Dos Passos’s characterization and his effort to focus on social more than individual history inevitably involve some stereotyping of all characters, unless informed by a feminist impulse, conscious or unconscious, such writing is bound to reflect not only its author’s unexamined assumptions, but the sexism of the society it depicts. There is no analysis in the novel of the oppression of women as there is of the oppression of the working class. And many important women birth controls advocate Margaret Sanger, for example whose work certainly had bearing on the lives of the novel’s many characters troubled by unwanted pregnancies are noticeably absent from the gallery of biographies (Rosen 191).

In Manhattan Transfer, there are naturalistic elements in U.S.A., Dos Passos strives to show environment shaping character, because he wishes to attack society as a whole. But the twelve major characters of Dos Passos have varying degrees of will. Joe Williams is passive, almost deterministically conceived, but Richard Savage is capable of choice and is the target of his severe moral criticism when he callously abandons pregnant Anne Trent. The tension between naturalism and the intense moral indignation that pervades trilogy gives the novel much of its energy. Its bleak vision of nearly universal defeat demands radical and social change.

Brilliant and serious as was Dos Passos’s performance in ManhattanTransfer. This novel was to yield in significance and impressiveness to his laterrendering of the same subject in the three volumes of U.S.A: The 42\textsuperscript{nd}Parallel, 1919 and The Big Money. Dos Passos must have felt that he had not done fulljustice to his theme in
confining his view to the city of New York, even though that is the metropolis of our world, the place where all threads cross. He wanted to bring in the big towns of the hinterland, the grassland, farms and lumber camps, the seven seas and the Central America which is the arena of our commerce and imperialism, and the wartime France and Italy that was the playground and the graveyard of our crusading youth.

*Manhattan Transfer*

Dos Passos must have felt, again, that in *Manhattan Transfer* he had given an inadequate selection of American national types. That he needed to lay more emphasis, both on the industrialist, the promoter, and the financier, and on the obscure men who do the task. Perhaps he felt that, effective as it was in its way, and even a trifle theatrical, his system of striking the high points in many lives left something to be desired in the way of calmness and thoroughness and he then chose to feature fewer characters and gave a fuller and more consecutive account of their lives.

In *Manhattan Transfer*, Ed Thatcher and his wife Susie had their first child, a girl named Ellen. After the birth of the child, Susie became neurotic, she wanted to die. Congo and Emile, two French boys, came to New York to make their fortunes. Emile married a widowed French woman who owned a delicatessen. Congo did not like New York and want to see again.

Gus McNiel, a milkman, was run over by a train. George Baldwin, a young lawyer, took Gus’s case against the railroad and obtained a settlement for the injured man. While Gus was in the hospital recovering from the accident, George had an affair with Gus wife Neile.
Jimmy Herf arrived from Europe with his widowed mother, who was in delicate health. One evening she had a heart attack; not long afterward, she died. Jimmy’s rich uncle Jeff and Aunt Emily Mervile then became his legal guardians. One evening at their house Jimmy met Joe Harland, the drunken black sheep of the family, who had won and lost several fortunes on Wall Street. Susie Thatcher died, and Ed worked hard for little Ellen. He stayed at the office until late each evening, working and dreaming of all the fine things he would do for his daughter some day. Ellen grew up, went to the stage, and married John Oglethorpe, a competent but lazy actor. Her married life was unhappy, for she discovered that her husband was of a homosexual.

Jimmy Herf’s uncle Jeff tried to get him interested in business, but Jimmy would have none of it. He got a job as a reporter and became acquainted with Ruth Prynne, a young actress who lived in the boarding house where Ellen and John Oglethorpe stayed.

George Baldwin had forgotten Nellie McNiel. He was now interested in Ellen. One afternoon, as he and Ellen sat together at tea, a drunken college boy stopped at their table. George introduced him to Ellen as Stan Emery. Joe Harland, the black sheep relative of the Merviles and Jimmy Herf, was now forty five and almost broke. He spent his last money on a few shots of whiskey to bring back memories of the old prosperous days on Wall Street. Ellen and Stan fell in love. When she was with him, she was happy. But when she went home to John, she was miserable. Ellen decided that she and John could no longer live together. She packed her things and moved to a hotel.
Stan Emery came to Jimmy Herf’s room. Stan was on a long drunk after being expelled from college. Later in the day they met John and Ellen drinking tea together. Stan left, but Jimmy stayed to talk with Ellen. George Baldwin sat at breakfast with his wife Cecily. He had married her for social position; they were not happy. Cecily knew of his other affairs. George did all he could to keep her from leaving home because a scandal would ruin him in the business world. Ellen moved from her hotel to an apartment. She was supporting herself well now, for she had become a success on Broadway.

Joe Harland had finally got a job as night watchman. One evening he was visited by a young labour organizer, Joe O’Keefe. The older man warned him against getting mixed up in labour troubles. But O’Keefe said that Gus McNiel, now an assembly man, was on the side of labour.

Harry Goldwiser, a rich Broadway producer, fell in love with Ellen. He asked her to marry him. She refused, but in a friendly way for her career depended upon Goldwiser. Gus’Niel retained George Baldwin as his lawyer throughout his rise to political power. George warned him against getting mixed up with labour because, as a member of a conservative law firm, George could not help Gus with labour troubles. Ellen wanted Stan to stop drinking so much, but he would not reform. Drink was the only means by which he could adjust himself to the world. One evening Ellen went out to dinner with George Baldwin. Everyone was excited about the beginning of the world war. But George could think only of Ellen, and in a fit of rage he threatened her with a gun. Gus McNiel, who was nearby, took away the gun and hushed up the incident. Jimmy Herf, who had been talking to the bartender Congo, took Ellen outside and sent her home in a taxi. Ellen finally obtained a
divorce from John, and Harry Goldwiser renewed his attentions. One evening Ellen and Harry met Stan dancing with a girl named Peerline. Stan revealed that he and Peerline had been on a long drunk and had been married. Later Stan came home drunk, disgusted with his life and with Peerline. He poured kerosene around the apartment and set fire to it. Peerline returned just in time to see the fireman carry Stan from the burning building.

Ellen was crushed by Stan’s death, for he was the only man she had really loved. To be with Jimmy Herf gave her some comfort because he had been Stan’s friend. But Jimmy wanted to be more than a friend to Ellen, he still loved her. She told him that she was going to have Stan’s baby. She wanted to leave show business and rear the child. But she had an abortion instead. Ellen and Jimmy went to Europe to do Red Cross work during the war. Finally they were married. They returned from France with their baby.

Joe O’Keefe came back from the war with a chip on his shoulder. He thought the veterans deserved a bonus because they had lost out on the big money at home. He had another reason for feeling bitter. Somewhere overseas he had caught syphilis. George Baldwin’s home life was still troubled. Having post-war political ambitions, he turned against his old friend, Gus McNiel, and ran for mayor on a reform ticket. Jimmy became despondent and quit his job. George Baldwin finally got a divorce. He proposed to Ellen too weary of her muddled life to resist him, she accepted his proposal.

One night Jimmy Herf was walking the streets when a car drew up beside him and stopped. In it was the French man, Congo, now a wealthy bootlegger. He took Jimmy home with him and tried to cheer him up. Late one evening after a party
Jimmy Herf wandered down by the river. As he waited for a ferry to take him from Manhattan, he realized that he felt gay and happy for the first time in many months. Morning found him walking along a concrete highway, penniless but still happy. He did not know where he was going, he knew only that it would be a long way.

**Three Soldiers**

In *Three Soldiers*, Private Dan Fuselli was anxious to become Corporal Dan Fuselli. He had seen movies of Huns spitting Belgian babies on their bayonets. And then being chased like rabbits by heroic Yankee soldiers. They were later rewarded with embraces by the pretty and picturesque Belgian milkmaids. He looked forward to the time when his girl, Mabe writing from San Francisco, his home town, would address her letters to Corporal Dan Fuselli.

Private first class Fuselli of the medical corps hated the Army and everything about it, but he knew that to become a corporal he must keep clean, keep his mouth shut, obey the brass, and continually cajole the Sergeant. He was infuriated one night when he went to town to see Yuonne and learned that the Sergeant had taken her over. Then, when he returned to camp, he heard that the consumptive corporal was back, the one in whose absence Fuselli had been made acting corporal. But private Fuselli kept his mouth shut.

Finally, after a setback doing endless and following his recovery from avenereal disease, after the Armistice, he did become Corporal Dan Fuselli. But by that time his girl had married a naval officer. Matters worked out differently for Chrisfield. The Army was not as easy going as life had been in the Indiana farm country. The officers shouted at you, made you do things you hated. You had to
take it. One night Chrisfield was so furious he pulled a knife on a Sergeant named
Anderson, but his friends held him back and nothing happened. In Europe, things
were not much better. Occasionally he had a talk about the stars and the fields with
his educated buddy, John Andrews. Mostly, however, the war was awful.

The marches were endless and his shoulders acted from his heavy pack. When bombardments came, the marchers scattered face down in a field. Once
Chrisfield asked Andrews to speak French for him to a French girl at an inn, but
nothing did come of it. One day, walking alone through a wood near the front,
Chrisfield found a dead German lying prone when he kicked the body over; he saw
that it had no face, only a multicolored, pulpy mass with green flies hovering around
it. In the man’s hand was a revolver he was a suicide Chrisfield ran off panting.

Chrisfield was high strung when he was sitting thinking; a soldier prodded
him and asked him what he was dreaming about. Chrisfield punched the fellow in the
nose. He and Andy hated the men who were always telling the men at the front what
brutes the Huns were and urging them in the name of old glory to kill Germans.
Chrisfield was court-martialed when he announced that he intended to kill Sergeant
Anderson after the war was over.

One day he went wandering and made his way silently into the kitchen of a
house near the front. Looking into the next room, he saw a man in a German
uniform. He reached into his pocket, pressed the spring on the grenade he had,
withdrew it, and tossed it into the room. Not long afterward he came across
Anderson, now a Lieutenant, seated wounded in a deserted section of the wood.
Chrisfield had two more grenades in his pocket, and he threw them at the man he
hated. After the Armistice, the rumor that he had killed Anderson somehow leaked
out. Afraid, Chrisfield went war and became a refugee in France, eternally on the move.

John Andrews was a Harvard graduate and would be a composer. The Queen of Sheba section of Flaubert’s “Temptation of Saint Anthony” kept recurring to his mind as he wasted the barracks windows, and he thought how fine the subject would be for a musical composition. He cursed the Army for slowly stamping him into its iron mold. Overseas, he saw action and was more convinced than ever that war was needless butchery. He felt happiest away from the regiment. One day he walked away from his company in order to be alone. He was looking at little frogs in a pool when a shell burst near him. He awoke on a stretcher.

For a while the hospital was a relief from the endless orders and general mechanization of Army routine. Lying in his bed, he began to realize that he had respect for himself only when he thought of rebelling against the system, of going war. Soon the tedium of the hospital began to call him. After he was healed, he rejoined his company reluctantly and full of rebellion. The Armistice had been signed. When he heard that he could go to a French university through a school detachment being set up, he lied, secured some recommendations, and found himself in Paris.

In Paris he met Genevieve Rod, a young French woman who admired his piano playing and his artistic tastes. She thought of artists as men who, because of their special sensitivity, should be exempt from the horrors of war. Andrews disagreed, one worker was like another. It was the whole of humanity that should be exempt. One day he left Paris without official leave for a country trip with Genevieve. A Member of Parliament picked him up and took him to a local office
where he was beaten by several Members of Parliament. He was sent to a labour battalion loading concrete for a stadium being presented by the Americans to the French. It was a crushing work. Convinced that Army life was a menace to human freedom, Andrews decided to desert for one man less in the system made it weaker by that much. One night he leaped from a plank and swam out to a barge in the seine.

The barge family cared for him for a few days. They sank his uniform in the river, bought him new clothes, and as anarchists proclaimed their solidarity with him. He went back to Paris to find Genevieve, and stayed for a while with Chrisfield and a group of other concealed deserters. Then, hearing that Genevieve was at her country place, he joined her there.

At first he did not tell her of his desertion. He lived in an inn nearby and began composing, not about the Queen of Sheba, but about John Brown, liberator of slaves. When he finally confessed his plight to Genevieve, a noticeable reserve crept into her attitude toward him perhaps, she suggested, he should give himself up. She could not comprehend the social motive in his rebellion.

One day he heard an American Officer’s voice at the door of the inn below his window. He thought of the prison sentence he must face. Too late he discovered that the landlady, experienced in the ways of impecunious Americans who were possible deserters, had stolen his revolver. As the Members of Parliament took him away, the wind blew in through the window of his room and the music papers on which he had been working fluttered one by one to the floor.

But the fact that a technological environment not only induces most people into various stages of automatism, he makes the family unit socially non-effective, he has certainly got something to do with the collective landscapes of
U.S.A. Its structure is poetic in having its unity not in an idea but a vision, and it is cubist in presenting multiple simultaneous perspectives like a cycle of medieval mystery plays. It could readily be maintained that this method not only permits comprehensiveness of a kind indispensable to the modern artist, but he also makes for the intelligible rather than the disciple in art. The kind of pleasure that he provides in comparison with Hemingway is that of detached intellectual institution rather than that of sympathetic merging with the narrative and characters.

U.S.A.

The characters in U.S.A. then, are individuals subjected to the pressures of their environment, not propaganda puppets. If they accept the conditions of the machine as does J. Ward Moorehouse and rise to economic success while losing their souls, or if, like Eveline Hutchins, they seek escape in sex and in artistic and political dilettantism, it is because, being what they are, they choose it or they are driven to it. The three volumes comprising U.S.A. trace the progress of the relation of man to his “machines” from the end of the nineteenth century to the stock market crash at the end of 1929. The study includes the whole of the social, political and economic system of the United States. The means of evaluating the machines is the study of the lives of the individuals who are moulded by them, who are subjected to their pressures, and who sometimes rebel against them.

In the first two volumes, he confined himself to five leading persons, in The Big Money. What he gives in each case is a detailed biographical chronicle of the character featured, so that we have a complete case history parentage, childhood environment, education, occupations, favourite diversions, marital status, down to
the circumstances of death, if it occurred within the period of the chronicle, everything that might be required by a sociologist for whom no detail is without significance and who wants his file complete.

Mac McCreary, is the son of a Connecticut factory hand. He works as typesetter and as migrant laborer at various points in the Northwest, and becomes an enthusiastic supporter of the Industrial Workers of the World, but these last yields to the demands of family life. When he decides that his wife is simply milking him, he goes to Mexico, still interested in the labour movement. He sets up housekeeping with a Mexican girl, and ends up very comfortably as keeper of a radical bookstore.

J. Ward Moorehouse is a son of a station agent in Wilmington, Delaware. In school he distinguishes himself as a debater and orator. He starts life in a real estate office. He finds that he has a genius for promotion, and bright blue eyes, and that he can put on an engaging look that people like. His two marriages are with wealthy women. When his first marriage goes on the rocks, he feels that he is entitled to some compensation for the loss of time he has suffered.

In Pittsburgh he becomes an advertising expert for steel products, conceiving the idea of winning the favour of the public for his company with a long-range educational campaign. Then he sets up an office in New York as public relations counselor. He specializes in propaganda showing the identity of interest of capital and labour, and in keeping down subversive influences among miners. When America enter the War, he offers his services to the government and is promptly sent to Paris as publicity director for the Red Cross. He is prominent in shaping the Versailles Treaty, and is able to serve the interests of large investors in oil.
On his return to New York he promotes various enterprises and entrance halls in Washington against pure food laws which are disadvantageous to his clients, makers of patent medicines. He is a man of great refinement and distinction of manner. While in France he has love affairs with several Red Cross workers, but he never lets women interfere with business.

Janey Williams, daughter of a retired towboat captain of Georgetown, who takes up stenography, and becomes the efficient secretary of J. Ward Moorehouse, first in his New York office and then in Paris. She leads a very limited life, concerned for comfort and respectability, gradually turns into a fair hair, and watches over her employer with jealous care.

Eleanor Stoddard, daughter of a workman in the Chicago stockyards. She greatly dislikes her father, and her ruling passion is the avoidance of all that is ugly and gross. She works in a lace shop, studies at the Art Institute, she has a job at Marshall Field’s, and goes into business with a friend as interior decorator in New York, where she does the Moorehouse home. She sees a lot of Moorehouse, but his wife is mistaken in thinking that their friendship is anything more than platonic. She follows him to Paris, where she has an important position in the Red Cross and meets all the most interesting people. She brings back lovely Italian panels from her mission to Rome. She has a discreet affair with Moorehouse in Paris. But in the end, she marries a Russian prince, and burns candles before an ikon while her guests drink tea from a silver Urn.

Charley Anderson is the son of a boarding-house keeper in Fargo. He starts life as an automobile mechanic. He works in various places, enlists in the army. He becomes an aviator, and on his return from France takes up the business of making
airplanes, for which he has a natural gift. But he catches *The Big Money* fever and goes in heavily for speculation. His relaxations are women and drink, and he goes in heavily for these. He makes and loses a lot of money and marries a society girl. He has an affair with Margo Dowling, glamorous actress, at Miami, and he loses his life in an automobile accident while taking a drive with a girl he met at a nightclub.

Richard Ellsworth Savage is a poor but cultured family of Oak Park, he is put through Harvard by a lawyer with literary tastes, he is prominent there as poet and college editor, then goes abroad in the volunteer ambulance service. After a trip through Europe he is called back home for talking too freely about the war, but through influence he is given a captain’s commission.

Savage is attached to several high-ranking officials in France, and rumours about importantly far behind the lines. He has an affair with a Texas girl, but doesn’t think he ought to spoil his career by marrying. He gets acquainted with the Red Cross set. After the war he goes into Moorehouse’s firm, carries on a campaign for Americanism and Bingham Health products, and lobbies against pure food laws. He is a literary prostitute. His talents and charm are sold to the highest bidder; his life is one long picnic, though without happiness, and tending toward activities in Harlem.

Eveline Hutchins is the daughter of a Unitarian minister, who becomes an interior decorator, a Red Cross worker in Paris. She knows a lot of interesting men, marries a rather heavy one, and dies of an overdose of sleeping pills. Joe Williams, Janey’s brother, who joins the navy, deserts, serves commerce through the war as seaman and petty officer, is several times submarined, once married, and never amounts to much. Daughter, lively Texas girl, who goes abroad on Near East Relief.
She has a lot of fun, an affair with Captain Savage in Rome, but instead of bearing his child, ends her life in an airplane crash with a French pilot.

Margo Dowling, the glamorous girl who comes of stage people, marries a dope-taking Cuban, she has a series of adventures, and lands very much on her feet when Sam Margolies in Hollywood picks her for a star. And then finally there are Benny Compton, the Jewish communist boy, who strives mightily for the cause of labor and is sent to Atlanta for opposing the draft. Mary French, who works at Hull House and for labour organizations in Pittsburgh, she goes to prison in Boston for protesting the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti is a friend of various “comrades,” (Beach, Theory 56) and is broken by Don Stevens on his return from Moscow.

With the exception of Ben Compton and Mary French, it is said that the characters are pretty much all alike in assuming that the world is their oyster. Only they differ in imagination and opportunity. Moorehouse is the chief of the exploiters, those who know how to make the most out of everything business, advertising, marriage, the war, relief, and the misunderstandings of capital and labour.

Eleanor Stoddard and Margo Dowling stand very high in this category: the one so shrewd in her exploitation of art and charity, the other in her exploitation of art and sex. Charley Anderson had everything for him and was going good. But he didn’t have the sense to stick to his honest trade of constructing planes.

The Big Money got him the little pleasures. Mac and Janey and Joe stand for the small people, seeking their own but without imagination and opportunity. They are of the race that is used and exploited and to get nothing from the game but hard knocks and prison fare and occasional activities.
Mac is not quite so simple. He had leanings toward something more rewarding and less purely selfish. A man, he said, “has got to work for more than himself and his kids to feel right.” “I want study and work for things, you know what I mean, not to get to be a slave driver but for socialism and the revolution and like that, not work and go on a bat on work, those damn barks on the railroad” (BM 252). Thus he had a glimpse of some ideal objective, of something more than selfish and casual round which to organize his effort.

Mac found his socialism was not to be reconciled with the demands of his family. And when he had thrown off the yoke and gone to Mexico, he hardly more than drifted with the current. He was a man of good intentions, but he did not have the stuff of heroes and martyrs. As for Ben and Mary, they are the two characters in the story who consistently worked for something more than themselves. But they were so obscure and ineffectual, such strands and straws in the wind of fate, that they do not greatly affect the tone of the whole exhibit.

These are the twelve men and women whose private histories are served up in *U.S.A.* as typical of Americans living in the first thirty years of the twentieth century. Together they form a valuable file of case histories. The characters, many of them, come to be associated together in business or in “love,” as front-page people are likely to be in small a world. But their connections are loose and casual, no more is made of these than of many other aspects of their lives. They are not played up in the manner of drama with issue, climax, and resolution. The narrative flows along in a steady stream of small events, with a minimum of formal scenes or “constituted occasions.” The characters are taken up in rotation, with the smallest apparent regard for the bearings of one on another or upon any story in which they are all involved.
Here again, the pattern is largely thematic, and depends on the reference from the private and individual case to matters of general and public import once. But here it is not by symbolic chapter-headings and introductory prose poems that Dos Passos suggests the wider reference. He has hit upon a new set of technical devices of startling originality to carry this burden, in which the symbolic and the poetic give way to the literal and the factual, so arranged that the critical attitudes may be supported with the utmost weight of documentation.

The first of these devices is called the Newsreel. This is a selection from newspaper headlines and articles of a date corresponding to that of action in the private lives which follow. It places the private action in the calendar of history, reminding the reader of what things were of concern to the world at large at the moment when such an individual was dealing with such an item in his obscure life. There is no comment, no reference from public to private; but as the thing repeats itself over and over, there is a growing sense that private and public must be related in the order of things: that the capture of Mafeking or the execution of Ferrer must have its bearing, however remote, upon the career of Mac, that Polish groups are of concern to Richard Ellsworth Savage, that the appointment of Daughterty has its long-range significance for Margo Dowling, and the landing of American marines in Nicaragua has its importance for Charley Anderson.

Thus this chapter critically viewed at the fictional aspects of Dos Passos’s select novels. The next chapter sums up the entire research work.