Dr Peter Sillitoe, PDRA on ShaLT


NB: All images are from the Early English Books Online database and are not from the Museum’s two Folio copies. Therefore these are not for reproduction and are for illustrative purposes only.

Picking up from the last report and the National Art Library’s copy of the Jonson 1616 Folio, this report enlarges on that one since I have now inspected the copies in special collections. Indeed, it is now clear that the library has two copies of the Folio, though one is in much better condition than the other (further catalogue details are given below).

As was made clear in the last report: “the Ben Jonson Works / Folio from 1616 would seem ideal for use as a ShaLT image as well as for future Museum purposes. The Folio pre-dates Shakespeare’s Folio (also in the V&A collections) by 7 years and so could be exhibited as an example of the importance of other playwrights in the early modern period. Secondly, the book is usually considered to be of immense importance in scholarly work (though not communicated to the public in any detail) as the Folio effectively represents the first time a professional English writer collected together his or her ‘works’ for general sale in print. This links to the fact that, unlike the posthumous Shakespeare Folio, Jonson put this collection of his own plays and poems through the press himself (there is clear evidence of his interest in the venture in various sources). Thus, the 1616 Folio may be said to be one of the very first occasions in which an English writer declared this new ‘professional’ status in public. It is highly likely that an image-based display on this book would be of educational benefit to the wider community via the V&A’s use of the book for exhibition. Lastly, there are further opportunities here for narratives about ‘theatre-as-industry’ and
‘Shakespeare’s competitors’, as well as narratives linking performance to print and the need to ‘record’ theatre via publication.”

To my knowledge, the Jonson Folios have not been displayed or photographed previously by the Museum. Starting with the ShaLT project it is clear that as many images as possible should be captured for use on the website for a number of reasons, including issues surrounding authorship, patronage, print, media and so on. We could also point out that the only other ‘works’ that year (of a British writer) was the 1616 edition by King James (at end of this document).

Thinking specifically of future use at the V&A a copy of the Folio would sit well alongside the Museum’s display copy of the 1623 Shakespeare First Folio for the reasons given above (pre-dating Shakespeare, issues about authorship, Shakespeare’s rivals etc).

**Title-page**
Were the book to be displayed open at a certain page Jonson’s title-page would seem the perfect place to start, as its neo-classicism contrasts with the famous image of Shakespeare in the 1623 Folio (the Jonson image below is not contained in the two V&A copies that I have seen). Furthermore, a display for Jonson would be timely as CUP are currently completing a new complete works (edited by Martin Butler et al).

Also of note on the title-age: ‘Benjamin’ not ‘Ben’ is preferred, almost certainly for status and prestige. Of particular importance is the visual narrative with its neo-classical discourse, including the use of classical architecture, art, and stylistics, the image of the chorus, classical pillars, and the overriding sense of architectural permanence for this grand authorial project. Clearly, for Jonson, theatre, even public theatre, was to be taken very seriously from this point if not before, and the Romanesque structures articulate this perfectly. Note the Roman amphitheatre as Jonson and the printer seek to authorise Renaissance theatre by evoking the classical theatres of Greece and Rome. England’s new theatre land is thus contextualised alongside the classical past and so privileged and glorified.

Generic pointers – tragedy and comedy are mentioned at the top of the page. Note also the satyr and elements of pastoralism.
This important page sets out the idea of a dramatic works for the first time (including also poetry). Important factors include the dedicatory sections. For instance, *Everyman out of his Humour* is dedicated to the Inns of Court (a useful image for the ShaLT website), whilst ‘The Fox’ (*Volpone*) is dedicated to the two universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and *Cataline* is dedicated to the Earl of Pembroke. A visitor to the Museum might find it interesting to note that the Folio does not separate plays generically as comedies, histories, and tragedies (as the 1623 Shakespeare Folio famously does). Rather, the reader is offered a choice between the drama of the theatres, poetry, entertainments, masques and barriers.
This contains an interesting dedicatory poem to the completion of the Works and to Jonson himself, and so underscores the uniqueness of the venture at this time in theatrical history.
This would be perfect for display in terms of Shakespearean contexts (or photography for the Museum’s website) as the closing page for the play entitled Everyman in his Humour from 1598 features a notable statement about the performances as being those of Shakespeare’s company: “By the then Chamberlain his servants”.

Furthermore, the page then lists the ‘principal comedians’, and this includes William Shakespeare, together with Burbage, Condell, Slye, and Kempe. Note also the reference to the Master of the Revels who had licensed the play for performance in the earlier 1590s.
Dedication to the Inns of Court

TO THE NOBLEST
NOVRCERIES OF HVMMA-
NITII, AND LIBERTY, IN THE
KINGDOMS:

The Inns of Court.

Understand, you Gentlemen, that
your friend: and a worthy suc-
cession of you, to all time, as be-
ing borne the Judges of those
Nhicles. When I wrote the
Tromere, I had friendship with
lurers in your faciit; who, as
they were great Nectors in learning, if they were no
help Examples of Bining. Of them, and then (that I
for no more) it was not defended. (Nor, that the-
Printers, by a doubled charge, think it worthy a lon-
ger life, then commonly the gree of such things: but
promote, if you be careful to set it a former to their plea-
sure, who are the inheritors of the first future barneis.
Yet, I commend, if the but in the way of your more-
ness, and your full studies to the public. For if I shall
suffer for it. But, when the gano, and capt is off, and
the Lord of liberty takes then, to take it in your
hands, perhaps may make some Becher insulted with
humanity, read, and not repent him.

By your knowcr,
G. R. Benl. Llnden.
The

This will be of use as a ShaLT image.
Dedication to the Elizabethan court (on p. 179)

1599 dedication “To the Special Fountain of Manners: The Court”. This could be of interest in terms of links between public theatre and the elite world of the court.

Interestingly, note how Jonson signs off “Thy servant, but not slave”.
This page features the phrase “By the King’s Majesties Servants”. It also lists actors, including Shakespeare, Burbage, Heminge and Condell.
Dedication to the Universities (on page 441)

TO
THE MOST
NOBLE AND
MOST EQUALL
SISTERS
THE TWO FAMOVES
UNIVERSITIES
FOR THEIR LOVE
And
ACCEPTANCE
SHOWN TO HIS POEMS IN THE
Presentation
Ben. Jonson
THE GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGER
Dedicates
BOTH IT AND HIMSELF.

This will be of use as a ShaLT image.
Entertainments (on p. 841 onwards)

This introduces us to the idea of drama at court or in a civic context excluding the theatres. As the Dyce collection includes various rare and important quartos of such entertainments this issue will be returned to in a future report, but for now it is worth stressing that the Folio contains various courtly and civic entertainments including the *Part of the King’s Entrance in Passing to his Coronation* (James I) as well as various courtly masques from p. 891 onwards.

NB: The better edition is the one in the Clements Collection (CLE L11). The Forster edition is not in such a good state and is catalogued as 2 volumes – vol 1 is simply the 1616 Folio, vol 2 is actually the 1640 Second Folio (Forster S Fol 4689).
THE WORKES OF
THE MOST HIGH
AND MIGHTIE
PRINCE,
IAMES

BY THE GRACE OF
GOD, KING OF GREAT
BRITAIN, FRANCE AND
IRELAND, DEFENDER
of the Faith, &c.

PUBLISHED BY IAMES, BISHOP
of WEXFORD, and Dean of His MAJESTIES
CHAPEL ROYAL.

LONDON
PRINTED BY ROBERT BARKER AND
ROBERT BILL, PRINTERS TO THE KINGS
MOLL EXCELLENT MAJESTY.
ANO 1616.

Errata.