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My Gossip's foot voyage

JAMES LOXLEY

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"Ben Jonson is going on foot to Edinburgh and back", George Gerrard reported to Sir Dudley Carleton in a letter of June 1617. Jonson's walk to Scotland was clearly already catching the interested eye, much as it has done ever since. The journey itself was not the adventure it might have been before the Union of the Crowns, but that a celebrated and, frankly, weighty poet should choose to attempt it on foot was certainly remarkable. Gerrard heard about the plan during King James's first visit home in fourteen years, and it has often been thought that Jonson, perhaps in search of Scottish roots, was emulating the royal progress. There were probably also less regal precedents at the back, at least, of his mind: in his poem "On the Famous Voyage" he mentions the expeditions both of an unnamed traveller who "backward went to Berwick" and of the actor Will Kemp, who had danced all the way from London to Norwich in 1600. The writer Gervase Markham was also to walk from London to Berwick - forwards, it is assumed, and pledging not to cross any of the rivers en route via bridge or boat. When Jonson eventually set out for Edinburgh in the summer of 1618 he was followed by John Taylor, the Thames waterman and popular poet, who completed his "penniless pilgrimage" not only on foot but without begging or spending money. Promising merely to walk should perhaps look unambitious by comparison.

The story of Jonson's journey lingers in scholarly remembrance, nonetheless. Most importantly, the expedition produced the encounter between Jonson and William Drummond recalled in the latter's "Informations" (as the famous "Conversations" are more accurately called). The opinion and anecdote set down in the "Informations" illuminate Jonson's poetic principles, his views of his contemporaries, and the account he chose to give of himself. They are particularly beguiling for allowing us to imagine that we are hearing Jonson speak off the record, as it were, and that we can catch his conversational tone even through Drummond's editorial compressions, Scots inflection and sometimes pursed lips. The "Informations" also provide us with glimpses of the journey itself, including Jonson's irritation at being followed - mocked, he thought - by Taylor, and his purchase of a pair of boots at Darlington, which he "minded to take back that far again". Such snippets have been combined with other fragmentary sources to build up a sketchy picture of Jonson's walk and his possible motives for undertaking it. Gerrard told Carleton that Jonson was walking "for his profit", which suggests that - as in the cases of Kemp, Markham and Taylor - bets had been laid, or sponsorship promised. We also know from Edinburgh records that Jonson was made a burghess of the city, and that a dinner was held there in his honour in October 1618.

Taylor met his fellow poet at the house of a John Stewart in Leith, while Jonson's correspondence with Drummond reveals the names of some of his other hosts.

Critical curiosity is also piqued by the fact that we ought to know more than we do. Among his notes on his guest's works, Drummond recorded that Jonson was planning "to write his foot pilgrimage hither, and to call it A Discovery". Unfortunately this narrative does not survive, and may indeed never have been completed. Jonson must at least have had it in draft, however, since in his "Execration Upon Vulcan" he noted the loss of "my journey into Scotland sung, / With all the adventures" in the 1623 house fire that consumed some of his papers. This particular loss has become one of those gaps in the literary record that tantalize all the more for being so clearly labelled.

Unknown to scholars, however, a record of the journey has in fact survived the centuries, preserved from fire and other threats among the papers of the Aldersey family of Aldersey Hall in Cheshire. These papers, now held in Cheshire and Chester Archives, include a manuscript containing a 7,500-word account entitled "My Gossip Joh[n]son / his foot voyage / and myne into / Scotland", detailing Jonson's travels as far as his investiture as an Edinburgh burgess. Almost as surprising as the discovery of this account, though, is the fact that Jonson did not write it; it is instead the work of a previously unsuspected travelling companion. Influenced, perhaps, by the still-restless spectre of ungentle Ben, we have been used to thinking of Jonson journeying unaccompanied: "I'm off to Scotland soon", he informs Shakespeare in Edward Bond's 1973 play *Bingo*; "Walking. Alone. Well, no one would come with me". Solitariness has more reasonably been inferred from the absence of any references to a companion in the known sources. But Taylor made his "penniless pilgrimage" with a servant and a horse to carry luggage and rations, so it shouldn't seem too strange for Jonson to have had company as well.

Professor Julie Sanders and I are now editing this account for inclusion in the new Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson. In examining the issues it raises we find that some of the most pressing questions are also the hardest to answer. Who was this fellow traveller? The account is unsigned, and internal evidence provides few clues. Jonson is called "my gossip" from the title onwards, suggesting that the relationship between the two is unlikely to have been that of master and servant. But "gossip", despite its roots in the kinship established through baptism, was a term of various signification in the early seventeenth century. It could apply to both men and women, as Jonson himself noted in his *English Grammar*. It could also name either party in the relationship between a godparent and a natural parent, or simply denote a godparent. So even when used literally, the appellation "my gossip" might make of Jonson a godparent to his companion's child, a co-sponsor to a third party's child, or the companion's own godfather. In extended usage "gossip" might mean a close friend, and it's worth noting that both the Duke of Buckingham and James VI and I described themselves as the other's "gossip" in their affectionate correspondence.

The combination of this proclaimed and narrated intimacy with the author's invisibility both to Jonson's contemporaries and subsequent literary history makes some

conjectures more plausible than others. He is likely to have been both male and of a social status consonant with that which Jonson had by now achieved, since according to the account the two travellers were made honorary burgesses of Dunfermline during their expedition (the relevant burgh records, it seems, are unfortunately lost). And as we shall see, he was admitted with his “gossip” to the houses, tables and confidences of the higher gentry and nobility. He is, however, unlikely to have been Jonson’s equal, a man of established standing in the world, or his presence and participation would surely have been less likely to go unremarked. We could reasonably infer that age might account for his diminished visibility, and that he was a young man - maybe even the godson that his repeated use of the term “gossip” could imply. He was perhaps playing the role of squire to a pedestrian poet-errant.

Given the collection in which the manu-scriphas been preserved, we might suspect that the companion was a member of, or closely connected to, the Aldersey family, and that external evidence could allow us to identify him. “Foot Voyage ... into Scotland” is written in a single, cursive secretary hand, quite old-fashioned for this period. It is an edited and perhaps polished copy of an earlier account, showing some transcription errors, regularly marking elisions with an “ec” for “et cetera”, and inserting “now Lord Mansfield” after its first mention of William Cavendish (he was ennobled only in 1620, two years after the events the account describes). It also contains, in the same hand, marginal and interlineal annotations adding details to the narrative. That there are such additions might incline us to the view that this is the hand of the author and traveller. But we cannot exclude the possibility that they are an attempt to restore previously omitted details to an edited copy, that they therefore derive from the fuller notes or journal on which this text is based, and that the hand may be that of a third party.

Authorial or not, this hand is quite unlike any found elsewhere in the Aldersey family papers. How the account came to be preserved among them is unclear; it is not mentioned in a calendar of family documents from 1899, and there are very few literary manuscripts in the collection. At first sight, too, the Alderseys seem unlikely friends of Ben. Perhaps the most prominent member of the family in the sixteenth century was Thomas Aldersey, a younger son of the Bunbury and Spurstow branch, who moved from Cheshire to London to become a prosperous haberdasher and a Member of Parliament, a supporter of mercantile and staunchly Protestant interests. He died childless in 1598, leaving much of his estate to John Aldersey, his nephew and former apprentice. By the early seventeenth century John had a city home near the western end of Cheapside and a country residence in Oxted, Surrey, where he was to be buried at his death in 1616. His son Samuel also became a haberdasher and successful merchant, heavily involved in efforts to promote a godly, preaching ministry in the 1620s, and a subscriber to the charter of the Massachusetts Bay Company. Samuel’s sisters were married to members of the London and home counties gentry, one of them becoming in 1610 the second wife of the lawyer Thomas Coventry. Coventry’s elevation to the position of Lord Keeper in 1625 probably helped John Aldersey’s grand-nephew, another Thomas, gain the post of Escheator of Cheshire in 1631. Some of

the papers of this Thomas, the heir to and eventual possessor of the main Cheshire estates, survive in the collection in Chester, and it is possible that he obtained and kept the manuscript containing "Foot Voyage", even if he is unlikely to have been the traveller. Interestingly, there is a link between the circle of John Aldersey and Ben Jonson. In 1604 the Haberdashers' Company provided the pageant for the Lord Mayor's show; Jonson was commissioned to devise it, though there may have been some irregularity in the commission as Anthony Munday also received payment "for his paines". The new mayor, Sir Thomas Lowe, was another of the elder Thomas Aldersey's former apprentices and John Aldersey's brother-in-law. Though there is no evidence of any Aldersey involvement in decisions concerning the pageant, it is possible that Jonson and the extended family of the man he helped to honour might have been, or become, friendly. It is more doubtful, given the social and religious differences between the parties, that any such amity could crystallize into kinship. If it was indeed the younger Thomas Aldersey who preserved the manuscript it may well have come into his possession in the 1620s, through connections he made at Cambridge, at Gray's Inn, or during his residence in London with Coventry.

Whoever the companion was, it is an understandable hope that he might prove to have been a proto-Boswell for the earlier Jonson. The account's author, though, is unattuned to literary matters and largely overlooks the poet's conversation, carefully noting instead the facts and events of the journey. The "Foot Voyage" is therefore more of a complement to Drummond's "Informations" than its supplement.

But if the detailed itinerary it provides can be trusted, Jonson's movements in the summer of 1618 can now be traced with a hitherto unthinkable precision. The travellers left London on Wednesday July 8 - only six days before Taylor - and walked up the old north road as far as "Totnam Highe Crosse". The next day they continued along what is now the Tottenham High Road into Hertfordshire. By Saturday July 18 they had reached Stamford; three days later they left the main road at Witham and headed west towards Belvoir Castle. From there they travelled on via Bottesford before rejoining the main road at Newark on Friday 24. Resuming their journey on Tuesday 28, they once again veered westwards away from the customary route, heading now for Rufford Abbey. One or two nights were spent at Rufford before they walked on to Welbeck, which was to be their base for more than a week. From Welbeck they made trips to Worksop Manor and Bolsover before setting out again on Thursday August 6, rejoining the main road at Bawtry that evening. They then walked to Wentbridge before detouring again to Pontefract. After a twonight stay there they took the road to York, which they reached on Wednesday 12. The following Monday they were underway again, walking to Darlington (the account is silent, alas, on the matter of those boots) before arriving in Durham on Saturday 22. They stayed there for three nights, then walked the fifteen miles to Newcastle on Tuesday 25. From Newcastle they set out on Sunday 30 for Bothal Castle, and after a night there journeyed on through coastal Northumberland towards Berwick, arriving on Monday September 7 - almost two months after their departure from London .

Crossing into Scotland, they walked to Cockburnspath and on via Dunbar, where they turned northwards and approached Edinburgh through Auldham, North Berwick, Seton, Prestonpans and Musselburgh. Though they finally arrived on Thursday September 17, the account records that the voyage was ceremonially completed at the city's Mercat Cross the following morning, with Jonson accompanied up the High Street by a reception committee: "One Friday all these gentlemen with others of the towne brought my gossip to the heigh crosse, and there on their knees drancke the kings health, testifying in that place that he hadd performed his iorney". Rather than resting, they crossed the Forth the next day to visit Sir George Bruce's celebrated coal mine at Culross and his salt pans at Kincardine, before heading eastwards via Dunfermline to Pettycur. Late on Wednesday September 23 they returned across the Forth from Burntisland to Leith, staying - as Taylor reported - with John Stewart. From there they went back to Edinburgh on Saturday September 26, "where my Gossip was with all ceremony made Burgesse". After that, it seems, they separated, and Jonson disappears from view; the author of the account remained in the city only until Monday October 5, "at what tyme I parted from Edenborough, and at Leeth toke boat for Brunt Iland, where I mett with a Shipp bound for England".

In addition to giving us this itinerary, the account in the Aldersey manuscript may also shed light on Jonson's motives. The proclaimed completion of the journey at the Mercat Cross suggests that he wanted his achievement certified, and the requirement to walk all the way does seem to have been central to that achievement. In the seventeenth century a ferry carried travellers on the main route from York to Darlington across the Tees at Neasham. Rather than cross here, Jonson and his companion took a detour over the bridge at Croft-on-Tees instead, thus ensuring that they did not need to hitch a disqualifying lift. As the account puts it, "wee passed Croft bridge going two myles about because we would not passe Nysam ferry". It also refers to Jonson collecting "subscriptions" early on, perhaps, like Taylor, to support not just his travels but the publication of a subsequent narrative. If pecuniary "profit" had been the only motive, though, Jonson would surely have made things easier by sticking to the direct route and less difficult walking offered by the main roads. His diversions reveal the extent to which he was tracing a path through a network of friends and benefactors.

At Belvoir Castle, for instance, he was given a subscription by Francis Manners, the sixth Earl of Rutland, whose late brother Roger, the fifth Earl, and Elizabeth Sidney, his Countess, had been Jonson's patrons. The Earl's friend, Robert Bertie, Lord Willoughby, also subscribed. At Rufford Abbey they received "extrodinary grace and entertainment" from the recently widowed Jane Talbot (nee Ogle), Countess of Shrewsbury, on whom Jonson was later to write an epitaph. Sir William Cavendish, the Countess's nephew, and later Duke of Newcastle, then sent one of his servants to escort them to Welbeck Abbey. At Welbeck they were shown round by Sir William himself, who had only recently inherited the estate on the death of his father, Sir Charles. Jonson and his companion were taken to see the library and the "roome of evidences" in which were kept weapons Sir Charles had taken from Sir John Stanhope after a celebrated altercation some two decades previously. When Sir William

then left for Rufford with his mother, Lady Catherine (also nee Ogle, and later commemorated by Jonson), he “resigned the whole house to my Gossip... Commanding his Steward and all the rest of the officers to obey my Gossip in all things, which authority hee did as freely put in execution”. On their return, “Sir Wil Candish carried my gossip to see Bolsover... castle one which Sir Charles had buyt a delicate little house. . . . As also to meet one Smithsonn an excellent architect, who was to consult with Mr Johnson about the erection of a Tomb for Sir Williams father, for which my gossip was to make an Epitaph”. (Jonson and John Smythson were clearly asked to collaborate on the composition of the memorial to Sir Charles Cavendish that is still to be seen in the Cavendish chapel in Bolsover church, Jonson’s epitaph elegantly incorporated into Smythson’s design.) The detour via Belvoir may have been made in preparation for this project, since the chancel of the church of St Mary at Bottesford was in effect the mausoleum of the Earls of Rutland. Alongside other family tombs was the monument to the fifth Earl and his Countess, erected in 1616; Jonson perhaps wanted both to honour his late patrons and to examine noble precedents for the Cavendish commission.

Although William Cavendish has long been recognized as one of Jonson’s most important later patrons, the account makes clear that the Cavendish-Ogle family embraced him much earlier than has sometimes been thought. It also contains one fascinating detail that suggests an even closer relationship with their household. The travellers’ arrival is introduced by the arresting sentence, “From thence to Wellbeck where my Gossip made fat herry Ogle his Mistress”. Henry Ogle was a kinsman of the Cavendishes, born around 1560, who served the family loyally until his death in 1635; William Cavendish characterized him as “the faithfull’st servant, built but to obey”. His will gives no hint of a surviving wife or children. The most likely reading has to be that Jonson made the older man “his mistress” during his stay, suggesting that he initiated a sexual relationship between them. It is also possible, though far less plausible, to construe the sentence as a claim that Ogle himself had a mistress, whom Jonson made “fat” - presumably pregnant - during this or an earlier visit. Evidence can be cited in support of both the unlikely and the likely readings: to Drummond Jonson admitted a sexual preference for wives over maids, while Thomas Dekker had labelled him “ningle” and “hermaphrodite” in *Satiromastix*.

The Cavendish-Ogle influence is evident elsewhere. Jonson and his companion enjoyed the Countess of Shrewsbury’s hospitality again during their visit to Pontefract, and Bothal Castle, where they stayed some weeks later, was an Ogle property. But the account offers glimpses of other literary connections, too. At Waltham Cross, we learn, “my Lady Wroth came to my Gossip”. At Water Newton, near Peterborough, “wee met with one Pauy sometime a citizen in London”, perhaps a relation of the young actor Salomon Pavy, delicately elegized by Jonson on his death in 1602. On the day they left Welbeck, Jonson and his companion were entertained at Hodsock Priory by Sir Gervase Clifton, a member of the midlands gentry and masque enthusiast who was to perform, alongside the Earl of Rutland, in Jonson’s *Gypsies Metamorphosed* three years later. On his arrival in York, Jonson was sought out by Sir Arthur Ingram, a merchant and would-be courtier identified in a

contemporary poem as one of the wits who gathered at London's Mitre tavern, a group that included a number of Jonson's familiar acquaintances. As Rutland's friend, Lord Willoughby, had performed in the 1606 masque *Hymenaei* and accompanying "Barriers", or martial exercises, he too might have known the poet.

In some of these figures we see connections that are as much courtly as literary - unsurprisingly, perhaps, given the importance for Jonson's writing of courtly demands and occasions. On July 9, the travellers were greeted at Ware by Sir Robert Mansell, an assured court operator who had also performed in the 1606 "Barriers", and Sir Arnold Herbert, a Gentlemen Pensioner in James's household. Both reappeared on the road south of Durham on Saturday August 22; they had been expecting to meet Jonson in Newcastle a month earlier. On their arrival in Scotland, Jonson and his companion were looked after by Scots members of the Privy Chamber or Bedchamber: they stayed with James Auchmuty at Auldhame, were accompanied by William Ramsey for much of their time in Edinburgh, and were hosted by John Gibb at Dunfermline .

Such connections are perhaps to be expected, and some of the Bedchamber links have previously been inferred from Jonson's correspondence with Drummond. But the account also indicates some hitherto unsuspected affiliations. During his stay at Welbeck Jonson expressed an eagerness to visit Sir Thomas Brudenell, who from the account would appear to have been then in residence at Worksop Manor. Brudenell was a prominent Catholic baronet and brother-in-law to the late Francis Tresham, the Essex rebel turned Gunpowder conspirator. Jonson's enthusiasm for his friendship is perhaps another sign of his enduring connections to Catholic circles, despite his apostasy some eight years earlier.

Just as interesting is the evidence of a friendship between Jonson and Richard Neile, then Bishop of Durham. Though ten years Jonson's senior, Neile, like the poet, had studied at Westminster School, enjoyed the patronage of Cecil, and successfully ingratiated himself with James on the King's accession. In 1605 he was appointed Dean of Westminster, before embarking on a remarkable progress through six episcopal posts that ended with the archbishopric of York. The account stresses the warmth of Neile's welcome for Jonson:

My Lo[rd] vs[ed] him with all the loue and respect that could bee, entreating to bring all his company next day to dynner, and to vse no other house but his. Whither wee all came the next day being sonnday. Where the plenty of meat, variety of dishes and state of service was such as I saw not since our coming foorth[.] But that which exceeded all the rest was my Lords extraordinary, and strange, freedome, and familiarity, with my Goss[ip], and his grace and fauour for his sake to vs.

Neile's generosity to Jonson may have been founded on shared antipathies as much as on the similarity of their ascent to prominence from relatively lowly Westminster roots. On St Bartholomew's day - appropriately enough - they were joined for dinner by "a most violent Puritane with whom my gossip had a pleasaunt encounter, at which my L[ord] laughed hartely". Neile's doctrinal and liturgical preferences would have made him sympathetic to

the vein of anti-puritan satire running through Jonson's works, and it is tempting to think that he contrived this "encounter" for their mutual amusement.

This parade of names perhaps gives the impression that "Foot Voyage" is of interest principally as an insight into Jonson's lengthy book of contacts. What it reveals about his public status in the summer of 1618 is, though, just as striking. The travellers were not only greeted and hosted by civic dignitaries in many of the towns they visited, but were also the focus of considerable popular excitement. At Royston, the account notes, "the Maydes and young men came out of Towne to meet us". On their arrival in Pontefract they "came the backe way because all the towne was vp in thronges to see vs":

And there was dancing of Giances [i.e. stilt walkers]; and musick prepar'd to meete vs[.] And notwithstanding wee tooke a byway to escape the crowd and staring of the people yet a swarme of boyes and others crosse[d] over to overtake vs, and pressed so vpon vs, that wee were fayne to present our pistols vpon them to keepe them backe, and make them believe wee would shoote them to get passage.

At Durham, "the weigtes and cornets came to our lodging", while when they finally reached Edinburgh, "the women in thronges ran to see vs etc. Some bringing sack and sugar, others aquauitae and sugar". The next day, the formal completion of the voyage was celebrated in just as popular a fashion:

My Gossip also dranck to the Baileif and Aldermen and the whole People their health they being so thicke in the street, that wee could scarce passe by them that ran in thronges to have a sight of my gossip. The wyndowes also being full every one peeping out of a round hole lyke a head out of a pillory.

Jonson was clearly happy in the festive role such celebrations required him to play. Throughout the journey we find him engaging in acts of conspicuous generosity, donating "two pieces to the newly erected Chappel" at Buntingford, presenting half a crown to "the lowest scullion in the house" at Belvoir, and on his visit to the "free schoole" in Newcastle (now the Royal Grammar School) giving "the Master a piece to buy a booke with". During their stay in Pontefract he "invited the whole towne to his venisonn, and the wyne came to 41s, which my gossip payed". Sometimes the festive becomes positively carnivalesque, as when the travellers dined at Tollerton, north of York: Parson Rogers hearing of our passing by rydd after vs and recovered vs at Tollerton, at myne host Thortons, where my gossip discharg'd two borrachoe bottles vpon myne host and the parson, to the downfall of the one and soe elevating the other that Mr Parson would needs bring vs on the way, where to shew his love to my gossip he fell off his horse and after ran leaping and dancing before vs half way to Topcliffe.

And an episode at Welbeck shows that Jonson was not only willing to play carnival king, but enjoyed the licence to do so. Already given the run of the house by Cavendish and Lady Catherine in their absence, he remained in character once the latter had returned:

Presently... the Ladies came whome Mr Johnson welcomed to his house, and at supper bydd them want nothing, for if they did it was not his fault. Chafed at the table for lighte, and checked the wayters because there was no more new bread, which freedome of his mingled with a great deal of myrth much delighted the ladies.

This is the poet as Face, almost, his comic presumption indulged by the Lovewit family. In such foolery, and in the manner of his public reception on his journey, there is a likeness to figures such as Kemp from which the familiar image of the pedantic classicist has perhaps distracted us.

Such vignettes are undoubtedly the most engaging moments in the account. It also adds, though, to our knowledge of a number of Jonson's works. As well as the epitaph on Sir Charles Cavendish, the visit to Welbeck engendered a further poem, eventually published in *The Underwood*, in which Jonson praises the exceptional horsemanship of Sir Charles's heir:

When first, my Lord, I saw you backe your horse,
Provoke his mettall, and command his force
To all the uses of the field, and race,
Me thought I read the ancient Art of Thrace,
And saw a Centaure, past those tales of Greece;
So seem'd your horse and you, both of a peece!

The account allows us to date this first sight of William Cavendish in action, and the sentiment it provoked, to Wednesday August 4: "The next morning Sir William ridd his great horse which hee did with that readines and steadinesse, as my gossip say they were both one piece". Similarly, the confirmation that Jonson and the Cavendishes were intimates as early as 1618 increases the likelihood that the christening entertainment written by Jonson for the celebration of a Cavendish family baptism was penned for this William Cavendish, rather than for his cousin of the same name, the future Earl of Devonshire, with whom it has also been associated. A "Mathematician" features prominently in the entertainment, and the account of the walk makes clear that Jonson was well acquainted with Henry Lukin, the family's estate surveyor, "who hadd bin Tutor to Sir William and now read the mathematicke to his brother Mr Charles".

The account may also provide support for one attribution that has hitherto been treated with scepticism. In a 1649 history of his home town, the Newcastle chorographer William Gray ascribed a verse riddle about the extraordinary tower and crown of St Nicholas's church (now the cathedral) to "Ben Johnson". It's a rough piece, making a mystery of an admired architectural feature:

My Altitude high, my Body foure square,
My Foot in the Grave, my Head in the Ayre,
My Eyes in my sides, five Tongues in my Wombe,
Thirteen Heads upon my Body, four Images alone;
I can direct you where the Winde doth stay,
And I tune Gods Precepts thrice a Day.
I am seen where I am not, I am heard where I [i.e., eye] is not,
Tell me now what I am, and see that you misse not.

The attribution was dismissed by Jonson's great twentieth-century editors, C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson. It should be noted, however, that the school Jonson visited on August 26 had been housed across the churchyard from St Nicholas's until 1607, and still maintained strong connections with the church. Gray himself had probably also studied there in the years immediately preceding Jonson's visit; he was also well connected to the civic leaders who hosted the poet in 1618. His attribution might have more authority than Herford and Simpson supposed.

That the voyage further stimulated Jonson's writing is apparent from the plans mentioned to Drummond, but its impact on his work was probably more diffuse and pervasive. Jonson's summer journey surely informed the bucolics of his masque *Pan's Anniversary* (1621), and the character of the Fencer in that work might even owe something to a Thomas Robinson, "called Thom the fencer", whom the travellers met near Bothal. More generally, Jonson's interest in the precise topography of the Stuart regions and nations, and his experimental engagement with the genres of pastoral and romance, deepened in his later years. As some critics have recently begun to argue, the walk through rural Britain to Edinburgh was probably instrumental in that deepening. It is hard to imagine him untouched, for instance, by an incident such as this, at North Berwick, on September 16: "Wensday, Sir John Humes told my gossip that his sheerers hadd made a great sute to him to haue a sight of him. So wee walked vp into the fieldes where was a number of them with a bagpipe, who no sooner saw my gossip, but they circled him and daunc'd round about him". The image is captivating: something like a pastoral commonplace, suddenly and perhaps startlingly sprung to life. What might the poet of court and city have made of this? Satisfaction that the rural labourers of south-east Scotland thought him deserving of such a ceremony, or astonishment that this should be so? Fascination at their performance, perhaps - at its distance from courtly dancing, or its likeness to it? Are such incidents the reason why he came to speak of "adventures", then, and of his journey as "a discovery"? This Ben Jonson would head a lengthy list of metropolitan artists stirred by their encounters with a world elsewhere. In the "Foot Voyage" we find him unexpectedly sprung to life, startling us with discoveries of our own.

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