CHAPTER I

INITIATION

INITIATION AND THE AMERICAN SCENE

Initiation has been one of the most persistent themes in American fiction. It became all the more prominent with America's coming of age in the early phases of the twentieth century, and it continues to be so at the present time. The theme of initiation is imperative and inevitable in a youth-oriented civilization like that of America. It provides the writer an opportunity to deal with the various social and emotional forces that confront the adolescent in his formative years. The process of transition from adolescence to adulthood is generally painful, and is followed by a loss of innocence. Analysing a cross section of views on initiation from Joseph Campbell to Ihab H. Hassan and Mordecai Marcus, Isaac Sequeira formulates a convincing and comprehensive definition:

Initiation is an existential crisis or a series of encounters in life, almost always painful, with experience during which the adolescent protagonist gains valuable knowledge about himself, the nature of evil, or the world. This knowledge is accompanied by a sense of the loss of innocence and a sense of isolation, and if it is to have any permanent effect at all, must result in a change in character and behaviour... In almost every case, the change leads toward an adjustable integration into the adult world.
Isaao Sequiera amplifies Mordecai Marcus's three categories of initiation -- tentative, uncompleted and decisive -- to study the novels of eight modern novelists, Sherwood Anderson, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, James T. Farrell, Carson McCullers, J.D. Salinger, Truman Capote and Ralph Ellison. The operative parts of the definition given by him are broadly three: first, that the initiate during his struggle for existence has a painful experience; second, that on the initiate a valuable knowledge dawns which helps him to understand the world around him; third, that in most cases the initiate is integrated into the adult world. Sequiera's definition and classification can be taken as valid for the study of the process of initiation in American fiction.

As initiation in literature bears only a tangential relationship with the anthropological and sociological initiation, the initiatory processes differ in nature and extent from the anthropological rites de passage. The adolescent goes through a physical or emotional trauma which is followed by a gain in knowledge and a loss of innocence. The prominent examples in fiction of the twentieth century initiates are: Sherwood Anderson's George Willard, Hemingway's Nick Adams, Farrell's Studs Lonigan, Faulkner's Ike McCaslin and Salinger's Holden Caulfield.
George Willard, the boy-man of *Winesburg, Ohio* (1919), comes into contact with spiritually and emotionally wounded men and women. Most of them are grotesques, people with distorted and eccentric personalities, who inhabit the fictional mid-western town of Winesburg. George Willard becomes their confidante, gains experience and learns how complex, puzzling and frustrating life can be. Nick Adams is the adolescent protagonist of fourteen Nick Adams stories published in *In Our Time* (1925), *Men Without Women* (1927) and *Winner Take Nothing* (1937). He goes through a variety of emotional and physical experiences of the violence of birth and death, discomfiture of the father, tension of sex, indulgence in alcoholism, repulsion of homosexuality and whoredom and the horrors of war. After undergoing a long period of apprenticeship, he finally attains maturity and enters the adult world. Studs Lonigan is the hero of three novels, *Young Lonigan* (1932), *The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan* (1934) and *Judgment Day* (1938) collectively called the *Studs Lonigan* trilogy. The trilogy traces Studs's life period from an adolescent of fourteen, through maturation and manhood until he dies at the age of twenty nine. The adolescent Studs finds himself surrounded by spiritual poverty at home, at school and in the streets and playgrounds where he spends most of his time. Stifled by spiritual vacuity, he goes through a traumatic childhood and afterwards a life of dissipation. He becomes a mental
and physical wreck, and dies a premature death. Faulkner's *The Bear* (1942) is one of the most significant initiation stories in American fiction. It begins in the Woods with the ritualistic hunt of the legendary bear, Old Ben. The first three of the five sections of the story deal with the hero, Ike McCaslin's apparenticeship in hunting skills and forest lore, and the last two with his initiation. McCaslin encounters the bear eight times, and each encounter leaves him with some meaningful experience. The myth-adventure with the legendary bear is the period of education and maturation of Ike McCaslin. J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1961), one of the most popular novels of the Fifties and Sixties among the youth, is the story of a hypersensitive adolescent, Holden Caulfield. He is perplexed and confused by the hypocrisy, complexity and the lack of genuine love in adult society. He flees from the corrupt world of the "phonies" and tries to seek refuge in the world of other genuine beings. The cleavage between the innocent world of the child and the corrupt world of the adults results in a painful experience for Holden and he suffers a nervous breakdown.

Like his contemporaries, Dos Passos also finds the intellectual and social climate of the early twentieth century highly congenial for the study of the dynamic processes of adolescence. The ordeals that the Dos Passos
adolescent-initiate undergoes are more of a sociological and deterministic mode rather than the ritualistic ones. There are four initiatory processes suggested in the novels of Dos Passos: family disorganization, lack of conducive education, sexual laxity, and war. In this respect he is nearer to James T. Farrell than Hemingway or Faulkner or J.D. Salinger. The four initiatory processes are not set in a systematic sequence one after the other as they are with Nick Adams, for instance; rather, the adolescent initiate may experience one or more at a time. These ordeals provide a painful transforming experience to the adolescent. In power and effect the transformation is not necessarily the same in all cases. With the valuable knowledge that he gains during the process of his maturation, he may emerge endowed with a concrete conviction, thus, becoming a social rebel, or if unable to confront the existential challenge of life, may deliberately suppress or ignore the knowledge that dawns upon him and succumb to the material values and be a social climber, or like Huck Finn and Holden Caulfield, may observe the corrupt and degenerate world around and simply become a spectator.

II

FAMILY DISORGANIZATION

More often than not, in a Dos Passos novel family disorganization is the first of the four processes that
provides a painful experience to the adolescent. The family consisting of a husband, wife and children is the basic social institution where the child learns the accepted social norms, attitudes, values and behaviour patterns. Dos Passos notices a constriction, a crack appearing in the delicate and abiding parent-child relationship. The crux of the Dos Passos adolescent's existential crisis lies in the gulf yawning between him and the disorganized family. The nuclear family, undoubtedly, plays a vital role in the socialization of the child. David Riesman points out the primary potent influence of the parents in the personality formation of the child and calls it "Inner-Directedness." Defining the term, he writes, "the source of direction for the individual is 'inner' in the sense that it is implanted early in life by the elders and directed toward generalized but nonetheless inescapably destined goals." Comparing "tradition-directedness," "inner-directedness," and "other-directedness," he suggests that "the inner-directed person has early incorporated a psychic gyroscope which is set going by parents and can receive signals later on from other authorities who resemble his parents." Although, Riesman adds, the inner-directed person goes through life less independent than he seems, owing to the early dependence on his parents, the intensive private guidance at home makes him "capable of maintaining a delicate balance between the
demands upon him of his life goal and the buffetings of his external environment. The homogeneously composed family which could induce inner-directedness normally gets disorganized in the novels of Dos Passos through three means: (a) the bereavement of a parent or parents, normally the death of the mother, (b) the ogre aspect of the father, (c) parents indulging in solipsistic activities. The disorganized family is responsible for painful memories, and the adolescent undergoes emotional as well as physical trauma.

The Bereavement of a Parent or Parents, Normally the Death of the Mother

Dos Passos portrays an idyllic relationship between the adolescent and the mother. There is usually shown a perfect understanding, support and sympathy in the mother and a reciprocal respect and regard in the loving reminiscences of the son. The ubiquity of the dead mother in the child's reminiscences lends poignancy to the childhood period of the hero. The sense of stability and sustenance that the child expects to derive gets severed, creating a vacuum in his life. Blanche H. Gelfant brilliantly observes the traumatic experience that the "generic hero" undergoes owing to the death of the mother and the brutal behaviour of the father. The child is impelled to search for "stability and roots." She elucidates, "At the radial point of Dos Passos' art stands a hero obsessed by the elusiveness of his identity,
a young man dislocated in his society, self-questioning, uncertain, unnerved, and estranged." She adds, "In the hero's cycle of life, the death of the mother marks the final dissolution of the home," and her death further aggravates the estrangement between the father and the son. Dos Passos does not drop the death scene casually, but links it inextricably with the succeeding scene which symbolically presages the nature of the hero's development and his ingress into the adult world.

In Manhattan Transfer Does Passos draws a detailed and vivid picture of the death of Jimmy Herf's mother, a truly painful experience for Jimmy. The fatal blow falls not long after their arrival in New York. She is, all of a sudden, taken ill in the hotel where they are staying. Jimmy calls his aunt, Mrs. Merival, who nurses her dying sister. He shudders at the idea of his mother's death and feels as if he is losing his hold on everything. His agony has been poignantly described in the words:

Eleven o'clock. Terror gripped him suddenly. If mother was dead ...? He pressed his face into the pillow. She stood over him in her white ballgown that had lace crisply on it and a train sweeping behind on satin rustling ruffles and her hand softly fragrant gently stroked his cheek. A rush of sobs choked him. He tossed on the bed with his face shoved hard into the knotty pillow. For a long time he couldn't stop crying.

Jimmy keeps on brooding on his mother's benigh image till he finds that the watch had stopped at 1.45. All of a
sudden he decides to visit the mother's room. Mrs. Merivale, the nurse, and the doctor are attending to his mother. He begs for a glimpse of the sick mother who is lying with "crumpled face," and after seeing her he comes back to his room, "He stood stiff and cold in the centre of the room with his fists clenched. 'I hate them. I hate them,' he shouted aloud. Then gulping a dry sob he turned out the light and slipped into bed between the shiverycold sheets (p.89).

The chapter "Steamroller" reveals the death of Jimmy's mother, "And muddy had had a stroke and now she was buried" (p. 113), and Jimmy is shown walking fast on the road going uphill. The upward hill and the briskness of the walk perhaps signify the pace Jimmy will be expected to adopt to cope with the hard world after the death of the mother. It may be an "uphill task" for him to survive in the industrialized-urban metropolis of New York.

Charley Anderson, the protagonist of The Big Money, goes through a similar experience. After his return from the war, Charley Anderson stays with his brother, Jim. He learns that his mother has been hospitalized, and operated upon for a cancerous tumor. Without much loss of time he visits her and is shocked to see her yellow shrunken face. Leaning over to kiss her he feels her lips thin and hot and her mouth giving out bad breath. Dos Passos draws a beautiful image of her imminent death when she drops her glasses while
indulgently and intently looks at her "prodigal son."
Charley picks up the pieces and assures her that he will get them repaired. His reply perhaps implies a sentimental gesture and an abortive attempt to restore order to the vestiges of her glasses, the seeing aids. He returns from the hospital and is overwhelmed with filial love, and grief, feeling as if the tears are running down his face. The first operation having failed, the mother undergoes another one, to which she finally succumbs and dies. Unlike Jimmy, Charley Anderson is grown up, yet at his mother's funeral he is in a sullen mood:

At the funeral, about halfway through the service, Charley felt the tears coming. He went out and locked himself in the toilet at the garage and sat down on the seat and cried like a child. When they came back from the cemetery, he was in a black mood and wouldn't let anybody speak to him....He lay there on his bed at night a long time in his uniform without undressing, staring at the ceiling and hearing mealy voices saying, deceased, bereavement, hereafter.10

In the scene following his mother's death he is shown moving about with Emiscia Svenson, the daughter of his employer in Minneapolis, a symbol of sexual promiscuity for Anderson. His flirtations with her are prophetic of the loose life he will lead as a great aeroplane mechanic and financial wizard.

In Manhattan Transfer and The Big Money the actual death scene is delineated. In Adventures of a Young Man and Chosen Country, the death scene is simply recalled through the hero's reminiscences. In Adventures of a Young Man Glenn Spotswood's mother has died of cancer which she might have
developed due to the caesarean operation she had in Cleveland, on Glenn's birth. He is grief-stricken and overwhelmed with a sense of isolation due to the tense atmosphere in the house. Tears well up in his eyes, and he is in search of a lonely corner to give vent to his pent-up feelings. The moment he finds himself "alone in the small kitchen he couldn't keep tears out of his eyes, it looked so much like it used to times he'd helped mother get meals or had washed the dishes for her." The kitchen articles and crockery bring to his mind the benign aspect of her personality and "He could still see Mother's wax face, motionless under glass" (p. 24). As the memories swarm in his mind, Glenn wants to weep like a child. Unable to control the surging feelings he goes to the bathroom and there cries profusely. Relieved of the pent-up feelings, with dim hazy eyes, he looks at the picture opposite him. It was the picture of the Bay of Naples at night with Vesuvius in eruption in the distance. Glenn remembers that his mother had bought the picture in Italy. He thinks "he was sailing that fishingboat across that midnight bay under the mother of pearl moon" (pp. 27-28). Like the interlinking scenes noticed in the cases of Jimmy Herf and Charley Anderson, in this picture too, is suggested a profound and prophetic significance. The Bay of Naples under the starry moonlit sky is the protective benign representation of Glenn's mother, and Vesuvius in eruption at a distance, foreshadows Glenn's volcanic rebellious nature.
Jay Pignatelli, the hero of *Chosen Country* is eighteen years old when he appears in the novel for the first time. He is on his way to Chicago for a change, during his summer vacation and he wants to see his friend Joe Newcomer. On the train he is reminded of the early eventful moments spent with his mother and finally her death. He reminisces about his mother's sweet caresses combing his hair, the sea bathing, shell collecting etc., and especially the watch that she presented to him. Again, he recollects how suddenly she fell sick in the Hotel Dustan and there was the hectic activity of the nurses and the doctors, and how he felt neglected as nobody paid any attention to him. Jay recalls his love for his mother, Petite Mere, "He'd hated all those schools, all his life he'd hated everything but Petite Mere"¹², and after her death he suffers the pangs of loneliness:

And now I'm my own, old enough to encounter the emergency. But how? Where to start? An Englishman in America and American in England and the only home I ever knew just grief's cramping tedium round Petite Mere's sickbed. No wonder I had no tears left when she died...And the old country hearse was dusty and the locust blossoms drooped in the hedgerows and the crows cawed overhead and the two old colored men had dug out the fresh red clay till it looked like a wound in the bleeding earth. (p.32)

Jay's next appearance is at a party, talking and dancing with Lulie, a female protagonist in the novel. This succeeding scene after the reminiscences on the train is
indicative of the happy ending, the only novel of Dos Passos which ends in a happy marriage, and John D. Brantley rightly calls it a "novel of acceptance." Thus, in the death of the hero's mother, Dos Passos evokes a benign and blissful mother-image. Her death wrecks the gaiety and the congenial atmosphere of the wholesome family and the child goes through a traumatic experience.

The Ogre Aspect of the Father

Commenting on the role of a father in the child's life, Joseph Campbell writes, "the father is the initiating priest through whom the young being passes on into the larger world." In Dos Passos's fictional world the father-figure is split, especially when the ogre father-image contrasts with the composite, consistent and benign mother-image. There is ambivalence in the father-image. It is the image of a person who is moral, intelligent and strong-willed, yet unsuccessful, acquiescent, weak, bankrupt and despotic. Whichever aspect of this ambivalent image he may be, it is antagonistic to the adolescent who develops a strong aversion for the father. The ambivalent father figure serves as an ordeal to initiate the child into the adult world.

The hallucinatory, formidable father-image is best exemplified in Streets of Night. Wenny, one of the three protagonists, is the son of a congregational minister. His
ethical and frenetic behaviour checks the natural blossoming of Wenny. At the age of twenty-three he finds himself simply a social parasite, and rebels against the puritanical persecution of his father. He tells Fanshaw and Nancibel, his friends, how he has broken his relations with his father. There is a "little chat on life and eternity" between him and his father. Wenny argues in favour of life and his father is for eternity. In the heated discussion, Wenny decides not to depend upon his father for financial help any more. Fanshaw and Nancibel do not approve of his decision, but Wenny argues:

You can't imagine how fearful it is down there. A congregational minister's house in Washington. The snobbery and mealymouthedness...God, it is stinking...You see I never really lived with them. My mother's sister brought me up mostly here in Boston... I have nothing in common with those people down there, and now, because they were giving me money they decided I must do what they wanted and they hate me and I hate them. I was a filthy coward to ever take a cent from him, anyway....And so here I am at twenty-three, penniless, ignorant, and full of the genteel paralysis of culture. (p. 102)

It is only after breaking his relations with his father that Wenny feels free to act. "Gee, it's lucky I had that row with Father. I'd never have waked up for years" (p. 113). Notwithstanding his fuming and fretting, he fails to free himself from the haunting presence of his father's image. Before committing suicide, Wenny drinks hard in a bar, and watches himself in the looking glass
beside him. The reflection in the looking glass brings back to him the haunting figure of his father:

He drank and the man in the looking-glass drank. He stared into the black wells of his dilated pupils. Panic terror swooped on him all of a sudden; it was not his face. The face was thinner, the upper lip tight over the teeth, the hair smooth and steel grey, the jowls pinkish, close-shaved, constricted by a collar round backwards. My face, my father's face, and Dad's Voice.... (p.197)

He fails to drown the haunting father-image in the bouts of Martini and "Everything was spinning again and again and he was saying over and over: I must pull myself together, pull myself together, for that face is my face, and father's voice is my voice. I am my father" (p.199). The thought drags him to death "Now in me my father'll be dead" (p.200).

A principled father is incarnated in the person of Herbert Spotswood, in Adventures of a Young Man. An intellectual and a man of firm convictions, he adheres to his pacifistic beliefs, staking the careers of Glenn and Tyler, his two sons. He has lost his job at the University of Columbia. Justifying his stand, he says, "A man's first duty is to his belief in what's right and what's wrong. I believed that our entering the war was an act of criminal folly and I still believe it" (p. 29). The death of his wife, Ada, has already estranged him from his children and this is further aggravated because of his proclaimed
adherence to his beliefs. Glenn in particular, develops a sort of dislike for his father.

The father's unwarranted beating of the children is another repelling attribute of the father-figure in the novels of Dos Passos. The brutal and callous behaviour is exemplified in the beating meted out to Bud Korpenning in *Manhattan Transfer*. The incident leads to patricide and finally to suicide. After killing his father, Bud escapes into the populous city of New York. Incessantly tormented by hunger, poverty and the fear of detectives, he takes refuge in a poor house. Unable to sleep, one night, he discloses to a co-boarder the secret of his anguish. Unbuttoning the front of his union suit he asks him to look at his back. "Christ Jesus," whispered the man running a grimy hand with long yellow nails over the mass of the white and red deepgrouped scars. I 'ain't never seen nothin' like it" (p. 122). Bud then narrates the inhuman attitude of the father:

That's what the ole man done to me. For twelve years he licked me when he had a mind to. Used to strip me and take a piece of light chain to my back. They said he was my dad but I know he aint. I run away when I was thirteen. That was when he ketched me an began to lick me. I'm twentyfive now. (p. 122)

The atrocities of the father continue till Bud is enraged enough to kill him. He tells:
I mashed him head in with the grubbinhoe, mashed it in like when you kick a rotten punkin. I told him to lay offn me an he wouldn't....He was a hard godfearin man an he wanted you to be soeered of him. We was grubbin the sumach outa the old pasture to plant pertoters there....I let him lay till night with his head mashed in like a rotten punkin. A bit of scrub along the fence hid him from the road. Then I buried him and went up to the house an made me a pot of coffee. (p.123)

Another instance of the father's merciless treatment of his son occurs in The 42nd Parallel. Joe Williams, introduced in The 42nd Parallel but a protagonist in 1919, is beaten by his father with or without reason. His sister, Janey, is sympathetic towards him, but being a girl and more so a child, is unable to protect him. The family lives in a dilapidated house in Georgetown. The father is a martinet in the family and the children dare not make a noise in the house. Sometimes, reading a Sunday paper the father goes to sleep and Joe and his sister Janey, cannot laugh loudly. Strongly disapproving of a father who beats his children, Dos Passos gives graphic details of the corporal beating inflicted on Joe by his father:

About once a week Joe would get spanked. Popper would come home from the Patent Office where he worked, angry and out of sorts, and the girls would be scared of him and go about the house quiet as mice; but Joe seemed to like to provoke him, he'd run whistling through the back hall or clatter up and down stairs making a tremendous racket with his stubtoed ironplated shoes. Then Popper would start scolding him and Joe would stand in front of him without saying a word glaring at the floor with bitter blue eyes. Janey's insides knotted up and froze when Popper would start up the
stairs to the bathroom pushing Joe in front of him. She knew what would happen. He'd take down the razorstrop from behind the door and put the boy's head and shoulders under his arm and beat him. Joe would clench his teeth and flush and not say a word and when Popper was tired of beating him they'd look at each other and Joe would be sent up to his room and Popper would come down stairs trembling all over and pretend nothing had happened.

Dos Passos narrates a particular beating incident which becomes a traumatic experience for Joe. Janey watches the beating:

Once a drizzly Saturday night she stood against the fence in the dark looking up at the lighted window. She could hear Popper's voice and Joe's in an argument. She thought maybe she'd fall down dead at the first thwack of the razorstrop. She wouldn't hear what they were saying. Then suddenly it came, the leather sound of blows and Joe stifling a gasp. She was eleven years old. Something broke loose. She rushed into the kitchen with her hair all wet from the rain, "Mommer, he's killing Joe. Stop it." Her mother turned up a withered helpless drooping face from a pan she was scouring. "Oh, you can't do anything." Janey ran upstairs and started beating on the bathroom door. "Stop it, stop it," her voice kept yelling. She was scared, but something stronger than she was had hold of her. The door opened; there was Joe looking sheepish and Popper with his face all flushed and the razorstrop in his hand. (pp.154-155)

Joe endures the beating with a manly fortitude, but a deep hatred for his father is ingrained in his mind. He forbids his sister, Janey, to interfere when he is being beaten and tells her, "When I get a job and make enough dough, I'll get me a gun and if Popper tries to beat me up I'll shoot him dead." (p.155).
Examining Dos Passos's "generic" hero's search for identity, Blanche H. Gelfant perceptively comments, "In the geography of emotions, father and mother represent antipodes of hatred and love. All love is polarized about the mother while the father receives the dregs of his son's feelings - jealousy, resentment and hate." Thus, Dos Passos portrays a harmonious, composite mother-image culminating into death, and an ambivalent father image reflecting cruelty and authority. Both, however, fill the impressionable period of the hero's childhood with painful memories.

Parents Indulging in Solipsistic Activities

The twentieth century technological development and urbanization has split the well-knit family unit into segregated segments of individuals. They have been so walled-up in their mechanical routine that their family life has been relegated to the leisure hours. The solipsism of the parents has given rise to, what David Riesman calls, "The Other-Directedness" in the children. In The Lonely Crowd he observes that whenever the older patterns of discipline are relaxed and society becomes urbanized and there are industrial and technological developments, other-directed-type of people increase in number. Contrasting the Other-Directed persons with the Inner-Directed ones
he points out that "the other-directed person learns to respond to signals from a far wider circle than is constituted by his parents. The family is no longer a closely knit unit to which he belongs but merely part of a wider social environment to which he early becomes attentive." 18

The Great Days (1958) shows the disastrous effects that the parents' self indulgence can have on children. Ro Lancaster, "the rolling stone," fails to mould his sons, Chips and Louie, into his own image. Being a celebrated journalist, his professional engagements keep him away from home. Consequently, the children are neglected. Chips becomes a problem child for the school authorities and is "in hot water for breaking bounds and going into town without permission." 19 Because of a lack of discipline, he is "flunked" from the boarding schools. Both Chips and Louie grow up into juvenile delinquents. Explaining his sons' delinquency, Ro says: In our home the boys were constantly at loose ends. They moped and sulked. I tried to get them interested in a course of reading. I tried to get them to take swimming lessons at the YMCA. I tried to get them interested in collecting stamps and making ship models, but all they would do was play jazz records and go to the movies. Then they would come home complaining how lousy the picture had been as if it were my fault. Most of the time they just sulked. (pp. 208-209) On their return home from the movie one day, the children find their father unexpectedly back. They react
in a strange fashion which Ro painfully records:

Chips gave me a funny look as if to say, "You back?"..."So the divorce is off?" he asked. Louie piped up in his high voice! "Chips kep' sayin' he'd rather have Roger /a high government official/ for a father than Dad...He said at least Roger would stay home and take us to ballgames." (p. 263)

How his long absence from home adversely affects his sons, is also observed by his wife, Grace. "It's because of us, Ro. If we'd turned out right, they /children/ would..." (p. 5). Instead of supplying a social matrix with model parents in which the personality of the child could thrive, Ro Lancaster would rarely stay at home. As a consequence, his adolescent sons turn to other sources outside the family bounds for security and affection. Stan Emery in Manhattan Transfer is the prototype of the teenagers who have lost their bearings in life. Their painful process of initiation is furthered by the quest for identity outside the family circle. Due to the parents' nonchalance and their inability to be model parents, the adolescent no longer responds to the callings of the institution of family. Torn by tension and insecurity like Huck Finn and Holden Caulfield, the Dos Passos adolescent seeks to define his identity in the world around. A paragraph on Stan Emery in a local paper Town Topics throws light on the misadventures and activities of affluent students:
Malicious tongues are set wagging by the undeniable fact that young Stanwood Emery's car is seen standing every night outside the Knickerbocker Theatre and never does it leave they say, without a certain charming young actress whose career is fast approaching stellar magnitude. This same young gentleman, whose father is the head of one of the city's most respected lawfirms, who recently left Harvard under slightly unfortunate circumstances, has been astonishing the natives for some time with his exploits which are sure are merely the result of the ebullience of boyish spirits. A word to the wise. (p. 197)

The final fictional narrative of Midcentury deals with Stan Godspeed, the disillusioned young nephew of Jasper Milliron, a business magnate. He sets out on a spending spree across the country with his uncle's credit cards which he has stolen. His biographical chapters are entitled "Tomorrow the Moon." He bears a deep-rooted grudge against the adults who fail to understand the problems of the adolescents. He says, "They say teenagers are screwy but it's the adults who are really nuts. At teenage parties we have a nice happy violent time getting rid of our frustrations. We have fun. But these damned adults, all the poor clods do is sit there beating their brains out over their liquor." Appended to the fictional character of Stan Godspeed is the profile of James Dean, a motion picture actor, meaningfully entitled "The Sinister Adolescents." The biography reappears in Esquire (Oct. 1973), in a modified form, interspersed with snapshots. The biography is focused on the diminishing parent-image, and
the neglected adolescents turning into delinquents. Thematic to the profile is the interspersed news:

**TEEN-AGE DANCES SEEN THREATENED BY PARENTS' FAILURE TO COOPERATE**

The adolescents have been described as "the shook-up generation in sections of the city undergoing their own profound shake-ups in social patterns." The end of the story is both ironic and portentous, "The sinister adolescents come to various ends, sometimes they grow up." In the profile of James Dean, Dos Passos shows how the parents' inadequate care and love make their children feel strong resentment, even hatred towards them. Insecure and isolated, these adolescents, painfully try to seek their identity in the world outside.

## III

**LACK OF CONDUCIVE EDUCATION**

The Dos Passos hero gains a painful experience in his educational career due to the failure of the inefficient educational institutions to properly develop the personality of the child. Mostly, he does not go beyond high school, or drops out of college, or at best receives a haphazard education. This lack of conducive education arises from:
The parents' inability to give financial help to the child, the inefficacy of the educational institutions to socialize the child.

Parents's Inability to Give Financial Help to the Child

The father, in particular is expected to sacrifice his financial needs for the welfare and education of the child. In a Dos Passos novel the father is either not conscientious and competent in his parental role, or he disappears from the scene leaving the family in financial straits. In some cases the father suffers from a guilt-feeling for not having been able to give adequate financial aid or care to the child; but this deficiency, pecuniary or personal, serves as an initiatory process and gives the child an intense experience. In the light of inadequate academic education and the failure of the educational institutions to guarantee a worthwhile career, the Dos Passos hero begins to look for a more meaningful identity outside the educational system. Some of Dos Passos's heroes who fail to receive the desired education because of the father's inability to give financial help, are: J. Ward Moorehouse in The 42nd Parallel, Ben Compton in 1919, Glenn Spotswood in Adventures of a Young Man and Chuck Crawford in Number One.

Ward Moorehouse is reported as a promising child in the academic field. He graduates from high school as head
of the debating team, class orator, and winner of the prize essay contest. Everybody in the family feels that he should go to a college for further studies. But the unsatisfactory financial condition of the family retards his progress. Constrained by circumstances, Johnny joins a book distributing firm as an agent and makes a good sale of Bryant's History of the United States. With the money he earns, he goes to Philadelphia, gets a scholarship, passes the examinations, and enrolls himself as a freshman indicating B.S. as the degree he is working for. In his sophomore year when his career appears secure, he learns that his father has slipped on the ice on the station steps and has broken his hip. The accident to the only breadwinner in the family brings a sudden end to his college education. The incident makes Moorehouse feel very bitter against drink and against his father. Ben Compton's debut in 1919 is as a gangling high school youth with heavy glasses and the family spells out for him a lawyer's profession. He is hardly thirteen when due to illness his father has to give up his work as a watchmaker in a jewellery store. The family's financial condition becomes worse, but Ben, somehow or the other is able to graduate from high school, and win a prize in an essay competition. To enter New York University he needs money; he overstrains himself
which adversely affects his weak health. Being unable to provide nourishing food and leisure for Ben, his father feels sad: "thirty years he had worked in America and now he was a sick old man all used up and couldn't provide for his children." Glenn's father, Herbert Spotswood, is a devout pacifist. He loses his teaching post at Columbia because of his anti-war views. After the death of his wife the other source of income from his in-laws in the form of an annuity, also ceases. Financially handicapped, Herbert Spotswood cannot help Glenn who is keen to take college board exams to pursue his studies. He recommends him to his old friend, Dr. Talcott who runs a school at Winnesquam. Herbert Spotswood, like Ben's father, confesses in one of his letters his "greatest shame and humiliation" for not being able to afford Glenn's education. Chuck Crawford's father is "a mighty opinionated" man and a smart lawyer. He cannot adequately support his family because "He paid out more in fines for contempt of court than he collected in fees in his law practice, an' most of his clients were pore people an' he never did press for payment." In order to continue his studies Chuck has to do various odd jobs.

The Inefficacy of the Educational Institutions to Socialize the Child

Educational institutions could take over some of the responsibilities abdicated by the parents. These are the
viable centres as recognized by John Dewey, where the adolescent can get an opportunity to establish the identity and self-esteem denied to him by the parents. In the *Studs Lonigan* trilogy, James T. Farrell depicts how the schools and colleges the adolescents attend do not prepare them to be integrated into the society or create a more meaningful one. One of the educational fringe benefits that the hero remembers are the camps, athletics, picnics or friendships. Though these are equally important parts of the educational curriculum, they in themselves alone, fail to bring about social cohesion. Pointing out the defective system of education, Dos Passos writes to his daughter Lucy, whom he addresses as "Sweet Rabbit", that "The pathetic thing about the great well-intentioned mass of college and highschool students is that they have been so badly educated they have no knowledge or understanding of the complications of the world we live in and they have been so conditioned and prejudiced by generations of ill-taught teachers that they refuse to see a fact when they are confronted with one." A dislike for the utility of the academic education has been expressed by Wenny in *Streets of Night*, Jimmy Herf in *Manhattan Transfer* and Glenn in *Adventures of a Young Man*. One of the themes in *Streets of Night* is the oppressive academic environment in Cambridge, Boston, in the years before the outbreak of the First World War, and the theme
is reiterated in Camera Eye (25) in The 42nd Parallel.
With great discernment Dos Passos epitomizes the unconducive environment of his college days:

haven't got the nerve to break out of the bellglass four years under the ethercone breathe deep gently now that's the way be a good boy one two three four five six get A's in some courses but don't be a grind be interested in literature but remain a gentleman....(p. 341)

Fanshaw MacDougan, David Wendell, and Nancibel Taylor are three friends living in Boston. Fanshaw's first appearance is as a devoted college student who acts on the exhortation of his teacher, Mr. Crownsterne. His "heart to heart talk" about the temptations of college life checks Fanshaw from consummating his love with a chorus girl. False education has made him an inhibited young man and he fails to act in life. Later on, Fanshaw appears as an art instructor. His friend, Wenny is working for an M.A. degree in anthropology. Wenny realizes the corrupting influence of university education and however naively, tries to find recompense in the love of Nancibel Taylor, who is too frigid to love anybody. Wenny loses the bearings of his life and gives up studies. Fanshaw advises him to continue his studies to complete his M.A. course but Wenny replies:

"Honestly, I don't give a damn, Fanshaw. I'm so sick of this hanging on the outskirts of college...."

"I think your department would get you a scholarship. You must go put it up to them. It's ridiculous to let a thing like this wreck your career."...

"My dear Fanshaw, if you knew how utterly sick and fed up I was with all that...No, I'm going to live this time."...
"But don't be a fool. Look, I'll try to scrape up some cash for the term bill. I think I can do it."
"You mustn't. I don't want it paid...I'm not going to keep on with this farce any longer." (pp. 105-106)

Wenny emphatically asserts, "If there is anything in my life I bitterly resent it is that. The time I wasted in college" (p.80). Jimmy Herf, fortunately has the fullest opportunity to get a college education, but he also feels its inadequacy. He tells Congo, a successful bootlegger, "If I'd had a decent education and started soon enough I might have been a great scientist" (p. 384). Unfortunately, as C. Wright Mills observes, in practice all that education can do is to prepare the youth for white-collar jobs.

Although Glenn Spotswood has graduated from Columbia cum laude, he takes no pride in his achievement. To his old friend, Paul Graves he talks about how he has wasted three years putting himself through college, "just because nobody of the whitecollar class could think of anything better to do. And all the time what he'd really wanted to be doing was beat his way around the country living like working people lived. The whitecollar class was all washed up" (p. 147). Education without concrete and conducive plans, acts as a retarding force in the formation of an adolescent's personality. Dos Passos expresses his apprehension of the detrimental effect of a defective education, in a letter to his friend Rumsey Marvin:
By the way what are you reading nowadays?
For the Lord's sake don't get the idea that your school work is educating you—' taint—
All the education one gets is from ones own reading or ones own living and you really have to have the reading to have a standard to test the living by—
School & college interfere with ones education most horribly anyway.30

IV

SEXUAL LAXITY

Sexual encounter, particularly the initial one, is a significant experience in the life of the Dos Passos hero. Dos Passos treats it as an ordeal in the process of initiation during which the hero receives a meaningful experience. In the entire range of Dos Passos novels from One Man's Initiation-1917 to Midcentury, he dramatises three kinds of love; lustful love, altruistic love and conjugal love. Lustful love or sexual promiscuity is heavily accented as a biological gratification, an evanescent passion, an animal desire and serves as an initiatory process. A by-product of a decaying civilization -- the industrialized and materialistic society -- sexual promiscuity became all the more conspicuous in America after the First World War. Articulating their individualism, both the male and female sections frequently transgressed physical or moral restraints and as a consequence the traditional authority of the family and the church declined. Newsreel LI in The Big Money throws light on the new freedom of the women, the various professional avenues open to them.
and the equalization of social and political privileges.  
Portraying, though very often with disdain, the extramarital sexual indulgence, Dos Passos makes it one of the important themes in *U.S.A.* and the novels written before it. He keenly observes that the moral lapse, especially on the part of a woman, becomes a sound reason for the spiritual agony or degeneration in the Dos Passos hero. His early novels are what Ihab H. Hassan would call "the expense of spirit and waste of shame." Infidelity in man or woman, turns love into a kind of sexual commodity and exposes the protagonist to emotional strain.

Ellen Thatcher, in *Manhattan Transfer* is the prototype of female fictional characters who clamour for wealth and success in life. Besides her other post-marital sexual transgressions she has married three times, to Jojo Oglethorpe, Jimmy Herf, and George Baldwin. Eveline Hutchins, introduced in 1919, during her period of puberty has a horror of her own body. But as she grows up into a beautiful young woman, she has a series of love affairs, with Dirk McArthur on her way home from Europe tour, Jose O'Rieley, a Spanish artist, Jerry Burnham, the war correspondent, Don Stevens, a member of I.W.W., J.W. Moorehouse, the Public relations counsel and during the war a major in the Red Cross, Paul Johnson, a private in the army, who marries her even though she is pregnant, and Charley Anderson, the war
ace. This life of dissipation finally drives her to suicide. Eleanor Stoddard, an interior decorator, carries a life-long sterile relationship with J.W. Moorehouse. Eileen O'Dawyer in *Midcentury*, the wife of Blackie Bowman, is an alcoholic. She is a freakish young woman and thinks that a life of sex and drink is her birthright. Without any moral qualms and compunctions she cuckolds her husband, Blackie, and makes his life hellish. Analysing the treatment of love in modern American fiction, Ihab H. Hassan has appropriately observed that the ideal concept of love has been mutilated into "the dehumanization of sex and desexualization of love," and adds that "the appropriate symbol of spiritual death was no longer impotence but aimless copulation."

Juxtaposed to the lustful love of mechanized sexuality are the altruistic and conjugal love, which emphasize a humane kinship. Altruistic love is based on a spirit of comradeship and self-effacement. In this kind of love, reflected through the social rebels, there is a desire for sharing each other's problems and anxieties. The comrades have temperamental affinity. Love for them is of spurious value, if they cannot exchange their deepest ideas and feelings. An idyllic portrayal of conjugal love permeates the novels after *U.S.A.* Marriage in these novels is conceived more as a social charter for the establishment of a legitimate happy family life than a licence for sexual intercourse.
Aware of the noble and inspiring aspect of a woman's personality, John Dos Passos lavishes his respect and admiration for womanhood in the words of Paul Graves, a protagonist in *The Grand Design*. On the suicide of his secretary, Georgia Washburn, Paul Graves says, "what a waste to have her poor life shattered so soon. So gentle, so good. Old Facts and Figures. She ought to have had a proper husband and children. When a good woman died it was worse than a man dying, so much hope died with her" (pp. 370-371).

The Dos Passos adolescent is awakened to sexual knowledge before he is ready to grapple with the stern realities of life. The love experience is not of a romantic type as it is with Hemingway or Fitzgerald, but a driving force, a symbolic manifestation of the restlessness of the milieu. The characters who undergo a significant and intense sexual experience, are: J. Ward Moorehouse and Charley Anderson, in *The 42nd Parallel*, Richard Ellsworth Savage in *1919*. J. Ward Moorehouse has an intense sex experience through his wife's pre-marital promiscuity. He has pangs of agony but succumbs to the material glamour that his lascivious wife, Annabella Strang offers to him. At twenty he is an ordinary-looking, blonde-headed youngman, with a business asset in his "Pair of bright blue eyes." He does not smoke or drink and is "keeping himself clean for
the lovely girl" (p. 199), whom he shall one day marry. He reads Success Magazine and is particular about his dress. His abstinence and moral scruples seem to evaporate the moment he meets Annabella Strang on a train, bound for Ocean City. She is the daughter of a prominent and wealthy nose and throat specialist in Philadelphia. Moorehouse, "the little blue-eyed ninny" is first shocked to discover that she smokes. But her wealth is a temptation strong enough to drag the reader of Success Magazine into a pre-marital, promiscuous love affair. Before he is initiated into sex, he suffers the pricks of conscience, pangs of jealousy and the scourges of opportunism. Finding a rival in a Frenchman, Monsieur de la Rochevillaine, Moorehouse becomes conscious of his comparative poverty and growing jealousy and seeks imaginative escape in writing songs on "Annabella Marie". The Frenchman's departure is a relief and Ward Moorehouse gets a chance to enjoy bathing in the sea with Annabella Strang in the moonlit night. While dressing, qualms of conscience bother him and he asks himself "if he wanted to get married to a girl who'd go in swimming with a fellow all naked like that, anyway" (p. 213). The illusions about chastity and the virginal image are shattered. Notwithstanding her smoking, licentiousness and nude bathing, the little song writer proposes to her, "Would you marry a feller like me without any money?" and
adds "You're pretty wealthy, I guess, and I haven't a cent, and I have to send home money to my folks...but I have prospects" (pp. 213-214). A marriage proposal is not a very challenging situation for a promiscuous woman like Annabella. Instead of answering, she "pulled his face down and ruffled his hair and kissed him" (p. 214).

Sex relations of Moorehouse and Annabella Strang become the talk of the town and two bellhops talk about the "hotstuff" that she is. Moorehouse eavesdrops, and listens to their conversation about the Frenchman's sexual relations with Annabella Strang. One of the bellhops says, "I know he was in the room. I caught him once. They'd forgot to lock the door" (p. 218). For sometime Moorehouse is mentally shaken and decides to leave the town immediately, but pragmatic considerations suggest to him to ignore her sexual transgressions. With finesse Dos Passos draws a conflict between penury and prosperity, peace of mind and material pelf:

He walked down the street without seeing anything. For a while he thought he'd go down to the station and take the first train out and throw the whole business to ballyhack, but there was the booklet to get out, and there was a chance that if the boom did come he might get in on the ground floor, and this connection with money and the Strangs; opportunity knocks but once at a young man's door. (p. 219)

Moorehouse, the opportunist, pleads in favour of lucrative prospects and what follows is spiritual agony:
He stood a minute looking at himself in the glass of the bureau. The neatly parted light hair, the clean cut nose and chin; the image blurred. He found he was crying. He threw himself face down on the bed and sobbed. (p. 219)

Annabella Strang has initiated Moorehouse into sex with her extramarital promiscuity and he drops his early high ideals. Before he enters the system he feels: "Here he was twenty-three years old and he hadn't a college degree and he didn't know any trade and he'd given up the hope of being a songwriter. God damn it, he'd never be a valet to any society dame again" (p. 234).

Charley Anderson has as many as twelve affairs with different girls during his life time. Out of this series of sex relations, four — with Emiscah Svenson, the daughter of his employer at Minneapolis, Doris Humphries a rich and beautiful society girl in New York, Gladys Wheatley, the daughter of a rich banker at Detroit, and Margo Dowling, who became the sex-symbol of Hollywood — are conspicuous for the variety of experience each gives him. Yet, his first sex encounter with Emiscah is significant as it initiates him into sex. Like Annabella Strang, Emiscah also proves unfaithful and vitiates Charley Anderson's moral and spiritual vitality, which he is never able to redeem. He rather becomes "a little devil with women" and confesses "I got woman trouble."
Charley is still a high school student when he is initiated into sex. He gets a summer job at an amusement park outside Minneapolis, and falls in love with his employer's youngest daughter, Emiscah Svenson. Charley's is a consistent initiation into sex, from the preliminary stages of kissing, embracing, and sexual excitement finally to sexual intercourse. After duty hours, Charley and his co-worker, Ed Walters go out canoeing with their girls. Often, they smoke cigarettes, play the phonegraph and kiss and cuddle up together in the bottom of the canoe. Emiscah teaches Charley how to frenchkiss but there is no sex contact, and their love is confined to hugging and kissing. Again, One night, all the four go out to enjoy a bonfire in a patch of big woods and there tell each other ghost stories. Ed Walters makes a bed with hemlock twigs stuck in the ground and all the four sleep in the same blankets, embrace and tickle each other. "Part of the time Charley lay between the two girls and they cuddled up close to him, but he got a hardon and could not sleep and was worried for fear the girls would notice" (p. 427). With relations becoming more intimate, Charley takes Emiscah every Saturday night out to a movie or some restaurant or dancing. At Christmas they are engaged and Charley gives her the seal ring. In the meantime Charley gets an attack of diptheria and is hospitalised for weeks.
In his absence, Ed Walters and Emiscah lead a loose life. One day they get over-drunk and Ed takes her to a hotel, seduces her and she conceives. On his return home from the hospital, Charley finds Ed Walters missing and Mr. Svenson a little indifferent and cold and worried. Emiscah discloses the secret of her pregnancy, and Charley is shocked and in utter agony he exclaims "By God, it was Ed" (p. 434).

Emiscah proves faithless and Charley now does not care at all for purity and moral scruples. His fiancée's infidelity and his friend's treachery create an emotional upheaval, but soon after he is willing to be initiated into sex, "She kissed him and loved him up and locked the parlor door and they loved each other up on the sofa and she let him do everything he wanted" (p. 435). During his sex life with Emiscah, Charley is exposed to a woman's iniquity and a friend's insincerity which eventually embitter him against the abiding values of life. Later on, he hopelessly tries to find solace and inspiration in the love of Doris Humphries who proves frigid and selfish.

Richard Ellsworth's (Dick savage) first sexual encounter is highly significant. He is hardly fourteen when he spends two summers as a bellhop in a small hotel at the shore and becomes friendly with Edwin Thurlow, a young minister and his wife, Hilda. The third summer,
hardly sixteen, Dick has sexual intercourse with Hilda. On Sundays, when Edwin is away to Elberon to conduct services in another little summer chapel, Dick and Hilda take long walks together. She tells him that she and her husband have no sex relations because he feels they are too poor to have a baby. Disgusted with her husband's apathy to sex contacts, Hilda tells Dick, "She didn't care whether the damn parishioners saw her or not, and talk and talk about how she wanted something to happen in her life, and smart clothes and to travel to foreign countries and to have money to spend and not to have to fuss with the housekeeping and how she felt sometimes she could kill Edwin for his mild calfish manner." 35 And unable to control her surging passions, one moonless night she seduces Dick. She "suddenly jumped on him and mussed up his hair and stuck her knees into his stomach and began to run her hands over his body under his shirt.... They neither of them said anything, but lay there in the sand breathing hard. At last she whispered, "Dick, I mustn't have a baby.... We can't afford it.... That's why Edwin won't sleep with me. Damn it, I want you, Dick. Don't you see how awful it all is?" (pp. 88-89). At the adolescent age of sixteen, Dick is initiated into sex by a married woman and that too the wife of an ecclesiast. Feeling he has committed a sin, Dick is overpowered by remorse,
"He thought of killing himself, but he was afraid of going to hell; he tried to pray, at least to remember the Lord's Prayer. He was terribly scared when he found he could n't even remember the Lord's Prayer. Maybe that was the sin against the Holy Ghost they had committed" (p. 89). These moral compunctions are ephemeral and their love continues for the rest of the summer. Every Sunday evening when Edwin is out to conduct service: in Elberon Dick and Hilda enjoy sex. Sex experience opens new horizons of outlook for the young Dick and when he goes back to school that fall, he "felt very much the man of the world" (p. 90).

V

WAR

War in itself is a concrete ordeal where the youth suffers physical, emotional and psychical agonies. The Dos Passos hero enters war with naive idealism and enthusiasm. He is a sensitive youngman, an aesthete, bubbling with romantic illusions. He is not very precisely aware of his motive for joining the army. He carries a vague, lurking desire to experience danger, with a naive hope to save the crumbling civilization from the barbarous and dehumanizing effects of war. He is like Nathaniel
Hawthorne's adolescent protagonist Robin of the story "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," who comes to the city in search of his kinsman and a new way of life. He faces the evil that permeates the city life, undergoes hardships, gains knowledge about life and this constitutes his initiation. Similarly, the Dos Passos hero, in the words of Frederick J. Hoffman, is, "The young naïf, like the provincial coming to the brilliant confusion of the great city for the first time, is overwhelmed by an experience he half expects and partly hopes to find, but which stuns him by being so much more unpleasantly true than he had bargained for." 36

The title of the novel One Man's Initiation-1917 suggests its hero Martin's Howe's initiation into war. We encounter him for the first time on New York Harbor, ready to board an ocean liner bound for France, as a volunteer ambulance driver, to be "initiated in all the circles of hell." 37 On the ship amidst hectic activity, enthusiasm, and music, Howe is simply thrilled. He nostalgically dreams, "He has never been so happy in his life," and "The future is nothing to him, the past is nothing to him. All his life is effaced in the grey languor of the sea" (p. 45), and feels "as through infinite mists of greyness he looks back on the sharp hatreds and wringing desires of his life. Now a leaf
seems to have been turned and a new white page spread before him, clean and unwritten on. At last things have come to pass" (p. 45).

Before Martin Howe is directly involved in the war, he undergoes a succession of auditory and visual experiences relating to war. Collectively the impressions result in a traumatic experience and shatter all his romantic illusions about war. The first experience is related to the information about the "new gas" that he overhears from a sallow young man on the liner:

It /"the gas_7 just corrodes the lung as if they were rotten in a dead body. In the hospitals they just stand the poor devils up against a wall and let them die. They say their skin turns green and that it takes from five to seven days to die -- five to seven days of slow choking. (p. 47)

Martin's literary, moral and aesthetic sensibilities are crushed when a talkative young American woman sputters about the atrocities of the Germans and how they ravished the inmates of a convent. Hers is the second verbal, off-the-scene report that Howe gets. Again, on the ship he overhears two men talking about the pre-war and post-war immorality prevalent in France, and also about the shortage of food. They add that the French even eat horse meat. Though not yet in the thick of war, Martin Howe has heard three verbal accounts of war -- Gas, rape and food shortage.
On his arrival in France, Martin Howe's first experience of the tyranny of war is through the young man who wears a triangular black patch for a nose, that ends in a mechanical device with little black metal rods that take the place of the jaw. Hereafter, Martin Howe starts visualizing the grim realities and brutalities of war. Randolph, his friend and co-ambulance driver, asks him of his impressions of war and he replies:

"I don't know. I never did expect it to be what we were taught to believe....Things aren't."

"But you can't have guessed that it was like this... like Alice in Wonderland, like an ill-intentioned Drury Lane pantomime, like all the dusty futility of Barnum and Bailey's Circus."

"No, I thought it would be hair-raising." (p. 60)

Another painful war experience that Martin Howe undergoes is when the school-master revives verbally the beauty of the road and his garden prior to the outbreak of war in France. In the meantime a convoy of military trucks passes and Martin is once again struck by the faces of the soldiers. "Through the gap in the trellis Martin stared at them, noting intelligent faces, beautiful faces, faces brutally gay, miserable faces like those of sobbing drunkards" (pp. 64-65). And the schoolmaster's wife laments "Oh, the poor children, they know they are going to death" (p.66). The final stroke of painful experience comes when he sees the first war casualty, the man wounded by a machine gun-bullets.
Martin found himself looking into the lean, sensitive face, stained a little with blood about the mouth, of the wounded man. His eyes followed along the shapeless bundles of blood flecked uniform till they suddenly turned away. Where the middle of the man had been, where had been the curved belly and the genitals, where the thighs had joined with a strong swerving of muscles to the trunk, was a depression, a hollow pool of blood. (pp. 71-72)

Thus, Martin Howe is initiated into the brutalities of war with a series of audiovisual ordeals.

Like Martin Howe, John Andrews, one of the three soldiers of Three Soldiers, an Easterner, is a sensitive Harvard aesthete. He wants to be a musician. He volunteers himself for ambulance driving, but soon finds that his creative impulses are stifled by army life. He enters the army "Chockful of illusions and fine words," as "a voluntary worker in the cause of democracy." Leaving behind the pastoral beauty of his village, he vividly recollects that only a week ago his life was like a "dream read in a novel, a picture he had seen in a shop window -- it was so different" (p. 28). He continues his musings:

When he had been a child he had lived in a dilapidated mansion that stood among old oaks and chestnuts, beside a road where buggies and ox carts passed rarely to disturb the sandy ruts that lay in the mottled shade. He had had so many dreams....He had planned so many lives for himself: a general like Caesar, he was to conquer the world and die murdered in a great marble hall; a wandering minstrel...a great musician...." (p. 28)
From this world of romantic phantasmagoria, so full of flowers and fancies, he chooses to be initiated into an "aura of imbecile routine, sterile mechanism, and dehumanization." His first appearance is in Chapter II where he stands naked in the centre of the examination hall for a physical test "with his arms folded, half amused, half angry, shifting his weight from one foot to the other, listening to the sound of the typewriter..." (p.14). He stands there "prodded and measured feeling like a prize horse at a fair" (p.15). The scene is highly symbolic and portentous of Andrews's initiation. The ticking typewriter signifies the mechanised monotony of the new army life in contrast to the melodic rhythms in his imagination. If the moment of his initiation into the army life is compared to his early childhood environment, one gets to understand him better. His mother had taught him to play the piano, and she would devote hours making beautiful copies of his compositions. But here during the course of his medical test, there is a disconcerting emphasis on the word "imbecility." Soon after his entry into the army, the war starts appearing ridiculous and hateful. The wretched routine of washing windows in the Allentown barracks becomes an incessant symbol of monotony indignation and slavery. The assignment of washing windows is symbolic of the dessicating and deadening aspect of war which haunts him throughout and crushes his
artistic impulses and aspirations. Consequently, his musical compositions also remain incomplete and change from "Arbeit and Rhythmus," "The Queen of Sheba" to "The Body and soul of John Brown." The symphony of "Arbeit und Rhythmus" recurs in his mind while he is washing windows:

Andrews stared at the upper right-hand corner and smeared with soap each pane of the window in turn. Then he climbed down, moved his ladder, and started on the next window. At times he would start in the middle of the window for variety. As he worked a rhythm began pushing its way through the hard core of his mind, leavening it, making it fluid. It expressed the vast dusty dullness, the men waiting in rows on drill fields, standing at attention, the monotony of feet tramping in unison, of the dust arising from the battalions going back and forth, over the dusty drill fields. He felt the rhythm filling his whole body, from his sore hands to his legs, tired from marching back and forth, from making themselves the same length as millions of other legs. His mind began unconsciously, from habit, working on it, orchestrering it. He could imagine a vast orchestra swaying with it. His heart was beating faster. He must make it into music; he must fix it in himself, so that he could make it into music and write it down, so that orchestras could play it and make the ears of multitudes feel it, make their flesh tingle with it. (p. 17)

The musical compositions brewing in Andrews's mind are conspicuously incompatible with the mechanical co-ordination between the movement of Andrews's hands, and the legs and feet of the parading soldiers. Andrews naively expresses the hope of perpetuating his music through orchestras. These windows reappear in the Camera
Eye sections of U.S.A. and again over a decade later, as a casual reminiscence in *Tour of Duty*. To the indignation of washing windows is appended the work of sweeping up leaves and brushing cigarette butts from the barrack streets. John Andrews's spirit is contorted with revolt at having to do such menial jobs. The naive notions with which he had entered army life have been shed and his subsequent desertion and rebellion are essentially against what he construes to be his own enslavement.

The nature and extent of the process of initiation helps to determine the next stage of the hero's development. Adolescents like Wenny, Jimmy Herf, Ben Compton, Joe Williams, Glenn Spotswood, Tyler Spotswood are initiated through the hazards of family disorganization. Before they find an ingress into the adult world they are awakened to a new social awareness. Characters like George Baldwin, J.W. Moorehouse, Dick Savage, Charley Anderson, Jed Morris undergo an intense sexual experience. Their succumbing to carnal desire is indicative of their lust for material values. Martin Howe and John Andrews go only through the ordeals of war, and are obviously involved in war. However, certain characters like Chuck Crawford, Millard Carroll, Paul Graves, in *The Grand Design*, Roland Lancaster, in *The Great Days*, Blackie Bowman and Terry Bryant in *Midcentury* do not fall in any of the categories mentioned above, primarily because they are
introduced as adults and their initiatory period is not depicted. Thus, the power and effect of initiation will lead to and condition the next stage of involvement.
REFERENCES

1 Incidentally, Dos Passos inaugurates his career as a novelist with One Man's Initiation-1917 (1920). It deals with the initiation of Martin Howe, the hero, into the brutalities of war. Again, in Manhattan Transfer, a Jewish immigrant imposes on himself the initiation rites by shaving off his beard after seeing an advertisement for Gillette safety razor. The term "initiation" in its ritualistic sense is used twice in Chosen Country, the apotheosis of all Dos Passos's novels: Lulie, the heroine is made to undergo the hurdle of swimming one hundred yards with eyes closed and bite the head of a live perch. After the ordeal she is initiated into the "tribe" of boys.


3 Dos Passos himself had to undergo the hazards of the disorganized family. He was the illegitimate son of Attorney John Randolph Dos Passos and Lucy Madison Sprigg. Dos Passos was born in a hotel in Chicago and was not acknowledged publicly as late as his fifteenth year. J.W. Wrenn comments, "his mind and attitudes developed of necessity in relative independence of what might have been the influence of a home - an institution he never really knew."


5 Ibid., p. 25.

6 Ibid., p. 16.


8 Ibid., p. 136.


15 The arid relationship between Wenny and his puritanic father, has also been observed by Blanche H. Gelfant: "His father symbolizes the cultural aridity Wenny faces in Harvard, and the stagnant and stultifying Puritanism he feels in Boston as its prevailing atmosphere. On specific occasions also, Wenny is stymied by his fatherfixation: he cannot consummate the sexual act because he relives his father's experience of impotence as it had been recounted to him."

Blanche H. Gelfant, op. cit., p. 137.


17 Blanche H. Gelfant, op. cit., p. 136.


22 Ibid., p. 384.

23 Ibid., p. 384.


26 John Dewey, the great educationist and a contemporary of Dos Passos recognizes the importance of educational institutions in moulding the personality and character of the adolescents. He presents a society-oriented theory of education. He writes:

> We have seen that a community or social group sustains itself through continuous self renewal, and that this renewal takes place by means of the educational growth of the immature members of the group. By various agencies, unintentional and designed a society transforms uninitiated and seemingly alien beings into robust trustees of its own resources and ideals. Education is thus a fostering, a nurturing, a cultivating process.


27 James T. Farrell, who like Dos Passos maintains an ecologist's perspective, in the "Introduction" to the *Studs Lonigan* trilogy, acquaints the reader with the mood and intention in which the novel is conceived and also various reasons for the adolescents' discomfiture in society. His desire is "to reveal the concrete effects of spiritual poverty." (p. xii). He adds "The story of Studs Lonigan was conceived as the story of the education of a normal American boy in this period. The important institutions in the education of Studs Lonigan were the home and the family, the church and the school, and the playground. These institutions broke down and did not serve their desired function."

C. Wright Mills records the white collar tendency among the youth in White Collar. "The most fundamental question to ask of any educational system is what kind of a product do its administrators expect to turn out? And for what kind of society? In the nineteenth century, the answer was 'the good citizen,' in a 'democratic republic.' In the middle of the twentieth century, it is the 'successful man' in a 'society of specialists with secure jobs.' He adds: In the new society, the meaning of education has shifted from status and political spheres to economic and occupational areas. In the white-collar life and its patterns of success, the educational segment of the individual's career becomes a key to his entire occupational fate.


The awakening of women in the early twentieth century has been fictionalized in the character of Nancibel Taylor, the female protagonist in Streets of Night. A career girl, Nancibel declines the marriage proposals of two promising young men, Wenny and Fanshaw, whom otherwise she loves. Pointing out the life of drudgery and dependence that the women of her times had been leading, she refuses to be tied in the holy bond of marriage.

"That's where my music comes in," Nan was saying her voice grown suddenly tense as Wenny's. By living it, by making myself great in it, I can bust loose of this fearful round of existence. What a wonderful phrase that is, the wheel of Karma. I understand why women throw themselves head over heels at the most puny man. They have got to escape, if only for a moment, from the humdrum all the little silly objects, pots and pans and spools of thread that make up our lives. I've got to get that in my music. Nothing else matters. (p. 89)

The increasing industrialization and democratisation of culture provided a new social position to women. This brought radical changes in domestic life and as a result the significance of family life diminished.

33 Ibid., p. 149.

34 Ibid., p. 156.


