

## CIRCUMNAVIGATION NARRATIVES

Nearly every literate person who has circumnavigated the world has written about the experience, which is often seen as pivotal or life altering. It took Charles Darwin five years to sail around the world in *Beagle*, but he spent the rest of his life sifting through the materials he collected and writing about his experience and findings. More recently, Robin Lee Graham, an American teenager, sailed around the world alone in a small sailboat. His memoir *Dove* (1972), has become an inspiration to countless adolescents the world over, many of whom have never been near the ocean.

Ferdinand Magellan was the first to lead a successful expedition to circle the globe (1519–1522). Magellan himself was killed in the Philippines, but Antonio Pigafetta, one of 17 survivors who straggled back to Spain, wrote a short book, *The First Voyage around the World*, an abbreviated English version of which was included by Richard Eden in his *Decades of the Newe World* (1555). The first full English translation did not appear until 1625, in Samuel Purchas's *Hakluytus Posthumus; or, Purchas His Pilgrimes*. Purchas included accounts of the first six circumnavigations in his massive three-folio-volume compilation of travel stories and documents. All the early circumnavigators traveled west from Europe, sailing southwest to Brazil and following the coast to Patagonia. At first, navigators believed that South America was attached to a great southern continent, and the Strait of Magellan was seen as the only route to the Pacific. The Dutch captain Willem Cornelisz Schouten van Hoorn went further south to avoid the Spanish claim on the Strait of Magellan (the Portuguese had a similar claim on the Cape of Good Hope), and he was the first to round Cape Horn in 1616. His discovery was important, because doubling the Horn was found to be faster and less hazardous than sailing through the Strait of Magellan.

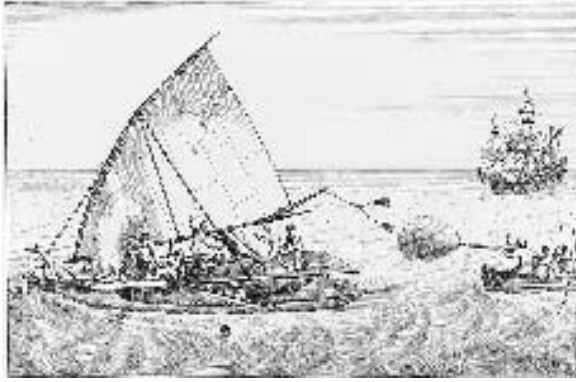
Nevertheless, circumnavigation was a very dangerous activity. Magellan began with five ships and 270 men. Three years later, one ship and 17 men returned to a Spanish harbor near the one they had left. Sir Francis Drake, the first captain to lead an expedition around the world and live to tell the tale, lost well over half of his men and two of the three ships he began with. Drake did not actually write an account of his voyage, but an anonymous sailor did leave a short account, which Richard Hakluyt published in his great compendium, *Principal Navigations* (1598–1600). It was not just storms, poor maps, and uncertain navigational equipment that made these voyages dangerous; disease, notably scurvy, was the chief cause of death. In some cases, the danger and loss of life were considered worth the reward, largely plunder. The Spanish stole from the indigenous populations, the English

stole from the Spanish, and the Dutch would take what they could where they could.

This was not just a sixteenth-century pattern. Open privateering, plundering, and stealing went on well into the eighteenth century. Henry Morgan, William Dampier, and George Shelvocke, to mention just three prominent pirates, found the risks worth the rewards. Morgan never circumnavigated the world but was content to confine his raids to the West Indies. Dampier wrote a lengthy account of his travels around the world: *A New Voyage round the World* (1697) gave a patriotic spin to his story of robbery and plunder. Dampier wrote two other books on his travels. In part because of these books, he was given command of a warship, *Roebuck*, to explore Australia. Dampier planned to sail around the Cape of Good Hope and, remaining in the southern latitudes, look for the southern continent before returning to England via Cape Horn. Had Dampier completed the mission, he would have been the first to sail from west to east around the world. Unfortunately, he failed so famously that he was court-martialed and declared unfit for further command. The judgment did not prevent Dampier from publishing an account of his expedition, *Voyage to New Holland* (1703–1709).

A west-to-east circumnavigation was first completed by Captain James Cook in his second great expedition, 1772–1775. Cook is perhaps the greatest circumnavigator and explorer of all time, and he marks a welcome change from piracy to genuine exploration. On his first circumnavigation, he sailed to Tahiti with the noted astronomer Joseph Banks to observe the transit of Venus over the sun. Cook then went on to discover the southeastern corner of Australia and to circumnavigate both islands of New Zealand and chart their coastlines. On Cook's second expedition, he sailed from Plymouth in 1772 for the Cape of Good Hope, where he rested for several weeks before heading southwest into uncharted seas. Cook confronted the great ice floes surrounding the seventh continent as he reached 71°10' south latitude, and he concluded that either there was no southern continent or it was so far south as to be bound by impenetrable snow and ice and of no use to mankind. Cook's account, *A Voyage towards the South Pole*, was published in 1777. It is a detailed story with invaluable information for future sailors. Among other things, he noted that seawater does not freeze at 0° C and that icebergs are formed of freshwater not salt water. In this long journey with great periods of time spent at sea, Cook lost only four men and only one of those to scurvy. He not only proved that scurvy could be prevented by a good diet, but his proof finally convinced other captains to protect their crews in a like manner.

On Cook's third voyage, the great explorer was killed during a skirmish with the local inhabitants on



Mid-ocean incident during the 1615–1616 Dutch circumnavigation by Le Maire and Schouten (from Burney's *Chronological History of the Voyages and Discoveries in the South Sea or Pacific Ocean*, vol. 2, 1806). Courtesy of the Travellers Club, London; Bridgeman Art Library, agent.

Hawaii. His account up to that point was edited and augmented by James King and published in 1784. Not only are these books valuable sources of geographical and navigational information, but they also contain useful ethnographic observations on the people of the North and South Pacific along with data on the flora and fauna of the regions.

Following Cook's circumnavigation, narratives move in three different directions. Exploration continues, but now largely confined to the polar regions. The most notable of these narratives was James Ross's *A Voyage of Discovery and Research 1839–43* (1847), in which the author/explorer describes his charting of the coast of Antarctica. The second direction is narratives of expeditions to make more detailed charts of previously discovered areas. On a French charting expedition led by Louis Claude de Freycinet, his young wife, Rose, dressed as a man, stowed away with her husband's knowledge. She was one of the first women to sail around the world and leave a written account. Her journal was not published until 1927, in a very limited and expensive edition. An English translation by M.S. Rivière, *A Woman of Courage*, appeared in 1996. Rose was just 22 when she accompanied her husband on the long and arduous voyage.

Perhaps the most famous charting and scientific expedition was the voyage of *Beagle*. Charles Darwin had just graduated from Cambridge when he was selected as the ship's naturalist. Although the great product of this voyage, Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, was not published until much later, his personal account of the voyage in the form of a diary was printed in 1839 as the third volume of the *Narrative of the Surveying Voyages of the Adventure and Beagle between the Years 1826 and 1836*. Owing to its popularity, the third volume soon became available by itself; and in 1845,

prior to yet another edition, Darwin made extensive and final revisions and retitled his book, as *Journal of Researches*.

The third direction these narratives take is the travelogue, that is, a journey undertaken to gather material for a book. Mark Twain's *Following the Equator* (1897) is a satirical meander around the world. Twain makes wry comments on the people and places visited while on a lecture tour. Near the end of the nineteenth century, newspapers in the United States found that round-the-world trips by clever journalists were an easy way to stimulate circulation. In 1889, Nellie Bly and Elizabeth Bisland raced each other around the world, sending back lively accounts of their adventures to their respective newspapers.

By this time, sailing around the world had become so commonplace that, to gain any notice, one had to do something different or dangerous. The first known individual to circumnavigate the world single-handedly was the Canadian Joshua Slocum, in a 36-foot sloop, *Spray*, which he had built himself. Leaving Gloucester, Massachusetts, in May 1895, he returned to the same port in July 1898 to great acclaim. Slocum's book, *Sailing Alone around the World*, was published in 1899. A particularly poignant circumnavigation was undertaken by 16-year-old Robin Lee Graham in 1965. He took seven years to complete his journey in a 24-foot sloop, *Dove*. Although young Graham began alone, he picked up a wife and daughter along the way plus countless adventures that keep his book, *Dove* (1972), still in print.

The most famous solo circumnavigation was by Sir Francis Chichester, who was 65 and a survivor of lung cancer by the time he set out to sail around the world faster than any previous solo mariner. He made only one stop, in Sydney, Australia, where *Gypsy Moth* was extensively repaired and refitted before the second and final leg of his journey eastward around Cape Horn and then back to Plymouth, where he arrived on 28 May 1967, nine months and one day after departing. Chichester's achievement caught the imagination of the British and indeed the entire world. He was knighted by Elizabeth II, and, perhaps more importantly, his book, *Gypsy Moth Circles the World*, was rushed to press later that year and became an instant best-seller. There remained only the final triumph of sailing around the world single-handedly with no stops. That was accomplished the following year by Robin Knox-Johnston, winner and only finisher of the first nonstop round-the-world race. His book *A World of My Own* (1969) recounts the adventure.

This, of course, did not put an end to the interest in circumnavigation. Round-the-world nonstop yacht races are organized periodically. Other sailors looking for adventure and solitude find themselves sailing

around the world and, more often than not, writing about their experiences. And for good reason: the worry of scurvy and pirates has largely passed, and the Panama and Suez Canals eliminate the need for doubling the Capes Horn and Good Hope, but there is still plenty of adventure for anyone undertaking a surface circumnavigation of the world.

DAVID JUDKINS

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### CLAPPERTON, HUGH (1788–1827) *British Explorer*

Hugh Clapperton led an extremely adventurous life, which culminated in two expeditions to the Sudanic region of West Africa. It is on these that his fame chiefly rests. Yet that fame is not as great as such an effective as well as genial, entertaining, and informative a traveler deserves. Unsympathetic editing of his journals in the 1820s, combined with the fact that the second journey was something of an anticlimax both geographically and politically, has meant that Clapperton's name does not always spring readily to mind as that of a major explorer.

One of 21 children of a Scottish surgeon, Clapperton was apprenticed to the sea as a cabin boy. Press-ganged into the navy, Clapperton deserted but was forgiven and made a midshipman, and he began to serve with distinction in the Mediterranean, in the East Indies, on the Canadian Great Lakes, and, most importantly, at the capture of Mauritius from the French in 1810. The end of the Napoleonic wars and half-pay did not appeal, so Clapperton leaped at the chance opened up for him by Walter Oudney, his fellow Scottish ex-sailor, to join an official expedition that was to penetrate to the West African interior across the desert from Tripoli. The Colonial Office added Major Dixon Denham to the party. It was, unfortunately, not clear who was in overall charge, and Denham was a difficult man whose poor relations with Clapperton undermined the enterprise. Yet the achievements were considerable, not least on Clapperton's part. On this expedition of 1822–1825 and its follow-up in 1825–1827, he came near to solving the problem of the course and termination of the Niger that was so exercising European geographers, found out what had happened to Mungo Park, provided the first reliable report of the results among the Hausa kingdoms of the great jihad of Uthman dan Fodio, and more generally gathered a wealth of information on the basic nature of the Sahara, Bornu, and Hausaland, to which was added data on Yoruba societies on the second venture. Clapperton was also the means by which the British government began to implement a policy of curtailing both the Saharan and maritime slave trades and introducing “legitimate” trade.

The available writings consist essentially of daily journals, which have been published in edited form, and some correspondence, a small part of which has also been published. In the cases of both expeditions, the journals were edited by John Barrow, the formidable second secretary at the Admiralty. Barrow perhaps found the ex-cabin boy *déclassé* and certainly had theories about the Niger that the explorer seemed to be disproving. His editing of Clapperton, as he confessed,