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### Milton and Charles I: Modern Authorship

Milton lost his independence as a polemicist when Parliament commissioned him to attack *Eikon Basilike* after Charles I's execution. As Tom Corns has demonstrated, Milton's prose style significantly changed in his first official assignment, from an idiosyncratic, highly personal voice to a legalistic voice shaped by his decision to adhere closely to the king's book in order to refute it. In the short term, Milton was clearly the loser in his visceral engagement with the king's memories and meditations from the grave. *Eikon Basilike* was the most widely read text to be published in Milton's lifetime, a political and affective event of enormous and consequential power.

I argue that Milton's engagement with the king's book was a creative turning point. What Milton learned from his close encounter with the popular artistry of *Eikon Basilike* shapes his Restoration masterpieces. The Narrator of *Paradise Lost* is, for example, clearly modeled on classical epics. Yet he is also something new: the voice of a historical person speaking from the text. Virgil made his biography key, Jonson made self-referential jokes, and Wroth created versions of herself in the *Urania*. But what Charles I (and his collaborators) did was to literally summon a recognizable speaking person. Milton recognized Charles I's originality.

This paper explores the transformative lessons about modern authorship Milton learned from his failed battle against Charles I's *Eikon Basilike* and their realization in his modern epic, *Paradise Lost*.

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**Books and Edited Collections**

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