



James Loxley, Anna Groundwater, and Julie Sanders, eds. *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland: An Annotated Edition of the "Foot Voyage"*

James Loxley, Anna Groundwater, and Julie Sanders, eds. *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland: An Annotated Edition of the "Foot Voyage."* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. xvii, 237 p., ill. ISBN 9781107003330. £65.00 / US \$99.00 (hardback).

As many readers will know, Ben Jonson's narrative accounts of his 1618 "foot voyage" from London to Edinburgh, well documented as side notes in the anecdotal writing of Jonson and others, seemingly met their demise in his 1623 study fire, or, unsurprisingly, were lost to history. One particularly appealing glimpse into what stories might have been found in these documents comes from William Drummond, who hosted Jonson on his travels and spoke, in his remarkably stilted way, of some of the poet's encounters. But for centuries the full content of Jonson's travels remained unspoken and unread.

In 2009, however, one such manuscript account—damaged by water, bookworms, and mice—was identified in among the papers of the Aldersey family of Aldersey Hall in Cheshire, which had been deposited by a family member in the Record Office at Chester in 1985. Composed as a prose account, in the past tense, and by a single hand other than Jonson's, the 7,000-word document appears to have been written at a date later than the voyage, by a companion who accompanied Jonson on the journey, and in the form of a re-written, non-holographic draft. Nonetheless, to date it is the closest, and longest, extant account of Jonson's voyage, and possesses merit in that status alone.

This account forms the basis of the annotated edition produced by Loxley, Groundwater, and Sanders. Its introduction is divided into a discussion of the manuscript and its provenance, the Aldersey family, the manuscript's possible connection to families in north Wales, and tentative suggestions about its authorship. In truth, very little is known about the manuscript, and the editors take care to stress that many of their remarks are based on conjecture. But this is to be expected in an edition of a document only recently discovered, and therefore missing the bulky scholarship that arises from those interested in establishing content and textual history. Instead, the editors point to the manuscript's importance in its insights into the character of Jonson, the landscape through which he walked, the people he encountered, and the processes and thought that had to go into undertaking such a walk.

Three essays to the back of the edition provide some useful context. In "The Genres of a Walk," the account of Jonson's foot voyage is compared to other famous walking narratives, such as the pamphlet of John Taylor, who walked to Scotland just days after Jonson. In "Jonson's Footwork," his walk is evaluated through a discussion of typical topography: the



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types of inns, roads, and fields that Jonson would have encountered. The essay also looks at how such geography is known to have impacted his work, directly or otherwise, in texts such as *Underwood* 53. Finally, in "Scenes of Hospitality," the account of Jonson's walk is analysed for its numerous references to the names and titles of the people who in some way interacted with him, whether acting as host, serving as escort, or simply appearing as unexpected encounter.

The text of the account itself is modernised, in part due to the high number of difficult passages that are elliptical, abbreviated, and compressed. However, much of the text's orthographic variance, such as that made in an effort to express pronunciation, has been justifiably left unaltered. Detailed annotations are presented in two columns and discuss the usual: names, places, and objects, as well as obscure, arcane, and archaic words or variants of words, and textual and bibliographic interpretation. All in all, this is a careful edition of a long-lost account that documented a notable time in Jonson's life.

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