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Adolf D. Klarmann  
Dürrenmatt

Roy F. Nichols  
The Challenge to  
the Historian

A. V. Riasanovsky  
The Foreign Relations  
of Ancient Russia

Robert E. Spiller  
The Alchemy of Literature

*A scholarly publication of the  
Philomathean Society*

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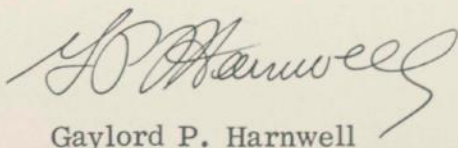
Dear Reader:

Pascal has written that, "Things are always best in their beginning," and the publication of a new magazine is a particularly promising and stimulating event. *Era's* publishing venture is applauded by all of us who are concerned with advancing knowledge and scholarship.

As you turn the pages of this magazine, you will be sharing the interests of members of the University faculty and of its student body. You can enjoy a more leisurely and thoughtful encounter with your fellows, be they teachers or students, than is always possible in the hurly burly of daily contacts. Lawrence Sterne once noted that writing, when properly managed, is but a different name for conversation; and although we may quarrel somewhat with his definition, the time you spend in the formal exchange of ideas presented in the writing of *Era* will enable you to explore with some of the best University minds the currents of present thought. The tone of the conversation will be a very high one and an instructive as well as a social occasion.

The University is delighted that the Philomathean Society is printing *Era* to bring current University ideas in the humanities to the attention of its family and friends. The Society has a distinguished 150-year history of publications; the continuation of its fine tradition will help ensure a lively intellectual atmosphere on the campus. The participation of the undergraduates in the life of University thought and action is vital, and this publication is a splendid contribution to that life. The University is pleased and indeed proud to welcome *Era* to Pennsylvania.

Very sincerely,



Gaylord P. Harnwell



## Editorial

With *Era* we hope to satisfy the need on the Pennsylvania campus for a scholarly undergraduate publication. The desire of the Philomathean Society in publishing *Era* is to stimulate the minds of its readers and to increase interest on the campus in intellectual activity. The articles will primarily be those of faculty members. In future issues, however, we plan to also offer student writing and art.

At the University, because of the great diversity of interest and the tendency toward concentration in individual fields, it is easy to be unaware of others' pursuits. In this issue there are articles on American History, European History, European Literature and American Literature; future issues will draw material from these and many other areas of study. Our intention is to instill a sense of the community of learning that is the University of Pennsylvania.

Acknowledgement is due Gene D. Gisburne and Robert F. Longley for their help in the initial stages of publication. Without Peter Rona's personal drive in leading the Society and securing faculty and administration support, *Era* would not have been possible.

Daniel Alkon





## THE CHALLENGE TO THE HISTORIAN

Roy F. Nichols

The problem of discovering the forces determining the design of American democracy has been a concern of historians over many years. The challenge to interpret has been so exciting that it has created a species of intellectual civil war among scholars. This conflict of the pen and type-writer may well be considered for whatever light it may throw on the process of understanding. The explanations historians offer for the actions of their forbears, at times, can be as revealing as the acts themselves.

When Americans first began making political history and later when they undertook to tell how they had done it, those who were writing the history were not prone to do much save chronicle. But questions of causation arose as they were bound to. At first these accomplishments were ascribed to Divine Providence and Manifest Destiny. But as German scholarship migrated to American institutions of higher learning, its teachers introduced the idea of a germ theory of historical development. Institutional seeds germinated in antiquity, burst and flowered in the late eighteenth century, guided by some built-in growth determinant. Democracy originated in the German forests and matured in the English and American societies under some form of Anglo-Saxon determining pattern which continued to be potent and grew even more influential as the

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colonists crossed the Atlantic to the American wilderness.

Then at the conclusion of the nineteenth century as the United States was celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus's great exploit, a young scholar in the West, Frederick Jackson Turner of the University of Wisconsin, in 1893 made a dramatic announcement. He proclaimed his famous Frontier theory which in almost poetic strain accounted for American democracy. It was not the European institutional inheritance, nor the seaboard experience which shaped the republic, it was the vast treasure of free land, much of it forested, and the constantly advancing population which together had made the pattern. Man's constant westward quest for cheap land and the rude nature of his pursuit of the frontier kept Americans rugged, resourceful, and democratic. Men cast away the sophistication of the old world and the East, and in these raw surroundings created and continued the democratic processes of self-government.

"American democracy was born of no theorist's dream; it was not carried in the *Susan Constant* to Virginia, nor in the *Mayflower* to Plymouth. It came out of the American forest, and it gained new strength each time it touched a new frontier. Not the Constitution but free land and an abundance of natural resources open to a fit people, made the democratic type of society in America for three centuries while it occupied its empire."<sup>1</sup> Every time democracy reached a new frontier it gained strength as did the giant when he touched the earth. Each frontier renewed the creative virtue of the American people advancing to greater achievement of equality, virtue, and self-governing power.

Turner believed that his pattern had universal application and not only had determined American evolution, but quite possibly that of all societies. He traced a pattern of migration and settlement from metropolis to the frontier. First the hunter and explorer had penetrated the wilderness. These were followed by the trader and the herdsman with his pastoral way of life. Next the unspecialized frontier

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farmer broke the soil, eventually to give way before those who would organize settled rural communities with their neater farms. Finally the merchant and industrialist brought the city and the factory town. In this procession of the enterprising, the alluring force was the existence of this vast expanse of free land, which drew migrants ever westward and at the same time acted as a safety valve. The discontented and the unsuccessful could always look for a new opportunity and remove the dangers arising from their maladjustment to the older communities.

Turner appeared at a time when it was almost inevitable that American historical thinking should be vitally affected by the fact that successive waves of population had been surging across the vast continent. For these proliferating western communities were bound to demand their place in the intellectual as well as in the political sun. Men and women in the West would challenge the preoccupations of eastern scholarship as they did the rule of eastern political interests. For this purpose the trans-Appalachian communities were bound to produce someone who would express the newly self-conscious demand of this younger section for historical recognition and definition. Had it not been Turner, it would have been someone else. These western communities had reached the point in cultural maturity where they had to know their history, and to teach themselves, they would produce a bard, a chronicler, or an historian. Quite significantly he appeared at the University of Wisconsin where a group under the leadership of the antiquarian, Dr. Lyman C. Draper, had accumulated a great mass of historical material on the West.

Turner almost literally snatched his hypothesis out of the social and intellectual air which he breathed. By the 1890's the revolution wrought by the introduction of steam and electrical power and the advent of factory, railroad, steamship, telegraph, and cable had shrunk the world into a single market and had caused such strains and difficulties in economic life as to influence certain economists to characterize the years 1873-1896 as The Great Depression.



This was particularly marked in agrarian communities where, especially in the American West, there was a great advance in the production of grain and meat and a fall in prices in a glutted world-market.

This condition in the early nineties produced a neo-Malthusianism, and some writers and publicists looked forward to the exhaustion of the supply of arable land as an instrument to restore prices. Others were concerned about immigration, wishing to restrict the free migration of immigrants to America to conserve the land. The idea of the exhaustion of arable land was in the air. Turner found it in the Johns Hopkins University, at the University of Wisconsin, and in the scientific and popular literature which he and his teachers were reading.

Western bard that he was, poet of his culture, Turner examined the whole American experience and made it western. His was a moving epic which swept Americans off their feet and for forty years it went hardly challenged. In fact, as long as Turner lived, there was remarkably little criticism of his concept. Only after his death when there was the usual period of obituary writing and career evaluation did real criticism begin. Such appraisal was bound to come. Turner's skill had made people for a season lose sight of the fact that the frontier process had been an active concern of American historians long before his day, that his contribution was but a spectacular and, it proved, passing phase of an interest extending over some three centuries. American historians had of necessity to trace the growth of frontier settlement from the moment they first put pen to paper in the seventeenth century.

The criticism which developed in the 1930's pointed out that the theory was unstructured. No adequate exemplification had ever been worked out to prove that the theory had facts to stand upon. It had been much easier to enjoy the beauty of his poetry than to submit his logic to any rigorous factual proof. Turner's generalizations which were most criticized were five in number. It was stated that he had provided no consistent definition of the frontier. The

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existence of free lands did not have the controlling influence which he claimed for it. The stages of development applied only to the Middle West. The frontier was not the sole source of American democracy; the influence of Europe was restored. The traits of American character supposed to be derived from western experiences were the products of a more complex series of determinants.

The nation-builders, it was pointed out, were not inventive, they were neither pioneers nor institutional discoverers. Rather, they were adaptive and repetitive. They liked to project in parallel lines. Pioneers from New England, the Middle States, or the South tended to bring their constitutions and laws with them. Political practice on the frontier tended to be more conservative than liberal. Voters showed greater distrust of elective officials, more interest in protecting property rights than in extending suffrage. There was a tendency, over the years, when they made changes or introduced improvements, to follow the East rather than to blaze new institutional trails or to build improved roads for the benefit of the East. When Democracy was carried into the forest, it was modified along more conservative lines.

Other limitations are best understood by brief reference to two of Turner's most perceptive critics, Henry Nash Smith<sup>2</sup> and David M. Potter<sup>3</sup>, men who owed their interest and insight partly to the new field of learning, American Studies, and partly to the new concepts developing in the recently identified behavioral sciences. These critics pointed out that Turner's hypothesis was similar to the agrarian philosophy of the physiocrats, and that it dealt only with conditions and values associated with rural societies. His hypothesis, Smith pointed out, like the agrarian philosophies, "offered no intellectual apparatus for taking account of the industrial revolution." It was "powerless to confront issues arising from the advance of technology." Potter concurred with Smith and further emphasized the concept that culture, as well as environment, controls men's behavior. Therefore, the fruits of technology, which Turner



largely ignored, as well as land and other natural resources, must be recognized as significant in determining American social development. Thus, Smith and Potter broadened and deepened the nature of the critical appraisal of the Turner thesis. They deflected it from the textual and turned it in the direction of the conceptual. The imaginative as well as the factual limitations of the hypothesis were thus more sharply defined.

As Earl Pomeroy pointed out<sup>4</sup>, the time was ripe for a new approach. The most obvious of Turner's limitations, or at least of the limitations which his associates and others seemed to derive from his writing and teaching, was the concept of environment determining a western society dedicated to rough manners and radical politics. He, for his part, thinks of the Western culture as one in which "conservatism, inheritance and continuity of custom brought from older communities bulked at least as large in the history of the West as radicalism, crudity and environmental determinism." He thinks of the frontiersman as a colonist, "a cultural transplant, often more traditionalist in attitude than his cousins in the older settlements . . . . The disposition of the settlers was basically to conserve and transport what they had known before." Institutions and values changed so little, he believes, because so often the settlers went forth not to create *new* communities so much as to seek individual self-realization and self-improvement.

As early as 1945, Fulmer Mood<sup>5</sup> had called upon American historians to "concentrate on the main professional obligation of the times, namely the resolving of the frontier issue." In 1961 Lee Benson<sup>6</sup> reiterated the plea. On the basis of his own reconsideration of Turner's work, he dealt in the imperative: "we must subject the frontier thesis to a thorough and most searching re-evaluation."

During the more than twenty years of controversy various efforts had in fact been made to take account of the criticism and to reassess the theory in its light. Very effective work in this direction had been performed most



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appropriately at the University of Wisconsin where Turner formulated his hypothesis. Professor Merle Curti undertook a study, *The Making of an American Community: A Case Study of Democracy in a Frontier County* (Stanford, 1959). He essayed therein to test Turner's contention that there was an intimate and special association between the process of the settlement of a new area and democracy, defining democracy as equality of opportunity for acquiring property, the process of settlement and the development and expression of leadership, and between the process of settlement and the achievement of approximate equality of status. Secondly, he wished to find out whether traditional historical methods would yield greater objectivity when supplemented by quantification, by the use of a "control group" concept, and by certain other social science methods.

He made a microscopic study of Trempealeau County, Wisconsin, as a sample unit similar to many such on the frontier. In order to seek an intimate understanding of the process of social cohesion on the frontier, he studied the land titles and mortgages registered, the voting lists, voting statistics, real and personal property distribution, the statistics of literacy, the records of school attendance, the incidence of intermarriage, the participation in community activity of individuals in the role of major and minor leaders, and related these situations to all householders and their families and to all non-householders from 1850 through 1880. Social mobility and geographical mobility were studied. The basic data came from the census, supplemented by newspapers, dockets, diaries, letters, and reminiscences of early settlers. The proper structure over time was compared with that in an older Vermont rural region similar in size and population.

This study in many respects confirms the Turner thesis, that free land makes for economic and political equality, with some qualifications. By some indices democracy is shown to have been more fully realized in the earlier rather than the later stages of settlement and vice

versa. There was greater democracy earlier in landholding, greater equality of holdings.

On the other hand there on occasion proved to be less political democracy, more acceptance of leadership by individuals, sometimes patriarchal, promoter leaders. Here again there must be qualification, for in the earlier days there was much effort to offer inducement to people to come and buy land, and emphasis was placed on equality of opportunity to participate in improvements. The concept of a better and improved community was a good advertisement. Taxes and their spending were kept pretty much under the control of the taxpayers, and these pioneers were keen to protect persons and property. There was not much room for local innovation in the early days. Wisconsin, for instance, brought over the Michigan system of governmental organization which the legislature enacted as a uniform pattern to be used by the whole state. Therefore, wherever settlers located in Wisconsin they had to conform to a set pattern. The profits of distribution of real and personal property, 1850-1880, in the Wisconsin county and that in the much older Vermont region did not differ essentially, but there was more equality in Wisconsin, particularly in the earlier period. Later on the acquisitive gained top-heavy holdings and those not so equipped either went elsewhere or accepted a modest place in the economic scale.

Contribution to the frontier theory came likewise from disciplines other than history. The new science of demography is playing its part in the explanation of the processes of blueprint drafting which Turner so eloquently charted. Professor Everett Lee of the University of Pennsylvania and certain of his colleagues conceive of the frontier movement as a phase of the larger processes of migration which have exerted such a dominant influence in shaping the development of the United States. These processes of migration have been continuous since the beginning of settlement. The end of the free land belt did not stop them. Even today, one out of five people changes his residence every year, one in twelve goes so far as to leave the county, and



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one in thirty moves into some other state in the federal system. In fact, in some age groups as many as half of the members move annually. For over a century, migration from rural to urban communities has consistently exceeded the move from urban to rural. Thus the existence of free land to the westward, while it has acted as a force in shaping American development, has been but one, competing with similar forces leading as strongly in other directions.

The existence of this vacant land as a stimulant to migration, Lee finds<sup>7</sup>, has had a significant influence upon our national character and upon our political institutions, though not in Turner's terms. This influence is strong because migration is a selective process. It attracts young adults, the well-educated, and seemingly the most intelligent. The communities where these selected migrants congregate are, therefore, likely to be unusually dynamic. Also, these young people start new strains. They do not have the opportunities existing at home to marry near or distant cousins; biologically, these new communities are real melting pots. Also, old family ties and habitual associations with elders are broken; thus new and smaller independent families take the place of long-established familial systems. These new families are therefore independent and individualistic to a degree not possible in older communities. Old structures of leadership, likewise, are not there, nor can long established elites function. New leadership may be created in line with new values having little to do with customary community positions elsewhere.

On the other hand, the demographic studies of Lee and others show a tendency for migrants to be conservative and imitative rather than liberal and reforming. Migrants can be indifferent about improving undesirable conditions and uninterested in reform. The migrant has learned that it is easier to move on than to stay and face difficult situations or to try to change them. In this connection, there is little to support some concepts of geographical determinism. The migrant is not likely to stay long enough

in a difficult position to be moulded by it; he moves on. This constant migration has tended to lessen interest in local government and politics and to concentrate enthusiasm on national issues and party labels.

Foreigners have made greater contribution to our institutional development than previously believed, for study indicates that the frontier was less homogeneously "American" than Turner indicated. Migration to the west and the growth of democracy have been reciprocal. Migration has produced new, democratic, self-governing communities. On the other hand, the existence of democracy has provided freedom to migrate. Migration has provided a safety valve somewhat different from Turner's concept. Discontent on the farm, rather than in the city, could be worked off by migrating to new agricultural areas or to urban centers. The fact that there were other places to go to and freedom to go there made for psychological security.

Other historians influenced by the work of social scientists have made significant interpretations and have developed a theory of frontier democratic evolution. They have formulated a novel approach to the frontier problem which is closely allied to certain research in social science. Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick<sup>8</sup> have been viewing the development of political democracy on the frontier in the light of certain studies directed by Professor Robert K. Merton of Columbia, who has been analysing the problems of self-government in certain recent public housing developments. They find that certain conditions in those situations now observable produce a theory of democratic origins which gives substance to Turner's hypothesis. According to these scholars, the periods of wholesale migration, repeated a thousand times over in the United States, provide experiences crucial in the careers of millions of Americans which can be compared and found congruous with experience constructed on a contemporary model. The essence of this experience is the fact that a new community faces an initial period of problem solving



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with a population homogeneous in the sense that among them there is a lack of a structure of leadership. Elkins and McKittrick propose a model for a conceptual framework by which the validity of Turner's hypothesis of the relation of the frontier experience to democracy may be measured, based upon a recent testable experience.

In two housing developments, Merton found processes from which a theory of political democracy may be derived, which projected backward in time, demonstrates the accuracy of Turner's idea, which he, of course never structured. This experience appears in any new community, whether in the seventeenth or twentieth centuries. The theory is, in brief, that whenever there is a new community with a series of problems and no structure of leadership, then the situation compels cooperative democratic action.

Following this reasoning Elkins and McKittrick develop the concept of a multiple frontier following projections westward from the seacoast. There was Turner's frontier which was what he was familiar with in his own region in the Northwest Territory. Here there was an unstructured leadership with a multiplicity of roles demanding cooperation and general participation in community life. Speculators were unable to monopolize; the small town enterpriser was the main operator. There was equality of opportunity and community pride in the promotion of programmed systems of public improvements designed to attract.

In the southern frontier however there was a structured leadership of plantation elite. Landholding might be dominated by the few. The sparsely settled county rather than the closely settled town was the basis of politics. The simple problems of rural communities did not require general participation in politics. However, the elites provided for constant additions to their ranks and the acquisition of land was not difficult.

In New England there was a combination. There was a structured leadership, largely ecclesiastical—the clergy



and the elders. On the other hand there were many problems, and a general participation in town government resulted. In one town of 47 families there were 35 officers. Here there were no king's deputies as in England. The townsmen did for themselves in the towns, and their deputies managed the colony in the legislature.

To the extent, however, that there was an imported structured leadership in the Southern colonies there appeared less of practical democracy. This latter was a situation which Turner did not recognize in his generalization. The actual dynamics of this process as observed and reported by Merton in the experience of his two housing developments illustrates how it was done on the frontier.

The several generations who have been at work since Turner formulated his theory, including his various critics, have done much to make more comprehensive historical understanding of the evolution of this enlarging society with its increasing number of self-governing communities that so engaged Turner's genius. There had developed a much more complex synthesis made up of more elements than Turner had extensively considered. The Republic had begun as a series of colonies clinging to a seashore, founded by people who were following behavior patterns developed in Europe but gradually modified by the experience of transatlantic migration and settlement in the wilderness. The frontier's political experience began not as the migrants crossed the Alleghenies, as they passed through Cumberland gap, but at the beachheads. It was not a simple experience but a complicated one in which there was as much continuity as there was innovation, as much adaptation as there was invention.

This experience started with the necessity of neighbors, associates, businessmen, or church members to come to some understanding about the behavior required for survival in open country where savages or hunger might threaten or in towns where more crowded humanity might likewise fear attack or epidemic. Men alone or organized

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as companies, congregations, communities must work out the problems of migrating across a forbidding ocean and settling in a rough and often inhospitable and dangerous wilderness. Here European experience and transoceanic migration were as much factors as were the forest, the vastness of the wilderness, the savagery of the aborigines, and free land. Men and women were on their own far from the homeland and others of their own kind, and they so behaved. They chose, they adapted, they created according to their needs and capacities.

The national experience has been the product of their most complex experience, an experience much more intricate than that of the disappearance of free land on a receding frontier. Shaping this experience were ancient folkways and traditions, the patterns of human behavior as revealed by the behavioral sciences and those explaining human ecology, and the processes of human adaptation. The American society has proved unique; there has never been another to duplicate it. It has been democratic because that particular experience could not produce anything else. It was dangerous to its own peaceful evolution because it was in a sense undisciplined, anti-authoritarian, and despite its love of documentation, somewhat anarchic. Turner included but a fraction of the operating force in his formula of dynamics; therefore his interpretation must be found wanting.

Today a new interpretation more comprehensive and revealing is so much needed. Since nearly three score years and ten have passed since Turner launched his theory, the intellectual climate, the resources of knowledge in the nineteen-sixties, decree a different theoretical base from any possible in the eighteen-nineties. There was a more complex series of determinants shaping the evolving nation than merely the growth of the West. The multiplication of cities, the concentration of population in urban centers in both the north-east and the middle-west, the growing complexity of existence which has become increasingly mechanized, the lack of uniformity of this centripetal and



centrifugal movement of population, increasing racial antagonism, and the fear of losing world status are factors now generally shaping American evolution and particularly the growing confusion within the fragmented American society. Complex evolutionary factors are shaping the growth of the changing American republic. While Turner's mind was conscious of some of this complexity, his emotions rejected much use of it in his epic. Were he writing his work today, using the same techniques of grasping from the air those concepts which seemed to saturate it, would he not make them the theme of a new song? But he is dead, and where is his Elisha?

Proceeding from the study of such theories as those of Turner dealing with the mobility and adaptability of a vast and growing population in a tremendously spacious environment, it is possible to contrive the formulation of more complex analyses of historical causation by combining with such concepts others based upon the accumulation of discoveries in science in general and in the social sciences in particular.

Significant factors have been accelerated by the human dynamics generated in the nineteenth century experience of the American people. The geometrical progression of population increase and the rapidly changing patterns of the distribution of this population have decreed a new interpretation.

The individuals, families, and larger groups as they move from place to place generate new forces of various intensities in a variety of ways. The process of deciding to move, of making the change, of determining where to stop, of creating a new community or of contributing to one already established, requires the expenditure of much energy. The energy available in the republic is constantly being redistributed. Older communities are losing as new are gaining. Since this is a society of self-governing communities working on several levels--local, territorial, state, and federal-- power has been created in each of them based upon the aggregate of the participating individuals

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and the influences which determined the quality of their contribution. There is bound to be friction because few changes of pattern, unless specifically and mechanically channeled according to plans and specifications, can take place without forcing new routes or channels through resistant structures. These frictions do not need to be dangerous; they need not tear the fabric to shreds or rend it to pieces. Whether they do or not depends in last analysis upon various complex conditions.

One set of determinants is the accidents of personality, the identity of those who hold the power or seek to secure it. Another is the nature of the support given these personalities and the intensity of the motivation of those supplying it. A third set is shaped by the variety of the community complexes, by the extent to which they are homogeneous or marked by internal divisions and rivalries, by the group dynamics. Moreover there is the nature of the cultural climate: to what degree have the intellectual levels been developed? Finally there is the biological state of society, the way in which life itself is being lived in the particular environments. What are the states of nourishment and reproduction, of shelter and climate, of communication, and of the expenditure of physical and mechanical work energy, and of their ratio?

The historian on many occasions does not find himself equipped with the knowledge necessary to understand these complex factors. There is a gap between fact and theory, between the current narratives of folk actions and the available analysis of the patterns of these actions and of the determining factors which shape them. Current theories, such as those propounded by Turner, seem inadequate.

Though the learned world understands more about the nature of life and the limits of human behavior, historians have not yet developed sufficient interest in, or command of, the developments in other fields, nor have they association enough with the experts in these fields to work out the new conceptualization needed to acquire the knowledge



necessary to fill the gap between known facts and any comprehensive theory of causation.

When this gap is bridged historians will be able to approach an understanding of the intricate processes which govern the construction and adjustment of American democracy.

1. Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, New York, 1921, 293.
2. Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land*, Cambridge, 1950.
3. David M. Potter, *People of Plenty*, Chicago, 1954.
4. Earl Pomeroy, "Toward a Reorientation of Western History: Continuity and Environment," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLI (1955), 579-600.
5. Fulmer Mood, ed., *Early Writings of Frederick Jackson Turner*, Madison, 1938, 38-39.
6. Lee Benson, *Turner and Beard*, Glencoe, Ill., 1960.
7. Conference with author.
8. "A Meaning for Turner's Frontier," *Political Science Quarterly*, LXIX (1954), 321-353, 565-602.



THE FOREIGN RELATIONS OF ANCIENT RUSSIA  
FROM THE NINTH TO THE MIDDLE OF THE  
THIRTEENTH CENTURY

PART I

*Alexander V. Riasanovsky*

A. A. Shakhmatov, a noted Russian philologist and historian, expressed the opinion in his last published work<sup>1</sup> that the Russians together with the rest of the Slavs originally inhabited the basin of the Vistula River. Later, the Russian tribe (*Plemja*) detached itself from the main body of the Slavs. "Linguistic evidence discloses that the original Slavic family split first into two branches, the western and the southeastern, and that the second branch later gave rise to the southern and eastern offshoots."<sup>2</sup> The Slavs were thus divided into three main groups: the Western Slavs, the Slovenes and the Antes. The latter, according to Shakhmatov, were the ancestors of the Russians.<sup>3</sup>

"The Antes separated themselves from the Slovenes no earlier than the first quarter of the Sixth Century; the independent existence of the Russian tribe dates from that time; in the Ninth Century we see it inhabiting a huge area of land."<sup>4</sup>

The "Russian tribe", made up of at least twelve distinct sub-groups, settled the Eastern European plain between the

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sixth and the ninth centuries. The Russians found themselves in possession of a vast territory which had, because of its size and geographic location, considerable international importance. The Russian nation or *Rus'* served from its beginning as a cultural and commercial link connecting Western and Northern Europe with Byzantium and the Arab Caliphate, with the countries of Asia Minor, Central Asia and the Far East. Important trade routes between Europe and Asia ran through *Rus'*, and the support of the Russians was needed to maintain them; the Russians became active partners in the trade. Early in its history, *Rus'* established relations with its neighbors as well as with more distant lands and people: with the Byzantine Empire; with the Southern Slavs (the Serbs and Bulgars); with France; with the German states; with the Central European nations of Poland, Bohemia and Moravia; with the Slavs and Finns along the shores of the Baltic Sea, and with the Scandinavian countries. Ancient Russia also carried on relations with the Kama Bulgars, the Khazars and with the Transcaucasian nations of Georgia and Armenia. From 880 to 1175, the Russians undertook six separate expeditions across the Caspian Sea.<sup>5</sup> They carried on trade with Balkh, Mavaranahr and even China; with Palestine, Syria, Egypt as well as with distant India.

The foreign relations of Ancient Russia, understandably enough, were not all of equal intensity and importance. Nor did they contribute equally to the development of the Russian state. But almost all of them did contribute something to the spiritual, cultural and material life of *Rus'*. B. D. Grekov has pointed out:

"It is doubtful if in any other country of the medieval world one can encounter so many cross-currents of cultural influences as in Russia...Persian fabrics, Arabian silver, Chinese cloth, Syrian manufactures, Byzantine brocade, Frankish swords, etc. were brought to Russia and ... served as models for the artistic creations of Russian craftsmen."<sup>6</sup>

Among the diverse foreign relations of Ancient Russia, its contacts with the Byzantine Empire were the most



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fruitful, and those with the Arab Caliphate ranked next in importance. The Empire and the Caliphate were the two great cultural centers of the early Middle Ages. Cultural influences emanating from them spread first over Southern Europe, then penetrated into Central Europe and extended, finally, to the shores of the Baltic Sea and beyond. *Rus'*, the southern extremities of which were situated in close proximity to both centers, lay in the direct path of these influences. But *Rus'* was no passive recipient of the cultural flow. The practices and traditions of the Empire and the Caliphate came into contact and collision on Russian soil with other customs and institutions, native as well as imported. The resulting ferment left indelible traces upon Russian life and culture. *Rus'* profited from its favorable location. By the end of the tenth century, Kiev, its capital, became a major European cultural and commercial center in its own right.

The impact of Byzantine civilization was the most powerful external factor to shape the life and institutions of Ancient Russia. Byzantine influences reached the Russians by way of the Antes, the Serbs, the Bulgars; through contacts with Georgia, Armenia and other nations; as well as from direct intercourse with the heart of the Empire itself. Even prior to the formation of the Byzantine state, the Antes maintained relations with the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. Roman coins of the first-fourth centuries found in excavations around Kiev have confirmed the existence of these early relations.<sup>7</sup> Further confirmation has come from the fact that the old Russian system of dry goods measures was derived from the Roman system. The Russian *chetverik* (i.e. quarter measure) not only resembled the Roman *quadrantal* in meaning but equalled it in size (26.26 liters), while the Russian *polosmina* corresponded to the Roman *medimna* (each held 52.52 liters).<sup>8</sup> The use of Roman measurements in Ancient Russia was to be explained by the fact that in the terminal centuries B.C. and in the first centuries of our era a number of Greek and Roman colonies were planted in the southeastern European

plain, on the shores of the Black and Caspian Seas, and along rivers which flowed into these seas.<sup>9</sup> The colonists lived on trade with the surrounding barbarian population; they exchanged such luxury goods as wines, fine fabrics and articles made of gold and silver for cattle, hides, furs, wax, grain and other products of field and forest. The Greek and Roman colonies exerted considerable influence upon the natives in the area as shown, for example, by the Russian adoption of Roman dry goods measures. This took place at an early date. The capital of the Roman Empire was moved to Constantinople in 395, but Greek did not become the official language of the eastern Empire until the reign of Justinian the Great (527-565). Since the Russian measures corresponded in name to their Latin rather than their Greek equivalents, the borrowing occurred no later than the third quarter of the sixth century, and perhaps much earlier. By that time, well developed trade relations must have existed between the Ante-Russian population and the peripheral areas of the Byzantine Empire.

Gradually, relations were established between the Antes-Russians and the Imperial center. This may have happened as early as the seventh century. Archeologists have uncovered in the region of the Dnepr River several hundred Byzantine coins dating to the seventh-eleventh centuries. The route from Kiev to Constantinople, which later formed part of the so-called "way from the Varangians to the Greeks" described by Constantine Porphyrogenetus (tenth century) and the Russian Chronicles (eleventh-twelfth centuries), ran along the Dnepr. The early appearance in the Russian language of Greek names for certain types of naval vessels and of Greek nautical terminology has corroborated the evidence of the coins.

The ninth century *Annales Bertiniani*, in an entry for the year 839, recorded an attempt made by Rus' to enter into direct diplomatic contact with Constantinople. The entry has been the subject of considerable controversy. Some authorities have contended that the diplomatic over-



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ture to Byzantium was made by Sweden and not by Kievan Russia. In brief, the information contained in the *Annales* was as follows. The Byzantine Emperor Theophilus dispatched an embassy to the German Emperor Louis in Ingelheim, and along with the embassy came several foreigners, emissaries of *Rhos'*, originally sent by their *Khaquan* ("chacanus", the title of their ruler) to Constantinople to establish friendly relations with the Byzantine Emperor. But they were unable to go back to their own country the way they had come because "savage people" had barred the route. Theophilus forwarded them to the German Emperor in the hope that the latter would assist their passage home. At the German court it was established that the foreign emissaries were of Swedish origin.<sup>10</sup>

There has been general agreement that the "*Rhos*" of the emissaries was another form of the word "*Rus'*", but because the emissaries themselves were Swedes, the contention was that *Rhos* (*Rus'*) was a Swedish tribe. No Swedish tribe, however, was ever ruled by a *Khaquan*. The title was of Eastern origin, and the Prince of Kiev was the only European ruler known to have used it.<sup>11</sup> The Prince of Kiev, like other medieval rulers, often employed foreigners as ambassadors or messengers, and regardless of their own national origin, they called themselves "Russians" (i.e. *Rhos*, *Rus'*, etc.) for they served a Russian prince. For example, ambassadors and merchants sent by the Prince of Kiev to negotiate the 911/912 treaty with the Greeks, despite the fact that many of them had Scandinavian and German names, all claimed to be "Russians,"<sup>12</sup> and enjoyed the special rights and privileges granted to Kievan Russia in the treaty. By the same token, the fact that the emissaries of 839 were Swedes and also the representatives of *Rhos* should not becloud the issue as to the identity of the people that sent them on their mission. They were sent by Kievan *Rus'*.<sup>13</sup>

According to the Russian Chronicle, Kievan Russia launched an attack on Constantinople and besieged it in 860. Patriarch Photius, who witnessed the siege himself, re-

garded the Russian attack as justified retaliation for the murder of several of their countrymen (probably merchants) who had been living in the Byzantine capital.<sup>14</sup> In an episcopal letter (*ca.* 867) the same Patriarch Photius noted that the *Rus'* had accepted Christianity and received a bishop from Byzantium. Evidently, some part of Russia became Christian at that time. Later, towards the end of the ninth century (after 882 according to the Russian Chronicle), the Princes Oleg and Igor' united the major Russian tribal princedoms under the hegemony of Kiev. In the beginning of the tenth century, Oleg undertook a campaign against Constantinople. The second Russian attack on Constantinople ended in the 911/912 treaty which was very favorable for the Russians. The treaty re-established the friendly relations which had previously existed between the Russians and the Greeks.<sup>15</sup> Byzantine sources did not mention the second Russian campaign against Constantinople while the Russian Chronicle gave it such fantastic embellishment that some Russian historians (e.g. Bakhrushin) have doubted that it ever took place. But the treaty of 911/912 with its clauses heavily favoring the interests of the Russians has proved very difficult to explain except in terms of a Russian military success against the Empire. A reasonable theory advanced by other historians has been based on acceptance of the fact of the Russian campaign, but dismissal of the obviously improbable details ascribed to it by the Russian Chronicle.<sup>16</sup> Privileges granted to Russian merchants by the treaty of 911/912 were reduced somewhat by the treaty of 944/945 following Prince Igor's unsuccessful attack on Constantinople in 941. But in general, Russian merchants throughout the entire tenth century enjoyed greater privileges and advantages in their trade with Byzantium than the merchants of any other European nation, and only Venice in 994 was granted similar terms.<sup>17</sup> Specifically, Russian merchants were given the right by the treaty of 911/912 to bring their goods into Constantinople and to carry out Byzantine products without payment of customs duties; they were granted a permanent place of



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residence in Constantinople (near the Church of St. Mamontos) and were promised supplies sufficient for a six months' stay; they were not permitted, however, to winter in the capital. The Greeks also were obliged to furnish the Russians with provisions and naval equipment (sails, anchors, etc.) for the return journey. The treaty permitted Russian merchants to buy Byzantine goods not only for home consumption, but also for resale to other countries. These goods included rare items such as silk cloth of a type which was manufactured in great secrecy by the Greeks, and under conditions of the strictest government monopoly. Export of this cloth was permitted only with much reluctance by the Greeks.<sup>18</sup>

Although Russian-Greek relations in the tenth century were based chiefly upon trade, the treaties between them did not have a strictly commercial character. They defined a wide range of mutual relations and conduct; they established friendly relations between the contracting parties, fixed compensations for mutually inflicted damages, set punishments for capital crimes perpetrated by members of either party against the other, made mandatory mutual aid in cases of shipwreck, determined conditions of service undertaken by Russians in Constantinople and the disposition of their property in the event of death, settled the question of ransom for prisoners and other questions. The provisions of the treaties reflected the scope and nature of the relations which existed between Kievan *Rus'* and Byzantium in the tenth century. The relations became closer yet after the baptism of Russia.

Direct contact between Byzantium and Central and Northern Europe became very difficult in the tenth century owing to the appearance of the warlike Magyars along the Danube River and of the Scandinavians in the Mediterranean Sea. As a result, for almost two centuries Kievan Russia was the chief purveyor of Byzantine goods to large sections of Europe.<sup>19</sup> Trade between Kievan Russia and Byzantium expanded considerably during that period. The Russian-Greek treaties and information given by Constantine Por-

phyrogetus (913-959) have helped to ascertain the operations of this trade. In the spring of each year, a large convoy of Russian vessels carrying grain, slaves, animal hides, furs, wax and other goods sailed down the Dnepr River and, having crossed the Black Sea, anchored at Constantinople. Trade concluded, the fleet returned home by the same route.

Relations between Kievan Russia and Byzantium were based upon mutually profitable trade and regulated by special treaties. From time to time, however, they were marred by armed conflict. Contention most probably arose as the result of trade disputes and generally took the form of a Russian attack upon the outlying districts of the Empire or of raids upon the capital itself. The first recorded Russian attack on Constantinople took place under the leadership of the Kievan Princes Askol'd and Dir in 860. The Princes Oleg and Igor' attacked Byzantium in 907 and 941 respectively. Svjatoslav, the son of Igor', fought a tenacious and prolonged war against Byzantium, prompted apparently by imperial ambitions of his own. His death in 972 resulted from that struggle. Svjatoslav's son, Prince Vladimir, attacked the Greek colony of Chersones. The Russians captured Chersones after a difficult siege, but Vladimir returned it to Byzantium in exchange for the hand of Anna, sister of the Emperors Basil and Constantine. Although reluctant to give their sister in marriage to a barbaric and, at the time, pagan prince, the two Emperors were forced to act because their joint throne was threatened by the revolt of Bardas Phocas. Vladimir fulfilled the conditions of marriage laid down by the Greeks: he returned Chersones, sent a detachment of troops to help quell the rebellious general, accepted Christianity himself and had the Russian people baptised (*ca.* 988). Marriage to a member of the foremost Imperial house of Europe greatly enhanced the position and prestige of the Kievan Prince. Common faith and dynastic connections served to draw *Rus'* and Byzantium closer together. There was only one more incident of serious discord between them. It took place during the reign of the Kievan Prince Jaroslav, and may have been



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provoked by Greek pretensions in looking upon Kievan Russia as subject territory. Jaroslav's son, Vladimir lead the Russian attack on Constantinople in 1043. The campaign was unsuccessful, and peace again prevailed.

Having received baptism and a church hierarchy from the Greeks, Kievan Russia placed itself within the religious sphere of the Eastern Greek Church rather than the Western Roman Catholic Church<sup>20</sup> and under the cultural influences of the Byzantine Empire instead of the Latin West. The influence of Byzantium did not stop at the church nor at the court which adopted Byzantine titles, dress and manners; rather, it went deep into the life of the nation, into its language and literature, its art, its law, its commercial and military establishments. In short, the impact of Byzantium was felt on all aspects of Russian civilizations, secular as well as religious.

Language has provided a way of measuring cross-cultural influences, and linguistic evidence, taken together with other factors, has afforded a good indication of their scope and depth. Philological studies have revealed a rich Byzantine contribution to the old Russian language. Both the Church Slavonic and the Old Russian alphabets were based upon the Greek, while Russian grammatical forms were constructed upon Greek models. The number of Greek words which were incorporated into the old Russian language far exceeded the number of other foreign words. Up to four hundred such Greek words, expressions and linguistic peculiarities have been counted.<sup>21</sup>

Byzantine influence dominated the intellectual life of Kievan Russia. The inclination towards abstract, dialectical reasoning upon a religious basis and the scholasticism of early Russian thought has been traced to Greek sources. The intellectual influence of Byzantium extended far forward into Russian history. Reflecting the traditional Byzantine attitude, as late as the end of the eighteenth century, humanities were more highly regarded in Russia than the physical sciences. And even in the second half of the nineteenth century, the male *gimnasia* which constituted the

largest and most important section of Russian secondary education, devoted 40% of its teaching time to classical languages (Greek and Latin) and only 60% to all other subjects.

Early Russian literature in style and initially in content showed the strong impact of Byzantine examples. First to appear in Russian were translations of Byzantine narratives made either directly from Greek or from one of the southern Slavic languages (Serbian or Bulgarian). These translations aided the development of native Russian literature. In the field of art, Byzantine influences were the most pronounced in painting (iconography, fresco and miniature) and in architecture in stone, while architecture in wood continued to develop along indigenous lines. Russian decorative arts were likewise influenced by Byzantine, although to a lesser extent than by Arabic and Persian forms.

Ancient Russia, located wholly in Europe and only bordering on Asia, had widespread contact with other European countries. Marriage connections made by the ruling house of Kievan Russia with other ruling houses of Europe have testified to the extent and diversity of these relations. The Grand Prince of Kiev, Iaroslav the Wise (d. 1054), was married to the Swedish Princess Ingigerd. Anna, one of his daughters, was the wife of the French King Henry I; she was also the mother of King Philip I, and for a time Regent of France. Another daughter, Anastasia, married Andrew, the King of Hungary, and a third daughter, Elizabeth, married King Harald Hardrade of Norway. Jaroslav's son, Vsevolod, who knew five languages, wed a Greek princess. Euphraxia, daughter of Vsevolod, became the wife of the German Emperor Henry IV, and her sister, Predslava, that of a Hungarian Prince. Vsevolod's son, Vladimir Monomakh (d. 1125) was married to Gytha, daughter of Harold, the last Saxon king of England.

Russia's relations with other European countries were based primarily upon trade. Commerce between them moved along two main avenues: from Kiev to Central Europe (Moravia, Bohemia, Poland, Southern Germany),



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and from Novgorod and Polotsk across the Baltic Sea to its southern coast and on westward, or northward to the Scandinavian countries; both these routes began functioning in the ninth century.<sup>22</sup> The *Raffelschtatten* customs regulations of 905, containing a reference to the regulations of 876, testified to the existence of early commercial relations between Russia and the German states.<sup>23</sup> Extensive trade developed between Kiev and Regensburg, where a special class of merchants, the *ruzarii*, grew up for trading with the Russians.<sup>24</sup> Novgorod and other northwestern Russian cities such as Polotsk, Vitebsk and Smolensk traded extensively with Germans, Baltic Slavs, Finns and others. Two foreign merchant yards existed in the twelfth century. Novgorod (the "Old Gothic" and the "New German"). The *First Novgorod Chronicle*, under the year 1130, mentioned Russian commerce with Denmark.<sup>25</sup> In 1188, Emperor Frederick granted a charter to the city of Lubeck permitting duty free trade with Russian and certain other merchants (the Russians were mentioned first). During the eleventh-thirteenth centuries, Galich traded with Hungary, while Kiev and Suzdal' traded with Poland. Novgorod concluded a commercial treaty with the *Nemtsy* ("Germans") in 1195, which, judging from its content, was not the first of its kind. The term *Nemtsy*, as used in the text of the treaty, signified not only Germans proper, but also Scandinavians and, indeed, all non-Slav Catholics. (But Novgorod also endured a prolonged and bitter struggle with the *Nemtsy*, specifically with the Teutonic Order.) In 1229, Smolensk signed a similar trade treaty.

Trade with the Baltic Slavs comprised an important part of Russia's foreign commercial relations. Novgorod, for example, traded with the Slavs inhabiting the southern and southwestern shores of the Baltic through ports such as Völlin-Vinesta, Shchetin, Kolobreg and Gdansk. Russia's trade with the Baltic Slavs, according to P.S. Savel'ev who made a special study of the subject, began as early as the end of the seventh century, and flourished in the eighth-

ninth centuries as an important link in the trade route between Europe and Asia. The major storehouses along that route were located at Itil', Bulghar, Novgorod and Völlin.<sup>26</sup>

Trade relations between Novgorod and the Scandinavian countries began approximately at the same time as relations between Novgorod and the Baltic Slavs. Russian merchants, very probably, journeyed to the Scandinavian countries considerably earlier than Scandinavian merchants to Russia. Such important Russian terms pertaining to trade and commerce as *torg* (trade), *Klet'i* (warehouse), *bezmen* (an instrument for weighing goods) and some others were adopted into various Scandinavian languages, while in the Russian language of the time, there were no words of Scandinavian origin pertaining to trade.<sup>27</sup> This would suggest strongly that Russian commercial facilities were more highly evolved at the time than the Scandinavian. And, indeed, trade was not developed to any great extent by the Scandinavian countries during the eighth-ninth centuries.

"The whole population was rural; it is more than doubtful whether there was, at some two or three market-places, possibly a small settled town population."<sup>28</sup>

Two trade centers appeared, but only as late as the end of the ninth century: one in the Westfold province of Norway, and the other in Upland, Sweden.<sup>29</sup> They traded with Denmark, and were, most probably, periodic gathering places, similar to the German *Jahrmarkt*, rather than cities.

The 944/945 treaty between Kievan Rus' and the Greeks recorded the names of twenty-six merchants who took part in it from the Russian side. Among those listed were many Scandinavian names. There was no specific agency for conducting treaty negotiations such as a foreign ministry at the court of the Prince of Kiev, and ambassadors were taken from the *druzhina* of the prince which had many Scandinavian members. Scandinavian merchants came with them.<sup>30</sup> The sending of an embassy to Constantinople



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for the specific purpose of concluding a trade agreement, however, was a rare event. No more than one or two such embassies were sent a century while during the same period some one hundred Russian trade caravans made the journey.<sup>31</sup> Far fewer Scandinavian merchants traveled with the annual caravans; the route from their homeland was far too long, difficult and hazardous to encourage regular journeys.<sup>32</sup> According to H. Koht, Scandinavian countries did not develop a sizeable European trade until as late as the thirteenth century, and even then it was initially monopolized by the Germans. The Scandinavian merchant class was never very large nor very rich.<sup>33</sup> Scandinavian countries concluded no trade treaties with the Empire in the tenth century as did nations which traded extensively with it (e.g. Kievan *Rus'*, Venice). Archeologists have found few tenth century Greek coins in Scandinavia,<sup>34</sup> and according to T. J. Arne, few objects of Byzantine manufacture dating to the period.<sup>35</sup> Evidently, Scandinavian-Byzantine trade was never very extensive. It was certainly small in comparison with the trade between Kievan *Rus'* and Byzantium, and was carried on, very probably, as part of that trade.

Some historians, who have tended to emphasize the cultural and political role of the Scandinavians in early Russian history, have also made much of journeys undertaken by Scandinavians across Russia to Constantinople and back. These Scandinavian travels, it has been alleged, were chiefly responsible for spreading the benefits of Scandinavian and Byzantine cultures all over Russia. Professor Stender-Petersen, for example, has written that "countless" numbers of Scandinavians, singly and by the hundreds, athirst for adventure, made the journey to the Byzantine capital, stopping over in Kiev and Novgorod.<sup>36</sup> But there has been little evidence to support the contentions; substantiated instances of such travel have been infrequent. The controversial embassy described in the *Annales Bertiniani* has been discussed already, as well as the merchant-ambassadors of 944/945. In 980, Prince Vladimir

sent several hundred Varangians from Kiev to Constantinople. In Kievan Russia, as elsewhere, the term "Varangian" (varjag and variations thereof) was applied to Western warrior-merchants in general and not only to Scandinavians.<sup>37</sup> The national origin and the ultimate fate of these Varangians has not been ascertained: many of them may have remained in Byzantium. A Scandinavian detachment of some four-hundred men (perhaps a few more) served in the Varangian corps at Constantinople in the eleventh century, but the Scandinavians were in a minority within the corps; before 1066, the majority was Russian, and after 1066, Anglo-Saxon.<sup>38</sup> Replacements for the Scandinavian detachment came chiefly by the sea-route, and not overland. Thus, A. A. Kunik, referring to Adam of Bremen (d. *ca.* 1075) wrote that for several centuries the Swedes did not use the Eastern route to Constantinople, i.e. via Russia, because of its difficulty, but employed the Western sea-route via Gibraltár. The Danes, in general, used the sea route.<sup>39</sup> After carefully examining Scandinavian sages, Kunik was able to report only four instances of trips made by Scandinavians (Islanders and Norwegians) across Russia to Constantinople in the tenth century.<sup>40</sup> W. Thomsen quoted the same number.<sup>41</sup> Both V. G. Vasil'evskii and Thomsen named only one person - Bolli Bollanson - who made the journey in the first three decades of the eleventh century<sup>42</sup> and Vasilevskii names only Harald Hardrade after 1030 (who made the trip between 1034 and 1044).<sup>43</sup> Kunik, Thomsen and Vasilevskii could have overlooked individual cases, but certainly not "uncountable numbers". Scandinavian sagas as well as Russian and Greek sources have given no grounds for the assumption that the Scandinavians used the route across Russia to Constantinople in any great numbers or with any great frequency. Indeed, such trips were rare.

Philological studies have failed to uncover any extensive influence of the Scandinavian languages upon Russian, since few words of Scandinavian origin found their way into the Old Russian language. Clara Thornquist, who made the last



thorough study of the subject, found only four words of Scandinavian origin in the Russian language of the "ancient period" (called "Varagian period" by Pogodin, i.e. up to mid-eleventh century). Two Scandinavian words, according to Thornquist, entered Russian towards the end of the eleventh century; four more words in the twelfth century, and one word in 1200. A few more words of Scandinavian origin found local usage in the twelfth century.<sup>44</sup> Some eleven loan words in a period of about four centuries was slim contribution indeed when compared, for example, with the hundreds of Greek words that entered the Old Russian language.

Available evidence has failed to substantiate the existence of very close or firm ties between Kievan Russia and the Scandinavian countries.<sup>45</sup> Relations with the Scandinavian countries contributed far less to the spiritual, cultural and material life of *Rus'* than its relations with the Byzantine Empire.

An exaggerated view of the significance of Scandinavian influence upon early Russian history has given rise, nevertheless, to the so-called "Norman" theory of the founding of the Russian state. According to this theory, Varangians from the north, i.e. presumably Scandinavians-Normans, were responsible for founding the first Russian state and for laying the foundations of Russian culture. Formulated by J. S. Bayer in the eighteenth century, the theory received decisive support from the eminent historian A. Schloezer.<sup>46</sup>

The "Norman" theory was based upon an interpretation of the *Russian Primary Chronicle* and stated that Varangian Princes, Rjurik and his two brothers of the Swedish tribe *Rus'*, were "summoned from across the sea" or, having come to Russia for some other purpose, founded the Novgorod Principedom ca. 862. According to Schloezer, the Swedish tribe *Rus'* was first located in Roslagen, but together with its princes, it migrated in its entirety to Novgorod. From Novgorod, the Varangians-Normans (i.e. Scandinavians) spread to the south; Rjurik's retainers Askol'd and Dir occupied Kiev. Later by means of a rather naive ruse,

Rjurik's relative Oleg and young son Igor' killed Askol'd and Dir and without opposition installed themselves in Kiev. In the following years, the Varangians-Normans, under the leadership of Oleg and Igor', subdued the surrounding Slavic tribes and united them into the Kievan state. The foreign conquerors, or so claimed the early proponents of the "Norman" theory, bestowed the name *Rus'* as well as the benefits of a superior civilization upon the native Slavs.

Schloezer described conditions in Russia prior to the advent of the Varangians-Normans as follows:

"No doubt there were people there, God knows when they had come and from where, but people without government, living like birds and animals that filled the forests, excelling in nothing, having absolutely no contacts with the southern peoples.<sup>47</sup>"

According to Schloezer then, the Russian land was a wilderness and the Russian people were primitive savages until the coming of the Scandinavians-Normans in the second half of the ninth century. On the basis of that assumption, Schloezer went on to argue that the Russian state as well as the whole of Russian culture - the very name of the nation, its social, political, military and commercial institutions, its written language and literature, its art, its law and its religion - owed their existence and the first two centuries of their development to the beneficial influence of the Scandinavian conquerors.

The "Norman" theory won the support of Mueller, Thunmann, Fraehn, Krug, Karamzin and Pogodin in the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century, and with such overwhelming endorsement, it became the dominant position in Russian historical thought. Although there was some early opposition, scholarly criticism of the "Norman" theory began in earnest only in the second half of the nineteenth century. By then, considerable advances had been made in Russian historical, archeological and philological studies. I. I. Sreznevskii, S. A. Gedeonov and D. I. Ilovaiskii were among the first to question the assumption that Scandinavian influences were decisive in the formation of the Russian state and the shaping of Russian culture.



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They were answered by the proponents of the well entrenched "Norman" theory and a spirited controversy ensued. It has continued up to the present.

The concluding installment of this article will deal briefly with the more modern versions of the *Norman* theory. It will also discuss relations between Russia and the Near East including the problem posed by the mysterious "third Russian tribe" mentioned by several medieval Muslim authors.

1. A.A. Shakhmatov, *Drevneishie sud'by russkogo plemeni*, Petrograd; 1919. Shakhmatov died in 1920.
2. A.A. Shakhmatov, *Drevneishie sud'by* .... p. 12. The terms *Rus'* (country), *the Rus'* (people) are used throughout the work synonymously with "Russia", "Russians", etc. This is done merely for convenience, and not to suggest that "*the Rus'*" were necessarily Russians in the modern sense of the word (i.e. Great Russians, as distinguished from Ukrainians and White Russians).
3. A.A. Shakhmatov, *Drevneishie sud'by* .... p. 11.
4. A.A. Shakhmatov, *Drevneishie sud'by* .... p. 22.
5. B. Dorn, "Kaspil", *Zapiski Akademii nauk*, Supplement to XXVI, SPb, 1875, pp. 532-533.
6. B.D. Grekov, *Kiev'skaja Rus'*, Moscow, 1953, pp. 396-397.
7. I.E. Zabelin, *Istoriia russkoi shizni s drevneishikh vremen*, Moscow, II, 1912, pp. 98, 357. According to M.I. Rostovtzeff the major cities of Dnepr (Dnieper) Russia-Kiev, Chernigov, Perjaslavl', etc. - grew up on the location of former native settlements dating to the last centuries B.C. See: M.I. Rostovtzeff, "The Origin of the Russian State on the Dnieper", *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1920*, Washington, D.C., 1925, pp. 167-168.
8. B.D. Grekov, *Kievskaja Rus'*, pp. 378-379.

9. Olivia, Theodosia, Panticapaeum, Tamatarkhu, Chersones, etc. See: I. Tolstoi and N. Kondakov, *Russkie drevnosti v pamjatnikakh isskustva*, SPb, I, 1889, pp. 1-18.
10. *Annales Bertiniani* Ed. G. Waitz, MGH SS. In usum scholarum. Hannover, 1883, pp. 19-20.
11. That the Prince of Kiev used the title of Khaquan has been authenticated by an anonymous Persian geographer who wrote ca. 982 (see: *Hudūd al-Ālam: The Regions of the World. A Persian Geography*, trans. by V. Minorsky, preface by V.V. Barthold, Oxford University Press: London, 1937, esp. Para. 44); by Metropolitan Illarion's speech "O zakone i blagodati" (ca. 1040) in which he referred to the Kievan Princes Vladimir and Iaroslav by that title; by *Slovo o polku Igoreve* (ca. 1185), and other sources.
12. In the words of the treaty: "my ot roda russkago Karly, Ingel'd, Farlof..." etc. See: *Povest' vremennykh let*, M-L, I, 1950, p. 25.
13. On this subject see Alexander V. Riasanovsky, "The Embassy of 838 Revisited: Some Comments in connection with a 'Normanist' Source on Russian History", *Jahrbucher fur Geschichte Osteuropas*, X, 1, 1962, pp. 1-12.
14. See the second *Beseda* in P. Uspenskii, *Chetyre besedy Fotiia*, SPb, 1864.
15. Cf. the wording of the treaty: "na uderzhanie i na izveschenie ot mnogikh, let mezhi khrestiany i Rus'iu buy' shuiu ljubov'..." in *Povest' vremennykh let*, p. 26. Evidently friendly relations existed between the Russians and the Greeks and that something happened ca. 907 to rupture them.
16. For a general discussion of the subject, see: A.A. Vasiliev, "The Second Russian Attack on Constantinople", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts, No. 6, pp. 161-225.
17. B.A. Rybakov, "Torgovlia i torgovye puti", in *Istorija kul'tury drevnei Rusi*, M-L, I, Ch. 8, 1948, p. 338.



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18. The 944/945 treaty limited the amount of this cloth that Russian merchants could purchase to no more than fifty *zlotniks*' worth per person.
19. B.A. Rybakov, *Torgovlja i trgovye puti*, p. 342.
20. The schism between the two Churches was already evident and it finally took place in 1054.
21. V. Mavrodin, *Obrazovanie drevne-russkogo gosudarstva*, Leningrad, 1945, pp. 394-395.
22. B.A. Rybakov, *Torgovlja i trgovye puti*, p. 341. Trade between Novgorod and Baltic regions began even earlier according to P.S. Savel'ev.
23. G.V. Vernadsky, *Kievan Russia*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948, p. 338.
24. B.A. Rybakov, *Torgovlja i trgovye Puti*, p. 343.
25. *Novgorodskaja pervaja letopis' starshego i mladshego izvodov*, Ed. A.N. Nasonov, M-L, 1950, p. 207.
26. P.S. Savel'ev, *Mukhammedanskaja numizmatika v otnoshenii russkoi istorii*, SPb, 1846, esp. p. CLXXXIX.
27. S. Syromiatnikov, "Drevlianskii Knjaz' i varjzhskii vopros", *Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosviashchenija*, SPb, (New Series), June, 1912, pp. 132, 133.
28. H. Koht, "The Scandinavian Kingdoms until the End of the Thirteenth Century" *The Cambridge Medieval History*, New York, VI, 1929, p. 363.
29. H. Koht, "The Scandinavian Kingdoms...", p. 363.
30. Even if one were to accept Shakhmatov's general conclusion that the majority of the names were Scandinavian while the rest were Slavic (Sinko, Borich, Oleb, Kutsi, Vuzlev, and perhaps others) or of undetermined nationality, it would still not constitute proof of extensive trade relations between Scandinavian countries and the Empire. Twenty-six merchants was not a large number, and without added corroboration, would be insufficient indication of well developed trade. Owing to the danger and difficulty of transporting goods, the number of persons engaged in trade during the middle ages was large in comparison with the trade turn-over. Prince Jaroslav (d. 1054), e.g., detained at one time in

Perjaslavl' some 150 Novgorod merchants and an additional 150 from Smolensk.

The *druzhina* of the prince was his personal suite of retainers.

31. Russian trade caravans came yearly to Constantinople according to Constantine Porphyrogenetus.
32. For the description of the difficulties of the journey, see: S. Lesnoi, *Istorija russov v neizvrashchennom vide*, IV Paris, 1955, p. 335 and ff.
33. H. Koht, "The Scandinavian Kingdoms...", p. 391-392.
34. See: T. J. Arne, *La Suede et l'Orient*, Uppsala, 1914, pp. 89-90; B. Nerman, "Die Verbindungen zwischen Scandinavien und dem Ostbalticum in dem jungern Eisenzeit", *Kungl. Vitterhets och Antikvitets Academiens Handlingar*, Stockholm, XL, 1, 1929, p. 3.
35. T. J. Arne, "La Suede ...", p. 207.
36. A. Stender-Petersen, "Die Varangersage, als Quelle der Altrussischen Chronik", *Acta Jutlandica*, Copenhagen, VI, 1, 1934, p. 12.
37. Cf., for example, the names of those who took part in the 944/945 treaty with the Greeks.
38. V. G. Vasil'evskii, *Trudy*, SPb, I, 1908, pp. 27, 355, 375-376.
39. E. Kunik, *Die Berufung der Schwedischen Rodsen durch die die Finnen und Slaven*, SPb, Vol. II, 1845, pp. 215-216.
40. See: E. Kunik's supplement to B. Dorn, "Kaspil", p. 424.
41. W. Thomsen, *The Relations between Ancient Russia and Scandinavia and the Origin of the Russian State*, London, 1877, p. 107.
42. Thomsen, *The Relations between Ancient Russia ...*, p. 107; V.G. Vasil'evskii, *Trudy*, Vol. I, p. 270.
43. V. G. Vasil'evskii, *Trudy*, I, p. 270.
44. The words were: up to mid-eleventh century - *grid'*, *tiun*, *iabednik* and *jakor'*; from mid- eleventh century to its end - *stjag* and *sjaga*; in the twelfth century - *berkovets*, *golbets*, *narva* and *pud*; and *narov* in 1200.



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- See: Clara Thornquist, *Studien über die nordischen Lehnwörter im russischen*, Uppsala, 1948, p. 25 and ff.
45. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries there was considerable warfare between the Russians and the Scandinavians. Thus, according to the *First Novgorod Chronicle*, Swedes attacked Russian ships in the Baltic, besieged Ladoga in 1164, and in 1240 they launched an invasion in force - a crusade, as it were, with the avowed purpose of converting the Russians to Catholicism - against the Novgorod region. The Russians retaliated by attacking Swedish cities. See: *Novgorod-skaja pervaja letopis'* . . . , under appropriate years.
  46. See: J.S. Bayer, "De varagis", *Comentarii Academiae Scientiarum Imperialis Petropolitanae*, SPb, IV, 1729 pp. 275-311; J.S. Bayer, "Origines Russicae", *Comentarii Academiae Scientiarum*. . . . , VIII, 1736, pp. 388-436; A.L. Schloezer, *Allgemeine Nordische Geschichte*, Halle, 1771, p. 222 and ff.; A.L. Schloezer, Nestor Russian trans. by Iazykov), SPb, I, 1809, pp. 418-420.
  47. A.L. Schloezer, *Nestor*, p. 419-420. Compare the above with M.I. Rostovtzeff's description based upon more recent information: "In the ninth century, when the Russian annals first begin to give us a systematic record of the Russian people and their princes, Russia appears to us as a well-shaped body, as an organized state, with its own peculiar political, social and economic structure, and endowed with a high and flourishing civilization. Russia of the ninth century consisted of many important commercial cities, situated partly on the Dniepr and its tributaries, partly in the far north of Lake Ilmen, and partly on the upper Volga. Each of these cities possessed a large territory populated by different Slavonic tribes and had its own self-government with a popular assembly, a council of elder and elected magistrates." M.I. Rostovtzeff, *Iranians and Greeks in South Russia*, The Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1922, p. 210.

## THE ALCHEMY OF LITERATURE

Robert E. Spiller

What can literature say about a society that other forms of statement cannot say? My answer to this question would be that it can raise man's understanding from the level of experience to the level of wisdom. Every age has felt that it was an age of transition, that the great times were in the past, that the present was pretty much confused, and that the future was dark. That is what a good many people think about this age of ours also. But it is in times like this, when people are most deeply concerned about what is happening to them and to their cultures and their countries that they are most likely to produce great works of literature. In such works they raise their sense of distress about the conditions in which they find themselves, above the level of immediate experience. It is the role of literature to confront confusion, to discover its underlying causes and its errors, and to raise our understanding of ourselves to a higher level of perspective, to the level of wisdom.

Now, how does literature do this, and what is the difference between what it might do with a problem of this

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kind and what, let us say, a reporter for the daily newspaper would do? A reporter would merely present the facts in an orderly way and tell directly what had happened. If it were a paper that was sensational in its policies, it might carry its editorial function over to its news pages and indirectly try to play up the hazards involved in the situation in order to strike fear into the reader. People who are afraid of what will happen next are likely to rush out and get the next edition of the paper, and circulation is boosted. But the conclusions which the great masses of people reach under such circumstances are not likely to be the judgments of posterity.

Under the same circumstances, literature has an entirely different way of dealing with experience. The idiom it uses is the language of symbols rather than that of direct discourse. It turns from immediate facts to general representations, and substitutes, through this use of symbols, for the experience of the now a view of experience which can be shared by people in different countries who speak different languages or by people of the past and of the future. Thus the symbol raises an experience from an idiom of fact to an idiom of general concept, of values, of norms of one kind or another. A very simple example of how this works would be the flag or the cross or any other of the symbols that are familiar to all of us. These symbols have grown out of specific experiences of the past, but they have taken on larger meanings so that they can be applied to many different circumstances if those circumstances involve common values or common criteria of judgment of human experience. The flag will lift us out of our selfish and personal concerns and make us think of the common good; the cross will make us realize that great goals can be achieved paradoxically through sacrifice.

Similarly, literature reaches out for the symbol. It is, in one form or another, an extension of our ideas beyond the limits of our normal experience. By discovering a symbol for an unprecedented event -- that is, by discovering something that we can think about visually -- we have

begun the task of translating our experience into wisdom.

The literary man, the creative writer, not only develops individual symbols in some such fashion as this, but he organizes them into patterns and something emerges which critics have called symbolic form. This is a kind of organization over which the literary man rather than the statesman or the military man can alone exercise control. He can arrange his experiences and order them in such a way that they have special meanings for him, and these meanings can be conveyed to others by reference to the symbols he has used. Little by little a form or structure, or an inter-relationship of ideas and values begins to emerge until there is developed a body of mythology like those associated with the Christian story or with the great days of Greece. We have already developed a similar body of myths and symbols associated with the founding of this country, with the fundamental ideas of the founders, and with the personalities of Washington and Jefferson and Lincoln and the other great names that are associated with that founding. We have even erected a kind of temple to each of these three in our national capital. Thus we are developing a symbolic structure, a structure of symbolic form, that we can place between our experience and our understanding of it.

We need not intellectualize this structure in order to share in its meaning; we need not say that each of these symbols means so and so and that they add up to this meaning or that. In fact, it is better if we allow them to remain about 60 to 75% connotative in their meaning and only 25 to 40% denotative or with exact meaning, meaning that is generally agreed upon. A repetition of these patterns of symbolic form which we thus learn to understand and take for granted, forms a myth or tradition which can then be infinitely varied as new experiences are related to it. This country, being very young culturally, has had about 300 years to develop such a national myth or American cultural tradition, but we seem to be arriving at that point now. Washington Irving, Fenimore Cooper, and other of our early writers had no such structural background that they



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shared with their readers and against which they could play the lights and shadows and variations of their symbolic interpretations of the meanings of their times. Because of this lack, they had to use as a reference the culture of Europe, a culture which was not the product of that time and that place. Its structure was not a symbolic expression of the experience of this continent, of life in the wilderness, of the building and expansion of a new civilization. The day by day events and thoughts which came to these early writers and to their readers were alien to the culture against which they were forced by circumstances to play their symbolic interpretations of the meaning of life. This is the reason, I think, that our early writers were so much concerned with what we called nationalism in literature. They were not unduly chauvinistic; they had a practical problem of their craft to meet and solve. They could either plunge into the immediate experience, as did Jefferson or Tom Paine or Franklin, without trying to make literature out of it, trying to reduce it to symbolic form; or they could try, as did Irving and some others, to borrow their symbolic forms elsewhere, from the Gothic romance of Germany or the nature poetry of England, transplanting medieval castles and nightingales to the banks of the Schuylkill where they felt very uncomfortable. They had no other alternatives because they were faced with a problem that only time could solve.

The writer who first really faced this problem and made a start in cracking it open was our first great social novelist, the author of a series of tales in which he attempted both to see his own society clearly and to raise it from the level of experience to that of symbolic form. I sometimes get weary of Fenimore Cooper because I have spent so much time with him, and I try to spare other people my tedium, but I have a tremendous admiration for his great desire to understand his own society and to interpret it to his contemporaries. He had an elementary but a sound understanding of the problem because he rejected deliberately the

materials of the currently fashionable British romances and domestic novels and chose that part of the world he knew best, the part which had been settled by the Dutch patroons and was the most aristocratic colony in a democratic world. He was interested in the relationship of the extremely sophisticated forms of European civilization which these people had brought with them to the primitive life of the wilderness which they had been forced to live. He was of the second or third generation from the earliest colonists, but he had read about and heard about their problems in the lives of the Indians and of the trappers and frontiersmen who had earlier pushed into the wilderness of upper New York state and made a home of it. Cooper saw the great conflict between two sets of values: the values represented by the social structures of the transplanted culture and the values imposed by the conditions of primitive living. He saw the same conflict at work still in his own day and he wanted to do something about it, by the use of narrative art to discover its meaning.

There were only two kinds of novels available to him as models. On the one hand, there was the historical romance, the romance of adventure, the tale of the long chase and capture; and on the other, there was the domestic novel, the novel of society, the novel of social criticism. The choice lay between Sir Walter Scott and Jane Austen, and neither of them quite fitted his problem. There was a set of symbols for the romance which had little or nothing to do with the American experience; American impulses from the vernal woods were somewhat different from those which Wordsworth felt in Cumberland, and it was somewhat difficult to equate an Indian hunter with Sir Galahad. Similarly, the drawing rooms and the country villages of the English domestic novel were not yet to be found even in the American cities which had not yet developed to the same degree of urban sophistication as their counterparts across the Atlantic. There was nothing for Cooper but to find a middle course and, in doing so, he developed his own symbols such as Natty Bumppo, or Leatherstocking, the man



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of the woods, the man of nature, whose moral responses to life were a curious mixture of the woods and of society. This is why he so resented both those critics who told him that he was imitating Scott and those who told him that his portrait of life in the United States was inaccurate, and why he was so insistent upon the novelist's right to take what he called "a poetical view of the subject." Such symbolic characters could be tested both in the woods of upstate Cooperstown and in the society of New York City, both of which he knew at first hand. He was trying to work out a basic moral problem which was also for him a problem of etiquette, the problem of the meaning of this new and undeveloped civilization, without depending upon the symbolic forms of the old fiction to do it. His failures were as important to American literature as were his successes.

I did not mean to spend so much time on Cooper, but he is useful because he states our problem in an elementary stage. The basic morality of the new society has been one of the major concerns of American literature ever since Cooper's day because our founders proposed a new form of human relationships which they believed to be better than the old ones which they had left behind in Europe and we are still tremendously interested in seeing just how our experiment in democracy is going to work out -- or if it is going to work out at all. We have transplanted the radical liberal ideals of Western Europe to a new environment and we have tried to make them work in the belief that they might have a better chance in a less complicated situation. In the process, we have made our lives even more complicated than European lives ever were, but we have not escaped our problem. We still feel that they can and should work in the highly complex, machine-made society of the 20th century. No wonder we are in for a tremendous sense of frustration and defeat. The longer we live and the more complicated our society becomes, the wider is the discrepancy between the ideals of our founders, the ideals of our tradition, the ideals of our mythology, and the actualities of our modern life.

It is the task, an increasingly difficult task, of our literature to discover and organize new sets of symbols to bridge the gap between the experience we now have and our basic assumptions -- to make that experience vivid and organized and comprehensible to us so that we can live in it understandingly. That is what our writers have been trying to do as our civilization has settled down in the 20th century and admitted that it is urban and industrial rather than rural and agrarian as it was in the earlier days; that the United States is actually one of the great world powers and not the group of colonies of a European power that it once was. As we have come to recognize these facts, our literary men have learned how slowly to extract from them meaningful symbols and then to organize these symbols into a workable pattern to which we can relate our daily experience. Thus a new literature which has developed from a special set of American facts is comprehensible and useful not only to us but to all those who share our experience even in part. Because Western European man has gone through a similar transition into the terms of modern living, American literature has something special to say to Europeans as well, something which perhaps their own literature cannot say as clearly. The violence of the struggle to be born into the modern age is much more elemental in a Cooper or a Mark Twain or a Hemingway than it is in a Joyce or a Proust or a Kafka. The very absence of sophistication make the essential factors in the experience more clear and sharp. Our literature is being looked to by the critics of France, Germany, Norway, and England for a symbolic interpretation and criticism which they can use for themselves insofar as they share the experience of the modern mechanized world.

The human problem in this world is not new: it is that man's scientific knowledge has outdistanced his ability to cope with his experience and control his behavior morally. The American experience merely presents this paradox more dramatically, in more extreme a form than do some



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others. America's ideals of democracy have been so clearly stated as a working philosophy that their contrast to the materialism of its economy of abundance is particularly striking. We see the misery of our condition, whether that of the poor whites or Negroes in the Mississippi of Faulkner, that of the congested streets of the New York of Dos Passos, or that of the small Midwestern town of Lewis with its narrow and shallow lives. We see all this misery and we see the selfishness of our conduct about it, the fact that we do so little to correct it, and we stand helpless until a literary man comes to us and reveals for us the ultimate human values and the human meanings involved in our situation. Then we realize that this is nothing new, our perplexity is no different from that of the Roman people in the time of Augustus, of the Englishmen in the time of Elizabeth, of any great civilization at a time of tremendous powers and tremendous crises. There have always been poverty and riches, love and hate, ambition and despair, jealousy and revenge and compassion and peace.

The civilization of the United States in the twentieth century presents this basic human situation in terms so new that they require a completely new literary response. Tradition can help very little. Toward the end of the 19th century our writers began to realize this fact and went to work on the job of making the modern problem intelligible to us.

The first attacks were direct. The genteel writers like Longfellow, Lowell, and their followers who had so long controlled the literary market were still being read, but people were showing signs of becoming a little impatient with them because they did not seem to be coming to grips with life. Then along came Theodore Dreiser who took an honest look at life and said, "Let's see it; let's see it straight; let's take a few simple characters, people that we know, and present them logically and honestly and then see what the story is." He used his own family, his sisters, his brother, his father and his mother, his friends, all the people he knew, people with whom he had been in contact

in his jobs as delivery boy or newspaper writer, and he made stories of them by changing them just a little bit. He, so to speak, got the literary plane off the ground. It was skimming over the surface even though it had not attained much altitude in such novels as *Sister Carrie* and *Jennie Gerhardt* and the trilogy about the Philadelphia financier Yerkes who became Frank Cowperwood in Dreiser's stories about him.

Here was the beginning of a new process of symbolization of actual life. These characters were themselves but they were generalized, they were typified as Cooper's Leatherstocking had been. Each of them became an anybody; Clyde Griffith of *An American Tragedy* became The American youth, Cowperwood became the American financier. Because each of Dreiser's characters has a particular and then a general meaning, they are each a symbol and the literary process is started.

The next step came with Sinclair Lewis who took off from Dreiser's beginnings by saying, in effect, "Now, here's the situation: I was born and brought up in a small town in Minnesota; I like to write about the people that I know; I've been to Chicago and throughout the Middlewest; these are the people I know best; their problems are my problems. I would like to present these people, but I would also like to reveal them, to show them up." He added to Dreiser's direct method the more sophisticated instrument of satire. This put a finer edge on his inquiry. He manipulated the truth enough to make his characters look in upon themselves. As in a distorted mirror, they saw their traits exaggerated so that their weakness and extravagances would stand out. The process of generalization, or of symbolization, thus took a step forward. A book like *Arrowsmith* or *Babbitt* is a more generalized statement in symbolic form than is a book like *Sister Carrie* or *An American Tragedy*. The difference lies mainly in the use of the instrument of satire. Of the many literary devices available to the novelist, satire is one of the most effective for revealing the meaning of the human situation.



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By the mid-1920's most of the literary spade-work had been done and there were a great many important new American writers ready to make their contributions to the new literature. I would like to choose somewhat arbitrarily just three of them, as representative of different ways of performing the role of the literary artist, and ask each one of the three the same series of questions: "How do you do it? How do you go about this process of generalizing in such a way that the values and the meanings of our civilization can be better understood? And how successful have you been? If you have failed, in what way have you failed to reach the maximum goal and become a really great writer? Is there a Shakespeare among you and your fellows? I think probably not; but why not? Shakespeare succeeded in extracting literary gold from the dross of the Elizabethan age; why have we not produced someone who could do the same for ours? What is the nature of your own successes and your failures?"

John Dos Passos was a writer of Spanish extraction although an American citizen. There is basic in his writing a sense of alienation and protest. His life was divided, as were the lives of all of his generation, into three parts: an era before the first world war, experience in the war, and an aftermath of adjustment to the post-war society. The pattern of life that we see in Dos Passos was common to many of the writers of his generation, even in such details as serving in an ambulance unit rather than in the regular army, becoming, so to speak an observer rather than a participant, and then coming back to throw himself into the social situation in the United States between wars, identifying himself almost up to the hilt with the radical social movement as editor of *The Masses*, organ of the extreme leftist group. All this experience culminated in the great trilogy, *U.S.A.* But no sooner was this novel written than, to our surprise, we see him denying his radicalism and, in many people's minds, becoming a turn-coat, defending through the later years an extremely conservative political philosophy. But we must not forget that we are

not here concerned with Dos Passos as a politician or an agitator. Because the idiom of his thought was mainly political, his journalistic and literary work deals with political material and it was his business to reflect and to interpret the political currents and crises of his time.

Because his material is so impersonal, even though his feeling about it is not, Dos Passos makes a good writer to take as illustrative of our first stage in our theory of the literary process. We can see him responding vividly and immediately to the social life about him, trying to work out a system of symbolic form against which to throw the likeness of his experience, experimenting with all the new techniques he could discover, and finally writing a series of stories that embody these symbolic forms and give them permanence like a bit of plastic hardening into a fixed shape after it has been mixed and stirred and then set.

Dos Passos starts with a disgust at man which probably arises largely from his experiences as a youth and in the war. Naturally, his first attack is a direct one. He writes a novel of three soldiers, presumably himself and two others, and tells of their reactions to the war. Like Dreiser, he took a familiar situation and raised it from the ground just enough to gain perspective on it. These three soldiers become three types of reaction to the war situation. Dos Passos seems to have originated this particular device, but it has been copied by a great many other writers of war stories.

In his next step, after an experiment with a very different sort of form in *Manhattan Transfer*, Dos Passos moves up a definite level toward symbolic structure with the great trilogy *U.S.A.* Here he takes a full cross-section of American life and reveals its dismay and decay and disease, as he sees it, by the use of three or four experimental technical devices. The first of these he calls the Newsreel, in which he clips the headlines from newspapers and mixes them with scraps of news stories and bits of popular songs. In each of these Newsreels, which are inner chapters of his novel, the popular song is used as a rhythmic



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accompaniment as the news items follow one another -- none of them complete -- in a kind of movie technique, a series of flashed pictures. In this way, the reader gets a feeling of what is going on in the country without pausing to focus on any specific facts or events long enough to become wholly aware of them. Then, in what Dos Passos calls the Camera Eye, he is plunged into the contrary kind of experience, that which starts in the sub-conscious, in the complex feelings of the individual. In these passages, Dos Passos uses incidents remembered from his childhood or from the war, such as the occasion when the taking over of the ambulance corps by the Red Cross was interrupted by a shower of shells and all the Red Cross majors took to hiding. He pulled this relatively unimportant incident out of his memory and put it into his story in order to give another dimension to his sense and the reader's of what was going on in the times. A third device is that of the biography of prominent persons such as Roosevelt or Veblen, business men and politicians and radicals, people who were shaping the times. And finally there is his story itself, an interlocking series of narratives about individuals who are very ordinary, middle of the road, Sinclair Lewis kind of people. There is little or no plot as the paths of these people cross and criss-cross and re-cross each other in a meaningless tangle of episodes, their lives coming and going on a kind of dead level with "This is the way the world works" as the narrative tone of voice. These three related novels cover the entire war experience: before the war during the war, and after the war. In raising the total experience of an era and a civilization up to the level of symbolic form, Dos Passos is tremendously successful, but his success does not extend to a full realization of the meaning of the form he has constructed. He leaves the reader about where he found him except that he has given him a much fuller sensory and emotional realization of the events which have been narrated. But he does not quite say why or what is universal about them. The only generalization to which his own can be related is the Marxist ideology

which Dos Passos apparently never himself fully accepted and which he rejected within not too long a time after writing this novel. One is left with only a kind of sentimental humanitarianism as a basic philosophy underpinning the literary form.

It is no wonder that in later life Dos Passos felt that he must get another intellectual foundation for his work. He then wrote the trilogy which he finally called *D.C.*, a series of novels in which he debunked first Communism, then Fascism, and finally the New Deal, a study of the microcosm of Washington to offset that of the macrocosm of the United States as a whole. In doing so, he wiped out all contemporary political possibilities and left himself and his readers only the inherited American tradition of Thomas Jefferson. It was logical for him then to desert fiction for history and to write books about the American past. After almost achieving the level of great literature, Dos Passos lost his grip on the problem and slipped further and further away from mastery of the literary alchemist's art.

Eugene O'Neill went further than Dos Passos in literary development. He was somewhat older than either of our other two authors, but not enough older to prevent his being essentially a member of the same generation. He also had a stormy youth in a family which was disordered. It would seem that if you happen to be born into a well-regulated family and your father and mother get along together and don't throw dishes at each other, there is very little chance for you to become an important writer. You have to have a home in the first place, and then you have to have disorder in the home to stir up your emotions and prepare you for your role as a social critic. As we all know from O'Neill's recent play, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, which is largely but not strictly autobiographical, his home was disrupted by the efforts of his father and mother to escape from themselves through the artificial means of alcohol and drugs. As this is the great tragedy of his life, it probably stimulated him to run off to sea, led to his adventures in far places, and might even have had something to do with his physical



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breakdown, his time in the hospital, and his final return. It was the source of his struggle all through his life to become adjusted to himself, to his intense emotions, and to the society of his day.

In his early plays O'Neill is concerned with people who, like himself, are unhappy and discontented with life, but one could also group these plays according to the social problems with which they deal. For instance, there are plays on the Negro question like *The Emperor Jones* and *All God's Chillen Got Wings*; there are plays on the lot of the worker versus the lot of the capitalist like *The Hairy Ape* and *Marco Millions*, and there are plays on the decay of domestic morals, especially in family life, like *Beyond the Horizon*, *Desire Under the Elms*, and *Strange Interlude*. He wrote many plays which examine the American family and ask what is happening to it. They are suggestive of Ibsen who was much concerned with this kind of problem. And finally there was a series of plays on the failure of the American ideal, the only one of which apparently to survive is *A Touch of the Poet*, although *The Iceman Cometh* might be included in this category, and O'Neill planned many more.

There is no doubt that O'Neill was concerned throughout his life with social problems as such, but in each case in which he deals with one of them and starts discovering symbols for his facts, his problem becomes personal rather than social. His symbols are the symbols of psychology rather than of sociology and his characters represent the plight of individual men in modern society rather than the plight of man in general as in the case with Dos Passos.

O'Neill has used two major techniques for accomplishing this aim, two kinds of art, in one of which he leans slightly more toward the facts and in the other of which he leans more toward the symbols. The two kinds are sometimes called naturalism and expressionism, but they often merge the one into the other. In a play like *Desire Under the Elms* or *Beyond the Horizon*, he deals with a single

situation and a single problem, and his characters are individuals first and symbols only secondarily. In other plays, however, his process of symbolization goes so far that his characters lose almost all sense of life and become nothing but puppets, walking symbols. Among such plays are *The Emperor Jones*, where a Negro porter who becomes the ruler of a small island is little more than a symbol of the primitive instincts that underlie the civilization of all of us, and *The Hairy Ape*, where Yank is little more than the essential hairy ape in all men. No one thinks of him as a real person from the beginning of the play to the end although the process of his reversion to type is the main point. These are both early plays, but even toward the end of his career, in *The Iceman Cometh*. O'Neill told his story through characters who are much more symbols than they are individuals. In each case, he succeeded in escaping from reality into illusion, from fact into meaning, by raising the individual's problem (often his own) from the immediate and circumstantial to the general. This accomplishment becomes most impressive and moving in the last of his plays, unpublished and unproduced at the time of his death, *Long Day's Journey into Night*. This is the story of his own family and here he confronts the problem of his own youth most directly and deeply: how to deal with the people who gave him birth, who shaped his early life for him, and yet whom he had to reject in order to become a man in his own right. It is that rejection which we see happening in the play that allowed him to realize the great artist that was in him. And yet even so great an achievement is imperfect. One cannot help feeling that, in this most nearly perfect of modern tragedies, O'Neill was still so much wrapped up in his own emotions and his problems were so intensely personal and psychological that he fell short of the social perspective of a Dos Passos or a Sinclair Lewis on the one hand and of the aesthetic perspective of a T. S. Eliot or a Faulkner on the other.



## THE ALCHEMY OF LITERATURE

My third choice should be an illustration of an author who achieved success in the respects in which Dos Passos and O'Neill fell short of it, in discovering the full sociological and psychological meanings of his symbolic forms. But I have already said that I do not believe that we have produced a modern American Shakespeare. We must still be satisfied with approximations, and Ernest Hemingway will serve to suggest the next stage on the road.

Hemingway was neither completely absorbed in the social life of his time, although he was strongly drawn into it, nor in the psychological problems of the age, although he was very much drawn to them also. Of our three, he is the one who most nearly succeeded in getting himself out of the tangle of contemporary emotions through symbol, through the use of symbolic form, and who developed the purest art. I have chosen him rather than Faulkner or Eliot, whom some might claim as greater artists, because he presents the same problem as they but in a simpler form. I can illustrate, I think, the process of distillation of life into art better with an uncomplex artist like Hemingway than I could with a more complex artist like Faulkner or Eliot, either of whom would involve us in many other considerations before we could get to the crux of our problem.

At the heart of all of Hemingway's stories is a boy in the woods of Northern Michigan. This boy, Nick Adams, is his fictionalized self, and he puts him through many of his own experiences, experiences with pain, with death, with life as he himself met it. In every incident, we feel the sensitivity of this boy as he grows into young manhood in Hemingway's first volume of short stories, published in Paris under the title, *In Our Time*. Between the stories, which are not otherwise connected, are camera eye interludes similar to those of Dos Passos to link them to the sub-conscious awareness of the same sensitive human being, the boy. Under various names, Nick, grown up, is in all of Hemingway's stories.

Although Hemingway's first mature novel *The Sun Also Rises* states his basic attitudes toward life as fully as anything he ever wrote, it is not as focused on a single character as are most of his later stories. Jake Barnes has been wounded by the war and faces sterility in love and death. The narrative is centered about him as much as about anyone, but almost equally important are Lady Brett Ashley whose affairs with the various characters provide much of the action, the American Jew Robert Cohn, the Spanish bullfighter Pedro Romero, and the others of their ex-patriate, pleasure-seeking set. Written in the cynical vein of the passage from *Ecclesiastes* that supplies the title, the novel also states Hemingway's basic stoicism, the belief that only in love and death is complete self-realization attainable. At the same time that it is revealing human nature on as base and sensuous a level as would seem possible, it comments on the dilemma of an entire generation by use of the "waste-land" themes of sterility and ritualistic killing which were also effectively used by Eliot and others. Much more effectively than Scott Fitzgerald or any other of the "Lost Generation," Hemingway in this novel summed up the meaning of life this side of Paradise. Confronting the fact that man in modern society has failed, and is in danger of even more serious failure, the artist in Hemingway, in his passion, his dismay at this knowledge, is able to free himself so completely from personal involvement that he can see his people coldly and clearly, confront them with the ultimate dilemmas of love and death, and present them in a symbolic structure more nearly perfect than anything which Dos Passos or O'Neill was able to achieve.

The symbolism of *The Sun Also Rises* is not as obvious nor as fully developed as it was to become in Hemingway's later stories. In *A Farewell to Arms*, the Hemingway theme is concentrated with white-hot intensity on the central characters Frederic Henry and Catherine Barkley and the symbolic use of the elements - water, rain, plain, mountain - becomes much more confident and effective. As a work of



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art, this is probably Hemingway's best novel, but *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is more revealing of his intentions and methods because it is more complex. Here the Hemingway hero, Robert Jordan, finds himself caught in the central political problem of the day, the choice between Communism and Fascism as they work out their destinies on the mountain battlegrounds of Spain, but social issues as such are completely subordinated to the personal crisis in the life of one man: the necessity that he should realize himself fully in love and courage before accepting death. The two levels upon which the novel is written, the narrative and the symbolic, are clearly stated in the title, for the symbol of the bell could have purely political significance (it is impossible to escape the crisis of the times) or merely personal meaning (anything that happens to anyone anywhere in the world is a part of each of us when we have realized, through love and death, our basic kinship with our fellows). To the elemental symbols are added those of the bridge, the cave, Maria's close-cropped hair, the earthy Pilar and the cringing Pablo, in an intricate web of implied significances which gives the story an entire world of meaning quite apart from its narrative action.

I cannot, of course, discuss all of Hemingway's work, but I would like to conclude with brief mention of one of his longer short stories, *The Snows of Kilimanjaro*. Here the Hemingway hero faces death from an infected leg on the African plain while contemplating the unattainable white peak of the mountain of his spiritual yearning. So sharply does the symbolic structure represent the two levels of human experience that the story even has two endings. While death comes in the most sordid and undramatic way that cynicism could devise, the spirit is freed by the arrival of the rescue plane and a true death is realized by a symbolic crash against the white peak. The narrative and symbolic structure so exactly coincide that not a word in the story could be disturbed without destroying the whole.

This, I suppose, is the test of art: it must be intensely real but it must escape from reality. In order to present a society or a culture, it must transcend at the same time that it fully comprehends the issues and the complex and confused forces at work among a people at a given time and place. It would seem that a generation of American artists in fiction and drama and poetry has come mightily close to achieving that high aim.



FRIEDRICH DÜRRENMATT  
OR THE TRAGIC SENSE OF THE COMEDY

*Adolf D. Klarmann*

Since its misty conception in the *comos* and the *mimos* to the complex girations of the Paris *avant garde* the term comedy has come to mean different things to different people. A short glance at the more recent literature confirms the suspicion that the modern dramatist cares little whether he defines his experience of the world as a tragedy or as a comedy. The term tragicomedy seems more appropriate to him, or such neutral designations as the popular "play" or even "comedy-drama." However this kind of confusion need not surprise us if we remember that the *Birds* by Aristophanes or Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* or *The Tempest* or Lope's *El Alcalde de Zalamea* or Molière's *Le Misanthrope* or *George Dandin* are all called comedies. Were Buchner's *Woyzek* written today it would undoubtedly have been called a tragicomedy.

At the turn of the century and in the midst of naturalism, Hauptmann's tragedies of human insufficiency *Kollege Crampton* and *Ratten* are termed comedies. Not much later, Hoffmannsthal pours his melancholy elegy of misapprehension and resignation into the comedy *Der Schwierige*, and in their ultimate loneliness and emptiness Schnitzler's supposedly gay lovers of life are tragic. The stress shifts in the drama of expressionism where at first Kaiser and Sternheim, following in the footsteps of Wedekind, continue the romantic tradition of *épatèr le bourgeois*. While these

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plays retain on the whole the conventional form of the stage, a radical change takes place about 1910. The stage as active component of the play makes its significant appearance with Strindberg's *Dreamplay*. The expressionist station drama, the stage of illusion, musical interludes, and soon enough the introduction of the film dominate the previously conservative stage. Out of the recent past reach voices of dramatists such as Strindberg, Pirandello, Giraudoux, Cocteau, Wilder, Eliot, Kaiser and Brecht and help inspire the metarealistic or the abstract theatre on both sides of the Atlantic, the theatre of an Anouilh, an Ionesco, a Tennessee Williams, a Dürrenmatt, and many others. In their own ways they all struggle with the apparent meaninglessness and nothingness of existence. They are suspended above the dreadful and tempting pit of blackness, of death, some trying to impart a purpose and to defy the absurdity of life by its very affirmation. Camus' *Sisyphus* smiles as he starts again and again to push the stone uphill. It is perhaps this smile that uniquely pervades our modern comedy.

Common to all modern comedy is its devotion to the theatrics of the stage, to play acting, to the spectacle, to distraction. The play is the thing, and the moral, if any, must be totally integrated or assumes the form of a Brechtian Alienation. With a sovereignty of spirit akin to romantic irony this latter day child of the baroque theatre creates a world of its own which denies accepted laws of rationality and lives by the laws of its own logic and gravity. Antonin Artaud calls for a total theatre without logic and rationalism. The last consequences of this demand imply the danger of a contest between the stage and the drama, where the stage, as in the baroque theatre, tends to reduce the drama to a mere libretto for its tricks. Most of our contemporaries are practitioners of this type, and Dürrenmatt in particular is aware of the fatal abstraction of stage business and its defiance of the aesthetic economy of the play. Jean Genet, the pampered criminal of the Paris *avant garde*, is fascinated by the inherent mendacity



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of the theatre. According to Sartre he is attracted "by the element of fake, of sham, of artificiality. . . He has turned dramatist, because to him the falsehood of the stage is most manifest and fascinating. . . Everything must be so false that it sets our teeth on edge." In Dürrenmatt the pyrotechnics of the stage seem to reach some sort of apogee. Figures appear out of trap doors, enter through windows and clocks, scenery flies up and down in full view, torture wheels are outlined against the sky, moon-dances are performed on roofs, angles alight on chandeliers, chickens run across the stage. In short, every conceivable trick of the trade of the theatre, the cabaret, the burlesque and the film is applied with fullest and lustiest abandon.

Friedrich Dürrenmatt and Max Frisch are the realization of the age-old Swiss dream of producing dramatists of European rank. At a relatively young age, Dürrenmatt, a 42 years old parson's son, has achieved world fame, which was crowned by the spectacular success of the American version of his *Visit* as Valency chose to call his rather unfortunate adaptation of *Der Besuch einer alten Dame*. His literary output is relatively small: seven plays, one opera, so called, five or six radio plays, some rather remarkable prose, and then his detective stories. Only two of his radio plays lack any semblance of a comedy: the *Enterprise of Vega*, a science fiction thriller with the atomic bombing of Vega, the penal colony of the Earth, where in the dire effort of survival the separative forces of earthly prosperity have yielded to a sober feeling of solidarity of one for all and all for one. The other is the *Nocturnal Conversation with a Despised man*, a movingly written discourse between the hangman and the idealist. Significantly for Dürrenmatt both plays are imbued with a defiant affirmation of life, its dignity and its values. The remaining radioplays show on the whole the same type of humor as his longer works for the stage, with the added note, that their grotesqueness is even more accentuated

by the very compactness of the form. Among his prose-works I should like at least to mention his wonderfully funny *Greek Boy Seeks Greek Girl*, and *The Flat Tire*, a grotesque mock court story with the gradual realization of guilt in spite of legal innocence and the voluntary acceptance of death as expiation, gruesomely parallel to the ending of the *Visit*.

In practically all his writings we find one overpowering theme returning in several variations: Man's presumptuous quest for justice, his vainglorious attempts at rectifying the alleged wrongs of the world, and finally, in some few instances the dawning of a realization of inescapable existential guilt and its expiation. We shall find these misguided reformers in the end unmasked in their unconscious egotism, and opposite these mock heroes we shall see the true human beings, the non-heroes, who are forever running away from their temporal saviors in their effort to survive. They are the salt of the earth, they are the pledge of the eternally renewed hope.

As to Dürrenmatt's purpose in writing for the theatre, some of the answers can be found in his most important little book, *Problems of the Theatre*. In it he raises the question whether the present world can be presented at all in the theatre. Modern man who has lived through all the falsehood and empty promises of the years after 1930 has little faith in man made redemption. As for great tragic heroes, what would they be doing in an age of automation that only knows impersonal institutions? Boards of directors or personal secretaries of remote and anonymous executives are hardly a fit subject for an heroic drama. For the drama a hero is needed; and this is an unheroic age. In spite of its ending tragedy is essentially optimistic, for it believes in the eventual perfectibility of man. It is impossible for the modern writer to write in the grand tragic tradition, for: "Tragedy presupposes guilt, despair, moderation, lucidity, vision, a sense of responsibility. In the I-don't-give-a-damn attitude of our century, in this sell-out of the white race, there are no



more guilty and no responsible. It is nobody's fault and nobody wanted it. Ours is a collective guilt and collectively we are caught in the net of the sins of our fathers and forefathers. For we are only the children of their children. And that is our hard luck and not our fault. For guilt exists only as a personal achievement nowadays, a religious act. Only comedy can do justice to our condition. Our world has brought us to the grotesque as well as to the atom bomb. The grotesque is only one way of expressing the paradox, the form of anti-form, the face of a faceless world. And just as in our thinking we no longer can get along without the concept of the paradox, so also in art, as well as in our world, which only exists because the atom bomb exists. Out of fear of it. But the tragic is still possible. . . We can achieve it out of comedy, as the dread moment, as the gaping abyss. Many of Shakespeare's tragedies are really comedies out of which the tragic arises. One could easily conclude that the comedy is the expression of despair; however, this conclusion is not inevitable. If one realizes the senselessness of this world, one could despair. This despair is not the result of this world, but only one answer to it. Another answer might be: not to despair, but the determination to endure this world like Gulliver's among the giants. . . It is still possible to show man as a courageous being. The world (hence the stage which represents this world) is for me something monstrous. . . which must be accepted but before which one must not capitulate. The world is far bigger than any man, and perforce threatens him constantly. If one could but stand outside of the world, it would no longer be threatening. But I have neither the right nor the ability to be an outsider. . . To find solace in literature is too cheap. It is more honest to retain one's human angle."

Since the life blood of Dürrenmatt's comedy is tragic, we shall try to investigate by what means an inherently tragic subject may assume the form of a comedy and a non-heroic character, heroic dimensions. It is important to note the critical nature of modern comedy and its func-

tion as the conscience of the age through its tendency to overstate reality to the point of clowning. In Dürrenmatt, in grateful acknowledgment of his discipleship of Wedekind the cathartic impact of the comedy is achieved by its expansion into the macabre-grotesque. One is tempted to invoke Strindberg's introduction to his *Dreamplay*, where everything can happen, everything is possible, time and place cease to exist, fancy goes weaving new patterns from an insignificant bit of reality into a tapestry made of memories, experiences, ideas, improbabilities and incidental writing.

In Dürrenmatt's love of the macabre, there is a definite kinship to E.T.A. Hoffman as well as to Kafka, and a spiritual affinity to the graphic art of Alfred Kubin, especially in the conceptualization of a situation as well as in its *mise en scene*. Dürrenmatt visualizes scenes with the eye of an experienced draftsman before he translates them into the idiom of an imaginative stage, as for instance the moondance scene at the end of *It Is Written*, or Akki's abode under the Euphrates bridge in *An Angel Comes to Babylon*. Hence also his preference for the stage settings of a Theo Otto: 'I have little use for a theatre that uses black drapes as was the fashion once upon a time, or for the tendency to glory in threadbare poverty which some stage designers seem to aim for.'

And now to the plays themselves. The above mentioned first full length attempt, *Es Steht Geschrieben*, *It is Written*, is particularly interesting, because, in spite of the obvious shortcomings of a beginner, it literally explodes the full arsenal of Dürrenmatt's comic devices and hence most clearly demonstrates both method and *Weltanschauung*. In the figures of the two Anabaptist leaders, of the centenarian bishop, and of the Emperor Charles, we recognize the several types and motivations of temporal redemption and the projection beyond the incurred guilt to an expiation. As to the handling of the comic situation and certain technical devices he, in contrast to Brecht, gratefully acknowledges his debt to the great Viennese folkplaywright Nestroy,



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"that most wonderful phenomenon in the theatre in the German language," as he calls him.

We are startled by the very first scene as the stage lights concentrate on three kneeling Anabaptists in front of the curtain who in their baroque God-seeking, invoke tragicomic apocalyptic visions. A stage direction immediately warns us - and stage directions play a most important part in, and of, the play - not to take them seriously. "One needn't take these scoundrels seriously enough to go to the trouble of constructing a special set for them. It is enough to let them appear in front of the curtain. The director and the actors are welcome to make use of their own ideas for we are supplying only a few scanty notes and touches toward making a colorful world which yesterday looked exactly like today and tomorrow."

We note the primacy of the stage and the reintroduction of improvisation as practiced in the *comedia dell'arte* and in the Viennese folk theatre. The *Einfall*, the *idea* as he calls it in his *Theatre probleme*, has a prominent place in the Dürrenmatt design. Here, as in other instances, it sometimes takes over the play and carries the author merrily and recklessly to a burlesque exuberance - he calls it *Übermut* - which he considers an essential condiment of the comedy. Words, he says, are of great but not exclusive importance. Almost as important are: the stage, the ideas, *Übermut*, and the rhetorical gesture, which he loves dearly and which he says was lost for the world of the drama when a naturalistic actor with bad memory could not remember his part. The actor's stepping out of his part and directly addressing the audience in the theatre or the author's in his stage directions addressing the reader is a charming survival of romantic irony common to the theatre of both the East and the West. The device of the monologue is very important and serves several purposes: it introduces first of all a character in the manner of a *conférencier* who comments on actions past and future in full awareness of his anachronism, for instance here, when the monk states that he is neither historical nor has he,

fortunately, ever lived. "I appear only a few times in this play, two or three times, all told. Why, it even happens once in a while that I don't have to appear at all, because the director has cut me out in order to shorten the play or because he is one actor shy. Even now, as I am talking to you, I am not much more than a silence filler. To be sure the curtain has gone up and all eyes are on the stage, but no one knows how it goes on from here." We see here a further function of the monologue as time-filler for the interrupted dramatic time, a kind of replacement of the curtain between scenes. Or the monologue can expand easily into a musical interlude, a couplet, a time-tested stage tradition, happily applied by Nestroy, but also by Brecht and Dürrenmatt.

But back to the play. The introduction of Bockelson, the religious demagogue and opportunist, is an hilarious bit of buffoonery in the best tradition of Nestroy. Of like caliber is the watchman with his *judico ergo sum* or the learned streetcleaner who has preempted at least as many academic faculties as Faust. Contrasted with the self-seeking Bockelson is the deeply mystical Knipperdolinck, the richest man of the town who in search for his God gradually sheds all his earthly possessions and loves, including his wife, only to realize on the rack that God will not have His will fathomed nor His kingdom established on earth.

In his quest for grotesque and macabre effects Dürrenmatt does not hesitate to combine seemingly mutually exclusive ingredients. This becomes quickly clear in the slapstick introduction of such deeply serious characters as the Bishop, who is shoved onto the stage in a wheelchair from the wings, or the Emperor who gets dusted off with a feather duster like a museum piece. Yet it is the centenarian Bishop who speaks some of the profoundest thoughts clothed in an utterly contradictory bit of romantic irony and poetic anachronism. For instance, addressing himself to the audience he says: "If you get to see things that appear too cruel and too non-sensical to you, don't



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get too scared; Believe me, the world can endure any wound and it does not matter too much whether man is happy or not; for happiness was not given to him and it is his only by a great act of grace. Above all it is essential that he exists, stumbling on earth. I know there is much misery down here. . .and confusion without end. Yet if we do not take it all too seriously up here on the stage, it is not to mock your misfortune and ours, but because we want to show man's actions a bit disengaged from the gravity of the earth. . .'" And he jumps right into irony: "All of us, or at least all of us here on stage, have lived centuries before you. . .'" etc. This parodistic anachronism is exceeded later by the expatiation of the class-conscious vegetable woman on the importance of onions for the propagation and survival of mankind: "For the dark Middle Ages have barely passed and ahead still lie the Thirty Years' War. The War of Succession, The Seven Years' War, the French Revolution, Napoleon, the Franco-Prussian War, the First World War, Hitler, the Second World War, the Third, the Fourth,. . .the Twelfth World War. That is why children are needed! Ladies and gentlemen, and corpses too. Help the course of the world, consider the future and eat onions. What difference does a little stench more or less make?" Amusing as all this may be, the gratuitous mixing of serious and frivolous elements detracts from the impact of passages in which Dürrenmatt seems to want to convey a serious concern with a problem, as for instance in the religious discourse between the Bishop and Knipperdolinck which follows the above scene. The theatrical fate of Mattison, the fanatical Anabaptist leader, is not much different. He flays the frivolous attitude of the playwright and pronounces that he, the author, is nothing but a "literally uprooted Protestant, afflicted with the boil of doubt, suspicious of the faith which he admires because he lost his own, a phony melange of hollow cliché and a scurrilous enjoyment of indecencies." In this acrid self-persiflage Dürrenmatt's peculiar romantic irony achieves some sort of a superlative. But at the same time

we begin to sense the inherent heresy of the Anabaptist in anticipating God's will and proclaiming himself the self-appointed savior here on earth.

There is no end to the clowning as the camp scene descends from the flies crudely painted on brown wrapping paper. Battle scenes are indicated by stage darkness and martial music filling the empty time. No macabre cruelty is spared the audience: the nihilist Bockelson has proclaimed himself king of the world which he will drag down with him in destruction; the pentinent Knipperdolinck is the highest judge, he the new Jeremiah wooing his God, who forever evades him. Grotesque and macabre scenes vie with soul-searing protestations, followed by the death-drunk moondance of the two Anabaptist leaders and their expiration on the rack. Knipperdolinck makes this gripping last statement: "For whatever happens manifests Thy infinity, O Lord. The depth of my despair is but a symbol of Thy justice and my body lies in this wheel like in a cup which Thou fillest now with your grace to the brim." And the bitter sense of it all? The Bishop sums it up: "Guilt, expiation. What pretty words for such a misery. There is no difference between man's deed and the rack to which God has bound him."

Having discussed this play so fully, we may be more brief in our discussion of the others. If the tragicomic subject of this play is man's search for God's kingdom on earth, then the second play, *Der Blinde, The Blind Man*, treats the temptations of Job and the faith in the world of the spirit. Comedy and exuberance of stage technique is replaced here by a macabre air of the unchanged, uniform scene. The changes are only indicated by making the blind man believe that he moves from place to place as the group of cutthroats and escaped actors, upon the bidding of the satanic Negro, da Ponte, act the several parts in the retinue of the blind Duke. Taking his theme from Matthew 9:29: "Then touched he their eyes, saying, according to your faith be it unto you," Dürrenmatt sur-



prisingly reaffirms his reliance on faith by vanquishing all Satan's attempts to break the spirit of the Duke and by upholding his faith against the existentialist defeatism of his son and the dedication of daughter to Satan da Ponte. Thus in his blindness the Duke can see a higher sense in creation in spite of all absurdity.

*Romulus the Great*, easily his most Shavian comedy, follows in the old tradition of applying contemporary concerns to a classical theme. Both tragedy and comedy of the present as well as the past have made ample use of it. This persiflage of history makes few demands on the stage and easily falls into four distinct acts. The play is a sardonic travesty on the military in the dying Roman Empire, and simultaneously on the humorless, mission-conscious submissiveness of the rising supermen of the Germanic race. One different type of comic character with dire undertones of the omnipotence of business is introduced in the person of Cesar Rupf, the tremendously wealthy trouser manufacturer who is determined to put the Romans in pants, either by bribing the Goths to abandon the conquest of the Roman Empire, he, Rupf, thereby becoming the savior of Rome and the most worthy candidate for the hand of the Emperor's daughter, or in case of refusal, by siding with the pants-wearing Germans against Rome. Dürrenmatt undoubtedly has his fun here at the expense of his good Swiss compatriots.

The tragicomedy of little *Romulus the Great* lies in the fact that, realizing the cruelties and injustices of the builders of the Roman Empire, he has decided to end all patriotic wars by dooming Rome to conquest by the Germanic tribes. However, his plans are disorganized by Odoaker, who knows Roman history and culture better than the Romans, and who has really come to proclaim Romulus emperor and submit to his rule in order to rescue the world from the Spartan ideals of world conquest as practiced by his abstemious and vegetarian nephew Theoderic. In the end, Romulus and Odoaker must resign themselves to their fate, for the one could not punish Rome for past sins and

the other tried in vain to alter the course of the future. Thus irony changes to bitter earnestness and back again into comedy. Romulus concludes: "Bear the bitter lot and try to put some sense into all this nonsense. Give the world a few peaceful years, Odoaker, which history will, of course, skip because of their lack of spectacular feats of heroism. Let us finish out our comedy. Let us pretend that the impossible equation has a solution, that the spirit has won out over the matter Man." Alas, history informs us of even greater inhumanities in the name of glory, as practiced in the German succession to the world of Rome.

In his next two plays Dürrenmatt's comedy returns full force to a highly complex stage technique. *The Marriage of Mr. Mississippi* or *Fools Pass Through* is, in spite of its various literary antecedents, a most original bit of stage writing. It owes some of the characteristics of its main protagonists to the author's admiration for Wedekind, and on the other hand it has the elements of a Brechtian "Lehrstück" with the accoutrements of alienation and epic theatre. But this is by no means all. For intrinsically it is conceived in the tradition of the medieval mystery play in which man is placed in life to prove himself in the eyes of a higher fate. Here too, the main characters, in a plea of self-justification, defend the convictions which they would foist as panaceas upon a reluctant world. Two men, friends from the days of their common past in the gutter, and representing the political extremes, attempt, each in his own image, to bring justice to the world, only to find defeat because of the woman Anastasia, a direct descendant of Wedekind's Lulu. And between the two, also despairing of the woman, stands the idealist, Don Quixote.

As the play begins, we notice two windows in the background, whose views are contradictory and confusing, a situation which Dürrenmatt explains in his *Theatre Probleme*, where he speaks of the dematerialization of the stage and the locus of the drama: "I expressed the indefiniteness of the locale by having the right window of a room look out upon a northern landscape with its Gothic



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cathedral and apple tree, while the left window of the same room opened on a southern scene with an ancient ruin, a touch of the Mediterranean and a cypress. The decisive point is that the writer is making poetry with the stage, a possibility which has always fascinated me and which is one of the reasons, if *not* the reason, why I write plays. However, remembering the comedies of Aristophanes and Nestroy, in every age poetry has been written not only for but also with the stage. Similarly, in *An Angel Comes to Babylon* the stage has to indicate the two loci of the drama, heaven and Babylon, heaven as the mysterious point of departure, and Babylon as the place of action. To indicate the vastness and the incomprehensibility of heaven, a gigantic drop of the Andromeda nebula stretches out as might be seen from Mt. Palomar. To stress the ubiquitousness of the metropolis, a Babylon somewhere between New York and Paris is indicated."

According to the notes which Dürrenmatt appended to his *Comedies, An Angel Comes to Babylon* essays to interpret the motivation for the building of the Tower of Babel. The figure of the beggar Akki is Dürrenmatt's stroke of genius. His brusque sentimentality, his cheerful beefing, his wit, his decency, and his fierce love of freedom raise him, not unlike Brecht's Azdak in the *Caucasian Chalk Circle* to the ever valid symbol of independent man's desperate struggle to survive between the grindstones of opposing panaceas. Akki is poor, for he knows of the transitoriness of all material attachment and personal engagement: "To withstand the world, the weak man must understand it lest he get onto a road which leads nowhere and lest he run into mortal danger. The powerful are powerful; it is mean to disregard this truth and dream foolish dreams of conquering the powerful without having the means of beating them. Heroism is stupid. It only gives away the impotence of the weak and makes the powerful laugh. . . Only he who is nothing and has nothing survives. Play stupid and survive. . . Attack from within. . . Humble yourself and you breach every wall. Endure ignominy. And if

the times demand it, bury your hopes, your love, your sorrow, your grace, your humanity under the hangman's red cloak." With this grand Wedekindian gesture, Dürrenmatt has set man's tragic plight in the frame of a fantastic comedy.

It seems to me that Dürrenmatt's strongest work is *Der Besuch einer alten dame* or *The Visit* as it is called in the Valency adaptation. The idea of Old Testament justice which we have already encountered in *Mississippi* approaches here Greek dimensions and lends to Claire Zachanassian features of ancient Nemesis. After an absence of forty years from Gullen, which in Swiss German means something like slop, she returns to demand justice against the man who forty years before seduced and betrayed her. He had driven her to seek a living for herself and their child in the big city as a prostitute. This made it possible for her to become the richest woman in the world, so rich that she can now buy herself justice. Her man, Ill, is to be delivered to her dead, and one of the Gulleners is to carry out the deed.

In contrast to most other Dürrenmatt figures that remain morally static, Ill experiences a degree of catharsis. He goes through an intuitive development from sated bourgeois unconsciousness to the gradual realization of existential guilt and the necessity of accepting retribution, or even beyond this, of becoming the fatal sacrifice, not for the purpose of reestablishing justice, as the Gulleners would wish to believe, but in order to reaffirm his fellow man's implication in the cosmic guilt which is the price of life. The ending of the play shows us the total transformation, of Gullen. Since no single individual is willing to carry out Ill's murder, the whole community must take it upon itself; this happens in the stirring scene where all the men of Gullen congregate to judge Ill. All take the classically portentous oath of accepting Claire's money: "Not for the sake of the money. But from conscience qualms. For we cannot live, if we tolerate a crime among us, which we must eradicate lest our souls suffer harm



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and our physical possessions.”

If tragedy literally translated means the song of the scapegoat, then the *Visit* is a true tragedy. Yet, like all his other works, it is replete with comic elements. The author tells us: “You will get the best results if you produce me in the general tone of a folkplay and treat me as a kind of conscious Nestroy.” And he insists that the tragic tone be maintained, for “it is a wicked play, but for this very reason it must not be played wickedly, but in a most humane way with sadness and with anger, yet with humor. For nothing does more harm to this comedy, which ends tragically, than beastly earnestness.”

*Frank the Fifth Opera of a Private Bank*, with music by Paul Burkhard, was deservedly a flop on every stage. Dürrenmatt tries to mock here the flexible business-conscience of his effecient fellow Swiss beyond the point of good taste. The bankers with their total devotion to earning a dishonest living and the clerks who loyally serve the cause of crime are meant to present a persiflage of the bourgeois world and its perverted virtues. One cannot help but think of the reverse situation in Brecht’s *Three Penny Opera*, where, however, the anti-social parody is carried out with infinitely more genius and certainly much more fun. Here, as so often in Dürrenmatt, the ethical realization comes, but it comes too late. The cheated cheaters sing in the end: “We could have turned back at any time. At any moment of our evil life.” There is no heritage that could not be refused; there is no crime that had to be committed. In a way, the thought of the *Visit* is carried here to its logical conclusion. The final chorus announces the coming of a new glacial age (shades of *The Skin of Our Teeth*): “The ice world is coming. The glacier covers mankind that freezes and no longer flees. The spirit sought us and turned away. In lazy grace we have turned to ice. There was no punishment and there was no judgment and justice did not pay off.”

In his last play, *The Physicists*, which had its premier only in February 1962, the comic element recedes appreci-

ably. We are however still within the genre, and Dürrenmatt concentrates his scorn and irony primarily in his stage directions. There are still plenty of comic scenes, but, on the whole, the tone of the irony in the play proper is less exuberant and more tragic. In spite of its rather sensational subject, Dürrenmatt succeeds in creating tension, surprise and dramatic reversal. In an epilogue to the play Dürrenmatt stated his creed of the responsibility of the spirit to life. He calls it "The Twenty-one Points concerning Physicists." They are : "I do not proceed from a thesis but from a story. If you proceed from a story, you must think it through to its end. The story is thought through to its end if it has taken its worst possible turn. The worst possible turn is not predictable. It occurs by accident. The art of the dramatist lies in injecting the accident into the action as effectively as possible. The protagonists of a dramatic action are people. The accident in a dramatic action is predicated on when who encounters whom. The more premeditated man acts, the more effectively he can be overtaken by an accident. Premeditating people wish to reach a certain goal. The accident strikes them most effectively when, as a result of it, they arrive at the opposite of their goal, the very thing they fear and wish to evade, (Oedipus, for instance). Such a story is, to be sure, grotesque but not absurd; it is paradoxical. The dramatists are just as little able to avoid the paradoxical as the logicians. And the physicists can avoid it as little as the logicians. A drama about physicists has to be paradoxical. It cannot have physics as its goal, only the effect thereof. The content of physics concerns the physicists, its effect concerns all people. What concerns all, only all can solve. Every attempt of an individual to solve what concerns all must of necessity fail. Reality appears in the paradox. Whoever faces the paradox, exposes himself to reality. The dramatic art can trick the audience to expose itself to reality, but it cannot force it to withstand or to conquer it."



Already at the age of twenty-five, the physicist Mobius has reached the limits of human knowledge. Fearing the destructive possibilities of his theory, fifteen years before the play begins, he escaped into an insane asylum, pretending that the voice of King Solomon was dictating his secrets to him. In order to spare humanity from the consequences of his knowledge, he had sacrificed family, career, and personal happiness, only to live for his theories in the abstract, convinced that thereby he had rendered them completely innocuous. Unknown to him, two famous physicists in the secret service of their countries, one from the west and the other from a party dictatorship have had themselves also locked up in the asylum in order to get at his secret. One appears as Newton; the other as Einstein. As in the last act they try to persuade or force Mobius to follow one or the other, he succeeds in convincing them of the dreadful destructiveness of their knowledge: "We have reached the limits of knowledge in our science. No one can follow us. Our science has become horrible, our findings deadly. We physicists must capitulate before reality, which cannot withstand us. We must take our knowledge back again. There is no other solution." Alas, they soon find out that a thought, once born, can no longer be taken back. While the three supposed madmen have revealed themselves as normal, the directrix of the asylum, madly believing in the appearance of King Solomon, had copied all of Möbius' writings before he had burned them and had established a world trust with this knowledge which delivers the fate of humanity into the hands of this madwoman. And so the asylum has become a prison for the three savants. Returning to their mad parts, they recite briefly their vita and achievements. Newton has established the mathematical basis of science; Einstein has established the theory of relativity which has changed physics; and yet he says: "I love people and I love my violin, but upon my recommendation the atom bomb was built." And finally we hear Mobius: "I am poor King Solomon. Once I was immeasurably rich and wise and god-fearing. I was a prince of

peace and justice. But my wisdom destroyed my fear of God, and when I no longer feared God, my wisdom destroyed my riches. Now all cities are dead over which I ruled; the empire which was entrusted to me is empty, a desert shimmering in a blue light; and somewhere around a small nameless star, senselessly, eternally, circles the radioactive earth. I am Solomon. I am poor King Solomon."

What now is the tragic sense of the comedy? Perhaps the young and gifted American playwright Jack Richardson has still another answer: "Observe the clown carry on his trade in the abyss of the comic. His hair-raising awkwardness is touching and amusing at the same time. The greater his talent the less he is capable of coping with his fatalities, which govern the world, the more he is the universal image of us all."

In closing, let me return once more to that wonderful beggar Akki in *The Angel Comes to Babylon*. He is no hero; he does not challenge the centuries, nor is he the instrument of an all-powerful fate or a Nemesis. He is the little man who knows only too well that it is dangerous to walk with the mighty. All he wants is to survive. And this is a great deal. For if the Akkis disappear from the face of the earth, there will be no more happiness, and no beauty and no poetry, and no refuge for divine grace. Only an iron sense of duty, pitiless and consistent. And all the great heroes, if you let them, will sooner or later destroy themselves and drag the world down with them. But Akki does not wait; he runs for dear life taking God's child Kurubi with him: "I love the earth which still exists, the earth of beggars, unique in happiness, unique in danger, wonderful with possibilities, the earth which I conquer ever anew, mad with its beauty, in love with its image, threatened by force yet undefeated. Hurry, child, doomed to death and yet alive, mine for the second time by grace, that now accompanies me. Babylon, blind and pale, crumbles with its tower of stone and steel pushing irresistibly upward toward its downfall; and in front of us, behind the



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storm through which we hasten, pursued by horsemen, targets of their arrows, wading through sand, clinging to slopes, and our faces burnt; before us there lies in the distance a new land, rising out of the dusk, steaming in the silver of light, full of new persecutions, full of new promise and full of new songs!"

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide information regarding the proposed changes to the existing policy on the use of company funds for employee travel expenses. The proposed changes are intended to reduce the company's financial burden while ensuring that employees are able to travel for business purposes.

2. The proposed changes include the following:

- a. Limiting the number of business trips per employee per year to a maximum of three.
- b. Requiring employees to obtain prior approval from their supervisor before traveling.
- c. Limiting the amount of money that can be spent on travel expenses to a maximum of \$500 per trip.
- d. Requiring employees to submit receipts for all travel expenses.

3. The proposed changes are necessary in order to ensure the company's financial stability. The current policy on travel expenses has resulted in a significant increase in the company's financial burden, which has led to a decrease in the company's profitability. The proposed changes are intended to reduce the company's financial burden while ensuring that employees are able to travel for business purposes.

4. The proposed changes are also necessary in order to ensure that the company's resources are used efficiently. The current policy on travel expenses has resulted in a significant increase in the company's financial burden, which has led to a decrease in the company's profitability. The proposed changes are intended to reduce the company's financial burden while ensuring that employees are able to travel for business purposes.

5. The proposed changes are also necessary in order to ensure that the company's resources are used efficiently. The current policy on travel expenses has resulted in a significant increase in the company's financial burden, which has led to a decrease in the company's profitability. The proposed changes are intended to reduce the company's financial burden while ensuring that employees are able to travel for business purposes.











