

Review Essay

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Situating Ben Jonson: The Cambridge Edition of the Works

In July 2013, Ben Jonson set off on a walk from London to Scotland. Several media and heritage outlets trailed this journey extensively in advance, including the Twitter account ‘Ben Jonson Walking’ (@BenJonsonsWalk):

#BenJonson is on a short break before he sets off on his epic walk next Monday, with a last minute dash to the Bodleian for some extra info. (1 July 2013, 5:08am)¹

Over the following days, the account and an accompanying blog continued to post excerpts from the recently discovered manuscript written by Jonson’s companion on his walk of 1618.² Edited to meet Twitter’s 140-character limit, and including links and hashtags for navigation, @BenJonsonsWalk offered a fascinating, bite-size overview of the journey:

‘Three Minstrels thrust themselves on us asking if we would hear a merry song, the life & death of my Lord of Essex’ #Hoddesdon #BenJonson (10 July 2013, 12:02am)

‘This forenoon it thundered & rained which stopped us setting forwards till the evening’ #BenJonson #englishweather <http://bit.ly/BJWblog> (10 July 2013, 4:03am)

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Occurring in real time, this electronically disseminated report of the walk, belated by 400 years, situated Jonson in a temporal and geographic space that turned an anecdote into a labour-intensive and richly detailed experience. The project moved beyond simple dissemination, however, as the Twitter account began to interact with its twenty-first century audience. @BenJonsonsWalk ‘followed’ other Twitter users, engaging in discussion and debate, seamlessly conflating the 1618 walk and the 2013 public sphere. Meanwhile, ‘William Shakespeare’ (@Shakespeare) commented somewhat wryly:

Ben Jonson is walking to Scotland. Londoners can relax. @BenJonsonsWalk
<http://www.blogs.hss.ed.ac.uk/ben-jonsons-walk/> ... (9 July 2013, 9:11am)

The jocular tension between the avatars of Jonson and the more established Shakespeare serves as a pleasant synecdoche of a critical tradition that binds the two authors together while insisting on their fundamental differences. For some this choice reads the two authors as ‘exemplifying nature and art, usually to Jonson’s disadvantage’, as Warren Chernaik’s recent essay argues.³ For others, Jonson’s own description of Shakespeare as being ‘not of an age, but for all time’ best distinguishes them, with Jonson himself coming to stand for the age while Shakespeare transcends his period.⁴ In both cases, the historical forces that have led to Shakespeare’s cultural dominance over Jonson present a Jonson prejudged according to Shakespearean terms.⁵

The Twitter project may only be one facet of a much more comprehensive scholarly edition, but the relative anomaly of a Jonsonian project making confident steps in a medium awash with Shakespearean organizations, parodies, fan communities, and experiments is telling. Since the standard was established by the multi-volume, original-spelling Herford, Simpson, and Simpson Oxford edition of 1925–52, Jonson has continued to occupy a formidable, prestigious place in university libraries at the expense of greater cultural recognition (with the exception of a few key plays revived in theatres and reprinted in affordable single editions).⁶ For Ben Jonson’s twenty-first century editor(s), the challenges are thus: How best to represent an author defined by his own moment rather than his transcendence? How best to balance the implicit desire to render Jonson accessible to students and newcomers while also consolidating a voluminous canon spanning several genres? How best to mediate between the author’s supposed anti-theatricality and the partially preserved but inherently performative traces of his masques and plays? And how best to capture the multiple performative, manuscript,

and textual manifestations of his works, which exemplify at once both an unprecedented level of authorial control over presentation and the proliferation of multiple, contradictory versions of the same texts?

Overview

The Twitter account created to promote and disseminate details of the 1618 walk was a rare attempt in 2013 to reach a broader, non-specialist audience through an open access medium. The version of Jonson constructed in the walk — the ‘gossip’, the joker, the literary celebrity, the socially active figure — is very different from that constructed by *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson (CWB)*, the occasion for this review essay.⁷ Retailing at \$1050 in the US and £650 in the UK, spanning seven hardback volumes and 5224 pages, and drawing on the labours of sixty-seven contributors (two posthumous by the time of publication), this prestige product mirrors the canonizing practices of Jonson himself in 1616, maintaining Jonson as an elite bibliographic phenomenon. The sheer volume of posthumous credits in the acknowledgements indicates the care and duration of the editorial process, testifying to the length of gestation as well as to the accumulated centuries of expertise that inform the work undertaken.

That this edition has only been made possible by digital technology is apparent not only in the simultaneous publication of seven print volumes, as acknowledged by the editors, but also in the prominence given in the print edition to the concurrent online edition of the *Works*. While this essay is concerned with the print edition only, the frequency of reference to the electronic edition means that the two cannot be viewed in complete isolation.⁸ The online edition includes open access materials that expand on the edition’s work (most usefully for the textual specialist, lengthy textual essays providing the detail of collations, decisions, and the material books) and more general materials including a chronology of Jonson’s life. Most impressive is the freely available performance archive, which includes essays of some substance on the plays’ performance histories: Lucy Munro’s forty-five-page essay alone, surveying four centuries of performance of *The Alchemist*, will be an invaluable resource for future scholars of the play’s reception.

The remainder of the online edition, protected behind a paywall, includes the fully searchable text of the works themselves, with facsimiles and old-spelling versions sitting alongside the modern English text of the print edition; transcriptions of almost 600 early documents relating to Jonson’s life

and to his masques; a full bibliography; and ‘a complete critical edition of the music associated with Jonson [containing] nearly fifty songs from the plays, poems, and masques, and two dozen dance tunes that can with reasonable confidence be linked to the masques.’⁹ The electronic edition of the *Works* will also include essays on dubia, including the additions to the 1601 quarto of *The Spanish Tragedy* that recent scholars have with increasing confidence linked to Shakespeare.¹⁰ In short, the electronic edition acts as an extended appendix to the print edition, collating the wider archive of associated materials that will be ‘necessary for full study of Jonson’s life, performance history, and afterlife.’¹¹ Significantly, though, the editors have allocated (subordinated?) this attention to the critical and performative afterlives of Jonson to the electronic edition rather than giving it a dedicated presence in the print version. As I will go on to suggest, the dual nature of the edition licenses the print volumes to work in a more dedicated manner towards a relatively conservative vision of Jonson, presenting a Jonson located firmly within his own lifetime and historical context rather than reworked and retheorized by subsequent generations.

This work begins in the process of arrangement, as *CWBJ* is the first edition of Jonson to group works chronologically rather than by genre or medium. As the general editors argue,

The traditional generic divisions have reinforced a conception of Jonson as a literary artist whose work stands outside the flux of event and away from the competition with other writers which in fact constituted his daily milieu. The Cambridge Edition’s chronological arrangement aims to allow Jonson’s relationship to his historical context to be more readily explored.¹²

Fascinatingly, the implication is to deprioritize Jonson’s own sense of his career trajectory and instead subject Jonson to the movements of history. At its most powerful, this chronology yields a sense of artistic and personal development that insists on the inseparability of Jonson’s multiple outputs. Following *Poetaster* in volume 2, the reader encounters a note on the lost *Richard Crookback* and then Ian Donaldson’s introduction to Jonson’s letter to Robert Cotton. The letter requests a book that will clarify details of Italian geography that would allow Jonson, as Donaldson argues, ‘to pinpoint more exactly Tiberius’s possible movements after his departure from Rome at the end of Act Three’ of *Sejanus*.¹³ A few pages later the edition reproduces Jonson’s translation of a speech from Lucan alongside the Latin original,

with the argument for Jonson's authorship made by Herford, Simpson, and Simpson expanded here by its appearance immediately before *Sejanus*, in which play several lines from the poem reappear in a revised form.¹⁴ This careful positioning of the manuscript ephemera thus links *Poetaster* and *Sejanus*, creating a narrative that repays the close reader and illustrates the discursive literary environment within which Jonson worked.

Such a narrative, of course, raises the potential for a false teleology to be applied to Jonson's career — particularly because the chronological arrangement of the volume is inconsistent. Masques are situated when originally performed (not published) and letters when written, alongside ungathered poems. Poems collected by Jonson, however, appear chronologically according to the date of first printing, meaning that several early poems in *The Forest* (1616) appear almost fifteen years out of their compositional sequence. The plays are for the most part sequenced according to their first known performances, though in the case of those texts existing in wildly different forms, such as the revised folio versions of *Every Man in His Humour* and *Cynthia's Revels*, the plays are sequenced according to their print revision. None of these difficulties is fatal, especially as the apparatus to each text makes clear the full thinking behind each piece's date, but an attempt to fix Jonson's entire canon chronologically cannot help but be compromised when weighed against the far less neat culture of revision, transmission, remediation, and dissemination that characterizes many of the works here. A case in point is Donaldson's note on *The May-Lord*, allocated by its sequencing to 1618, when it was mentioned by William Drummond.¹⁵ While Donaldson argues persuasively that it may have been a seasonal entertainment first given in May 1611 at Penshurst, he is swayed by his own suggestion that it may have reflected instead on the decline in the Howard family's fortunes and thus been in composition during the visit to Hawthornden. While the print edition necessitates a decision, one is reminded of the untold stories that ghost this particular version of Jonson's career and opinions.

New to this iteration of Jonson are three texts that make this edition 'more "complete" than its predecessor'.¹⁶ Colin Burrow's notes on *Ad Carissimam Memoriam Thomae Nashi Amici Dilectissimi Benjamin Jonsonus hoc Elegidium Consecravit* [*Elegy on Thomas Nashe*] link this short and intermittently powerful outpouring to a network of patrons, collaborators, and dedicatees that includes Nashe, Elizabeth Carey, Thomas Berkeley, and Humphrey King. The 1609 *Entertainment at Britain's Bourse* illustrates, in James Knowles's introduction, Robert Cecil's 'interests in the Virginia and East Indies

trades' and cannily 'adapts the conventions of the country house entertainment' to the new commercial setting.¹⁷ While the story of its discovery in 1996 by Knowles is not included, the introduction makes clear that discussions of *Epicene* have already begun to take account of this entertainment's close associations with that play. Knowles also adds to the canon three extant songs from a 1607 entertainment for the Merchant Taylors Company. More interesting than the songs themselves (which nonetheless stand as excellent, light examples of the kinds of song sung to welcome, accompany, and bid farewell to dinner guests) is Knowles's account of the extraordinary preparations made for the banquet, christened even by the Company as exacting 'unreasonable sums'.¹⁸

These three additions in themselves exemplify how the edition fixes Jonson firmly in his own time. The emphasis throughout is on the meanings texts generate at their original moments of realization, particularly for the masques, letters, and occasional poems. Integrating these with the more famous plays creates an insistently historicist emphasis that, while not denying the works as artistic or appropriable texts, prioritizes the experience of the educated and attuned early modern reader/auditor. As the general editors argue, '[a]uthorial intentions cannot be separated from the social, political, and cultural circumstances in which the text was prepared', and the edition seeks to locate meaning through a thorough exploration of these circumstances.¹⁹ To read through the edition start to finish is to receive a rich, detailed education in early modern English, Scottish, and European politics, mercantile history, literary culture and biography, courtly culture, and religious struggle, linked by, yet also overshadowing, Jonson himself. Perhaps paradoxically, the emphasis on a Jonson intrinsically linked to his contexts runs concurrently with a presentation of Jonson as a largely lone worker. The edition, in redating *A Tale of a Tub* to the end of Jonson's career, 'assumes' the play to be entirely Jonson's own, leaving only *Eastward Ho!* as an explicit collaboration, and thus aligns itself with Jonson's own elision of collaborators in *Sejanus*.²⁰ While several other works in the edition illustrate Jonson in what other collections would identify as collaboration, here the editors depict Jonson responding as an individual.²¹ *The King's Entertainment* of 1604 stands as the key instance: while the editors of the *Oxford Middleton* printed the entire entertainment as a collaborative/competitive endeavour between Dekker, Harrison, Jonson, and Middleton, Martin Butler's edition for Cambridge includes only Jonson's part as expanded in the 1604 quarto.²² While the rationale for editing Jonson's section in isolation is sound, given

the abbreviation of his contribution in the separate publication of the *Whole Magnificent Entertainment*, the editors' choice to accept Jonson's detachment of his own part is limiting.

Breaking with the edition's own integration of Jonson's works, I propose to now address different facets of the edition's work in turn: the letters, the poetry, the masques and entertainments, and finally the plays.

Life and Letters

Ian Donaldson's 'Life of Ben Jonson' offers a straightforward cradle-to-grave summary of the more detailed work encapsulated in his 2011 biography, reviewed by Erin Julian elsewhere in this issue.²³ Donaldson organizes this 'Life' into key movements ('early life', 'middle years', 'final years') and, true to the edition's purposes, places a heavy emphasis on politics and allegiances, serving to introduce the key contexts as well as the author; thus, the period 1610–11 introduces the reception of *Epicene* and *The Alchemist* but also the claims of Stephen Janiculo to the throne of Moldavia, the assassination of Henry IV, and the movements of Jonson's Catholic associates Sir Kenelm and Lady Venetia Digby.²⁴ A reduced emphasis on Jonson's own religious allegiances constitutes the main change from the full biography, but the brief descriptions of key works enhance the utility for a general reader. The careful citation of sources allows this brief essay to act as a précis of the documents transcribed in the electronic edition's archive.

The inclusion of life documents in the *CWBJ* allows us to see in practice how 'the ideals central to Jonson's aesthetic work themselves out in the complicated circumstances of the poet's life', as Julian puts it.²⁵ With one exception (Letter 11, to George Garrard in 1609, which includes a poem and is thus edited by Colin Burrow), Donaldson edits all nineteen letters by Jonson, as well as six written by others, allowing the reader to evaluate Jonson's literary persona in his personal correspondence. The main cluster of letters consists of those written from prison in 1605 following the troubles occasioned by *Eastward Ho!*, and Donaldson suggests they give the lie to Jonson's claim to Drummond that the imprisonment was voluntary.²⁶ Carefully edited and standardized, the letters in their chronological positions allow fascinating comparisons of Jonson's high pleading style to various patrons (taking him in most cases from the addressee's 'most honourable' to his own 'most humble'). The ordering here moves towards terser letters, with the final ones to Philip and William Herbert showing a greater sense of apology for any perceived

delay in writing to them for succour. Next follow three letters by Chapman (in italics to distinguish them from Jonson's), two of which are addressed to Thomas Howard. In these, the tone is yet more apologetic than Jonson's own, as Chapman expressly points out the authors' failing in presenting 'our unhappy book' without Howard's knowledge.²⁷

The next major grouping of biographical documents relates to the 1618 walk, a section which will be enhanced greatly, in due course, by the electronic edition's account of the walk. Here, as with *Sejanus*, the varied documents create a colourful picture. Colin Burrow edits a manuscript exchange worth reprinting here:

To Master Ben Jonson in his Journey By Master Craven

When wit and learning are so hardly set
That from their needful means they must be barred,
Unless by going hard they maintenance get,
Well may Ben Jonson say the world goes hard.

This Was Master Ben Jonson's Answer of the Sudden

Ill may Ben Jonson slander so his feet:
For when the profit with the pain doth meet,
Although the gate were hard, the gain is sweet.²⁸

Burrow notes that Sir William Craven died in August 1618, probably dating this exchange to Jonson's departure in June. Acting as a semi-comic preface to the *Informations* with Drummond, the edition then shifts to Nottinghamshire and the poem on the funeral monument of Sir Charles Cavendish in Welbeck Abbey, implying the author still at work as he moves north. The footnotes give a frustrating instance of the dual edition's occasional opacity, as Burrow defers to the electronic edition for discussion of the poem's origins in the walk.²⁹ The next forty pages lay out the *Informations to William Drummond of Hawthornden*, with Donaldson preserving the original layout of marginalia and miscellaneous notes. Unlike other works in the edition by other authors, the *Informations* are printed in Roman, presumably on account of the length — although Donaldson notes that the opinions expressed are entirely Jonson's, the voice is clearly Drummond's throughout, particularly in his final summation of Jonson's character. The extensive commentary picks up on sources for key biographical details of Jonson and expands on the personages named while at the same time admitting the problem of closing down meaning in attempting to explicate what are often obscure and ambiguous references. An epilogue to the *Informations*

then preserves four letters between the men (three from Drummond, one from Jonson) displaying the continuing warmth between Drummond and 'Your most true friend and lover' as Jonson reports his joyful reception in London by King James.³⁰

Towards the end of the edition William Cavendish becomes the most important figure in the documents, with the final five letters all being addressed to him. Donaldson implies that Lovel in *The New Inn* 'appears to reflect aspects of his [Cavendish's] character', and the situation of the letters among the works of this period does nothing to discourage this kind of biographical reading.³¹ The letters betray an amusing and light manner as Jonson complains of his printer (Letter 15), but the pairing of letters 16 and 17 best showcases the range of Jonson's epistolary style.³² Letter 16 is a terse four lines, admitting an inability to borrow money and instead pleading for charity. Letter 17, by contrast, offers a dream fable presenting a fox and moles as the vermin undermining his house, interpreted by Jonson as the wants that require the support of 'some good man of a noble nature'.³³ The letter concludes with a postscript that notes tersely the withdrawal of 'the barbarous Court of Aldermen' of Jonson's pension as chronologer to the City of London. The art of Jonson's main letter gives way to an acknowledgement of pragmatic necessity.³⁴

While this documentation will sit more prominently as part of the electronic edition, the letters and biographical details selected for the print edition go a considerable way toward locating the works within a historically situated life. This inclusion offers significant implications. Jonson's work is, as the letters demonstrate, profoundly biographical (if not autobiographical), the allusions to personages and events rendered explicit by comments in Jonson's correspondence, and this edition is significant in making those connections clear. Yet the alignment of mediums here (particularly in an instance such as Letter 17, whose genre is already fluid) blurs the boundaries between literary fictions and personal presentations to an extent that arguably limits Jonson himself to a singular authorial identity and overstates the significance of Jonson's connections to the shaping of his more creative works. This danger the edition largely avoids, but the reader should be careful of reading too much into the apparent causality of the chronological arrangement.

Poems and Books

The edition gives relatively short shrift to poetry, with no introductory essay dedicated to verse. David L. Gants and Tom Lockwood offer an essay on the print history of Jonson's works up to the twenty-first century, but the overwhelming emphasis falls inevitably on plays — a similar essay on manuscripts would have been welcome. The work here is thorough, technical, and informative concerning Jonson's fate at the hands of the book trade following his death. Despite the note that '[b]y the time he entered into an agreement to print the first volume of his collected works, Jonson had created a sophisticated set of paratextual practices', however, Gants and Lockwood make disappointingly little reference to recent critical movements to read the layout and construction of these texts.³⁵ Ian Donaldson's excellent 'Note on the title-page of the first folio' compensates for this omission by offering a close reading of the folio's design, meanings, and allusions.³⁶ More of this kind of attention to the material form of the books edited would be welcome throughout, though the electronic edition potentially offers more scope through the reproduction of facsimiles.

Colin Burrow takes primary responsibility for poetry. Revealing most obviously the scale of his endeavours, an intimidating band of textual notes for *The Underwood* attempts to capture the multiple revisions and versions undergone by the poems this publication contains. Poem 43, 'An Execration upon Vulcan' offers a case in point: on one page, fourteen lines of poetry are supplemented by eighteen lines of notes in two columns and a further twenty lines of variants.³⁷ The specialist will find this exhaustive detail invaluable, though it might have been better presented in the electronic edition than in the print version. While Jonson himself described the inclusions as 'lesser poems of later growth', Burrow notes the difficulty of establishing the extent of Jonson's organizational agency in a collection that also includes poems by Donne, Godolphin, and Wotton, possibly transcribed by Jonson and collected accidentally among his own poems.³⁸ Burrow's diplomatic edition makes good sense of the organization, noting that divine poems are followed by love lyrics, while meditative and panegyric poems are arranged in something close to chronological order. Burrow reads an arc of disappointment that paints a picture of an aging and isolated Jonson who 'vigorously insists on his moral independence from, and intellectual superiority to, the world around him, but whose poems do not always have the power to influence his surroundings, or even to survive the ravages of time and fire'.³⁹ But Burrow

also notes an air of triumph in the poems to Venetia Digby which continue to link Jonson to the highest echelons.

We should not ignore the obvious parallel between the imaginative poetic arc of *The Underwood's* 'speaker', constructed from a miscellany of poems spanning decades, and the construction of an arc for Jonson by this edition through a chronological ordering of works written in a range of voices over several decades. Burrow's sensitive and unfixed reading of the collection acknowledges the fact that personality emerges from the poems but is reluctant to judge with certainty the nature of that personality. In other cases his reading is clearer. The grouping of poems in 1631 related to the dispute with Inigo Jones ('An Expostulation', 'To Inigo', 'To A Friend') expresses a clear set of arguments and opinions, and Burrow confidently suggests that the satires on Jones may have contributed to Jonson's fall from grace, and that the bitter tone implies Jonson's recognition that Jones had 'won' the quarrel, as in this:

Oh shows! Shows! Mighty shows!
The eloquence of masques! What need of prose
Or verse, or sense t'express immortal you?
You are the spectacles of state!⁴⁰

Since the predominant strand of poetry is the dedication, satirical verses such as this stand out for their refusal to bow to conventions of humble address and for their closer proximity to the more biting remarks reported by Drummond. The humble tone of the dedications and epitaphs understandably aligns more closely with that of the epistles to his patrons, as is most clear in Burrow's editing of Letter 11 to George Garrard, including an epitaph on Cecilia Bulstrode. Here Burrow shows Jonson writing quickly and to order, with the cover letter asking Garrard to 'write me your liking of it'.⁴¹ The efficiency with which Jonson's authorial persona slips between the allusive epitaph and the sober letter is perhaps a reminder in miniature of the edition's overall strategy of subsuming author to context: Jonson increasingly seems defined by his mutability as circumstances dictate.

Burrow's work on the lyric poetry is typically rigorous. 'To Celia' exemplifies his careful tracing of sources (the love letters of Philostratus of Athens, in the Latin version attributed to Antonio Bonfini), showing how the early version's use of 'Celia' in the first line is altered to 'only' in the revised version of *The Forest* to align more closely with the Greek.⁴² The care given to even short poems is perhaps one of the edition's most rewarding aspects: the

sonnet printed in Nicholas Breton's *Melancholic Humours* (1600) leaps out as a very rare example of Jonson's use of the form, and a cross-reference to Epigram 56 reveals that Jonson's corpus contains only six examples, which Burrow catalogues.⁴³ The diligence here opens up pathways for the reader, but one aspect that the edition cannot adequately represent is the presence of the poems in their material context — the nature of Breton's work, for example, is not addressed, and the selections from Robert Chester's *Love's Martyr* (the book that also, of course, yielded Shakespeare's 'Let the bird of loudest lay') offer no opportunity for connection to the other elements of that collection.⁴⁴ This complaint can, of course, offer no reasonable redress; how can all associated works possibly be reprinted by a single edition? *CWBJ* is in this respect perhaps a victim of its own comprehensiveness: in drawing attention to the importance of the material, intertextual, and allusive connections of Jonson's work, it makes the missing pieces even more apparent.

Masques and Entertainments

While useful supporting materials may be missing, in the case of letters and poems the works themselves at least remain complete. The edition's groundbreaking contribution to the study of Jonson's masques, however, accepts from the outset that any treatment of these works can only ever be partial. Martin Butler's exhaustive twenty-page list of every known individual to dance in Jonson's masques or tilt in the barriers following *Hymenai* and *A Challenge at Tilt* (with brief biographies of every individual) demonstrates by itself the situation of Jonson's entertainments within a complex culture of political, social, and personal events.⁴⁵ Butler's general introduction to the masque form points out the extraordinary cost and lavishness of the events, and prioritizes the forces and personalities that commissioned them, driving up expense as part of a display of wealth and power.⁴⁶ For Butler, the significance of the masques to an understanding of Jonson's entire output cannot be underestimated, given that he was responsible for almost every Christmas masque during James's reign. Butler's introduction concentrates on the importance of scenery, dance, light, and above all music, for which the electronic edition, with its inclusion of songs, will provide a significant new resource. This section of the edition most strongly reinforces the performative and occasional aspect of Jonson's creative output, with the edited versions of the masques providing only one element of these lavish entertainments. Butler's own contributions include a note on the probable attendance

of Pocahontas at *The Vision of Delight* in 1617 and the rather whimsical comment that *Christmas His Masque* features the earliest representation of a 'paternal figure embodying the season's spirit of feasting, good-fellowship, and community' and thus 'it is pleasant to suppose that Jonson may have invented Father Christmas'.⁴⁷ *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue* (1618) exemplifies one of the edition's few concessions to original spelling in order to represent the performed Welsh dialect prose of the antimasque *For the Honour of Wales*, as in the line 'A liddle hard s'ift has pit 'em aull into Wales; but our desires and petitions is that the musics be aull Welse, and the dances, and no 'Ercules brought in now with a gread staff and a pudding upon him'.⁴⁸ This reasonable exception is particularly effective in distinguishing the character of the companion piece from that of the main masque.

Butler, David Lindley, and James Knowles divide the editorial work here, although the three editors have clearly worked closely together in, for example, tracing the increasing use of French conventions from *The Vision of Delight* to *Chloridia*. Knowles takes primary responsibility for entertainments, demonstrating in early occasions (at Althorp in 1603 and Highgate in 1604) how Jonson reshapes the conventions of Elizabethan pastoral to both assert continuity with the previous reign and develop the genre. Julian's essay in this issue demonstrates the recent emphasis on the masques as key to Jonson's politics as well as poetics, and even in the earlier entertainments Knowles discerns a concern for harmony and tolerance, in the latter case arguing that the liminal geographical position of Highgate itself between court, city, and country facilitated 'the insinuation of potentially controversial views' in calling for gentle treatment.⁴⁹ The introduction to *An Entertainment at Theobalds* is especially enlightening in mediating between two different versions of the masque that, Knowles argues, complicate the question of agency (patronal or authorial) and allegiance (James or Anne). Knowles's main work covers the multiple versions of *The Gypsies Metamorphosed* (1621) which, in two separate versions, consolidated the position of George Villiers, marquis of Buckingham in significantly different ways, as the revised version performed at Windsor portrayed a Buckingham more flawed and redeemed by conditional royal favour. Revealingly, Knowles notes the 'unfortunate side-effects in reducing the possibility of [the] poet's agency' in mediating between these versions — a slightly odd reading given the emphasis elsewhere on the subordination of authorial agency to the demands of patrons and sponsors.⁵⁰

The editorial presentation of the masques is straightforward, with speeches, stage directions, and descriptions laid out according to the standard

conventions of the plays. The editors make an effort, however, to present as much visual evidence as possible: *Chloridia*, for instance, includes twelve pages of Jones's costume illustrations which visualize the alignment with Henrietta Maria's artistic and political agendas.⁵¹ David Lindley's *Oberon, the Fairy Prince* reproduces several of Jones's set designs that indicate the artistic ambition of this particular entertainment and the setting against which the satyrs initially appear.⁵² Lindley's sensitive editing of the masques balances the emblematic and political meanings while also looking forward and back. Thus, Lindley's introduction casts a shadow over *Hymenai* through its discussion of the bride Frances Howard's later arrest for the murder of Thomas Overbury.⁵³ *Hymenai* draws on the ritual combat of the joust to create a victory of marriage over celibacy, aligning the praise of union with James's politics. Frustratingly, however, the marginalia (here as elsewhere) are printed as endnotes rather than as marginal comments, depriving the text of a significant part of its original visual make-up that could easily have been replicated here. Given that Lindley's introduction to *The Masque of Queens* concentrates in large part on the marginalia that position Jonson's treatment of witches (and are revealing in his prioritization of classical over contemporary sources), a mode of presentation that gave these greater priority would have been productive.⁵⁴ The conflict between the performed and printed texts reveals itself strongly in these moments, and the strategy contrasts directly with that used for *Sejanus*, where the classical marginalia are printed as footnotes above the commentary and collation. Here, as with the printed masques, it would have been rewarding to see a greater sense of the bibliographical interplay between text and paratext. Given that the choice of the 1605 quarto as base text is due to that edition's distinctive typography, the compromised representation is disappointing.

The Plays

Nonetheless, this compromise is endemic to any attempt to capture a text that is both performative and readerly, and the editorial strategies here at least make available the supplementary materials that address both sets of priorities. Inevitably, despite the attention to the wider range of works, the plays dominate the new edition, with each edited separately by a different editor or set of editors. The editors make great effort to relate the work of these individual projects to the other genres (notably in *Sejanus*, whose introduction refers to the preceding odes, letters, and Donaldson's note on the lost

play *Richard Crookback*). At the same time, however, the edition also carefully demonstrates each play's broader implications. A key essay here is that of Helen Ostovich on *The Magnetic Lady*, who sees the play as Jonson's own summation of his life work, looking back to *Every Man out of His Humour*.⁵⁵ Ostovich makes the play exemplary of Jonson in the comparisons to the rest of his work, teased out in the commentary also, as well as demonstrating the play's tribute to Charles Cavendish, the borrowings from Roman comedy, commedia dell'arte and folk tales, and the constant return to questions of intellectual and economic property. Ostovich's work here goes beyond its implications for this play, tying together the concerns raised by the several other editors of the plays.

The choice of copy-texts aims for the form in which plays were first staged or published, while acknowledging revisions. Thus the key departure from previous collected editions is the destabilization of the 1616 folio as the default copy-text. Preferred are the quarto versions of *Sejanus*, *Volpone*, and *Every Man out of His Humour* (the last following the lead of Ostovich's Revels edition), and the separate editing of the quarto and folio versions of *Every Man in His Humour* and the revised acts of *Cynthia's Revels*. Eric Rasmussen and Matthew Steggle's work on the last of these significantly favours the quarto, treating the additions to the folio as obscuring the quarto's sense and logic. It is unusual, but refreshing, to see an entire critical introduction devoted to arguing that the folio text is 'long, unwieldy, and not entirely satisfying'⁵⁶ The folio versions of *The Alchemist*, *Catiline*, and *Poetaster* receive preference as Jonson's corrected copy.

David Bevington's introductory essay on actors, companies, and playhouses argues for Jonson's continued loyalty to the Chamberlain's/King's Men and the various formations of the Children of the Blackfriars, though it also notes a dissociation from the theatre towards the end of his career.⁵⁷ Bevington's main concern is the structure of male/female/boy roles and Jonson's talent for casting roles, and he pursues this focus in his own editions of *Epicene* and the two different versions of *Every Man in*, establishing the latter's development of humours comedy (a topic on which Robert Miola's introduction to *The Case Is Altered* also centres). Bevington is one of the few editors to consider later stage history in his introduction and commentary, along with Julie Sanders for *The New Inn* who argues for the significance of later twentieth century revivals and criticism in reimagining the play as nostalgic for a lost Elizabethan past. Read in conjunction with the fragment of *The Sad Shepherd* (which, argues the late Anne Barton, specifically evokes Lyly following the 1632 publication

of *Six Court Comedies*)⁵⁸ and Peter Happé's reassessment of *A Tale of a Tub* (or *A Tale of Tub*, as the running titles confusingly and intermittently state) as a Caroline play, Sanders's edition presents a Jonson looking back to Elizabeth's reign at the end of his career. Happé similarly implies that the author is reflecting on his own loss of grace.⁵⁹ In these texts, moreover, stagecraft remains key to Jonson's practice, whether through the 'talismanic' centrality of costumes to *The New Inn* or the mocking, antimasque function of the puppet show in *A Tale of a Tub*.⁶⁰

Stagecraft is also a key point of discussion in Richard Dutton's groundbreaking work on *Volpone*, consolidating the work Erin Julian discusses in this issue.⁶¹ Dutton follows his previous work on the quarto by editing the full paratext of the play to highlight the political significance of its moment of publication and positioning of Jonson, yet also draws on the stage history throughout his commentary to gloss passages.⁶² Dutton's work, unusually for this edition, realizes a Jonson both of his age and for all time, with a comprehensiveness that models what can be achieved even within the limited space of a collaborative edition. Inevitably editors of those plays with longer theatrical histories consider these play-texts in terms of their stage potential, and Peter Holland and William Sherman's edition of *The Alchemist* is particularly attentive to the social geography of the Blackfriars and its theatrical space.⁶³ The tendency towards theatrical logic means that Jonson's mass entries are replaced throughout all of the plays by entrances and exits at the moment they occur, a sensible decision for the sake of readers, though depriving the texts of another aspect of their bibliographic novelty.

Randall Martin's work on *Every Man out* is attuned to the performative complexities of this text, both teasing out the implications of the Dog (argued here to be the longest role for any live animal on the English stage) and printing the several alternate endings for the play as Jonson's attempts to mediate his representation of the queen.⁶⁴ Attentiveness to contingencies of performance also dominates John Creaser's work on *Bartholomew Fair*, showing the ways in which Jonson's complex structure takes advantage of a newly available expanded company. Creaser explicitly separates a subsequent stage history from his work on the play's resonances in 1614, arguing that the specificity of allusion points to a moment of political crisis.⁶⁵ As with *The Devil Is an Ass*, the plays draw on folk, carnival, and comic conventions to satirize commerce and entrepreneurship, and Anthony Parr argues that the latter play may even be seen as an antimasque on an enormous scale, calling on the king to banish the ills it presents.⁶⁶ In discussing the influence of the

older morality plays on the opening scene, Parr joins other editors to show a Jonson looking backward as well as forward, reworking obsolete or dated theatrical traditions in shaping his new art.

Where plays are more commonly read than performed, editors prioritize historical and literary concerns. Gabriele Bernhard Jackson tackles the topical satire of *Poetaster* with great clarity, detailing the ‘War of the Theatres’ and including an appendix pinning down the identities of the actors. Jackson is keen, however, to resist the tendency for over-ambitious extrapolation, arguing that an ‘indirect search for Jonson’s probable views by way of his milieu is a thankless task’. This statement articulates a caution about biography that pervades the edition even as it prioritizes Jonson’s contexts.⁶⁷ Inga-Stina Ewbank’s posthumously published edition of *Catiline* focuses instead on the play’s classicism, arguing that Jonson aligns himself with Cicero and logging the sources he draws upon. Throughout her commentary, Ewbank apes Jonson’s own practice in recording the historical facts and sources alongside discussion of Jonson’s appropriation of the material, leading to instructive notes such as that for act 3 scene 1, in which Jonson’s use of entrances, exits, and groupings, coupled with his telescoping of time and events, ‘turn[s] the stage into a remarkable exhibit of Roman politics’.⁶⁸ The edition enables the reader to compare these explicitly classical works with Jonson’s translation of Horace’s *Arte Poetica*, sensitively edited by Colin Burrow who points out the translation’s subtle deviations from the Latin.⁶⁹ The full Latin text is printed in parallel, making an excellent resource for students of Jonson’s textbook.

Donaldson’s and Burrow’s notes on lost plays and entertainments respectively give a sense of what is missing from the canon and, in the case of the plays, the extent of Jonson’s collaborative work on plays such as *Page of Plymouth* and *Robert II*.⁷⁰ Treatment of the only substantially collaborative play included here, *Eastward Ho!*, dismisses attempts to ‘disintegrate’ contributors, particularly arguing that 4.1 shows signs of all authors and that the play’s uniform style probably indicates a diffuse collaboration throughout. Suzanne Gossett and W. David Kay instead focus on the play’s controversy and intertextuality, connecting it to wider political narratives revealed by the letters and biographical materials.⁷¹ As elsewhere in the edition, an understanding of collaboration transcends models of co-authorship, prioritizing instead Jonson’s immersion in his age. The closing of *The Cambridge Works* with Lorna Hutson’s edition of the *Discoveries* is fitting, finally displaying the ways in which Jonson manipulates the utterances of others to

perform his own direct emotional involvement, creating consistency out of fragments.⁷²

The creation of consistency among the disparate and diffuse traces of Jonson's career, finally, makes *The Cambridge Works of Ben Jonson* an achievement of monumental proportions. This edition both establishes a definitive Jonsonian canon and text for a new generation and advances historicist scholarship through its thorough embedding of the man and works within the socio-political-cultural environment of the early seventeenth century. As does Jonson himself at the beginning of the *Epigrams*, the edition demands an attentive and careful reader, and offers most to those willing to read its contents chronologically as well as dipping in and out of key works. In constructing its careful reader, the edition consolidates its importance not just to Jonson scholarship, but to any study of the cultural history of Stuart and Caroline England.

Pray thee take care, that tak'st my book in hand,
To read it well: that is, to understand.⁷³

Notes

- 1 The project website is still, at the time of writing, available at <http://www.blogs.hss.ed.ac.uk/ben-jonsons-walk/>.
- 2 The manuscript, discovered in 2009 by James Loxley in the archives of Aldersey Hall in Cheshire, is due in 2014 for publication by Cambridge University Press in an annotated edition and essay collection, as well as a transcript for the electronic version of the Jonson edition.
- 3 Warren Chernaik, 'The Dyer's Hand: Shakespeare and Jonson', Ton Hoenselaars (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Contemporary Dramatists* (Cambridge, 2013), 54.
- 4 *Mr. VVilliam Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* (London, 1623; STC 22273), πA4v.
- 5 On this, see Mark Robson, 'Jonson and Shakespeare', Julie Sanders (ed.), *Ben Jonson in Context* (Cambridge, 2010), 57–64.
- 6 C.H. Herford, Percy Simpson, and Evelyn Simpson (eds), *Ben Jonson, Works*, 11 vols (Oxford, 1925–1952).
- 7 David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson (eds), *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, 7 vols (Cambridge, 2012).

- 8 *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Online*, <http://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/benjonson/>.
- 9 *CWBJ*, 1.lxii.
- 10 For a summary of the scholarship, see Will Sharpe, 'Authorship and Attribution', Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (eds), *William Shakespeare and Others: Collaborative Plays* (Basingstoke, 2013), 671–80.
- 11 'About', *CWBJ*, <http://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/benjonson/about/>.
- 12 *CWBJ*, 1.lxv.
- 13 *Ibid*, 2.185.
- 14 *Ibid*, 2.192.
- 15 *Ibid*, 5.343–5.
- 16 *Ibid*, 1.lx.
- 17 *Ibid*, 3.354.
- 18 *Ibid*, 3.219.
- 19 *Ibid*, 1.lxxiii.
- 20 *Ibid*, 1.xiv.
- 21 See, for example, Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (eds), *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works* (Oxford, 2007).
- 22 *CWBJ*, 2.419–69. Compare the treatment in Taylor and Lavagnino, *Middleton*, 219–79.
- 23 Erin Julian, 'New Directions in Jonson Criticism', *Early Theatre* 17.1 (2014), 180–2 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12745/et.17.1.9>; *CWBJ*, 1.lxxxvii–cxv; Ian Donaldson, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Oxford 2011).
- 24 *CWBJ*, 1.cii–ciii.
- 25 Julian, 'New Directions', 180.
- 26 *CWBJ*, 2.642.
- 27 *Ibid*, 2.652.
- 28 *Ibid*, 5.349.
- 29 *Ibid*, 5.350.
- 30 *Ibid*, 5.394.
- 31 *Ibid*, 6.343.
- 32 *Ibid*, 6.343.
- 33 *Ibid*, 6.385.
- 34 *Ibid*, 6.386.
- 35 *Ibid*, clxix. See, for example, Leah S. Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare* (Berkeley, 1988), 2–25, and Joseph Loewenstein, *Ben Jonson and Possessive Authorship* (Cambridge, 2002).
- 36 *CWBJ*, 4.611–5.

- 37 Ibid, 7.172.
- 38 Ibid, 7.71.
- 39 Ibid, 7.73.
- 40 Ibid, 6.377.
- 41 Ibid, 3.371.
- 42 Ibid, 3.247.
- 43 Ibid, 1.549, 5.139.
- 44 Ibid, 1.554, 5.228–34.
- 45 Ibid, cxliii–clxiii.
- 46 Ibid, cxxxi–cxlii.
- 47 Ibid, 5.253.
- 48 Ibid, 5.335.
- 49 Julian, ‘New Directions’, 185.
- 50 Ibid, 5.475.
- 51 Ibid, 6.350–61.
- 52 Ibid, 3.711–24.
- 53 Ibid, 2.657–65.
- 54 Ibid, 3.283–301.
- 55 Ibid, 6.393–411.
- 56 Ibid, 5.8.
- 57 Ibid, 1.cxvi–cxxx.
- 58 Ibid, 7.422.
- 59 Ibid, 6.543–53.
- 60 Ibid, 6.173.
- 61 Julian, ‘New Directions’, 188.
- 62 Richard Dutton, *Ben Jonson, Volpone, and the Gunpowder Plot* (Cambridge, 2008).
- 63 *CWBJ*, 3.543–53.
- 64 Ibid, 1.235–47, 421–6.
- 65 Ibid, 4.263.
- 66 Ibid, 4.476.
- 67 Ibid, 2.17.
- 68 Ibid, 4.78.
- 69 Ibid, 7.3–67.
- 70 Ibid, 1.231–2.
- 71 Ibid, 2.531–41.
- 72 Ibid, 7.481–95.
- 73 Ibid, 5.113.