


Diachronic Profile of The Evolution of Travel Writing Genre		Literature Keywords: travelogue, travel paradigms, travel writer.
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<p data-bbox="228 485 350 516">Abstract</p> <p data-bbox="175 537 1446 686">The intention of this paper is to provide an overview of the development and the characteristics of the travelogue genre with reference to recent theoretical and literary publications on this issue. At the center of our attention is the impact of motivations for travelling and of the perceptions of the world on the creation of certain travel paradigms, giving also an overview of the socio-historical and other circumstances that have conditioned the continuity or the interruption of the conventions of travel writing through the ages.</p>		

Although travel books have always been greatly popular, they have become subject of extensive literary and theoretical examination only in the last few decades, mostly thanks to the development of imagology studies. The flourishing literature of this genre opened many issues, including the approach to travelogues, their literary status, documentary value, role of the travel writer, problem of meeting various cultures and many others. While many authors have written about various discourses and travel patterns in the presentation of different countries, just a few of them situated their research within a broader historical perspective, showing the development and transformation of travel paradigms through the epochs. The intention of this paper is to summarize some of the research findings of scholars who have dealt with these issues.

In the introductory study of the collection of essays entitled *Travels and Visions* the editors Elsner and Rubies identify idealism, imperialism and empiricism as the three main motivations that lead to the shifting of various paradigms of travel and types of travel literature (Elsner & Rubies, 1999). To this criterion of motive the Russian historian Ksenia Polouektova added another two: the traveller's experience of space and time and the experience of his own corporality. In her doctoral thesis entitled *Foreign land as a Metaphor of One's Own*, she provides an overview of continuity and discontinuity of conventions of travel writing, from the records of pilgrims, warriors and missionaries, merchants over itineraries and adventurer, naturalist and ethnographer notes, tourist guides and bedekers, to travelogues who have found their place among the works of "belles lettres." Although her study deals with paradigms of travel writing that emerged during the 1200s through the 1800s, hers, as well as the criteria of Elsner and Rubie are suitable for the analysis of the latest travel books.

In the analysis of pilgrimage as the first practice that has led to significant production of travel narratives, scholars emphasize the central place of the allegory of traveling as a spiritual journey and maturation. Although it predicts movement through space, usually accompanied by a number of difficulties and dangers, this type of travel is primarily seen as an inner experience which aims for spiritual elevation, and the pursuit of a virtuous existence. Such a goal also influences the traveller's relationship with the outer world, so that the places he travels through in an effort to reach the final destination develop figurative meanings. The writer is not focused on

the world around him, but on himself, and the meaning that a place can produce is defined by the cult or written in the scriptures that "monopoly map the terrain" (Elsner & Rubies, 1999; Polouektova, 2009). Insisting on allegorical values at the expense of figurative representation results in the impossibility to understand these accounts if not accompanied by mythological apparatus, whose authority is ultimate (Polouektova, 2009).

According to Polouektova, the traveller's lack of interest in material reality comes from the unique experience of space, time and corporality. The perception of time in which the present moment has no privileged place, but is subordinate to a distant past and to a vision of the future and represents only a temporary stop on the journey to eternity, also shapes the space as a continuous and straight road to the main destination - the divine mercy in the other world (Polouektova, 2009). Likewise, the experience of the body as sinful, as the main obstacle in achieving the virtue of the soul, the concern that attention to corporality could compromise the spirituality of travel, led to the neglect of the material circumstances under which it occurred (Polouektova, 2009: 36). In the opinion of Attilio Brillì the itineraries (itineraria) of pilgrims and guides (libri poenitentiales), for their schematic physiognomy, are direct precursors of rudimentary guides, the notebooks of travellers and merchants (Brillì, 2008). The main feature of these is that the more pilgrims and merchants strived to be precise in documenting stages and costs of the journey, the less they noticed the natural and urban environment that surrounded them (Brillì, 2008).

Polouektova indicates great analogies between the travel goals of pilgrims and crusaders: they both seek salvation of the soul and this shared purpose forms their travel accounts in a similar way (Polouektova, 2009). Significant changes will be brought by the chivalric tradition, reflected in the replacement of religious motives with mystical and romantic ones, setting the protagonist at the center of events and storytelling (Polouektova, 2009). Chivalric ideal is based on the motif of the search (usually for the Holy Grail) and on the cult of the courtly love, which leads to changes in the discourse and creates narratives of a more open-ended structure and diverse cultural approach (Polouektova, 2009).

Although the Middle Ages is not only marked by travels guided by religious aspirations, Polouektova does not opine that travel writings of traders, diplomats, pirates and scholars should be treated as empirical, due to the dominant influence of religious traditions on their narrative structure, despite the secular motives for travelling (Polouektova, 2009).

Although traces of naturalistic and ethnographic practices can be found in antiquity, the dissemination of this paradigm of travel is associated with the fourteenth century and its faith in the premise of empiricism, reaching its culmination point several centuries later. It does not represent a break with the medieval tradition, but a kind of continuity of belief in a universal transcendental truth, available to all through the direct experience. (Elsner & Rubies, 1999) The key text that denotes the turning point in this sense is the travel book of Marko Polo *Il Milione*, which creates a new type of travelogue which aims to entertain and to educate the reader. This type of travel paradigm does not need an allegorical legitimacy and the interest in the outside world is a sufficient motive for undertaking a journey (Polouektova, 2009). However, regard for the material reality does not have to produce a reliable image of it, as evidenced by *The Travels of*

Marco Polo. In fact, the tendency of travel writers to enrich their presentations with imagination will later lead to frequent accusations, causing the French Encyclopedia to define the traveller as a person who travels and sometimes gives descriptions of his journey, but very rarely in a veracious way (as cited in Guagnini, 1994).

The main difference between the travelogue model offered by Marco Polo and naturalistic and ethnographic travel accounts that emerged four centuries later, is the fact that Marco Polo's desire to entertain the readers prevails upon the intent to convey the lived experience. On the other hand, the criteria of empirical validity were defined at the end of the sixteenth - early seventeenth century (Polouektova, 2009).

Mission travels should also be considered as a part of an empirical context since they obey different impulses in relation to the practice of pilgrimage. Driven by the desire to spread Christian thought, missions are related to geographic expansion of horizons. Missionaries sought to research and determine the type of social structure and characteristics of non-Christians in order to convert them more easily, which led to privileging empirical methods and a rational approach in describing the new reality (Elsner & Rubies, 1999). Elsner and Rubie argue that this rationalist turn emerges from the conversational features of the missionary task. Unlike the pilgrims and crusaders, whose encounter with non-Christians was of an aggressive nature, manifesting itself through automatic rejection or attack, missionaries tended to study their belief system in order to be able to refute it with arguments. In fact, some extremely valuable readings of Christian theology are designed as a conversation with Jews and Muslims (eg. *Summa contra gentiles* of St. Thomas Aquinas), or as an aid in the practice of preaching (Elsner & Rubies, 1999).

Humanism combines pragmatic and idealistic goals of promoting educational travel with faith in their transformation effects on human moral qualities. Educational travels will have a long tradition, and their most famous manifestation was the *Grand Tour* (Buzard, 2005). Drawing on literary examples from antiquity (travels of Ulysses), humanism has led to a different understanding of the relationship between the sensitive and cognitive, between the traveller and the world that surrounds him. Beyond the upcoming rationalism and empiricism, the waning popularity of religious discourse was influenced by encounters with the brutal reality of conquest during the Spanish colonization of South America, the incongruity of missionary aspirations with the actual situation in the colonies, with corruption and abuse (Buzard, 2005). Among the new motives that appear in travelogues, Polouektova indicates vanity and frustration as the probable consequences of post-medieval consciousness which lost the virginity of the religious vision and at the same time was culturally encouraged toward self-reflexivity and self-criticism (Buzard, 2005).

From the time of the Renaissance, travel has become a very structured and elaborate method for mastering knowledge about the world, and thus the acquisition and classification of knowledge are the most common motives for undertaking a journey (Leed, *La mente del viaggiatore: dall'Odissea al turismo globale*, 1992). A special relationship to travel that gained popularity in aristocratic circles at the end of the sixteenth century was created by the intellectual curiosity of the new science that observed natural and artificial phenomena, contemporarily showing an interest in the art of antiquity (Brilli, 2008).

The popularity of travel was directly proportional to the spread of geographic research, establishing strong diplomatic and trade relations between different countries and trying to become better acquainted with the cultures and political issues in unknown places. The lack of university programs in the sixteenth and seventeenth century also contributed to wide-spread travel, underscoring its importance as the only way of acquiring knowledge in political science, economics, modern history, foreign languages (Brilli, 2008).

Increased desire to learn about foreign countries and the ability of travel to break through the complex systems of economic, cultural and social order have made travel writing a form of academia through which intellectuals became involved in the general, political and cultural issues of foreign countries. The intent in creating instructions for travellers is to focus their attention on the phenomena from which they can derive the greatest benefits before returning to their country. The most famous in this regard is the essay "Of travel" by Francis Bacon, in which he offered a list of things and activities most worthy of a traveller's attention:

"the courts of princes, especially when they give audience to ambassadors; the courts of justice, while they sit and hear causes; and so of consistories ecclesiastic; the churches and monasteries, with the monuments which are therein extant; the walls and fortifications of cities, and towns, and so the heavens and harbors; antiquities and ruins; libraries; colleges, disputations, and lectures, where any are; shipping and navies; houses and gardens of state and pleasure, near great cities; armories; arsenals; magazines; exchanges; burses; warehouses; exercises of horsemanship, fencing, training of soldiers, and the like; comedies, such whereunto the better sort of persons do resort; treasuries of jewels and robes; cabinets and rarities; and, to conclude, whatsoever is memorable, in the places where they go." (Bacon, 1625)

This list has remain an undisputed authority through the following two centuries and continued to constitute the basic structure of guides and travelogues (Brilli, 2008).

The Eighteenth century is defined by Brilli as the "golden age of travel," a century of "incredible blooming of travel literature" (Brilli, 2008). The popularity of travel literature in the period of Enlightenment as a "tangible and culturally sustained manifestation of madness involving European upper classes" is caused by a renewed faith in the unique essence of human nature hidden under the diversity of customs, laws, religions and languages of the peoples and nations. This optimistic view also leads to satisfaction in studying diversity, even deformity (Brilli, 2008). Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, in which the diversity of practices is considered just a "colorful drapery," will emerge in descriptions of everything that is different, unusual and bizarre, provided that this difference may be related to the principle of unity which connects people and things, natural and urban environment. (Brilli, 2008)

During the eighteenth century people showed great interest for the uncovering and the reconstruction of the past in order to determine their own place in the history of civilization. (Peković, 2010). The development of civilization was interpreted through the evolutionary model, on the one hand as a decay that is an estrangement from the original state of innocence, and on the other, as progress, development and overcoming primitiveness. Primitive civilizations were seen as a period of human youth, whilst European civilization was depicted as the age of maturity (Leed, *Per mare e per terra: viaggi, missioni, spedizioni alla scoperta del mondo*, 1996).

The belief in the existence of an objective truth, a number of geographic and scientific discoveries, the Enlightenment faith in the human ability to fully comprehend and control the reality through science will become the major feature of scientific travelogues (Polouektova, 2009). In this regard, the American literary theorist Mary Louise Pratt emphasizes the importance of publication of Linnaeus classification of the natural world, *Systema Naturae* (1735), which led to the global interest in scientific research, as well as to the forming of a large international scientific expedition with the task to determine the shape of the earth (Pratt, 1992). The growing insistence on information and data, on a "true" representation of the world, has led to the elimination of fantasy and fairy-tale elements in travelogues and travel writers exert significant effort to correct errors, to convey what they actually experienced and studied, while recognizing the limitations of their analysis and point of view.

Thanks to these efforts, as well as to the development of empiricism, which acknowledged the importance of the senses (especially the sense of sight) in revealing the world and gave priority to personal experience over textual knowledge, traveling throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century became the main database and source of knowledge for social and natural sciences (Leed, *Per mare e per terra: viaggi, missioni, spedizioni alla scoperta del mondo*, 1996). Thus, the information becomes the most precious value of a travel account, the focus of storytelling, while the traveller has the role of commentator and interpreter. From the belief that everything can be determined by measuring and counting derives the "predominantly civil and masculine image of the world that is reflected in the so-called 'objective' travelogues: ethnological, botanical, geographical... whose main characteristic is 'materiality' of the world and numerical value" (Peković, 2010). The desire for mapping the world and ethnographic interests were rarely innocent, but went hand by hand with the imperialistic tendencies, with the desire to establish domination over others (Elsner & Rubies, 1999).

Beside the scientific travelogue, with which it shares the belief in the possibility to arrange the world with the appliances of reason, in the eighteenth century "sentimental" travel also had its audience, shifting the focus of attention on the narrator and his experience, with an emphasis on drama (Blenton, 2002). The theme of survival of the traveller in a hostile environment and heroic pathos do not represent a novelty compared to previous travelogue tradition, but now they rely on political and philosophical ideals that have had their most famous expression in the novel *Robinson Crusoe* (Polouektova, 2009).

Romanticism with its doubts in the possibility of human reason brings a different cultural climate. In giving priority to emotions and to the irrational in establishing a relationship between the man and the world, romanticism identifies travel experience as a means to discover both ourselves and others (Polouektova, 2009). „Ultimately, the romantic travel offers a reconciliation between the subject of experiences and the object of descriptions, turning the object of experience in the subject, exposing his point of view, his imagination and reflection (...) There is a mixture of real and fictional, the nature begins to be perceived in a subjective way, the geographical accuracy and scientific pretensions are being abandoned; lyricism emerges" (Gvozden, 2004). Changes in travel literature are reflected in the assignment of new roles to the travel writer, in his "rejection to economize with impressions" in refusing the interdiction of talking about himself (Peković, 2010).

The focus of the narrative shifts from the outer to the inner world as a travel writer is no longer perceived as the only recipient of images and their interpreter, but as a "beacon or searchlight able to revive the inert nature that animates the landscape, encourage its potential vitality by conveying to it his own emotional charge" (Brilli, 2008). This paradigm is preceded by promoting travel as aesthetic experience, as enjoyment in the untouched wild nature, which means its separation from moral, religious, and educational goals (Polouektova, 2009). Romantic travellers establish a special relationship with nature, which, surpassing its own materiality, has a strong effect on their psyche and reveals to them some special meaning (Polouektova, 2009: 72). In addition to the general repertoire of themes, romanticism also sets the archetype of a rebellious hero that tends to express his own individuality despite restrictions represented in family and social authorities. Slobodanka Pekovic asserts that the rebellion was the main driving mechanism of the time, primarily as the middle-class revolt against aristocratic starch and pomposity and against elitism in general.

One of the key features of most books produced in this period is the pursuit of authenticity, which manifests itself as nostalgia for the "lost time", a slower way of life whose rhythm and development is not dictated by industrialization and progress (Polouektova, 2009). Hence preference toward societies with a more traditional social order, which remind the traveller of his native country from a bygone era, as well as the constant search for the exotic. Polouektova therefore considers that authors have travelled in order to be able to present their knowledge, not to verify it (Polouektova, 2009).

Unlike the Enlightenment spirit that tracked a unique essence beneath all differences, during the nineteenth century the belief in the impossibility of reducing these differences takes root, and there is a pursuit to identify the special features of a place, landscape and people (Brilli, 2008). The separation from previous cultural traditions is reflected in the permeation of the role of the writer as a narrator and protagonist, as well as in linking-up the documentary goal with the "fabulous matrix of narrative," a practice that was harshly denounced in the eighteenth century. Therefore travel accounts are rich with Romanesque elements such as helpers and opponents (e.g. innkeepers, coachmen, bandits), obstacles to be crossed, puzzles to be solved, dangers to be overcome, etc. Thus, impassable forests and mountains, swollen rivers, remote taverns, news about outlaws, etc. correspond to difficult tasks to which heroes of novels are exposed. (Brilli, 2008).

Romanticism coincides with the birth of mass tourism and strives towards a strict distinction from the new paradigm by appropriating features of elitist experience emerged from the pursuit for the original and authentic (Polouektova, 2009). In insisting on the dichotomy of traveller/tourist, Romanticism glorifies the adventurer who selects carefully the places to visit and describe, unlike tourists who do not drift from the beaten path and are slaves to the consumer fashions of the modern world (Polouektova, 2009). The pioneer of the modern tourism industry is considered to be Thomas Cook, who, starting from his first tour in 1841, made traveling more democratic by organizing itineraries, accommodation, food, guides, etc. for a number of travellers (Hulme & Youngs, 2005). A decade earlier a radical change in writing travelogues occurred. In fact, till the 1830-ies travel books on one hand represented a description of visited places filtered

through personal experience, while on the other they offered a list of useful instructions. In the decade between 1830 and 1840 there is an emergence of essayistic and travelogue literature with strong literary aspirations, while, on the other hand, the first travel guides of John Murray and Karl Beadeker are being printed (Brilli, 2008).

The technological development has contributed to a broad expansion of mass travel by eliminating the risks and physical efforts for travellers, making even the most remote places on the planet accessible. The transformation of travel from individual to collective experience is the main aspect that underpins the difference of this paradigm in comparison with the previous ones (Polouektova, 2009). The change in the means of transport affects the traveller's perception of space, substantially limiting his exploration of the environment, especially if traveling by plane.

Travel is seen as an escape from the monotony and stress of daily life, it is associated with rest and leisure, and sightseeing becomes its key activity. Because it seems that there is a general "consensus" about what is worth visiting, certain places become attractions "through a double process of consecration of place and ritualization of sightseeing" (Polouektova, 2009).

The modernist discourse in travel accounts also tends towards differentiation in relation to the paradigm of tourist travel. In the words of Croatian comparatist, Dean Duda, "modernism prefers individuals, solitude, melancholy, the experiment with foreign and unknown, the world whose center is questionable, so the artist/traveller is actually a subject in exile, an existential loner who does not have a place or home. Modernity, therefore, is based on the specific logic of accommodation: his subjects are located as being dislocated" (Duda, 2005). As a fundamental process of mediation of (a) traveller's experience, Duda points out the *ironic desilusion* or *disjunctive irony*, that is, an ironic view of the modern world as a disjointed and fragmented. (Duda, 2005). Refraining from the identification with the national and collective, travellers resolutely attack rituals and practices of the tourism industry by choosing an antithetical position in relation to tourists (Duda, 2005). "Therefore the own sensibility is produced by constantly exposing the traveller's Other and the deep-rooted collective identifications. In fact, in that way it is created an almost archetypal dramatic tension between a lonely, sensitive individual on one side and any form of collectivism on the other" (Duda, 2005).

The multiple permeations of the art and tourism industry are the main feature of postmodernism. The sociologist John Urry in the book *The tourist gaze* describes postmodernism as the dissolution of boundaries, not only between high and low culture, but also between different cultural forms such as tourism, arts, education, photography, television, music, sport, commerce and architecture (Urry, 2002). He marks the postmodern culture as anti-auditory, since it denies the separation of aesthetic and social as well as the claim that art is arranged differently than life. The forms of postmodernism do not arise in contemplation, rather, they are a product of absentmindedness. The postmodern culture affects the audience directly, through regimes of pleasure rather than through formal properties of aesthetic material. When it comes to the relationship with reality, while modernism sees its representation as problematic, postmodernism problematizes the reality itself (Lash, 1990). One of the key elements of postmodernism is "the game", which sociologist Maxine Feifer describes by introducing the concept of "post-tourist". In addition to the wide choice between aesthetic, information, entertainment, and other content from

which he derives satisfaction, the post-tourist has a growing awareness that he is a tourist and that tourism represents a series of games, not the authentic experience. The post-tourist knows that the traditional fishing village could not survive without the income from tourism, that he is not "a time traveller" if he visits a historical place, that he does not become a "noble savage" if he goes on a tropical beach and that he is not an invisible observer when visiting an indigenous tribe (Feifer, 1985).

Given that travel accounts owe their popularity to the ability of transformation, we could conclude that not only can we expect the emergence of new paradigms, but also the reproduction of the existing ones. Although travelogues in literary and aesthetic sense are rarely able to reach the fame of other genres, since most travel writers are not actually writers, they are characterized by a high imagological potential, which provides us the possibility of extensive interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research.

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