Four Types of Travellers

— A Study on the Rise of the Modern Travel Story —

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Introduction

It is more than probable that, when Sir Walter Scott entered upon *Kenilworth* with a general remark that 'it is the priviledge of tale-tellers to open their story in an inn,'[1] he kept the Tabard Inn in view, and that he professed to make the most of the 'advantage that falls on few.'[2]

This mode is indeed advantageous for tale-tellers because it enables them to present with the least artificiality a variety of characters together 'by aventure yfalle in felaweshipe'[3] seeming to promise some interesting development of the tale, for it is reasonably expected that 'the free rendez-vous of all travellers' should afford so many chances for 'the humour of each'[4] to display itself without ceremony or restraint, if all the travellers are talkative enough to tell respectively a few stories of certain length, and for all that, they are sensible enough to hold their tongues when one is speaking. This setting enables an author to put a number of stories or episodes of diverse origins with little positive connections together, under the pretext that they are the record of a voluntary conversation.

I

Perhaps we may well find the spring of this sort of narrative con-struction in the modern age in *Decameron*, presumed to have incited Chaucer, Marguerite de Navare and many others to write collections of tales applying similar settings. It is naturally the case with each of them that none of these authors seem to have been possessed by any ambition to make up some dramatic developments, either out of the setting or of the component episodes, so as to allow its theme to grow into an organizing plot, since they are much more concerned about how to entertain readers with a variety of strange and amusing episodes, than to offer them a narrative consistently organized from the beginning to the end. It is not

without reason that in these stories all the characters, most of whom are travellers, should be more talkative than active, while our common sense will regard it as more passable to assume the reverse of it, or at least to suppose them to be as talkative as active.

Indeed we find it quite evident when we turn our eyes from the Tabard back to the Black Bear to see the course of the events, that Scott is presenting on the side of the common sense a story most different in construction from Chaucer's in spite of the similarity of their first scenes. Besides, a glance at the literary history of Europe will reveal that the stories about travellers more active than talkative outnumber those by far, and in due course we shall find it most moderate to consider them a sort of variations on these. Some of the merits inherent in presenting these travellers which must have been inspiring many tale-tellers to write stories, running for the most part after the courses taken by them should now be clarified.

One merit is of the same nature with that which we have pointed out in regard to the *Canterbury Tales*, which is that the setting enables an author to put a variety of episodes together, in this case under the pretext that they are the record of the main characters' experiences; namely, what they witness or are involved in during the travel. Another merit peculiar to the mode derives, as one may detect with ease, from the pretext itself, for it imposes a pattern, or a sort of seeming consistency on these episodes merely because they have to occur successively in the course of the journey from start to arrival.

A third should be that the author is allowed to make the best use of casual coincidences designing his story in such a way as to develop in good accord with his motive, as it would seem, to some extent, not so artificial that a traveller should happen to meet with somebody, or to be somewhere convenient to the delivery of his intention. The reason why *Decameron*s are regarded as a sort of variation is that they solely owe their construction to the last of the merits as the virtual expence of others in order to carry out the authors' intention of presenting a certain numbers of short stories.

Since the days of our remotest ancestors these merits must have been inspiring imaginations of so many anonymous poets till at last *Odysseia*, the prototype of this sort of narrative, was completed in ancient Greece, for each of the heroes of the Greek myth, Cadmus, Perseus, Jason, Theseus and Hercules among others, is as great a rover as Odysseus. It can be assumed then with ample justice that there must have been a number of epics in the ancient and early medieval Europe, besides such magnificent long

poetries as *Aeneis*, *Beowulf*, *Chanson de Roland* and *Nibelungenlied* which present on a vast canvas those heroic dramas of the great rovers.

With a view to this tradition as well as to the very fact that the poems to be discussed below were recited by jongleurs who were themselves travellers, it was only natural that not a few of the poets who sang in the succeeding age, with practical aims either to favour their audience with the fantastic tales about chivalry and idealized love, courtly or pastoral, or to enlighten them by means of allegorical stories about moral doctrines and profound philosophies, which are generally called 'romances', much more limited and abstract literary forms as compared with the fullness and variety of epics, owe chiefly the construction of their poetries not only entertaining but didactic, to those merits when they introduced such fantastic romances as *Tristram*, *Bel inconnu*, *Le Morte Arthur*, or such allegorical ones as *Roman de la Rose* and *Piers the Plowman*.

The introduction of the method of printing from movable type in the middle of the fifteenth century, and the appearance of the 'reading' public prompted by it, rendered it no primary requisite for tales to be told in verse, for when the delivery of the tales had depended mostly on the recitals of joungleurs, it was required most that the words themselves should be arranged rhythmically enough to strike sweet their audience's ears, and at the same time to make it easy for the minstrels to learn them by heart. The result is that during the latter half of the fifteenth century a lot of those fantastic or allegorical poetries were translated into prose. It is worthy of notice that as is the case with *Le Morte Arthur* and *Morte Darthur*, no qualitative differece is to be detected in the fundamental point of those poets and these prose writers, both of whom drawing on the same sort of canvasses the adventures of similar travellers.

The view point, however, is incongruous with the essence of the prose, since there exists a fundamental difference between the language of poetry and that of prose; for as Jean-Paul Sartre it, the poets 'considere les mots comme des choses et non comme des signe....'

> Le prosateur écrit, c'est vrai et le poèt écrit aussi. Mais entre ces deux actes d'écrire il n'y a de commun que le mouvement de la main qui trace les lettres... les mots (en prose) ne sont pas d'abord des objets, mais des designations d'objets ....Ainsi arrive-t-il souvent que nous nous trouvions en possesion d'une certain idée qu'on nous a apprise par paroles, sans pouvoir nous rappeler un seul des mots qui nous l'on transmise. [5]

The prosaic attitude explained above is directly opposite to the belief

that everything in the world is linked to a unique and irreplaceable word
apparently designating and identifying it. It is on this account that Pierre
Guiraud, another French critic writes as follows:

> L'Antiquité, aussi bien que le Moyen Age, vit dans un monde créé. Les choses,
> Les êtres, toutes les catégories de la raison, de l'affectivité, de la sensibilité, les
> notions du bien, du mal, du beau, pré-existent de toute éternité, extérieures à
> l'individu, sous forme d'idées au sens platonicien du terme; et chaque chose, de
> toute éternité, est "nommée" que ce soit par le donneur de nom de Platon ou par
> Dieu créateur du Verbe; car le langage comme le monde est donné et, lui aussi,
> extérieur á l'homme. Chaque chose est liée au mot unique et irremplacable qui la
> désigne et l'identifie; les idées descendent dans les mots comme les âmes dans les
> corps et la fonction du poète, du troubadour, du trouvére est de retrouver cette
> forme dans laquelle s'incarne la réalité.
>   Pour l'homme moderne c'est l'expérience vécue qui identifie et authentifie le
> réel, pour l'homme médiéval c'est la forme; un roi doit correspodre à "idée" de roi
> — et on représente toujours avec son sceptre et sa couronne, comme le berger avec
> sa houlette et le moine avec ses sandales; de même Amour, Faux-Semblant et Doux-
> Déduit.[8]

As is generally pointed out, *Don Quixote*, published early in the seven-
teenth century is told from a view point exactly reverse to those prose
romance writers', and in consequence it is regarded as a parody of these
romances, or an 'anti-romance' deeply rooted in author's sense of 'l'expérience
vécue.' Again tracing back from Cervantes the current of the prose narra-
tives by a century, we find that owing to the same sense of the actual life
on the part of tale-tellers, the tradition has received a growing modification
during the period and that such tales as *Til Eulenspiegel*, *Pantagruel*, *Le
Disciple de Pantagruel*, *Utopia*, *Lazarillo de Tormes* or *The Unfortunate
Traveller*, respectively indicate the slow but steady development of a new
genre of prose narratives which are different, very much in the author's
preoccupation with actual life, but not so much in the materials dealt with,
and very little both in their construction and in the author's purpose which
is above all practical, from prose romances.

Since it has much been discussed by so many eminent literary critics
how to give the exact date of the rise of the novel, which inevitably
involves a further discussion about the definition of the novel distinct from
other prose narratives such as satire, allegory, entertainment or propagan-
dism, it might appear rather imprudent to deal with these early prose
narratives together with the prose fictions produced in the next two centu-
ries. But in truth these fastidious discussions are not really so important,
for modern narrative prose is so versatile in its form as well as in its
subject matter, that it has been hardly possible for any of the critics to

give a convincing definition of the novel. What these discussions seem to imply is no more than that the novel is a realistic prose narrative which endows its readers with a deep artistic impression intrinsic of the form; that is, the novel is defined as the masterpiece of the modern prose narratives.

Such a definition, however, claiming that the form should consist solely of the masterpieces is practically of no use, for it is hard to conceive of such a genre in defiance of our common sense that there should be masterpieces and failures mixed up in a literary genre. It is evident, moreover, that the definition carries with it these endless arguments about the borderline problems. It is more substantial to deal with them as a whole, whatever the name of the genre may be, and to regard these fastidious discussions as meant to select treasures out of trushes within a genre. It follows from this that we are at liberty to classify modern prose narratives for convenience' sake according to their particularities with regard, for example, either to their subject matters or to their structures.

II

Now we should go on with our considerations about the prose narratives concerning travellers published in those three centuries. It is not too extravagant to hold that these narratives form the main current of the genre during the period even if we preclude such collections of tales as *Cobbler of Canterbury* and *Tinker of Turney*, or such epistolary narratives as *Humphry the Clinker* and *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, for the reason that the fomer should, as has been discussed above, be regarded as a variation on the form virtually independent of its intrinsic pattern, and that, as the established literary theory proclaims, the latter should be regarded as a variation of the collections of model letters for the uneducated, though in fact not a few of the latter depend on the merits of the form; for as the famous first line of *Werther*, 'Wie froh bin ich, daß ich weg bin!' will suggest, correspondences must be exchanged between one far away from home and those remaining.

The unexampled prevalence of travel stories during the period should, of course, be ascribable to the firmly established literary tradition based on the merits of the convention, accomodated now with a handy vehicle of modern realistic prose. But it must be ascribed above all to the passion of the age driving many ambitious youths out of their native places, of mother country or of Europe itself, to go to the brave new world. Indeed it is during this period that Europeans' idea of the world was enlarged at one swoop to

the global scale, which provided authors with a vast frame to stretch their
canvasses on. It followed naturally that many of the tale-tellers were stimu-
lated to introduce their fictions, counting on the ardent curiosity on the
readers' part as to the strange customs and manners in the far countries,
provoked by the reports from the adventurers who had made geographical
discoveries, in the disguise of true stories, as is the case with More's *Utopia*,
one of the earliest of the sort, schemed to be told for the most part by a
Raphael Hythloday, assigned as a member of the parties who had navigated
under the command of Amerigo Vespucci; and it has been pointed out that
not a few of the readers of More's fable believed in Utopia. This disguise
effects, in short, to clothe their wildest actions and the most artificial plots
with verisimilitude appealing at the same time to readers' exoticism.

The passion of the age drove another sort of youths less adventurous but
more practical-minded out of their native towns or of mother countries to
see more of the life. It is suggestive that in those days 'to travel' delivered
in such a connection as, "I suppose, sir, you have travelled?" had an exact,
distinct meaning in England, which was 'to learn in some more civilized
countries.' As the set phrase, 'unlettered, untravelled and unexperienced'
indicates, it was one of the requisites to be an intellectual that he had
'travelled.' Journals of these travellers must have satisfied their audience not
with the surprising informations, but with the practical news concerning
the places they were more or less told about. It is believed that when
Lazarillo de Tormes was published in Elizabethan England it was accepted
as an introduction to the Spanish customs. This sort of interest, quite akin
to that of a student learning human geography, should have been concerned
not only with foreign but with home affairs as well. It is a very suggestive
fact that the author of the adventure story based on Selkirk's experience,
was also the writer of *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*,
estimated still now as an invaluable documents concerning the eighteenth
century England. It was thus evidently in expectation of this sort of interest
as well as the knowledge begotten of it, each of which effects to evoke the
sense of 'l'experience vécue' that in many of the stories, the places on the
route along which they develop are given by names.

Above is the outline of the rise of the modern prose narratives based on
the journey-convention, and we shculd now turn our eyes back to the works
themselves. Let us subdivide them into groups so as to gain a closer view
on them, and at the same time to explain their manifold influences on later
novels, in the similar way that we might classify the whole works of the

modern prose narratives. They can be grouped under four heads according to the types of the travellers with whom the actions develp and whose existences are the essentials of these stories.

A traveller of the first type is 'inert,' wholly subject to the author's mind, and his rôle in the work is to serve as a mirror to reflect his environ-ments on the route that are more substantially presented than himself, and thus holding together a series of occurrences he witnesses or hears of, like a thread stringing beads. Travellers in the second group are 'eccentric' who are rather arbitrary vagavonds schemed to entertain readers with many comic or ironic scenes they cause all the way. Those in the third group are 'growing,' who are to make a mental progress during the travels offering them certain initiating experiences. A traveller of the last type is 'heroic' whose striking personality is shown to reflect in every incident or character he encounters, giving a concıete wholeness to the story. Listed below is the result of the classification.

(1) Adventure Story and Moral Fable

   Utopia (E. 1516), *Le Disciple de Pantagruel* (F. 1538), *Lazarillo de Tormes* (Sp. 1553), *The Unfortunate Traveller* (E. 1594), *The Man in the Moon* (E. 1638), *Voyage dans la Lune* (F. 1657), *The Isle of Pines* (E. 1668), *Pilgrim's Progress* (E. 1678), *Fortunatus* (E. 1700?), *Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* (E. 1719), *Captain Singleton* (E. 1720), *Gulliver's Travels* (E. 1726), *Roderick Random* (E. 1748)

(2) Comic Story

   Til Eulenspiegel (G. 1515), *Pantagruel* (F. 1533), *Don Quixote* (Sp. 1605), *Long Meg of Westminster* (E. 1620), *Francion* (F. 1622), *Tom Jones* (E. 1749)

(3) Initiation Story

   Simplicissumus (G. 1669), *Gil Bras* (S. 1715), *Joseph Andrews* (E. 1742), *Wilhelm Meister* (G. 1786)

(4) Epic Story

   Robinson Crusoe (E. 1719), *Moll Flanders* (E. 1722), *Manon Lescaut* (F. 1731), *Vicar of Wakefield* (E. 1766)

Narratives with 'inert' travellers, outnumbering by far those included in other groups, are related most closely among them with the medieval ro-mances, and especially when aiming at the abnormal effects, they are inclined to be either a wild merodrama like *Oroonoko* (E. 1688), or a pornography like *Fanny Hill* (E. 1749). They are so constructed as to impress readers, who are more interested in what is going on than in the characters' responses to it, in the succession of incidents either really extraordinary and quite strange to their ordinary experiences, or quite familiar but represented in some uncommon points of view. Readers are induced to be absorbed in pur-

suing the adventures of travellers by whose favour they are prepossessed,
though at times authors' genuine intentions are of didactic sort when they
try to let the narratives illustrate some principles of life they believe in. It
is only when their sense of life, of 'l'experience vécue,' is profound and
concrete enough to make their readers *see* that their tales would be successful
either in the way of adventure stories or of moral fables. The following
century brought forth on this line *Ivanhoe*, *Kenilworth*, *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas
Nickleby*, *Alton Locke*, *Treasure Island* etc. in England, *Les Chouans*, *Salambô*,
Les Miserables, *Journal d'une femme de chambre* etc. in France, *Red Rover*,
Gordon Pym, *Deerslayer* etc. in America.

Together with most of the above, narratives in the second group are
generally referred to as 'picaresque roman,' yet the essential difference be-
tween these and those is that Quixotes are more impressively and solidly
presented than Lazalliros thanks to the eccentricity labelled on them, of
which the consequence is that each of the latters is more consistently
organized as a whole. since anyone who is eccentric should be comic by
himself, some of the minor works of the sort such as, for instance, *Til
Eulenspiegel* and *Long Meg* depend entirely on this crude comic effect which
is rather burlesque, while those picaresque masterpieces endow us with much
profounder comic ironies, discharged out of the frictions between appearance
and reality in ill accord with each other. For eccentricity is merely a relative
idea, as one is generally called eccentric when his view of life is more or
less contradictory with the majorities'. It should be sometimes hard to tell,
then, which of the views is really appropriate, and the comic irony, in
itself a penetrating criticism on the stereotyped views of life, is evoked out of
their conducts or opinions apparently ridiculous or absurd. *Pickwick Papers*
and *Huckleberry Finn* are among the greatest works of the group published
in the nineteenth century.

The third, belonging to what is named by Germans 'Bildungsroman',
scored the greatest success in Germany as the term will suggest, while in
England, though as a matter of fact many of the works titled, 'The Life of
So and so' evidently depended on the pattern only to accomplish little
conviction, it was not so prevalent. The introductory part of *Moll Flanders*
is one of the rare successful cases and *David Copperfield* is among the failures,
as it is hard to believe that David has grown more than physically. *Les
Illusions Perdus* and *L'Education sentimentale* are French masterpieces published
in the following century, while in England *Heart of Darkness* is prominent.

The stories about 'heroic' travellers, a brilliant revival of the epic now

in prose are, in comparison with those included in the above groups, more consistently organized and freer from the defects common to them that their plots develop at the mercy of contingencies, and as the result episodes are accumlated in them rather than juxtaposed, owing to the tragic intensity evoked not only by the magnificency and dignity of their striking person-alities they share with their ancient ancestors, but by the appropriate temper on the part of the authors. *Heart of Midlothian*, *Chartreuse de Parme* and *Moby Dick* would be listed among the greatest literary achievements of the next century of the type.

References

1) Walter Scott: *Kenilworth*, 1821, Everyman's Library, *p.* 1
2) *cf.* P. O. D.
3) Geoffrey Chaucer: *Canterbury Tales*, 1387, 'General Prologue'*ll*, 24–5
4) Scott : *op. cit.*
5) Jean–Paul Sartre : *Situations II* Gallimard 1948, *p.* 70
6) Pierre Guiraud: *La stylistique*, Que Sais–je, 1957, *pp.* 29–30
7) Henry Fielding: *Joseph Andrews,* 1742, Penguin Books *p.* 70

Summary

In the history of English novels there is a pattern so fondly employed by many novelists, which is to let a traveller play the leading part, presenting the story as a document of his experience during the travel. It is no exaggeration to say that most of the narratives in prose published in the eighteenth century and during the two centuries preceding it, are dependent on it.

Its conspicuous prevalence during the period should be ascribable, for one thing, to the tradition arising in the day of the ancient epics taking advantage of the merits inherent in the pattern. It is to be ascribed at the same time to the passion of the age which is the age of the Geographical Discoveries, which endowed tale–tellers with a vast canvas on which to draw a story with a sense of concrete reality.

We may clssify these stories into four groups according to the types of the travellers, each of which produced in the following century a number of novels exhibiing its characteristic features.