento (Université de Paris 8, 24-26 October 2017) and afterwards, with characteristic generosity, discussed this point with me. I would also like to thank Stephen Orgel who read a draft of this paper and suggested important changes.