RICE UNIVERSITY

World War I in the Novels of John Dos Passos

by

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ABSTRACT

John Dos Passos was one of a "war generation" of young novelists for whom World War I was a source of excitement and then disillusionment. The works of Hemingway, Cummings, and others illustrate this, but for Dos Passos the war became a preoccupation which lasted through most of his writing career.

Like many other young novelists, Dos Passos saw the war as an ambulance driver. This gave him direct personal experience with war, which he later utilized in his novels. This study examines three works, First Encounter, Three Soldiers, and U.S.A., to show how Dos Passos reworked the materials of his personal experience each time for a different effect and to a different purpose.

First Encounter is a generally direct rendering of Dos Passos' life as an ambulance driver. The central character, Martin Howe, is a sensitive and thoughtful observer much like the young Dos Passos. He embarks for France and the ambulance corps in search of adventure. During his period at the front he undergoes an initiation experience of uncertain nature, which gives him a more mature view of war. The novel is an immature and unsuccessful work, important only for the introduction of motifs which appear in later Dos Passos novels.

In Three Soldiers Dos Passos imposes some sort of form on his material. He attempts to combine subjective reactions such as those of Martin Howe with a look at the war from a more distant perspective. There are three main characters,
each representing a different level of perception about the war and the army. Dan Fuselli's opinions are all formed by what he sees in the movies; Chrisfield is just beginning to react independently; John Andrews is a highly perceptive musician who thinks for himself. Each struggles with the destructive force of organized military power, and in his own way is defeated. Only John Andrews retains a measure of independence. Dos Passos reinforces his theme with appropriate satiric techniques.

_U.S.A._ is still another expansion of focus. Here the author sees war as part of a network of corruption and injustice which informs all of modern American life. Dos Passos uses the Newsreels, the Biographies, the fictional narratives, and the Camera Eye to relate the war thematically to big business' exploitation of labor and other instances of loss of individual freedoms. As in _Three Soldiers_ Dos Passos is concerned with the struggle of the individual against the huge, impersonal "system." _U.S.A._ represents as well the most effective satire of the war and of the people who are attracted to it. One strong motif is the use of language as a "smokescreen" which conceals reality when used by unscrupulous people; both fictional and real figures are criticized for this, especially Woodrow Wilson.
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INTRODUCTION

The literature of any country necessarily reflects the reaction of its people to times of war. The initial response is likely to be one of shock and horror, followed more or less quickly by patriotic exhortations and justification of the national role in events. The reaction of American literature to World War I is especially interesting, for it is the chronicle of a nation's attempt to apply principles of democracy and reforming idealism to a troubled world. America in the years preceding the war was a proud, optimistic country, with little clear idea of the European state of affairs. There was widespread belief that America, as a shining example of democracy at work, could be a model for other nations. When war broke out in Europe Americans still did not realize what the next few years would bring. Some writers and public figures believed that war was a terrible waste of the world's resources, but many others still felt that there was nothing nobler than war in a glorious cause. Gerald Critoloph has shown that America went through several rough stages in literary reaction to the war, all corresponding to the stages in public opinion. After the first surprise and horror, the country passed from neutralism (during which the theoretical effects of war upon literature were hotly
debated) into strong anti-German feeling. When America entered the war, patriotism reached frenzied heights, followed by joy at the Armistice, and, eventually, a letdown period and great bitterness about the war just fought.

Those who felt themselves most closely connected with the collapse of easy idealism were the young writers, those who had just reached manhood when the war began. They had shared in the climate of optimism, and took themselves seriously enough to be strongly disappointed when their ideals were "betrayed" by Wilson and others. These were the young artists just coming of age in a time of violence, whose work would be influenced by violence, and whose lives would be newly directed by it. Writing as they did from a powerful common experience, they naturally became linked in the public mind as a "generation" of writers—in fact, a "war generation."

The writers of World War I shared the experience of emerging from a background of democratic idealism into the shock of war. For most of these young men, idealism did not last long once they perceived that the war was senseless, brutally wasteful of lives and property, and without any important bearing on the lives of ordinary people. Nevertheless, fresh from college and from the first experiments in the craft of writing, the young writers—Dos Passos, Hemingway, Cummings, Malcolm Cowley—took on the war as a tremendously exciting experience. They became "gentlemen
volunteers" in the Norton-Harjes ambulance corps and other similar units. If they were too intelligent to feel a flippant, callous curiosity, they did regard the war as an opportunity for observing, and for learning.

Although World War II had its own "war generation" of novelists, the experience documented in these later books was really not the same. It could not have been. The tumbling from exuberant idealism into complete disillusionment, as described in more than one novel of the "lost generation," could happen only once. Dos Passos discusses this point in the 1945 preface to First Encounter:

War and oppression in the early years of this century appeared to us like stinking slums in a city that was otherwise beautiful and good to live in, blemishes that skill and courage would remove. To the young men of today these things are inherent deformities of mankind.... That doesn't mean they like the dust and the mud and the fatigue and the agony of war or the oppression of man by man any better than we did. But the ideas of these things are more familiar.

Then too, it is much easier for Americans of the sixties to look upon the more distant of the two wars and generalize on the "typical" experience of the young idealists. Malcolm Cowley became the chronicler of his generation, and
described certain characteristics which he saw in all the members of this group of "exiles." According to Cowley, these men came to the war wholly as spectators and reporters. They were still at an age when they took themselves quite seriously; they had much the same backgrounds, especially in education; they had a keen sense of being on the brink of great and vastly interesting discoveries. They all went to the war with the same expectations and had the same experiences ranging from fear to boredom. And in the aftermath of war they suffered the common letdown and disillusionment. Cowley describes the war experience in *Exile's Return*:

...one might almost say that the ambulance corps and the French military transport were college-extension courses for a generation of writers. But what did these courses teach? They carried us to a foreign country, the first that most of us had seen...They made us more irresponsible than before:...we could let the future take care of itself, feeling certain that it would bear us into new adventures. They taught us courage, extravagance, fatalism, these being the virtues of men at war;...they taught us to fear boredom more than death. All these lessons might have been learned in any branch of the army, but ambulance service had a lesson of its own: it instilled into us what might be called a *spectatorial attitude.*

Cowley goes on to describe their feeling of leading charmed lives, telling how they collected bits of shrapnel as "souvenirs of death." After the war, in Cowley's words,
"we returned to New York, appropriately—to the homeland of the uprooted." Thus the Lost Generation comes into existence.

It is doubtful if any of the writers can be forced completely into a pattern like this one. Dos Passos is a good example. In certain respects, largely external, his life is like that described by Cowley. He did join the ambulance corps, he did suffer a letdown after the war, he did return to Europe to live after an interval in the United States. His first novel, One Man's Initiation--1917, (reprinted in 1945 as First Encounter) exhibits many of the characteristics embodied in Cowley's description of young men at war. Yet this reveals only a part of Dos Passos' concern with World War I in his fiction. His interest in this war became a preoccupation which lasted through most of his writing career, even to so late a novel as Chosen Country (1951).

The purpose of this study is to examine this interest in the war and to show how Dos Passos reworked the materials gathered in his personal experience, each time for a different effect and to a different purpose. There will be three sections. The first will discuss First Encounter as a generally direct rendering of Dos Passos' personal experience as an ambulance driver, and indicate certain attitudes and motifs which recur
in later novels about the war. The second section deals with Three Soldiers, the author's first attempt to remove himself from the war experience and generalize the problems of a large group—in this case, the American army. Included in this section is a discussion of the techniques used by Dos Passos to portray the personal dilemmas of three representative soldiers, and to point up the evils and weaknesses of the army as a whole. The culmination of both technique and theory is found in U.S.A., which is a further expansion of viewpoint, from the individual to the army, and now to all of American society. World War I is considered as an integral part of Dos Passos' indictment of modern America, and is shown to play an important role in all sections of the trilogy, not just 1919. Critics have tended to neglect the war portions of U.S.A., and to concentrate on Dos Passos' other criticisms of big business, persecutors of the laboring class, and political opportunists. I wish to demonstrate, therefore, that Dos Passos went beyond merely reporting his reactions to war and his horror at its injustices and absurdities. Dos Passos came to see his own experiences as representative of the experiences of others; what is more, he consciously used the war as a vehicle for satire. In his vision of the novelist as the "architect of history" (see below, Chapter III), Dos Passos could hardly avoid placing the war in a larger context.
each time he wrote about it. To him, war could only be meaningful in its implications for the condition of society as a whole, and in this he far transcends the simple reactions of one who merely observes.
CHAPTER ONE

First Encounter is the story of Martin Howe, a young man who volunteers for ambulance corps. In many ways he is like Dos Passos and the other young writers whom Cowley describes. They are sensitive and thoughtful observers, whose attitudes toward war are still unformed. Martin is the first in a series of young Dos Passos "heroes" who are present in France during the war, and whose observations form important parts of their respective novels. He is first seen on board the ship which is taking him to France. There is a holiday atmosphere of anticipation and excitement. The young men are singing a popular song, "God Help Kaiser Bill." In the later novels Dos Passos exploits the inherent ironies in the popular songs of the time, but here there is no more than a hint of sarcasm. Dos Passos observes of Martin:

Martin is stretched on the deck in the bow of the boat with an unopened book beside him. He has never been so happy in his life. The future is nothing to him, the past is nothing to him...Now a leaf seems to have been turned and a new white page spread before him, clean and unwritten on... At last things have come to pass.

This sounds a great deal like Cowley describing Dos Passos and other writers of their generation. Martin expects
excitement and adventure in France. Even after he learns how unpleasant war can be, he retains a natural cheerfulness which asserts itself strongly at the end of the novel. He alternates periods of cheerfulness with periods of depression and rebellion at the stupidity of men. For most of the soldiers on the Western Front, World War I was a dirty, tiring, and boring ordeal. The weeks in the trenches without firing a shot and the constant rain and mud became the soldier's greatest hardships. Martin expresses the disappointment of many when he says, "...I thought it would be hair-raising...." In his expectation of stirring action, Martin is not unlike many young soldiers who took part in the war.

Martin also reacts strongly to Europe as part of his total war experience. Martin's first impulse upon landing is to absorb as much of "Europe" as he can. He is a hypersensitive version of the tourist, and even later, when he is involved in the heaviest combat action, he is alive to the beauty and the picturesque qualities of the French landscape. A man's response to Europe is always an indication of what sort of person he is in a Dos Passos novel. The ordinary soldier considers France as a place where people drink wine with meals and where women are willing to spend the night with total strangers. At the same time he has a
Sunday-school disapproval of such things ("Gee, these Frenchwomen are immoral."⁴) and a fear of disease. But for such characters as Martin Howe, and John Andrews of Three Soldiers, France is a country enriched with a noble past. Martin is quartered near a Gothic abbey which enables him to forget the war and dream of "the quiet lives the monks must have led."⁵ He imagines rows and rows of old books, "tales of blood and death and love where the crude agony of life was seen through a dawnlike mist of gentle beauty."⁶ He longs for a similar escape from "all this cant of governments, and this hideous reiteration of hatred."⁷ At the same time, Martin self-consciously rejects the aspects of France which interest the common soldier or ambulance driver. In this, he is contrasted with his wordly friend Tom Randolph, who enjoys himself to the utmost while in Paris, while Martin spends his night looking at Notre Dame cathedral.

The motif of comradeship is a strong one in the book. Martin makes friends easily with French soldiers and other people he meets. There is a sort of gay camaraderie in the face of danger and hardship which seems to be a feature of most of the novels written about World War I: The Enormous Room, Farewell to Arms, Company K by William March, and Le Feu by Henri Barbusse, some of the best books to come out of the war; all feature the give-and-take of men in the
trenches, behind the lines, or in prison. Dos Passos uses the companionship motif thus, and in another way as well. It is his habit to present his young men in pairs, two close friends whose personalities contrast, and who share adventures. Martin Howe and Tom Randolph are only the first pair in a list which includes Telemachus and Lyaeus of Rosinante to the Road Again, John Andrews and Henslowe in Three Soldiers, and Richard Savage and Ned Wigglesworth in 1919. In each case the friend of the main character is intelligent, cynical, and inclined to be intellectually irresponsible. When Martin exclaims "We are slaves of bought intellect, willing slaves," Tom Randolph answers with a philosophy which, with modifications, is expressed by his later counterparts as well. "But, Howe, the minute you see that and laugh at it, you're not a slave. Laugh and be individually as decent as you can, and don't worry your head about the rest of the world; and have a good time in spite of the God-damned scoundrels." Although Dos Passos would not have said "don't worry your head about the rest of the world," he might have agreed with Randolph that being individually decent is the only workable approach to an absurd and evil world in which wars like this one can happen.

The original title of the novel, One Man's Initiation--1917, suggests that Martin has learned something about himself or the world around him by the end of the novel. If he has,
it will not be the same sort of initiation as that of Henry Fleming, the soldier in Stephen Crane's *Red Badge of Courage*. Although a comparison naturally suggests itself, as it does in *Three Soldiers* also, Henry Fleming learns to face fear and death to arrive at a kind of self-knowledge. It is not physical fear which poses the problems for Martin Howe. His initiation must be into acceptance of the implications of what he is observing, and an assumption of responsibility and involvement. Martin is not callous, but naturally sympathetic; he has great pity for the sufferings of others. He knows fear for his own life, and has difficulty becoming accustomed to the deaths of others.

Martin's mind could hardly grasp the connection between this man full of latent energies, full of thoughts and desires, this man whose shoulder he would have liked to put his arm round...—and those huddled, pulpy masses of blue uniform half-buried in the mud of ditches.¹⁰

However, the feelings he expresses most often are the desire to escape from the fighting, and the wish that something interesting would happen. "The main thing about this damned war is ennui—just plain boredom."¹¹ The war seems remote at times, in spite of the sympathy he feels for those who suffer. He is a victim of the "spectatorial attitude" which keeps his involvement from being complete. Martin
still regards himself as an observer, and expects the war to be an experience for his personal edification. At one point, he and Randolph quarrel in a friendly way over possession of shrapnel souvenirs, exactly as Cowley himself reminisced in *Exile's Return*.

The nature of Martin's initiation is therefore unclear. His outlook fluctuates from concern to youthful exuberance to indifference very rapidly. Perhaps the strongest expression of Martin's ability to remove himself from the realities of the war comes late in the novel when Martin sees a group of prisoners marching down the road.

"Why, they're Germans," he says to himself. "I'd quite forgotten they existed."

In spite of a sympathy for the rest of mankind, and a hatred for the war, which have been growing in Martin throughout the book, he is still capable of such indifference. His attitude as observer, as "outsider," coupled with his youthful inconsistency in thinking, prevent him from achieving any really deep concern about the war, or from reaching mature and precise evaluations of his experience.

However, Martin has perhaps attained some emotional maturity through exposure to physical danger and the difficult conditions of the war. Chapter IX describes the beginning of an intellectual maturity as well. Martin and his friend
Tom Randolph become involved in a discussion with four French soldiers about the war; the incident is based on a true one, as Dos Passos explains in the Preface. During the conversation Martin discovers for himself that the American people have been tricked into betraying their principles of democracy and freedom in order to become "a military nation, an organized pirate like France and England and Germany."

"What terrifies me rather is their power to enslave our minds," Martin went on, his voice growing louder and surer as his idea carried him along. "I shall never forget the flags, the menacing exultant flags along all the streets, the... gradual lulling to sleep of people's humanity and sense by the phrases, the phrases...."13

As the men go on to talk about the future, one Frenchman advocates the Church as the hope for the world, another Communism, and still another Anarchy. The men end by drinking to Revolution, in a great spirit of camaraderie. Martin, in a flash of sudden joy, declares

"Oh, there is hope....We are too young, too needed to fail. We must find a way, find the first step of a way to freedom, or life is a hollow mockery."14

Dos Passos seems to be suggesting that Martin's
initiation is complete. He has experienced war, and derived from it a dedication to "finding a way" to a better world. However, as an author, Dos Passos has not been able to make Martin's initiation artistically convincing. The reader receives glimpses of the author's attitudes, but no consistent picture. The hero and the author are both somewhat confused about the social and personal meanings of their war experiences.

The one theme which does emerge clearly is that of war as a horror imposed on common people from somewhere above, as yet vague and undefined. At times Martin burns with hatred and longs to revolt against the "lies" which are told to make men fight.

And all those men beyond the hill and the wood, what were they thinking? But how could they think? The lies they were drunk on would keep them certainly from thinking. They had never any chance to think until they were hurried into the jaws of it, where there was no room but for laughter and misery and the smell of blood.

David Sanders says of Dos Passos, "his basic statement is that institutions can grow beyond the point of being controlled by the human beings who create them." It is not the common citizen who is responsible for war. In fact, none of the soldiers or ambulance drivers in Dos Passos' war novels are seen as evil, intolerant, or unscrupulous. At
worst they are bewildered by the turn of events which has put them into combat, but usually they are good people. Criticism is reserved for officers and others in positions of responsibility, and is more obvious in Three Soldiers and U.S.A.

All of the other good novels about World War I made the same sort of point. Hemingway and Cummings were both concerned with the helplessness of the "little" men against the forces of current events. For them, war seemed grotesque, hideous, and at bottom irrational. Cummings in particular makes a point of this. First Encounter does not stand up well in comparison with such books, however. There are hundreds of other personal accounts of the war which reveal as much. The novel's most promising feature is the prose style, which, although not consistently good, borrows from cinematic techniques. The fragmented, impressionistic descriptions are an effort to duplicate the actual reactions of a witness who is constantly on the move, picking up impressions and recording them without thinking about them. The following passage is one of the best such examples:

The lamp in the hut of the road control casts an oblong of light on the white wall opposite. The patch of light is constantly crossed and scalloped and obscured by shadows of rifles and helmets and packs of men passing. Now and then the shadow of a single man, a nose and
a chin under a helmet, a head bent
forward with the weight of the pack, or a
pack alone beside which slants a rifle,
shows up huge and fantastic with its
loaf of bread and its pair of shoes and
its pair of shoes and its pots and pans.17

Thus the use of light and shadow, the unusual "angles" and
"close-ups" all suggest a film. Just as a film might,
Dos Passos puts together a large number of these vignettes
to present a constantly shifting picture of Martin's
surroundings. Martin Howe has little time to stop and
contemplate what he sees, and thus the narrative cannot
pause either. Much more than any of the later work except
the Camera Eye sections of U.S.A., First Encounter is devoted
to recording a single person's response to his environment.
This fragmentation is to some extent related to Martin's
swiftly changing attitudes about the war. The technique
would have been effective if Dos Passos had not attempted to
impose upon the narrative, as in the discussion in Chapter
IX, some sort of consistency and organization. Thus the
novel stands somewhere between a series of short sense
impressions, and a controlled account of a young man's
initiation into social responsibility.

After First Encounter, Dos Passos abandons the limited
viewpoint, although most critics feel that Three Soldiers
suffers from being too closely tied to the outlook of
John Andrews. Therefore, First Encounter is interesting only
in relation to Dos Passos' other novels about World War I. The "lies" theme becomes all-important in *Three Soldiers* and *U.S.A.*, as Dos Passos develops and organizes his theories. Then too, the distance between author and character increases with each succeeding novel. It might be said fairly that Martin Howe "is" Dos Passos, but John Andrews is not. When Dos Passos wrote *First Encounter*, perhaps he was still too close to the war for objectivity. The fact that his book is not nearly as angry as, for example, *A Farewell to Arms*, probably shows that Dos Passos entered the war with fewer illusions which needed to be discarded. He was idealistic, but not a fool. However, it was not until he wrote *Three Soldiers* that Dos Passos began to be dispassionate, and to employ the techniques which characterized the best of his mature work.
CHAPTER TWO

Arthur Mizener, in *The Sense of Life in the Modern Novel*, speaks of the dilemma facing the Lost Generation novelists after the war. The novel was at the time facing the dual pressures of portraying man's states of inner consciousness and illustrating "doctrinaire social theories." Mizener observes that the young writers were full of the conviction that they were participating in a literary revolution, and full of scorn for the work of the nineties and the Georgian period. In spite of this youthful viewpoint, as Mizener points out, these young men were still reading Swinburne in college when war broke out.

Like Swinburne himself, the writers who came of age in the period of the First World War committed themselves to both the aesthetic attitude and the social conscience without—at least at first—any sense of conflict.

The sense of conflict developed along with technical innovations, making it necessary to choose between the way of the "lyric" and the way of the "case history." Some sought a resolution of the two approaches, and Dos Passos was one of them. *Three Soldiers* is an attempt at such a solution, and *U.S.A.* provides still a different method of dealing with the problem.

In *Three Soldiers* Dos Passos deals with the same set of events as in *First Encounter*, but from an expanded, more
complex viewpoint. We have seen that the viewpoint of Martin Howe in *First Encounter* is a youthful and limited one, though admittedly ambiguous. Toward the end of the novel Martin was growing into some sort of social consciousness, though as yet overshadowed by his purely sensuous and emotional response to the war. In 1920, the same year in which *One Man's Initiation* was first published, *Three Soldiers* was completed, and it appeared in 1921. The interval is not a great one, but it apparently gave Dos Passos an opportunity to impose some sort of form on his material. The first indication of some definite and carefully formulated attitude on the part of the author is in the titles he has chosen for the six divisions of the novel. The first four are "Making the Mould," "The Metal Cools," "Machines," and "Rust." The reader thus learns at once that it is to be a novel concerned, at least in part, with the effects of organized military power upon individuals. The final two sections are entitled "The World Outside" and "Under the Wheels," implying an attempt by some individual to resist destructive force, and his ultimate defeat.

Having established a mechanical metaphor, Dos Passos does not use it as a rigid pattern, but keeps it in the background. *Three Soldiers* represents more than just an inflexible novel of social criticism; it is also an attempt to combine the subjective reactions of Martin Howe with a
look at the war from a more distant perspective. Dos Passos is concerned with the degrading effects of war and the army upon individual people and the destruction of the very qualities which give them their individual values. The novel is not precisely about "war," it is about "soldiers," and the distinction is far from insignificant. That the war itself is over about halfway through the book makes no difference to the progress of Dos Passos' theme; in fact, many of the really important events occur after the fighting has stopped. In order to give a sufficiently complete treatment to his themes, Dos Passos has chosen three main characters, each of whom represents one way of reacting to the power of the army over the individual. It will be seen that Dos Passos' portrayal of these three men establishes a kind of progression, both in attitudes about the "system" and in detailed treatment of these states of inner consciousness which Mizener mentions as becoming so important to the modern novel.

Of the novel's three soldiers, the one with the simplest mind is Dan Fuselli. Dos Passos is more keenly aware than he was in First Encounter of the great popular cliches of thought employed in time of war, and Fuselli is one of the soldiers who accepts what he is told without question. He is shown from the beginning to have the greatest confidence in the army, in the war, and in the possibilities for
great things which are held out to him. "It's great to
be a soldier," he said to Bill Grey. 'Ye kin do anything
ye goddam please.'2 He is possessed by the crudest
emotions: on one hand, the nagging desire to be made a
corporal; on the other, pure animal fear, as in his night-
mares, his fear of drowning. Fuselli is also prey to the
most maudlin sentiments, as evidenced in his rambling,
almost child-like account of parting from his girl Mabe.
It should be noted that this reminiscence is called up by
seeing a very sad film.

"I came near bawlin' at the picture of the
feller leavin' his girl to go off to the
war," said Fuselli...."It was just like it
was with me."3

The more one reads of Fuselli, the more he sees that every
thought or dream Fuselli has is passed on from the movies
or other aspects of popular culture. As he is shipped out
of his training camp to go overseas, the movies which form
his only notion of reality begin to run through his mind.

Fuselli's mind had suddenly become very
active. The notes of the bugle and of the
band...sifted into his consciousness through
a dream of what it would be like over there.
He was in a place like the Exposition Ground,
full of old men and women in peasant costume,
like in the song, "When It's Apple Blossom
Time in Normandy." Men in spiked helmets
who looked like firemen kept charging through,
like the Ku Klux Klan in the movies, jumping
from their horses and setting fire to buildings
with strange outlandish gestures, spitting
babies on their long swords. Those were the Huns. Then there were flags blowing...and the sound of a band. The Yanks were coming. Everything was lost in a scene from a movie in which khaki-clad regiments marched fast, fast across the screen.

Dreams of motion-picture glory pervade his every ambitious thought, and he visualizes himself "heroically carrying a wounded captain back to a dressing tent, pursued by fierce-whiskered men with spiked helmets like firemen's helmets." Besides his naive equations of films and popular songs with truth, he has a gnawing desire for material success, the uncritical respect for those above him, the fear of "getting in wrong."

Once in France, Fuselli begins to learn that there is more to the war than the movies have told him. He, like everyone else, feels dismay at the mud, the boredom, the triviality of the daily work (he is in a camp far from the front). Although he can only express it by saying, "Hell, but I thought it'd be excitin' like in the movies," he is nevertheless sensitive to his isolation and insignificance.

He was so far from anyone who cared about him, so lost in the vast machine....Day after day it would be like this—the same routine, the same helplessness.

Fuselli reacts with a kind of inarticulate fear, a fear which he himself does not fully understand. And yet, in his mental servitude, the only way out which occurs to him is further ingratiation with his superiors in hopes of the
all-important promotion.

Fuselli is a pitiful character as well as a contemptible one. In back of his feverish desire to be made a corporal is a desire to be accepted, admired, even loved. But he is a citizen of a brutal world; the girl back home marries someone else, his French girl proves to be flippant and unfaithful, and the army first mires him in dreams of glory, then in hopeless boredom. And finally it court-martials him for contracting a "social disease," and condemns him to hard and degrading labor. He never sees combat action. He is last seen on the streets of Paris, his ambitions turned to despair and apathy. The only explanation Fuselli can muster, even then, is "Hell, I got in wrong, I suppose."

Like Fuselli, Chrisfield is without education and must obtain a set of standards somewhere else. But unlike Fuselli, Chrisfield grew up on a farm; he has an abiding love for the land, and also a deep emotional spontaneity which informs all his reactions. From the first he is seen to be hot-blooded, proud, and quick to anger. He tells John Andrews soon after they first meet that he almost killed a man once, and that he has just drawn a knife on Anderson, a soldier who is "pickin' on" him. On the other hand, Chrisfield is constantly aware of the beauties of nature, and capable of close, warm friendships. Like Fuselli, he is
vaguely bewildered and resentful of the pressures the army is applying. However, he is a more sensitive person to begin with. Chrisfield has a very crude sense of himself as an individual, a sense which increases during his acquaintance with John Andrews.

A revealing sequence is the one in which Chrisfield is reconnoitering near the front and comes across the body of a German soldier in the woods. His senses are strained to the utmost; he is overwhelmed first by fear, then by unreasoning anger. Again and again he kicks the soldier, without understanding the source of his anger. But when he turns over the body and discovers that the man has shot himself, "Chrisfield felt the hatred suddenly ebb out of him."² There is an unexpressed realization here that he has some dim relationship with this dead faceless man. One has been a victim of the military machine, the other is only beginning to feel its weight. The point of this scene is quite different from its parallel scene in Stephen Crane's *Red Badge of Courage*, in which Henry Fleming finds a dead body in the forest while fleeing from battle. In Crane's book the message is one of acceptance of death as a reality and even a good, and of the futility of protest. For Dos Passos, the scene is used as a protest, a step toward self-awareness and eventually rebellion on Chrisfield's part. John Wrenn comments that
To Dos Passos, as to Chrisfield, the central importance lay in the manner of death; all the difference was in the attitudes of the dead man before he died. Dos Passos stressed the difference between life and death, and Crane the virtual identity of the two.

Following this experience, Dos Passos describes Chrisfield's standing at attention and simultaneously thinking of his numerous dissatisfactions.

An idea came into Chrisfield's head. Suppose the leaves should sweep in broader and broader curves until they should reach the ground and sweep and sweep until all this was swept away, all these pains and lice and uniforms and officers with maple leaves or eagles or single stars or double stars or triple stars on their shoulders. He had a sudden picture of himself in his old comfortable overalls, lying on a shuck of hay under the hot Indiana sun. Funny he'd thought all that, he said to himself. Before he'd known Andy he'd never have thought of that. What had come over him these days?

Thus he begins to acknowledge the change in himself, even while he chafes under the regimentation, the dirt and heat, even the nightmarish memory of the dead soldier. He admits to his friend, the educated artist John Andrews, "Ah guess Ah got a bit of the devil in me." During this time, the presence of the hated Sergeant Anderson acts like a goad to his anger, embodying everything that oppresses Chrisfield.

Chrisfield felt powerless as an ox under the yoke. All he could do was work and strain and stand at attention, while that
whitefaced Anderson could lounge about as if he owned the earth.

Eventually Chrisfield takes refuge behind his constant "Ah doan give a hoot in hell," in an effort to stem his rising panic. Life becomes a confusion of dream and waking. Then, in a crucial battle, Chrisfield becomes separated from Andrews and the other men he knows. He meets Anderson by chance, and kills him, without making a conscious decision about it.

Suddenly he found he had pressed the spring of the grenade. He struggled to pull it out of his pocket... His arm and his cold fingers that clutched the grenade seemed paralyzed. Then a warm joy went through him. He had thrown it.

Curiously enough, after the murder of Anderson, Chrisfield feels that he has in some way come to terms with his oppressors. He welcomes the discipline and the anonymity.

Chrisfield looked straight ahead of him. He did not feel lonely any more... His feet beat the ground in time with the other feet. He would not have to think... He would do as the others did.

Much later, when he meets John Andrews (who has since been wounded, hospitalized, and released), they have nothing to say to each other. Like Fuselli, Chrisfield seems to have accepted his situation as a soldier, even to regarding it
as a "regular picnic." Yet by the end of the book Chrisfield has deserted. He is obsessed by the belief that someone knows about the killing; his impulse is to flee, to hide, and to seek out John Andrews, who used to provide the only sane world view that Chrisfield knew. By this time Andrews himself is A.W.O.L., and has no help to offer, except money. Chrisfield disappears into Paris, condemned to be a perpetual victim, and is seen no more.

John Andrews, the third of the "three soldiers," might be called the descendant of Martin Howe, and thus the closest of the three to Dos Passos himself. He is the artist, the intelligent consciousness which can interpret events and estimate their consequences. Andrews understands well the language of implication, which at once sets him apart from Fuselli and Chrisfield. He is also given to endless periods of self-analysis, a fact which tends to make him the bitterest critic of army life. One of Andrews' earliest experiences in the army was that of washing the windows of a barracks. As he performs the same motions over and over, he reflects on the monotony of his task, and allows it to become symbolic of his total life in the army up to that time. Drudgery, boredom, and uniformity—these are the first complaints John Andrews has about the army. One is reminded of Martin Howe's cry, "The main thing about this damned war is ennui—just plain boredom." Andrews' complaint
is not a cry of adolescent disappointment however. His enlistment was a wilful self-surrender to these very qualities.

It was in this that he would take refuge from the horror of the world that had fallen upon him. He was sick of revolt, of thought, of carrying his individuality like a banner above the turmoil. A little later he tells himself

...at least at the bottom, in the utterest degradation of slavery, he could find forgetfulness and start rebuilding the fabric of his life, out of real things this time, out of work and comradeship and scorn.

Almost immediately Andrews discovers that the army will not consent to be an agency for the rehabilitation of world-weary musicians. He has trapped himself in a "futile madness" and committed himself to the pursuit of killing and of mass hatred. Thus the act of washing windows will develop into the very fabric of his nightmares during the course of the war. Overseas he becomes disgusted with all that he sees; life becomes a repeated struggle to stay alive and sane, and to have a bath once in a while. He forms a sort of admiration for his friend Chrisfield, whom he considers to have the gift of real life within his reach. In a moment of passionate self-condemnation, Andrews tells Chris

I belong to a crowd that just fakes learning. I guess the best thing that can happen to us
is to get killed in this butchery. We're a tame generation...it's you that it matters to kill.

It is Dos Passos' practice in the novel to alternate accounts of one character with those of the next, examining the consciousness of each in turn. After the events of the training camp, the next description of Andrews' inner mind takes place in Part Four, when he is wounded. There is an extended section which is entirely concerned with the workings of his mind while he is wounded and then hospitalized. Just as Andrews is a victim of the most intense mental agony of the three, so he knows also the greatest physical pain. His first hope, after the first wild hours of pain, hovering between dream and waking, is that he will be discharged from the army, to "live" again. Hospitalized in an old French home converted by the army for the care of the wounded, Andrews examines the intricately carved ceiling and knows a feeling much like that of Martin Howe in the ruined abbey:

He kept feeling a half-formulated desire to be up there too...He felt at home in that spacious hall, built for wide gestures and stately steps, in which all the little routine of the army seemed unreal, and the wounded men discarded automatons, broken toys laid away in rows.  

The carved ceiling and the imagined Queen of Sheba from Flaubert's *The Temptation of St. Anthony* (a symbol of
of artistic inspiration to him) weave themselves into his thoughts as he lies in the hospital, the Queen of Sheba becoming particularly related to his desire to compose once more. Finally Andrews decides he must desert; "this was his last run with the pack." He seeks to emerge from tortured speculation into definite action. Instead of deserting, however, he pulls strings to be sent to Paris as a student.

Paris is complete release from the restraints of the army for Andrews. It represents freedom, culture, creativity, and everything which he admires. Unfortunately it also brings out what one contemporary reviewer called the "adolescence" of Andrews and his Paris friends, with their "collegiate cabaret-unconventionalities." The modern reader also has less sympathy with these hysterical gaieties than with the brooding moments in the hospital. However, Dos Passos manages to convey the marvelous freedom felt by young men coming from a very bad time of life into a very good one. As the early reviewer in the New Republic pointed out, the adolescent happiness of Andrews and his friends in Paris serves to intensify the tragic contrast with the brutalities of war.

The motif of comradeship is a strong one in Dos Passos' war fiction, beginning with Martin Howe and his friend Tom Randolph. It appears even earlier in his book of essays
Rosinante to the Road Again, in which two young men whom he calls Telemachus and Lyaeus journey through Spain together. The idea of two men traveling together is pointedly related to Don Quixote and Sancho Panza as well, and echoes of these two appear everywhere in the book. Like Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, these two travel through Spain on a "quest"—this time for the essential nature of Spain and the Spanish people. Dos Passos contrasts the personalities of the two young men, as an echo of the contrasts between Quixote and Sancho Panza. During the book he demonstrates that this contrast—between the mystical individualist who believes in the power of the soul over everything, and the practical individualist who thinks of food for his belly—is central to all of Spanish life and art. In roughly the same way, Dos Passos likes to contrast his pairs of young men: the introspective idealist and his pragmatic, cynical companion.

Besides providing contrast and lending a romantic aspect to the novels, the friends of the heroes play other important roles. Like Randolph, John Andrews' friend Henslowe is an "intelligent hedonist" who had a worldly, sophisticated view of life, and whose motto was "Have a good time in spite of 'em. To hell with 'em." These companions exhibit a desire to retreat from certain aspects of life, which the hero figures could never share, but they are
nevertheless worthy of some respect. At times the minor friends can even become a means of showing the hero the way to the truth, as when the Kid urges Andrews to jump in the river and escape. But in general the close companions of the hero are used to present an alternate way for the individual to deal with the pressures of war. The attitude which Andrews comes to in the end is not an endorsement of the unrelenting pursuit of pleasure, but it does have something of Henslowe's aloofness about it. Andrews, like Henslowe, ends by denying the power of the authorities to "enslave" him, though he replaces cynicism with regret for the past. Dos Passos seems to be saying that there is no one "right" way of thinking, and that every situation is complex. Dos Passos also differentiates himself from the character of Andrews in this small way as well as others, by showing that Andrews has part of the answer but not all of it.

Dos Passos has always been attracted to the travel-book form, and yields to this attraction by writing numerous long passages describing the people of Paris and the streets. He is recreating his own experiences after the Armistice, and the joy he felt as a young soldier like Andrews. But for the doubts and fears with which he is plagued, the stay in Paris would be a productive period for Andrews. He still cannot shake the memory of himself washing windows at the
training camp; it fills him with shame. Every necessary contact with army bureaucracy leaves him trembling with helpless despair, wondering how to make some gesture of rebellion.

In those office buildings, with white marble halls full of the clank of officers' heels, in index cards and piles of typewritten papers, his real self, which they had power to kill if they wanted to, was in his name and his number, on lists with millions of other names and other numbers. This sentient body of his, full of possibilities and hopes...was only a pale ghost that depended on the other self....

It is not surprising that Andrews is arrested, after being caught without a pass on an excursion to Chartres. Subdued by the brutality of the military police, he is made a prisoner and forced to perform the most degrading tasks. He does manage at last to make the longed-for gesture of revolt. He deserts, but only at the urging of the Kid, a fellow prisoner. Andrews has been restricted in every direction by his own self-awareness. He is too conscious of the consequences which may attend every action, and so he hesitates. Action is much more difficult for him than for Chrisfield, in spite of his greater perception of the issues—or because of it. The significance of his leap into the river and of his shedding his uniform to swim away, need not be belabored. The gesture itself is all important. Andrews knows he will probably be caught, and yet he feels that in
performing this one deed of independent volition he has asserted his superiority over the impersonal power that enslaved him. Throughout the book he has been obsessed with the idea of "slavery." "I'm going to write a book on slave psychology," he tells Genevieve, the girl he loves. Yet now that he has concluded that slavery is a matter of personal consent, imposed from within as well as without, he is content. His serenity is pointedly contrasted to the fear and guilt of the other deserters he meets in Paris. They have fled, but consider themselves to have sinned against established authority in doing so; Andrews' flight is a deliberate rejection of that authority. Once in the country, he reflects upon what he has learned. He thinks once more of his window-washing experience, and then, seeing a young lad wading in the river, wonders if he too will be forced into the same "mould," an echo of the early "machine" metaphor. Those who were not "sheep" in the stockade were deserters who would not live long.

And yet other nightmares had been thrown off the shoulders of men. Every man who stood up courageously to die loosened the grip of the nightmare.

Andrews partially identifies himself with John Brown, the hero of the new piece of music he is writing while in the country. Sometimes he criticizes himself (the habit is not easily broken) for not having "helped others" to achieve
"freedom." Yet he is basically at peace with himself. When the soldiers come for him he becomes "suddenly calm" and submits without objection. For Andrews, the learning process must be enough in itself, for he will never have the opportunity to apply what he has learned. This does not imply that Dos Passos saw the end of the novel as a failure on Andrews' part, or as a suggestion that men of independent thought are automatically doomed to extinction. Malcolm Cowley considers the abandoned sheets of music blowing off the table to express Dos Passos' idea of the war's real tragedy. Cowley believes that Dos Passos is mourning the loss to the world of an artist and his work. If this is an element of tragedy, it is only a subsidiary one. Dos Passos admits the grimness of the world, but seeks to deny its inevitability, if only in a very small way.

This lengthy discussion of the three soldiers has been an attempt to demonstrate how the characterizations form a coherent grouping within the scheme of the novel. Fuselli and Chrisfield represent two different levels in the handling of Dos Passos' theme. Fuselli has not even taken the first step toward separation from the system. He has not even the perception to realize his limitations, let alone the strength to overcome them. Chrisfield represents a conflict between a natural love of life and freedom, and the inexorable pressures of a system which, in order to survive, must
destroy such impulses. Chrisfield, then, is a step beyond Fuselli, for although his reactions are irrational and disastrous, he has at least made a step toward self-awareness. The third of the three soldiers, John Andrews, is almost all self-awareness. His whole life is one of introspection and analysis, causing Arthur Mizener to comment that:

Fuselli is a caricature whose consciousness consists... of the cliches of the "enterprise system," and John Andrews... lives almost completely in an inner world of imagination and is aware of the social world outside his imagination only as an unpleasant and sometimes intolerable intrusion.

Mizener has exaggerated the case, but he is correct in assigning to Fuselli and Andrews opposing positions in Dos Passos' attempt to combine the social novel with the novel of inner consciousness. Fuselli is almost entirely social, Andrews is very much the man of inner consciousness, and Chrisfield is somewhere in between them.

Mizener, in drawing the distinction between the author's portrayal of Fuselli and that of Andrews, does not discuss it as a conscious device used by Dos Passos. In fact, most critics, in noting that the largest part of the novel is devoted to the story of Andrews, agree with Malcolm Cowley who calls the book an "Art Novel." This term describes a
novel concerned with the efforts of sensitive, creative individuals to fight "the world," which in turn attempts to make them conform to established modes of conduct and so cease to create. To read Three Soldiers in this way is to criticize Dos Passos for allowing his sympathy for Andrews to obscure the other elements of the novel. There is an obvious similarity in character to Martin Howe and to Richard Ellsworth Savage in U.S.A., which seems to indicate Dos Passos' preoccupation with sensitive young men in danger of being crushed by "the machine." For example, Malcolm Cowley in After the Genteel Tradition describes the central conflict in Dos Passos' novels as one of the "Poet Against the World." Three Soldiers thus becomes an Art Novel, in which the talented young musician "tries to assert his individuality in despite of the World, which is stupid, unmanageable, and ...victorious." In a variation of Mizener's viewpoint, Cowley goes on to say that the Art Novel is one side of the coin with Dos Passos, and the "collective novel" is the other. This is simply another way of saying that Dos Passos seeks to employ both the individual consciousness and social criticism to convey his viewpoints.

This approach, while valuable, assumes that Three Soldiers is finally a failure, suffering from an excessive preoccupation with the problems of the artist. The novel is in
fact a vivid and successful one. It is true that Andrews has a large share of the novel to himself, a share which he earns as the most intelligent and observant of the three soldiers, and therefore the one most deserving of analysis. Dos Passos realized that the novel must have one reasonably perceptive and reliable consciousness through which he could focus his attack upon the army's destructive forces. However, the personal tragedies of Fuselli and Chrisfield, and of the many other soldiers mentioned more briefly, are seen to be as significant as Andrews' possible defeat can ever be. It is not the music which Andrews writes which qualifies him as the most important character, as Cowley implies. Personal attitudes are always the important thing for Dos Passos, and the fact that the world will never hear a performance of "The Soul and Body of John Brown" is not nearly so significant as Andrews' final, personal triumph.

The deliberate selection of these three representative soldiers and their arrangement in the pattern outlined above, is part of the justification for calling Three Soldiers something more than an "Art Novel." Basing his work upon themes which were only implicit or incoherent in First Encounter, Dos Passos uses newly developed satiric techniques to give weight to his attack upon organized military power. Thus he is able to round out his portraits of the main
characters with the details which demonstrate his increasing proficiency as a critical novelist.

One favorite device is to pick out one aspect of popular thought, and by repetition and careful juxtaposition for contrast, increase its connotations until it becomes a damning indictment. An example is Fuselli's reliance upon the cliches of the motion picture, repeated until it has a dreadful irony about it. But a better example is Dos Passos' use of excerpts from popular songs. It was noted in Chapter I of this study that the first mildly sarcastic use of song occurred as Martin Howe embarked for France. The device is refined by Dos Passos in Three Soldiers and is expanded into the Newsreel sections of U.S.A. The Newsreel sections, in fact, are an amplification of the banality, the stupidity, the collective triviality of the mass American mind as revealed by the popular song in Three Soldiers. Throughout Three Soldiers snatches of song appear whenever the ordinary soldiers are gathered. The Y-men use them to whip up hatred for the Huns. The soldiers sing "Madermoiselle from Armenteers" while they march. Even Chrisfield is moved to maudlin sentimentality by the singing of "O green grows the grass in God's countree!"

Only Andrews remains largely unaffected by the popular songs, and in general, his sections of the novel are
devoid of such music. There are two exceptions, however. The first occurs when he is wounded and taken to the hospital. Woven into his nightmare of pain, along with the memory of washing windows, is the "tuneless shriek" of a "shrill broken voice" singing "There's a girl in the heart of Maryland." The maniacal singing blends itself with his physical agony so that

The voice shrieking the blurred tune
and the pain in his leg mingled themselves strangely, until they seemed one and the pain seemed merely a throbbing of the maddening tune.24

The song motif disappears again, only to reappear when the two sadistic M.P.'s arrest Andrews. As they take advantage of their position to mistreat him, one of the men hums "It's the smile that makes you happy, It's the smile that makes you sad."25 Thus the songs, which express the blandest and sweetest sentiments, are placed beside the most cruel and painful of events. They illustrate perfectly the contrast that Dos Passos was trying to draw between the publicly expressed sentiments and the incompatible activities which were silently agreed upon by the same people.

At the same time these songs form a mocking counterpoint to the serious music which John Andrews hopes to compose. In the end, however, the power of the popular song is defeated, if not by Andrews' compositions, by the
appearance of the lines from "John Brown's Body." This
too was once a popular song, but in a much finer sense;
it has the power to inspire the masterpiece of Andrews' 
career, and to absorb the vulgar, raucous strains into 
itsf. With obvious implications of revolt and the 
search for individual liberties, "John Brown's Body" 
is the final and fitting comment on how far astray the 
ordinary people have been led.

A much more savage criticism of one specific aspect 
of the war is Dos Passos' portrayal of the "Y-men." Again 
he is using them as a satiric device to exemplify, as it 
were, a larger condemnation of the system. The Y-men are 
ostensibly with the army to furnish cigarettes, soap, 
chocolate, and spiritual comfort to the soldiers, and to 
maintain a high level of morale among the men. In reality 
they form a macabre chorus, grouping themselves safely on 
the sidelines and exhorting the troops to kill and be killed 
for the highest ideals. They are the high priests of the cult 
of super-patriotism and as such receive the full impact of 
Dos Passos' scorn. The first Y-man in the novel is seen, 
as it happens, leading the men in singing "Hail, Hail, 
the gang's all here; We're going to get the Kaiser..."26 
His job is to whip them into a frenzy of hatred: "Now, once 
more...and lots of guts in the get and lots of kill in the
Kaiser. Now all together..." Y-men are always cheerful, always effeminate, and always endorsing a species of morality which Dos Passos identifies with the lowest, most unthinking elements of society. The Y-man who comes upon Andrews and Chrisfield bathing asks them to "get under the water" because there are two French girls watching. "I know they haven't any morals...But still." They feel called upon to make excuses for not having enlisted—a weak heart or weak eyes—even while they are perpetuating the myth of the "great Christian undertaking." Andrews observes with profound disgust, "and that's what'll survive you and me." It is very clearly these people, or non-people, who now hold the distribution of power and privilege, and who will survive in the future. Andrews himself is forced to humiliate himself before Spencer Sheffield, the epitome of the Y-man, in order to receive permission to go to school in Paris. Dos Passos shows us a network radiating outwards from these men of corruption and detachment from the concerns of the soldiers who do the actual fighting. The officers are no better than the Y-men, perhaps worse, for they are in positions of direct responsibility. It is an officer who arouses John Andrews' fury by telling the men to take no prisoners so that there will be more food for themselves. 28

An examination of the defects of the American army and
of the popular attitudes which surround it, leads to a concern about the way of life from which such a situation can evolve. In *Three Soldiers* Dos Passos uses the not uncommon literary situation of the American in Europe for a comparison of the values of two cultures, and thus a perspective on America. In *Three Soldiers* most of the characters react to Europe, and specifically France, in one way or another. Of course John Andrews responds most intensely. He enlisted in the army as a protest against his way of life in America. To fill the void left by this total denial of his earlier life, he embraces the life of the artist in Europe. He desires to leave behind all the distinctively American parts of his background in favor of the rich French past, particularly the Renaissance. It has already been noted that Andrews feels a strong kinship with the Renaissance past while wounded and hospitalized in the old home. The carved figures on the ceiling seem to him a silent comment on his modern, ineffectual way of life. Once he decides he will desert,

They seemed to be wriggling out of their contorted positions and smiling encouragement to him. He imagined them, warriors out of old tales, ...guildsmen and artisans, cupids and satyrs and fauns, jumping from their niches and carrying him off with them in a headlong rout, ...on a last forlorn assault on the citadels of pain.
Later, while studying in Paris and feeling himself hopelessly bound in slavery to the army and its ways, Andrews thinks again of "the people of the Renaissance" and makes a wistful comparison.

...he thought of the great, sudden wind of freedom that had blown out of Italy, before which dogmas and slaveries had crumbled to dust. In contrast, the world today seemed pitifully arid. Men seemed to have shrunk in stature before the vastness of the mechanical contrivances they had invented.

France also represents for Andrews a certain moral freedom, especially sexual, which he did not have in America. This is a fact recognized by all the soldiers, although most of the men are taught to regard this with a sort of Puritanical mistrust even while taking advantage of it. The "prophylactic kit" becomes the pervasive emblem of the American forces in Europe. Andrews' attitude is contrasted to this, for he regards such personal freedom as an essential quality of the atmosphere which gives him the ability to compose again.

Andrews is constantly making simple comparisons of America and Europe which are completely to America's disadvantage. Long descriptive passages dwell on every detail of his "sightseeing" in Paris, and he has a real affection for all the French people he meets. On the other hand, he
feels he must enlighten those who, in simplicity, believe America is a wonderful place. He tells Genevieve,

France is stifling...It stifles you slowly, with beautiful silk bands...America beats your brains out with a policeman's billy. 31

A little later, he virtually repeats this remark to his young friend Marcel:

It is stifling, I suppose...all these nations, all these hatreds, but still...it is very beautiful. Life is very ugly in America. 32

Paris is the only place in the world where he can be "free" to learn and to write.

In his dissatisfaction with America, Andrews turns to Europe as the only place where life can be meaningful. The war has both encouraged his disillusionment with the United States and placed him at a distance so that he can view the past from some new perspective. At the same time he is drawn into the provincial's gaping acceptance of everything Europe has to offer him. His admiration for European cultural associations leads him into the black-and-white comparisons mentioned above.

Yet Dos Passos seems to suggest that Andrews' perception is not a true one. It is true that through his life in Paris and his desertion to go into the countryside he gains some self-knowledge and the power to deal with the forces which oppress him. But his experiences do not achieve their effect by reflecting negatively on America.
Andrews continues to meet people who could, if he would pay attention, give him another view of Europe. Jeanne, his Parisian mistress, cannot understand his constant talk of freedom. "What do you mean? One takes what life gives, that is all, there's no choice." When Andrews hears her complaining about the terrible results of the war, he tries to console her by mentioning her greater "freedom."

She shrugged her shoulders. Later she burst out: "But what's the good of freedom? What can you do with it? What one wants is to live well...and be respected by people. Oh, life was so sweet in France before the war. In that case it's not worth living," said Andrews in a savage voice.

The Irish soldier confides to him that "Europe's dead an stinkin', Yank. Ain't no place for a young fellow."

Still later, when he has deserted and risked recapture to see Genevieve again, Andrews meets still another sort of opposition. He finds Genevieve, whose sophisticated, cultured, sensitive life he has admired so strongly, kept at a distance by barriers of gentility and ancient traditions of snobbery and convention. When Genevieve learns he has deserted, her first reaction is "Of course, you have no patriotism." Like the other French people whom he knows, she cannot understand Andrews' insistence on being "free."

Andrews begins to realize dimly that there is no "promised land" of total freedom, even in France. At a luncheon with
friends and relatives of Genevieve "he had a crazy desire to jump to his feet and shout: 'Look at me; I'm a deserter. I'm under the wheels of your system.'" American policies have been responsible for putting Andrews into the war, but the same viewpoints are to be found in France as well.

Freedom is an individual matter, unrelated to nationality. Then too, Andrews' use of "John Brown's Body" indicates his willingness to benefit from the American past as well as the French past, and to abandon his provincial rejection of America. At the same time, the Europeans with their matter-of-fact cynicism have emphasized a certain futility in the situation which Andrews is also learning to accept. However desperately one may hope otherwise, there will always be oppressive power seeking to destroy the life of the individual. The best one can do is put up a personal resistance and refuse to acquiesce in the process of enslavement. For Dos Passos, as Cowley remarks, even compromise is villainy. As in the case of Chrisfield's encounter with the corpse in the forest, the manner of death becomes all-important. Therefore, Dos Passos is to some extent deterministic, but he and Andrews both refuse to accept brutal impersonal force as the inevitable ruin of man. War and the army reduce human existence to its lowest terms—an animalistic struggle for survival, in which those with the most truly "human" impulses
are at the greatest disadvantage. Andrews suffers partial defeat at the hands of the "nonhuman" forces of life, but formulates a successful inner response to destructive power which will carry him through. In describing Andrews' kind of idealism, Dos Passos is careful to differentiate between that and stoicism. Passive acceptance of what life brings is not sufficient; there must be an impulse toward meaningful action as well. Thus, although Andrews has perceived this only at the moment of his arrest, his new knowledge is not without significance for other men in similar situations. Dos Passos' concept of idealism, therefore, is closely related to realistic assessment of the possibilities in a given situation, and is based on the belief that the world, or small parts of it, can be changed. In this Dos Passos differs from Hemingway, who, in A Farewell to Arms describes a universe which searches out those who are gentle, brave, and good, and destroys them without exception. Unlike Dos Passos, Hemingway places no ultimate value on the inner resistance of an individual.37

I have said above that Three Soldiers is not really a "war novel." It is probably not even as much a "war novel" as First Encounter. In the earlier book there is a strong sense of the direct personal effects of war upon a young man who is on the scene. For example, there is the constant
horror of death, some indication of how ordinary men feel when they are forced to kill each other; these qualities are almost entirely absent from *Three Soldiers*. The army is under attack, and that is a different thing. For the final implication of the novel is that the army, in spite of all its evils so brilliantly particularized here, is representative of other social institutions which can have the same effect upon an individual. War creates a distorted environment of emergency and the army takes advantage of it to entice or coerce young men into submitting themselves to its authority. The army then seeks to mask its slow destruction of the individual by maintaining a hysterically patriotic atmosphere, seeking to shut off dissenting thought. A man can be betrayed by his environment, by tricks of language, or by private selfishness into accepting these impersonal hells. All of this is much more painstakingly articulated in *U.S.A.*, but it is present or implied in *Three Soldiers* as well. Dos Passos is here concerned, as he is only partially in *First Encounter*, with the one intelligent voice of protest which can function in the novel as an indication of the way things really are. Although not infallible, the voice belongs to John Andrews in *Three Soldiers*. Andrews sometimes fails in perception, and is seen in the midst of a learning process, but his viewpoint is nonetheless important.
Three Soldiers can thus be seen as a transitional point in Dos Passos' treatment of World War I. His close personal identification with Martin Howe develops into a more distant portrayal of John Andrews. He is beginning to sense the possibilities for satire inherent in the war. And, while the army remains the main target for Dos Passos' criticism, he is developing a larger viewpoint in which the army plays only a part.
CHAPTER THREE

After completing Three Soldiers, Dos Passos turned his attention away from the war to other subjects. His novel Streets of Night (1923) is generally considered an unsuccessful "art novel." It is again concerned with the sensitive young man in a constricting society. He also wrote Manhattan Transfer (1925), a poetic, panoramic city novel which demonstrated that his technical skills were reaching a real maturity. John Wrenn suggests that

Taken together, Three Soldiers, Streets of Night, and Manhattan Transfer constitute a first trilogy by Dos Passos, which he might have entitled "American Perspective." By focusing his criticism at once upon contemporary institutions and upon their principal interpreters—Crane, Hawthorne, Dreiser—in our literary tradition, he developed his own thought and his own techniques in relation to theirs. He also added to his understanding of the whole American tradition and of his relation to it.

Dos Passos also wrote several plays, the travel book Orient Express, and some political articles. However, when he began to compose U.S.A., he chose to set the novels in the periods just preceding, during, and after World War I. Obviously he considered the war years as a culturally critical period for America and as an ideal background for the complex satire which he wished to organize. There are several factors
involved in this decision. One is that the war years continued to be important in Dos Passos' own memories of personal experience. Throughout his career as a novelist, Dos Passos has depended heavily on events and impressions of his own life as material for his fiction. These years in particular, which brought the death of his parents, the end of his sheltered years in school, and the shock of war, remained vivid. This personal quality runs from *First Encounter* to late novels like *Chosen Country* (1951), which is very thinly veiled autobiography of Dos Passos' life as a young man, and *The Great Days* (1958) which is perhaps a "semi-autobiographical" account of an aging journalist. This preoccupation seems natural in an artist who is concerned with the struggle of the individual against the massive institutions of society. In order to make an effective stand one must come to some sort of terms with himself, and must learn to evaluate personal experience.

A personal past and a national past are related, however, and this is another aspect of Dos Passos' plan for *U.S.A.* He has always felt the close relationship between the novelist and the historian, and in fact has turned in recent years to the writing of purely historical studies. In stressing this relationship, Dos Passos' theories recall those of Henry James, who in "The Art of Fiction" states that
the writing of history and the writing of fiction have much in common.

To represent and illustrate the past, the actions of men, is the task of either writer, and the only difference that I can see is, in proportion as he succeeds, to the honor of the novelist, consisting as it does in his having more difficulty in collecting his evidence, which is so far from being purely literary.

According to Dos Passos, a novelist also functions by recording the speech and thought of the times for later use by the historians. A writer is the "architect of history" and the influence of his work may reach down through time for many years after the novel is published. Dos Passos felt that the war had left American thought in an apathetic and undirected condition; a novelist, by catching the temper of the age, could set a pattern of self-criticism and lead people back into an awareness of the situation. "Those of us who have lived through have seen these years strip the bunting off the great illusions of our time, we must deal with the raw structure of history now,...before it stamps us out." As early as 1916, the year of his graduation from Harvard, Dos Passos was expressing the hope that the war would force men "to bring their ideals before the bar of criticism, to sift them, to try them, to attempt to discover where they really lead." The blatant failure of the public
to do this following the war induced Dos Passos to take it upon himself in *U.S.A*.

Although such a purpose is most obvious in the *U.S.A.* novels, the theory of the relationship of art and history can also be traced from his earliest writings, especially *Rosinante to the Road Again*. This is a travelogue about Spain in which Dos Passos attempts to delineate the essential Spanish character, and to show how Spanish art has been formed by Spanish history and by the intense Spanish emphasis on individuality. There is an admiring essay on the novelist Pío Baroja, in which Dos Passos observes that the only part which a man of the middle class can play in the reorganization of society is destructive. "His great mission is to put the acid test to existing institutions and to strip the veils off them." Of Pío Baroja he says, approvingly, that "...a profound sense of the evil of existing institutions lies behind every page he has written..." And again, in observing that Baroja is never a propagandist, always a novelist first, Dos Passos concludes that "In the end it is rather natural history than dramatic creation." To add to his concern about the need for such a work as *U.S.A.* is Dos Passos' conviction that World War I dealt a massive blow to forces of reason and sanity. As long afterwards as 1964 we find him saying
Western civilization is only just now beginning to recover from the carnival of unreason that went along with the military massacres of the first world war.

The use of the war had already proved itself rich in technical possibilities for the novelist. If Dos Passos was writing from some distance in *Three Soldiers*, his even lengthier perspective in *U.S.A.* enabled him to see the war in still a different way. In demonstrating the dangers American society was facing, Dos Passos used two major subjects and combined them throughout. One was the theme of business, its relation to the working man, the "wobbly" movement, and the whole area of radical politics with which it was connected. The second was World War I, which is seen in the novels as an outgrowth of the same selfish and corrupt tendencies in American life as the injustices to labor. While the novels are not exactly "war novels," since they have little to do with battles, soldiers, and military strategy, they are built around World War I as a social force which is both representative of all that is worst in American life, and instrumental in the continuation of these characteristics. This study is an attempt to describe the devices Dos Passos uses to present his picture of World War I and to outline the importance of the war to the trilogy as a whole.
It would be a distortion to say that *The 42nd Parallel* is "about" the war, but there can be no doubt that a major part of the novel is concerned with the coming of war. The very first Newsreel opens with a mixture of optimism for the dawn of a new century and references to the Spanish-American War, specifically the battle in the Philippines.

There's been many a good man murdered in the Philippines
Lies sleeping in some lonesome grave.¹⁰

Dos Passos calls our attention from the beginning to a war started from the basest of motives, and run entirely for the country's unscrupulous big interests. The Spanish-American war, provoked by the Hearst newspapers, as Dos Passos charges in his biographical sketch of Hearst, was fought to "make Cuba cozy for the Sugar Trust and the National City Bank."¹¹ It is but a small suggestion of the great War to come.

The coming of the war, and of America's entry into it, can easily be traced through the Newsreels of *The 42nd Parallel*. The Newsreels create a tension about the coming war which pervades the novel. The impersonal, matter-of-fact mention in headlines of events which the reader already knows to be historically "true" lends a quality of authenticity to the things which happen in the novel as a whole. Dos Passos
also employs his technique of ironic juxtaposition in the
Newsreels. The popular song, as used in Three Soldiers,
is used here with much the same effect. There are other
examples. In Newsreel XIX, the first four items are
arranged as follows, with the obvious implications:

U.S. AT WAR

Uphold Nation City's Cry

Over there
Over there

at the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Colt Patent Firearms Manufacturing
company a $2,500,000 melon was cut. The
present capital stock was increased. The
profits for the year were 259 per cent 12

When the United States declares war on Germany, Dos
Passos describes in detail the reactions of some of his
fictional characters. These reactions are significant
because he has already carefully established their personalities.
Their responses to the war reflect on the war as a whole.
Again, as in Three Soldiers, the characters represent various
levels of understanding about the war. Janey Williams, a
pallid creature who is private secretary to J. Ward Moorehouse,
is, like Dan Fuselli, the unquestioning believer of the
lies put out for public consumption. She tells her brother,
a sailor on leave,
it was a shame the weather was so mean and that it must be terrible for the poor soldiers in the trenches and she thought the Huns were just too barbarous and the "Lusitania" and how silly the Ford peace ship was.... Janey went on to talk about the war and how she wished we were in it to save civilization and poor helpless little Belgium.

Charley Anderson is an irresponsible but opportunistic young man who joins the ambulance corps on impulse, having no thought of patriotism or of anything else but "fifty dollars a month." He is accompanied by his friend Doc whose desire is to get to Europe "before the whole thing went bellyup." He represents those for whom the war was only an entertainment on a large scale.

Perhaps the most interesting characters in The 42nd Parallel are J. Ward Moorehouse and Eleanor Stoddard. Moorehouse is a man who has manipulated a way with words and an advantageous marriage to a wealthy woman into a position as a prominent public relations counsel. The introduction to U.S.A. ends with the sentence "But mostly U.S.A. is the speech of the people" and Moorehouse is the prime example of how that speech can be distorted and capitalized upon. He is a master of the smooth, impersonal statement which can placate everyone. Knowing in his heart that the war can only be fortunate for him, he "talked about being patriotic and saving civilization and the historic beauties
of Rheims cathedral. He said he was ready to do his duty when the time came...."16 Eleanor Stoddard is an interior decorator and a friend of Moorehouse. She too is shallow and opportunistic, and adopts popular attitudes as useful facades.

...they were crossing Times Square through the eighto'clock crowds and the skysigns flashing on and off. The fine little triangular men were doing exercises on the Wrigley sign and suddenly a grindorgan began to play The Marseillaise and it was too beautiful; she burst into tears and they talked about Sacrifice and Dedication and J.W. held her arm tight through the fur coat and gave the organgrinder man a dollar. When they got to the theatre Eleanor hurried down to the ladies' room to see if her eyes had got red. But when she looked in the mirror they weren't red at all and there was a flash of heartfelt feeling in her eyes, she just freshened up her face and went back up to the lobby, where J.W. was waiting... her gray eyes were flashing and had tears in them.17

On the day of the declaration itself, there is an atmosphere of carnival. Moorehouse offers his services to the government, and Eleanor thinks of becoming a nurse. In the highly emotional atmosphere thus engendered, these two visit Moorehouse's wife, who suspects them of having an affair, and make a dramatic declaration of innocence. In the tearful reconciliation which follows, Eleanor
thought how little people understood a man like that, how beautiful the room was, like a play, like a Whistler, like Sarah Bernhardt. Emotion misted her eyes.

"I'll join the Red Cross," she said. "I can't wait to get to France."18

This scene has all the falseness, sentiment, and pseudo-climactic atmosphere, of a scene from some elegant melodrama. Dos Passos even includes suggestions on setting and costumes, and stage directions. ("He walked over slowly until he stood beside her chair... She went up to him and put her hands on his shoulders. Eleanor stood back against the wall..."

All of this is an oblique comment on a war which attracts to itself the self-conscious posturings of complacent and hypocritical people such as these. By implication the whole war takes on a "staged" and artificial quality. It is interesting to note that this section on Eleanor is placed immediately before Newsreel XIX, quoted above, and after Newsreel XVIII, which contains an excerpt from an idealistic speech about dedication of lives and fortunes to the task and American privilege in spending blood for her high principles.19

This again suggests the divergence of public and private attitudes about the war.

Dos Passos' position can hardly be more explicit. In U.S.A., in keeping with his broad purpose, he is examining the war not from the viewpoint of the soldiers who fought it, but from that of the people at home. Already in The 42nd
Parallel, Dos Passos is beginning to examine the causes of war as well as its effects upon individuals. Thus the characters in whom he is most interested now are those who stand to profit from the war, not its victims. Three Soldiers was an expansion of viewpoint after First Encounter, from an individual reaction to concern with the problems of a group. U.S.A. is a further expansion, having its origins both in the panoramic city novel Manhattan Transfer and Three Soldiers. Dos Passos has accompanied this with a suitably complex method of satire, although his opinions remain basically the same. It was stated in Chapter II that Dos Passos was attempting to portray individual states of consciousness while at the same time driving home his criticism of the "system." In the U.S.A. novels he changes his techniques, but attempts the same sort of reconciliation. He relegates intense subjective reaction to the Camera Eye segments, which, as many critics have observed, become more and more tightly related to the other sections as the novels progress. The Biographies, both favorable and unfavorable, and the Newsreels provide the objective context and comment ironically upon it as well. In the fictional narrative portions, subjective and objective perspectives are to some extent combined. Here ordinary people are seen as they are being shaped by such events as those catalogued in the Newsreels and exposed by the figures
in the Biographies. Dos Passos carefully integrates their private reactions into the narrative, describing the world from each character's own viewpoint and expressing himself in terms which the characters themselves might have used.

The title of *1919* indicates precisely the period in time which most concerns Dos Passos. Just as *One Man's Initiation*—*1917* is the story of a young man in the midst of the war itself, *1919* is the story of the time immediately following the war, the making of the Peace in Paris, and the effects of the war upon society. While it is largely concerned with the immediate aftereffects of the war, there are other elements in the book as well. Some of the characters, Joe Williams and Ben Compton, for example, are not directly connected with the war. Neither are the Biographies dealing only with men who had something to do with the war. Dos Passos does not lose sight of the fact that both the evils of the war and America's domestic problems are related to the same factors: the selfish manipulation of events by big business; the lack of consideration for individual rights; the futility of either resisting the system or surrendering to it.

All of Dos Passos' devices draw closer together in *1919* so that the total impression is a much more unified one than that in *42nd Parallel*. The personage of the Camera Eye
is now a young man in the ambulance corps. This individual is very much like the earlier Martin Howe and John Andrews. While sickened by war, he retains a certain idealism throughout most of his adventures. David Sanders says of John Andrews what might be said of the Camera Eye figure, that he is politically naive: "He cannot go beyond his own revolt to any reasoned understanding of individual opposition to the system." And Joseph Warren Beach, while acknowledging the artistic skill with which the Camera Eye passages were written, also describes the naivety of the individual whose impressions are recorded.

Perhaps...Mr. Dos Passos wishes to indicate a way of seeing things directly or naively before the process of interpretation and elimination has intervened to give a semblance of order to what is seen and fit it all into a consistent and idealistic view of life.

This is at best an incomplete interpretation of the Camera Eye. The passages are only seemingly naive, for in reality they present a consistent and controlled view of life which comments significantly on the events of the novels. This is true at least in 1919 and The Big Money. The name "Camera Eye" seems to imply simple reproduction without intervention by the artist. However, any photographer, in the mere act of aiming his camera, has exercised some process of selection,
and a good photographer goes far beyond that. The "Eye" understands the truth better than any of the fictional characters or perhaps the biographical figures as well. His attitudes function throughout the novel as an artistic and moral norm; that is to say, they most frequently express the attitudes that earlier novels have firmly established as Dos Passos' own. Several characteristics seem to support this. One is his appreciation of the beautiful, even in the midst of the horror and suffering of war. Camera Eye 30 is a very successful combination of these two perceptions, with echoes of Patrick Henry and Milton, and faintly sardonic references to "bankers and clergymen." There is also a strong reminder of a scene in First Encounter in which Martin Howe and Tom Randolph spend a quiet afternoon in a "little pale salmon-colored villa" now deserted; the same contrasts are drawn. John Andrews had a sincere and well-informed enjoyment of the people and places he encountered, and Dos Passos approves of this. It indicates a sensitivity to existing conditions. Also, the person of the Camera Eye has the ability to pick out elements of absurdity and bitterness in his situation, just as John Andrews did. Camera Eye 32 describes with cynical amusement a ceremony in which the American Red Cross takes over the Norton-Harjes ambulance corps. Camera Eye 37 begins with an evocation
of the stultifying army routine against which John Andrews protested so frequently. Yet mingled with all this there is an unextinguishable optimism. There are three separate references to "the first day," giving a feeling of renewal and hope. Camera Eye describes the deaths of the young man's parents, which freed him to join the ambulance corps and escape from the "ethercone" of his university days. His high hopes ("tomorrow I hoped would be the first day of the first month of the first year") are fleetingly held up next to a handful of impressions of army life, including—again—"washing those windows" and "the sweetish puking grandiloquence of the rotting dead." Again in Camera Eye he talks about the "first day of the year," this time with a degree of disillusionment which seems to contradict his youthful optimism. Yet in Camera Eye he is again full of excitement and joy; the war is over.

...the dates fly off the calendar we'll make everything new today is the Year I Today is the sunny morning of the first day of spring We gulp our coffee splash water on us jump into our clothes run downstairs step out wideawake into the first morning of the first day of the first year

This could easily be a description of the young Dos Passos in the spring of 1919.
But the happiness of the spring of 1919 is not permanent and the novel does not end on a note of hope. The Camera Eye sections are brought together with the others to end on a single note of despair and savage bitterness. The young man is briefly drawn to politics when the general strike takes place in Paris, but remains always on the edge of the action. If, like Andrews, he can be called politically naive, it is not necessarily a criticism. None of Dos Passos' fictional characters are happy in rigid political commitments. Camera Eye 42, the last in the book, concerns the job of piling up scrapiron, performed by a group of "casuals." The narrator connects in his mind the junk they are piling up and the worn-out soldiers—the metal refuse and the human refuse.

...KEEP OUR BOYS FIT for what the hell the war's over scrap 30

The "scrap" idea prefaces the Camera Eye sections of The Big Money, which are uniformly ill at ease in society and despairing of breaking through its barriers of impersonality.

The narrative portions of the novel portray individuals who are involved with the war in entirely different ways from the Camera Eye. The Camera Eye personality was the one
voice of gentleness and compassion which comes through to us in this most selfish of human enterprises.

The narrative portions of the novel portray individuals who are involved with the war in entirely different ways from the Camera Eye. Of the fictional characters in *1919*, Joseph Warren Beach observes that

> For most of these people the war was simply one grand picnic, a "show" seen from box seats, a chance to cut loose from the moral restraints of "back home," and then over and above all that, a good living and a means of making their way in the world.  

This is true, although of the five characters who are treated in full only two, Richard Ellsworth Savage and Eveline Hutchins, are true witnesses of the "show." There are other familiar characters like J. Ward Moorehouse and Eleanor Stoddard who also appear frequently. However, the other main figures are Joe Williams, a sailor who goes to sea because he couldn't stand it at home; Daughter, a foolish young Texas girl who joins the Red Cross in Europe, becomes pregnant by Richard Savage, is jilted, and is killed in an airplane crash soon afterward; and Ben Compton, a young "wobbly" who stays at home and "doesn't believe in capitalist war." He is arrested and jailed for agitating against the war. Refusing to enlist in order to get his charges dismissed, he is taken off to jail in the midst of a jubilant
Broadway crowd watching a military parade. The world of Dos Passos' novels is usually populated with two sorts of people, those who exploit events for their own gain, and those who are exploited. The three mentioned above are victims of events beyond their knowledge, including in part the war. It is for these people, as for the "wobbly" Mac in 42nd Parallel, that Dos Passos exhibits the greatest sympathy. He reserves his scorn for those who, having gifts of talent, education, and position, use them irresponsibly. In following the time-honored American ambition to "get ahead" and in becoming great successes in the business world, characters like J. Ward Moorehouse reveal both their own emptiness and the misjudgment of a society which would value them so highly. While millions of men are being killed these people are pasting photographs in Red Cross scrapbooks and conferring with one another in soft voices. And after the war they seem to hover approvingly in the background while the "old men" divide the spoils. Like the Y-men of the Three Soldiers they are somehow not quite human.

One of the more interesting of these people is Richard Ellsworth Savage, who has many of the now-familiar characteristics of the Dos Passos hero, and some in common with the Camera Eye as well. He grows up without a father. He shows a gift for words and a liking for poetry. He attends
Harvard, where, like other Dos Passos figures before him, he acquires a cynical, hedonistic friend, Ned Wigglesworth.

...whenever politics or the war or anything like that came up he had a way of closing his eyes and throwing back his head and saying Blahblahblahblah.32

When the war begins, Dick joins the Norton-Harjes Ambulance Corps and once in France encounters war as an exciting and highly entertaining sort of Grand Tour. One of the other drivers expresses it by exclaiming at intervals, "Fellers... this ain't a war....It's a goddam Cook's tour (or madhouse, or whorehouse)." Dick's experiences at the front are quite reminiscent of Martin Howe's and the Camera Eye's, even to the point of spending off-duty hours in the garden of a little pink villa at Recicourt.33 Even bombs are not frightening enough to end the uproarious sprees. After leaving the Red Cross because of his alleged "pacifist" views, Dick adopts discretion, becomes an officer in the A.E.F., and returns to France. He is taking the first steps toward surrendering personal conviction to the demands of the "system." In France he continues to enjoy himself and jumps at the opportunity to become a courier at the Peace Conference. "The Peace Conference will be a circus and any chance to travel around Europe suits me."34 By this time, any resemblance to the other Dos Passos "sensitive young
men" has disappeared. After the Peace Conference, Dick joins J. Ward Moorehouse, forgetting his earlier ambitions to be a poet, and becoming what John Wrenn calls "a sort of commercial pimp." Thus, although Savage begins much as John Andrews might have, he loses any claims to being called an artist or a perceptive interpreter of events. It is indicative that his response to Europe is generally on the lowest plane. He has no feeling for the past; Europe means literally wine, women, and song to him. Most of the people to whom Dos Passos is unsympathetic treat Europe in the same way, and have a tendency to speak of the United States as "God's country." There is an ironic echo of this in the account of the Unknown Soldier, whose body is brought back to "God's country on a battleship."

U.S.A. has no figure who closely corresponds to the young men who were central to Dos Passos' other novels of the war. The Camera Eyes are highly subjective, but because of their loosely organized material and stream-of-consciousness technique they express a personal protest of a different nature than John Andrews'. Then too, in Three Soldiers, as in First Encounter, there is slight confusion as to Dos Passos' own point of view, but in U.S.A. there is none. There is one great theme implicit in all the U.S.A. novels, and every aspect of his technique, including the Camera Eye, reinforces this theme. Therefore no one character will play
an all-important role. Instead, all parts of the work unite to contribute to the total impression.

Most critics agree that Dos Passos' handling of his characters in such an impersonal, even cruel way, is unique. To some his method is distasteful. Arthur Mizener comments:

...on the whole Dos Passos' characters are the two-dimensional sort we expect in the Jonsonian tragedy of humors, and his events are thin and diagrammatic rather than full of the felt contingency of experience. U.S.A. has on a very large scale the architectural orderliness of the Jonsonian tragedy, but what it organizes is a set of notes for people and events, rather than a fully realized action.36

For others, however, especially the French, this technique is one key to Dos Passos' greatness. Madame Claude-Edmonde Magny in L'Age du Roman Americain praises Dos Passos for doing away with "romantic" heroes like John Andrews and perfecting "le roman impersonnel." Jean-Paul Sartre, who considered Dos Passos to be "the greatest writer of our time," relates this method of characterization to Dos Passos' own particular style.

Ces hommes de Dos Passos, ...comme je les hais! On me montre une seconde leur conscience, juste pour me faire voir que ce sont des betes vivantes, et puis les voila qui deroulent interminablement le tissu de leurs declarations rituelles et de leurs gestes sacres. La coupure ne se fait point
chez eux entre le dehors et la dedans, entre la conscience et le corps, mais entre le balbutiements d'une, pensee timide, intermittente, inabile a s'exprimer par des mots, --et le monde gluant des representations collectives. Comme il est simple, ce procede, comme il est efficace: il suffit de raconter une vie avec la technique du journalisme americain, et la vie cristallise en social....Du meme coup le probleme du passage au typique--pierre d'achoppement du roman social--est resolu.\(^{37}\)

Also, in "American Novelists in French Eyes," which appeared in *Atlantic Monthly* August, 1945, Sartre observes that Dos Passos, in order to make us feel more keenly the intrusion of the group thinking in the most secret thoughts of his characters, invented a social voice, commonplace and sententious, which chatters incessantly round them, without our ever knowing whether it is a chorus of conformist mediocrity or a monologue which the characters themselves keep locked in their hearts.

Both these statements are attempts to show that Dos Passos' style is designed to link the inner world of the characters with the outer, social world which is being criticized. In the first quote Sartre calls it "la technique du journalisme americain," and in the second a "commonplace and sententious social voice" but the point remains the same. Early in *U.S.A.* Dos Passos says that "mostly *U.S.A.* is the speech of the people," and that prepares for the importance of words themselves in *U.S.A.* Dos Passos brings forward several manifestations of the "social voice," both in the narrative and in the Newsreels. The use of language is closely related to
Dos Passos' point about the facade of public utterances connected with the war.

Many of the characters make a living by dealing with words: J. Ward Moorehouse and Richard Savage have already been mentioned, but the number also includes Janey Williams, Mary French (of The Big Money) and Ben Compton. Most of these people come to grief in one way or another, either because society attacks them for using words that are too controversial and extreme, or because they employ words as a screen for their real feelings. In his Camera Eye protest against the deaths of Sacco and Vanzetti, Dos Passos cries out

America our nation has been beaten by strangers who have turned our language inside out who have taken the clean words our fathers spoke and made them slimy and foul.

Although he is not speaking of the war here, this statement echoes his conviction that words are all-important. Martin Howe recognized their power in his rejection of generalities and, in the end, of such labels as "communism," "Catholicism," as remedies for the world's evils. Three Soldiers is often concerned with the deceitful effects of "public" morality. However, at the same time, words are the only hope of those who wish to fight hypocrisy with truth. As Dos Passos says in The Big Money, "we have only words against" the enemies
of the nation. In Camera Eye 49 he exhorts America to

rebuild the ruined words worn slimy
in the mouths of lawyers district attorneys
college presidents judges without the old
words the immigrants haters of oppression
brought to Plymouth how can you know who
are your betrayers America."

The language motif is also highly significant in the
Biographies of 1919 (as well as those of the other two
U.S.A. novels, which will not be discussed in detail).
There are eight figures, not including the Unknown Soldier;
five of these receive Dos Passos' approval and three—
Theodore Roosevelt, J. P. Morgan, and Woodrow Wilson—are
treated unfavorably. Jack Reed and Paxton Hibben were war
 correspondents who told the truth about conditions as they
saw them and underwent severe public censure for it. Randolph
Bourne also wrote highly unpopular articles against the war,
while "Schoolmaster Wilson" was thundering "Force to the
Utmost." The other two favorably-treated biographical
subjects were Joe Hill and Wesley Everest who, as labor
martyrs, belong to the business-labor-politics axis more
than to the war. Theodore Roosevelt, whom Dos Passos
regards as pompous, hypocritical, bigoted, and opportunistic,
was among other things a magazine writer and a man who relied
on "pat phrases:" 'Strenuous Life, Realizable Ideals, Just
Government." But it is Woodrow Wilson for whom language
has the greatest importance, as seen in Dos Passos' biography. Wilson hovers in the background of 1919, a crucial figure. Seen as a person who misuses a staggering amount of power and responsibility, Wilson is either a man misled by "sharper Clemenceau and sharper Lloyd George" or a hypocritical, cold, deceitful politician who knew what he was doing at all times. The treatment of Wilson is sometimes slightly ambiguous, but in general Dos Passos gives to him the supreme blame for both the killing of young American men and for the results of Peace Conference in Paris. Of all the personal Biographies connected with the war, again excluding the Unknown Soldier, Wilson's is the bitterest. Wilson was the son of a Presbyterian minister and "teacher of rhetoric in theological seminaries." His background in words is therefore established early.

The Wilsons lived in a universe of words linked into an incontrovertible firmament by two centuries of calvinist divines, God was the Word and the Word was God. Dr. Wilson was a man of standing who loved his home and his children and good books and his wife and correct syntax and talked to God every day at family prayers; he brought his sons up between the bible and the dictionary.

There follows a rather detailed account of Wilson's education and career, including mention of his numerous public writings. He gradually becomes more and more facade, passing as
necessity demands from one slogan to another: "neutrality in thought and deed," then "too proud to fight," followed by "He kept us out of war," and finally, five months after his re-election, "Force without stint or limit, force to the utmost." Dos Passos remarks sarcastically that

\[ \text{With the help of Almighty God, Right, Truth, Justice, Freedom, Democracy, the Selfdetermination of Nations, No indemnities no annexations,} \]

and Cuban sugar and Caucasian manganese and Northwestern wheat and Dixie cotton, the British blockade, General Pershing, the taxicabs of Paris and the seventy-five gun we won the war.\(^2\)

The description of the Peace Conference contrasts pointedly the speechmaking and pageantry with the anxious hopes of the "little people" all over Europe who burned candles to "Meester Veelson's" picture and "spelled a challenge to oppression out of the Fourteen Points."\(^3\) In the actual work of making the Peace, Wilson is seen in two ways. At one time he and Clemenceau and Lloyd George are "Three old men shuffling the pack, dealing out the cards."\(^4\) On the other hand, when returning to the United States Wilson must explain to Congress "how he'd let himself be trimmed."\(^5\) So Wilson is both dupe and willing accomplice, and there is in either case no escape from the responsibility for injustice. To defend his treaty Wilson had to start "talking to save his faith in words,
talking... talking...." He dies beaten, a failure in his last great desire. His paralysis has made it difficult for him to speak. Wilson is described thus by Dos Passos as the greatest of public posturers, using "words" to mask reality.

The final Biography is that of the Unknown Soldier. Here Dos Passos unites most of the motifs which appear in all of his war fiction. The Unknown Soldier is obviously the most anonymous of all soldiers, and his background is only a list of possibilities. He undergoes the typical army experience, the physical exam, the impersonal file which holds his service record, the mud, the fatigue, the restricting regulations, the platitudes and slogans, the fear of combat. His body becomes an excuse for ostentatious national mourning. In the last sentence of the biography, and of the novel, Dos Passos reminds us again of the man who bears the heaviest responsibilities for the events of the war which concern Americans: "Woodrow Wilson brought a bouquet of poppies." 

The Unknown Soldier biography acts as both summary and transition. In this superbly ironic account, Dos Passos reveals the "slimy depths of vileness and hypocrisy" of the American part of the war and at the same time catalogues the offenses of the army against the individual, as he did in the earlier books. The legalistic, journalistic, and
religious social voices echo those of earlier work. Although

*The Big Money* is not in any specific sense about the war, it is definitely a thematic extension of material presented in the first two volumes of the trilogy. Dos Passos weaves together the two complementary aspects of his theme throughout *U.S.A.*, and with them demonstrates the corruptions and injustices prevalent in the period about which he writes. This is true even in *1919*, which is largely concerned with the war, but contains the beginnings of motifs expanded in *The Big Money*. In this respect "The Body of an American" sets the tone for Americans who look upon the war in later years with smugness and vulgar sentiment. The vivid description of the Unknown Soldier's decaying body suggests metaphorically the corruption and foulness which will characterize American society after the war. The war is an agent which intensifies the decay of individual lives, and yet instead of being warned by this, society celebrates it.

The blood ran into the ground, the brains oozed out of the cracked skull and were licked up by the trenchrats, the belly swelled and raised a generation of blue-bottle flies, and the incorruptible skeleton, and the scraps of dried viscera and skin bundled in khaki

they took to Chalons-sur-Marne and laid it out neat in a pine coffin and took it home to God's Country on a battleship
As stated above, The Big Money is relevant to Dos Passos' treatment of war only in the clearly-marked relationship of themes. Parts of 1919 prepare for the following novel, which deals in detail with the boom of big business, the struggling labor movement, and "radical" politics, culminating in the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti. The last Newsreel of 1919, XLIII, which directly precedes "The Body of an American," contains references at its beginning and end to "radicals" being attacked by other citizens. In one case they are the police and in the other a group of soldiers and ex-soldiers. The linking of themes continues into the first Newsreels of The Big Money where bankers are hailing an era of expansion while ex-service men are demanding jobs. The Newsreel headlines of this novel build toward the Wall Street crash as those of The 42nd Parallel did toward the war; repeated assurances of prosperity give way to ominous suggestions of trouble and at last to "Wall Street stunned."

Just as 1919, although largely about the war, contained elements of the domestic situation with its framework of the "war" abroad, so The Big Money is relevant to the war even while dealing principally with problems of big business and labor. The promising lives which began to decay and lose their human qualities in Paris, such as Richard Savage,
are seen in advanced stages of ruin in *The Big Money*. The most important fictional character in *The Big Money* is Charley Anderson, who is a war hero capitalizing on his service record in order to obtain a lucrative job in the growing field of aviation. Unwise stock handling and an unsavory personal life combine to bring about his financial and moral ruin. His life is the central parable of this volume of the trilogy. In seeking to profit from his reputation as a hero in the war which has just ended, he relinquishes himself to the vulgar, dehumanizing effects of the "system," and eventually suffers the consequences of his action. It is this futile and sterile fate which awaits most Americans in *U.S.A.* that prompts Alfred Kazin to call it "one of the saddest books ever written by an American."

The Biographies also reinforce the connection between the two novels. One of the final Biography sections in 1919 concerns Wesley Everest, an ex-soldier who becomes a "wobbly" and is lynched by a group of other ex-soldiers. In a corresponding way, a number of the Biographies in *The Big Money* concern men who, in one way or another, have some connection with the war: Henry Ford, with his unrealistic peace ship; Thorstein Veblen, whose brilliant writings included works on Imperial Germany and on war; Hearst with his sensational newspapers, still another manipulator of
language.

In *The Big Money* the Camera Eye again represents the one perceptive, sane point of view in the novel. The Camera Eye follows the progress of the young man as he returns from France, plunges into the anonymous urban crowds, and eventually rises to passionate anger about the persecution of political and labor groups. The tone is one of weariness and disillusionment. In the novel's first Camera Eye, the homecomer's emotional memories of home and of the war are rudely jolted by the Customs inspector:

> what good burying those years in the old graveyard by the brokendown brick church... what good burying those hated years in the latrine-stench at Brocourt under the starshells
> if today the crookedfaced customs-inspector with...the funnypaper antics of thick hands jerking thumb
> (So you brought home French books didjer?)
> is my uncle53

There is still a trace of John Andrews in this response: a bit condescending, seeing America as a land without sympathy for people like himself. From there the protagonist becomes involved in the discouraging hunt for jobs. He also becomes preoccupied with the faceless aspects people present to one another. There is an account of a cocktail party:
this warmvoiced woman...distributing...
the parts in the fiveo'clock drama
every man his pigeonhole
the personality must be kept carefully
adjusted over the face
to facilitate recognition she pins on
each of us a badge

In another place he evokes the utter solitude of a single
person's existence in the city, talking of

an unidentified stranger
destination unknown
hat pulled down over the has he any? face

This is an intensification of the feeling of impersonality
experienced in the army and the feeling that the complexities
of modern life combine to deprive man of a voice in his own
fate. By the end of the novel the voice has found a cause
in which to express at least the individuality of protest.
Here again he joins his memories of the war to the incidents
he is witnessing at home, for example the jailing of strikers
in the mining districts:

(in another continent I have seen the faces
looking out through the barred basement windows
behind the ragged sentry's boots I have
seen before day the straggling footsore
prisoners herded through the streets limping
between bayonets heard the volley I have
seen the dead lying out in those distant
deeper valleys) what can we say to the
jailed?)
In a sense, the "war" is still going on. Most of the actual physical violence in U.S.A. comes not in scenes of World War I, but in domestic battles over labor issues. America appeared to triumph in Europe, but she "has been beaten" at home. The strikers, the laborers and agitators are "foreigners." Of the policemen, the sheriffs and "hiredmen with guns" the speaker says: "they have made us foreigners in the land where we were born they are the conquering army that has filtered into the country unnoticed...." War has finally become for Dos Passos simply a more violent manifestation of conditions which are more or less constant in modern society. World War I makes a striking illustration of the power of bureaucratic institutions over individual lives; its only effects in American, in spite of the public proclamations on the glory of fighting in a just cause, are to increase violence and sterility of everyday lives. Alfred Kazin comments that...

...what is so significant about Dos Passos is that though he is a direct link between the post-war decade and the crisis novel of the depression period, the defeatism of the lost generation has been slowly and subtly transferred by him from persons to society itself....For him the lost generation becomes all the lost generations from the beginning of modern time in America--all who have known themselves to be lost in the fires of war or struggling up the icy slopes of modern capitalism.
CONCLUSION

Most of the great novels which emerged from World War I had as their basic situation that of men in battle, or close to it. E. E. Cummings' book *The Enormous Room* is an exception, because it is set in a French prison, where Cummings and his friend were detained for their supposedly pacifistic opinions. They are all strong reactions to the war and make many of the same points about war's waste and absurdity. Hemingway and others wrote about the destruction of individual freedom, and the great unseen forces which manipulate ordinary people. Dos Passos' first novel, *First Encounter*, is much like other World War I novels in situation, but was much inferior in style and execution. It is formed of the uneven sense impressions of Martin Howe, who by the end of the book is only beginning to achieve a mature attitude about the war, as a replacement for the "spectatorial attitude" with which he entered. *Three Soldiers* is a more coherent attempt to portray an individual's struggle with the institutional power of the army. And *U.S.A.* is the final expansion of Dos Passos' concern with the war; here the emphasis has shifted to a very broad social and historical outlook. It was the ideal opportunity for the combination of art and history which
seemed so valuable to Dos Passos. The war, which horrified and repelled Dos Passos as a very young man, was the means by which he was first impressed with the dangerous power of great institutions. It first demonstrated to Dos Passos the necessity for an individual struggle for integrity. The dilemma of the individual consciousness, in relation to the war as vehicle for novels of "prophecy" or reform, form the two major elements of Dos Passos' war fiction, in varying proportions.

This serves to explain why the actual physical descriptions of battle gradually disappear from Dos Passos' war novels. _First Encounter_ is filled with gunfire, while _Three Soldiers_ has battle sequences only at certain crucial points. _U.S.A._ is perhaps the only work about the war which has no battles and no real soldiers as major characters. Dos Passos has, in a sense, taken up where other novelists left off; after showing himself to be aware of the problems of soldiers and sympathetic to them, he advances to an examination of the causes of war and an anatomy of the types of people who profit from war. Each change in focus in the novels brought a corresponding change in technique. _First Encounter_ revealed little of the brilliance Dos Passos displayed in later work. _Three Soldiers_ attempted to balance the inner consciousness of three
representative soldiers with satirical looks at characteristics of the army as a whole—the Y-men and the army’s manipulation of popular mass media are examples. *U.S.A.* was Dos Passos’ last use of World War I as a major subject, except for the sentimental *Chosen Country*, in 1951.

John Wrenn has said that in completing *U.S.A.* Dos Passos "had accomplished his major task as an artist" and emerged from a self-imposed isolation to become a full-fledged citizen of the United States. From now on his work would be closer to history than to fiction. In the works under consideration in this study, a type of character which frequently appeared was the isolated and perceptive critic who provided a more or less reliable viewpoint for the novel. It has been noted that these characters bear some resemblance to Dos Passos himself: Martin Howe, the youthful ambulance driver, was both alone in his thoughtful observations about the war and alone in fact by the end of the novel, after his comrades have been killed; John Andrews embodied the problems of the artist, set apart, and confronted with the hard realities of war; the Camera Eye narrator surveyed all of America from the unhappy vantage point of a man alone.

If it has been predominantly his own story, it is because, like Thoreau, Whitman, and Henry Adams, and less obviously Melville and Twain...he has used the self to explain the universe. Starting on the undefined ground of his common humanity, he made of
himself the representative man, seeking to define himself and his integrity. When he stood upon the firmer ground of democratic citizenship, he had defined in that symbol a man's freedom to act as he will and his responsibility for his actions. In his continuing efforts to establish that ground for every individual, he has been seeking to create in his fiction and to revitalize in his history, other models for Americans of the free and responsible individual.

Beyond U.S.A. nothing could be done with the first World War that would not be mere repetition. Dos Passos felt at last that he had obtained some personal and artistic satisfaction in dealing with this important period in his and his country's past. In his next trilogy, District of Columbia, and in his historical and political books written over the following years, Dos Passos turned his attention to other national problems, thematically related in some ways to the first books he wrote, but nevertheless striking out in a new direction. The years of World War I must be considered the single most important part of his life, as far as his novels are concerned. However, the books after U.S.A. are Dos Passos' way of accepting the responsibilities of belonging to a country in which such conditions may prevail. This does not mean that he has left off making the sharp criticisms of America that he made in his earlier books. In everything that Dos Passos has written one can perceive evidence of the
conviction expressed in his essay "Satire as a Way of Seeing:"

Without continually sharpening intelligence it is impossible to cope successfully with the intricacies of the changing world, or with the potential madhouse every man carries within him... When complacency fades, intelligence finds room to grow.
FOOTNOTES

Introduction.

4. Ibid., p. 47.

Chapter One.

2. Ibid., p. 30.
3. See Letters and Diary of Alan Seeger (New York, 1917) for a true account of a young man's experiences at the front. Seeger, a young poet, reacts much as Martin does to the hardships of war, except for his romantic belief that he was fighting in a glorious cause.
4. Dos Passos, Encounter, p. 22.
5. Ibid., p. 53.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 54.
8. See John Wrenn, John Dos Passos (New York, 1961), pp. 40-41. Wrenn relates this to Dos Passos' own desire for male companionship to counteract a youth spent without a father.
10. Ibid., p. 85.
11. Ibid., p. 82.
12. Ibid., p. 117.
13. Ibid., p. 144.
15. Ibid., pp. 130-131.

17. Dos Passos, Encounter, p. 80.

Chapter Two.


4. Ibid., p. 37.

5. Ibid., p. 40.

6. Ibid., p. 63.

7. Ibid., p. 302.

8. Ibid., p. 149.


11. Ibid., p. 158.

12. Ibid., p. 188.

13. Ibid., p. 190.


15. Ibid., p. 31.

16. Ibid., p. 168.

17. Ibid., p. 201.


20. Ibid., pp. 415-416.
24. Ibid., p. 198
25. Ibid., pp. 355-356.
26. Ibid., p. 25.
27. Ibid., p. 156.
29. Ibid., pp. 211-212.
30. Ibid., p. 343.
31. Ibid., p. 336.
32. Ibid., p. 345.
33. Ibid., p. 327.
34. Ibid., p. 420.
35. Ibid., p. 419.
37. Ernest Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms (New York, 1929), passim. For example, p. 327.

Chapter Three.
1. Wrenn, Dos Passos, p. 131.
4. Ibid., p. 149.
5. Ibid., p. 150.
8. Ibid., p. 99.
13. Ibid., p. 344.
15. Ibid.
17. Ibid., p. 353.
18. Ibid., p. 361.
19. Ibid., pp. 350-351.
25. Ibid., p. 140.
26. Ibid., p. 252.
27. Ibid., p. 9.
28. Ibid., p. 252.
29. Ibid., p. 344.
30. Ibid., p. 454.
32. Ibid., p. 92.
33. Ibid., p. 162.
34. Ibid., p. 308.
35. Wrenn, p. 159.
36. Mizener, p. 149.
39. Ibid., p. 437.
41. Ibid., pp. 241-242.
42. Ibid., p. 246.
43. Ibid., p. 247.
44. Ibid., p. 248.
45. Ibid., p. 249.
46. Ibid., p. 473.
47. Ibid., p. 183.
48. Ibid., p. 472.
51. Ibid., p. 519.
54. Ibid., p. 125.
55. Ibid., p. 197.
56. Ibid., pp. 523-524.
57. Ibid., p. 462.
58. Ibid., p. 524.
59. Kazin, p. 341.
Conclusion.

1. Wrenn, p. 166.
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