‘DARE TO TELL’: SILENCE AND SAYING IN BEN JONSON

1st – 3rd April 2016
School of English, University of St Andrews

A conference at the University of St Andrews in the 400th anniversary year of the publication of Jonson’s 1616 first Folio of Works.

Confirmed keynote speakers:
Professor Martin Butler (University of Leeds)
Professor Julie Sanders (University of Newcastle)

World premiere of Ben and Jamie by Brean Hammond

‘Our looks are called into question, and our words,
How innocent soever, are made crimes;
We shall not shortly dare to tell our dreams,
Or think, but 'twill be treason’ (Sejanus 1603, 1.1.67-70)

What does it mean to be called into question, to speak out or to stay silent, to have innocent thoughts, guilty looks, or culpable dreams? Jonson’s plays, comic and tragic, foreground the processes of imaginative interpretation that condition people’s actions, values and their very being.

On this prominent anniversary of Jonson’s publication of his 1616 first Folio of Works, this conference will explore themes of publication and performance broadly conceived to include the following themes:

• Authority, collective imagination, individual autonomy, and conscience - including as these issues relate to legal authority and questions of freedom of speech and thought, conscience and religion in 2016.
• Self-consciousness, acting, performance, reception, re-imaginings of the canon.
• Interpretation, defamation, equivocation, censorship, satire, criminality and innocence.
• Cultural ideologies, political subversion, social transgressions.

Please send your abstract of 300 words, along with a brief biography that includes your title and institutional affiliation, to jonson.conference@gmail.com no later than 26 February 2016.
The conference will also include:

- Brean Hammond’s new play about Jonson’s connections with Scotland, *Ben and Jamie*, at the Byre Theatre in St Andrews.
- Viewing and Discussion of Jonsonian texts at the University of St Andrews’ Special Collections (featuring Jonson’s first Folio of Works, printed by William Stansby in 1616 and sold by Richard Meighen).
- Performance of a Jonson play and a workshop on Jonson and drama (details to be confirmed).

General questions can be directed to the conference organisers Akihiko Shimizu, Julianne Mentzer, Peter Sutton, Rebecca Hasler and Zoë Sutherland at jonson.conference@gmail.com.