ABSTRACT

John Dos Passos, the most considerable figure in contemporary American Literature, presents the evils of contemporary American society in his novels. He plays the role of a social historian in this regard. The characters of his novels have no inner life commensurate with the outer world. Unlike the other writers of his time, Dos Passos invents a new form by which he is able to present his agony in a powerful manner. His family background has an impact on his literary career. As a journalist he is able to observe the society and, accordingly create characters with a critical mind in his novels. He depicts the American life of the period after World War I.

Chapter I deals with the loathsome life led by Americans because of commercialism, industrialism and World War I. Dos Passos anxiety to change the dominance of capitalism is revealed in his novels like, *Three Soldiers, Manhattan Transfer* and *U.S.A.* The characters move in the old, ill-planned rusting cities or those that are new and glittering. Dos Passos hates the wreckers who treat men as if they are machines, the speculators and the rich who live only to consume. His desire for the need to save the individual from society is also dealt with in this chapter.

Chapter II examines the bad influence of the city life on men and women which lead them astray very often. Ellen Thatcher’s misunderstandings with her husband Jimmy Herf result in divorce. Needing some kind of protection she marries an aged politician. The characters represent the bankrupt American Society.

Chapter III speaks about the melancholy mood experienced by the *Three Soldiers* – Andrews, Fuselli and Chrisfield. They lead a desperate life in the army which is the result of the hollowness produced by the World War I.
Chapters IV, V & VI *U.S.A.* a trilogy consisting of three volumes; The 42\textsuperscript{nd} Parallel, 1919 and The Big Money depicts the life of the people of his time through three devices; Biography, Newsreel and the Camera Eye. The characters of The 42\textsuperscript{nd} Parallel bring forth the stories of a number of representative Americans. In 1919 there is a terrifying picture about World War I. The final volume The Big Money presents the electrocution of Sacco and Vanzetti.

The focus of the novel falls upon the histories of noted personalities and traits of characters except the Camera Eye and the Newsreel sections. Camera Eye sections are none other than the life history of Dos Passos’s life still his thirties. Newsreel sections are jumbles of newspaper items and headlines, quotations from popular songs and other ephemerae of the period all set down upon the page in the same kind of confusion in which they existed in contemporary minds. Biographies are Twenty five sketches of persons prominent in the American life of the time ranging all the way from Woodrow Wilson to Rudolph Valentine. These are influenced by the pattern of struggle, labour, leaders, politicians, artists, journalists, scientists and business leaders. The fictional characters are average men and women, moulded by the complex forces about them.

Chapter VII traces the development of Dos Passos’s social and political thought through his frustrated characters. He presents America as a beaten nation. He foreshadows the hatred of capitalism combined with disillusion as Dos Passos is an eloquent spokesman.