Job Hortop, *The Rare Trauailles of Job Hortop, an Englishman / The trauailles of an English man* (London: William Wright, 1591; STC 13827.5, 13828)

Job Hortop (fl. 1550–1591) produced one of the few travel books written by an Englishman available in sixteenth-century London, whose market in travel literature was dominated by translations out of the Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch. ¹ Until the publication of the three-volume *Principal Navigations of the English Nation* (London: George Bishop, Ralph Newberie, and Robert Barker, 1599–1600; STC 12626a), compiled by the geographer and editor Richard Hakluyt (1552?–1616), the majority of travel literature produced by the English consisted of short, single-authored texts that would have been relatively cheap and easy to print. Although the English travel narrative would soon adopt more expensive formats, exemplified by the substantial and illustrated works by Thomas Coryate (*Coryate’s Crudities* [...], London: [Edward Blount and William Barret], 1611; STC 5808) and George Sandys (*A Relation of a Journey* [...], London: William Barret, 1615; STC 21726), English travel writers of the late sixteenth century were comfortable with the cheap print of pamphlet publication. Job Hortop’s *The trauailles of an English man*, the author’s only extant work, is a paradigmatic example of this genre.

Hortop’s book opens with a brief biographical account: ‘it is not vnknowne vnto many’, he asserts, ‘that I I.H. pouder-maker [i.e. manufacturer of gunpowder], was borne at Bourne, a Towne in Lincolnshire, from my age of twelue yeeres brought vp in Redriffe neere London’ (sig. A3²). Despite his insistence that his upbringing ‘is not vnknowne vnto many’, it is fortunate that Hortop began his narrative with information about his early life, considering that this is the only source we have for his years in Redriffe. For the most part, the details of the traveller’s life originate in his book and in no other source.

In ‘Redriffe’ (now Rotherhithe), Hortop was apprenticed to Francis Lee, the Queen’s powder-maker, until October 1567, when he joined John Hawkins, the first English slave-trader, as a gunner aboard the *Jesus of Lubeck*. ² The ship, accompanied by five others, first landed at Cape Verde and Sierra Leone, where Hortop and others (including Sir Francis Drake) conducted trade with the locals, captured slaves, and ‘fought with seauen thousand Negroes’ (sig. B1²). After this African excursion, the ships made for the West Indies and Mexico to continue the activities of trading and slaving.

While at the Port of St John de Lowe (now San Juan de Ulúa, in present-day Veracruz), Hawkins and the English made a truce with the local Spanish authorities. Yet the truce was short-lived, for the Spanish invaded the English ships that very night. Although the English escaped in the ensuing skirmish, their damaged ships and ruined provisions proved to be a mortal wound to the expedition. Hortop and others ‘were driven to eat hides, cats, rats, parrats, munkies, and dogges’ (sig. C1²). With mutiny imminent, Hawkins agreed to let any of his mariners who wished to go ashore in Mexico to search for victuals; Hortop was one of the 90–120 men who decided to test their fortunes on land rather than continue a life of destitution at sea. Perhaps this was a poor decision considering that Hawkins made it back to England in 1569, while Hortop remained abroad until 1590.

Shortly after landing in Mexico, Hortop and his companions encountered more perils, proving that their fortunes by land were worse than those by sea. After narrowly avoiding death while being robbed by the local natives, they were captured by the Spanish. Yet this imprisonment proved to be not entirely miserable. Having made his way to Mexico City with the


⁴ Conway, *The Rare Travailes*, p. iii.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The printer Thomas Scarlett, who collaborated with William Wright on no less than fourteen different editions from 1590–1592, first printed Henry Smith’s sermon *The Pride of Nabuchadnezzar* (London: William Wright, 1591; STC 22688) according to an imperfect copy. The two men published a revised version in the same year (STC 22689) that contains a preface written by William Wright expressing apologies for the previous corrupt edition. In this case, it is probable that the first edition was ‘withdrawn from circulation’. If Hortop was displeased enough with the first edition of his narrative to request that it be withdrawn from the market, it is probable that Wright would have issued an apologetic preface in the second edition. Since such a preface doesn’t exist, it is unlikely that the first edition of Hortop’s travels was taken off the market.

⁷ Although it seems likely that the account of the Chinese giant was fabricated, Unwin notes that the journal of the Spaniard Don Juan (on the ship with Hortop and the giant) also records this marvel. See Unwin, *The Defeat of John Hawkins*, p. 255.


Spanish, Hortop put his old trade to use and worked as a powder-maker for two years. G.R.G. Conway first pointed out that the Mexican archives contain references to Hortop making fireworks for religious celebrations, a pastime that endeared him to local friars. In 1571, he was forced to serve on the Spanish Plate Fleet heading for Europe; while trying to escape near the Azores, Hortop was caught, imprisoned in Seville, and then condemned to twelve years’ service in the galleys. This long period of servitude was followed by another bout of imprisonment and forced service. Hortop finally made his miraculous escape from Spanish imprisonment, with the aid of Dutch and English ships, in 1590. The narrative ends with Hortop’s return to his hometown of Redriffe.

In 1591, a year after Hortop’s return to England, the stationer William Wright published two editions of the narrative (STC 13827.5 and STC 13828). Hortop introduced significant changes in the second edition. The narrative became longer, expanding from nineteen to twenty-seven pages. Most of the additions exist on the syntactical level: he added many clauses and qualifying statements that amplify the language of the earlier edition. But some of these changes add content, and were probably the result of Hortop’s encounter with the narratives of other men who were on the voyage, such as John Hawkins (A true declaration of the troublesome voyage [...], London: Lucas Harrison; STC 12961) and Miles Philips (in Hakluyt, STC 12626a). Their accounts may have prompted his memory — or his desire to offer what readers might see as the fullest account of this adventure.

Yet many of the changes suggest marketing strategies rather than purely authorial intentions. It is probable that the first edition, entitled The Rare Trauailes of Job Hortop, an Englishman (London: William Wright, 1591; STC 13827.5) sold fairly well, seeing as William Wright thought it wise to publish another edition in the same year. Probably due to the quick appearance of the second edition, G.R.G. Conway proposed that ‘the first edition was apparently withdrawn from circulation’ after Hortop made changes to the book. Yet not only is there no evidence to support his claim, there is considerable evidence to contradict it: William Wright’s publishing practices in 1591 make it unlikely that the first edition of Hortop’s book was withdrawn from circulation. Moreover, since the title page does not indicate that the second edition was ‘revised’ or ‘enlarged’, it is possible that Wright was trying to avoid undermining the marketability of any remaining copies of the first edition.

In addition to changing the pamphlet’s title (from The Rare Trauailes of Job Hortop to The trauailes of an English man), Wright also changed the type of information on the title page. While the title page of the first edition goes to great lengths to describe the author’s misfortunes (‘the dangers he escaped in his voyage to Gynnie […] hee endured much slauerie and bondage in the Spanish Galley’), the title page of the second edition distils these experiences down to the phrase ‘containing his sundrie calamities’. The third paragraph of the first edition’s title page touts ‘many strange and wonderfull things’, such as ‘wilde and sauage peoples […] sundrie monstrous beasts, fishes, and foules, and also Trees of wonderfull forme and qualitie.’ The second edition scales back this list of wonders, promising that Hortop has ‘truly decyphered the sundrie shapes of Wilde Beasts, Birds, Fishes, Foules, rootes, plants, &c.’ Despite the minimalist approach to its title page, the second edition does add a significant piece of information: ‘With the description of a man that appeared in the Sea: and also of a huge Giant brought from China to the King of Spaine.’ Although Hortop’s descriptions of the merman and Chinese giant were in fact added to the second edition, they are by no means the most obvious changes to the text. For marketing purposes, however, these changes have taken centre stage. It appears that Wright has reduced information found on the original title page to make room for the paragraph about these marvels.

Another significant change to the book was its authorisation, which Wright may have sought in order to increase the validity of Hortop’s strange narrative. Certainly the book would not have required authorisation, since it contains no sensitive religious or political material. Wright and Scarlet also made considerable visual changes within the body of the pamphlet, switching from black-letter to roman for the main text, and roman to italic for proper names, perhaps suggesting that the second edition was intended for a more high-brow audience. They also excised from the second edition the indexical marginal notes appearing in the first. The addition of several offset poems in italic throughout, and the ‘Computation of […] Imprisonment’ at the end, were probably changes originating with the author. Both editions of the pamphlets were evidently popular and probably ‘read to death’, considering that only one copy survives of the first edition and only three of the second.

Following a tradition going back to Herodotus and Pliny the Elder, the author delivers his readers plenty of strange sights and marvels throughout the book. The title pages to both 1591 editions advertise the book’s treatment of ‘sundrie’ specimens from the plant and animal kingdoms. His examples range from the innocuous (which he can eat) to the frightening (which can eat him). Even though Hortop and his fellow mariners were forced to eat cats and monkeys at sea after the Spanish destroyed their provisions, the traveller demonstrated his more discriminating taste while on shore in Africa and the New World. He sampled quite an array of exotic foods, including plantains, guavas, avocados, white crabs, oysters, and the flesh of the ‘mallateen’, a ‘fish like a Calfe’ (probably a manatee), which ‘eateth not sauch vnlike to bacon’ (sig. C2v). At certain points in his narrative, Hortop pays much more attention to food than other more pressing matters, such as imprisonment or imminent execution; as Rayner Unwin notes, ‘perhaps hunger drove out all other...
While Hortop regarded these foods with a sense of curious excitement, his perception of the more dangerous creatures he encountered can be better described as curious trepidation. While in Africa, soon after he notes that ‘monstrous fishes called Sharks [...] wil deuoure men’, two of his fellow shipmen were killed by a ‘sea-horse’ (hippopotamus). The ophidians of the New World simultaneously aroused Hortop’s curiosity, creativity, and horror: in the West Indies he encountered both a two-headed ‘monstrous venemous worm’ (sig. B1²) and a ‘monstrous adder’ that was ‘going towards his cave with a cunnie in his mouth’ (sig. B2²). Hortop dedicated a relatively large amount of text to descriptions of the tiger and alligator, both of which must have been especially frightening to him. He describes tigers as ‘monstrous and furious beasts, which by subtletie deuoure and destroy many men’ (sig. B1²) while lurking on the commonly travelled trade routes. Particularly taken aback by the ‘Alagarta’ — which ‘wil carrie away and deuoure both man and horse’ (sig. B2²) — Hortop and his men decided to ‘fish’ for the beast by tying a live dog to the end of a rope and tossing it into the water. Although their efforts were successful (they manage to kill and stuff the alligator), they lost their taxidermal trophy in one of the ships sunk during a battle with the Spanish.

Of course, Hortop was not voluntarily travelling in order to study wildlife; his long term abroad resulted from misfortune rather than curiosity. As such, a great deal of Hortop’s narrative focuses on the author’s ‘travails’, perhaps at the expense of providing the detailed information that many readers expected from a book of ‘travels.’ Even before his long bout of incarceration, Hortop faced a series of setbacks, including near-starvation at sea, loss of ships, ruination of victuals, murder of friends, and robbery of provisions. Yet the lows were tempered with the highs of eating manatee and white crabs. Once he lost his liberty to the Spanish, Hortop enjoyed no such pleasantries, experiencing instead a long series of imprisonments, escape attempts, death sentences, and bouts of forced servitude. The section entitled ‘The Computation of my Imprisonment’, appended to the last page of the second 1591 edition, provides the reader with a summary of Hortop’s unfortunate experiences. The ‘computation’ is divided between a record of the number of years Hortop was imprisoned and a list of the five times during which his life was endangered. The section functions as an interesting inversion of the conventional ‘computation of distance’ trope found in many works of travel literature, such as Thomas Coryate’s Crudities (1611; STC 5808). Instead of measuring his travels in miles and leagues, Hortop quantifies his journey using years spent in prison or the galleys.

Slavery and captivity are also central themes in The travailes of an English man. Since the book deals with the actions of John Hawkins, the first English slaver, it can be considered an important primary source in the early history of the slave trade (along with John Hawkins’s A true declaration of the troublesome voyage, London: Thomas Purfoote for Lucas Harrison, 1569; STC 12961). Although Hortop’s book doesn’t explore the economics and mechanics of the slave trade in great detail, slavery does become a central theme when he is committed to the galleys. It is course quite ironic that the man formerly in the employ of a slave becomes a slave himself. Due to this occurrence, Hortop’s book takes on many of the qualities of the captivity narratives popular at the time. These stories usually centred upon the tribulations of Christian sailors who were captured by Barbary corsairs or Spanish Inquisitors. In such tales, the captive faced starvation, gruelling labour, and the constant threat of conversion. Miraculous escapes or rescues, such as the kind Hortop experienced, ultimately diffused these threats.¹⁰

This sort of fortitude takes on a distinctly national character in Hortop’s narrative. As an ‘English’ travel narrative — written by an Englishman for an English audience — the book undoubtedly played upon the sense of nationalism emerging in England at the time. Travel literature played an important role in transforming real people into heroic English characters, as is the case with the quasi-legendary status afforded to Sir Francis Drake in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Withstanding the dangers of shipwreck, starvation, robbery, war, captivity, or forced conversion, English travellers in many of these narratives seemed impermeable to the malignant influence of foreign lands, returning triumphantly to their homes as resolute national heroes. Even the more ordinary and quotidian actions of English sailors and merchants could be praised in a nationalistic framework, as is the case in Richard Hakluyt’s The Principal Navigations of the English Nation, which entirely omits any narrative not involving the English. In both editions of Hortop’s book, the title page indicates that the traveller is ‘an English man’, thereby insisting on the national identity of the pamphlet’s protagonist. Moreover, Hortop dedicated both editions of the book to Queen Elizabeth, to whom he ‘prostrate[s] [him]selfe (together with the Discourse of [his] trauelles’) (sig. A2²). This move firmly situates his ‘trauailes’ within the Queen’s project of religio-political nation-building. The book also utilises religious and cultural differences to accentuate the traveller’s strong English identity. Spain is the chief enemy, both in the work itself and in the England of 1591. Hortop’s experiences with the prowess of its military and ruthlessness of its Inquisition undoubtedly played on the anxieties and fears of his audience, for whom the Armada of 1588 was not yet a distant memory. Hortop’s ultimate resilience in the face of Spanish threats help fashion him as an English hero of sorts. Standing resolute in the face of native attacks and Spanish imprisonment, he plays the English ‘self’ to the foreign ‘other’ throughout the narrative.¹¹

One final point to make about the book is its connection to the literary mode of life-writing. The vast majority of early
modern English travel literature has been preserved in the form of diaries or journals, media closely linked to the genre of autobiography. Although Hortop’s printed text differs in some important ways from a manuscript travel diary, several of its features are characteristic of life-writing. For one, the pamphlet (and most travel literature for that matter) centres upon the daily experiences of the narrator/author and covers a large span of time. Moreover, Hortop begins his narrative with his own birth and childhood in England. The story encompasses more than his travels alone; it is a story of a life, not merely of a journey. The text ends with Hortop’s return to England. The last phrase of the work proper — ‘and went to Redriffe’ — signals a return to origins, the completion of a cycle in which a young man leaves his home only to return more than two decades later as a weather-beaten, middle-aged survivor of manifold dangers. Perhaps for Hortop, life began with his birth, but in a way has ended with his return home. In the concluding lines of the narrative, a poem presumably written by Hortop, one sees a man who has experienced the highs and lows of the world, and has ultimately accepted his lot in life:

Extremities cannot always last,
Each thing doth bowe and bend:
In time both ioy and woe doth wast,
And all things have an end. (sig. D4r)

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