

2016

John Dos Passos and the individual

Michael K. Yetter

Follow this and additional works at: <https://huskiecommons.lib.niu.edu/allgraduate-thesesdissertations>

Recommended Citation

Yetter, Michael K., "John Dos Passos and the individual" (2016). *Graduate Research Theses & Dissertations*. 3705.

<https://huskiecommons.lib.niu.edu/allgraduate-thesesdissertations/3705>

This Dissertation/Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Research & Artistry at Huskie Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Huskie Commons. For more information, please contact jschumacher@niu.edu.

ABSTRACT

JOHN DOS PASSOS AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Michael K. Yetter, Ph.D.
Department of English
Northern Illinois University, 2016
Mark Van Wienen, Director

The career of John Dos Passos, twentieth-century modernist, American fiction writer, can be separated into two distinct phases: the early liberal political writer and the late-in-life conservative Republican political writer. The entirety of Dos Passos's fiction is devoted to two topics: America and the individual. Due to the author's dramatic change in political philosophy, critics are troubled when reconciling these two phases; however, the critical consensus is that the one constant between early and later novels is his devotion to the plight of the individual. Dos Passos himself echoes this assessment. Closer examination of Dos Passos's fiction reflects that this judgment is too simplistic. The author's point of view on the individual should be divided into two categories: the individual citizen and what has been termed the Dos Passosian individual, a significant figure who stands out in society, challenging existing American economic and political structures in an effort to improve the social order for all. Further analysis indicates that the author's thinking about this Dos Passosian individual evolves over the course of his career. First, this representative individual shares characteristics with the early German Romantic poet, a figure who separates him- or herself from the collective, communes with nature, seeking enlightenment, and seeks to educate and inspire individual citizens to seek their own enlightenment. Next, the Dos Passosian individual becomes a modern American Romantic,

who shares traits with the early German Romantic poet in seeking inspiration in Nature but is also able to find some degree of enlightenment within the collective. This person then matures into a Democratic Individual, inspired by Walt Whitman, who fully embraces enlightenment within the collective and tries to inspire citizens to take steps in order to improve economic instability. Finally, Dos Passos's character becomes what this work terms a modern Democratic Individual, a figure who eschews Whitmanian distance from politics to become an economic and political operative and thereby acts upon a civic responsibility to the country and to fellow individual citizens while struggling in the postwar American political landscape.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
DEKALB, ILLINOIS

DECEMBER 2016

JOHN DOS PASSOS AND THE INDIVIDUAL

BY

MICHAEL K. YETTER
©2016 Michael K. Yetter

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Doctoral Director:
Mark Van Wienen

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been completed without the guidance and patience of my dissertation director, Dr. Mark Van Wienen. Additionally, I must thank my other committee members, Dr. Diana Swanson and Dr. James Giles. I am indebted to their mentorship, their encouragement, and most important of all, their friendship. I could not have asked for better instructors or a better committee.

Also, I have to mention my family. My mother prayed for me, my sisters believed in me, and my daughters took care of me. Do not think that I did not notice. When I needed you, each of you was there. Without your unconditional love and constant hectoring me about when I was going to finish this dissertation, I would have been lost.

Finally, thank you to Carolyn Law. You offered me a job, time to work on this project, and your friendship. I hope the finished product does you proud.

DEDICATION

For my father. You inspired this.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
AUTHOR'S NOTE.....	v
Chapter	
1.DOS PASSOS AND THE HISTORY OF THE INDIVIDUAL, INDIVIDUALITY AND INDIVIDUALISM	1
2. <i>ONE MAN'S INITIATION: 1917, THREE SOLDIERS,</i> <i>AND THE ROMANTIC INDIVIDUAL</i>	30
3. <i>MANHATTAN TRANSFER</i> , THE INDIVIDUAL, <i>AND BILDUNG</i>	52
4. <i>U.S.A AND THE SEARCH FOR A NEW INDIVIDUAL</i>	74
5. <i>DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: THE DEMOCRATIC INDIVIDUAL</i> <i>AND THE POLITICAL NATIONS</i>	107
6. THE MODERN DEMOCRATIC INDIVIDUAL OF POSTWAR AMERICA.....	143
WORKS CITED	170

AUTHOR'S NOTE

John Dos Passos's reputation as a gifted writer is due in part to his unusual aesthetic. Desirous of challenging the stereotypical structure and appearance of the American novel, his more modern style and voice were influenced by a number of early twentieth-century artistic movements, especially Cubism and Futurism; advancements in film techniques by prominent directors at the time; and by the author's experiences with artist Gerald Murphy, who in 1923 was commissioned to design a more modern American ballet, *Within the Quota*. Part of Dos Passos's aesthetic decisions at the sentence level include blending words together and an excessive use of ellipses. Also, it should be noted that on occasion the author favors European spelling.

I have not Americanized the author's spelling nor altered his tendency to merge words together. To do so would distort the author's aesthetic and corrupt the work's impact on the reader.

It is important to highlight that throughout the entirety of this text I have had to incorporate the ellipsis for my own purposes. In order to distinguish my own use of the punctuation from Dos Passos's, I enclose my ellipses in brackets.

I have employed the following abbreviations for select sources:

PRIMARY SOURCES:

Novels

DOC: AYM

District of Columbia: Adventures of a Young Man

<i>DOC: NO</i>	<i>District of Columbia: Number One</i>
<i>DOC: GD</i>	<i>District of Columbia: The Grand Design</i>
<i>Novels</i>	<i>Novels 1920 – 1925: One Man’s Initiation: 1917, Three Soldiers, Manhattan Transfer.</i>
<i>U.S.A.</i>	<i>U.S.A.: The 42nd Parallel, 1919, The Big Money</i>

Non-fiction

<i>Travel Books</i>	<i>Travel Books and Other Writings: 1916 – 1941: Rosinante to the Road Again, Orient Express, In All Countries, A Pushcart at the Curb, Essays, Letters, and Diaries</i>
<i>FC</i>	<i>The Fourteenth Chronicle: Letters and Diaries of John Dos Passos edited by Townsend Ludington</i>

SECONDARY SOURCES:

Biography

<i>TCO</i>	<i>John Dos Passos: A Twentieth-Century Odyssey by Townsend Ludington</i>
------------	---

CHAPTER ONE

DOS PASSOS AND THE HISTORY OF THE INDIVIDUAL, INDIVIDUALITY, AND INDIVIDUALISM

After graduating from Harvard in the spring of 1916, John Dos Passos had to make a decision regarding his future. He could continue with his studies, focusing on a developing interest in architecture; he could cross the ocean, enlist, and fight in the Great War; or he could pursue his interest in literature. This third option was the most appealing. He had been a member of Harvard's literary circle, published several essays on art and culture in the *Harvard Monthly*, and he was busy compiling a collection of original poetry written by himself and several of his classmates (the collection would be published in 1917 under the title *8 Harvard Poets*). The one obstacle to this third choice was his father. John Roderigo Dos Passos, a well-respected lawyer, wished his son to pursue a career in law, or at least to choose a trade that was as well respected as the legal profession and would further the family legacy. In her biography, Virginia Spencer Carr describes the father as someone "who continued his egocentric pursuits at will, convinced that he was in control of his destiny as well as the destinies of those around him" (18). In his memoir *The Best Times* (1968), Dos Passos recalls this period of his life and writes of his father's concerns from a more diplomatic perspective: "He was delighted to have me write my head off, but with patient humor he kept insisting that literature wasn't any way to make a living" (36).

Eventually, Dos Passos, Jr., had the idea of taking a year off and spending his free time reading, writing, and traveling. His father, however, was not thrilled with the prospect of his son going on the bum. Therefore, he proposed an alternative: Dos Passos, Sr., would finance a trip to Spain for one year so that his son could learn something of his heritage and pursue his interest in architecture. It was the father's hope that his son would return home after twelve months, become apprenticed at a reputable architectural firm, and take up the responsibility of monitoring the family's affairs. What the father could not anticipate was that the trip to Spain would only further his son's zeal for the life of an artist. Witnessing the grueling life and rugged independence of the Spanish *granjero* (farmer) helped the blossoming writer develop his views regarding a topic about which he would write for the whole of his literary career: the individual.

Townsend Ludington makes a passing reference to Dos Passos as "an individualist very much in the North American grain" ("John Dos Passos in the 1930s" 32). As a young man who was rather conventional in appearance and ideas, individualism was regarded as an act of rebellion (*TCO* 121). In an evaluation of Dos Passos's early attempts at fiction, which he successfully published in the *Harvard Monthly*, Virginia Spencer Carr writes, "More and more, characters who rebelled in some fashion against society's dictates fascinated Dos Passos and became a primary means of getting his own ambiguous feelings objectified so that he might deal with them" (87). These "feelings" to which Carr alludes concern the writer's complicated relationship with his father. Part of this fascination with, or what others might regard as idealization of, the rebel might be attributed to this relationship. Carr writes,

Despite having matriculated to Harvard with a vague notion of studying law, Dos Passos inwardly rebelled against his father's profession. He respected John R.'s intelligence, his success as a corporate lawyer, and his willingness to press his convictions even though his stand was an unpopular one. To young Dos Passos, there was much in his father's character and personality to admire, but he resented him, too. (55)

Dos Passos insisted that his own success would have to be achieved on his own terms. Consequently, he found himself rejecting upper-class status and riches (the two things his father worked hard to earn for himself and his family) and by extension his father's conservative values. Dos Passos's relationship with his father can be described as complicated, at best, stemming from the fact that John Roderigo was unable formally to acknowledge Dos Passos, Jr., as his son due to the fact that the boy was conceived out of wedlock and while Dos Passos, Sr., was married to another woman. Dos Passos, Jr., was forced to spend the first five years of his life as a bastard, travelling across Europe with his mother, seeing his father sporadically, and during such occasions he was compelled to refer to the man as "Dedi." Concerning the son's legitimacy, Lois Hughson writes,

Was he [Dos Passos, Jr.] a part of his father's world, the father, a man dedicated to the law who did not legitimize his son for sixteen years? Harvard was the first school to enroll him under the Dos Passos name. Yet his relationship with his father was very close. At least one thing he learned through it was that real belonging and attachment could flourish outside the law and social arrangements, that real claims and affection might have nothing to do with public status. At the same time he was closed off from the power that went with status; he was in a fundamental sense "déclassé." ("Dos Passos's World War" 51)

Carr notes that over time Dos Passos, Jr., grew to admire John Roderigo and all that his father had accomplished. He just didn't want to be like his father.

If, however, Dos Passos's family relationships had a formative influence upon his rebellious individualism, so too did other life experiences such as the trials of Sacco and Vanzetti, the Harlan Miners' Strike, the Spanish Civil War, and his relationships with Ernest Hemingway and E.E. Cummings.

For someone who saw himself from early on as an intellectual, Dos Passos's reading also mattered, in his development. To take a key example, he acquired a great deal of perspective

about America, the individual and individualism from reading Walt Whitman. In his memoir, Dos Passos writes about reading Whitman's "Song of the Open Road" the summer after he graduated from Harvard in 1916 and how the text contributed to a feeling of restlessness and a need to get away – right before his trip to Spain. That same summer, in his essay "Against American Literature" in the *New Republic*, his first paying professional publication, Dos Passos expressed his belief that American writers should emulate the ideals and legacy of Walt Whitman. By 1919, after the war and back in Spain for a second trip, this time as a journalist, Carr writes, "[T]he American who stood best as a symbol or model for Dos Passos' attempt to control his own destiny regardless of the odds was Walt Whitman. He considered the bard of Long Island to be his spiritual father" (166). Robert P. Weeks writes, "Dos Passos repeatedly saluted Whitman as his forbear and exemplar, quoted him, borrowed his ideas, and, especially in his later years, aped him" (431). Weeks argues that *U.S.A* is similar to Whitman's "Song of Myself" when it comes to style and structure, regarding the series as more of an epic poem, akin to *Leaves of Grass*, than a prose narrative. Lois Hughson discovers Whitman's famous image of blades of grass in one of the Camera Eyes in *U.S.A.* and argues from this that Dos Passos and Whitman share thematic elements in their works. As Weeks suggests, Whitman remains a prominent source of inspiration even at the end of his career as Dos Passos incorporates Whitman and his *Democratic Vistas* into what became Dos Passos's final novel, *Century's Ebb*.

Whatever the influences were that shaped Dos Passos's individualism, it is a central theme in much of the critical discourse on the author. In a discussion concerning the entirety of Dos Passos's career, looking to bridge the gap between the writer's early flirtations with socialism and his midlife switch to conservatism, Townsend Ludington writes, "The constant [. . .] was individualism, and all his life he searched for positions where he thought there was the

greatest possibility for its expression” (“John Dos Passos in the 1930s” 33). In 1969 during an interview with David Sanders for *The Paris Review*, when asked about the disparity of his political views between early books, such as *Three Soldiers*, and his later work, such as *Adventures of a Young Man* and *District of Columbia*, Dos Passos insisted that the common link between the novels was writing about the individual. Dos Passos commented, “I’ve usually been on the fence in partisan matters. I’ve often been partisan for particular people, usually people who seem to be getting a raw deal. [. . .] I have tried to look at it from the point of view of the ordinary man, the ordinary woman, struggling to retain some dignity and make a decent life in these vast organizations.” In an introduction to a collection of Dos Passos’s non-fiction, Donald Pizer writes, “He [Dos Passos] himself, however, in defense of individual freedom had remained ‘monotonously’ consistent” (*Major Nonfictional Prose* 15). James Steel Smith similarly recognizes a unifying struggle in Dos Passos’s fiction, regardless of when a particular book was written or the author’s ideology: “Sensitive to human hurts, he [Dos Passos] is always seeing the individual being hurt by his environment, no matter whether it be tightly organized or in chaos. He reacts almost instinctively against the shape of things as they are; he finds everywhere frustration of the individual’s search for satisfaction” (336).

While building on the claims of these previous critics (and the author himself) who have stipulated that Dos Passos is interested in or concerned for or obsessed with the individual, I would observe, and frame my argument, thus: the concepts of the individual, individualism, and individuality are too complex for critics to state, simply and only, that Dos Passos remained consistent across his career by writing about the individual. To begin with, in Dos Passos’s fiction, there is an important distinction between the individual citizen(s) – typically depicted as a member(s) of the lower social classes – and the Dos Passosian individual, who stands out and

apart from the stereotypical citizen in the author's work, often because this individual is meant to speak to and for those individual citizens being exploited by powerful interests. Additionally, Dos Passos may have been concerned for the individual early and late in his career, but it is abundantly clear that his thinking about individual citizens and his model individual changes over the course of his career, so much so that it is difficult to link the early conception of the Dos Passosian individual – whom I classify as a liberal figure that shares qualities similar to the early German Romantic poet – with the later figure – someone akin to a conservative adaptation of the Whitmanian Democratic Individual. Overall, little has been written about whether or not Dos Passos means the same thing when he speaks of the individual or individualism at different stages of his career.

There is too much ambiguity inherent in the statement: “The constant [. . .] was individualism.” What are the cultural influences upon Dos Passos, shaping his view of the individual? Does Dos Passos's individual present a survival of earlier forms of individualism, or does it come to terms with modernity? A close examination of Dos Passos's fiction is required in order to understand fully the author's thinking about individual citizens and the figure of Dos Passos's model individual.

Furthermore, even apart from Dos Passos's personal views, the terms “individual,” “individuality,” and “individualism” have such a multitude of denotations and connotations – which may be attributed to various nineteenth-century French, German, English and American sources – to demand preliminary exploration of these terms themselves, especially as each influence may be considered pertinent to John Dos Passos's own conception of the individual.

In separate analyses of the terms “individuality” and “individualism,” Koenraad Swart and Steve Lukes ascertain that these concepts have been discussed from three perspectives: political, economic and philosophical. Based on examples provided and explicated in Swart’s and Lukes’s texts, one can make the argument that there is some overlap between perspectives – as statements with regards to individuality and individualism from a political point of view might influence economic and philosophical perspectives, and vice versa -- though their work discusses each separately and treats them as distinct from the other. Based on my reading of their work, it would appear that select thinkers have tended to focus on one point of view, depending on from where they hailed as well as the circumstances surrounding their writing. In the nineteenth century, the French had a predominant political point of view regarding individuality and individualism; the Germans discussed the terms in a philosophical sense; the English appear to have emphasized economic aspects while the Americans debated the concepts from all three points of view. Swart and Lukes note that as a political term individualism typically has been regarded as advocating the establishment of an egalitarian society where the rights of all individuals are respected. As an economic concept, however, individualism often denotes a system in which each individual strives to earn a living for him- or herself with little or no government intervention, an economic policy known as *laissez faire*. Finally, the philosophical perspective of individualism has largely been associated with Romanticism, the nineteenth-century German philosophy regarding the role of the individual in society.

Though American thinkers such as Emerson and Whitman and, for a brief period of time at the beginning of the nineteenth century, some German Romantics wrote and spoke about individuality in positive terms, much of the time the general attitude of European thinkers, whether conservatives, socialists, or liberals, was overwhelmingly negative. Lukes writes, “For

some, individualism resides in dangerous ideas, for others it is social or economic anarchy, a lack of the requisite institutions and norms, for yet others it is the prevalence of self-interested attitudes among individuals” (49). Swart’s as well as Lukes’s work indicates that there is a cultural element closely associated with the negative consensus regarding individualism and its supposed deleterious impact upon established social order.

In the nineteenth century, French conservatives, socialists and liberals came to the conclusion that individualism resulted in the breakdown of social solidarity. Lukes writes, “In France, it usually carried, and indeed still carries, a pejorative connotation, a strong suggestion that to concentrate on the individual is to harm the superior interests of society” (48). A lot of the French negativity directed towards individualism corresponds to the ideas offered by Enlightenment thinkers – including Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Montesquieu – prior to the collapse of the Ancien Regime. Critics came to blame such individualistic ideas for the collapse of morality and society in the French Revolution.

After the revolution, conservatives believed that in order for society to function effectively, individuals needed to submit to authority. Joseph de Maistre regarded organized society as a gift from God. Individualism was therefore heretical and condemned as “political protestantism” (Lukes 46). Individualism resulted in nothing more than division. The individual needed to become part of the collective, namely, that of society and the church. Conservative thinkers were of the opinion that in order to be highly educated and moral creatures, individuals needed proper guidance and leadership, which could only be provided through submission to the establishment.

On the French Left, individualism was regarded only slightly differently. French socialists made a distinction between individualism and collective society. Socialist thinkers did

regard individualism as an important step in the attainment of a socialist state. Indeed, Louis Blanc believed that individualism was good in the sense that it promoted “self-assertion” (Lukes 51) and a rejection of traditional hierarchies in religious, economic, and intellectual arenas. However, individualism had to lead towards the establishment of a socialist state that was unified and well organized. Socialists believed that individualism promoted a threatening economic doctrine stipulating that in order for the individual to become “self-reliant,” he or she must take advantage of other members of society, thereby promoting the interests of the individual over those of the common good, also resulting in increasing the inequality gap between rich and poor. Socialists believed such an economic policy depended upon the exploitation of labor.

French political thinkers occupying a variety of positions on the Left regarded individualism as “a threat to pluralist social order, with minimum state intervention and maximum political liberty” (Lukes 52). These thinkers regarded individualism as nothing more than egoism, a character flaw that resulted in the individual separating him- or herself from the state. Alexis de Tocqueville argued that individualism leads to individuals retreating “from public life into a private sphere and their isolation from one another, with a consequent weakening of social bonds” (Lukes 52). While de Tocqueville did not regard independence as a negative, Dana Villa explains that for de Tocqueville individualism “obscures the ‘close ties’ between [. . .] private interest and the public good” (671). De Tocqueville believed that, because individuals depend on each other to ensure every individual’s own well-being, individualism is largely an illusion.

In nineteenth-century Germany, while leading thinkers wrote about and considered the role of the individual in political terms, concepts of the individual and individuality were most prominently associated with art. In contrast to the leading French ideals, the notion of

individuality was celebrated among German artists. Artists and philosophers – dubbed Romantics – believed individuality essential and desirable for the purposes of creating great art. Early German Romanticism, known as the *Frühromantik* and often dated from the summer of 1797 until 1801, began with a question: What is Romantic poetry? According to Frederick Beiser, “Romantic poetry” is the creative activity of turning something beautiful; this activity links to a political movement with the intention of romanticizing the world (21).

Beiser argues that when German thinkers, such as Wilhelm Wackenroder, Friedrich Schelling, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Karl and August Schlegel, and Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg, who published under the pseudonym of Novalis, were discussing the concept of Romantic poetry, in fact they were discussing an aesthetic ideal with wide application (8). Beiser writes, “The aim of early romantic aestheticism was indeed to romanticize the world itself, so that human beings, society, and the state could become works of art as well” (8). At the same time Beiser explains that early romanticists were realistic about their aspirations, seeing “*romantische Poesie* only as an ideal, a goal we can approach but never completely attain. All that remained to our lot here on earth, they fully recognized, was the eternal *striving* and *longing* to achieve this goal” (21). The aesthetic ideal of romanticizing the world was to break down the barriers between art and life (Beiser 8-9). Beiser writes, “It was the task of the modern age, Schlegel believed, to recreate the wholeness and unity of the ancient world, but now on a more sophisticated and self-conscious level that provided *for the freedom and equality of everyone*. What had once been given by nature to the ancient Greeks – unity with oneself, with others, and with nature – now had to be recovered through free activity by modern man” (emphasis added, 12).

Paradoxically, given this social aim, the German Romantic artist would seek to distance him- or herself from society in order to achieve an enlightened perspective that is better realized in nature, thereby “stressing the conflict between individual and society and the supreme value of subjectivity, solitude, and introspection” (Lukes 55). In other words, the individual cannot thrive in the society; therefore, the individual separates him- or herself from it. The individual discovers self-expression and by extension his or her individuality. The individual thereby becomes enlightened or self-aware.

This enlightened individual stands apart from the rest of society but can be held up as a model for others who would dare to discover their own enlightened selves. Ideally, the enlightened individual shares the story of his or her enlightenment with the community. However, sharing the tale of the individual’s experience of achieving enlightenment isn’t fully possible because the actual experience is subjective to the enlightened individual. Instead, the German Romanticist expresses him- or herself through his or her *romantische Poesie*, highlighting his or her enlightened perspective on aspects of life that relate to the community. When the audience is exposed to this art, they are learning from the enlightened individual’s perspective, but they are not becoming enlightened themselves. To accomplish this, they too need to separate themselves from the community and go into nature. Still, by communicating his or her enlightened perspective with the community, the enlightened individual promotes the enlightened point of view of social harmony.

The danger of this complex relation between Romantic individual and society is that the enlightened individual becomes so obsessed with his or her more highly enlightened perspective that the individual no longer sees any value in socializing with the community. When this happens, the enlightened individual finds it either impossible or fruitless to share his or her

perspective through art with members of the community, for the only other people who would be able to appreciate fully the message contained within the art are a select number of other enlightened individuals. What happens then is the gradual withdrawal of the enlightened individual from the community, descending into pure egoism. Indeed, Georg Simmel believed that individualism was solely a philosophy of difference (Lukes) and that the individual will always stand apart from everyone else; hence, only conflict exists between the artist and society, as society seeks to repress the artist's originality.

When the enlightened individual contributes to the community, ideally members of the community learn from the enlightened individual and desire to pursue a path towards enlightenment themselves. If every individual in the community becomes enlightened, then the entire community has become a town or district that has the characteristics of individualism. If more than one community adopts elements of individualism, then it is possible for an entire state to embody qualities associated with individualism. Each individual contributes to the social harmony of the community; each community contributes to the social harmony of the state; each state contributes to the social harmony of the country. Under this vision, Lukes writes that German Romantic individualism can achieve "the organic unity of individual and society" (57).

Such an ideal also presents the danger of only emphasizing the individual. Georg Hegel, a prominent voice in the German Idealism movement, which was linked to Romanticism, recognized that individuality is the "principle of the modern world" (qtd. in Villa 660) and asserts that the voice of the individual must and should be heard. The individual should not rule, though. According to Hegel, individuals would do well to submit to the social order. Dana Villa explains that Hegel insisted that too much focus on an individual's rights would lead to "atomization." Under Hegel's theory, in order to achieve social harmony, individuals need to

recognize the value of organizations, corporations, institutions, etc. Such a structure would mediate between the individual's rights and the common needs of the community. At the same time, this administration, or ruling party, would better educate the individual, making him or her a more respectable and highly respected member of society.

English thinkers were initially reluctant to use the label "individualism" when articulating divergent perspectives regarding the individual and individualism as they relate to English society. According to Swart, one of the first critics to use the label was the moralist Samuel Smiles (87). Smiles wrote about individualism from an economic vantage point. He believed that individuality was synonymous with self-reliance. Further, Smiles argued that the self-reliant individual was free to do as he or she likes. Smiles believed that the self-reliant individual was free to work hard and acquire a degree of wealth that would improve his or her social standing. Under this vision, individualism supported the capitalist system. Furthermore, Smiles believed this industrious, self-reliant individual would serve as a model to fellow country-people. They would see this individual's success and mimic his attitude of self-help, striving for economic success themselves. This, in turn, would benefit the country.

On the other hand, John Stuart Mill did not support a capitalist economic system promoted by individualism. Mill argued in favor of economic democracy where workers were equal to each other; the workers hired the managers, the workers fired the managers, and the workers had a stake in the capital being used to run the business. Mill believed that individuality promoted harmful competition between individuals (Lukes 63). Along similar lines, the socialist Robert Owen argued that the problem inherent in individualism is that it does not promote union; it only separates. A unified organization structured according to socialist principles is not compatible with the idea of each person for him- or herself. Brooke Foss Westcott argued,

“[I]ndividualism regards humanity as made up of disconnected or warring atoms; socialism regards it as an organic whole, a vital unity formed by the combination of contributing members mutually interdependent” (qtd. in Lukes 63).

Lukes writes that in England during the latter half of the nineteenth century, the term “individualism” was critiqued by classic socialism, communism, and collectivism (64). In contrast, Herbert Spencer, a classic economic liberal, argued that communism led to government ownership whereas individualism promoted self-ownership (Lukes 65). Spencer advocated extreme *laissez-faire* policies when promoting individualism. Spencer did not want individual wills to be replaced by government will. On the other hand, the vision of leading thinkers of social liberalism, T.H. Green, also a member of the British Idealism movement, and L. T. Hobhouse, a political theorist and sociologist, can be described as the marriage of individualism and socialism. Green regarded individualism as an essential aspect of human nature that should not be subverted by executive decree (Lukes 65).

Across the Atlantic, the American populace widely believed that they had founded a country built upon the individual, and theories of individualism tended to be regarded more favorably than in Europe. According to Lukes and Swart, for Americans individualism meant economic freedom, equal rights, equal opportunity, and limited government. Yet the terms “individual,” “individuality,” and “individualism” weren’t commonly used until late in the nineteenth century. Instead, Americans used phrases like “self-reliance,” “self-help,” “self-culture,” and “self-made” to represent concepts like individuality and individualism. In Emerson’s and Whitman’s work, every American is an individual. However, the writers also refer to the Poet, an enlightened, highly moral individual, not unlike the German Romantic artist. While every American individual has the opportunity to become a Poet, only a few actually will

do so. American institutions may help individuals to become better educated, highly moral creatures, but there is the desire that these individuals will become unified under the national identity of America without sacrificing each individual's unique identity. As Yehoshua Arieli writes in *Individualism and Nationalism in American Ideology*, American individualism provides "unity in spite of heterogeneity" (qtd. in Lukes 61).

For a more detailed accounting of the American individual and individualism, critics point to the work of Ralph Waldo Emerson, especially such essays as "The American Scholar," "Self-Reliance," and "The Poet." In his work, Emerson discusses individualism and the individual as distinct, albeit symbiotic, concepts, which when combined can be regarded as a social philosophy. According to Joseph Blau, Emerson's theory of individualism depends on his characterization of individual self-reliance. To be socially and politically responsible, the individual must first be true to him- or herself. Blau is quick to point out, though, that self-reliance should not be misinterpreted as rationalizing greed or supporting *laissez faire* capitalism. Emerson's theory of self-reliance may help an individual attain a measure of financial independence; however, it is also a theory oriented to altruism. As Blau explains, "A true community is made up of self-reliant individuals who, because they have common goals, can often agree on the means to those ends" (89-90).

Concerning the individual, in his 1837 address to the Phi Beta Kappa society at Harvard, Emerson writes about the "American Scholar," contributing to an ongoing debate within society and at the university. The duty of the scholar is to comment on society for the sake of helping the people without submitting to the whims of popular opinion. The chief responsibility of the American scholar is "to cheer, to raise, and to guide men by showing them facts amidst appearances" ("The American Scholar" 52). The scholar will have a hard life. He or she will not

be looked upon with favor. He or she will not be rich, must not succumb to the latest trends, and will spend more time with books than with people. The scholar is always watching, thinking, and reasoning about nature, about the people, and about the community. In order for the scholar to have any kind of positive impact with his or her message, he or she must be free from ideology and political party. The scholar must speak to the people from a protected class (“The American Scholar” 54). When the scholar speaks out, he or she cannot be afraid to speak the truth because of potential backlash from the people. By the end of the address, the audience is meant to understand that because Man is made up of all individuals and the scholar serves his or her function (i.e., thinking) and part of his or her thinking is influenced by living (i.e., observing and speaking with all individuals), the scholar then speaks with virtue to all individuals with the hopes of helping them become better educated and highly moral individuals who are also citizens.

Seven years after his speech to the Harvard Divinity School, Emerson ascribes some of the characteristics of the scholar to another individual – the Poet. The Poet speaks *to* and *for* the community. Emerson writes, “The poet has a new thought; he has a whole new experience to unfold; he will tell us how it was with him, and all men will be the richer in his fortune” (“The Poet” 290). Any individual can be a poet, but not everyone is a *true* Poet.

Emerson’s arguments would appear to be akin to the previously mentioned German Romantic ideas on individuality; namely, the individual can separate him- or herself from the state and achieve an enlightened moral state of being, but then such an individual can - and should - use this enlightenment in an altruistic manner to embrace and contribute to wider society. The idea is that through self-examination the individual will arrive at conclusions that are universal (i.e., applicable to the community for the benefits of adopting a socially aware point

of view), not self-centered. This argument became pivotal in Emerson's arguments regarding the individual and individuality, under the guise of the scholar and the Poet. Another way of looking at this concept is to recognize it as the Golden Rule: each individual recognizes everyone else's right to be an individual so that each, in turn, will enjoy the right to be an individual.

Inspired by Emerson's writing and lectures, Walt Whitman also champions the call of America and the individual. Readers will notice a remarkable similarity between Emerson's conception of the scholar/Poet and Whitman's Poet/Democratic Individual. Whitman recognizes that modern individualism may defy or reject the notion of patriotism, which is a nationalistic identity for the masses. However, as he stipulates in *Democratic Vistas*, he believes that individualism and patriotism can be reconciled. For Whitman, individuality is the "political genesis and life of America" (*Democratic Vistas* 941). He suggests that without individuality, America is not a complete nation. To write about America is to write about the individual; to celebrate America is to celebrate individuality. Therefore, in order to fully grasp his perspective about individuality, it is vital to examine the poet's thoughts about democracy and America.

Whitman makes reference to the Democratic Individual in his introduction to the 1872 edition of *Leaves of Grass*. He writes, "*Leaves of Grass*, already published, is, in its intentions, the song of a great composite *Democratic Individual*, male or female" (*The Complete Poems* 777). Under Whitman's vision, each citizen is both an individual and an American. This means that each citizen has both a singular identity as an individual and a unified identity shared with all other citizens as an American. Each person – man and woman – begins at the same level within this American democracy. Whitman writes, "Of every hue and caste am I, of every rank and religion" and "There shall be no difference between them and the rest" ("Song of Myself," *The Complete Poems*, 16.346, 19.377). Regarding democracy, Whitman writes, "The purpose of

democracy [. . .] is [. . .] this doctrine or theory that man, properly train'd in sanest, highest freedom, may and must become a law, and series of laws, unto himself, surrounding and providing for, not only his own personal control, but all his relations to other individuals, and to the State" (*Democratic Vistas* 942). In other words, under Whitman's vision, individuals set out to work, and individuals work together in order to form their government, which thereby becomes self-government. Whitman writes, "[T]he mission of government [. . .] [is] to train communities through all their grades, beginning with individuals and ending there again, to rule themselves" (*Democratic Vistas* 947). The hope is that this strategy will develop a town. From this, several towns will organize a state, and so on, until there is a nation and a national identity. Yet the ultimate concern is for the people, who should be served by their cities, states, and nation.

For all the grand notions behind Whitman's idealistic perspective of democracy, he acknowledges that the character of man and woman is weak. Politicians and various individuals who hold positions of power become corrupt. Their actions are not so much for the benefit of democracy as they are born out of selfishness. Whitman writes, "I say that our New World democracy [. . .] is, so far, an almost complete failure in its social aspects, and in really grand religious, moral, literacy, and esthetic results" (*Democratic Vistas* 938). In a letter to Emerson, whom Whitman addresses as "Master," Whitman takes issue with men and women who dictate the rule of law, who establish social order, who are representatives of the people. Simultaneously, Whitman is angry that citizens look to popular opinion when it comes to being informed. Instead, the people should be looking to the Poet.

Whitman believes that poets, philosophers, and authors will help shape the democratic structure of America. The American Poet will *not* be like the poets of the past. The American

Poet will not separate him- or herself from the people to the same degree as the early German Romantic poet. The Poet will live with the people, be one of the people, and recognize the beauty and divinity of all people in all trades and all classes of life. By writing about these individuals, the Poet will be writing about America. The one word that the Long Island bard tends to repeat a great deal is “modern.” In *Leaves of Grass* he writes of the modern man, the modern woman, the modern world, and the modern crowd: “And mine, a world of the modern, the word En-Masse” (“Song of Myself,” *The Complete Poems*, 23.478); “Just as any one of you is of a living crowd, I was one of a crowd” (“Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” *The Complete Poems*, 3.23). Whitman is writing a modern poem about the whole – America – and the parts – the individuals. Whitman does not believe that his Poet can write about either subject on its own. To be a Poet is to celebrate the whole *and* the parts. Whitman believes that the formulation of an American literature will help express and promote democracy and the American character. The Poet’s work inspires, illuminates, and educates other individuals, their communities, the state, and the country.

Finally, it should be noted that every individual who lives in America has the opportunity to achieve the status of Poet, or Democratic Individual. Emerson and Whitman believe that democracy should prepare individuals to achieve this status. The Democratic Individual is a free individual who contributes to and supports the democratic system, which in turn has been designed to support individuality. The state of democratic individuality is not fixed; it is an ongoing ideal for which individuals strive. The Democratic Individual will be held up as a model for other individuals to emulate and imitate. Once again, such an idea must co-exist with the previously mentioned Emersonian Golden Rule as applied to his theory of individuality –

namely, each individual must respect each individual's right to be an individual; otherwise, one cannot guarantee that his or her own individuality will be respected.

A prominent critique of nineteenth-century American individualism comes from Alexis de Tocqueville. During his journey across the United States, de Tocqueville arrived at the conclusion that Americans were very good at self-deception. Citizens may have insisted that the country was founded upon a principle of individuality, but what he noticed was that the country was successful at "cultivating a deep sense of community and an appreciation of 'the close tie that unites private to general interest'" (Villa 665). At face value, this does not appear to be a negative attribute of the American system. However, concerning the concept of American individualism, de Tocqueville is exposing a willful blindness on the part of the citizens. American individuals found some sort of consensus among other individuals, or the community, which allowed the individuals to turn personal interests into general interests, and vice versa. De Tocqueville – who considered pure individualism an illusion – believed Americans deceived themselves into believing that they were pursuing general interests when in fact they were pursuing only their individual aims. Meanwhile, all too many other individuals could very casually sacrifice their individuality in the name of patriotism, nationality, or the public interest. De Tocqueville regarded individualism as an American problem as opposed to an American virtue (Villa 664).

He may not have been composing a direct attack of Emerson's and Whitman's arguments; nevertheless, de Tocqueville's critique of the American concept of individualism appears valid. If we restrict ourselves, for the moment, to the Emerson-Whitman conception of the Democratic Individual, one might be led to believe that this figure is idealistic, yet lacking a firm basis in reality.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the notion of American individualism as an economic concept became more synonymous with big business industrialism than with Emerson's and Whitman's conception of the individual as Poet or Democratic Individual. The problem was that at the time, democracy and capitalism could not both reign supreme. Brands explains, "Democracy depends on equality, capitalism on inequality" (5). Brands remarks that the principles of capitalism gradually became more important to citizens than the principles of democracy (7). Men and women became more interested in standing out in their communities on the basis of wealth as opposed to having acquired the enlightened perspective of the Poet, or Democratic Individual. Wall Street provided members of all classes the chance to make an easy fortune through speculation: "The speculators were a distinctive species, yet one that crossed the other lines of social demarcation. 'All classes and grades are represented here – rich and poor, gentle and simple, learned and illiterate'" (Brands 16). The problem was that the majority of impoverished speculators stayed poor because they didn't have access to inside information regarding stocks that was reserved exclusively for the elite upper class. While it wasn't impossible for someone to make a decent amount of money through speculation and find him- or herself catapulted into a new social class, it was more common for the rich to stay rich and the poor to remain right where the rich felt they belonged.

Hence, the end of the nineteenth century was a time when the social theory of individualism became synonymous with upper-class values. McGerr writes, "The industrial upper class upheld a set of values at odds with those of other classes" (6). The richest one percent of the population, referred to as the "upper ten," had very distinct perspectives regarding individualism and individuality. The upper ten believed in the freedom of the individual. In this case, upper-class individualism became a philosophy that suggested that there was no such thing

as social class; society was made up solely of individuals. If an individual was not a success, this was due to personal shortcomings. The last thing that was needed, under this vision, was government intervention. McGerr writes,

Upper-class individualism was obviously self-serving and often self-deluding, but it was no sham. More than any other group, the upper ten carried individualism proudly into the organized and bureaucratized twentieth century. It was just this sort of individualism that their sons learned at home, at private school, and then at Harvard, Princeton, and Yale. And it was just this extreme individualism that set the upper ten apart from other classes that guaranteed social tension and conflict in the new century. (10)

While the upper ten associated individualism with self-interest, many members of the working class exchanged individualism for the philosophy of mutualism in order to survive. Mutualism meant that workers found themselves relying on members of their families for financial support. Everyone worked -- men and women, adults and children -- and pooled their earnings in order to pay for things like rent and groceries. Rather than exercise their individuality for self-gain, they tended towards self-denial in order to ensure the survival of the family. Manual laborers joined trade unions because the institutions celebrated collective action and condemned the individualism that was celebrated by the upper class. The working men and women were regarded as being concerned with their class, whereas the upper ten were regarded as being concerned with their individualism.

Aspects of mutualism extended to life in the country as the farmer relied on his entire family to work the farm. From time to time, the farmer worked and cooperated with other farmers, setting up a barter system or renting expensive machinery together at harvest time. However, this system of cooperation inevitably gave way to individual needs and competition (McGerr 24 – 28). McGerr makes the case that farmers, like the upper ten, lived a life that was motivated by individualistic needs. Individualism was to blame. McGerr writes, “In the hands of

the upper ten, individualism became an excuse for complete autonomy, a legitimization of indulgence and inequality, and a rationalization of the troubling national status quo” (56).

Jane Addams and other socially minded members of the middle class renounced individualism. Once they had rejected individualism, they recognized that a new social doctrine was necessary in order to guide their actions while reshaping individuals and American society. They wanted an ideology that was somewhere between individualism and socialism. The solution for Jane Addams and many of her followers, dubbed the Progressives, was association. Addams said, “[W]e are passing from an age of individualism to one of association [. . .] [W]e must demand that the individual shall be willing to lose the sense of personal achievement, and shall be content to realize his activity only in connection with the activity of the many” (qtd. in McGerr 66). Association for the reformers meant being willing to work with people outside of one’s social class for the benefit of the common good. Association meant that one had to have contact with other classes in order to be able to survive (McGerr 66-67).

A large part of the Progressive movement was a struggle against big business. Big business industrialism was synonymous with the upper ten’s perspective of individualism, and progressives wanted to change this. In addition to the struggle with big business, progressives struggled to change individuals. McGerr writes, “More than anything, progressivism [. . .] was the attempt to reconstruct the individual human being” (80). The problem inherent in the Progressive philosophy was that it was filled with contradictions. It involved “curbing the autonomy of the wealthy and improving the status of women. In response to the rich, the progressives condemned individualism. But individualism was central to middle-class women’s rebellion against domesticity” (McGerr 71). Individualism would also prove to be a concern with regards to educational reforms. Jane Addams, John Dewey and Woodrow Wilson may have

encouraged students to recognize their individuality, but an emphasis was placed on *guiding* students to adopt the Progressive identity, all the while learning how to become proper, respectful, educated American citizens.

Another arena where individualism was still prominent was in rural America. Because farmers lived relatively isolated lives, they tended to keep to themselves. It was believed that the individualism of the farmer, who viewed himself in competition with neighboring farmers, would affect his family; children would grow up cherishing their father's individualism. The result would be lack of cooperation and association with other members of the community. For example, American farmers wanted smooth paved roads, but they didn't want to pay taxes, which would in turn pay for the roads. Farmers insisted that the plight of the farmer was due to a lack of self-reliance; their solution was to insist on individualism, which meant hard work and the opportunity to make more money that they would spend how they liked. They didn't want the government stepping in and telling them how to spend their own hard-earned money. Progressives saw this as a threat (McGerr 104-106).

The history of the terms "individual," "individuality," and "individualism" benefit the reader greatly when coming to terms with Dos Passos's description of America – especially his vision for the ideal America and democracy – and, more importantly, the Dos Passosian individual. There are few specific connections in his work that indicate that Dos Passos read the philosophers, political scientists, or sociologists listed here, though evidence previously cited establishes that he was more than familiar with Walt Whitman. The claim can be made that the author's tendency to merge multiple words into a single unit resembles the German custom of blending multiple words into a single unit when generating new vocabulary; he read the work of

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, an early player in the *Sturm und Drang* literary movement. Also, Dos Passos does cite a line from Schiller's "Don Carlos" in a letter to his friend Rumsey Marvin, suggesting a familiarity with the German Romantics.

But if few instances of direct influence can be identified, exposure to the history of individualism aids in recognizing similarities between Dos Passos's work and that of his predecessors. To begin with, the early German Romantic poet is similar to the original Dos Passosian figure in books like *One Man's Initiation: 1917* and *Three Soldiers*. Just as the early German Romantic poet seeks enlightenment in nature, so too do Martin Howe and John Andrews. They distance themselves from familiar environments, seeking enlightenment about their collectives and about themselves, although it may appear odd to readers that a character would seek knowledge in Europe during the middle of World War One. Howe's narrative focuses on the path to enlightenment as the volunteer ambulance driver seeks a better understanding of the modern world. Armed with such knowledge, theoretically, Howe would be able to determine how best to share his enlightenment with his collective; not only this, he would better understand his own role in the modern world. John Andrews's tale also is about the path to enlightenment, but he accomplishes the next step of the early German Romantic poet: the creation of *romantische Poesie*. He joins the Army, believing that only by relinquishing his former identity will he be able to understand the common man better. Over the course of his journey, he becomes one of the men, but only he realizes that the necessary component to becoming enlightened is freedom. Once Andrews achieves spiritual (and physical) liberation from the Army, the war, and the modern world, he takes the next step of the early German Romantic poet by writing a symphony. It is through the creation of art, the creation of *romantische Poesie*, that the early German Romantic poet is able to progress to the next step:

sharing his or her art with the intention of educating the collective and helping individual citizens take the first steps along their own path of enlightenment.

A working knowledge of early German Romanticism also helps with identifying similar qualities in the development of this key individual into what I label the modern American Romantic in Dos Passos's quintessential, mature aesthetic, first illustrated in *Manhattan Transfer*. My reading of the novel indicates that the modern American Romantic is independent, thinks for him- or herself, seeks enlightenment, reflects his or her enlightenment through creative expression, and wishes to inspire individual citizens to recognize their individuality. The major distinction between the modern American Romantic and the early German Romantic poet is that the former discovers some degree of enlightenment within the collective. The modern American Romantic does retreat to nature, does seek distance between him- or herself from the collective, but this act is indicative of the figure needing space in order to achieve additional perspective of insight gained while part of the collective. In the novel, Jimmy Herf and Elaine Oglethorpe are the two primary examples of the modern American Romantic. Set in the heart of American capitalism and industrialism, Dos Passos again writes about the path to enlightenment. Early German Romanticism instructs that the successful early German Romantic poet creates his or her *romantische Poesie* and shares it with his or her collective, whereas the unsuccessful early German Romantic poet opts for egoism. Elaine's narrative is that of the modern American Romantic who succumbs to egoism by giving into the seductions of capitalist conformity, whereas Jimmy is the successful modern American Romantic, solely because he is able to maintain control of his individuality. The author's aesthetic in the finished work shares characteristics with *romantische Poesie*: it reflects the time period in which it was produced, it incorporates many forms of art, and it replicates modern attitudes that challenge the status quo of

American society. The new aesthetic allows Dos Passos to achieve the early German Romantic goal of *bildung* with his readers.

Whitman and his Democratic Individual, which parallels Emerson's Poet, is beneficial when recognizing identical traits in Dos Passos's figure who transitions from modern American Romantic into a Democratic Individual by the end of *U.S.A.* In the infamous trilogy, the modern American Romantic is a flawed individual, easily corrupted and intent on egoism. Mac, Richard Savage, and Margo Dowling are depicted as individuals motivated by greed. The result of such bleak narratives is that the modern American Romantic is no longer considered a reliable agent who might inspire change. Aggrieved by various historical events at the time, Dos Passos becomes more of an overt political writer in these books. This personal change impacts his key individual who transitions from modern American Romantic to a socially and politically shrewd Democratic Individual. Mary French is the first representation of this character, though she is not a perfect manifestation. She is a social worker, has socialist political leanings, and maintains her individuality. She is regarded as an economic agent struggling to help the working class, soliciting donations of money, food, or clothing from members of the upper class. It is these qualities that can aid in improving the American economic landscape for all.

With *District of Columbia*, *Chosen Country*, *Midcentury*, and *Century's Ebb*, Whitman's Democratic Individual is an invaluable outline for Dos Passos's character, but the author develops the figure beyond Whitman's prescription into his own modern Democratic Individual. Whitman's Democratic Individual works to represent all citizens, has a voice and delivers a message to and for all citizens, and stands apart from politics. Dos Passos's modern Democratic Individual embodies the first two characteristics but not the last. His modern Democratic Individual, Paul Graves, works in politics. This becomes necessary for the figure given the

historical backdrop of Graves's narrative – the Great Depression with World War Two looming around the corner. The common refrain at that time was: Do your part. We all have to make sacrifices. Dos Passos's modern Democratic Individual does his part. Instead of being an economic agent like Mary French, Paul is a political agent. He is not a traditional politician, nor does he hope to be one. Rather, he does work for the Roosevelt administration during the Great Depression as an administrator. Graves's responsibility is to create a New Deal program that will help the farmers. He is not motivated by personal gain; he simply wants to change things for the better. In his own words, he wants to make it so that the American farmer can achieve "stature." His plan to reach such a goal can be described as from the top down. The political bureaucracy that impedes Graves's potential for success is an influence for Dos Passos's final illustration of his individual: a modern Democratic Individual who acts for the under-represented, has a voice and delivers a message to and for the under-represented, does not pursue egoism, and seeks to achieve change by upholding the original values of American democracy as imputed to the founding fathers. This final image of Dos Passos's modern Democratic Individual is that of an economic and a political agent.

Dos Passos's fiction attributes his grim description of the American cultural, social, economic, and political landscape to individuals bent on egoism who exploit various institutions such as capitalism, industrialism, and politics for personal gain, thereby corrupting the "integrity" of these institutions, originally conceived and established by individual citizens who collectively became the United States of America. This is where the Dos Passosian individual comes into play – in the guise of the early German Romantic poet, modern American Romantic, Democratic Individual, and modern Democratic Individual. Close analysis of Dos Passos's fiction reveals that this Dos Passosian individual is a key player in American society, and he or

she may be the instrument for improving society for the benefit of all individual citizens. Dos Passos's prose chronicles the individual's path to enlightenment as well as his or her struggle to help individual citizens. However, his or her success consistently depends on individual citizens listening to what he or she has to say, which often complicates hugely the task of helping them.

CHAPTER TWO

ONE MAN'S INITIATION: 1917, THREE SOLDIERS, AND THE ROMANTIC INDIVIDUAL

In January of 1917, away in Spain on the pretext of studying architecture, John Dos Passos received tragic news: his father, John Roderigo Dos Passos, Sr., had passed away. Distraught, the young man grieved for his father. He understood his filial responsibilities and his obligation to the family, but Spain had come to mean so much to him. The people, the culture, the traditions – they represented something significant to the young man who was still in the process of searching for his future career path and his identity. During four months of travel, Townsend Ludington writes,

[Dos Passos] had learned a great deal not only about Spain but about himself. His discovery of Spain had come years before that of others of his generation, and – more importantly – his was a unique acquaintanceship: he had lived in the country alone, had shared with Spaniards their daily living, and had not then been immersed in the romantic mystique about Spain that developed among postwar writers. Dos Passos would sense his different understanding of Spain, although discretion would ensure his silence, and his knowledge of the country would account in small part for his break with Ernest Hemingway in 1937 after they had both traveled to Spain to observe the Civil War and had left with very different impressions of the situation. (*TCO* 115)

Nevertheless, the dutiful son did return home that February, though it took some time to book passage as the war and the presence of German submarines made travel dangerous.

Upon his return to America, Dos Passos was desperate to return overseas. He wanted to see the war firsthand. The Norton Harjes all-volunteer ambulance unit would present him with the opportunity to do so. Prior to shipping out, Dos Passos took the opportunity to compose an

essay based on his time in Spain. “Young Spain” describes what he noticed in the country, the culture, the people whom he had come to admire, and what the country represented to him – ideals that he would cherish and hope to emulate in his own life and fiction, before, during, and even long after both world wars. Eventually, the essay would be included in his non-fiction book *Rosinante to the Road* under the title “The Baker of Almorox.” Donald Pizer writes, “Dos Passos based his portrayal of Spain in this essay on the historical irony that the vitality of contemporary Spanish life stemmed [. . .] from the continuing powerful presence within Spanish culture of older beliefs and ways of life” (“John Dos Passos’ ‘Rosinante . . .’” 139). Dos Passos admired the rural towns and villages for their embracing of a simple life, an agrarian life, practically devoid of mechanical products and tools of modern Western culture and society. Despite any generational clashes in ideals regarding the future of Spain, all Spaniards were aware of the country’s past and of its culture. The country did not simply discard traditions and older beliefs because a more modern way of life might be more conducive to the contemporary world.

At one point in the text, Dos Passos is listening to a baker speak of his village, Almorox, as they tour the orchards and the wheat fields, talking about the upcoming pilgrimage and fiesta. While Dos Passos listens, he begins to picture the rich history of the baker’s world. Intertwined with this history is the image of the individual. At the end of the text, Dos Passos writes that in spite of the many historical, cultural, social, political, and linguistic changes over the years, what was constant was

the love for the place, the strong anarchistic reliance on the individual man, the walking, consciously or not, of the way beaten by generations of men who had tilled and loved and lain in the cherishing sun with no feeling of a reality outside themselves, outside of the bare encompassing hills of their commune, except of the God which was the synthesis of their souls and of their lives. (*Travel Books* 24)

In his own essay, Pizer identifies this passage as part of the central argument of Dos Passos's work:

[Dos Passos] begins with the premise that man best expresses his capacity to exist fully and productively, in freedom and happiness, within the community provided by the institutions of a specific place. And the place best able to provide the spirit-sustaining activities of family, work, and belief is one, like Almorox, above all simple in its needs and way of life. The basic emotional and ideological cast of this celebration of Almorox is, I would suggest, Arcadian [. . .] [T]here exists a refuge of the simple and natural, an Arcadia, in which men can both meet their basic needs and live in harmony with natural processes and therefore can live contentedly, fulfilled in body and soul. ("John Dos Passos's 'Rosinante . . .'" 140)

What Dos Passos and Pizer are describing is a community that supports individualism. The remark, "the strong anarchistic reliance on the individual man," reflects a paradox inherent in such a system where the welfare of the community is reliant upon the help of the individual, who is free to exercise his or her individualism by not helping. Though Dos Passos's concepts of the individual and individualism evolved over the years, it is important to recognize that they do make an appearance in the author's early work. Pizer identifies mind and body, present and past, myth and the contemporary world as themes that Dos Passos will write about as he seeks to revive aspects of the past. Pizer argues that what Dos Passos wants is a simple way of life, not unlike the one that he finds in Almorox, but the simplicity of life is ultimately in service of the community that is sustained by the individual who is in turn sustained by the community.

Dos Passos may crave a return to a simple, agrarian – borderline pastoral – way of living, but the world he inhabits and writes about is a modern, industrial, technological complex. Such a world does not support the individual as Dos Passos shows in his fiction. Instead, it seeks to enslave the individual to a life of conformity. This is the world that is described in the author's first two novels: *One Man's Initiation: 1917* (published in 1920) and *Three Soldiers* (1921).

These books introduce what will become the author's two favorite subjects for the entirety of his

career: the modern world (a.k.a. America in subsequent texts) and the individual. The essence of these first two crucial works is the individual's struggle to survive and find a role for him- or herself in a world that does not value individuality.

There is a critical consensus that Dos Passos would not mature as a writer until the publication of *Manhattan Transfer* or even *U.S.A* when critics like Pizer (see "John Dos Passos in the 1920s: The Development of a Modernist Style") and Hughson suggest the author abandons romantic values like the individual, and his perspective switches to focus on the collective. Hughson makes the argument that Dos Passos's early attempts at writing about World War One failed because the books were restricted to the experiences of the individual. Hughson believes that Dos Passos is attempting to write history but fails to do so because one character's experiences cannot be projected onto the whole. In order to accomplish such a feat, Dos Passos would need to embrace an entirely new rhetorical strategy, as he would, so Hughson believes, in ensuing books. She writes, "Dos Passos's turn to history as model was both to admit to the failure of individual consciousness and yet to save meaning and value by locating them outside that failed consciousness in a community of readers that both shared and transcended individual failures" ("Don Passos's World War" 60).

I reject such thinking. I do not doubt that Dos Passos's early works and philosophical perspectives (as displayed in his fiction and non-fiction) are the product of a still-maturing mind. However, my reading of Dos Passos is that he does not relinquish his so-called youthful principles. Dos Passos uses his later fiction, rather, to develop further his ideas about the individual and the role of the individual in society. I contest arguments made by critics like Hughson that Dos Passos's individualism is completely misguided. Also, I take issue with the use of the term "romantic," which his critics use in a derogatory fashion as they regard it as

being synonymous with naïvete. The history of the German Romantic movement *and* the German Romantic individual, or artist, proves otherwise. In fact, I argue that Martin Howe and John Andrews represent the individual along the lines of German Romanticism. It is through the character of John Andrews, and to a lesser extent Martin Howe, that Dos Passos will come to terms with what individuality and individualism mean – and would continue to mean – to him, especially since the struggles to seek enlightenment in a modern world full of temptations might lead to egoism and isolation.

In the novel *One Man's Initiation: 1917*, Martin Howe's experiences and development during the war resemble those of the German Romantic poet. As noted by Ludington, Carr, Hughson, Weeks (to name but a few critics), and even Dos Passos himself, the author was significantly influenced by Walt Whitman. A great deal of Whitman's philosophy and aestheticism was inspired by Ralph Waldo Emerson. An examination of Emerson, in turn, reveals that the essayist and poet's thinking was in part affected by his reading of German Romanticism – notably, philosophers such as Friedrich Schlegel, Friedrich Schelling, and Novalis. Thus, I turn my attention to the early German Romantics in order to acquire a better comprehension of the origins of Dos Passos's thinking with regards to the individual.

Early German Romanticism, as it has been labeled, began by asking, What is Romantic poetry, or *romantische Poesie*? This question did not signify merely the beginning of a literary movement but rather the development of an aesthetic ideal whose goal was to tear down the barriers between art and life with the intent of romanticizing the world (Beiser 8-9). As articulated by Schlegel, Romantic poetry needed to embrace the heterogeneous characteristics of modern literature; adopt the qualities of fantasy, mimesis, and sentimentality; be applicable to all

art forms; and offer a synthesis of science and art. This last principle was crucial for early German Romantics because once the aestheticism of *romantische Poesie* is extended to science, then the theory can be linked to nature (Beiser 13-17). The Romantic poet separated him or herself from society and communed with nature, hoping to achieve an enlightened perspective that the Romantic poet could then reflect in his or her *romantische Poesie*. In order to achieve the goal of romanticizing the world, the Romantic poet shared his or her *romantische Poesie* with society (Beiser 22). In other words, the Romantic poet shares his or her art with society with the express purpose of educating and enlightening the rest of the world, which has yet to gain an enlightened state of mind.

Once this enlightened state of mind has been achieved by the Romantic, however, he or she runs the risk of succumbing to egoism. The artist might succumb to such temptation because he or she may not be appreciated by the rest of society because no one else operates on the same enlightened level. The Romantic figure then retreats into isolation.

When we apply this perspective to Martin Howe's narrative in *One Man's Initiation: 1917*, his experiences are akin to the early German Romantic poet seeking enlightenment. The book focuses on the horrific wartime experiences of Martin Howe, a young man struggling through an existential crisis, who goes overseas to drive ambulances in the war. His motivation to see the war is due partly to a sense of adventure and partly to a desire to make sense of who he is supposed to be. The novel has been regarded as part *bildungsroman*. Ian Colley writes, "*One Man's Initiation* has something of the shape of a *bildungsroman*, and a crucial part of its meaning is to articulate the changes wrought in Martin Howe's outlook" (30). At the beginning of the book, Howe comes across as a young naïf who believes the American patriotic propaganda about the necessity to fight the Germans and to rid the world of tyranny. As

the story develops, Howe faces the harsh realities of war and comes to recognize that he is not watching Allied soldiers fighting and killing German soldiers and vice versa. He is watching men fighting and killing other men. He believes that opposing sides should recognize a kinship between them: their humanity. Over time, Howe abandons the patriotic line as he comes to loathe and curse the war. Howe cries out, “God, it’s so stupid! Why can’t we go over and talk to them? Nobody’s fighting about anything God, it’s so hideously stupid!” (*Novels* 20).

Like the German Romantic, Howe separates himself from his familiar environment when he leaves the United States and travels abroad. Once overseas, however, he quickly assimilates with the men around him, finding camaraderie with his ambulance-driving partner, Tom Randolph, and three French infantrymen. This sense of brotherhood with the other characters is important to the German Romantic poet; part of the artist’s education involves integrating with the populace and hearing the voice of the people. He revels in their friendship and takes delight in the fact that they can all find common ground, especially when it comes to beliefs regarding the war. The only figures who stand apart from everyone else, from Howe’s point of view, are the officers who at times in the narrative are portrayed as comical figures playing at war while the grunts actually go about fighting the war. There is a particularly absurd moment in the book when Howe notices a captain and a chaplain sitting down, eating tins of dessert, drinking glasses of anisette, discussing the war as though it were a theoretical exercise. Dos Passos writes, “In their manner there is something that makes Martin see vividly two gentlemen in frock-coats dining at a table under the awning of a café on the boulevards. It has a leisurely ceremoniousness, an ease that could exist nowhere else” (*Novels* 61).

Additionally, like the German Romantic, Howe’s point of view matures through discussions with various common people (in this case, the soldiers), personal experiences (in his

case, at the front line), and communion with nature. The reader may find it odd that Dos Passos's protagonist can identify beauty when surrounded with so much horror and tragedy, but Howe recognizes that France had a history before the war, that the past doesn't cease to exist simply because of the fighting, and that the history of France includes living in harmony with nature. Part of this past is represented by a dilapidated abbey converted into an aid station and shelter for the ambulance drivers. Dos Passos writes,

Martin would sit and dream of the quiet lives the monks must have passed in their beautiful abbey so far away in the Forest of the Argonne, digging and planting in the rich lands of the valley, making flowers bloom in the garden, of which traces remained in the huge beds of sunflowers and orange marigolds that bloomed along the walls of the dormitory. In a room in the top of the house he had found a few torn remnants of books; there must have been a library in the old days, rows and rows of musty-smelling volumes in rich brown calf worn by use to a velvet softness, and in cream-coloured parchment where the fingermarks of generations showed brown; huge psalters with notes and chants illuminated in green and ultramarine and gold; manuscripts out of the Middle Ages with strange script and pictures in pure vivid colours; lives of saints, thoughts polished by years of quiet meditation of old divines; old romances of chivalry; tales of blood and death and love where the crude agony of life was seen through a dawn-like mist of gentle beauty. (*Novels* 26-27)

For Howe, the abbey is a sanctuary. It is also a relic of the past, the product of a foreign world long since discarded but not forgotten. The fact that the old building is still standing amidst all of the gunfire and mortar shells is nothing short of a miracle. It is an architectural majesty in the middle of nature that has, over time, become part of nature. Howe's time there gives him the chance to think over all that he has seen and experienced as he attempts to make sense of what is happening to the world. Eventually, his thoughts will lead him to consider what he, as an individual, can do to make things better.

Howe's one failure is not sharing his enlightenment through some form of creative act, for part of the responsibility of the German Romantic poet is to communicate his or her enlightened perspective through a work of art. Colley writes, "Martin Howe, a frank self-image

of the author, learns that the world outside America and its universities is a violent and terrifying place. He never learns how it may be restored to harmony, but he does have glimpses of harmony that the imagination can bestow on certain timeless scenes” (33). At one point in the narrative, Howe sits with his three French infantrymen friends to share a bottle of wine and discuss how to go about fixing society in order to re-establish harmony. One of the soldiers suggests anarchy as a solution; the second recommends turning to religion; and the third advocates socialism. The little that has been written about the novel (see Granville Hicks and Iain Colley) turns to this particular moment in the book, dwelling over the passage dealing with socialism as though its contents reveal a portent of the author’s future ideological leanings.

The passage that I prefer to emphasize in this scene is a piece of advice offered to Howe by his friend Tom Randolph, seated in the background, practically ignored by Howe and the others. Still, it is a revealing moment. Howe comes to the realization that all members of society are slaves being used by the elite, all for the purpose of fighting their war. Randolph comments, “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” (emphasis added, *Novels 1920-1925*, 76). This advice flies in the face of the obligation of the German Romantic figure to share his or her enlightened perspective with the rest of society with the purpose of making the world beautiful. If Howe is a true romantic on the path towards enlightenment, he will never abandon the rest of the world. The condition Randolph proposes, to “be individually as decent as you can,” I understand to mean that each individual can make decisions about his or her actions and can be decent (honest, kind, caring, etc.) in taking such actions. But the complexity of the term “individual” complicates the phrase’s meaning because one individual’s sense of “decent” may not coincide with another individual’s (or a collective’s)

conception of “decent.” Thus, an alternative perspective of Randolph’s advice is that an individual can be an individual if he or she chooses to be. Or, an individual can be an individual only to the extent he or she is permitted to be. To what extent will the ambulance service, or by extension Dos Passos’s perspective of modern society, permit him to be? Can Howe be an individual at all?

Dos Passos does not pose a solution to this question by the end of the work. What the reader is left with is a depiction of carnage. Howe is kneeling by a stretcher, atop which lies his French friend, the man who advocated turning to religion. The socialist and the anarchist were both killed in combat. As Howe asks his friend how his other comrades are, the Frenchman replies, “Why ask? . . . Everybody’s dead. You’re dead, aren’t you?” (*Novels* 85). Howe’s response is intriguing: “No, I’m alive, and you. A little courage . . . We must be cheerful” (*Novels* 85). These words can be regarded as the calm, inspiring words a paramedic might speak to a wounded person in the grips of death, or the reader might recognize them as a sort of call to arms, especially given Dos Passos’s revolutionary zeal. As Hicks states, for Dos Passos “the destruction of the spirit was worse than the destruction of the flesh” (87). While the novel’s closing scene is unsettling, with the death of the socialist and the anarchist, Dos Passos leaves his readers with two choices regarding their own ideological future: religion (the French friend on the stretcher) or individuality. These are not entirely pessimistic choices for Howe, the Frenchman on the stretcher, or the audience, especially given the uplifting nature of Howe’s words. Furthermore, the design of this ending is intriguing because religion and individuality are not entirely separate or conflicting ideologies. Whitman informs in his preface to *Leaves of Grass*, “As a Strong Bird on Pinions Free, 1872,” that to write about poetry means to write about religion. Whitman states, “As there can be, in my opinion, no sane and complete Personality, nor

any grand and eclectic Nationality, without the stock element of Religion imbuing all the other elements . . . so there can be no Poetry worthy of the name without the element behind all” (*The Complete Poems* 776). What Dos Passos appears to be most interested in with this first book is exploring the path of Howe’s enlightenment and the eternal struggle that an individual would experience in the modern world. What remains to be seen is whether and how Dos Passos’s protagonist will share this enlightenment. Perhaps Dos Passos’s choice of survivors and Howe’s closing words offer some insight into this question. Should readers want to read the solution to the proposed question, then they need to turn to *Three Soldiers*.

Throughout the course of *Three Soldiers*, John Andrews’s journey, similar to Martin Howe’s, resembles the early German Romantic poet’s pursuit of enlightenment; however, the significant difference between the two books is that in *Three Soldiers* Dos Passos is much more successful at articulating his philosophical claims regarding the role of the individual in the modern world, and thus he comes close to finding his solution to the crisis proposed in *One Man’s Initiation*. In my view, Dos Passos recognizes that the individual and affirmation of the individual are of dire importance for the salvation of the modern world. Critics like Pizer, Hughson, Colley, and Cooperman agree that in Dos Passos’s vision of the chaotic modern world, the individual is being sacrificed and he or she appears to have no value to society. Pizer writes, “The theme of *Three Soldiers* strongly echoes the modernist concern, brought into sharp relief by the carnage of the war, over the loss of individual identity in modern society” (“John Dos Passos in the 1920s” 53). Hughson writes, “In calling his second novel *Three Soldiers*, Dos Passos shifts his interest from exploring the effect of the war on a single sensitive observer to a sense of the war as a subject beyond the comprehension of any single awareness. [. . .] [H]e also wants to show them losing their individuality in the shared experience larger than any of them” (“Don

Passos's World War" 50). Colley writes, "But the true enemy is the whole of modern life which denies to Andrews the opportunities for romantic fulfillment on a grand scale, and to which the isolated individual can only offer the response of negation" (39-40). Dos Passos is describing a macabre modern world that seeks to strip away all sense of individuality. But what should not be overlooked in these grim descriptions is an emphasis on the importance of one's individuality; to begin with, maintaining one's sense of individualism is a struggle, but the individual can hold an important role in the modern world, as the reader will see by the novel's close.

When John Andrews, a pianist with a privileged background, strips himself of all class distinction and privilege by joining the Army because he believes such a decision is the only way to truly understand what life is all about, this action resembles an important step taken by the German Romantic poet: the search for enlightenment. He chooses to join the Army partly out of a desire to escape succumbing to a life of egoism and partly out of a desire to learn more about the average American person – the working Joe, if you will. Dos Passos writes,

He [John Andrews] was so bored with himself. At any cost he must forget himself. Ever since his first year at college he seemed to have done nothing but think about himself, talk about 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. Scorn – that was the quality he needed. It was such a raw, fantastic world that he had suddenly fallen into. (*Novels* 111)

At the beginning of the novel, Dos Passos's protagonist is undergoing an existential crisis of sorts that is *in medias res*. He appears to be sacrificing his individualism when he decides to "forget himself." The deliberate choice to forget who he was, though, is an expression of his individuality. Further, Andrews appears to believe that his identity, bred out of upper-class privilege, prevents him from appreciating life and other people. By relinquishing his life of class privilege and going to live among the common people (in the armed services), he will learn from

them. Andrews is not completely abdicating his life as an artist/pianist, though; in fact, he knows that someday he will want to play the piano again, perhaps even compose (*Novels* 111). By separating himself from a familiar environment, he hopes to discover some element of his artistic identity and his missing humanity among the other soldiers and, subsequently, the people in France. Yet it is crucial to him that “[h]e must not let himself sink too deeply into the helpless mentality of the soldier. He must keep his will power” (*Novels* 111). It is important to Andrews that he maintain some control of his identity if he is to acquire enlightenment.

When his regiment is deployed to France, Andrews’s actions continue to resemble the path of the early German Romantic poet: he communes with nature. Dos Passos writes,

Above his [Andrews’s] head great piled, rose-tinted clouds were moving slowly across the immeasurable free sky. His glance slid down the sky to some tall trees that flamed bright yellow with autumn outside the camp limits. (*Novels* 101)

[. . .]

As they [Andrews and Chrisfield] walked Andrews leaned over from time to time and picked a couple of the white clover flowers.

[. . .]

“Let’s walk slow,” he [Andrews] said, “we don’t want to get out of here too soon.” He grabbed carelessly at little clusters of hawthorn flowers as he passed them, and seemed reluctant to untangle the thorny branches that caught in his coat and on his loosely wound puttees. (*Novels* 204-205)

There is a great clash of imagery when the previously cited lines are considered in the wider context of the novel. Dos Passos is describing a man who is contemplating nature, physically and figuratively. However, this contemplation contrasts with the harsh reality of the modernized, mechanized war raging all around him. The war appears to be part of the background.

Cooperman comments that this is a novel about civilization that happens to be set during the Great War, though it is not necessarily a war novel.

Part of the dilemma of the German Romantic poet is that he or she stands apart from society, although acting for the benefit of society. Amidst so much horror, Andrews, like the

German Romantic poet, stands out amongst his comrades as he notices the beauty of the natural world that is slowly being destroyed by the industrialized world of the war. Andrews's peers do not understand his odd behavior, including his closest friend in the company, Chrisfield, who only thinks he understands. But if Andrews follows the path of the German Romantic poet, he can take solace in the fact that those members of society who can see the truth as reflected in his art will come to understand who he is and his function as part of modern society. Piep's assessment of Andrews as "the representative of a world-weary *Bildungsbürgertum* [. . .] [who alone] possesses the intellectual facilities to grasp the inherent inhumanities of the modern condition" (68) supports my argument.

After a period of time, Andrews as the German Romantic poet discovers enlightenment in nature. But first he must lose any lingering sense of his former identity from before joining the Army; only then does he comprehend that the element that is crucial for the success of the German Romantic poet in the modern industrial world is freedom. Part of the reason the German Romantic poet separates him- or herself from society initially is because this freedom from society, or in Dos Passos's novel freedom from the modern industrial world, is crucial in order for the German Romantic poet to comprehend the world.

In Andrews's case, his enlightenment is presented to him in the guise of a frog. At the beginning of part four, entitled "Rust," Andrews is advancing as part of the Company across the countryside. Dos Passos writes,

Something was telling him [Andrews] that he must run forward and fall into line again, that he must shamle on through the mud, but he remained staring at the puddle watching the frogs. Then he noticed his reflection in the puddle. He looked at it curiously. He could barely see the outlines of a grimacing mask, and the silhouette of the gun barrel slanting behind it. *So this was what they had made of him.* He fixed his eyes again on the frogs that swam with elastic, leisurely leg strokes in the putty-colored water. (emphasis added, *Novels* 253)

The reflection of the grimy soldier solidifies a suspicion Andrews mentions earlier in the novel when Chrisfield expresses a desire to be more like him. Andrews replies, “No, I’m your sort, Chris . . . only they’ve tamed me. O God, how tame I am” (231). In this moment, Andrews throws into question all that he has learned, either through study or experience, because he has not acted on this knowledge; he has not expressed himself through *romantische Poesie*. The freedom necessary to do so, Andrews believes, is not permitted in the Army; the freedom to do so, Dos Passos is arguing, is not permitted in the modern industrial world. Andrews states further, “[W]hat’s the use of getting along if you haven’t any world to get along in? 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” (*Novels* 231). Andrews believes that he has become a slave to the industrial military machine. Just like his comrades who also have been stripped of their former identities, Andrews believes that he has become one of the mindless automatons that he recognizes standing in ranks. He has permitted himself to “sink too deeply into the helpless mentality of the soldier” (*Novels* 111). To reinforce this image of the soldier as robot, Dos Passos describes soldiers at various points in the novel as “toy soldiers” (*Novels* 175), a “stiff line of men in olive-drab” (*Novels* 216), “automatons in uniform” (*Novels* 383), and a column of khaki. One prominent image comes at the end of part four where Dos Passos writes, “The Company tramped off along the muddy road. Their steps were all the same length. Their arms swing in the same rhythm. Their faces were cowed into the same expression, their thoughts were the same” (*Novels* 328).

Dos Passos’s image of the Army is that of a well-oiled machine made up of well-oiled machines – machines making machines. Everyone *must* march to the same beat if the Army is to be successful. Andrews joined up believing that the Army would be the ideal place to find the

camaraderie he craved because everyone would be the same, everyone starts out at the same level, and everyone is on equal footing. The ultimate sacrifice is that Andrews has to be willing to relinquish his individuality for the greater good of the Army. His comrades make the sacrifice. The military cannot function if soldiers question orders. It is not specific orders Andrews ends up questioning; it is whether or not following any orders at all is worth the sacrifice of his individual freedom. So he turns and sees his reflection in the pond in this Narcissus moment, only Andrews realizes that he doesn't like what he sees; he doesn't approve of what "they" (the Army, the industrial complex) have turned him into: a killing machine. As the Company moves on, Dos Passos writes,

He [Andrews] felt triumphantly separated from them, as if he were in a window somewhere watching soldiers pass, or in a box of a theater watching some dreary monotonous play. He drew farther and farther away from them until they had become very small, like toy soldiers forgotten among the dust in a garret. The light was so dim he couldn't see, he could only hear their feet tramping interminably through the mud.
(*Novels* 253-254)

German Romanticism tells us that once the artist acquires an enlightened perspective, there is the risk of the poet being seduced into egoism. John Andrews runs this risk when he attends university in Paris through a program offered by the Army as the war winds down and armistice talks begin. He rants and raves, at times almost like a maniac, insisting that even the act of sitting down and playing the piano at a salon is a form of slavery because the audience expects it of him. For a moment, he is convinced that were he to compose an original symphony, it would be fruitless because no one except him could fully appreciate its significance. As a result, he stops playing the piano; he no longer attends classes; he is incarcerated by the Army, escapes from a chain gang, sheds his Army uniform and goes AWOL. Then Andrews retreats to the country.

It is only in nature that Andrews's spirit is once again revitalized and he may commence the next stage of the German Romantic poet: to express his enlightenment through creative expression, through *romantische Poesie*. In order to accomplish this feat, he craves freedom. Andrews remarks, "If I could once manage to express all that misery in music, I could shove it far down into my memory. I should be free to live my own existence, in the midst of this carnival of summer" (*Novels* 455). The freedom and independence that he desires to create art, however, must serve a purpose for the German Romantic poet. Otherwise, Andrews is nothing more than "[a] toad hopping across the road in front of a steam roller" (*Novels* 459). What good is freedom if others remain doomed to a state of perpetual indentured servitude? It's at this moment that Andrews sees a boy standing in a river and thinks about the child trying to catch minnows. Dos Passos writes,

And that boy, too, would be a soldier; the lithe body would be thrown into a mould to be made the same as other bodies, the quick movements would be standardized into the manual at arms, the inquisitive, petulant mind would be battered into servility. The stockade was built; not one of the sheep would escape. And those that were not sheep? They were deserters; every rifle muzzle held death for them; they 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. (*Novels* 459)

In order to help that boy and countless others who might be doomed to a fate similar to his own, Andrews returns to his symphony entitled "The Body and Soul of John Brown." For Andrews, the composition serves two purposes: on the one hand, Andrews is, in a way, championing the spirit of the nineteenth-century abolitionist who believed that armed resistance was necessary in order to abolish the institution of slavery. Though Brown's efforts at Harper's Ferry resulted in his capture and death sentence, of note for Andrews is that the individual John Brown was willing to die for what he believed was right. On the other hand, Andrews hopes his composition will raise the unenlightened to the level of the poet. The final sentence of the above passage also

eerily recalls the Spanish community of individualism Dos Passos had written about in “The Baker of Almorox.” Society will have a “strong anarchic reliance” on the bravery of the individual to stand against the tyranny of the industrial machine in order to save society from itself.

While I argue that Andrews, like Howe before him, is to be regarded as a German Romantic poet, there is some question as to whether or not Andrews fulfills the goal of the German Romantic poet. In the final scene of the novel, Andrews is led away by two MPs after having been turned in by his landlady. Left behind are the pages of his symphony. This image brings to mind the “white page spread before [Martin Howe] clean and unwritten on” in the opening of *One Man’s Initiation: 1917 (Novels 4)*. Martin Howe’s story starts with a blank page; John Andrews’s story ends with pages that have writing on them. Dos Passos’s individual finally is making progress. The author writes, “On John Andrews’s writing table the brisk wind rustled among the broad sheets of paper. First one sheet, then another, blew off the table, until the floor was littered with them” (*Novels 476*). These no-longer-blank pages of Dos Passos’s Romantic poet that are being blown around represent the *romantische Poesie* that John Andrews struggled to compose, but then left behind as he is being taken away. Cooperman sees this last image, that of Andrews walking away from his table, or not taking the opportunity to escape when it is clear that he had plenty of time and opportunity to do so, as an act of destruction. Cooperman states that art, for Andrews, isn’t enough because it represents a self-interest instead of a desire to help humanity.

My perspective differs. Where Cooperman sees destruction, I recognize creation and defiance. What Dos Passos delights in is the mere notion that Andrews finished the work; it is the *romantische Poesie* that is most important. Once completed, the artwork ceases to belong to

him. It now belongs to the world. It is now up to society to determine what they make of Andrews's symphony; likewise it is up to the reader to determine the value of Dos Passos's manuscript.

In spite of this interpretation, I am forced to acknowledge that there is an apparent disconnect between Andrews's symphony and society. The audience is left with the image of the pages scattered by the wind, an act that may be explicated as the harsh modern world (represented by the M.P.s) rejecting the early German Romantic poet's art. The pages remain in nature. There is no suggestion that someone gathered the pages together, put them in order, and performed the music. Therefore, we are unaware of whether or not the *romantische Poesie* had the intended effect over the populace. The Romantic in me wants to argue, yes. This is mere supposition on my part, however, and my romantic inclinations may be regarded as being at odds with Dos Passos's depiction of the modern industrial world in *Three Soldiers*. Based on Andrews's experiences, there is no evidence to suggest that modern society would take the time to listen to his symphony and, consequently, be altered by the work. It has been argued that Dos Passos's work suggests that society does not value the individual. In spite of this, Dos Passos's first two novels establish the importance of the individual to the salvation of society. This is the essence of Dos Passos's first two novels – the struggle and the importance of the individual.

Dos Passos believed in the individual, but his first two novels expose the complexity of such a simplistic statement. In *One Man's Initiation: 1917* and *Three Soldiers*, Dos Passos articulates a vision of the individual that resembles the tradition of German Romanticism. For Dos Passos, this individual faces two potential conflicts: the perilous nature of the individual's quest for enlightenment in the modern world and the moral question of whether or not he or she can share this newly acquired knowledge. While Dos Passos writes about the figure of the

Romantic individual who struggles not to be consumed by the industrial complex, at the same time he is writing about the Romantic individual's social responsibility to enlighten the collective that makes up the industrial complex with his or her artistic expression.

During Dos Passos's 1916-1917 trip to Spain, the artists, poets, and the baker of Almorox whom he interviews speak about the prospects of a centralized government and a unified Spain, but they take immense pride in their individuality. Dos Passos writes, "Spanish pride. This is a very real thing, and is merely the external shell of the fundamental trust in the individual and in nothing outside of him. . . . This is the core of the individualism that lurks in all Spanish ideas, the conviction that only the individual soul is real" (*Travel Books* 28). The paradox of "the strong anarchistic reliance on the individual man" is apparent in this passage as well. Spain sustains the individual, and it is only because of this sustenance that the individual, in return, celebrates Spain and his or her Spanish heritage.

Dos Passos's fiction is looking for precisely this celebration of both the individual and social support for the individual. But one is left to ponder whether it is possible to find such a social structure in the modern world, especially after the tragic events of the war.

For some readers, it might seem out of character for the author, who has been regarded by many as a pacifist, to want to venture into a war zone, even as a volunteer ambulance driver. Dos Passos's attitude towards the war was complicated. He was eager to see a cessation of the war, particularly because of its horrific effects on soldiers and citizens. When he was in Bordeaux in 1916, he came across a wounded soldier with a hole in his face where a nose should have been. This image would haunt Dos Passos and find its way into *One Man's Initiation: 1917*:

[Martin Howe] found himself staring in a face, a face that still had some of the chubbiness of boyhood. Between the pale-brown frightened eyes, where the nose should have been, was a triangular black patch that ended in some mechanical contrivance with

shiny little black metal rods that took the place of a jaw. He could not take his eyes from the soldier's eyes, that were like those of a hurt animal, full of meek dismay. (*Novels* 10)

Describing Dos Passos's perspective on the war, Ludington writes, "The thought of the slaughter revolted him, yet – and this perplexed him – he was desperate to see the action" (*TCO* 120). The idea of witnessing the horrific events of a war – the war to end all wars, as it was being dubbed – appealed to the writer in him: "[H]e realized that the war was the big event of that time, and if he wanted to be a writer, he should know what it was about" (*TCO* 121). Dos Passos also was hopeful, as he expresses in a letter to his friend Rumsey Marvin, that once America became involved in the fighting overseas, the fighting would stop and order would be restored.

In 1945, in "A Preface Twenty-Five Years Later" to *One Man's Initiation: 1917*, Dos Passos re-examined the earlier attitudes of a young man regarding the war. He was critical both of the idealistic horror and the idealistic hope that all might be set right by a revolution or by U.S. intervention:

To us, the European war of 1914-1918 seemed a horrible monstrosity, something outside of the normal order of things like an epidemic of yellow fever in some place where yellow fever had never been heard of before.

Looking back it is frightening to remember that naïve ignorance of men and their behavior through history which enabled us to believe that a revolution which would throw the rascals out of the saddle would automatically, by some divine order of historical necessity, put in their places a band of benign philosophers. (*Novels* 862-863)

Between 1914 and the composition of this preface thirty years later, Dos Passos had come to understand that war or revolution is never enough to exterminate a metaphorical cancer that is threatening a delicate geopolitical system. Politicians and military men and women may be concerned with fighting and winning the war, but someone needs to take the time to sit down and plan out what happens afterwards; otherwise there is a risk of yet another war. At the time of World War One, young men had romantic notions about going off to war, fighting the Germans,

earning a medal or two, and saving Western civilization and democracy from the threat of the Kaiser. But look what happened afterwards. A vindictive Versailles peace treaty led to the rise of Adolph Hitler, who felt that the honor of his homeland had been besmirched by the Allies and who proceeded to start World War Two. Many of Dos Passos's generation came home from the war to realize that nothing had changed. They felt that President Wilson, in permitting unjust treaty terms, had gone back on many of his promises. As a result, they felt alienated. Dos Passos believed in a cause when he went off to serve in the ambulance corps, but working for a cause is only worth something if lasting change comes about as a result of struggle. Dos Passos wanted to see a revolution; what he witnessed was the world simply reverting to its old ways. The hopes of young men at that time weren't enough to save the world.

The world might be changed for the better, though, with the help of a certain type of individual. Dos Passos continued to explore such a possibility in his subsequent fiction.

CHAPTER THREE

MANHATTAN TRANSFER, THE INDIVIDUAL, AND BILDUNG

In the fall of 1923, Dos Passos began work on his fourth novel, *Manhattan Transfer*, a book he once described as being about the essence of New York. With regard to the writing of the novel, Ludington remarks, “The more [Dos Passos] wrote, the more the work became a ‘collective’ about the city, where individuals were less the central concern than the city itself, which sometimes overwhelmed them and sometimes killed them [. . .] sometimes turned them into stiff porcelain figures [. . .] or sometimes drove them out” (*TCO* 229). Ludington’s description of *Manhattan Transfer* as a collective novel, less about the individual and more about a city, a modern world that has been built on industrialism and capitalism, is a view shared by critics such as Michael Madsen, E. D. Lowry, and Paula Geyh (to name but a few). The city is at the heart of the novel for Ludington and these critics. The city is protagonist and antagonist; the city will love someone one moment in Dos Passos’s work and, in the next, become that person’s greatest horror.

Yet amid the beauty and horror of Dos Passos’s “collective” novel, the reader finds two individuals – Elaine Oglethorpe and Jimmy Herf – ensconced in a city and a book very much made up of individuals. What makes these two characters particularly noticeable is their resemblance to the figure of the early German Romantic poet, and with them, particularly, Dos Passos continues the quest of the individual for enlightenment and community.

Whereas *One Man’s Initiation: 1917* and *Three Soldiers* described the plight of Dos Passos’s early German Romantic poet in wartime, I argue that *Manhattan Transfer*, written in an

aesthetic that evokes the traditions of early German Romantic artistry, is a work about two, what I have termed, modern American Romantic individuals, one who succumbs to egoism (Elaine) and one who resists egoism (Jimmy). By chronicling Elaine and Jimmy's journey from childhood to adulthood, Dos Passos is portraying the struggle that his modern American Romantic individual undergoes within the capitalist metropolis and exploring whether such a character has any relevance to the modern collective.

Fuller comprehension of Dos Passos's modern American Romantic can be supported with a brief description of the nineteenth-century early German Romantic poet. This figure was an individual who separates him- or herself from the collective for the purposes of seeking enlightenment in nature. Once enlightenment has been achieved, ideally this person will return to his or her collective and share this enlightenment with the goal of educating the group, so that any flaws within the group might be eradicated. In this vision, the early German Romantic poet supports the collective, and, ideally, the collective supports him or her. Less ideally, many early German Romantic poets opt not to return to the collective or share their enlightenment, thereby falling into egoism.

When the reader turns to Dos Passos's modern American Romantic, we find numerous similar features. I should explain that I designate this second Dos Passosian individual "modern" for the following reasons: the early German Romantics stipulated that their art should be reflective of the time when it was created. They described their art and their era (late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries) as modern. In this spirit, Dos Passos's individual in *Manhattan Transfer* is reflective of the twentieth century and is being written about using a new more modern aesthetic. Also, I wanted to establish a link between this "modern" American Romantic

and the modernist literary movement, of which Dos Passos is a significant contributor. Finally, the term “modern” on its own indicates a break from the previous individual I identified as “early.” It reflects that the author has evolved in his thinking about the individual, his art, and, as will be argued, America. Further, it reflects that Dos Passos has not abandoned Romantic ideas; his sense of the Romantic has simply evolved, just like his individual, and become more modern in order to make sense in the more modern twentieth century. His new individual is someone who has a strong character, is independent, thinks for him- or herself, seeks enlightenment, and reflects his or her enlightenment through some form of creative expression. Provided the modern American Romantic does not succumb to egoism, he or she shares this creative expression with individual citizens with the following intentions: inspiring them to recognize their individuality, inspiring them to seek their own enlightenment, inspiring them to contribute to the betterment of the collective. The significant difference between the modern American Romantic and the early German Romantic poet is the following: the modern American Romantic does not have to retreat into nature in order to seek enlightenment. This can be found while remaining part of the collective. The modern American Romantic retreats into nature, or withdraws from the collective, in order to acquire some perspective regarding his or her enlightenment acquired while part of the collective.

Elaine (Ellen) Thatcher Oglethorpe may be characterized as a modern American Romantic because the qualities of this character include strength, independence, and resilience. Ellen displays each of these features. As a strong woman, she shows that she is no man’s pushover. Her first husband is a former thespian and violent drunk named John Oglethorpe. Terribly unhappy in her marriage to him, Ellen engages in numerous extramarital affairs while her husband turns a blind eye. She winds up falling in love with another alcoholic, Stanwood

Emery, becomes pregnant with his child, files for divorce from Oglethorpe, stands by and watches as Stanwood marries another woman during a drunken stupor, learns that Stanwood “accidentally” killed himself, and then, while grief stricken, makes the decision to have an abortion. After World War One, she returns from working as a nurse in Europe, having married Jimmy Herf, but she divorces him almost as soon as their boat has docked because it is apparent that he lacks the wherewithal to take care of their family. She demonstrates her resilience when she has to be the chief provider. When married to Oglethorpe, she supported him in her capacity as a Broadway actress; when married to Jimmy, she is again forced into the role of chief provider and finds work as a theater critic. Herf jokingly says to her, “Well Ellie, here’s to the breadwinner who’s taken up the white man’s burden” (*Novels* 746).

Ellen’s independence is continually threatened, though, by a capitalist system that supports profits as opposed to supporting the well-being of the individual. As a result, Ellen becomes anxious over her own financial security. In addition, she was raised by a father who was a struggling accountant obsessed with making and saving money, and clearly his anxiety about finances has been passed down to his daughter. She had struggled to be a successful actress, but despite all of the rave reviews she received for her many stage performances, she views success primarily by how much money she has made, not by the accolades she has received. Part of the reason why she has an abortion after Stanwood’s death is because she cannot work on Broadway and provide for herself if she also has to take care of a baby. Every step of her life has been difficult. Every step takes her further from the financial stability, or, I should state, the upper-class level of financial stability that she craves and that the city requires if she is to thrive in Manhattan. Yet every step that she has taken has been a choice, a decision that indicates some agency as an individual, albeit within the framework provided by the city.

One of these choices is Ellen's decision to marry George Baldwin, a rich, prominent attorney. Moreover, this choice reflects the actions of a modern American Romantic who has opted for egoism. There are critics who argue that Ellen's decision to marry is motivated by sheer necessity. According to Paul Petrovic, Ellen is an unsavory, dependent character because she accedes to the so-called charms of George Baldwin. Then again, according to Petrovic's reading, Ellen has no choice but to marry Baldwin. His argument is that "[t]he towering cityscape in John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) acts as an oppressive force that keeps citizens under continuous surveillance by the patriarchal authority of bourgeois capitalism [. . . .] Ellen Thatcher typifies the plight of [Dos Passos's female characters] in being a victim of a patriarchal surveillance that turns private suffering into a spectacle for public consumption" (152). Due to the patriarchal Panopticon, any sense of individuality on Ellen's part is mere illusion: "[W]hatever power Ellen possesses to control men by means of her gaze turns out to be illusory" (156). She must marry Baldwin if she is to survive in the collective. Similarly, Madsen writes, "[I]t is hard to argue that Ellen chooses what she does. She is a product of her surroundings much like most of the characters in the novel" (44). It may be that Baldwin can offer her a life that she believes would continually elude her were she to remain a divorced single parent – a life of financial security. Yet her ability to support herself, as an actress and a writer, however humbly, does suggest that she has a choice. Ellen's own thoughts indicate a variety of lives that might be chosen: "There are lives to be lived if only you didn't care. Care for what, for what; the opinion of mankind, money, success, hotel lobbies, health, umbrellas, Uneda biscuits" (*Novels* 834).

The choice made by Ellen – to be provided for rather than living paycheck to paycheck – amounts to the choice of Dos Passos's modern American Romantic who opts for egoism. This

choice is frustrating because Ellen need not relinquish her independence. She makes the decision to go off with George Baldwin in spite of the fact that in her later years she has become a well-respected theater critic, earning a steady salary that enables her to care for herself and her child. If she were to occupy this professional role permanently, Ellen would be able to continue as a modern American Romantic who has *not* chosen egoism. Therefore, it appears that giving into egoism was not Ellen's only choice. Were Ellen to opt for a life as a theater critic and single mother, she might function similarly to the early German Romantic poet, operating as critic and educator, sharing her enlightenment with the collective with the following intentions: to inspire members of the collective to recognize their individuality, to inspire individuals to seek the enlightenment that she has achieved, and to contribute to the betterment of the collective.

But somehow, such a life is not enough. One gets the sense that nothing will ever be enough for Ellen. She does not have to marry Baldwin – in fact, for a large portion of the book, she brushes him off; also, she does not have to “care.” Yet she does. She is burdened by how she is perceived by other members of society and by the system itself. The modern American Romantic must be strong in order to stand apart from the collective and not succumb to popular opinion. When she chooses to marry Baldwin, Ellen gives in to egoism. Her decision indicates that the Manhattan collective does not support the modern American Romantic who does *not* choose egoism. This perspective suggests that the inverse is true as well. Namely, the Manhattan collective is prepared to support such an individual who *does* choose egoism. In this case, Ellen's decision was the smart choice for her to make as an independent woman, as an individual who wants to be part of the system, part of that elite social class. Moreover, it allows her to support her child. However, it is troubling to make such an argument as it implies that there is, or can be, a silver lining when opting for a life of egoism. Unfortunately, in *Manhattan Transfer* Dos

Passos does not explore the further implication of the choice of egoism. The narrative ends once his modern American Romantic makes his or her choice. In order to learn what comes next for this individual, the reader must turn his or her attention to *U.S.A.*

In contrast, Jimmy Herf can be recognized as a modern American Romantic who does not plunge into the abyss of egoism. Instead of going into business with his uncle, he wants to write – a career that is ideal for the modern American Romantic, as it would afford Jimmy an artistic outlet for writing about the collective and educating other individuals who make up the collective. Instead of blindly embracing either capitalism or socialism, Jimmy wants to think for himself. When faced with a society that he does not fully comprehend, he retreats. Independence and free thinking are also hallmarks of the modern American Romantic.

Jimmy Herf represents a familiar Dos Passosian archetype of the struggling modern American Romantic experiencing alienation from society. The type is common in Dos Passos's fiction. E.D. Lowry writes, "[T]he indecisive Jimmy Herf resembles the semi-autobiographical aesthetes of Dos Passos's previous books" ("The Lively Art ..." 1638). Martin Howe in *One Man's Initiation: 1917* leaves America to become an ambulance driver during World War One as part of an odyssey to discover his identity as an individual; John Andrews in *Three Soldiers* abandons his family and music school to join the Army initially out of a desire to become part of the collective, except that this decision leads him to reject the uniform identity of the Army when he discovers his individuality. Jimmy Herf is the bastard son of a sickly socialite who dies early in the novel. Subsequently, Jimmy is raised by a respectable Manhattan family that attempts to indoctrinate him into the capitalist ideology. As he gets older, however, he chooses to reject his upper-class birthright in favor of a more working-class lifestyle. Jimmy's decision to reject his

upper-class life resembles the path of the early German Romantic poet who separates him- or herself from social privilege in order to begin the stage of achieving enlightenment.

Jimmy's success at remaining an individual amid the collective fulfills an important criterion of Dos Passos's modern American Romantic. As also anticipated by the early German Romantic theorists, Jimmy must struggle to maintain his own individuality when the collective surrounds him. The problem facing him is that the conformist storyline offered by Dos Passos argues that if an individual wants to survive in capitalist Manhattan, then he or she needs to subscribe to the same ideology as those in power. In this case, the people in power are primarily wealthy capitalists who want to maintain control and to increase their wealth at the expense of the working class. Due to his upper-class upbringing, part of Jimmy's character clings to the notion that a man is meant to make himself into a success, a financial success, especially if he is to thrive in New York. On the cusp of graduating from Princeton, Jimmy receives some valuable advice from his Uncle Jeff regarding his future plans. The uncle states,

Look around you Thrift and enthusiasm has made these men what they are. It's made me, put me in the position to offer you the comfortable home, the cultured surroundings that I do offer you. [. . .] Now's the time to take a brace and lay the foundations of your future career What I advise is that you follow [your cousin] James's example and work your way up through the firm From now on you are both sons of mine It will mean hard work but it'll eventually offer a substantial opening. And don't forget this, if a man's a success in New York, he's a success! (*Novels* 585)

Jimmy resists seeking success along these lines. He is a success only in terms of not allowing himself to relinquish his individuality. He rejects the idea of going into business because he hopes to be a writer. After the war, he clings to socialist arguments that were all the fad across the ocean. He winds up bouncing from newspaper to newspaper because his radical views conflict with those of his employers. He resists sacrificing his "principles" for the sake of steady, gainful employment, resulting in Ellen's being forced to find work in order to support the

family. Therefore, caught between modern American Romantic individualist principles and social demands that he seek conventional success, Jimmy is left wondering whether or not he is a success or a failure. Dos Passos writes, “In the empty chamber of [Jimmy’s] brain a doublefaced word clinked like a coin: Success Failure, Success Failure” (*Novels* 746). Early on in the novel, when Jimmy rejects his Uncle’s interpretation of success, he is rejecting the capitalist system. Because Ellen subscribes to the same definition of success as Jimmy’s uncle and thereby gives in to her egoistic impulses, when she divorces Jimmy it is as if the system has in turn rejected him. It should be noted that it may seem unfair to deem Ellen a sell-out because she opted for egoism. After all, she has a responsibility to care for her child, a responsibility by which Jimmy does not appear to be overwhelmed. Then again, nowhere is it written that Dos Passos’s modern American Romantic is perfect. Also, remember that Ellen’s descent into egoism came when she sacrificed her independence by marrying a member of the upper-class. She did not have to marry George Baldwin.

Jimmy’s retreat from capitalist Manhattan delineates the ultimate act taken by a modern American Romantic. Ellen has to make a cruel choice, whereas Jimmy has to make a decision about whether or not to sacrifice his own beliefs. Jobless, homeless, divorced, and destitute, Jimmy roams the city streets like many of the others whom Dos Passos sketches in less detail. Because he resembles countless others roaming the streets, the audience can recognize the author’s modern American Romantic as a representative of the whole population; however, he also comes to represent what each individual who makes up the whole can become. As Jimmy walks the streets, he arrives at a realization that is long in coming regarding his survival within capitalism. Dos Passos writes,

A black moonless night; Jimmy Herf is walking alone up South Street. Behind the wharfhouses ships raise shadowy skeletons against the night. "By Jesus I admit that I'm stumped," he says aloud. All these April nights combing the streets alone a skyscraper has obsessed him, a grooved building jutting up with uncountable bright windows falling onto him out of a scudding sky. Typewriters rain continual nickelplated confetti in his ears. Faces of Follies girls, glorified by Zigfield, smile and beckon to him from the windows. Ellie in a gold dress, Ellie made of thin gold foil absolutely lifelike beckoning from every window. And he walks round blocks and blocks looking for the door of the humming tinselwindowed skyscraper, round blocks and blocks and still no door. Every time he closes his eyes the dream has hold of him, every time he stops arguing audibly with himself in pompous reasonable phrases the dream has hold of him. Young man to save your sanity you've got to do one of two things . . . one of two unalienable alternatives: go away in a dirty soft shirt or stay in a clean Arrow collar. (*Novels* 802-803)

He can dress the part and go make a killing on Wall Street, just as his uncle advised him to do, or he can hold fast to his opposition to this path.

The second choice, which means rejecting the capitalist system and will result in his remaining poor, reflects the ethos of the modern American Romantic and is the ultimate sign of Jimmy's individuality. Fed up with New York and everything it represents, Jimmy abandons the city and decides to take a ferry to New Jersey. Dos Passos writes that while waiting at the harbor,

[Jimmy] cant seem to remember anything, there is no future but the foggy river and the ferry looming big with its lights in a row like a darky's smile. He stands with his hat off at the rail and feels the riverwind in his hair. Perhaps he's gone crazy, perhaps this is amnesia, some disease with a long Greek name, perhaps they'll find him picking dewberries in the Hoboken Tube . . . He keeps trying to explain his gayety to himself. It's not that I'm drunk. I may be crazy, but I don't think so . . . (*Novels* 836)

Jimmy's "gayety" is crucial to notice because it is only after putting some distance between himself and capitalist Manhattan that Jimmy is able to experience an emotion like happiness. He has made a break; he is escaping with his life still intact; he is taking an important step in his evolution. Landing in New Jersey is described as landing in a garbage dump. Lowry agrees with an interpretation offered by Malcolm Cowley of this image: that Jimmy commits suicide (*"Manhattan Transfer: Dos Passos' Wasteland"* 50). But if the reader does regard this moment as

a metaphorical suicide, then it differs from those of Tony Hunter and Bud Korpenning because Jimmy's "suicide" takes place outside of the city's grasp. If the reader agrees that this moment is a "suicide," then, through leaving the city, the only part of Jimmy that has "died" is any possible lingering identification with the capitalist society with which he has grappled until reaching his epiphany. By my reading, Jimmy is not dying; he is not dead. Jimmy simply leaves in order to save himself; he distances himself from the collective so that he might develop some perspective about Manhattan and the knowledge that he has acquired while being a part of the capitalist system. This is consistent with the actions of the modern American Romantic.

With some physical distance between him and Manhattan, Jimmy can grow as a modern American Romantic. Jimmy illustrates the flip side of Dos Passos's depiction of Ellen as this prototype. Ellen demonstrates that the capitalist society can support the egoist, while Jimmy proves that a capitalist society does not support the autonomous individual. The novel ends with Jimmy looking down at what little money he has left. After spending his last quarter on breakfast, Dos Passos writes, "That leaves [Jimmy] with three cents for good luck, or bad for that matter" (*Novels* 837). Jimmy then hitches a ride out of Jersey atop a furniture truck. When asked how "far" he is headed, Jimmy responds, "I dunno . . . Pretty far" (837). His final words, "Pretty far," when interpreted literally, may represent a reference to the modern American Romantic retreating into nature, like the early German Romantic poet, wanting to get as far away from New York as possible, wanting to flee the town described as Babylon. Dos Passos writes,

First there was Babylon and Nineveh, they were built of brick. Athens was goldmarble columns. Rome was held up on broad arches of rubble. In Constantinople the minarets flame like great candles round the Golden Horn . . . Steel glass, tile, concrete will be the materials of the skyscrapers. Crammed on the narrow island the millionwindowed buildings will jut, glittering pyramid on pyramid, white cloudsheads piled above a thunderstorm. (*Novels* 702-703)

Yet there also is the metaphysical implication in Jimmy's last words. He leaves the city, venturing into the Unknown so that he will again seek and hopefully attain the enlightenment that has thus far eluded him in the modern capitalist metropolis and that will take him further than his peers' thinking.

With *Manhattan Transfer*, Dos Passos articulates a compelling argument: the modern world mandates that the individual citizen sacrifice his or her individuality for the benefit of the capitalist system. Such an expectation instills alienation in the mind of his modern American Romantic. Thus, this personage, seeking enlightenment, retreats from the modern capitalist metropolis. If Dos Passos wants to inspire change within this collective that takes its cue from capitalism, this retreat may not bode well for the future of the metropolis, especially if Jimmy as modern American Romantic either does not achieve fuller enlightenment or does not return to share his more enlightened thinking. The dilemma in his final image is that, while Dos Passos is writing about how the modern collective rejects the modern American Romantic, he is also writing about how modern society *needs* such a person. Without American citizens like Jimmy Herf, or Martin Howe and John Andrews for that matter, there is no one to challenge the status quo of capitalism as individual citizens are swallowed whole by industrialization or, like Ellen, plummet down the hole of egoism. The salvation of Manhattan and the country will be incumbent upon sustaining the figure of the individual.

Dos Passos does not explore the identity of the American Romantic exclusively in the fictional characterizations of Ellen and Jimmy, as the author embodies various facets of the modern American Romantic in the role of narrator. The composition and distribution of this vision on Dos Passos's part can be recognized as the next step: the sharing of enlightened thinking as depicted within the person's art. Just as the early German Romantic poet shared his

or her art so that change (i.e., *Bildung*) could come about, so too does the art of Dos Passos's novel.

Manhattan Transfer shares aspects of early German *romantische Poesie*, even as Dos Passos himself exemplifies many of the traits of the early German Romantic poet turned modern American Romantic. He was independent, believed in the individual (a belief that he never abandoned regardless of his ever-evolving political ideals), and stood apart from the collective. The author crisscrossed the globe a number of times and found enlightenment. His travels in Spain proved to be transformative experiences as were his later adventures through East Asia. This enlightenment is on display in *Manhattan Transfer*. But to what purpose? *Bildung* – “self-realization, the development of all human and individual powers into a whole” (Beiser 25) – was the desired outcome for early German Romantic poets when they resisted egoism. *Manhattan Transfer*, as an example of *romantische Poesie* – “the romantics’ general aesthetic ideal [. . .] [a transformation] not only of literature and criticism but all the arts and sciences [. . .] [breaking] down the barriers between art and life, so that the world itself becomes ‘romanticized’” (Beiser 8-9) – represents Dos Passos’s attempt to achieve *Bildung*. Dos Passos’s aestheticism and narrative practices allow *Manhattan Transfer* to succeed where his previous works of fiction stumbled.

In the first place, Dos Passos’s aesthetic choices in *Manhattan Transfer* enable him to better establish a connection between author and reader, and this relationship is essential to the goal of *Bildung*. Regarding the author’s new aestheticism on display in the novel, I believe that his choices closely resemble the ideals of the early German Romantic aesthetic. Frederick Beiser explains that Friedrich Schlegel, one of the forefathers of early German Romanticism, believed that *romantische Poesie* should embrace modern – meaning nineteenth-century modern –

features of art. Schlegel believed that modern art should reflect the time period in which it is produced, should reflect emerging modern attitudes that challenge the status quo, should incorporate all forms of art, should reflect nature. There is no single language when it comes to art.

Dos Passos shared these principles. He believed that his work (all American literature, really – see his essay “Against American Literature”) would have more impact if it represented the modern world, or contemporary times. A key experience that influenced Dos Passos’s developing aesthetic took place in Paris in the spring of 1923. Gerald Murphy received a commission to design an American ballet, hiring Cole Porter to write the score for what was to be called *Within the Quota*. Dos Passos helped by painting set pieces, just as he had done for the production of Stravinsky’s *Les Noces* for the Ballet Russe (*TCO* 226). The end result was a ballet that reflected the twentieth century by incorporating elements from a variety of art forms. About Murphy’s American ballet, Ludington writes,

It was, in a general way, the subject of *Manhattan Transfer* put to music, a ballet recording the impressions of a Swedish immigrant family freshly arrived in America. In *Manhattan Transfer*, Dos Passos brought not a single immigrant but a number of different types to New York; yet, like the Swede, several are naïfs. The impressions they get of the stresses and frantic rhythms of the city are like those conveyed in the ballet, which employed a movie-piano solo counterpointed against an orchestra playing a “jazz base” score [. . .] The cover of the souvenir program for the ballet was Expressionistic and faintly Cubist, showing a kind of Everyman immigrant figure [. . .] But the most striking part of Murphy’s contribution to the ballet was the backdrop he painted, a parody of the front page of a tabloid. On one side of the backdrop was the steamship *Paris* on end next to the Woolworth Building; then over the rest were sensational but – as it was a parody – nonsense headlines [. . .] The similarity of this to the italicized portions that begin each section of *Manhattan Transfer* or more, to the Newsreels of *U.S.A.*, is obvious. (*TCO* 226)

There are definitive links between *Within the Quota* and *Manhattan Transfer*. Cole Porter’s jazz score was also an influence on the improvisatory soundtrack of gears and the

grinding of wheels in *Manhattan Transfer*. The Expressionist and Cubist elements of the ballet become movie montage pan-and-scans of the entire city in which the writer's gaze is not focused on any single individual because he is desperate to take in the whole city. The citizen becomes a blur in a collective novel about the role of the individual. The nonsense headlines on stage become real headlines and store signs and advertisements read by characters in the novel. Jimmy Herf works at various newspapers in *Manhattan Transfer*. Working on and seeing the ballet and how all of the pieces were able to fit, this experience clearly helped Dos Passos figure out how to make his own aesthetic mesh together. To fulfill a similar goal in his own writing, Dos Passos borrowed aesthetic ideas not only from the ballet but also from painting and film, incorporating ideas from Futurism, Cubism, and cinema. Dos Passos thus created a work of *romantische Poesie* with a twentieth-century aesthetic that is, in effect, representative of Dos Passos's reader's era while "breaking down barriers" between art and life.

Concerning Futurism, part of the movement's original literary manifesto makes reference to motion. Filippo Marinetti believed the image of a sports car to be the ideal metaphor for the modern world and Futurism. Nothing is ever still. Even when objects appear to be still, they are in motion as forces are exerted against them, pushing and pulling. Hence, objects should be portrayed as in motion (Taylor). This characteristic is certainly reflected in *Manhattan Transfer*, as everyone in the city is constantly moving: trains, trucks, and tugboats are moving at all hours. The result of all of this movement is that Manhattan comes alive. The individuals who make up the city are part of a living, breathing, capitalist, industrial organism. At times, the non-human elements of Manhattan appear to be more alive than the people who reside in the city. Futurist painters composed their own manifesto that expressed the belief that a piece of art must be seen within its environment (Taylor 125), much as the early German Romantics insisted that painting,

or artwork, does not exist separate from its environment. The elements of *Manhattan Transfer* reflect the modern capitalist environment, and readers see this and understand the novel best, ideally speaking, when it is examined as part of the environment that it is depicting.

Regarding the influence of Cubism and film on Dos Passos's novel, Donald Pizer states, "The modernism of *Manhattan Transfer* [. . .] is related significantly both to an earlier form of montage, that of D.W. Griffith, and to the second stage of cubism, the synthetic cubism developed by Picasso and Braque during 1912 to 1914" ("John Dos Passos in the 1920s" 57). The use of collage in synthetic cubism inspired Dos Passos's desire to incorporate numerous historical elements in the text that would be reflective of that time, such as popular songs, newspaper headlines, and even advertisements (Pizer "John Dos Passos in the 1920s" 58-59). Dos Passos's appropriation of film montage, a source of contention for some readers and a cause of celebration for others, is reflected in his lack of transitions within the text. His prose jumps from one character to the next and to the next, without providing additional details to make each character more three dimensional. Pizer writes that D.W. Griffith's use of montage allowed the filmmaker to incorporate multiple plot points while projecting a large-scale vision for the overall finished film. This is what Dos Passos attempts to mimic. Dos Passos realized that not every character needs an extensive history, for two reasons: all that matters is what is happening at a particular moment, and the audience can identify with and understand each character based solely on depictions of that character's appearance, actions, and dialogue. These characters become three dimensional based on the audience's similar experiences in much the same urban world they inhabit, not based on how much detail Dos Passos includes on the page.

The Romantic objective of *Bildung* was greatly complicated by modern conditions. Beiser writes,

It was the task of the romantic generation to revive and reaffirm the classical ideal of *Bildung* against some of the growing trends of modern civil society: atomism, alienation, and anomie [. . .] [T]he romantic ideal of *Bildung* reaffirmed the value of unity with oneself, others, and nature. The goal of romantic striving and longing was essentially holistic: that the individual feel at home again in his world, so that he would feel part of society and nature as a whole. (30-31)

From the start, the figure of the early German Romantic poet was intended to remedy the problems facing the modern world, and these very problems evident at the dawn of the industrial revolution were all the more present in the angst and alienation plaguing Dos Passos's generation.

In order for the author and his art to achieve *Bildung* with his readers, *Manhattan Transfer* must expose the inequities of the institutions that contribute to individuals experiencing "atomism, alienation, and anomie" (Beiser 30). Part of Dos Passos's strategy for exposing the injustices of the collective in order to inspire the creation of a "harmonious whole" – another expression Beiser uses to describe *Bildung* – is to establish a connection between Manhattan, the modern metropolis, and money. Through this connection, Dos Passos is able to offer a damning commentary on the mirage of the American Dream and to expose the harsh reality of income inequality. As Ludington informs us, for Dos Passos New York in the 1920s was the land of the big money (*TCO* 200) and Dos Passos establishes this connection by incorporating economic language throughout his text. A number of characters believe that in America anyone can get ahead, provided that he or she is willing to work hard. Emile the waiter states, "I want to get ahead somewhere in the world, that's what I mean. Europe's rotten and stinking. In America, a fellow can get ahead. Birth dont matter, education dont matter. It's all getting ahead" (*Novels* 497). The reader learns that Emile the waiter has to prostitute himself to Madame Rigaud, a widow shop owner who is slightly well off, and Emile believes that by conning her into marrying

him – in fact she is conning him into marrying her – he can align himself with her wealth and become independent. Then there is Elaine Oglethorpe’s attitude when it comes to financial solvency. She is convinced that “[o]nce you’ve got money you can do what you like” (*Novels* 623). When the country is on the brink of entering the war in Europe, the decision to do so is discussed in economic terms. Dos Passos has his readers eavesdrop on a conversation where it is said, “Anyway I dont see how this can last long. The men who control international finance wont allow it. After all it’s the banker who holds the purse strings” (*Novels* 690). After the war, there are not enough jobs to go around, so the only available course for many when in pursuit of the American dream is a life of crime, as in the case of Congo, a former sailor and friend of Emile the waiter who becomes a bootlegger.

Accompanying all of this is the repetition of the color green, which may be the most used word in the book. Streetlights are green; clothing is green; hats are green; attitudes are green; people look green; some people’s eyes are green, or goldgreen; the water in the bay is browngreen; the sky is bluegreen. Amid all of this green, Dos Passos’s blurry characters are constantly in motion because they are on the hustle to make some greenbacks. There is one story of success, so-called, in the novel. It involves the lawyer George Baldwin who starts out in the novel as a down-on-his-luck ambulance chaser who sues the New York Central Railroad on behalf of Augustus (Gus) McNiel. The railroad offers a handsome settlement, Baldwin makes a name for himself in the papers, and his newfound celebrity brings in more clients, which translates into the opportunity to make more money. Baldwin’s blind pursuit of money escalates when he begins chasing power and women. His life is nothing but egoistic pursuit. His character is the bedrock of everything that is corrupt in the modern world, in Dos Passos’s view. This is the life that his modern American Romantic should be avoiding while in the pursuit of

enlightenment and *Bildung*. The blindly ambitious Baldwin shows just how empty is the pursuit of money.

This economic rhetoric reinforces the author's enlightened perspective that the capitalist collective does not embrace individuality. Instead, it prefers citizens to embrace an identity of capitalist conformity. The group abuses anyone who attempts to be an individual, especially working-class characters, by reminding them of their place in this modern Babylon. Dos Passos illustrates the message that even members of the elite class are not safe. For example, Joe Harland, a distant relative of Jimmy Herf and former Wall Street golden boy, finds himself down on his luck, on the bum, and shunned by his wealthy relatives and former colleagues. Harland recalls to a bar full of rummies:

You wouldn't think it to look at me now, would you friend, but they used to call me the Wizard of Wall Street which is only another illustration of the peculiar predominance of luck in human affairs [. . .] Well I suppose there's not one of you gentlemen here who hasn't at some point or another taken a plunger, and how many of you hasn't come back sadder and wiser. Another illustration of the peculiar predominance of luck in human affairs. But not so with me; gentlemen for ten years I played the market, for ten years I didn't have a ticker ribbon out of my hand day or night, and in ten years I only took a cropper three times, till the last time [. . .] Gentlemen just another illustration of the peculiar predominance of luck in human affairs. (*Novels* 607)

Harland's many references to luck suggests that no matter how hard a man or woman works in this life and in this modern world, some unseen force will have the last word on an individual's outcome. It is not entirely luck that determines Harland's fate, however. It is the city and the capitalist system that depends upon profit, caring only that said profit is accumulated by the elite few and not at all about distributing profit.

Dutch and Frannie are other examples of individual citizens who are victims of the capitalist collective. Dutch is a World War One veteran who cannot find a job and resents being on the bum in the country for which he fought. Frannie is so broke that she has to work as a

prostitute in order to make ends meet. When Frannie gets pregnant and refuses to have an abortion, Dutch vents his anger about his circumstances against the city by resorting to armed robbery. This is what the city and the system do to desperate individuals – turn once-hardworking, average, everyday men and women into petty thieves and prostitutes. And the city perpetuates this cycle with the next generation when Dutch is killed in a shoot-out and pregnant Frannie winds up in jail, guaranteeing that her unborn child will be raised by the state – just another unfortunate child born and raised in less than fortunate circumstances. The odds are stacked against the child before it is even born.

Dutch is not the only veteran who cannot find work. Plenty of veterans cannot because all of the jobs have been taken. Joe O’Keefe, a labor organizer, shouts to his men:

Are we going to put over this bonus proposition or aint we? . . . We fought for em didnt we, we cleaned up the squareheads, didnt we? And now when we come home we get the dirty end of the stick. No jobs . . . Our girls have gone and married other fellers Treat us like a bunch o dirty bums and loafers when we ask for our just and legal and lawful compensation . . . the bonus. Are we goin to stand for it? . . . No. Are we goin to stand for a bunch of politicians treatin us like we was goin round to the back door to ask for a handout? . . . I ask you fellers (*Novels* 729 – 730)

Frannie and Ellen are not the only female characters who become pregnant in the book; numerous nameless, faceless women, some of whom are prostitutes and some of whom are wannabe society dames, become pregnant and have to resort to back-alley abortions because they cannot afford to support themselves, much less a child. Dos Passos writes about many exploited women – exploited by lovers, by customers, and by employers. A majority of the female characters in the novel can barely survive, much less thrive, unless they can find an honest, well-off man to marry, for that is the gender and class system in which they live.

Dos Passos is telling his audience about the inevitability of these characters being consumed by the modern world. For virtually all of the characters, there is no question of *if* they

will submit to the system; it is merely a question of *when*. For example, Tony Hunter, unable to resist his homosexual inclinations despite undergoing treatment with a doctor, succumbs to suicide. Bud Korpenning, a farmhand who comes to the city with the intention of finding work, cannot seem to figure out how to operate while in the city. In the end, distraught because he cannot find work to support himself, he too kills himself by jumping from a bridge. The individual's pursuit of the American dream is all for naught because the system is stacked against him or her. Anyone is entitled to pursue the American dream, and a few do succeed, Dos Passos appears to be telling his readers, but this goal only can be achieved at someone else's expense.

If Dos Passos's strategy of exposing the faults of the capitalist system to his readers is to result in *Bildung*, then there remains a missing piece. This missing piece concerns the establishment of a new type of collective that celebrates the individual and to which the individual in return is willing to devote his or her individuality – reminiscent of the “strong anarchistic reliance on the individual man” (*Travel Books* 24) first introduced in his essay “Young Spain” (published in 1917) and developed further in *Rosinante to the Road Again* (1922). Dos Passos is examining the American system of government in his novels, and this system definitely does not operate according to the love doctrine of the early German Romantics. Dos Passos may be searching for a social system that shares certain qualities with the early German Romantic model, but, in the real world, American democracy is influenced by the economic framework of capitalism, which is built upon the concept of a citizen being entitled to pursue his or her individual economic interests, even at the expense of others. Of course, the German Romantics themselves faced a similar discrepancy between their ideals and the German political systems of their day. But certainly, in the capitalist system depicted in Dos Passos's

satiric portrait of New York, the individual is no longer supported, if he or she ever was. In fact, *Manhattan Transfer* more than implies that the “self-reliance” of the select Park Avenue few is dependent upon the exploitation of the undereducated and impoverished multitude.

While it is clear from the author’s work that he prefers a life of simpler times reminiscent of the days when the country was still being established by its forefathers, one cannot simply withdraw from society completely. Realistically speaking, in order to have the freedom to retreat into nature in order to seek the sublime, the individual will need to work with and within the current economic environment. Such a fact is not lost on Dos Passos, and it is certainly reflected by his change in aesthetic. Therefore, more fully developed modern American Romantic characters than Jimmy and Elaine might still help challenge or change the capitalist system. Dos Passos’s protagonists in his early novels adopt a rather passive role when it comes to fixing the problems of twentieth-century America. If Dos Passos is going to have a lasting impact, then this model individual will need to become much more active.

At the same time, though, by unmasking the fallacies that are part of the modern economic system, Dos Passos as narrator is daring a community of readers to try to change the modern system. When he imparts this enlightenment to his community of readers, the author is working towards *Bildung*.

CHAPTER FOUR

U.S.A. AND THE SEARCH FOR A NEW INDIVIDUAL

The *U.S.A* trilogy continues Dos Passos's exploration of America and the individual. The biggest difference between these three books and the author's earlier works of fiction is tone. Vanished from the narrative is any hint of optimism, as the series ends on a decidedly morbid note: the American dream is an illusion. This negative perspective on the country also is directed towards the individual, as the two are much more intertwined in these books than in Dos Passos's earlier fiction. Gone is the hopeful characterization of the modern American Romantic seeking to achieve the goal of *Bildung*. Instead, *The 42nd Parallel* (1930), *Nineteen Nineteen* (1932), and *The Big Money* (1936) are burdened with fictional portraits of modern American Romantics descending into egoism, motivated purely by greed. The figure of the individual in Dos Passos's *U.S.A* trilogy has become disreputable and is borderline despicable. Men seduce women and abandon them at the first sign of commitment; female characters turn on each other, viewing other women not as confidantes or friends but as rivals for the men who behave in such reprehensible ways; and the mirage of the American dream is pursued by any means necessary. In the end, the few who do achieve anything like success are spiritually and emotionally empty. In some circumstances, they despise themselves for what they have done to get where they are; others become bored with their new identities, craving a return to their old lives.

Dos Passos is still writing about the individual in the *U.S.A.* books; however, his modern American Romantic, once a figure of potential and inspiration, has become a corrupt character

easily succumbing to egoism. Mac in *The 42nd Parallel*, Richard Ellsworth Savage in *Nineteen Nineteen*, and Margo Dowling in *The Big Money* are representative of modern American Romantics who succumb to egoism. Dos Passos's dour depiction of his modern American Romantic signifies a break from his earlier hope in this figure as a possible agent of change in the world. In the *U.S.A.* trilogy, the author has become a more overtly political writer – a choice that was affected by the horrific experiences of the Sacco and Vanzetti trial and execution as well as the Harlan Miners' Strike – and is drifting in his political leanings. Once this shift takes place, his modern American Romantic, which resembled the early German Romantic tradition, transforms into a new, more politically savvy ideal American Democratic Individual, as inspired by his reading of Walt Whitman. Dos Passos falls short of finding this ideal individual by the end of the trilogy, but he does come close with the profile of Mary French in *The Big Money*.

In *The 42nd Parallel*, Fainy McCreary, or Mac, may be seen as depicting the descent of the modern American Romantic into egoism. He starts out in the book as the emblem of a modern American Romantic intent on pursuing *Bildung* through political action. Along the way, however, he opts for a life of egoism by trying on identities the way men at the time tried on fedoras. The first time this happens is when Mac changes his identity from devout party-line adherent to working-class husband; it happens again when he abandons the identity of would-be working-class hero and embraces life as a bourgeois storeowner.

Mac comes from a working-class background. As a young boy, he is impressed by the ideas exchanged between his father and his Uncle Tim. He listened attentively as the two men devoted a great deal of their time complaining about “the system”: “It’s the fault of the system that don’t give a man the fruit of his labor . . . The only man that gets anything out of capitalism

is a crook, an' he gets to be a millionaire in short order . . . But an honest workin' man [. . .] can work a hundred years and not leave enough to bury us with" (*U.S.A.* 21). Over the course of his narrative, Mac continues his socialist education: he takes up briefly with Doc Bingham, a road salesman, who instructs Mac to read Marx, to never sell out, to be cautious of women who will always demand that he sell out, and to "never forget the importance of putting up a fine front to the world. Though the heart be as dust and ashes, yet must the outer man be sprightly and of good cheer" (*U.S.A.* 41). There is the lingering scent of sexism permeating this socialism tutorial. The farther one reads, the audience will come across a pattern of misogyny concerning how the Communist Party treats certain female members; however, what Bingham is cautioning Mac is not to live a stereotypical bourgeois life – married, with a couple of kids, living in a nice home. The working-class cause must come first.

Then Mac pals around with George "Ike" Hall, who says to Mac, "God damn it, if people only realized how friggin' easy it would be. The interests own all the press and keep knowledge and education from the workin' men" (*U.S.A.* 61). Finally, after Mac learns how to run a linotype, he takes up work with Fred Hoff, a member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), and starts listening to speeches made by Big Bill Haywood, the founder and leader of the IWW. From his experience with Hoff and Big Bill, Mac realizes

[t]he exploiting classes would be helpless against the solidarity of the whole working class. The militia and the yellowlegs were workingstiffs too. Once they realized the historic mission of solidarity the masterclass couldn't use them to shoot down their brothers anymore. The workers must realize that every small fight, for higher wages, for free-speech, for decent living conditions, was only significant as part of the big fight for the revolution and the coöperative commonwealth. (*U.S.A.* 95)

Dos Passos does a masterful job of describing the environment and the conditions that Mac and others like him are struggling against just to make a living. Lisa Nanney writes, "This is the deep

concern from which the trilogy emanates – how can the common individual prevail against the massive systems of industrial capitalism that have turned the promises of the American dream into a lie?” (177). For every step the workers take in the direction of creating their socialist cooperative, those forces in league with capitalism drive them back a mile by striking the workers with sharp rhetoric, with stricter state and federal laws, and with weapons. The reader might have the impression that, despite his rough character, Mac may be Dos Passos’s modern American Romantic devoted to the pursuit of *Bildung* through his devotion to socialist causes and his fight on behalf of the workingman, all in an attempt at establishing a more egalitarian social order in the United States. The reader definitely empathizes with Mac and the legions of workers just like him who come from humble beginnings and want nothing more than a fair chance.

The problem, though, begins when Mac marries. His wife, Maisie, has certain expectations from her husband; namely, he needs to provide for the family and, for him to do so, she wants him to relinquish his interest in radical causes. The next thing Mac realizes, he has a decent paying job, a home in San Diego, and two children, Rose and Ed. He has defied Doc Bingham’s advice from earlier. Mac seemingly has achieved the kind of life that his father and uncle always complained that they could never have, yet when he takes a long hard look at himself, he views his lower middle-class suburban life as repugnant. Mac prefers the struggle. He feels that he belongs on the front line of the class war, side by side with all of the workers. If Mac is to be regarded as a modern American Romantic intent on achieving *Bildung*, then he should stick to his socialist education and fight for the cause of the workingman. He remembers the words of Doc Bingham when he announces to himself, “I guess I’ve sold out to the sonsobitches allright, allright” (*U.S.A.* 105).

Therefore, Mac decides to abandon Maisie and the kids. His rationale for leaving is the belief that “a man’s got to work for more than himself and his kids to feel right” (*U.S.A.* 107). Mac’s abandonment of his wife and children may not seem a noble act, but for him it appears necessary not only to reclaim his independence and individuality but also to work for the greater good. His abandoning his family for the sake of a larger collective ideal is fundamentally a contradiction that points to an evolving problem with his character – he is not really interested in the larger communal good if he does not pay attention to the communal good of those persons close to him. Mac’s decision is influenced by the modern American Romantic’s striving to achieve *Bildung*. He winds up in Mexico wanting to fight with the revolutionaries; supposedly, he is earnest to take up the cause of the struggling peasants, but he falls in with a group of merchants and landowners. He appropriates the role of a shop owner and, once again, finds himself living a rather contented life. In the end, he remains in Mexico, where his “motivation for staying [. . .] has become his own comfort and prosperity, a clear echo of the motives of the capitalists he had scorned so many years before” (Wagner 96). For a revolutionary, this is the ultimate sell-out. Mac has accomplished nothing more than reclaiming the identity that he had with Maisie. The only thing that is different is his locale; Mac has substituted Mexico for California. He is not embracing a philosophy of socialism (even in a problematical sexist version). Mac simply wants what he wants. Dos Passos’s modern American Romantic thus ultimately succumbs to the egoism that has proved to be all too intoxicating. By keeping this identity and maintaining this lifestyle, Mac has chosen to save himself rather than the workingman.

In *Nineteen Nineteen*, Richard Ellsworth Savage resembles the Dos Passosian individuals from the author’s early novels, specifically Martin Howe, John Andrews, and Jimmy Herf, and

therefore his story is not exactly original. However, where Howe's, Andrews's, and Herf's tales end abruptly, Savage's narrative explores more fully the descent of the modern American Romantic into egoism. Savage comes from humble beginnings: a drunkard for a father, raised by his mother who fled her husband out of fear for her and her son's safety. He attended a good school where he mixed with rich kids, but he kept his poor background a secret from them because he didn't like feeling out of place. He had aspirations early in life to pursue poetry as a calling, but the need to support his mother financially necessitated his going to work at a young age. Richard attended Harvard, where, once again, a feeling that he did not belong plagued him. He worked hard at his classes and finished college a year early when "he discovered that if he went into war work he could get his degree that spring without taking any exams" (*U.S.A.* 441). Borrowing from his own life story, Dos Passos explains that Savage enlisted in the volunteer ambulance service and sailed for France. Dos Passos marks the occasion with a passage that resembles the opening of his first book:

Sailing for France on the *Chicago* in early June was like suddenly having to give up a book he'd been reading and hadn't finished. Ned and his mother and Mr. Cooper and the literary lady considerably older than himself he'd slept with several times rather uncomfortably in her double-decker apartment on Central Park South, and his poetry and his pacifist friends and the lights of the Esplanade shakily reflected in the Charles, faded in his mind like paragraphs in a novel laid by unfinished. He was a little seasick and a little shy of the boat [. . .] inside he was coiled up tight as an overwound clock with wondering what it would be like over there. (*U.S.A.* 441-442)

The repetition of the book he "hadn't finished" and the "unfinished" novel recalls the "white page spread before [Martin Howe], clean and unwritten on" (*Novels* 4). The distinction between Dos Passos's individuals in *The 42nd Parallel* and *Nineteen Nineteen* is that Howe is a blank page going to the war with the ambulance service and hoping for some type of experience, whereas Savage's character is simply "unfinished."

Once in France, Savage befriends a mechanic from Kansas named Fred Summers. While Savage's initial response to the war is fear, Summers's take on things is reflected in his oft-repeated phrases: "This ain't a war It's a goddam whorehouse" (*U.S.A.* 443), or "madhouse" (*U.S.A.* 518), or "Cook's tour" (*U.S.A.* 522). As Savage creeps closer to becoming "finished," his story, like Howe's, adopts additional aspects of Dos Passos's autobiography. Savage becomes disillusioned by the motives driving the war, exchanges ideas with an anarchist and a socialist about how best to end the war and solve all of the world's social problems, abandons his Christianity when it becomes clear that theology is not the answer, and is thrown out of the ambulance corps for expressing less than patriotic sentiments about the war in his letters to friends and family back home. At one point, taking up the call of the modern American Romantic seeking *Bildung*, Savage thinks that what he must do to change popular opinion about the war is that "he must write some verse: what people needed was some stirring poems to nerve them for revolt against their cannibal governments" (*U.S.A.* 538).

Why does Dos Passos offer another installment of much the same characterization? Martin Howe's story begins with blank pages that are left blank at the end of *One Man's Initiation: 1917*, reflecting that Howe is left still searching. John Andrews's story in *Three Soldiers*, though inspiring, is unfulfilled; the individual is handcuffed and escorted off by a pair of military police, in essence denied the opportunity to share his symphony with the public. In *Manhattan Transfer*, Jimmy Herf is seen leaving Manhattan, apparently never to return. Savage's story is the first time Dos Passos continues the narrative. The author now knows what comes next, inevitably it seems, for his modern American Romantic: the corruption of the twentieth-century industrial world will lure Dos Passos's individual to plunge into egoism.

Dos Passos reveals gradually that Savage's fate is to become a crony for capitalism. As punishment for his seditious letters, Savage is removed from service with the Norton Harjes Ambulance Unit and is sent back to the United States. As soon as his boat docks, he is taken in hand by an old family friend, avoids any punishment for his actions, and receives a commission in the Army due to his being the grandson of Major General Ellsworth. Ambulance driver Savage becomes Second Lieutenant Savage and begins the journey back to France, where first he translates for Major Thompson and then works for the Post Despatch Service under Colonel Edgecombe, who promotes Savage to Captain. The war, so it would seem, is suddenly very good to Savage. This new war experience is made up of egoistic excess: good wine, fine dining, evenings in salons, and translating for his commanding officers who visit local bordellos. Savage's war truly is "a goddamn whorehouse."

Quickly it becomes apparent that once Savage has become an officer, he has effectively abandoned his previous modern American Romantic's inclination to write verse and educate the public about the grim realities of war. Life as an officer has provided Savage with enough money to take care of himself and his mother, in addition to bailing out his brother from the occasional jam. Savage has status. He is no longer concerned about not belonging. During a trip to Rome, Savage says to his sweetheart, "Do you know what we are, Anne Elizabeth? we're the Romans of the Twentieth Century [. . .] and I always wanted to be a Greek" (*U.S.A.* 677). Savage's reference to a previous desire to be a "Greek" reinforces the notion that he had intended to follow the path of the modern American Romantic: seeking enlightenment, sharing it with the people – in his case, through verse – and protecting the individual. Now, he regards such a prospect as naïve. Comparing the United States to the Roman Empire is effectively labeling Americans as conquerors and imperialists. This is a designation with which Savage is now

largely at ease. When he was on the battle lines as part of the ambulance unit, the grunts complained that the war was one big capitalist enterprise, and the idea left a bad taste in his mouth; as an officer in Paris, the armistice is discussed in terms of oil futures. Over drinks in a café in Paris, talk turns to President Wilson and the Soviets. Savage's companion, a man named Robbins, comments,

[I]t used to be King Coal, but now it's Emperor Petroleum and Miss Manganese, queen consort of steel. That's all in the pink republic of Georgia . . . I hope to get there soon, they say that they have the finest wine and the most beautiful women in the world. By God, I got to get there But the oil . . . God damn it, that's what this damned idealist Wilson can't understand, while they're setting him up to big feeds at Buckingham palace the jolly old British army is occupying Mosul, the Karun River, Persia . . . now the latrine news has it that they're in Baku . . . the future oil metropolis of the world. (*U.S.A.* 664)

It would appear that no matter what your rank, or whether it is wartime or peacetime, the topic of conversation is the same: money. The difference in the exchanges has to do with perspective. The workingmen want to do away with the whole sordid economic system; the upper-class men are looking for a way to make a profit for themselves. Savage is keen to be a part of this system. At a closed-door meeting discussing the future of the League of Nations, Dos Passos writes,

When somebody spoke the word oil everybody sat up in their chair. Yes, [Colonel House] could say definitely an accord, a working agreement had been reached between certain American oil producers and perhaps the Royal Dutch-Shell, oh, no, of course not to set prices but a proof of a new era of international cooperation that was dawning in which great aggregations of capital would work together for peace and democracy, against reactionaries and militarists on the one hand and against the bloody forces of bolshevism on the other. (*U.S.A.* 752-753)

Savage, the former pacifist, appears to have taken a shine to this in-the-know, egoistic point of view. This is supported further by the fact that he goes to work for the public relations magnate J.W. Moorehouse and starts to spend his days at salons, drinking and networking. Savage also behaves savagely towards his former love, Anne Elizabeth, whom he throws over when she

becomes pregnant with his child. He completes his fall into egoism when he sacrifices her for the sake of his career. Nanney argues, “Savage represents the experiences of Dos Passos’s own class and generation, many of whom the writer must have seen relinquish their radical and pacifist ideals after the war in their effort to benefit from the wealth to be made in the postwar economy” (183). Dos Passos’s modern American Romantic is effectively dead when it is revealed in *The Big Money* that Savage rises through the ranks at J.W. Moorehouse’s firm, eventually taking over for Moorehouse himself, whom Savage idolizes. Dos Passos needs a new individual, but where he is to turn for one, when seemingly the best materials are corrupted, is unclear.

In *The Big Money*, the third book of *U.S.A.*, Margo Dowling represents yet another example of Dos Passos’s modern American Romantic pursuing a life of egoism. Margo is at first difficult to recognize as having any similarity at all to the early German Romantic poet. Yet she may be regarded as such because she embodies some of the same qualities once depicted in the character of Elaine Oglethorpe: strength, dedication, and a willingness to stand on her own. That is, she is willing to stand on her own, up to a point. The reason for this distinction is because Margo never once represents the modern American Romantic interested in *Bildung*. The enlightenment she discovers is how to protect *herself*, how to take care of *herself*, and how to improve *herself*. Such refined thinking reflects the attitude of the modern American Romantic bent exclusively on a life of egoism. Yet, it also reflects a harsh reality for women at the time in which the story is set. In other words, if a woman seeks to maintain her identity, then she must to be willing to do whatever is necessary to survive in a system that is not devised to support a female individual, modern American Romantic or not.

Margo’s story begins as do many of the fictional sketches in *U.S.A.* Born to a life of poverty and abandoned by her father, Fred, she is raised by Agnes, Fred’s girlfriend, who places

Margo in a convent temporarily because she is unable to provide for the young girl. It is not until Agnes meets Frank Mandeville, a vaudevillian performer, that Margo's life changes, and even then Dos Passos offers a grim portrait. Margo develops into a beautiful young girl, falls in love with performing and the theater, and is raped by Frank, who had become her *de facto* stepfather. She then marries a young Cuban boy named Tony Garrido who turns out to be gay and moves the couple to Cuba where she has Tony's baby, who dies a couple of days after birth. Margo returns to Agnes in New York and takes up with a rich college boy, only to have the romance ruined by the sudden appearance of Tony. She has an affair with Charley Anderson, a rich, married engineer who dies, and, finally, she has to start all over again from scratch and manages to do so by relocating to Hollywood. With the horrors that Margo has had to endure, is it any wonder that she chooses a life of pure egoism as opposed to pursuing *Bildung*? All her life she has been taken advantage of, lied to, and abused. Inclined from the start toward egoism, she has tried to manipulate people for her own benefit – especially when she takes up with Charley Anderson – but every time the tables have turned on her and she winds up being the one who is manipulated. Plenty of characters lose in these novels. Margo, however, loses everything, and more than once.

Once she moves to Hollywood, Margo's pursuit of egoism becomes more pronounced and at times recalls Elaine Oglethorpe's descent. In Hollywood, Margo and Agnes finally understand how the game works: image is everything. As Lisa Nanney argues, "Margo learns how to manipulate masculine sexuality to her advantage. This equips her to achieve her version of the American dream – to be a movie star, a career that depends on her ability to create desire" (188). During discussions for a film contract, Margo calls on Agnes to negotiate on her behalf. Dos Passos writes,

Agnes was wonderful. She talked about commitments and important business to be transacted and an estate to care for, and said that at that figure it would not be worth Miss Dowling's while to give up her world cruise, would it, darling, if she appeared in the picture anyway it was only to accommodate an old friend Mr. Margolies and of course Miss Dowling had always made sacrifices for her work, and that she herself made sacrifices for it and if necessary would work her fingers to the bone to give her a chance to have the kind of success she believed in and that she knew she would have because if you believed with an unsullied heart, God would bring things about the way they ought to be. (*U.S.A.* 1108)

In this story, one's success has little to do with true character and, instead, has everything to do with whom one appears to be. Dos Passos writes, "[Agnes and Margo] got a few invitations from actors and people Margo met on the lot, but Margo said she wasn't going out until she found out what was what in this town. 'First thing you know we'll be going around with a bunch of bums who'll do us more harm than good'" (*U.S.A.* 1109).

Because Hollywood is a world where image is everything, Margo deems it crucial to associate with only the right people, meaning the right people who can help her career. Also, she is determined not to repeat past mistakes, and that extends to taking up with men. She tells one potential suitor that she is not interested in marrying him or anyone. When he tries to seduce her, "[s]he got to her feet and pushed him away. 'I'm not going to let things like that interfere with my career either'" (*U.S.A.* 1095). Based on this passage, the reader might have the impression that Margo is a positive example of a modern American Romantic, as she is a strong woman who exerts her individuality by pursuing a career rather than the stereotypically expected and socially accepted pursuit of a husband and a family. Reflecting on her impetuous marriage to Tony, Margo comes to the conclusion that "[a] girl sure is a fool ever to put anything in writing" (*U.S.A.* 1118). Comparable to what Elaine Oglethorpe accomplished by leaving Jimmy Herf, Margo shuns conventional societal expectations for women. By doing so, she displays her independence. Her career as an actress might have been used to enlighten the movie-going public

about the travesties in society, thereby transforming her into the more positive characterization of the modern American Romantic bent on achieving *Bildung*. But alas, there is no evidence to suggest this in the text. Instead, Margo views her career in silent movies as a stepping stone into a new life where she might achieve the big money and the lifestyle that she feels she has earned given her past of hardship and pain in capitalist America.

Margo remains that type of corrupted modern American Romantic whose life choices are motivated solely by egoism. Re-examining the previous passage when Margo says that she is not going to let things like men get in the way of her career, what she means is that she is taking the necessary steps to ensure her success in the capitalist dream factory that is Hollywood.

Ultimately, though, her decisions lead to emptiness. Robert Rosen explains, “Throughout, *U.S.A.* bitterly condemns the American Dream: success not only corrupts, but fails to bring satisfaction. Moneyed lives are easier, to be sure, but no more fulfilling than other lives. The exploitation of the many by the few brings genuine happiness to none” (84). Her transformation from impoverished chorus girl to budding independent Hollywood starlet becomes complete one night when she catches a reflection of herself in a triple mirror. Dos Passos writes, “She looked at the three views of herself in the white spangly dress. Her eyes a flashing blue and her cheeks were flushed. Agnes came up behind her bringing her the rhinestone band she was going to wear in her hair. ‘Oh, Margie,’ she cried, ‘you never looked so stunning’” (*U.S.A.* 1122). The right image, the right friends, and the right clothes all contribute to Margo’s make-over, and there is plenty of evidence that points to Margo’s becoming a success, but at what cost? Now that Margo is on the cusp of financial and professional success, will this lead finally to a happy ending? Dos Passos defies such an equation. Even if this incarnation of the Dos Passosian individual acquires a modicum of financial success, such success must be measured in terms of cost. In Margo’s

case, success costs her all sense of individuality, just as it did Elaine Oglethorpe; Margo's continued success, the reader learns, will cost Margo her independence as well. Margo is led to believe that she can only maintain status by marrying the Hollywood director, Sam Margolies, just as Elaine had chosen to forego independence as a theater critic by marrying George Baldwin. Constant pursuit of egoism leads to Margo becoming a caricature of herself. Nanney writes, "Margo gains the big money [. . .][and] pays with her integrity" (189). At a party in New York, the Hollywood siren of the silent movies, Margo Dowling, is described as "a small woman with blue eyelids and features regular as those of a porcelain doll under a mass of paleblond hair" (*U.S.A.* 1234). The once feisty, sexual Margo has transformed into a doll, a mere plaything. By chasing her own interest, ironically, Margo has relinquished any lingering sense of individuality. She has become a mere image. She is no longer herself; Margo is only what people see of her. Even the echo of the modern American Romantic is no more.

Part of the reason that Dos Passos's thinking about the individual has changed is because Dos Passos has become, by this point in his career, closely – although by no means unequivocally – aligned with the politics of the Left. Rosen writes, "*U.S.A.* chronicles not only the changes America underwent over three decades, but also the evolution of its author's own social thinking" (89). Before Dos Passos began writing *The 42nd Parallel* in 1929, he started writing articles for the *New Masses*, helped the Communist-aligned New Playwrights, traveled to Mexico City and witnessed how the peasants were being mistreated, and, finally, traveled to Russia in 1928. But this trip to Russia also instilled doubts in Dos Passos about the effectiveness of communism, doubts that had already existed after seeing the half-starved people suffering during his 1921 to 1922 travels through Constantinople, Batum, Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, large portions of which were under control of the Bolsheviks (see *Orient Express*).

Up until this point, the case can be made that Dos Passos's political ideology was sympathetic with certain communist ideals, but he was never a formal member of the party. Ludington explains that Dos Passos was confused by the political institution of communism. He wondered over and over: Were the Russian people happier under this system? Or did they prefer their way of life before the revolution when the czar was still in power? (*TCO* 272). At one point during his trip to the USSR, Dos Passos spoke with some young students and found that he "admired their enthusiasms and social fervor, but his instinct for individual liberties dampened his ardor for Communism" (*TCO* 268). While it is difficult to categorize Dos Passos's political affiliation (see Gold, Wade, Hicks), it is clear that he remained firmly committed to the individual, a figure that starts out resembling the early German Romantic poet but evolves into someone and something new by the second phase of his career. In a review of *The Big Money* for *The Nation*, Whipple states, "Though Dos Passos does not call himself a Marxist – and would seem in fact not to be one – his point of view is unmistakably radical. The class struggle is present as a minor theme; the major theme is the vitiation and degradation of character in such a [capitalist] civilization" (88).

The two events that had the greatest impact on Dos Passos and his politics were the trial of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti and the Harlan Miners' Strike. Dos Passos visited Sacco and Vanzetti in jail and walked away convinced of their innocence. He committed himself to their cause. Determined to defend them in any way he could, he wrote a number of articles for various publications as well as *Facing the Chair: Story of the Americanization of Two Foreignborn Workmen*, a pamphlet in support of the Italian anarchists, whom he believed were victims of a biased American judicial system (*TCO* 246; Carr 222 - 223). In his memoir, Dos Passos reflected on their case and wrote, "When we took up for Sacco and Vanzetti we were

taking up freedom of speech and for an evenhanded judicial system which would give the same treatment to poor men as to rich men, to greasy foreigners as to redblooded Americans” (*The Best Times* 185).

In 1931, Dos Passos traveled to Kentucky as part of a commission – made up of Lester Cohen, Samuel Ortiz, Bruce Crawford, Melvin P. Leavy, Charles and Adelaide Walker, and, their leader, Theodore Dreiser – to investigate and report on the Harlan Miners’ Strike. At that time, miners were earning close to slave wages, starving, and living in unsanitary conditions. They were forced to work long hours with no chance of climbing out of debt because their wages went back to the mine owners in the form of rent or utility and grocery bills. When the miners voiced a desire to unionize, violence erupted. Dos Passos was outraged by the treatment of the miners, but he was equally furious at union leaders behind the strike. Ludington writes, “[Dos Passos] had been furious with the Communists about the way they neglected miners already in jail in Harlan [. . .] [H]is doubts about the efficacy of the Communists tactics grew, although he continued to sympathize with their aim of helping the cause of the laboring man” (*TCO* 299). All of this frustration – at the Communist Party, at the American judicial system, and at human beings’ nature to crave power – is on display in *U.S.A.*

Even as *U.S.A.* continued to focus on the individual, modern American Romantic or otherwise, and the nation, Dos Passos, now a more overt political author, focuses upon the contaminating nature of capitalist America upon any and all individual citizens. In comparison to Dos Passos’s earlier works, the connection of individual and nation in *U.S.A.* is depicted through a much darker tone as Dos Passos the political writer sees both as corrupt. When writing about America, this tone is prominently on display in the Newsreels throughout the three novels and in the Camera Eye sections of *The Big Money*. The Newsreels, made up of portions of headlines,

excerpts from articles, song lyrics, and advertising jingles, provide an historical context for the fiction that Dos Passos is writing, still building on the Futurist idea of a work of art as a product of its environment (Taylor 12). He includes such examples as: “FLEETS MEET IN BATTLE TODAY WEST OF LUZON” (*U.S.A.* 56); “CZAR LOSES PATIENCES WITH AUSTRIA” (*U.S.A.* 230); “ARMIES CLASH AT VERDUN IN GLOBE’S GREATEST BATTLE” (*U.S.A.* 363); “300,000 RUSSIAN NOBLES SLAIN BY BOLSHEVIKI” (*U.S.A.* 541); “PRESIDENT STRONGER WORKS IN SICKROOM” (*U.S.A.* 776); “GIANT AIRSHIP BREAKS IN TWO IN MIDFLIGHT” (*U.S.A.* 1053). At the same time, the Newsreels provide a hint at the author’s darker shift in tone: “LABOR MENACE IN POLITICS” (*U.S.A.* 80); “WILSON TAKES ADVICE OF BUSINESS” (*U.S.A.* 210); “EMPLOYER MUST PROVE WORKER IS ESSENTIAL” (*U.S.A.* 445); “SPECIAL GRAND JURY ASKED TO INDICT BOLSHEVISTS” (*U.S.A.* 563) (see Weeks for analysis of Dos Passos’s rhetorical strategy in the Newsreels). The Newsreel headlines are not solely about what is happening across the country; they also reflect the treatment of individual citizens. Kazin makes the argument that what Dos Passos writes about in the books is society: “It is society that becomes the hero of his work, society that suffers the anguish and impending sense of damnation that the lost-generation individualists had suffered alone before” (101). Kazin argues that Dos Passos is writing about society and how it has contributed to the downfall of the individual. By contributing to said downfall, society suffers and will continue to suffer. The anguish depicted in *Manhattan Transfer* is that of the individual citizen; the capitalist system appears immune. In *U.S.A.*, by contrast, Dos Passos implies that the individual artist is no longer sole sufferer of this; the anguish is shared by the entirety of society at the hands of the capitalist industrial complex.

The enormity of such a realization is expressed most clearly in the Camera Eye sections of *The Big Money*. The Camera Eye pieces are excerpts of Dos Passos's autobiography composed as prose poems. As his audience reads about the country's evolution, they also read about "the development of different kinds of consciousnesses in an unnamed narrator from childhood to adulthood" (Nanney 195), although it becomes apparent by *The Big Money* that the unnamed narrator is the author himself. It is after Sacco and Vanzetti are executed that Dos Passos the political writer arrives at the following conclusion expressed in Camera Eye (50): "all right we are two nations" (*U.S.A.* 1157). With this statement, it is no longer necessary for the political writer to disguise his darker tone through the Newsreels. In Camera Eye (51), Dos Passos the political writer explains that the two nations he has witnessed consist of "they" and "us":

(they have made us foreigners in the land where we were born they are the conquering army that has filtered into the country unnoticed they have taken the hilltops by stealth they levy tolls they stand at the mine-head they stand at the polls they stand by when the bailiffs carry the furniture of the family evicted from the city tenement out on the sidewalk they are there when the bankers foreclose on a farm they are ambushed and ready to shoot down the strikers marching behind the flag up the switchback road to the mine those that the guns spare they jail). (*U.S.A.* 1209)

Kazin explains Dos Passos's two nations by re-examining the Sacco and Vanzetti case, which "gave [Dos Passos], in a word, the beginnings of a formal conception of society; and out of the bitter realization that this society – the society Martin Howe had mocked, that John Andrews had been crushed by, that Jimmy Herf escaped – could grind two poor Italian Anarchists to death for their opinions, came the conception of the two nations, the two Americas, that is the scaffolding of *U.S.A.*" (111). Kazin identifies these two Americas as the police, the judges, the governing bodies, and the rest of the upper elite that make and enforce the rules and then the lower working classes that are oppressed and expected to abide by the rules. Another way to interpret Camera

Eyes (50) and (51) is that Dos Passos's "two nations" are two collectives, each with its own notion of the individual. There is the capitalist nation that does not support the individual citizen or the artist in the modern American Romantic mold; this organization opts instead to oppress and demand conformity. When the individual citizen or modern American Romantic does not capitulate, then he or she is disposed of – even literally executed in the case of Sacco and Vanzetti. Then there is the second nation, the working-class nation, whose ideology is more in line with that of socialism and that does make an attempt to support the individual citizen and the artist.

Dos Passos's disappointment in the capitalist nation also transfers to the individual. He writes for the individual, but he is disappointed in the individual's willingness to sell out to the capitalist collective. Wagner states, "Dos Passos' deepest criticism throughout the trilogy is directed toward people who misuse America's institutions – capitalists, for gain that is entirely personal; industrialists, for the destruction of personal resources; those who demand freedom of speech, for irresponsible or repressive speaking or writing" (90). Dos Passos ponders, "what can I say?" and "we have only words against" (*U.S.A.* 1208, 1210). As previously stated, the corrupt individual citizen is described as being in the constant pursuit of personal gain, an action that can be regarded as the modern American Romantic's lapse into egoism. Ideally, the modern American Romantic, like the early German Romantic poet, would pursue *Bildung* in order to improve society. But Dos Passos the political writer becomes ever more of a realist over the course of *U.S.A.* By its end, he admits that under modern capitalist conditions, the modern American Romantic cannot function because he or she is nearly as susceptible to corruption as is the average individual citizen. The modern American Romantic is not strong enough to prevail against the system. Blanche Gelfant argues that all of Dos Passos's novels are about the Dos

Passosian individual searching for an identity. The hero's search is motivated by inner turmoil – a father's rejection, the lack of a home, and the disgust at one's self for having done nothing. This anger is then redirected at various institutions that dare to strip the hero of individuality. In the end, the Dos Passosian hero finds an identity by taking on a social role (149). I would add to Gelfant's assessment that it is not just the Dos Passosian hero who is searching. The author himself also is seeking the characterization of the ideal individual strong enough to challenge the modern system. Based on my reading, Dos Passos is searching for a twentieth-century upgrade of the modern American Romantic, which itself is a twentieth-century furtherance of the early German Romantic poet. If he or she is to find that upgrade, he or she must take a wider social role and might find such a role and also social support for such a role in relation to the "second," working-class nation.

I contend that the ideal individual for Dos Passos will resemble the figure of the Poet as described by Walt Whitman, also known as the Democratic Individual. Whitman was a major influence on Dos Passos's thinking. In 1916, Dos Passos's essay "Against American Literature" argued that Whitman was the first authentic American writer and that future writers need look to Whitman and his vision as a model for their own work (*Travel Books* 587 – 590). Carr notes, "[T]he American who stood best as a symbol or model for Dos Passos's attempt to control his own destiny regardless of the odds was Walt Whitman. [Dos Passos] considered the bard of Long Island his spiritual father" (166). Hughson identifies Walt Whitman as the source of Dos Passos's political ideas: "Dos Passos' ideas about political action and the exercise of power have an important source, not in an historian or political theorist or even in another novelist, but in a poet, Walt Whitman" ("In Search of . . ." 179). Hughson comments that Whitman was "a man who knew what power was! Yet, like Dos Passos, he hoped to find a viable political entity in

Eden before the fall – the place where the single person and the *en masse* were still truly one” (“In Search of” 180). In Whitman’s poems, as Hughson suggests, the plurality of voices in America becomes a single, unified, patriotic American voice. By contrast, Dos Passos in the role of political writer maintains that the plurality of American voices cannot be unified. If, as Hughson argues, Dos Passos sought a Whitmanic vision of the individual “before the fall,” I would assert that by the time of *U.S.A.* Dos Passos had lost this dream of innocence. The single voice may have been appropriate for Whitman, but it will not work in Dos Passos’s modern America. The problem, he recognized, is that America is not a single nation. It is two nations. In the struggle for power, which is the prevalent theme in all of Dos Passos’s fiction, one nation will exert its authority over the other. The struggle for Dos Passos in *U.S.A.* is identifying a character who can and will use his or her voice and speak out for the subordinate nation.

Although Whitman was less conscious of the class divide than Dos Passos came to be, Whitman’s Democratic Individual remains a useful alternative to Dos Passos’s rendering of the modern American Romantic. The key difference between the Democratic Individual and the Romantic poet is that the former is constantly surrounded by the people, the average independent citizens, which Dos Passos sees especially in the second nation. The Democratic Individual may place some distance between him- or herself and the community, but he or she does not physically abandon the community. The Democratic Individual does not retreat fully into nature to seek enlightenment. The Democratic Individual need look no farther than his or her immediate environment within the community when seeking enlightenment that can be shared with and implemented by the people in order to help the community. In Whitman’s vision, the Democratic Individual does not give in to egoism because he or she remembers that he or she is one of the people, is writing about the people, and has a responsibility to the people. These traits, once

integrated with Dos Passos's differentiation between social classes, may provide the basis for the modern upgrade in the ideal individual that Dos Passos seeks. Dos Passos's ideal individual will embrace the principle that enlightenment can be uncovered within the community, but because Dos Passos the political writer writes about America as two nations, this means that the author and his version of the Democratic Individual will differentiate between social classes and embrace that class which is oppressed by capitalism, the "second" nation.

Bits and pieces of a twentieth-century, politically aware Democratic Individual can be gleaned from closer examination of the Camera Eyes. Regarding the function of the Camera Eyes in *U.S.A.*, Ludington explains, "What Dos Passos attempted to show through the entire group of Camera Eyes was his gradual assimilation into a world beyond the shelter of his self-conscious imagination. The more he could find his place in that world, the less of a separate, subjective life was there to portray" ("The Ordering of the Camera Eye in U.S.A." 444). But the process indicated by Ludington was gradual, beginning with Dos Passos's own experience. In *The 42nd Parallel*, the Camera Eyes tell the story of Dos Passos's adolescence up to the point where he sails for France in 1917. In *Nineteen Nineteen*, they chronicle his experiences in the war, with the Army, in Paris, as well as his impressions of the armistice. Even when the reader comes to *The Big Money* when Dos Passos has returned to the United States, the speaker in the Camera Eye struggles mightily with his identity: as a writer, as an individual, and as a political being. He writes in Camera Eye (46) about taking a walk one night, struggling with finding a voice, wanting to speak up and wanting to speak out against all of the travesties that he has witnessed. Dos Passos writes, "you suddenly falter ashamed flush red break out in sweat why not tell these men stamping in the wind that we stand on a quicksand" (*U.S.A.* 893). Instead, he retreats home. Dos Passos continues, "while I go home after a drink and a hot meal and read

(with some difficulty in the Loeb Library trot) the epigrams of Martial and ponder the course of history and what leverage might pry the owners loose from power and bring back (I too Walt Whitman) our storybook democracy” (*U.S.A.* 893). There is a distance between author and subject in these passages that persists throughout *U.S.A.* Dos Passos separates himself from the people about whom he is writing. He relies on the first-person in these more personal passages. It is clear, based on the author’s tone, that he sympathizes with these individual citizens. He just does not feel as though he is one of them. There is a gap between him and them. This writer of the “second” nation, perhaps, feels a sense of guilt due to his family background – the bastard son of a self-made, upper-class, prominent lawyer who preached in favor of *laissez-faire* economics and to whom progressive politics was a four-letter word.

Still, Dos Passos empathizes and identifies with the citizens of the “second” nation. “I too Walt Whitman” is the author’s cry of a desire to write about the people and America. In *Camera Eye* (49), Dos Passos writes about walking around Plymouth, interviewing people about Sacco and Vanzetti, everyone insisting on their innocence and repeatedly asking Dos Passos why? On the return train to Boston, he wonders, “how can I make them feel how our fathers our uncles haters of oppression came to this coast how say Don’t let them scare you how make them feel who are your oppressors America” (*U.S.A.* 1135). It is when Dos Passos witnesses the atrocities of the Harlan Miners’ Strike and comes to terms with the horror of Sacco and Vanzetti’s execution that the gap between the author and the second nation finally is bridged. After Sacco and Vanzetti’s execution, Dos Passos writes,

they have won why are they scared to be seen on the streets? on the streets you see only the downcast faces of the beaten the streets belong to the beaten nation all the way to the cemetery where the bodies of the immigrants are to be burned we line the

curbs in the drizzling rain we crowd the wet sidewalks elbow to elbow silent pale looking
with scared eyes at the coffins
we stand defeated America (*U.S.A.* 1158)

By this time his use of the third-person “they” refers to the “first” nation of capitalism and industrialism and power, “you” is Dos Passos addressing himself once again as separate from the second nation, until finally the first-person plural “we” indicates the individual citizens of the “second” nation *and* Dos Passos. He has found his place and by *Camera Eye* (51) he will find his voice. When he visits the striking Harlan miners in jail, he wonders, “what can I say?” (*U.S.A.* 1208). He doubts his legitimacy as a Democratic Individual, and yet, he writes,

(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)
(*U.S.A.* 1209 – 1210)

As a Democratic Individual, based on his numerous travels and experiences in the war, Dos Passos has had quite an education about the treatment of individual citizens at the hands of a capitalist nation. Again, he asks, “what can we say” (*U.S.A.* 1209), only this time notice the subtle change in pronoun. There is no longer any question that “I” will speak at this moment. Now it is a matter of substance. Now Dos Passos posits the essence of the message when “we” speak as a nation. Dos Passos ends this *Camera Eye* acknowledging that the odds are stacked against the “second” nation for “we have only words against” (*U.S.A.* 1210), meaning that “we” lack the materials and means with which to fight oppression. The act of speaking them, though, is an important and powerful first step. He has assumed an important responsibility to speak out and to the individual citizen. Here, the reader finds the beginning of Dos Passos as a Democratic Individual in the guise of a political writer.

Dos Passos also seeks his Democratic Individual in a handful of his characters. I believe that Mary French in *The Big Money* comes closest to the ideal individual for whom Dos Passos the political writer is searching. Mary French is not to be regarded as a modern American Romantic and neither is she a perfect representation of the new individual. Like Mac, Richard Savage, and Margot Dowling, Mary French does sacrifice part of her individuality. In Mary's case, this sacrifice is depicted in her blind devotion to the Communist Party. More importantly, though, she does not give in to the temptation of pursuing a life of pure egoism. Mary French reflects a shift in Dos Passos's thinking about the figure of the individual. She does not resemble prior incarnations of the Dos Passosian individual – i.e., Martin Howe, John Andrews, or Jimmy Herf – who reflect either the early German Romantic figure of the author's first two books or develops into the modern American Romantic by the fourth, a character who retreats into nature to create a work of art that he or she will share with society with the aim of achieving *Bildung*. Based on Dos Passos's work up to this point, such figures have become much too passive and too easily susceptible to egoism. Instead, Dos Passos is now more interested in an individual who is active in society.

Mary French is the daughter of a doctor who is a drunk and is always broke. The one saving grace of his character is that the majority of his patients are poor and cannot afford to pay the man; still, he treats them. Her mother is more interested in money and status. After she divorces Mary's father, she sets about increasing her wealth, building on the life insurance she received from her own father's death, eventually rising to a respectable and comfortable rank in society. Raised by her father, Mary is exposed more to his way of life, which involved continual sacrifice. When she is old enough to enroll in college, Mary decides that she wants to study and prepare for a career in social service work. Dos Passos writes about Mary "thinking of the work

there was to be done to make the country what it ought to be” (*U.S.A.* 856). This passage, easily overlooked, becomes the refrain for Mary French and the newest incarnation of the Dos Passosian individual.

Part of the responsibility of the new Dos Passosian individual is to assert his or her individuality by standing against injustice and not being swayed by popular opinion, especially not the opinion of the “first nation.” There are many temptations for Mary; she has numerous opportunities to fall in with the “right sort” of people of whom her well-off mother would approve. Mary, however, believed that when it came to her life, “[s]he had to feel that she was doing something real” (*U.S.A.* 870). She drops out of Vassar to volunteer at Hull House; she works at the *Times-Sentinel* in Pittsburgh only to be fired for writing an article that would be more appropriate in the *Nation*; she moves to New York and works at an art gallery and then at Bloomingdale’s in order to make ends meet. All the time Mary “kept telling herself she wanted to be connected with something real” (*U.S.A.* 1137). After being laid off by the department store, she writes an article about the treatment of department store workers that gets published in the *Freeman*. The journal offers her a job as a researcher. She was to look into “wages, livingcosts, and the spread between wholesale and retail prices in the dress industry for the International Ladies’ Garment Workers” (*U.S.A.* 1137). Mary likes the work because “[a]t last she felt what she was doing was real” (*U.S.A.* 1137).

Along the way Mary has several love affairs with men who are considered important figures in the Communist Party, all of which end badly – her romance with Ben Compton results in her having an abortion – and, eventually, she finds herself living in Boston doing public relations work for a committee that is devoted to stopping the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti.

Mary intensely believes in this new cause and will stop at nothing to see it through. Dos Passos writes,

Every cent she could scrape up went into the work of her committee. There was always stationery and stamps and telegrams and phone calls to pay for. She spent long evenings trying to coax communists, socialists, anarchists, liberals into working together [. . .] When at last she got to bed her dreams were full of impossible tasks; she was trying to glue a broken teapot together and as soon as she got one side of it mended the other side would come to pieces again, she was trying to mend a rent in her skirt and by the time the bottom was sewed the top had come undone again; she was trying to put together pieces of a torn typewritten sheet, the telegram was of the greatest importance, she couldn't see, it was all a blur before her eyes; it was the evidence that would force a new trial, her eyes were too bad, when she had spelled out one word from the swollen throbbing letters she'd forgotten the last one; she was climbing a shaky hillside among black guttedlooking houses pitching at crazy angles where steelworkers lived, at each step she slid back, it was too steep, she was crying for help, yelling, sliding back. (*U.S.A.* 1149)

From the start of the passage to the end, Dos Passos's tone becomes ever more negative as the author describes the futility of Mary French's work. There is even a point when she insists that common sense must prevail in Sacco and Vanzetti's case. The author's tone is dark because he lived through all that his new individual is experiencing, and Dos Passos is reflecting on this moment in American history, disgusted with the Communist Party, with the American judicial system, and with America.

But what should *not* be overlooked is Mary French's determination to keep trying despite the futility of it all. Distraught, she comments to Jerry Burnham, a Boston newspaperman, "If the State of Massachusetts can kill those two innocent men in the face of the protest of the whole world it'll mean that there will never be any justice in America again" (*U.S.A.* 1147). The reader can just about ascribe Jerry's response to the disillusioned Dos Passos: "When was there any to begin with?" (*U.S.A.* 1147). One might recognize a certain degree of pessimism in such a statement coming from Dos Passos's new individual. Remember, though, she is not perfect. She

is expressing a popular sentiment for that time given the circumstances, and her faith in the cause is tempered by realism. On the other hand, Mary French's comment is actually a bit more hopeful than Jerry's.

Firmly devoted to the cause, the author's new individual continues with the fight. After Sacco and Vanzetti are executed, she goes to work for another relief committee – this one devoted to supporting the striking miners in Pennsylvania. She organizes protests, does public relations work with the media, and solicits donations for the miners and their families. Constantly, her efforts come up short. The men in the office and her lovers insist over and over again that what is needed is more organization in the party, more discipline in the party, a better commitment to the cause on the part of the working class, a protest, a picket, another strike, and some money. What the party could do if only it had some money. All Mary sees, though, are starving men and women, and children who don't have any warm clothes or milk. One afternoon she is invited to meet her mother at the Plaza. Mary is surprised to meet Judge Blake, her mother's new husband. When talk turns to Mary's work and the miners' cause, Mary receives a bit of an education from her new stepfather, who tells her, "I know that social inequality is a very dreadful thing and a blot on the fair name of American democracy. But as we get older, my dear, we learn to live and let live, that we have to take the bad with the good a little" (*U.S.A.* 1225). One might interpret this passage as Mary French being advised to relinquish her idealism and to embrace a more realistic, or cynical, perspective of the world. She is young and a bit naïve, Judge Blake is suggesting, to think that she can make the world a better place. America and American democracy are what they are. This passage recalls Dos Passos's "two nations," and Judge Blake is a representative and a voice for the capitalist nation. The cynicism of Judge Blake even might be attributed to Dos Passos the political writer, bitter over the corrupt nature of the

nation and the individual, who clearly had lost the romanticism and optimism that infused the prose of his earlier novels. Despite this, Dos Passos continues to write about the individual. For it is through the figure of the individual that the collective can be saved. Although the author does not fully develop how such a task might be achieved, it is clear that he is seeking a path towards a solution. As previously stated, Dos Passos writes in *Camera Eye* (51), “we have only words against” (1210). Words can inspire. Words can motivate. Words can be powerful weapons. Dos Passos knows this. Thus, he continues with his narrative and Mary French does not abandon her idealism.

Although Mary seems susceptible to manipulation by Communist Party operatives, she remains firm in her commitment to the “second” nation. In spite of the rebuke Mary receives from her mother and stepfather, Mary does continue her work with the committee when she is delivered another harsh blow: her lover, Don Stevens, ends their relationship by marrying another woman - a union arranged by the Communist Party. Caught off guard, Mary weeps but does not protest. Inevitably, she accepts the decision that has been made. She understands and respects Don’s devotion to the party. Again, she returns to work. Stinging from the break-up, Mary agrees to go to a lavish party with her friend, Ada. While everyone at the party is smoking, drinking cocktails, and gobbling up the food that is being passed around, all Mary sees is waste: “It’s the waste [. . .] The food they waste and the money they waste while our people starve in tarpaper barracks [. . .] I’m sick of this parasitic life. I’m going back to the office tomorrow I’ve got to call up tonight to see if they got in all right with that load of condensed milk” (*U.S.A.* 1236). The party goes on and her friends continue chatting as if what Mary has said is nothing more than drunken rambling. The next day when she is at the office, Mary learns that the driver responsible for transporting food and clothing donations to the miners and their families

was shot. At the same time, she discovers that the socialite who threw the party Mary attended the night before has killed herself. Ada asks Mary to leave work and come over to her apartment and console her. Mary's response: "I have too much to do to spend my time taking care of hysterical women on a day like this" (*U.S.A.* 1238). Dos Passos ends Mary French's story and *The Big Money* with the following passage: "She put on her hat, collected her papers, and hurried over to the meeting of the committee" (*U.S.A.* 1238).

Rosen interprets the above passage as the actions of a devout party loyalist, even though, like Dos Passos, Mary never joined the Communist Party. Rosen writes, "Mary French [. . .] grows politically more committed every day. Like Dos Passos, she works madly to save Sacco and Vanzetti and raises money to aid striking miners. Her total devotion to causes and her too close association with the Communist Party impoverish her personal life" (88). The problem for Rosen is Mary's willingness to sacrifice her potential happiness with Don and her sexual identity all for the good of the party. Offering a similar line of analysis, Hughson states, "When Mary turns away from the grief of her old friend, she demonstrates a political fidelity which is at the same time a defection from a greater human loyalty. Furthermore, her steadfast commitment to the dispossessed is tied to the passivity of her sex. No matter what the radical victory and the corruption of the newly empowered must entail, she, as a woman, will never have any power and is a safe repository of the revolutionary ideal" ("In Search of . . ." 188). Mary's latest romance ended because Don married another woman because of party orders. Mary's acceptance of such a decision and her returning to work represents a loss of individualism for Rosen and betrays her individuality as a woman for Hughson. They regard Mary as much too passive. But is not the fact that Mary never wavers in her commitment to the "revolutionary ideal" a strength? Wagner argues, "As the various plotlines of the trilogy show, once a character lost his or her sense of

individualistic purpose and became a cog in the wheel of large industry [. . .] life became a series of automatic responses, leading finally to many kinds of dissatisfactions, among them emotional bankruptcy” (98). Wagner’s comment would suggest that Mary is returning to her committee work out of a lack of individual self-esteem rather than from a positive desire to continue doing the kind of work that would “make the country what it ought to be” (*U.S.A.* 865). According to Wagner, Mary returns to the committee because that is what she is expected to do. It is part of her routine. There is some validity to this claim. But what concerns me is that Wagner and Rosen overlook a key aspect of Mary French, which aligns her work with the activity of a Democratic Individual.

What Wagner and Rosen do not address is the fact that Mary very easily could have accepted her mother’s and Judge Blake’s offer of an overseas trip in order to get some well-deserved rest; she very easily could have retreated to Ada’s apartment, had a drink, and consoled her friend; she very easily could have relinquished her perspective on the world and adopted Judge Blake’s and Jerry Burnham’s points of view as her own. Any of these decisions would have implied a shift to egoism on Mary’s part. Yet, she returns to work. Hughson writes, “There lurks yet in Mary French’s dedication to the strikers’ cause some hope in Dos Passos that the hungry will be fed, that the magic will be found in the real world” (“In Search of . . .” 192). Maybe her work will have an impact and maybe it won’t. Maybe what matters is that Mary is trying. Given her willingness to sacrifice herself all too fully, she may not be the ideal archetype of the new individual for whom Dos Passos is searching in these novels, but she does represent a start. Mary French is a good middle ground for Dos Passos the political writer.

What also should not be overlooked is that Mary French does have a voice and is willing to speak out. She does so numerous times when she points out the social inequity between the

classes and condemns the excessive waste created by the elite class, including many of her friends. She exhibits a great deal of fortitude by not giving up on the various causes for which she fights, even when tempted to a life of egoism by her mother and by her friend, Ada. If Mary has one flaw, as previously identified by Wagner and Rosen, it is that she abides by every dictate of the Communist Party agenda. The ideal Dos Passosian individual would not be afraid to challenge group opinion, even when the group in question is championing oppressed individuals. But the one other aspect of Mary French's character that needs to be highlighted is her determination to be involved in something real. She wants to contribute to society. She wants to do something to make a difference. This is a crucial quality Dos Passos seeks in his version of the Democratic Individual.

Dos Passos's travels abroad, his experience with the Sacco and Vanzetti trial, and disillusionment with the Communist Party exposed two inescapable truths in the author's work: the individual citizen's and modern American Romantic's susceptibility to egoism and the inherent corruption of organizations bent on acquiring power. The figure of the modern American Romantic is not strong enough to stand up to the organization or to the current social paradigm. Such a figure is weak, as depicted in the stories of McCreary, Savage, and Dowling. As Rosen explains, in a series of novels about "rootlessness and social mobility, those who rise are often corrupted in the process. Those few who try to act morally [. . .] meet repeated defeat" (80). Whipple echoes this sentiment: "Those who prostitute themselves and succeed are most completely corrupted; the less hard and less self-centered are baffled and beaten; those who might have made good workers are wasted; the radicals experience internal as well as external defeat. No one attains any real satisfaction" (88).

In my view, however, Dos Passos's formulation of a Democratic Individual does point the way toward a solution to some of society's ills, and it is in pursuing such a solution that some characters can achieve a degree of satisfaction. Through Mary French's character it is clear that any solution will take both action and words. Dos Passos writes, "what can I say?" (*U.S.A.* 1208). He can allow the figure of the Democratic Individual to speak for him. Mary French is a step in this direction. Careful examination of Dos Passos's subsequent works will inform the reader as to whether or not his vision of the Democratic Individual will be brought finally to life and fulfill the role Dos Passos envisions.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: THE DEMOCRATIC INDIVIDUAL AND THE POLITICAL NATIONS

The late 1930s and early 1940s represent the start of the final phase of Dos Passos's career. At this point his political ideology started to become more right wing. Alfred Kazin wrote in his review of Dos Passos's novel *Adventures of a Young Man* (1939), the first installment of *District of Columbia*, "The thirties have brought Dos Passos to a growing disaffection with the whole radical movement in America" (qtd. in Maine 198). By way of explanation of the author's change in political ideology, John Trombold writes,

Communist Party sectarianism challenged Dos Passos's political commitments during his work on behalf of the Harlan County Miners in 1932 and after the rioting between Socialists and Communists at a political meeting at the Madison Square Garden in 1934. Of much greater long-term significance for his outlook, however, were other events between 1935 and 1938: the execution of Dos Passos's friend the poet Jose Roblés [*sic*] by the Communists in Spain during the Spanish Civil War [. . .] and the Moscow Trials, by which Stalin eliminated his internal political enemies in the Soviet Union, demolished Dos Passos's previously held convictions about politics and art. (239)

He was no longer allied with the Communist Party, a decision that Dos Passos was not alone in making. Granville Hicks notes,

Even in 1937, there were plenty of ex-fellow-travelers to agree with Dos Passos, though more of them had been disillusioned by the trials of the Old Bolsheviks than by events in Spain. And there were plenty more by the end of 1939, after the Soviet-Nazi pact and the liquidation of the democratic front. (95)

Gradually, by the end of his career, as Virginia Spencer Carr and Townsend Ludington note in their biographies, the former Communist sympathizer would become a conservative; more specifically, Dos Passos became a Goldwater Republican. Trombold notes, "By 1944 [Dos

Passos] was ready to vote Republican. In the early 1950s Dos Passos was more of a 'willing aide' to the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation's inquiries into possible revolutionary subversion than he was an object of those federal inquiries" (239).

Critics differ on the degree of change in Dos Passos's writing after the 1930s as well as the type of continuity that exists between the two phases of his career. Ludington argues that the one constant that bridges the gap between early and later Dos Passos is individualism and that "all his life he searched for positions where he thought there was the greatest possibility for its expression" ("John Dos Passos in the 1930s" 33). Trombold counters that, rather than Dos Passos's support for the individual, his distrust of collectives is the unifying theme of early and late works.

In spite of their differences, I believe that Ludington and Trombold are both correct. However, to claim that Dos Passos's early and later works are unified by fear of collectives or individualism is too simplistic, the reason being that Dos Passos's perspective on the individual evolves once again after the 1930s. The romantic figure of the early books becomes a new kind of modern Democratic Individual in *District of Columbia*, and part of the reason for this enlightened depiction of individualism corresponds with a distrust of collectives. The reader should not regard the two themes separately. Further, Dos Passos's writing certainly indicates a shift in focus around 1940. Instead of looking to Europe, more specifically Spain, for a model of the ideal social organization that would support and nurture individual citizens, Dos Passos re-directed his gaze to America. In the essay "Farewell to Europe!" originally published in 1937, Dos Passos writes, "America has got to be in a better position to work out the problem: individual liberty vs. bureaucratic industrial organization than any other part of the world. If we

don't it means the end of everything we have ever wanted since the first hard winters at Plymouth" (*Travel Books* 622).

When writing about America in *District of Columbia—Adventures of a Young Man* (1939), *Number One* (1943), and *The Grand Design* (1949) – Dos Passos's prose continued to describe a country split into two nations. In *U.S.A.*, the two nations were split along class lines, the upper class and the working class, with the Democratic Individual, although clearly more allied with the working class, straddling the middle, going back and forth between both nations, seeking real and permanent change for the improvement of all of American society. In *District of Columbia*, America is two nations divided along political lines – the politicians (who resemble the upper-class nation of *U.S.A.*) and the electorate (which has much in common with the working-class nation). The new modern Democratic Individual, different from its first incarnation as Mary French in *The Big Money*, has become more of a political agent in this series, as he or she works in the political nation with the intention of developing social programs (which happen to have a great deal in common with the socialist ideals of Dos Passos's youth) that will improve life for the electorate nation. These programs, which will support individual citizens who will, in turn, support a system that recognizes their individuality, very much resemble the vision Dos Passos had for America throughout his career.

Dos Passos locates his modern Democratic Individual in Paul Graves, the protagonist of *The Grand Design*. Graves represents Dos Passos's modern interpretation of Whitman's Democratic Individual. Although Whitman sees the Democratic Individual as needing to stay out of politics, Dos Passos's modern Democratic Individual *is* a political agent – a kind of ambassador – who labors primarily in the political nation to create a program that will support the individual citizens in the electorate.

Glenn Spotswood, the protagonist of *Adventures of a Young Man*, might have been Dos Passos's representative modern Democratic Individual. He is willing to fight for his beliefs, he refuses to sacrifice his principles, he has an enlightened perspective, and he is capable of using his voice to communicate with the people in both nations. Yet, in spite of his having a voice, he lacks a resonating message. Glenn's speeches are contaminated by Dos Passos's personal vendetta against the Communist Party. What is missing is the modern Democratic Individual's desire to inspire lasting change that would benefit individual citizens.

The novel can be read as a profile of an individual in the making. At the age of sixteen Glenn worked as a camp counselor. When one of the campers goes missing, is found, and then comes down with scarlatina, the camp owner blames Glenn's friend Paul Graves. When Glenn stands up for his friend, he too loses his job. After his freshman year of college, Glenn travels the country, wanting to study the working conditions of the migratory farmer. During this time, Benjamin Franklin Noe teaches Glenn that, contrary to the Communist Party's message regarding employers, their own employer is a fair man. Eventually, he moves to New York, attends classes at Columbia, has an affair with the wife of a friend, and recommits himself to the cause of the working class. After he graduates from college, however, his father advises him to take up with his uncle who finds Glenn a job in a bank.

When he is forced to leave his banking job, Glenn goes to work for the American Miners Union. He abandons his former identity and becomes Comrade Sandy Crockett. He and his partner, Less Minot, work to organize the striking miners of Sladetown and bring them into the union. Glenn is jailed on trumped-up charges after a rally, is released, and then goes on a lecture tour to raise money for the union and establish a defense fund for the incarcerated miners in

Sladetown. Upon learning that a miner was killed while trying to orchestrate a jail break, Glenn realizes that none of the donations he collected have made their way to the miners. When Glenn demands that the party do more for the miners and the workers, he is expelled from the Communist Party. Glenn starts his own splinter group. He wants to keep up the fight, but the fight has changed. Instead of finding a solution for the common man, Glenn focuses more on attacking the Communist Party. When his efforts fail, Glenn enlists to fight in the Spanish Civil War, a decision that leads to his own fateful end.

When evaluating Glenn Spotswood, Robert Sayre opines, “Glenn’s point of view to the end is precisely that of a Leftist dissident Communist critical of the CP [Communist Party] in the name of an authentic revolutionary impulse and a self-determining working class. But Glenn’s rhetoric is made to sound as hollow, cliché-ridden and out of touch with realities as that of the official Communists” (270). Sayre makes a valid point. Every time Glenn recommits himself to the cause, it is typically after some dramatic episode in his life, for instance a failed love affair or the loss of his job at the bank – ironically, a job at which he happened to excel. He is more responsive to his own circumstances than to other more general needs. When Glenn does fight for the working class, the message he conveys is drab, uninspiring, and unoriginal because he toes the party line. When Glenn finally exerts his independence, he is expelled from the party. From that point on, any message Glenn might have communicated is superseded by his own malice towards the party, which happens to align closely with Dos Passos’s own personal disillusionment with the Communist Party. The novel’s thesis, articulated in a series of prose poems between each section of the work, is essentially Dos Passos’s grudge against the Communists:

those who would not submit their will to the will of the Party

*(which meant the will of the Central Committee,
which meant the will of the autocrat
supreme in the Kremlin scheming mankind's domination)
were enemies of the human race.
(DC:AYM 309)*

This message, devoted solely to attacking the Communist Party, leaves the reader wondering, how will a former Communist's attack on the party help establish a system for the individual citizen? The answer is, it will not. I do not believe that the message can even be regarded as a reasoned negative critique explaining why such a system will not work in America, for Dos Passos's prose regarding the Communist Party emphasizes vitriol rather than a rational analysis. Lionel Trilling expresses a similar opinion in his 1940 review. Trilling believed Dos Passos's view as articulated in the novel was much too narrow. Clearly, Dos Passos wanted to write about big ideas and have an intellectual debate, but political infighting in the Communist Party does not a novel make. It might have, if Glenn Spotswood had had any depth. Trilling writes, "[O]f all the possible ways of representing the complex tragedy of modern radical politics, Dos Passos has chosen the one that brings out the fewest meanings, creating for his exposition a world of small and narrowing possibility, inhabited by people without depth of feeling, with a minimum of intellect and almost no virtue beyond the infrequent one of a dull and dogged honesty, with no great dignity even in heroic defeat" (95). In his 1939 condemnatory review, Malcolm Cowley writes, "Glenn Spotswood is simply not interesting or strong enough to carry the burden of the story" (qtd. in Maine 202). Dos Passos's emotions become swept up in his vendetta against the Communists and do lasting damage to Glenn Spotswood as a potential modern Democratic Individual. At the same time, I must acknowledge that there is a certain validity to Dos Passos's emotions, as his bitter rhetoric is due to his suspicion that the Communist Party assassinated his friend José Robles (see Koch, *The Breaking Point*).

While *Adventures of a Young Man* details the evolution of an individual, *Number One* chronicles a politician in the making. Tyler Spotswood, Glenn's older brother, might at first seem to provide a model for Dos Passos's modern Democratic Individual. He is an enlightened individual based on his experiences in World War One. Also, he has held a number of jobs that have exposed him to many harsh realities about the country including how the hard-working electorate is struggling to survive. Tyler even has a message: Every Man a Millionaire. What he lacks is a voice.

Tyler works for Representative Homer T. "Chuck" Crawford, a caricature of Huey Long, whom Tyler believes could go all the way to the White House. When Senator Stoa dies, Crawford decides that he wants to switch over from the House to the Senate. In order to win the party's nomination during a tough primary, they need a number of things: money, which will be provided by Norman Stauch, an infamous gambler; an endorsement from Governor Steve Baskette; publicity, which is guaranteed by the political sideshow that Tyler and Chuck organize; and support from the people, which can be won with the right platform. Crawford appropriates Tyler's message, Every Man a Millionaire, and tells the electorate that he believes that real change can be instituted at the government level to ensure that at the local level all citizens can have their own chance to become as rich as millionaires. It appears, then, that Crawford may be the voice who speaks Tyler Spotswood's message.

It does not take long, though, for Tyler's hope – that Crawford might, in spite of unsavory tactics, do the work of the people – proves misguided. After winning the primary, there is a meeting with Jerry Evans, a businessman, and two members of the Utilities Commission, during which time they formulate a plan: in exchange for an undisclosed amount of money, Evans would have access to certain lands so that he can drill for oil. Crawford would have the

cash he needs to start a corporation that can finance his own radio station, WEMM, which he can, in turn, manipulate to spread his message. Crawford craves a national presence so that the party will nominate him for a presidential run. His revised message becomes, American society needs to be reformed, but without destroying the entire political system. Instead, he wants to fix it from the inside out.

After a period of time, the Struck Oil corporation is investigated for tax fraud, Senator Crawford's affiliation with WEMM is under review, and Tyler is subpoenaed because his signatures are all over the paperwork. Crawford's plan is for Tyler to fess up that he is an alcoholic and that he was drunk when signing papers. During his grand jury testimony, Tyler realizes that someone is embezzling funds and that he is being set up as the fall guy. Once this is made clear to him, he resigns, gets drunk, and hears part of a broadcast where Crawford insists upon his own innocence. When Tyler is told that it is his duty as a citizen to tell the country what kind of a snake Crawford really is, Tyler says, "We can't sell out on the people, but the trouble is that me, I'm just as much the people as you are or any other son of a bitch. If we want to straighten the people out we've got to start with number one" (*DC: NO 297*). Crawford's betrayal is the cause of Tyler's disillusionment. He truly believed that anything can change, that anything can be made for the better. At the end of the book, he walks away: from politics, from Washington, D.C., from everything in his life that has been contaminated. This act of defiance bears the resemblance of the modern American Romantic retreating from society to seek enlightenment, but we learn in *The Grand Design* that Tyler's alcoholism escalates and he has not straightened himself out at all to be of any use as a potential modern Democratic Individual.

In 1943, Stephen Vincent Benét praised *Number One*, emphasizing Dos Passos's brilliant portrait of the nefarious Crawford, advising readers to consult the book so that they would

“recognize the particular kind of fascism we could breed in these States” (qtd. in Maine 232). After all, Benét comments, “[I]t is our responsibility – for it is we, the people, who elect the ‘Chuck’ Crawfords” (qtd. in Maine 232). On the other hand, Alfred Kazin found the novel “unsatisfying” (qtd. in Maine 233). Kazin remarked that the major difference between *U.S.A.* and *Number One* was Dos Passos’s depiction of the individual. Kazin writes that in *U.S.A.* “[t]he only triumph of the individual there was to register his protest as we went down into the maw of the machine age (and his sacrifice was his distinction; he was too good),” whereas in *Number One*, the individual’s sacrifice “has an aura of responsibility” (qtd. in Maine 233). In other words, Kazin recognizes a purity in the actions of the individual in *U.S.A.*; in *Number One*, Dos Passos is lecturing his readers about their responsibilities as citizens. Because of this theme, Kazin considered the work nothing more than a homily.

Homily or not, the problem with Tyler Spotswood is that he is held responsible by author and by the reader for being corrupted but without ever having enough independence to offer an alternative to the corrupt system. The reader recognizes that Tyler has not been given his own voice by the author, which explains why this would-be modern Democratic Individual relies on a surrogate, Chuck Crawford, to speak for him. The problem with this strategy is that Crawford uses Tyler’s message for his own political and financial gain, corrupting Every Man a Millionaire into, “Well, it’s every man a millionaire for himself” (*DC: NO* 134). The message becomes fraudulent. Therefore, Tyler’s inability to speak to the people or stand up to Crawford disqualifies him from the title of modern Democratic Individual.

Due to these inadequacies in the portrayals of the Spotswood brothers, I have chosen to focus my analysis of Dos Passos’s modern Democratic Individual on Paul Graves and the final installment of the trilogy: *The Grand Design*. In his review of *Adventures of a Young Man*, John

Chamberlain remarks that Glenn Spotswood is not to be regarded as the savior of the novel. Instead, that role belongs to Paul Graves. Chamberlain correctly writes, “Paul Graves is the undoctinaire ‘man of good will,’ a humorous fellow who gets on with what he has to do and exploits nobody [. . .] And in Paul’s kind lies the hope of the world” (qtd. in Maine 196). I contend that, through closer examination of this final text over the others, the reader and the critic will better fathom the fullness of Dos Passos’s evolving, complex perspective of America as two nations as well as the author’s conception of his modern Democratic Individual.

Regarding the author’s vision of America as two nations, it can be inferred from reading the sequence of prose poems in each book that Dos Passos believes that American democracy is the preferred organization/collective/institution (as articulated in his “Farewell to Europe!”). Prior to writing *District of Columbia*, Dos Passos looked towards Spain and socialism as the models for his ideal society. Books like *Three Soldiers*, *Manhattan Transfer*, *The 42nd Parallel*, and *Nineteen Nineteen* insist that American democracy is not a system that supports individuals and, in fact, had been corrupted by capitalism, thereby compelling the author to break with the American system in order to establish an alternative arrangement that would support the individual. Communism and socialism were enthralling to the left-wing author. What, then, compelled the ultimate break with Communism?

By 1934, Dos Passos was irate with the Communist Party for breaking up a Socialist Party rally at Madison Square Garden, going so far as to join two dozen authors and intellectuals in signing an “Open Letter” to the Communist Party, condemning its actions. The letter was later published in *The New Masses* (Carr 328; Ludington 324). In a letter to Edmund Wilson in 1935, Dos Passos wrote that his support for the U.S.S.R. was on the decline for a number of reasons: “[T]he Kronstadt rebellions [in 1921], the Massacres by Béla Kun in the Crimea, the persecution

of the S.R.'s [Socialist Revolutionaries], the N.E.P. [New Economic Policy of the Soviet Union], Trotsky's expulsion [in 1927], the abolition of factory committees, and last the liquidating of the Kulaks and the Workers and Peasants Inspection [in 1929] – which leave the Kremlin absolutely supreme" (FC 462).

Then came the Spanish Civil War in 1936. Frustrated by the American government's decision to remain neutral and not to supply arms to the Loyalists, and disgusted by the biased war reportage in American newspapers, Dos Passos decided to go to Spain and film a documentary as part of the Contemporary Historians company – which he co-founded with Ernest Hemingway and Lillian Hellman, or so they believed – that would "accurately" report on the horrific events taking place. By the time Dos Passos arrived in Spain in April of 1937, he was on a second mission: to find his friend José Robles. Concerning Robles, Carr writes, "José Robles [. . .] was in Spain on vacation with his family when the war broke out. Robles had elected to take leave from his teaching post at Johns Hopkins University and stay on in Spain to help the Republican government in whatever way seemed more feasible. [. . .] Robles had worked first as a cultural attaché with the Ministry of War. [. . .] Robles' work was highly classified" (366). Dos Passos learned from Robles's wife, Márgare, that Robles had been arrested several weeks prior to Dos Passos's arrival, and no one knew where or why he was being incarcerated (Carr 366). In a "Letter to the Editor" published in *The New Republic* in 1939 – a response to the criticism offered by Malcolm Cowley condemning Dos Passos's bias against the Communist Party in the novel *Adventures of a Young Man* – Dos Passos explains,

It was not until I reached Madrid that I got definite information from the then chief of the Republican counter-espionage service that Robles had been executed by a "special section" (which I gathered was under control of the Communist party) [. . .] Spaniards I talked to closer to the Communist party took the attitude that Robles had been

shot as an example to other officials because he had been overheard indiscreetly discussing military plans in a café. (*Travel Books* 624)

Robles's assassination by the Communist Party was the breaking point for Dos Passos.

Ludington writes, "Given the distrust Dos Passos had for organizations and governments as well as his growing distrust of the Communist Party in the United States, it was inevitable that he break completely with the party sooner or later. The incident that made the rupture sooner was the disappearance of his longtime friend José Robles" (*TCO* 366). Robert Sayre's assessment of the impact of the Spanish Civil War on American writers, obviously including Dos Passos, is thus: "[T]he response to the war was always closely bound up with the relation to Communism. Each affected the other: the prior relationship to Communism conditioned the way the war was experienced, and the experience of the war sometimes contributed to the triggering of a crisis in, and reappraisal of, the stance towards Communism" (263 – 264). Dos Passos's exposure to the happenings of the Spanish Civil War propelled him on a course during which he re-evaluated his own relationship with the Communist Party. Not only that, his time in Spain marked a break in his friendship with Ernest Hemingway, who had commandeered the filming of the documentary. Dos Passos initially conceived the film "primarily to bring the *truth* of the Spanish Civil War to concerned Americans, which in turn might help convince the President to repeal the arms embargo on Spain" (*Carr* 373). Hemingway and avant-garde documentary filmmaker Joris Ivens – a confirmed member of the Communist Party and Comintern propagandist whose career "was purchased by strict obedience to the political dictates of the Soviet regime" (*Koch* 48) – shot footage highlighting battle scenes where Loyalist forces, with the help of the Communist Party, were fighting the fascists. It glamorized the war, whereas Dos Passos wanted the film, eventually

released under the title *The Spanish Earth*, to focus more on the Spanish people and how the war was impacting them. Koch notes,

Dos wanted to see [Spain's] transformation featured in the film. Hem wanted to play down radical social change in the Republic and play up the heroic military struggle against fascist militarism. This was more than a mere clash of temperament: macho Hem wanting battle scenes versus fervent Dos plumping for social change. True, radical social change thrilled Dos Passos and bored Hemingway. But as Ivens knew, the real issue was Comintern propaganda policy. The directive was to portray Spain as a beleaguered democracy fighting fascism, and – above all – *not* as a revolutionary state. (126 – 127)

Under Hemingway's guidance, the film became little more than agitprop. In the summer of 1937, there was a private screening of *The Spanish Earth* scheduled in the White House; President Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, Ivens, Hemingway, and Martha Gellhorn were in attendance. At the end of the showing, President Roosevelt's comment – "Why don't you give more stress [. . .] to the fact that the Spaniards are fighting, not merely for the right to their own government, but also for the right to bring under cultivation those great tracts of land that the old system forcibly left barren?" (qtd. in Koch 228) – validated Dos Passos's vision for the film.

Thus, Dos Passos returned to America in 1937 with fresh eyes, seeing American-style democracy as the sole hope of a political and social system able to support the individual. At the same time, *The Grand Design* continued Dos Passos's critical vision of the United States, asserting that the modern American political nation must be altered if it is going to be able to provide support for the individual citizen. His vision of modern American democracy looks back in time. It resembles the democratic institution originally conceived and developed by the founding fathers, for Dos Passos believes that somewhere along the way, "*We had forgotten*" (*DC: AYM 2*). These three words in the trilogy's opening become a common refrain in the prose poems of *Adventures of a Young Man* as well as a theme throughout *District of Columbia*. Dos Passos writes,

*In the press of business
we had somehow forgotten
the plain aims and purposes
for which we founded
far from the world's thrones
and principalities and powers
an American republic.
(DC:AYM 3)*

“We” are not supporting the individual if “we” are not listening to individual voices. This means remembering, he writes at the close of *Adventures of a Young Man*,

*that when we say the people, we don't mean the proletariat or the
salarial class or the members of a fraternal order or a political party,
or the right-thinking readers of editorials in liberal or reactionary newspapers;
we mean every suffering citizen,
and more particularly
you and me.
(DC:AYM 342)*

There is something Whitmanian in this passage. Dos Passos had made a career of writing about America as two nations, but he prevails upon a shared identity to convince his audience to embrace American democracy. We are from two nations – a political class and the electorate – but we can be one. This patriotic sentiment of Dos Passos’s reflects a belief that the true spirit of American democracy meant a nation founded on the principle of individualism, where an individual is able to work to support him- or herself and, most of all, where an individual’s right to individuality is respected. The nation supports the individual, and simultaneously the individual exercises his or her individuality to support the nation, thereby becoming one with the nation. That oneness, however, always remains conditional, depending on the nation’s support for the individual self and citizen.

In *The Grand Design*, Paul Graves’s responsibility as a modern Democratic Individual is to design and put into practice a social program that will support the democratic vision Dos

Passos has in mind, practically since the beginning of his career. However, prior to any critical analysis of Graves as a modern Democratic Individual, it is important to note that his characterization bears significant resemblance to Walt Whitman's conception of the Democratic Individual. A close examination of Whitman's description of the Democratic Individual will aid in better understanding Dos Passos's modern interpretation of this figure and the role he or she has in the author's vision of America as two nations.

Whitman's Democratic Individual must have certain core characteristics in order to be effective in the democratic community. His Democratic Individual, also referred to as the Poet, will be informed and will participate in the democratic process, but according to Whitman, the Democratic Individual must not maintain a specific party identity. The Democratic Individual does not subscribe to a particular ideology. It is vital that the Democratic Individual be able to make judgments for him- or herself (*Democratic Vistas*). The figure of the Democratic Individual will be found operating among the people – upper and lower class, bankers and prostitutes, police and criminals, men and women – yet the Democratic Individual is separate from the people. Whitman writes, “He is a seer . . . he is individual . . . he is complete in himself . . . the others are as good as he, only he sees it and they do not. He is not one of the chorus . . . he does not stop for any regulation . . . he is the president of regulation” (*The Complete Poems* 746). Without the Democratic Individual, America and the people will lack a voice. Part of the responsibility of this voice is to help bring about economic, political, social, and moral change. Whitman's Democratic Individual comprehends that he or she holds an important office in society, but this figure does not seek reward, and he or she may find it necessary to work through the political system but at the same time refuse to become fully part of it.

Dos Passos's mid-century perspective on the individual represents a seismic shift in his thinking about the individual. By *District of Columbia*, however, the ideal individual has evolved into something akin to Whitman's Democratic Individual. The major similarity Paul Graves shares with his early German Romantic counterparts, such as Martin Howe, John Andrews, and Jimmy Herf, is that Graves as a modern Democratic Individual seeks enlightenment. This enlightened perspective, or knowledge, then would be shared with the community at large. In the manner of Whitman's Democratic Individual, Dos Passos's modern Democratic Individual will find enlightenment through direct and daily interaction with the people: upper and lower class, capitalist and laborer. Paul Graves, like Mary French, will interact with men and women in both nations that make up Dos Passos's vision of America. The goal of sharing this knowledge, I argue, is to expose the social inequities contaminating the community, thereby educating the audience about certain realities that may have gone unnoticed or are simply accepted by the general population without question, and to inspire the audience to alter these inequities for the betterment of the community. The major differences between Paul Graves as modern Democratic Individual and Dos Passos's earlier protagonists is that Paul Graves, like Mary French before him, remains part of the community. He does not withdraw from the collective in order to collect his thoughts and better understand the system. Achieving enlightenment and fuller comprehension of said enlightenment takes place within the collective. Additionally, he is not expressing his enlightenment through some grand creative gesture.

What distinguishes Paul Graves from Mary French is that even though he considers himself a scientist and farmer who has more in common with the individual citizens of the electorate nation, he holds a job in America's political nation. Mary French is consumed by "thinking of the work there was to be done to make the country what it ought to be" (*U.S.A.*

865). She, however, does not seek a government job in capitalist America. Instead, she takes up social work, does some journalism, volunteers to provide supplies to striking miners, and rallies support for Sacco and Vanzetti. She believes that through these actions “she was doing something real” (*U.S.A.* 1137). Further, Mary French is an effective ambassador between the two nations: one night she is seeking donations – food, money, clothing – from the members of the upper class for the impoverished, and the next day, in her working-class digs, she organizes the delivery of said donations. She is connected with real work and believes that her efforts can bring about change, but she is hampered by the party’s motivations and overall inability to put people’s needs ahead of the party. Through Mary French, Dos Passos explores whether his Democratic Individual can be successful while operating primarily in what he describes as America’s working-class nation, or America’s second nation.

Paul Graves is a modern Democratic Individual who tries, valiantly, to inspire change in his country, but he does so from above, working within the political nation, by holding a position in President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s administration. The author’s decision to give his modern Democratic Individual a job in government is anathema to Whitman’s depiction of the Democratic Individual or Poet. For Whitman, the Democratic Individual is not to subscribe to a political ideology, is not to hold government office, and is not to be a member of any political party. A role in government risks the Democratic Individual’s characterization as someone who is open to all ideas. It exposes him or her to the allure of power and could lead to egoism should the Democratic Individual promote self-interest over helping the people. Not to mention, working with the government is not the same as being an outsider who comments on the workings of society.

Why this change, then, in Dos Passos? In his review of *Adventures of a Young Man*, Chamberlain writes that there is a battle taking place in the novel for Glenn Spotswood's soul. It is through this battle that Dos Passos is writing about "phases of the old dilemma: how to keep the political struggle for power from conquering or corrupting the humanity to which all reformers and revolutionists should aspire" (qtd. in Maine 195). Chamberlain states that Dos Passos cannot solve this dilemma without the establishment and help of "limited government" (qtd. in Maine 195). Based on Dos Passos's vision, this limited government help comes through his modern Democratic Individual operating like an ambassador, maneuvering between America's two nations. *District of Columbia* depicts a greater rift between America's two nations than the one detailed in *U.S.A.* The modern Democratic Individual's role is to communicate with either nation, seeking some sort of treaty that would enable both nations to coexist and support each other. How his modern Democratic Individual goes about trying to fulfill this role involves holding down a job in the political nation with the Roosevelt administration.

By accepting a job in the political nation, Paul Graves does not sell out; rather, he reflects a new approach to the figure of the Democratic Individual. Whitman believed that the Poet might be influential by remaining apart from politics; Dos Passos concedes that, under modern conditions at least, such a position leaves the Democratic Individual without any such influence. I infer from *The Grand Design* that Dos Passos wonders whether or not it is possible for the modern Democratic Individual to succeed while operating in the political nation and yet also that Dos Passos sees such an effort as the one strategy with any hope of success. Paul's desire to work with the administration is first introduced in *Adventures of a Young Man*. Paul wants to see if he can put together an agricultural project and get it funded through the New Deal. Dos Passos writes, "He'd worked out some ideas about agricultural experiment stations and the government

was shovelling out the money. Maybe they would set him up in a small way and let him do his stuff” (DC: AYM 299). Not to mention that at the time fulfilling one’s civic responsibility by taking a government job may have made sense to an American citizen. Dos Passos writes, “Perhaps the day had come for government assistance to small business and the familysized farm. The demand for a new deal all around for the underprivileged was heard with more and more insistence on every hand. The present Administration had rolled up its sleeves and pitched in to build a more equable society for the American people” (DC: GD 32). This is the sentiment that drives Millard Carroll in the novel’s opening when he leaves a high-paying private-sector job for a position in FDR’s administration. The refrain, “We all have to make sacrifices,” is repeated throughout the text. This is Carroll’s sacrifice. It will become Paul Graves’s sacrifice as well, for Carroll prevails upon him to join him in Washington, D.C. Graves is taken with the idea of doing the kind of work that will be of benefit, not just for Washington, D.C., but for all Americans. It is very much the same vision that motivated Mary French.

In sum, then, the work of the enlightened modern Democratic Individual operating in a political nation corresponds to a vision for the country that Paul believes (and Dos Passos appears to believe) will impact society for the better. When Paul joins the administration during President Roosevelt’s first term, he has an ambitious agenda. He writes in a memorandum to his higher-ups: “*The aim of this project is to save the familysized farm in America*” (DC: GD 66).

In June 1929, President Hoover created the Federal Farm Board. Its mission was “to promote agricultural cooperatives and stabilization corporations” (Kennedy 44). The cooperatives were charged with maintaining systematized markets for various commodities, such as cotton and wool, by “facilitating voluntary agreements with producers” (Kennedy 44). If the market were ever overrun with surplus commodities from the producers, or farmers, then the

stabilization corporations would step in, buy the surplus, and commodities prices would remain stable. But the Federal Farm Bureau spent its entire budget of \$500 million dollars by the time President Roosevelt began his first term, and the continual production of surplus goods drove down prices. Consequently, farmers were not able to earn a living. Kennedy writes, “By early 1933 banks were foreclosing on farm mortgages at a rate of some twenty thousand per month” (141).

Under President Franklin Roosevelt, one proposal to address agriculture’s economic calamity was domestic allotment, which involved stopping the production of surplus commodities (Kennedy 141). Domestic allotment came under the purview of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA), an agency described as “an elaborate scheme to micromanage the farm sector” (Kennedy 177). The administration believed that the best way to ensure recovery was to embrace economic isolation. Historically, the Department of Agriculture, founded in 1899, took measures to help the American farmer increase his or her production. By the 1930s, though, because of the surplus, one of the tenets of the AAA held that American farmers had to “adjust production to consumption” (Kennedy 203). A scarcity had to be created in order for prices to go back up. The Agricultural Adjustment Act set up a system that paid farmers not to plant surplus crops. Further, farmers were encouraged to destroy many surplus crops already in existence. The AAA relied on Extension Service agents across rural America to encourage farmers to participate in this voluntary program. Since the AAA paid farmers to decrease the amount of crops raised, this meant the number of acres plowed was reduced. Tenants and sharecroppers had been working much of the untilled land. They were, as a result, deprived from earning a livelihood. Farm owners were meant to share the government money that they were paid with their tenants and sharecroppers, but few did. Consequently, many

tenants and sharecroppers left rural America and moved to the city with the hope of finding a job in the new Civil Works Administration (CWA) (Kennedy 190 – 217). The AAA strategy remained in existence in spite of this displacement of workers, and the economy did not show signs of recovery until 1935, two years after the AAA's plans were implemented.

In *The Grand Design*, Dos Passos explores the ramifications for American citizens of Federal Farm Board and AAA policies via the experience of Paul Graves. Paul sets up and monitors a number of farm cooperatives that resemble those started under President Hoover and continued during President Roosevelt's tenure. When in Washington, D.C., he relies on local farmers operating as Extension Service agents to promote the cooperative program. Paul is also helping tenant farmers and sharecroppers struggling to earn a living. It is during a respite from his work with the agency, back on his own farm with his wife and children, when Paul starts thinking about how he might go about fixing up the property. Suddenly, Dos Passos writes,

The blueprint was unrolling in his head. It was the floorplan of an airy foursquare farmhouse, two bedrooms, bathroom, livingroom, kitchen with a good enameled sink and an electric stove and a washing machine and a cement walk leading out back to the barn and garage and implement shed and a simple dairy for cooling milk; a paved road flanked by the power line and telephone led to the rural center, where the cooperative dairy was and maybe a small cheese plant and refrigerated lockers and the rural school and a couple of stores and a church, and became a four lane highway to the town where there would be factories and warehouses and merchandizing centers and motion picture theatres and highschoools and meeting halls. This was his America. If you could get the rural economy functioning well enough to reverse the trend and suck the people back out of the obsolete gangrenous cities . . . Americans had never learned to build decent cities because they didn't need them, maybe. As the blueprints unrolled in his mind it was as if he skimmed in an imaginary plane over a model countryside contourplowed reforested resettled. God there was so much land in this country. There was room for us all to live spaced out, to reach a balance between largescale organization and individual human stature . . . Stature. (DC: GD 141 – 142)

This vision becomes Graves's plan for the country. Subsequently, it inspires a great deal of thought about the American farmer. Dos Passos writes,

The oldtime American farmer had lived a hard life fighting weather and prices but he was the master of his destiny. It was that feeling of being master of your destiny that was frittered away in largescale organizations, in city life, in industrial plants and labor unions. If you could make a man a little more independent at the source of his livelihood he would be able to make over all these organizations into organs for selfgovernment instead of organs for slavery. That was what [Paul] meant by stature. (*DC: GD* 143)

Note that the system that Paul has conceived is remarkably similar to the social and political structure that Dos Passos describes and writes about at great length in his 1922 book, *Rosinante to the Road Again* (see “The Baker of Almorox” and “Benavente’s Madrid”) and in his essays about the Spanish Civil War (collected under the title *The Villages Are the Heart of Spain*). Prior to leaving Spain in 1937, Dos Passos visited the town of San Pol de Mar. Carr writes,

Here Dos Passos discovered cooperative ventures in agriculture, fishing, chicken farming, retail stores, public baths, showers, a pool parlor, a gymnasium – all municipally operated. Moreover, a Catalonian alliance of cooperatives of long standing had helped unify the people of that province in a unique fashion [. . .] Dos Passos concluded that the villagers were “the heart of Spain,” not the cities with their divisive political factions. (371 – 372)

In spite of Dos Passos’s seismic shift in political ideology (for excellent analyses of this topic see Hicks, “The Politics of Dos Passos”; Ludington, “John Dos Passos in the 1930s”; Trombold, “From the Future to the Past”), there is a great deal of commonality between early and later Dos Passos, especially in the author’s impressions and dreams about the modern world and modern America. Regardless of his political leanings, the author writes about and searches for this ideal community throughout the entirety of his career. *The Grand Design* suggests that the modern Democratic Individual will be instrumental in helping make such an ideal a reality.

The nation Paul has envisioned, so similar to what Dos Passos had seen in Catalonia, is the desired goal of the modern Democratic Individual. The problem in bringing about such an

idealistic endeavor is figuring out the modern Democratic Individual's course of action to bridge the gap between America's two nations. Dos Passos writes,

What was worrying [Paul] in this business, he explained scowling, was that there seemed to be something incommensurable between what went on in the agency office – the policy level – and what went on in the field. We had in government today, at least that was his guess, the most wellintentioned crowd of people since the very early days of Washington and Jefferson. A man like Millard Carroll had sacrificed a business and a very sizable income. There were hundreds like him. He couldn't make out Walker Watson but behind that latter day Lincoln stuff there seemed to smoulder something that was not entirely selfinterest. Anyways grant 'em all a hundred percent patriotism from the gentleman in the White House down and the best possible plan of operations that could be braintrusted out and you would still have this gap between the plans at the policy level and the poor devil in the field being moved around by forces too big for him to understand. In a business, no matter how huge, Standard Oil say, the problem was simple. The aim was to make money. You could tell, at least a good accountant could tell, what every smallest branch was doing. But the aim of government enterprise was presumably to secure the wellbeing of the population. That wasn't so easy. (*DC: GD* 162 – 163)

It would appear that the effective modern Democratic Individual in FDR's America will need to be able to converse on two levels: political and layman. The modern Democratic Individual will need to be able to translate theory into practical application and vice versa. Paul's responsibility will be to translate the "forces too big" to individual citizens in order for him to have any effect as a modern Democratic Individual and to bring about his vision.

Paul's one fault as Dos Passos's ideal modern Democratic Individual is his inability to speak. Whitman's Democratic Individual must have a voice; otherwise, America and the people also will lack a voice. Graves does not need to be a highly skilled orator, but communication is vital. Yet the reader and the critic should not begrudge Paul this lapse. Instead, this is at most a minor defect, for Paul is able to deliver his message through various memoranda to Millard Carroll and other individuals working in the Administration as well as through casual conversations with farmers out in the field. However, Paul is asked to speak at a luncheon for

members of a local farmers' cooperative. When he is unable to articulate himself well enough in the more formal setting, he says, "Lord, I'm no speaker" (*DC: GD* 150).

But Paul, and through Paul, Dos Passos, equates public speaking with the responsibilities of being a politician. Like Whitman's Democratic Individual who does not seek political office, Paul does not see himself as a politician. The fact that he does he regard himself as a Washington bureaucrat is a positive aspect of his characterization as a modern Democratic Individual; he operates through politics but is not a politician. Over dinner in a diner, Paul says,

I don't know anything about politics [. . .] I'm in this because I think there's a valuable reservoir of people in this country who haven't gotten a break, farmers who live on submarginal farms, hillbillies, migrant laborers. Prosperity is an express that goes by mighty fast and makes very few stops and a lot of good people just don't catch the train for no fault of their own. So long as this government is willing to spend a few million dollars setting these people up in new farms and houses and in machinery to work with I'm willing to string along and see how it works. I think it will pay off in better farming practices as well as in conservation of the soil and of the most valuable thing of all. (*DC: GD* 247)

Paul has no love for politics and he has no ambition to hold higher office. It would appear that Dos Passos's modern Democratic Individual cannot be swayed to sacrifice his principles for the sake of the Administration. This passage shows that he holds onto the same vision that he had earlier when he was at his own farm. Therefore, the reader and the critic should forgive the lapse in public speaking on Paul's part. After all, being a skilled public speaker does risk turning someone into a skilled manipulator of public sentiment, as with Chuck Crawford.

Paul's two greatest strengths as a modern Democratic Individual are his willingness to listen to the individual citizens and his ability to communicate their concerns to the men for whom he works in the Administration, essential qualities to the modern Democratic Individual operating as ambassador between the two nations. On the surface, this description of Dos Passos's modern Democratic Individual may not represent a significant break with Whitman's

conception of the figure, for, according to Whitman, the Democratic Individual will be found with the people, listening to and speaking for America and the people. What is crucial to remember, however, is that Dos Passos's modern Democratic Individual listens and speaks to the people as a representative of the political nation because, in contrast to Whitman, Dos Passos's modern Democratic Individual holds a job in this nation – and must hold such a job to have any kind of influence. Also, he or she represents the people, or the electorate nation, when he or she speaks and listens to the political nation.

These qualities are vital if the modern Democratic Individual is going to be able to help create a collective that supports and is supported by the individual citizen. Even when conversations with individual citizens border on the negative, as they do on many an occasion, Paul does not ignore or block out what is being said. He does not hear only what he wants to hear. He never refuses to listen. He absorbs the details, collects all necessary data, and then reports what he is told to both nations. Paul never tries to tell the people what to think. Paul could very easily insist that every farmer across the nation take part in his plan, but he does not. It is not the responsibility of the modern Democratic Individual to tell individual citizens how to think. Rather, it is the responsibility of the modern Democratic Individual to tell individual citizens what they need to know in order to make a more informed decision for themselves. On several occasions, several men and women in rural areas have a negative assessment of his cooperative program. A cooperative manager confesses, "I'm a cooperator from the word go [. . .] but what worries me about this business is that . . . when the Government steps in to put people on their feet who haven't been able to get together themselves to help each other. I don't see how it can result in anything but more politics" (*DC: GD* 246 – 247). A farmer named Hodgins, not part of the cooperative, admits that he approves of and supports the spirit of the plan (*DC: GD*

157). The problem is that Hodgins has noticed that many former tenant farmers are only succeeding because of government loans. Without that help, they would all go belly-up because they are not good businessmen.

The worst condemnation comes from Reverend Green, who insists, “In these counties [. . .] relief is in the hands of the politicians and the politicians are mostly landlords who save it for their own tenants” (*DC: GD 155*). The reverend takes Paul on a tour of farms that are still struggling because they are not part of the cooperative. These individual farmers are not former tenant farmers who have rented some land to manage under the watchful eye of their landlord. These are individual citizens who know how to manage their land and are experienced businessmen but victims of the Depression. Yet they refuse to accept welfare from the government. Many of these people are broke, starving, lack basic modern appliances such as running water and electricity, and live like they are sharecroppers in the nineteenth century. They are dying. The reverend’s message is clear: Paul should not concern himself solely with monitoring whether his program is a success. He needs to concern himself with the welfare of the people.

Dos Passos’s modern Democratic Individual insists that the welfare of the people is the driving force behind his vision. Paul works towards creating an America that will give each citizen “stature.” The problem, as Paul sees it, is that the program will not help everyone, the greater good that Reverend Green highlights, if individual citizens are unwilling to participate in the voluntary program. The two main reasons why many farmers refuse to enroll are, first, they do not want the government telling them what they can and cannot do on their farms (i.e., big government is bad). These individual citizens refuse to risk their individuality by permitting the political nation to have any kind of say in how they run their farms or control over their

livelihood. Second, they cannot make their own fortune by participating in a food cooperative in which everyone shares the profits (i.e., socialism is bad). In other words, they believe in economic individualism, one of the country's founding principles. They exercise their individuality by opting out of the cooperative, even if it means sacrificing their own livelihood.

Paul finds, then, that he is contending not just with stubborn individuals but individuals whose decisions are shaped by doctrinaire ideological prejudices. Still, Paul struggles and carries on. At one point he says,

Your relationship with people changes when you try to organize them into doing things. You have to kind of lower their consequence. First thing you know it's your career instead of the work gets to be the important thing. I suppose that's how politicians are made. Oh God don't let me turn into a politician. (*DC: GD 268*)

In spite of the fact that many are resistant to his blueprint for America, Paul remains a true modern Democratic Individual. Even Whitman's Democratic Individual had to cope with similar hesitancy from the people. His Democratic Individual stands apart from the people and operates outside of the government, but this separatism does not guarantee that the people will listen to him or her. When Whitman's Democratic Individual's ideas are ignored, he or she must stand firm in his or her opinion and not give in to popular thinking simply for the sake of feeling relevant. Whitman tells us that the Democratic Individual can be a lonely calling. Therefore, the responsibility of Dos Passos's modern Democratic Individual as ambassador is to deliver the message: Here is what is wrong with the country and this is what we can do to fix it. He or she cannot coerce the electorate nation or the political nation into believing or even following the contents of the message. Note, though, that were the political nation to become mute, once Dos Passos's modern Democratic Individual delivers his or her message, such a reaction will prove to

be an impasse for this more modern Democratic Individual to fulfill his or her function with the electorate. Working within politics presents dangers, but they are necessary ones.

Within his depiction of the modern Democratic Individual, Dos Passos once again writes about an all-too familiar subject addressed in earlier books – America – only, in *District of Columbia*, he defines it in political terms as opposed to the economic language used in prior works. According to Dos Passos’s description, the political nation at that time was more than aware of the country’s problems that needed to be addressed for the benefit of both nations; the political nation, however, still proves to be a difficult swamp to navigate in order to conceive, design, and implement any kind of program that might alleviate, much less solve, the aforementioned problems. Washington, D.C., and the political nation may have the best intentions, but they operate according to their own language and customs. At one point in *The Grand Design*, Millard Carroll tries to educate Paul in what he calls “the Washington tempo” (*DC: GD 71*), which involves attending and hosting dinner parties in order to make acquaintances with influential Washington power players, courting the favor of key figures who have the ears of the right politicians; attending meetings behind closed doors that are off the record, waltzing around facts and speaking only in hypotheticals, and emphasizing the political benefits in every discussion in addition to the social advantages. Based on this description, being a modern Democratic Individual in the political nation appears to be more about process than achieving actual results. Paul does not want to be bogged down in politics. Millard explains that “the Washington tempo” is mandatory because it is how programs like Paul’s find funding. “The Washington tempo” is how the political nation works.

But as a go-between for the political class and the common citizenry, Paul is not interested in schmoozing and rubbing elbows. He cares only about implementing his plans for

the farmers. Paul believes that “[i]f [Millard] attends to the politics . . . no I mean the heaving and hauling inside the Administration . . . I may be able to get somewhere with the technical side of the thing” (*DC: GD* 82). If Paul can stay clear of “the Washington tempo” and the allure of power that tempts many a politician, as chronicled in *Number One*, the modern Democratic Individual might just have a lasting impact on both nations, in spite of Whitman’s insistence that the Democratic Individual not occupy a role in government. The problem, as Gelfant correctly sees it, is that Paul may want to work for his country, but “the ruling administration is unwilling to accept him” (147). His failure at making his program work is not due “to the deficiency of [his] ideas or [his] [character] but to the selfish and confused machinations of the New Deal administration [. . .] he has been blamelessly overwhelmed by a political clique against which he finds no redress” (147).

Still, Paul’s message and his blueprint for America hold some hope of success for the two nations. World War Two presents a new set of complications, certainly, as the country suddenly has to shift its priorities. Many social programs affiliated with the New Deal are de-emphasized and funds are re-allocated for the war effort. The refrain, “We all have to make sacrifices,” takes on a new denotation. Individual citizens are not working to bring the two nations out of a depression; instead, they are working to build a military apparatus to protect the country, now unified under the banner of patriotism. When Paul’s blueprint is no longer deemed a priority by the administration, however, he does not abandon his plan. Rather, he intends to implement the blueprint for the Navy as part of their Pacific war plans. The modern Democratic Individual continues to operate as an agent, substituting his role in a corrupted government for a commission in the military. He still wants to bring about change while representing the second nation.

Though the subject of America may be familiar in Dos Passos's work, the country has changed significantly since *U.S.A.*; the America of *District of Columbia* is scarcely recognizable to Dos Passos in the guise of the political writer, as opposed to Dos Passos the narrator. The political writer of *U.S.A.* does not announce his presence in the text until *The Big Money* when he uses the first-person "I" in *Camera Eye* (46). In *District of Columbia*, Dos Passos, in the by-then familiar role of political writer, identifies himself as one of the people by using the first-person plural "we." *Adventures of a Young Man* begins with "We had forgotten" (DC: AYM 1) and *The Grand Design* ends with "We learned; but not enough" (DC: GD 441). The subtle alteration in pronouns is a stark difference. The narrator of *U.S.A.* stands apart from the second nation. He identifies with them, but he does not feel as though he is one of them. Something sets him apart, most likely his family background, given the fact that his father was a financially successful and politically influential lawyer for capitalist interests and traversed freely through the political nation. In *District of Columbia*, Dos Passos's use of the first-person plural indicates that he identifies with all Americans, especially those in the second nation. He has achieved a kind of Whitmanian unity in this work that is not possible in *U.S.A.* He writes, "*the people is everybody / and one man alone*" (DC: NO 248). Continuing, he states,

*each life taut in the net of lives:
neighbors, wives, children, the postman who comes to the door, the
woman who works in the kitchen, the man higher up;
weak as the weakest, strong as the strongest,
the people are the republic,
the people are you.*
(DC: NO 248)

Dos Passos is describing a Golden Age of America, an idealized America, that no longer exists – and may never have existed – yet to which he is desperate to return. Tragically, it has been distorted and corrupted first by industrialization and capitalism – as described in *Manhattan*

Transfer and *U.S.A.* – and then by politicians bent on egoism – as illustrated in *District of Columbia*. Dos Passos remarks in the prose poems that “we” elected “them” and “[t]hey spoke for us” (*DC: GD* 23). Only Dos Passos does not care for “their” message, which is “[t]o make America over” (*DC: GD* 83) – i.e., the New Deal. Dos Passos the reformer would have agreed with such a sentiment, but the political writer of the prose poems does not condone many of the actions legislated by the Roosevelt administration in order to “make America over.” The author is no longer attacking Communism in this third volume. The new threat is big government. Paul’s blueprint may be a “big” ambitious plan to save the American farmer, but it is not a plan to grow the size of the government. Do not conflate his modern Democratic Individual’s mission with the growth of government. For Dos Passos the political writer, “big” government is a threat.

As a political commentator and political actor scarred by his Communist experience, Dos Passos views the New Deal as a threat in spite of the fact that he implies in his novel that he sees favorably some of the initiatives rolled out by the administration. Hicks points out that “[i]n an interview [Dos Passos] gave in the winter of 1949, after *The Grand Design* had been published, Dos Passos said that he was surprised that reviewers had regarded it as an all-out attack on the New Deal” (95). In his essay “Farewell to Europe!” Dos Passos optimistically writes, “Not all the fascist-hearted newspaper owners in the country, or the Chambers of Commerce, nor the armies of hired gunthugs of the great industries can change the fact that we have the Roundhead Revolution in our heritage and the Bill of Rights and the fact that the democracy in the past has been able under Jefferson, Jackson, and Lincoln, and perhaps a fourth time (it’s too soon to know yet) under Franklin Roosevelt, to curb powerful ruling groups” (*Travel Books* 622). But then the war happened.

He admits that President Roosevelt and his administration succeeded at creating numerous jobs for the unemployed, instituting the eight-hour workday, the six-day workweek, and protecting workers' rights. But when the United States declared war, and everyone was in favor of personal sacrifice in order to stop Hitler, Dos Passos reverts to the singular pronoun of *U.S.A.* In *The Grand Design*, use of the first person implies that he stands alone in his opposition to President Roosevelt's actions. While the entire country rallies around the president, united against a common foe – the result being that there is no longer a split between “we” and “they” – Dos Passos laments that lost Golden Age of America, that America has forgotten itself, that America has forgotten its history. As a consequence, in Paul's case, Gelfant rightly points out that the political clique of government officials Paul must deal with “is his enemy as well as the enemy of the country, the obstacle to his self-fulfillment and the fulfillment of America's dreams” (147).

Then again, in spite of the political writer's grim perspective on his country, the modern Democratic Individual can help the country return to Dos Passos's idealized America. In spite of the deprioritization of Paul Graves's blueprint by the administration during the war, Paul does not abandon his plan. Rather, he refashions it for the Navy when he is called up by the service to devise an agricultural plan to be operated in the Pacific theater to help troops in between supply ships. The modern Democratic Individual does not abdicate his or her role simply because the political nation deems him or her unnecessary for the moment. Under this vision, the modern Democratic Individual recognizes that he or she still has a responsibility to the electorate, to the secondary nation, to the enlisted men and women. Paul intends to uphold this responsibility in a military capacity because there remains the potential for achieving the original goal of the

blueprint – to give men and women stature. Recall, Paul believes that once every man and woman has stature, then the country can change for the better.

Dos Passos closes *District of Columbia* with a description of his father’s America, comparing it to this modern America. The political writer appears to be weeping. It is not that he does not believe Hitler must be stopped. The problem is that “[w]ar is a time for Caesars” (*DC: GD 417*). Hicks writes, “As for war, Dos Passos hated it in and for itself and because it inevitably resulted in the piling of power upon power” (96). Declaring war, sending men off to war, and deciding how to allocate monies and resources to winning a war give the president yet again more power. Dos Passos writes,

*but we have not learned, in spite of the Constitution and the Declaration
of Independence and the great debates at Richmond and Philadelphia
how to put power over the lives of men into the hands of one man
and to make him use it wisely.*

(*DC: GD 418*)

As evidence of FDR’s potential for authoritarianism, Dos Passos highlights the creation of the Japanese internment camps (*DC: GD 416*). If such a barbarous decision can be made, who knows what other actions might be deemed justifiable? Because he is intimately acquainted with man’s weak-willed nature and tendency to descend into egoism, he fears that no good can come from such decisions. He ends the series with the following lines:

*The republic’s foundations are not in the sound of words,
they are in the shape of our lives, fellowcitizens.
They trace the outlines of a grand design. To achieve
Greatness a people must have a design before them
too great for accomplishment. Some things we have learned, but not
enough; there is more to learn. Today
we must learn
to found again
in freedom
our republic.*

(*DC: GD 446*)

Dos Passos offers the following statement to the president in his essay, “To A Liberal in Office”: “It is the business of liberals in positions of power to remember that free institutions depend on the ‘how’ much more than on the results. Democracy is a method of social organization, not an end. [. . .] [I]t is hardly too much to ask a public official to remember that he is a citizen before he is an official and that he must decide for himself whether his actions are tending to the defense or the destruction of the government” (*Travel Books* 628, 631). In other words, President Roosevelt’s decisions while in office may have helped to win the war, but at what cost? Chuck Crawford thought only of the results, to the point that it did not matter *how* or at whose expense he might achieve those results. The modern Democratic Individual may be a political agent, but he or she never forgets that he or she is also a citizen, which helps them avoid egoism and maintain the purity of his or her actions. Dos Passos asks the president to take a moment to remember that he too is a citizen, not only a politician. Such a minor step, though a crucial one, may help to bridge the divide between politicians and citizens, between the political and the electorate nations.

The prose poems expose the costs of FDR’s policies to “save the nation”: the presidency has more power than at any other point in history, and the federal government is larger than ever. Dos Passos regards government growth, and the escalation of government power, as a flagrant violation of the essence of America. President Roosevelt’s administration may have started with the ideal of supporting individual citizens, but, based on Dos Passos’s description, it did not end still holding to this vision. Instead, it became consumed with the growth of government and the consolidation of power. Dos Passos fears such behavior by any administration in power, not just FDR’s, and sees it as a threat to the individual citizen. Hicks adroitly observes that

[n]othing is deeper in [Dos Passos] than his fear of power. To begin with, he feared the power of the military, as he had experienced it in the first World War, and the power of men of wealth. The hatred of war and exploitation grew so acute that he accepted for a time the tempting radical doctrine that only power can destroy power. But what he saw of communism in Russia, in Spain, and at home convinced him that the destroying power could be more dangerous than the power it overcame. The New Deal, whatever its accomplishments, represented a great concentration of power, and he must always have been uneasy about it. (95 – 96)

If the reader is searching for a solution to this amassing of power by a government body, Dos Passos's advice in the prose poems would appear to be: America, and American democracy, needs to revert to the way it was under the founding fathers. This is Dos Passos's "grand design." What Dos Passos describes is not an easy task. Such a labor would require a Herculean effort, involving the collaboration and cooperation of both the political *and* the electorate nations. This is just as "grand" as the effort made by the founding fathers when the American democratic republic was first established. However, such a feat can be accomplished with the help and guidance of his modern Democratic Individual.

Do not take this message literally. For Dos Passos, this is a figurative sentiment. The problem is that Dos Passos sees the American government growing so large that it either cannot hear the individual or it has stopped listening, which is why the politician needs to take a moment to remember that he or she was a citizen before he or she was a politician.

Whitman believed that the Democratic Individual could help unify the people and remind them that they are all Americans. Such a romantic sentiment is just not possible in Dos Passos's illustration of modern America because of the imbalance in the country that has contributed to America becoming two nations. In the earlier novels, it was an economic imbalance. In *District of Columbia*, it is an issue of government escalation. As I have argued, Dos Passos's modern

Democratic Individual will labor to correct this imbalance, which must be fixed before all individual American citizens can be unified under a shared patriotic identity.

If the reader or critic desires step-by-step instructions from Dos Passos on how to achieve this correction, Fichtelberg advises turning to Dos Passos's historical works and non-fiction texts. Whether in the non-fiction or the fiction, though, the key is the individual. This figure has evolved over the course of the writer's fiction, turning into the modern Democratic Individual of the *District of Columbia*. No matter the author's political ideology, he is for the individual. The problem is that Dos Passos as political writer has a vision for America that he describes in verse. Paul Graves, his protagonist, operates in prose. Dos Passos looks backwards when writing about his idyllic America, and the inherent message is that such a country will be more supportive of the modern Democratic Individual. Paul Graves, however, takes his blueprint to the Navy. The message encoded in such a decision is that the modern Democratic Individual has not abandoned the idea of working with this real-life twentieth-century government, or some other form of official bureaucracy, while continuing to represent the people.

CHAPTER SIX

THE MODERN DEMOCRATIC INDIVIDUAL OF POSTWAR AMERICA

With the publication of *Adventures of a Young Man* in 1939, friends noticed a change in John Dos Passos's political leanings. In a *New York Times* interview, Dos Passos "insisted again that he had spent his entire life 'trying to escape classification.' More and more, however, despite his tendency to shrug off labels, most of his friends and old literary acquaintances in the North interpreted his direction as archconservatism" (qtd. in Carr 496). His conservative ideology was even more pronounced by the time of the 1952 presidential election. Dos Passos chose to affiliate himself with the Republican Party (Carr 493). He was pleased when President Eisenhower was elected in 1952, and again in 1956, hoping that "under Eisenhower the nation might strengthen its will to fight the Communists, and particularly he hoped that a new administration might combat internal subversion" (*TCO* 459). Dos Passos approved of the House Un-American Activities Committee and agreed with Senator McCarthy's goals of wanting to root out the Communist threat. Though he did not laud the man once he became a publicity hound "who had smeared the reputations of a number of people" (*TCO* 460), neither did Dos Passos condemn McCarthy for such behavior. Rather, in his novel *Century's Ebb* "he portrayed McCarthy as a patriotic country boy vilified by politicians and liberals soft on Communists" (*TCO* 460).

From 1950 until his death on September 28, 1970, the author maintained a vigorous writing schedule pursuing journalism assignments as well as publishing essay collections, histories, and biographies. Dos Passos also wrote and published four books of fiction: *Chosen Country* (1951), *Most Likely to Succeed* (1954), *The Great Days* (1958), and *Midcentury* (1961).

Century's Ebb (1975) remained unfinished when he died, though it was published posthumously. Today, all of these books are practically unknown to the reading public and have been forgotten by literary scholars except diehard Dos Passos devotés. While I cannot argue that these remaining five books represent the author at his best – I concede the widely held opinion of Dos Passos's critics that *The Great Days* is great in title only and represents a “low point for Dos Passos” (Cowley 17) – I must defend the merits of reading and studying these books. Besides, *Midcentury* and *Century's Ebb* are truly fascinating in their own right, and *Most Likely to Succeed* is a wonderful satire. These books represent an interesting coda to the author's thoughts on his two familiar subjects of America and the individual.

Reading these later books, Dos Passos's conservatism comes across as reactionary. Conservatism is a weapon wielded in his all-too-familiar battle against forces corrupting contemporary society – by contemporary I mean 1940s through 1960s – and threatening the liberty of the individual. Dos Passos told a reporter from the New York *Herald Tribune*, “I think the only people who have any fresh ideas today are the conservatives. [. . .] They are interested in individual liberty” (qtd. in Carr 518). His conservative ideology coordinates well with his desire for the country to return to the mold originally conceived by the founding fathers. When it comes to comprehending the author's conservative outlook on America – and the postwar globe – a close examination of Dos Passos's non-fiction texts and interviews given during this period is advantageous (see Robert C. Rosen's *John Dos Passos: Politics and the Writer* and Granville Hicks's “The Politics of John Dos Passos”); however, elucidation of these later histories, biographies, and essays risks venturing beyond the bounds of this work.

What is not to be overlooked, though, is that when it comes to his modern Democratic Individual, Dos Passos offers an updated definition of this figure in the books *Chosen Country*,

Midcentury, and *Century's Ebb*. Similar to Paul Graves of *The Grand Design*, this figure performs a public service as an agent working for or as part of a formal institution, government or otherwise, established by individual citizens to safeguard their rights. Like Mary French of *The Big Money*, he or she does not chase egoism and does not crave financial gain or fame, as he or she never loses sight of the fact that his or her responsibility is to act as a representative on behalf of the individual citizens; it is the obligation of the modern Democratic Individual to speak the truth, even if his or her "truth" is disregarded. What is new about this figure is that the modern Democratic Individual fulfills these goals in a manner that upholds American democracy. This last feature is the author's mandate for the modern Democratic Individual.

Dos Passos's modern Democratic Individual evolves yet again in his fiction during this final phase of the author's career. Select passages from *Midcentury* and the posthumous *Century's Ebb* reflect the changes Dos Passos has in mind for the figure, though it does still share some similarities embodied in previous incarnations and with Walt Whitman's conception of the Democratic Individual.

Critical analyses of the later work prove difficult to track down as most scholars, and Dos Passos's own peers, prefer the author's earlier fiction. Each of the late novels proved to be controversial for some his critics, many of whom disparaged Dos Passos for abdicating his early-in-life leftist principles and choosing his late-in-life attack of the Communist Party, yet there are also critics who praise the later work. In his review of *Chosen Country* (December 1951), Arthur Mizener writes, "The reader will find the marvelous narrative gift which can marshal a whole society for us and yet keep the story moving with the pace of first-rate melodrama" (qtd. in *Maine* 251). Mizener agrees with Edmund Wilson that this is Dos Passos's best novel. Going

even further, Mizener states that Dos Passos devotes a great deal of time in his trilogies to writing about political ideas and people dealing with what kind of country America is. However, Mizener believes that formerly there had been some distance between author and his choice of subject, a lack of pathos, which prevented the reader from fully appreciating the message Dos Passos was delivering and empathizing with the feelings of his characters. Mizener believes that Dos Passos finds that pathos and displays it in *Chosen Country*. On the other hand, Harrison Smith (December 1951) is not as impressed with the novel as Wilson and Mizener. He does not find Lulie Parsons and Jay Pignatelli “worth writing about” (qtd. in Maine 256). Theirs is a “banal love story” (qtd. in Maine 256). Smith even mocks the sentimentality of the novel’s ending as Jay and Lulie stand on the porch of a cabin that they borrowed for their honeymoon, expressing the desire to remain where they are and make the wilderness their home. Iain Colley lambasts Dos Passos for becoming a writer of melodrama with books like *Chosen Country*.

Fanny Butcher (February 1961) praises *Midcentury*. She states that it will be the most talked-about book that year. What is celebratory about the novel is that “*Midcentury* is essentially a novel about labor, but it is also about our country, today and only yesterday, a novel so interspersed with fact that the book seems less a story than history” (qtd. in Maine 259). Harry T. Moore (February 1961) hails *Midcentury* as Dos Passos’s best work since *U.S.A.* Moore celebrates the writing because Dos Passos allows the narrative to make his thesis for him, rather than resorting to proclaiming a thesis himself (a strategy employed in the *District of Columbia* series that did not win him praise) (Maine 263-266). David Sanders writes that *Midcentury* is a restatement of Dos Passos’s big ideas that he had articulated in books like *U.S.A* and *District of Columbia*. The book describes “a carefully documented sequence in which power has passed from big business to big government to big labor and finally to a monstrous instance of bigness

where the three have become one” (49). Sanders does not exactly heap praise on the novel, but he does suggest that it has been unfairly reviewed along sectarian lines. His review is an attempt to appreciate the book on its own merits while simultaneously comprehending where the novel sits among the entirety of Dos Passos’s oeuvre. In this latter instance, Sanders sees parallels between *Midcentury* and *The Big Money*. Sanders writes, “*The Big Money* dealt with money so big that it displaced all other values. The compromise of ideas, the abandonment of all principle, which is the subject of *Midcentury*, is even bigger than the financial sky-ride of the twenties, and its size is all the more terrifying” (49). The characters may continue to move from place to place, but the prose in *Midcentury* takes its time as characters stop to reflect about where they are and where they are going.

R.A. Fraser’s (February 1961) less than admiring review pays close attention to the difference between *Midcentury* and *U.S.A.* Thirty years had passed. The original trilogy described the struggle being fought by the individual; the later book shows how the fight led to frustrated hopes. Fraser writes, “For what has happened in the generation between the two books, Dos Passos seems to be saying (without explaining why it happened), is that an authentic and passionate individualism has died in America, and with it the hope of building a society based on the needs of the individual” (qtd. in Maine 261). Fraser faults the book, suggesting that disillusionment contaminates the author’s prose. Milton Rugoff (February 1961) labels *Midcentury* a “hollow imitation” of *U.S.A.* Rugoff writes, “The book’s chief bogeys – aside from racketeers – are the New Deal (and in terms of personalities, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt) and most liberals and intellectuals” (qtd. in Maine 267). Rugoff claims that Dos Passos’s political predilections mar the fiction of the book, turning it into propaganda instead of art. In the *New Statesman*, John Gross (October 1961) writes, “[F]or what purports to be a panoramic

‘novel of our time’ proves little more than a crotchety attack on labor rackets as the root of all un-American evil” (qtd. in Maine 275). For Dos Passos the old man, what is old is good, what is new is bad. Gross recommends ignoring *Midcentury* and turning to better works like *Manhattan Transfer* or *The Big Money*. The most damning review comes from Gore Vidal (May 1961), who in his piece in *Esquire* states that Dos Passos has overstayed his welcome in artistic circles. The author is no longer relevant because his work is no longer as good as it once was at the beginning of his career. Vidal finds Dos Passos’s switch in political ideology, from liberal to conservative, amusing, yet it is nothing to pay close attention to because Dos Passos is not politically relevant. *Midcentury* is described as nothing more than “page after page of [. . .] Old Guard demagoguery” (qtd. in Maine 269).

Malcolm Cowley’s assessment of the later fiction is that “[s]ome of [Dos Passos’s] later work appeared to be written with more haste than his early novels, with less rigor and with fewer demands on his imagination” (16). With regards to *Century’s Ebb*, Cowley writes (November 1975) that in the novel Dos Passos is attempting to answer a question he poses in his biographical sketch of Walt Whitman: What would Whitman think of modern-day America? To answer this question, Dos Passos merges fiction, biography, and various travel pieces chronicling what the author has seen during his time crisscrossing the country. Dos Passos provides a forlorn answer, but there is also a glimmer of hope to be found in “those individuals who work devotedly and remain honest in the midst of almost universal corruption” (qtd. in Maine 280). For all of the posthumous novel’s faults, Cowley does like the fictional narrative focused on Jay Pignatelli, primarily because this fictional alter ego of the author “reveals himself candidly at moments of personal crisis” (qtd. in Maine 280). Cowley sees something honest in Dos Passos’s fictional disguise in this final work. However, the work on its own does not stand out. What

Cowley recommends is reading this book in the order the author intended as late in life he reorganized all of his books into one giant series he called *Contemporary Chronicles*. *Century's Ebb* is the thirteenth chronicle, and one gains a full appreciation of the book when it is read as part of a larger oeuvre.

In spite of their unevenness, reflected in the mixed reviews, I assert that ignoring these later works is a mistake. Dos Passos's late-in-life fiction may not be representative of his best work, but these are important books as they reflect the author's final arguments about the Dos Passosian individual. Though the argument has been made that these novels offer less insight into the individual because they focus more on the collective – a familiar critique applied to *U.S.A.* and *Manhattan Transfer* – I contend that within the author's disparaging description of postwar America the reader will find key notions about the individual citizen and what I have termed the modern Democratic Individual.

First, in order to safeguard the rights and individuality of independent citizens, the modern Democratic Individual has become an economic and political operative by assuming an official role while working in an institution representing the voiceless individual citizens. As reflected in the character of Paul Graves in *The Grand Design*, this represents a break with Whitman's description of his own Democratic Individual functioning independently apart from political parties and other ideological organizations. In Dos Passos's America, he notes that “*Man is a creature that builds institutions*” (*Midcentury* 119) and that “*Man's institutions fashion his destiny*” (*Midcentury* 119). As opposed to challenging the institutions directly – industrialization, the military, capitalism, etc. – Dos Passos acknowledges the inevitability of institutions. This is a far cry from the opinions expressed by the author of *Manhattan Transfer* and *U.S.A.* In a biographical sketch about Walter Reuther, the UAW-CIO president, Dos Passos

writes, “Institutions are built on zeal. They are also built on fear” (*Midcentury* 142). Individual citizens will always erect some form of institution with the rationale that these institutions will safeguard the rights of individual citizens. The dilemma, as Dos Passos articulates in one fashion or another in book after book, is that even though individual citizens believe (mistakenly) that they should have control over these institutions that they create – if only to safeguard their individuality and not succumb to the cog of conformity that is required for the institution to function and thrive –they do not. The threat of institutions – capitalism, Communism, industrialization, big government, or unions – against the individual, individualism, and individuality has been a focus for the entirety of Dos Passos’s career. In his later novels, especially *Midcentury*, the inevitability of institutions is described as tragic as, yet again, institutions wind up having power over individual citizens. Humankind puts all of its faith in these institutions to protect them, but various elements corrupt the institution. While it may be inevitable that humankind will create institutions, Dos Passos’s entire body of work informs the reader that it is inevitable that said institutions wind up controlling the individual. Relying on a clichéd yet effective metaphor comparing society to an ant colony, Dos Passos writes,

*Lecturing on “Social Insects” the late Professor Wheeler of Harvard used to point out with some malice to his students
that the ants,
too,
in spite of the predestined perfection of their institutions,
suffered what he called “perversions of appetite.”
Their underground galleries and storied domes
are infested by an array of lethal creatures, thieves and predators, scavenger
crickets, greedy roaches and rove beetles, and one particular plumed little bug
which secretes in its hairs an elixir so delectable to antkind
that the ants lose all sense of self- or species-preservation
and seek death in its embrace. (Midcentury 120 – 121)*

Dos Passos's capitulation to the inevitability of institutions implies that there is no escape for the individual citizen from institutionalization. The end result of institutionalization, the so-called "lethal creature," is that the corrupted institutions emit "*an elixir so delectable*" enabling them to take advantage of the very individuals who established the institutions. In order to protect individual citizens from being exploited by these same institutions, the modern Democratic Individual will need to have some function within the institution. In *Chosen Country*, Jay Pignatelli decides that he wants to pursue a career in law, but this choice of occupation is not born out of a desire to make his fortune. Jay's initial rationale is "[a] lawyer is an officer of the court. Isn't it conceivable that a man might practice law as a public service?" (*Chosen Country* 389). Jay is described as someone who "believes that if a few good men got together and spread the proper information, they could get rid of crookedness and demagoguery in public office and put the poor old United States back on the rails" (*Century's Ebb* 407). Terry Bryant, a World War Two veteran and rubber plant worker, hates how his co-workers, most of whom are European and speak very little English, are exploited by the bosses at his factory. Terry says to his wife, "We've got to do something to help these people. [. . .] Pop brought us up to hate injustice more than anything in the world. Pop's old man brought that with him from the old country" (*Midcentury* 46). His wife, Tasha, recommends starting a union, yet another institution, though one designed to protect individual citizens from larger corrupt institutions. Once Terry organizes the workers, he feels a responsibility to protect the men. They elect him to represent them within the union, ensuring that they are receiving the protection guaranteed by the dues they pay.

These sentiments expressed by Jay and Terry reflect the responsibility of the modern Democratic Individual to function as part of the institution in order to speak for and represent

individual citizens within said institution. This modern Democratic Individual is no longer just an ambassador between divided political nations, like Paul Graves, nor is the figure solely a social worker seeking to bridge the gap between America's two nations separated along class lines, like Mary French. This modern Democratic Individual embodies both roles – Terry and Jay must function in political *and* economic terms.

Second, the modern Democratic Individual must not succumb to egoism; this can be accomplished because he or she will not fail to remember that he or she is a representative of the individual citizens. This is reminiscent of Dos Passos's advice to President Roosevelt to remember that he was once a citizen *before* he was a politician ("To a Liberal in Office," *Travel Books* 631). The role of representative is to be regarded as a consequential responsibility. Dos Passos asks in *Documentary* (15), "Is there any provision in the law in favor of the individual?" (*Midcentury* 236). While describing the plight of the individual citizen and his or her struggle against corrupt forces, the crooked institution that is the primary recipient of Dos Passos's attacks in *Midcentury* is unions; specifically, he writes about "the degeneration of unions into oppressive organizations" (Rosen 136). Carr writes, "The novel's conflicts did not involve socialism or Communism versus capitalism. The enemy was the centralization of power in government, business, and labor" (529). The novel was to be about "[t]he enduring struggle for life against 'strangling institutions' that seemed to Dos Passos to loom ever larger as the 1960s began" (*TCO* 480). What is particularly abhorrent about unions for the author is that these institutions were created with the intent of protecting the rights of the worker; unions were supposed to be that provision in favor of the individual. Dos Passos recognizes in unions the identical corruption that plagues capitalism and industrialization, as depicted in *Manhattan Transfer* and *U.S.A.*, and bureaucracy, as portrayed in *The Grand Design*, and said corruption has

lured individual citizens, union bosses, and representatives to egoism, thereby perpetuating the longevity of the corrupt institution. In *Manhattan Transfer*, *U.S.A.*, and *District of Columbia*, labor organizers rally the working class to organize by joining the unions in order to fight against the owners, the employers, and the upper class. For a brief period in the late 1930s, union efforts were championed by the Roosevelt administration because policymakers advocated the socialist sentiment of workers' rights. But by the 1950s, in Dos Passos's account, union corruption becomes rampant. The United States Senate Select Committee on Improper Activities in Labor and Management (at one point known as the McClellan committee) investigated racketeering in labor unions. Senator John L. McClellan was head of the committee in 1955 and can be regarded as a potential real-life example of a modern Democratic Individual. Dos Passos's biographical sketch of the Senator ends with the following passage:

certain legislation was passed,
 but its enforcement
 remained in the hands of officeholders and aspirants to high office whose ears
 were perpetually cocked towards the lobbyists,
 and who never heard
 the testimony,
 nor read the letters
 that outraged the senior senator from Arkansas. (*Midcentury* 277)

In *Midcentury*, it would appear that Dos Passos concedes that there are men and women who hold government positions and are good people. The problem is that their work proves to be ineffective because of the power-hungry, corrupt individuals who are consumed by egoistic pursuits, yet another set of "lethal creatures." These individuals prevent anything from happening that might bring about lasting change; these corrupt individuals prevent democracy from operating the way Dos Passos believes it is meant to function. Dos Passos's work more than implies that this is why the modern Democratic Individual is needed. What needs to be

determined is not whether Dos Passos's modern Democratic Individual is equal to the task of protecting the rights of individual citizens while part of the institution, but whether or not the modern Democratic Individual's actions will be effective.

In his capacity as a union rep, Terry Bryant is responsible for his co-workers, especially since he organizes and convinces them to join the IWW. When Terry believes that the workers in the plant are being cheated, because their funds are being wasted to pay for weekends away in Atlantic City or booze because the leaders are drunks, he requests an accounting of how union dues are being spent. He wants an honest union to represent his men. Only he is told, "Get wise, feller, get wise" (*Midcentury* 203). The workers are not in control of the union – it is the leaders who are in charge, and if Terry plays his cards right, he too might be able to profit. Only he is overcome by guilt as he confesses to his wife, "Those guys believed in me when I told 'em we'd get them a break if they joined the International and the only thing that's happened is they pay a few cents more dues so that the International office can get their per capita" (*Midcentury* 203). Terry is an idealist, but he is naïve about how the world works. Even his wife has to take him aside to explain: "Terry you can't fight 'em singlehanded. [. . .] Why can't you grow up. [. . .] You're not a boy scout any more" (*Midcentury* 208). Tasha does not approve of what is happening, but she is being pragmatic. They have several kids and they are barely getting by on his meager income. If Terry starts making waves, she knows that there will be repercussions. Terry is learning that the odds are stacked against the honest man and the modern Democratic Individual.

At a union meeting, Terry makes a last desperate pitch against the union leadership when he takes the microphone: "It doesn't matter too much what happens to me personally. [. . .] If we are going to keep American democracy we've got to act on it at the grass roots. [. . .] The way to

keep union democracy perfect is to clean out leeches and bloodsuckers the moment they appear” (*Midcentury* 230). Robert Rosen correctly highlights Terry’s narrative as an indictment of large unions that are “at best undemocratic, at worst criminal” (137). The one thing in Terry’s favor is that he remembers that before he was a union rep, he was a worker. This helps him resist the chance to “get wise” and cash in at his co-workers’ expense. Yet his plea is all for naught. Abandoned by his co-workers, he winds up fired for his efforts. Dos Passos’s would-be modern Democratic Individual is therefore ineffective, as his efforts are rejected by those individual citizens he was elected to represent.

Third, the individual citizens choose Dos Passos’s modern Democratic Individual; therefore, it is the responsibility of the modern Democratic Individual to speak the truth no matter the cost. This feature recalls Whitman’s words, and Emerson before him, when writing about his Poet, explaining that the Democratic Individual is not to be swayed by popular opinion; the Democratic Individual does not jump on the bandwagon. Not only this, but the Democratic Individual risks alienation from friends, family, and the community simply because he or she believes that it is incumbent to speak the truth, even if this message is contrary to community-wide accepted beliefs and practices. There is a distinction between Whitman (and Emerson) and Dos Passos concerning the “truth” delivered by the Democratic Individual. Whitman believes that the citizens, at some point, will be drawn to the Democratic Individual’s message because people are naturally drawn to the truth (*Democratic Vistas*); their being drawn to this “truth” thereby reinforces the one-ness apparent in Whitman’s work. The distinction in Dos Passos is that his America – more precisely, the 1950s postwar America that is the subject matter in *Midcentury* and part of *Century’s Ebb* – is a divided nation; it is separated along political *and* economic (and generational) lines. Dos Passos’s modern Democratic Individual speaks the truth

but risks betrayal by the citizens out of economic necessity because they are beholden to the powers-that-be that happen to have all of the political clout, even if they are drawn to the modern Democratic Individual's "truth."

Terry Bryant speaks up at the union meeting not only because he feels compelled to do so, but because his co-workers ask him to speak up on their behalf. They know that he is speaking the truth. They know that he is trying to protect their well-being. They want new union leadership; they want a review of union accounts; they too want an honest man to stand up for their rights. They choose Terry. This renders a significant distinction between Paul Graves and Terry Bryant, not to mention Mary French and Terry Bryant. In *The Big Money*, Mary feels a moral responsibility to do more for the working class that is exploited by the corrupt economic nation. She does social work, she writes journalism, she organizes speeches and donations. She chooses to get involved. Paul Graves has a reputation as an agricultural scientist. He has the notion of pitching a farms plan to the Roosevelt administration; ultimately, it is his sense of patriotism that convinces him to do his part for the country. In *Midcentury*, Terry is a colleague and an equal. He is not some more educated "do-gooder" helping those less fortunate than himself. Because of this connection, he feels responsible for his co-workers, so he organizes them and speaks with them about joining a union. Once they enlist in the IWW, they choose Terry to represent them; the workers *elected* him to be their intermediary between their employer and the union. However, they also promptly turn their backs on him when their own jobs are at risk. When Terry is fired from the rubber factory, he views this as a violation of his union rights. Seeking to be reinstated, he agrees to state labor arbitration, only to realize that he has zero chance of winning the case when none of his co-workers agree to stand up in court for him and when he comes across the judge laughing it up and going to lunch with the opposing counsel.

Terry moves his family to Duquesne, where he becomes a taxi driver. He is determined to keep his mouth shut and not to get involved. He has to eat and support his family just like every other individual citizen. However, Terry does get involved once again as a result of the taxicab war that takes place between Will Jenks, a so-called honest capitalist who believes in free enterprise, and mobster Frank Stellato, who has a monopoly on taxi operations in Duquesne. Terry teams with Jenks, finds himself organizing drivers who want to earn a fair wage, and subsequently, is murdered by goons working for Stellato. Terry's tragic death reflects the theme of *Midcentury*, which Colley identifies as "the extinction of the self-willed individual by the power of large group interests and monopolies" (142). Still, the modern Democratic Individual must be willing to pay the ultimate price rather than abandon the truth of his or her message to the individual citizens. Otherwise, he or she risks egoism and the integrity of his or her mission as a modern Democratic Individual.

Finally, in the process of representing the people and speaking the truth, the modern Democratic Individual takes steps to ensure that American democracy functions properly; the modern Democratic Individual is to uphold values set in place by the founding fathers. It is this missing quality that distinguishes the modern Democratic Individual of *Midcentury* and *Century's Ebb* from Paul Graves, Mary French, Jimmy Herf, John Andrews, and Martin Howe. In *Century's Ebb*, upon returning to the United States after witnessing the atrocities of the Spanish Civil War, Jay Pignatelli tells his wife, Lulie, "Somebody has to have the brains and the guts to find a formula Some way of applying the principles of the founding fathers to modern industrial society" (*Century's Ebb* 168). Even Terry Bryant says, "If we are going to keep American democracy we've got to act on it at the grass roots." Finally, there is a clearly stated mandate for the role of Dos Passos's modern Democratic Individual. What this means is

that while protecting the economic and political rights of individual citizens while operating within an institution originally conceived to protect the individuality of citizens, the modern Democratic Individual is doing so in a manner that upholds the values of American democracy – that all human beings are created equal; that every individual has the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; and that all citizens have a voice and the right to speak, especially about how the country is being managed. Further, the modern Democratic Individual is responsible for ensuring that the desires of the individual citizens, whom he or she is representing, do not conflict with the spirit of American democracy.

The modern Democratic Individual is not just standing up for the individual citizen; it is also his or her duty to protect the country. If human beings are institutional animals, then it can be argued by extension that America is an institutional country. Institutions created and operated according to democratic principles can be of some value to the country and to individual citizens. Only everywhere Dos Passos looks, he sees corruption. The government has grown, corporations have grown, unions are growing. Individuals bent on egoism who seek to amass economic and political power staff these corrupt organizations. Contrary to Nanney's remarks that "[Dos Passos] offers no antidote to the power these institutions have to efface their builders" (228), the modern Democratic Individual is that antidote and must operate in a manner to correct this depravity. The catch is that there is scant evidence in Dos Passos's fiction of the modern Democratic Individual's efficacy in fixing the corruption of these inevitable institutions. In *Midcentury*, "[n]ot just individuals, but individual autonomy itself is imperiled" (Rosen 138) as the actions of the modern Democratic Individual on behalf of individual citizens are endangered by corrupt forces. By this time, Dos Passos the political writer alters his message, appropriating the jargon of conservatism, identifying the conservative movement as being pro-individual.

However, once again there is no evidence in his later fiction of a successful conservative message leveraging in institutional change for the betterment of all citizens. As previously mentioned, the author's conservative principles are better explained in his non-fiction of this time.

What must not escape notice is that the romanticism of the early books is absent in these later works. The Dos Passos individual is no longer separating him- or herself from society in order to offer commentary on it. The Dos Passos figure is not just creating art in order to educate individual citizens or to enlighten them about the reality of their situation. Their reality is already well known. And the modern Democratic Individual becomes part of the system in order to change the system, except that in the process of doing so, Terry Bryant is killed and Jay Pignatelli becomes a lawyer representing powerful capitalist interests. Lesser protagonists like J.E.D. "Jed" Morris and Roland Lancaster are not reflective of the modern Democratic Individual because they are consumed by egoism. In *Most Likely to Succeed*, Jed Morris is a hard-working playwright who becomes a high-paid Hollywood scriptwriter and devoted Communist stooge. He wants to do his part for the working class, but he is reluctant to relinquish his lavish lifestyle. What is interesting about Jed, it must be noted, is that in one of Dos Passos's earlier books, this leftist liberal might have evolved into one of the author's Romantic individuals. The character is despicable, though, especially to Rosen, who identifies Jed as both protagonist and antagonist. Jed is extremely unpleasant because, Rosen correctly argues, Dos Passos is breaking with his past liberal self (124). Roland Lancaster, in *The Great Days* (1958), is a has-been journalist who, like Paul Graves, wrote his own *Blueprint for the Future* arguing that despite winning the war, America and the Allied Forces were losing the peace. His book was to be a map for America and democracy after World War Two, but no one listens to him and he

wastes away in the novel wandering Cuba, reminiscing about the past, and plotting his return to notoriety.

Jay Pignatelli does make one decision at the end of *Century's Ebb* that provides a hint of how the modern Democratic Individual might fulfill his or her function. He needs to amass money and find the right people to support and contribute to his plan – a journal devoted to foreign affairs, exploring policy decisions that will impact the postwar world, a blueprint reminiscent of Paul Graves's efforts and possibly Roland Lancaster's.

In spite of the general consensus that Jay Pignatelli is Dos Passos's fictional alter-ego, it would be incorrect to make the generalization that the modern Democratic Individual will appropriate a strictly conservative agenda in order to fulfill his or her function as described by Dos Passos. Pignatelli's acceptance of American capitalism, which Dos Passos associates with American democracy, does, however, imply such a shift. In 1950, Dos Passos published a collection of non-fiction essays entitled *The Prospect Before Us*. Carr writes, "Dos Passos' thesis was that bigness, centralization, and 'being done for rather than doing' were the real enemies whether they were found in the Soviet Communist state, the British Socialist state, or the giant American corporation. The result was the same: the dwarfing and frustrating of the individual, his loss of freedom, and abject lack of interest" (496). Socialism did not work – it only resulted in growing the government under President Roosevelt. Communism is a threat to democracy, as it requires the sacrifice of one's individualism for the sake of the party. The individual, individuality, and individualism in the postwar world will only be supported by capitalism; however, it must be capitalism of a type bred out of old-fashioned American democracy. Ludington writes,

Century's Ebb is not so much a diatribe from the Right as a final statement in which Dos

Passos, who had devoted his career to observing America, hoped to awaken other Americans with his words. If, like earlier chronicles, it often paints a dark, even a savage picture, it also reflects his pleasure and amusement in his fellow men, who might scurry about foolishly and self-importantly, but who have as well their moments of tragedy, of compassion, and of greatness. The book rounded out his vision of American life and marked the end of his lover's quarrel with the world. [. . .] All that need be added to this to be an intellectual portrait of Dos Passos at the conclusion of his life was that he had come to believe that the capitalist system might function for the good of everyone; yet we should remember that even in later works like *Midcentury* he portrayed corruption and greed under capitalism. (*TCO* 506 – 507)

Buried at the end of his description of a dark and savage postwar world overwhelmed by corruption, institutions, and big government, a world that is likely to destroy, figuratively and literally, the modern Democratic Individual.

Dos Passos does describe the possibility, if not the probability, of his ideal vision of America becoming a reality. This can be found in the final chapter of *Century's Ebb*, "Christmas on the Moon," which is a biographical sketch of NASA, with an emphasis on Apollo 8. Dos Passos writes,

In our century we have seen everything that is hideous in man come to the fore: obsessed leaders butchering helpless populations, the cowardice of the led, the shoddy selfinterest, the easy hatreds that any buffoon can arouse who bellows out the slogans, public derision of everything mankind has learned through the centuries to consider decent and true; but now, all at once, like the blue and white stippled bright earth the astronauts saw above the rim of the moon's grisly skeleton there emerges a fresh assertion of man's spirit. [. . .]

We mustn't forget that science is just Latin for knowledge. The passion for knowledge constantly brushes aside the established dogmas of the day to seek the reality beyond. (*Century's Ebb* 472 – 473)

Dos Passos is impressed and inspired by the Apollo missions, especially Apollo 8. He identifies this particular flight as the defining experiment and proof that mankind can travel and will walk on the moon. Plus, the event took place at a rather turbulent time in history – 1968. The author sees a great deal in the world that he despises. However, Dos Passos sees a future in the space race, humankind's exploration of the moon, and science. The space race is really an

elaborate metaphor for a future that he hopes the country, and the world, will embrace. Countless people had to work together to build the massive moon rockets, to train the astronauts, to invent the technology that made the space race a success. Countless people from disparate backgrounds and ideologies were unified by their patriotism to see American astronauts make it to the moon. The country worked together. Citizens worked together. Ideology notwithstanding, this is what the country needs yet again; this is what the world needs: a moonshot that will improve, save, and protect America and American democracy. Based on the NASA model, the modern Democratic Individual might be any of the people involved in the moonshot: scientists, engineers, astronauts, NASA administrators, or someone involved with government oversight. NASA and the Apollo missions recall the Spanish social model Dos Passos wrote about at great length over the course of his career; they are the model for Dos Passos's postwar blueprint.

Dos Passos insisted that the one constant that can be uncovered in all of his work is that he has been for the individual. Ludington and Carr acknowledge this in their biographies, not to mention that numerous critics like Donald Pizer, E.D. Lowry, Granville Hicks, and others agree with this assessment. In Dos Passos's collection of essays, *The Theme Is Freedom* (1956), Ludington writes, "Going back as far as essays he had written for the *New Masses* in 1926, he meant to show that he had consistently espoused individual freedoms against whatever was the vested interest of the moment" (*TCO* 468). What many critics find difficult to comprehend is the author's change in politics. How does a highly respected author transition from an anti-institutional communist sympathizer to a liberal activist, then to an arch-conservative who finally accepts the American institution of capitalism? Colley's assessment of Dos Passos is that he was an American writer throughout the entirety of his career. He insists that Dos Passos did not have

to become a Goldwater Republican “to assure himself of this” (145). In 1959, Dos Passos offered the following to a *New York Times* reporter:

People keep asking me whether my political ideas have changed. Of course. Haven't yours? If they haven't where have you been all these years? It's a boring question because none of the political slogans of the Twenties applies to the Fifties. All the concepts have been stood on their heads. “Liberalism,” for example, used to be equated with enthusiasm for individual right; now it tends to mean identification with central governing power. This much I can say: though youthful prejudice occasionally led me into what I now see as distortions, on the whole the attitude of mind exhibited by the *U.S.A.* books doesn't seem to me too different from my attitudes today. What has occurred is a complete transformation of the social background. [. . .] [T]he basic tragedy my work tries to express seems to remain monotonously the same: man's struggle for life against the strangling institutions he himself creates. (Carr 518; *TCO* 477)

In his attempt to chronicle “man's struggle,” it would appear that Dos Passos adheres to whichever political ideology he deems best protects and acknowledges the rights of the individual citizen and guarantees his or her right to express that individualism while still part of the institution. The author does not offer proof that conservatism is the best ideology for achieving such a goal; there is only supposition. However, the same claim can be made about his more liberal books. He does not offer proof that socialism and Communism are better; at the time, they were simply preferred over the status quo. As time passed, Communism proved to be a threat to Dos Passos's personal philosophy concerning the individual, not to mention to Dos Passos personally. Not only that, but for Dos Passos there is ample evidence based on his experiences that Communism repudiates and actively works against the above goal.

The one aspect of Dos Passos's biography that most perplexes Ludington, and I must confess myself, is the author's support for the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and Senator McCarthy. He found it difficult to reconcile this later version of Dos Passos with the 1920s radical. The biographer's final assessment is, “Ends did not justify means, Dos Passos declared; yet because of his hatred for Communism he was willing to tolerate

dubious means to achieve the end of scouring alleged Communists out of government. [. . .] Dos Passos was unalterably convinced of a massive Communist conspiracy, and the more it was denied – and the more America’s strength relative to Russia seemed to decline – the more adamantly he asserted its existence” (*TCO* 461). Rosen states that the author’s late-in-life “arch-conservatism overwhelmed his critical judgment” (122). This is Rosen’s way of explaining hypocritical choices made by the conservative Dos Passos when compared to the author’s liberal past. Fear may have been a great motivator for Dos Passos’s change in politics. A thorough analysis of 1950s and 1960s attitudes reflected in other writers’ fiction may indicate whether Dos Passos’s extreme conservative ideals are an isolated instance or representative of a significant portion of the population. After all, for years Dos Passos was criticized for his abandonment of the Left as though he were the only prominent artist and political voice who did so. Historical evidence suggests otherwise (see George Packer’s essay “Turned Around”).

Dos Passos’s change in politics is a remarkable phenomenon, and it is a topic worthy of greater analysis. However, distaste with and disapproval of the author’s late-in-life Republicanism is not reason enough to disavow these later texts. *Midcentury* and *Century’s Ebb* alone are vital addenda to comprehending the Dos Passosian individual – from early German Romantic, to American Romantic, to Democratic Individual, and finally, to modern Democratic Individual. The author’s perspective on this figure evolves from book to book, from decade to decade. Evidence from the texts reflects that the shape of this figure was partly inspired by the author’s change in politics and partly impacted by current events. Based on my reading, the author’s implied insistence that such a figure plays a vital role in American society did not alter; however, the figure’s ability to succeed in postwar America is what is at stake. The figure appears to have hit a dead end. Terry Bryant is murdered and Jay Pignatelli is a capitalist. The

modern Democratic Individual has a responsibility to the individual citizens as well as a civic responsibility to the country according to the author's description, but the figure's ineffectiveness suggests that Dos Passos has gone as far as he can with his modern Democratic Individual. The figure can advance no further in the author's depiction of postwar America.

Dos Passos's dark descriptions of a country, and a world, polluted by egoism and power do not provide much of a glimmer of hope. NASA and the moon landing is the one example that implies that the author's blueprint is possible, if not probable, despite the reality that the modern Democratic Individual continually butts his or her head against the powers-that-be in an attempt to make this blueprint a reality.

Examine any undergraduate syllabus for a course on American literature, post-1860. Chances are the required reading list will not include John Dos Passos. Perform the same exercise for a graduate-level syllabus. The odds are a little better in the author's favor, except the standard recommended texts come from early in Dos Passos's career: *Three Soldiers*, *Manhattan Transfer*, or *U.S.A.* His later books have vanished. The preferred early books also are disappearing. The author's contributions to American letters are being relegated to the ash heap of literary history. Ask anyone if they know the name John Dos Passos and, most likely, you will be met with a quizzical look. Ask the same person if they know the name Ernest Hemingway, and I guarantee you that there is a better than average chance that they will know it, or at least they will recognize it well enough without having to look it up on the internet.

Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, E. E. Cummings, Robert Frost, and William Faulkner. These are the writers typically regarded as the prominent voices of American literary modernism. If we expand the list to include European

writers, then we can add James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. These writers have name recognition among readers and literature students. Some are known by high school students because their work is required reading, whereas Dos Passos's books are not. Why is that?

I suspect that part of the reason may have to do with the fact that Dos Passos fell out of favor with many of his contemporary critics. He began his career as a writer with a liberal-leaning ideology, and he was the darling of the critics. When he made a late-in-life switch to conservatism, these same critics felt betrayed by the author, so they took their vengeance by denouncing his later books. Their condemnation corrupted his legacy. Stephen Koch offers the following argument: up until 1936 and the Spanish Civil War, the reading public adored Dos Passos's work because what he was writing was different, new, and modern. At the same time, Hemingway had fallen out with the reading public and the critics because he had not written anything of substance since *A Farewell to Arms* (pub. 1929). After 1936, Dos Passos left Spain expressing disgust for Communist domination of the Republican cause, returned to America, and began his slide down in literary circles. Koch attributes this in part to the reading public's lack of interest in avant-garde literature. They wanted something more familiar. Thus, they returned to Hemingway and his novel sympathetic to Republican Spain, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (pub. 1937), which has since become a perpetual addition to required reading lists.

I will concede that it is important to read and study the stories, novels, poems, plays, and essays by the more familiar modernist writers. However, the problem is that everything we know about American literary modernism more often than not comes from reading and studying *only* these writers. By ignoring Dos Passos, we are ignoring an alternative vantage point of America, the modern age, and the individual. Dos Passos writes about the underside of American life that

bystanders know exists, but they choose to hurry past it if it confronts them on the street, asking for change.

F. Scott Fitzgerald romanticizes excess, obsession, love, bootlegging, and murder in *The Great Gatsby* (pub. 1925), whereas Dos Passos exposes poverty, the homeless, hopelessness, prostitution, social inequity, the dark side of running liquor, and suicide in *Manhattan Transfer*. Hemingway glorifies war and the nobility of hand-to-hand battle in *A Farewell to Arms* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, while Dos Passos describes the atrocity of war, the physical and emotional scars on the survivors, and the corruption of the peace process in *Three Soldiers*, *Nineteen Nineteen*, and *Century's Ebb*. There is an essence of realism in Dos Passos's work missing in the writings of other modernist writers. Not only that, but it should not go unnoticed or unremarked that Dos Passos preceded many of his peers when it came to writing about certain subject matter, such as economic inequality, Communism, and abortion. Compare Robert Penn Warren's *All the King's Men* (pub. 1946) and Dos Passos's *Number One*, and the reader will notice remarkable similarities between the two books.

His aesthetic can be daunting for the casual reader, so much so that when people compare Dos Passos's style to Hemingway's or Fitzgerald's or Faulkner's, Dos Passos's work is deemed unreadable. A lot happens in his books, and sometimes it is difficult to keep up with it all. Where stereotypical narratives tend to focus on a limited cast of characters, Dos Passos writes about an entire population, an entire generation. In doing so, the author is experimenting with the traditional structure of the novel. Pages read like a scene out of a movie because he was fascinated with the creation of the film montage technique pioneered by new filmmakers at the time, such as Sergei Eisenstein and D. W. Griffith. Dos Passos began his career referring to himself as a fiction writer, but near the end he called himself a "chronicler" because he believed

fiction should chronicle history. He includes pastiches of newspaper headlines and articles, advertisements, and song lyrics to represent the era and the environment in which his work is set. He merges fiction with non-fiction, a technique some contemporary writers are experimenting with today. Dos Passos's novels are a fascinating blend of fiction, history, science, and philosophy. Dos Passos was not writing just to tell his readers a story. He was writing to express a big idea.

It is this big idea that draws me to his work. It is this same big idea that I believe will be especially relevant and illuminating to a twenty-first century audience. Dos Passos may be writing about America and the individual, but he also is writing about power and those forces that wield power for their own corrupt purposes, be they economic, political, sexual, or geopolitical. Dos Passos's work shows that power can be a seductive, corrupting influence and that too much power in the wrong hands can lead to economic imbalance, internment camps, the atomic bomb, and big government.

Most of all, power threatens the rights of the individual citizen to express his or her individuality. Without a voice, the individual will not be heard, and then powerful voices begin to exert even more influence and control by speaking for the individual. Such a threat defies the integrity of the Constitution and the principles upon which this country was founded. This is part of what Dos Passos writes about, but it is only part of Dos Passos's message.

I would caution the twenty-first century reader not to pick and choose which of Dos Passos's books to read and study. This is what led to reading only the standard selections from the early phase of the author's career. Dos Passos's early radicalism does prove appealing to many critics, academics, and everyday readers. Yet I would argue that the author is just as

radical in later books. It is just not left-leaning radicalism. His later conservative ideology may prove disenchanting to many, but he continues to challenge powerful forces.

Dos Passos is quickly becoming an endnote in literary histories even as it is apparent that his contribution to American literature, though controversial, was important and had a lasting impact upon the development and direction of Modernism. Additional examination of these later texts is recommended and should be required for readers interested in the full history of modern letters. I believe that a fresh perspective of his oeuvre, especially the later books, from a new generation of readers will provide new insight about an author who was not only of his time but ahead of his time.

WORKS CITED

- Beiser, Frederick C. *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism*. Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Blau, Joseph L. "Emerson's Transcendentalist Individualism as Social Philosophy." *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol.3, no.1, Sept. 1977, pp. 80-92. *JSTOR*, <http://www.ulib.niu.edu:2207/stable/20127018>. Accessed 26 Nov. 2012.
- Brands, H.W. *American Colossus: The Triumph of Capitalism, 1865 – 1900*. Doubleday, 2010.
- Carr, Virginia Spencer. *Dos Passos: A Life*. Northwestern University Press, 2004. Print.
- Colley, Iain. *Dos Passos and the Fiction of Despair*. The MacMillan Press LTD., 1978.
- Cooperman, Stanley. "John Dos Passos' *Three Soldiers*: Aesthetics and the Doom of Individualism." *The First World War in Fiction: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Holger Klein. The MacMillan Press LTD., 1976, pp. 23-31.
- Cowley, Malcolm. "Dos Passos: The Learned Poggius." *The Southern Review*, vol. 9, no. 1, Winter 1973, pp. 3-17.
- Dos Passos, John. *The Best Times*. Signet Books, 1968.
- . *Century's Ebb: The Thirteenth Chronicle*. Gambit, 1975.
- . *Chosen Country*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951.
- . *District of Columbia: Adventures of a Young Man, Number One, The Grand Design*. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1938.
- . *The Great Days*. Sagamore, 1958. Print.
- . *Midcentury*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961.
- . *Most Likely to Succeed*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1954.
- . *Novels 1920 – 1925: One Man's Initiation: 1917, Three Soldiers, Manhattan Transfer*. Ed. Townsend Ludington. New York: The Library of America, 2003. Print.

- . *The Theme Is Freedom*. New York: Dodd, Mead, 1956. Print.
- . *Travel Books and Other Writings: 1916 – 1941: Rosinante to the Road Again, Orient Express, In All Countries, A Pushcart at the Curb, Essays, Letters, and Diaries*. Edited by Townsend Ludington. The Library of America, 2003.
- . *U.S.A.: The 42nd Parallel, 1919, The Big Money*. Edited by Townsend Ludington. The Library of America, 1996.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "The American Scholar." *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Edited by Brooks Atkinson. Modern Library, 2000, pp. 43-62.
- "The Poet." *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Edited by Brooks Atkinson. Modern Library, 2000, pp. 287-306.
- Fichtelberg, Joseph. "The Picaros of John Dos Passos." *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol. 34, no. 4, Winter 1988, pp. 434-452. *JSTOR*, <http://www.ulib.niu.edu:2207/stable/441886>. Accessed 11 Nov. 2011.
- Gelfant, Blanche H. "The Search for Identity in the Novels of John Dos Passos." *PMLA*, vol. 76, no.1, March 1961, pp. 133-149. *JSTOR*, doi: 10.2307/460320. Accessed 11 Nov. 2011.
- Geyh, Paula. "From Cities of Things to Cities of Signs: Urban Spaces and Urban Subjects in *Sister Carrie* and *Manhattan Transfer*." *Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal*, vol. 52, no. 4, 2006, pp. 413-442. *JSTOR*, <http://www.ulib.niu.edu:2207/stable/20479784>. Accessed 13 May 2013.
- Gold, Michael. "The Education of John Dos Passos." *The English Journal*, vol. 22, no. 2, Feb. 1933, pp. 87-97. *JSTOR*, doi: 10.2307/804561. Accessed 17 April 2013.
- Hicks, Granville. "The Politics of John Dos Passos." *The Antioch Review*, vol. 10, no. 1, Spring 1950, pp. 85-98. *JSTOR*, doi: 10.2307/4609397. Accessed 31 Aug. 2009.
- Hughson, Lois. "Don Passos's World War: Narrative Technique and History." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1980, pp. 46-61. *JSTOR*, <http://www.ulib.niu.edu:2207/stable/29532020>. Accessed 16 April 2013.
- "In Search of the True America: Dos Passos' Debt to Whitman in *U.S.A.*" *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 19, 1973, pp.179-192.
- Kazin, Alfred. "Dos Passos, Society, and the Individual." *Dos Passos: A Collection of Critical Essays*, Edited by Andrew Hook. Prentice Hall Inc., 1974. pp. 101-119.
- Kennedy, David M. *Freedom from Fear*. Oxford University Press, 2004.

- Koch, Stephen. *The Breaking Point: Hemingway, Dos Passos, and the Murder of José Robles*. Counterpoint, 2005.
- Lowry, E.D. "The Lively Art of 'Manhattan Transfer.'" *PMLA*, vol. 84, no. 6, Oct. 1969, pp. 1628-1638. *JSTOR*, doi: 10.2307/1261510. Accessed 13 May 2013.
- . "Manhattan Transfer: Dos Passos' Wasteland." *The University Review – Kansas City*, vol. 30, no. 1, Oct. 1963, pp. 47-52.
- Ludington, Townsend, editor. *The Fourteenth Chronicle: Letters and Diaries of John Dos Passos*. Gambit, Inc., 1973.
- Ludington, Townsend. *John Dos Passos: A Twentieth-Century Odyssey*. Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc., 1998.
- . "John Dos Passos in the 1930s." *Ilha do Desterro: A Journal of Language and Literature*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1990, pp. 31-41. *Google Scholar*, <https://periodicos.ufsc.br/index.php/desterro/article/viewFile/8795/8236>. Accessed 16 June 2015.
- . "The Ordering of the Camera Eye in U.S.A." *American Literature*, vol. 49, no.3, November 1977, pp. 443-446. *JSTOR*. doi: 10.2307/2924996. Accessed 29 May 2015.
- Lukes, Steven. "The Meanings of 'Individualism.'" *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 32, no. 1, Jan. – Mar. 1971, pp. 45-66. *JSTOR*, doi: 10.2307/2708324. Accessed 4 Oct. 2016.
- Madsen, Michael. "'No more'n a needle in a haystack': The City as Style and Destructive Underworld in John Dos Passos' *Manhattan Transfer*." *NJES: Nordic Journal of English Studies*, vol. 9, no.1, 2010, pp. 36-46. *MLA International Bibliography*, <http://www.ulib.niu.edu:28803/ojs/index.php/njes>. Accessed 13 May 2013.
- Maine, Barry, editor. *John Dos Passos: The Critical Heritage*. Routledge, 1988. *ProQuest ebrary*, <https://www.ulib.niu.edu:9443/login?url=http://site.ebrary.com/lib/niluniv/Doc?id=10095846>. 18 Sept. 2016.
- McGerr, Michael E. *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920*. Free Press, 2003.
- Nanney, Lisa. *John Dos Passos*. Series editor Joseph M. Flora. Twayne Publishers, 1998.
- Packer, George. "Turned Around." *The New Yorker*, 22 Feb. 2016, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/02/22/why-leftists-go-right>. Accessed 13 Sept. 2016.

- Petrovic, Paul. "‘To Get to the Center’: Recovering the Marginalized Woman in John Dos Passos’s *Manhattan Transfer*." *Studies in American Naturalism*, vol. 4, no. 2, Winter 2009, pp. 152-172. *MLA International Bibliography*, <http://www.ulib.niu.edu:2207/stable/23431294>. Accessed 13 May 2013.
- Piep, Karsten H. "John Dos Passos, *Three Soldiers*, and Humble Protest." *Embattled Home Fronts: Domestic Politics and the American Novel of World War I*. Rodopi, 2009, pp. 63-82.
- Pizer, Donald, editor. *John Dos Passos: The Major Nonfictional Prose*. Wayne State UP, 1988.
- Pizer, Donald. "John Dos Passos in the 1920s: The Development of a Modernist Style." *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, vol. 45, no. 4, 2012, pp. 51-67. *Project Muse*, <https://www.ulib.niu.edu:11446/article/492339/pdf>. Accessed 16 Apr. 2013.
- . "John Dos Passos’ ‘Rosinante to the Road Again’ and the Modernist Expatriate Imagination." *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 21, no. 1, Summer 1997, pp. 137-150. *JSTOR*, <http://www.ulib.niu.edu:2207/stable/3831580> Accessed 9 Jan. 2011.
- Rosen, Robert C. *John Dos Passos: Politics and the Writer*. University of Nebraska Press, 1981.
- Sanders, David. Review of *Midcentury*, by John Dos Passos. *Wisconsin Studies in Contemporary Literature*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1961, pp. 47-50. *JSTOR*, doi: 10.2307/1207271. Accessed 4 Aug. 2016.
- Sayre, Robert. "Anglo-American Writers, the Communist Movement and the Spanish Civil War: The Case of Dos Passos." *Revue Française d’études Américaines*, vol. 29, May 1986, pp. 263-274. *JSTOR*, <http://www.ulib.niu.edu:2207/stable/20873419>. Accessed 16 June 2015.
- Smith, James Steel. "The Novelist of Discomfort: A Reconsideration of John Dos Passos." *College English*, vol. 19, no. 8, May 1958, pp. 332-338. *JSTOR*, doi: 10.2307/372024. Accessed 4 Oct. 2016.
- Swart, Koenraad W. "‘Individualism’ in the Mid-Nineteenth Century (1826–1860)." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 23, no. 1, Jan. – Mar. 1962, pp. 77-90. *JSTOR*, doi:10.2307/2708058. Accessed 4 Oct. 2016.
- Taylor, Joshua C. *Futurism*. Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1961.
- Trilling, Lionel. "Deterministic and Mystic." *The Kenyon Review*, vol. 2, no. 1, Winter 1940, pp. 94-97. *Google Scholar*, <http://www.ulib.niu.edu:2207/stable/4332134>. Accessed 16 June 2015.

- Trombold, John. "From the Future to the Past: The Disillusionment of John Dos Passos." *Studies in American Fiction*, vol. 26, no. 2, Autumn 1998, pp. 237-256. *Project Muse*, <https://www.ulib.niu.edu:11446/article/439627/pdf>. Accessed 16 June 2015.
- Villa, Dana. "Hegel, Tocqueville, and 'Individualism.'" *The Review of Politics*, vol. 67, no. 4, Aug. 2005, pp. 659-686. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25046471>. Accessed 4 Oct. 2016.
- Wade, Mason. "Novelist of America: John Dos Passos." *The North American Review*, vol. 244, no. 2, Winter 1937/1938, pp. 349-367. *JSTOR*, <http://www.ulib.niu.edu:2207/stable/25114941>. Accessed 26 June 2012.
- Wagner, Linda W. *Dos Passos: Artist as American*. University of Texas Press, 1979.
- Weeks, Robert P. "The Novel as Poem: Whitman's Legacy to Dos Passos." *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 26, 1980, pp. 431-446.
- Whipple, T.K. "Dos Passos and the U.S.A." *Dos Passos: A Collection of Critical Essays*, edited by Andrew Hook. Prentice Hall, Inc., 1974, pp. 87-92.
- Whitman, Walt. *The Complete Poems*. Edited by Francis Murphy. Penguin, 2004.
- . *Democratic Vistas. Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*. Edited by Justin Kaplan. Library of America, 1982, pp. 929 – 93. *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.dewey.waubonsee.edu/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzE3MDA3X19BTg2?sid=e93285d5-6b4f-4646-b79c-2c612d2ab8e5@sessionmgr101&vid=2&format=EB&rid=1>. Accessed 23 March 2013.