CHAPTER III
INVOLVEMENT II

CAPITALISM AND THE HERO

Dos Passos was shocked by the unprecedented events of the early twentieth century during the course of which the United States became a predominantly industrial and urban society, with its agriculture declining. He had on him the impact of the Whitmansque democratic outlook and Jeffersonian agrarianism. Observing the rapid changes wrought in American society after the First World War, Dos Passos wrote, "These years have seen such a transformation in the shape of American society that the age of Jefferson and Adams and Washington and Madison and Hamilton and the rest seems as far away as the age of Confucius." The drive for industrial society, the lust for wealth and material values, he firmly believed, would endanger individual freedom and dignity. Industrialism signified a loss of strength, joy and vitality which degenerate into spiritual decay and aridity. Throughout his career Dos Passos remained skeptical of technological developments and achievements as he felt that material surfeit divorces man from his past culture resulting in
intellectual and artistic loss. Arnold Goldman rightly contends that Dos Passos's U.S.A. trilogy follows the epic tradition of Virgil, Hawthorne and Whitman but,

as a reversal of the moral 'foundation' of nation. We are shown the 'origins' of modern industrial and business America and their growth to preponderance at the precise expense of that vital flame of civilization whose presumptive triumph earlier epics herald. In U.S.A. foundations are discovered to be built on sand. What is transmitted is the parody of a civilized ethos. The villains triumph, undergo apocalyptic catastrophe and yet triumph.2

Dos Passos wished the technical knowledge to be harnessed to the task of increasing personal liberty, but he regretted, "We are still a mass of vague and rambling individuals who have barely begun to build ourselves a civilization. We lack standards, we lack ethics, we lack art, we lack that instinctive sense of direction that is the sign of an achieved civilization."3

Dos Passos visualized in the Twenties the cultural past crumbling under the technocratic and urban society giving rise to monopoly capitalism. In the Thirties the labour unions raised their dragon head. Consequently, the sharp eye that was focused on the House of Morgan in the Twenties, in the Thirties turned its vistas on the rottenness permeating the house of labour. Dos Passos denounces not only the pecuniary profit motive and exploitation of the working class by big business but also excoriates with equal severity the corrupt practices
prevalent in the labour unions. His last novel *Midcentury* deals mainly with the growth of big unions into a corrupt institution. After the dessicating effects of the Depression, the New Deal and the War provided a favourable atmosphere for the labour unions to flourish. These won power and privileges under the Wagner Act. Section 7a of the National Recovery Act was received as Labour's Magna Carta. Yet, under the new recognition, the individual conscientious labourer lost his freedom. Once the labour unions were on firm footing, complaints regarding malpractices started pouring in. Dos Passos analyzes the corrupt tendencies in the labour unions in the seven sections of "Investigator's Notes" and in over a third of the "Documentaries" and in the fictional narratives of *Midcentury*. All these are based on findings of the select committee on Improper Activities in the Labor and Management Fields popularly known as the McClellan Committee. Senator John L. McClellan of Arkansas and his chief counsel Robert F. Kennedy investigated improper activities like racketeering, violence, and intimidation in the labour movement. Power hungry and corrupt labour leaders had almost established a state within the state. None of the complainants to the McClellan Committee was against the unions as such. But they were unanimous in their complaints of the denial of their democratic rights. A retired railroad worker
in a letter to senator McClellan prophesied, "If this union corruption continues, it will spread like a cancer and eventually with the use of rigged elections it can jeopardize our free and democratic system of government."^4

Dos Passos's youthful indictment of the unprecedented and spectacular rise of technology and economic growth can be seen as early as 1916, in his essay entitled "Humble Protest." Therein he asserts that the debacle of abiding human values is due to "that bastard of science," the industrial revolution, the devouring mechanization. Dos Passos succinctly explains in "Documentary" (1) of *Midcentury* how the machine has transmogrified human personality and sapped the "joy" out of it:

**MECHANICAL BOY ASTOUNDPSYCHIATRISTS**

In the current issue of a national magazine a University of Chicago scientist describes the case of "Joey," nine-year-old who is so convinced he is a machine that he is unable to eat unless he first plugs himself in...Joey believes he can't breathe without an elaborate contraption of tubes and straws he calls his carburetor. He says he will die if his current is interrupted....

When the individual escapes into a world of delusions, explain the psychiatrists, these delusions are usually made up of fragments of the real world nearest at hand. Joey's story, they add, has relevance to the understanding of emotional development in the machine age. (p. 7)

For Dos Passos's contemporaries, too, the climactic period of the Twenties was an expression of social, moral, and cultural chaos. Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt* (1922), Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* (1925), Thomas Wolfe's *Looking Homeward*, *Angel* (1929) present pictures of a rapidly changing American
society on account of the business expansion, industrialization and urbanization and its impact on the life and mores of the people.

George F. Babbitt, the hero of Babbitt, is a typical self-made American businessman, in his middle forties. He is a partner of his father-in-law, but the old man seldom turns up and therefore in reality it is Babbitt who runs the business. Supporting efficiency and laissez-faire in business, he detests socialists, foreigners and reformers. However, behind this booming businessman can be found the inwardly spiritually bankrupt man. He has double standards in everything he does or believes; he favours Prohibition, but he himself does not observe it; believes in the sanctity of marriage but yearns after his secretary. Trapped in the conflict between his private and public self, Babbitt sees a perilous dichotomy between himself and his environment. The dissociation takes the form of a momentary open revolt and he rebels against the tyranny of marriage and the orthodox, constricting beliefs and dogmas. He cherishes a dream of a lovely girl, a "fairy child," which he realizes in the love of Tanis Judique, a widow nearing middle age. The revolt also assumes a socio-political guise when he supports the town radical, Seneca Doane, during a workers strike. The ambiguity of his life is exposed when he speaks to his son
Ted, who has left college to marry the girl in the neighbourhood. He confides in his son: "I've never done a single thing I've wanted to do in my whole life....But I do get a kind of sneaking pleasure out of the fact that you knew what you wanted to do and did it." Babbit is the picture of a conservative, triumphant businessman with a nagging conscience because of his loss of individuality in a world of pomp and show.

**An American Tragedy** is the apocalyptic vision of the social and moral tragedy of American society, manifested in its hero, Clyde Griffith, who aspires for a life of high social status, wealth and its ramifications, sex and recreation. As a child, he had felt ashamed and offended by his parents' poverty. He aspires to forge his way upward in the social scale with the help of his uncle Samuel Griffith and his beloved Sondra Finchley, a beautiful and rich society girl. He is, simultaneously drawn towards Roberta, a factory girl, who gets pregnant and presses Clyde to marry her. Roberta has declined Clyde's suggestion for abortion and now he maliciously manoeuvres to kill her. He arranges a meeting with her at Big Bittern Lake with homicidal intentions. By chance, the boat on the lake flounders and instead of saving her, he allows her to drown. Finally, he is arrested, tried and sentenced to death. The novel is an indictment of social snobbery, worship of money and man's blindness to more solid and abiding values of life.
Fitzgerald's hero is one of the "sad young men" of the Twenties who were born and bred up in the "genteel tradition." In his hopes and despair he represents the tensions and ambivalences of the Twenties. He starts with romantic illusions of success and glamour, and later on becomes rightly critical of everything, and more so, of himself. The final outcome is a destruction of all illusions, and a realization of the futility of all faiths. *The Great Gatsby* dramatizes the influence of the great American Dream on Jay Gatsby, the hero. It is a study of the hollowness of the illusions of the smart and sophisticated rich. Jay Gatsby is a reckless and romantic hero who hopes to realize his dreams in the love of Daisy Buchanan, who before the First World War had loved him but in his absence had married Tom Buchanan. Tom is unfaithful to his wife, and she is agonizingly aware of his infidelity. Gatsby throws lavish parties with a view to reclaiming Daisy's love. He does win her love but only for a very short period; the dreams are soon shattered when Tom discovers their love affair. Yet, Daisy refuses to leave Tom and this wrecks Gatsby's illusions. Sandwiched between the two residential areas of Jay Gatsby and Buchanans, there is a "valley of ashes." This bleak setting symbolizes the barren, spiritual wasteland that the characters of the novel inhabit. Gatsby's illusion of an incorruptible
dream of love and loveliness is life-sustaining, while the illusions of Tom Buchanan and other eccentric rich men are life-destroying. Dreams are never fulfilled; the American Dream meets a catastrophic end.

Whereas Sinclair Lewis studies the cultural dichotomy and aridity, Theodore Dreiser, in a deterministic tone, the gospel of wealth, Scott Fitzgerald the incandescence and disenchantment of the "jazz age," Dos Passos with an uncanny sense unravels the maladies of capitalism and its concomitants. Since capitalism, or big business has been centred in cities, its expression has been directly associated with urbanization. Analyzing the city myth novel Manhattan Transfer, John D. Brantley points out that the theme of the novel is the "emptiness of society and culture as revealed through individual lives in the wasteland of the twentieth century." Therefore, it is understandable why the city should become a close associate of capitalism. In the characters of Manhattan Transfer, Brantley observes, "four major flaws," which are due to their being the products of Twentieth Century urban society: (1) a primary interest in self and a lack of concern for others, (2) materialism, (3) shallowness and hypocrisy, and (4) cynicism. The observation is astute and profound and is largely applicable to all Dos Passos' city myth novels. The industrial - urban metropolis becomes a repertoire of
all the basic incongruities born primarily from the craze for wealth and glamour. This unbridled lust for money and social glamour finally leads one to dissipation and social disharmony. Comparing Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* with T.S. Eliot's *Wasteland*, E.D. Lowry eloquently contends that both Dos Passos and T.S. Eliot believed that "modern urban-industrial life is synonymous with futility, spiritual stagnation, nothingness." With a profound deftness he unravels the imagery in the two works and articulates the "overriding sense of moral impoverishment," and "aridity and impotence," embodied in the city of Manhattan. In summing up his essay, he draws a close kinship between Dos Passos and T.S. Eliot due to their ambivalent vision of "the problem of evil, to the forces which can corrupt and contaminate the spiritual texture of life." T. Ludington's contention is apt when he writes, "The chaos of the city oppresses the characters in *Manhattan Transfer*. Bright lights, screaming sirens, fires, thievery, corrupt politics and other such signs of disorder shatter each character's world."

II

Under the corrosive pressures of the industrialized urban society, characters like George Baldwin in *Manhattan Transfer*, J. Ward Moorehouse in *The 42nd Parallel*, Richard
Ellsworth in 1919, Charley Anderson in The Big Money, succumb to material luxuries and social success and thereby lose the modicum of goodness they evince in their early life. Ben Compton in 1919 rebels against the despotic capitalistic system. Jimmy Herf and Stan Emery in Manhattan Transfer and Fenian McCreary in The 42nd Parallel act as commentators. In Midcentury the triple involvement reaches the pinnacle of perfection. Frank Worthington, a labour leader rises from the ranks but for prestige, pelf and power, finally compromises his ideals with the dictates of the labour leaders. To accentuate the evils and malpractices prevalent among the labour leaders, Dos Passos includes characters like the Slansky brothers and the profiles of the teamster bosses. Terry Bryant and Jasper Milliron rebel against the diseased organism of the labour unions. From the Veteran's hospital Blackie Bowman in his rambling reminiscences comments on the union activities.

THE CLIMBERS

In George Baldwin there is a ruthless portrayal of a social climber. He is an ambitious young man led by the fatal illusion of success, blind to more substantial values of life. By profession he is a lawyer, the custodian of men's morals and of justice, but he rises to the office of District Attorney most unscrupulously. He appears in the novel as a restive, frustrated, unsuccessful, fresh advocate who could not
get a single client in three months in "the land of opportoonity." Disgusted with his vacant office, he goes out for lunch. In the restaurant he happens to glance at a news item in the daily paper about a milkman Gus McNiel, who has been seriously injured. He resolves to sue the railroad and forge ahead in his career as a lawyer. While Gus McNiel is in hospital, Baldwin goads Gus McNiel's wife, Nellie to file a petition for damages. While visiting her he gloats over her charms and succeeds in seducing her. Unable to control her passions, Nellie says, "Georgy I wouldn't do this, but I juss cant help..." (p. 57). Baldwin wins the case and his client receives 12,500 dollars as damages. The case shoots Baldwin into prominence and he becomes a partner in the well-established law firm of Emery and Emery. Material prosperity makes him indifferent to Mrs. McNiel, who is mistaken about his sincerity. Once, forgetting all womanly modesty Mrs. McNiel visits Baldwin in his office to make love. Finding him busy she proposes, "shall I come in this afternoon? Gus'll be liquorin up to get himself sick again now he's out of the hospital" (p. 73). Recognizing nothing more worthwhile than the pursuit of material glory, Baldwin replies, "No I cant Nellie.... Business...Business...I'm busy every minute."

"Oh yes, you are ....All right have it your own way" (p. 73), she slams the door and leaves defected.
Having reached the top rungs of the social ladder, he diverts his attention to the charming and successful film actress, Ellen Thatcher, "a versatile and exquisite artist" (p. 243) and obliterates Nellie from his mind. Once he comes across Mrs. McNiel in a restaurant, and recollecting his old love affair with her, tells Ellen Thatcher, "Think of it I was crazy in love with her and now I can't remember what her first name was...Funny isn't it?" (p. 219). The story of Baldwin's promiscuity does not end here. His hunger for money and luxurious comforts has commercialized even the holy bond of marriage. He had married Cecily just for "social position" and not for love. A brief glimpse of his married life reveals his hypocrisy and infidelity. His wife is jealous of his "physical urgences" with other girls and alleges that Baldwin married her only to solidify his social position. Lest his public image be destroyed, he tries to pacify her and pontificates, "a divorce would be very harmful to my situation downtown just at the moment," and asks her to avoid "scandal and headlines in the paper" (p. 185). Evidently, for Baldwin, marriage serves as a convenient camouflage for his social standing. He has no trace of fidelity whether to a cause or to a human being. In politics too, he is a man without qualms of conscience. He betrays his well-wisher Gus McNiel from whom
he has benefited immensely. Gus McNiel persuades him to contest for mayorlty. Baldwin acts on his suggestion but stands on an opposition reform ticket only to be certain of his victory. His impeccable conformity to the metropolis is reflected in his own words, "The terrible thing about having New York go stale on you is that there's is nowhere else. It's the top of the world. All we can do is go round and round in a squirrel cage" (p. 220). He chooses to relegate himself to the metropolitan luxuries and glamour.

In the character of J. Ward Moorehouse, Dos Passos captures the banality and absurdity of material success in an industrial-urban society. Moorehouse is like Sinclair Lewis's Babbitt who cares more for social etiquette and sophistication and is forgetful of the more lasting values of life. He is always on the look-out for a prosperous and placid career. Gradually he prostitutes himself to the dictates of the system. "Nowhere in modern American literature," observes John P. Diggins, "is the profile of the businessman so bitterly repulsive as in the figure of Moorehouse. His rise to wealth, which is traced through the three novels in U.S.A., is a biting satire on the self-made man myth. ('By gum, I can do it!') ." J. Ward Moorehouse is the leading protagonist of The 42nd Parallel. As Henry Dan Piper has pointed out, the latitudinal...
line itself is a symbol of wealth, power and decaying civilization. J. Ward Moorehouse is initiated into the system as a reporter on the Times Dispatch in Pittsburgh after his return from abroad. He contacts Mr. McGill, a business entrepreneur whom he had met in Paris in connection with his pamphlet and he appoints Moorehouse at hundred dollars a week, as temporary general manager to organize the Bessemer Metallic Furnishing and Products of the Homestead Mills. In the evenings as a change from the mirthless routine of the mills, he does not hesitate to make love to Gertrude Staple, a rich lady. Taylor, a partner in the firm, has a luke-warm attraction for her, and is pleased to withdraw in favour of Moorehouse. In the meantime Ward Moorehouse gets a divorce from Annabella Strang and immediately proposes to Gertrude Staple. But she tells him that "her father and mother would never consent to her marrying a man who didn't have as much income as she did" (p. 289). For Moorehouse marriage had always been a commercial transaction and he, therefore, determines to amass wealth by fair means or foul.

He gets this opportunity when a strike breaks out at Homestead. He directs his full attention to the strike in order to benefit from it materially. During the strike sentimental journalists and congressmen flay the steel industry. Moorehouse finds the situation opportune to
Gratify his own ends. He suggests to Mr. McGill a new proposal to start an "entirely new line in the publicity of industry. It was the business of the industry to educate the public by carefully planned publicity extending over a term of years" (p. 290). His dialogue with Mr. McGill indicates his selfish interest and he wants to capitalize on the situation. Moorehouse further suggests that he himself should be at the head of the publicity department, "because he was just wasting his time at the Bessemer Products; that had all simmered down to a routine job that anybody could take care of" (p. 290). Dos Passos obliquely points out Moorehouse's awareness that a mechanical life leads to ennui, but Moorehouse does not make any effort to renounce or abandon such a life. On the other hand, he aims to go higher and higher. In case his proposal at the Homestead mills does not materialize he plans to go to Chicago, another Manhattan, an industrialized urban city, and start an advertising agency of his own.

Henceforth there is steep rise in Moorehouse's career. The Information Bureau is founded to serve a twofold purpose: to educate the public, and to invigorate demand for consumer goods. Ward Moorehouse is put in charge of the actual work at a salary of ten thousand dollars a year. In the mean time Horace Staple, Gertrude Staple's father dies leaving his wife in trust and his daughter
Gertrude with an annuity of fifteen thousand dollars until her mother's death. Moorehouse marries Gertrude Staple.

On his return from his honeymoon, "He had the capital and the connections and felt that the big moment had come" (p. 301). With his commercial outlook in marriage, he induces the old Mrs. Staple to invest fifty thousand dollars in the firm. He inaugurates his own firm as Public Relations Counsel with Miss Rosenthal (Later on replaced by Janey Williams) as his secretary and Morton, his English valet. He proclaims his role to be of an intermediary between the financiers and industrialists and Labour. He drives home the ideal function of his firm, to G.H. Barrow, the labour leader:

"Capital and labour," he began in a slow careful voice as if dictating, "as you must have noticed, gentlemen, in the course of your varied and useful careers, capital and labour, those two great forces of our national life neither of which can exist without the other are growing further and further apart; any cursory glance at the newspapers will tell you that. Well, it has occurred to me that one reason for this unfortunate state of affairs has been the lack of any private agency that might fairly present the situation to the public. The lack of properly distributed information is the cause of most of the misunderstandings in the world....The great leaders of American capital, as you probably realize Mr. Barrow, are firm believers in fair play and democracy and are only too anxious to give the worker his share of the proceeds of industry if they can only see their way to do so in fairness to the public and the investor. After all, the public is the investor whom we all aim to serve. (p. 307)

Undoubtedly, Moorehouse's aim to bring about harmony and an amicable relationship between the capitalists and the labour is an ideal one. But Moorehouse uses it as a double-edged
weapon, and exploits both the capitalists and the labour. He regards himself as a driving force behind the industrial and the labour system, whereas in either case he is motivated by personal pecuniary profits. John P. Diggins has rightly commented: "His every action is spurred by base ambition cloaked with a pretentious idealism."  

How far Moorehouse cares for the public interest, is well exposed in The Big Money in his connivance with Mr. Bingham. Mr. Bingham is introduced in The 42nd Parallel as a philandering bookseller who has become the proprietor of a large patent medicine concern. In order to promote Bingham's spurious products, Moorehouse bribes the congressmen to defeat a pure food and drug bill. He invites Senator Planet and Colonel Judson to dinner. In deliberations over the table Moorehouse contends, "Once government interference in business is established as a precedent, it means the end of liberty and private initiative in this country" (pp. 564-65). To convince the senator, Colonel Judson emphatically adds, "It means the beginning of red Russian bolshevistic tyranny" (p. 565). The Senator pleads in his diplomatic manner: "What you say may be true, but the bill has a good deal of popular support and you gentlemen mustn't forget that I am not entirely a free agent in this matter. I have to consult the wishes of my constituents..." (p. 565). And the meeting concludes with
clandestine hints to bribery; "Mr. Bingham," said J.W. "is a very publicspirited man, senator; he's willing to spend a very considerable sum of money." "He'll have to," said the senator" (p. 567).

Moorehouse stoops to underhand means for material success and prestige. His youthful idealism of being a poet and a dedicated husband are warped due to the abundant temptations and opportunities provided by the material world. Analyzing Moorehouse's character Arnold Goldman comments:

'The public relations counsel' is very nearly the presiding genius over the whole triology, and in any case The 42nd Parallel is decidedly his novel. The bulk of it concerns himself, his mistress, and his secretary -- and their pasts....Moorehouse represents the interposition of advertising between worker and boss as a means of selling capitalism to the American people. The 'plot' of U.S.A. is, then, in broadest terms, the struggle between the Party and the Bosses for control in America, in which the public relations counsel steps in -- quite sincerely believing himself to be without ideology -- and hands labor over to Capital.'

Charley Anderson, the chief protagonist in The Big Money, is the representative of the machine and the machine age. His character shows that finance-controlled industrialism destroys the values of life. In his character are exposed the vices of wealth, wine, and woman, which spring up from an industrialized society. In the course of his life Charley Anderson shoots up from "Just a mechanic" "the boy wizard of financing." From his early school days he starts playing with tools and machines in his brother
Jim's workshop. In one of his youthful adventures he drives a truck to accident. After the First World War he returns from Europe as an airman with a reputation and has signed up an aviation proposition with Mr. Joe Askew. The post-war Depression reduces him to a pauper and while in New York waiting for Joe Askew, temporarily he takes up a job as a mechanic in the Ford Garage where he had worked before the World War I. Earlier in *The 42nd Parallel* he had revealed sympathy for the working class and attended some of the meetings. He believed, "working stiffs ought to stick together for decent living conditions and the time was coming when there'd be a big revolution like the American Revolution only bigger, and after that there wouldn't be any bosses and workers would run industry" (p. 442). Even after his return from the war in *The Big Money* he looks ingratiatingly to his fellow workers. He tells Bill Cermak, his co-mechanic, "Hell, I ain't no boss....I belong with the machanics" (p. 255). But as he is engulfed in the holocaust of wealth, he loses his intrinsic goodness.

Charley Anderson's career soars into prominence and affluence, when Askew-Merritt Aviation Co. starts operating, and he is appointed at two hundred fifty a week. He works assiduously and succeeds in manufacturing a starter which works like a dream, "smooth and quiet as a sewing-machine" (p. 233). With his scientific accomplishments and
achievements he gets more and more involved in machine and money. How the mechanized life of opulence and gay gatherings coalesces with the world of machines and Anderson immerses himself in it, has been adroitly depicted in a scene at the Johnsons', Anderson's friends from the war. When Charley enters, "There were some pretty girls and young men of different shapes and sizes, cocktail glasses, trays of little things to eat on crackers, cigarettesmoke. Everybody was talking and screeching like a lot of lathes in a turning-plant" (pp. 229-230).

It is during this period that he falls hopelessly in love with Doris Humphries, who dodges him time and again and drives him all the more crazy for her. After his first success with the manufacturing of a starter, he tells Bill Cermak that Andy Merritt was getting profitable contracts with the government and stresses that it is a patriotic duty to capitalize production on broad base:

Bill, goddam it, we'll be in the money....Good old Bill, the pilot's nothin' without his mechanic, the promoter's nothin' without production....You and me, Bill, we're in production, and by God I'm going to see we don't lose out. If they try to rook us we'll fight, already I've had offers, big offers from Detroit...in five years now we'll be in the money and I'll see you're in the big money too. (p. 240)

The lure for "Big Money" is too strong for Charley to resist and overcome. His love for Doris Humphries further goads him to run after money. He neglects his job at the
plant, with whom as a skilful technician he seems to have been wedded, and goes out to gamble at the Stock Exchange. He plunges himself headlong into speculation and its natural concomitant, wine. With his successes at the Stock Exchange, Charley Anderson buys up all the Askew-Merritt stocks he can lay his hands on. He can take risks and begin his purchases at the toss of the coin. Soon he becomes the flying and finance wizard, and at the same pace he is drowning himself in bottles of wine.

With the immense inflow of wealth, and with "whoring after false gods," Anderson leads a nerve-racking life. Taking it to be a change for the better, he shifts from New York to Detroit. There as Vice-President and Consulting Engineer, he makes twenty five thousand dollars a year. In Detroit he marries Gladys. He loses himself in the glamour of the parties his wife throws while his insatiable desire for money persists. His extra-marital sexual transgressions continue and he never settles down nor tries to settle down in a happy contented married life. He meets with a serious flying accident and his wife ships him to Florida so that he can recover his health. Being already suspicious of his licentiousness, she sets detectives on his trail. They report his sexual indulgence with Sally Hogan, a pick-up girl. Gladys divorces him and
he is meted out a Shelleyan kind of punishment by not being given the charge of his own children. He burns in the fire of revenge, for the rest of his life and is never able to pull himself out of his self-destructive shell. Thus he blights his own creative genius.

Frank Worthington in *Midcentury* follows the footsteps of Charley Anderson and J. Ward Moorehouse, his prototypes in U.S.A. His biographical sketches are significantly entitled "The Big Office." He has a natural flair for leadership and when unions are reorganized and revitalized Frank Worthington conducts the strike "like a military campaign, with supply depots, intelligence, forces in reserve, the longest picket line in history" (p. 125). Through his administrative power and speeches he proves that "The rubber workers were the vaunted vanguard of Labor's majestic march out of the brutal bestialities of bondage" (p. 126), and "the organization spread like a prairie fire" (p. 126). Soon his dream to be the President of the labour unions is realized and his opulence is recorded as:

> Out of the ten thousand dollar salary the executive board voted him he and Lillian / his wife / began to pay off the mortgage they'd had to put on the old people's house. They were a frugal couple. It was more money than they had ever dreamed of; they began to buy farmland as an investment; they had to think of the girls. (p. 126)
The Worthingtons are happy in the new respectable position. The pomp and glory of the "Big Office" takes him in its thraldom.

Frank Worthington wins his next election by a narrow margin and is under the influence of Grant Graham, the International's organizational Director. After the election is over, Grant Graham takes him to a Chinese restaurant situated outside the town and advises him to be more diplomatic and practical in his behaviour so as to avoid future hazard:

"Get wise Frank," Grant began pleading as soon as he'd closed the door behind the Chinese waiter. "We got to trim our fences or we'll lose the organization to the crooks and the crackpots. You got to go after the key men. Most of 'em would be for you, Frank, if you gave 'em encouragement."

Frank glared through his glasses into Grant's bulging bloodshot eyes. "What do you want me to do? Distribute patronage like a politician?"

"Exactly," said Grant Graham. (p. 129)

Frank Worthington refuses to follow Grant Graham and has to face the opposition of the men who really matter in the labour unions. Jed Starbright, the president of the local union in Doylesville, Pennsylvania, spreads discontent among the locals because Frank has found irregularities in his financial reports. Once Frank Worthington goes to Doylesville to address a membership meeting, and the moment he hints about the financial discrepancies, he is shouted down by the followers of
Starbright. Presently, pandemonium breaks out. There are scuffles, hand-to-hand fights, till the local police arrives. Instead of taking action against Starbright, the executive board calls for Frank's explanation. He is held guilty of "slander ing local officials, of conspiring to deprive them of their rights, of bringing the International into disrepute by wild and unproved charges" (p. 130). He is suspended from the office of President. Yet again, with the help of Grant Graham and Milan Slansky, a member in the board, Frank Worthington is manoeuvred back into position. His compromise with the labour leaders is in fact his compromise with the system. Led astray from the rank and file and lost in the halo of glory, he fails to see the merits of Terry Bryant's case when it is presented before him.

The high living of the labour leaders embodied in teamsters like Dan Tobin, Dave Beck and James Hoffa is the central theme of Midcentury. They represent the evils and malpractices rampant in the labour unions. The sardonic portraits of business tycoons of U.S.A. are transformed into the acid sketches of the teamster bosses. They are aspiring, self-seeking young men, and once at the helm of affairs, start indulging in the corrupt and corrupting influence of labour unions. The biography of Dave Beck, a laundry leader, tells how a man got "accustomed to having
his own way: well tailored; ate in the best restaurant; hired suites in the best hotels; drove the most expensive cars" (p. 216). James Hoffa succeeded Dave Beck as the Teamsters' International president. He tries to justify his peculiar leisure by saying, "Just because I'm in Labor do they expect me to wear baggy pants and drive a three dollar car and live in a four dollar house?" (p. 220).

Dos Passos gives a sarcastic summation of teamster Dan Tobin, the first Teamsters' Boss:

"When he retired as general president emeritus in 1952, they made him a present of a Cadillac, all expenses paid including the chauffeur's wages, the services of a full time maid, maintenance on his two homes, and fifty thousand dollars a year for life. Why shouldn't men of enterprise be attracted to labor?" (p. 214)

The appalling lack of professional ethics or responsibility in the teamster bosses, Dos Passos sums up in the words:

"In the old days rough and ready characters became teamsters for the freedom of the life. Teamsters' organizers moved among the rank and file slugging it out with those who opposed them. In midcentury they took shortcuts. Men of enterprise among the organizers went to an employer and told him to sign up his employees or else. In California at least they were backed by the courts."

The tide of the times ran strong. (pp. 220-221)

III

SOCIAL REBELS

After the publication of Manhattan Transfer, the struggle between capital and labour becomes a major theme
in Dos Passos's fiction. Dos Passos's socialistic and egalitarian interests are revealed in *One Man's Initiation-1917* in the ideological discussion among the three French radicals and Martin Howe, in the tavern scene. John Andrews in *Three Soldiers* and Jimmy Herf in *Manhattan Transfer* speak of the importance and possibilities of socialism. But the theme assumes a dominant tone in *U.S.A.* The Sacco-Vanzetti case is for Dos Passos a traumatic experience and it boils up his humanitarian fervour. The electrocution of Sacco and Vanzetti, the anarchists, becomes symbolic of the gulf that had been created between the capitalists and the workers. They were held guilty of murder during a payroll robbery and were tried in the court for six long years. The charges were all fictitious. Thousands of liberals, including Dos Passos, made frantic united efforts to save the innocent souls. The death sentence convinced Dos Passos of the tyranny and injustice that reigned supreme in the country at that time. His candid and passionate outburst on the material dichotomy, "All right we are two nations," has become proverbial and the affair symbolic of the state of the nation at that time. The Camera Eye (50) in *The Big Money* records Dos Passos's feelings:
they have clubbed us off the streets they are stronger they are rich they hire and fire the politicians the newspaper editors the old judges the small men with reputations the college presidents the ward heelers...they hire the men with guns the uniforms the police cars the patrol wagons

all right you have won you will kill the brave men our friends tonight...

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

their hired men sit on the judge's bench they sit back with their feet on the tables under the dome of the State House they are ignorant of our beliefs they have the dollars the guns the armed forces the power plants

they have built the electric chair and hired the executioner to throw the switch

all right we are two nations

America our nation has been beaten by strangers who have bought the laws and fenced off the meadows and cut down the woods for pulp and turned our pleasant cities into slums and sweated the wealth out of our people and when they want to they hire the executioner to throw the switch...." (pp. 520-521)

Dos Passos considered the business world to be a world of "the leeches of leisures and the parasites of profit." It suffocates the loyal worker who tries to find meaning and value in work and life. The stockholders, the financiers, who control the purse strings and power, ravish the integrity of the labour class. To increase production, the industrialists and capitalists demanded labour for sixteen hours a day by men, women and children. To produce goods at a low cost they paid the workers meagre
wages. Their attitude became most callous when they
assassinated men, manhandled and blacklisted union members
without rhyme or reason. To redress the wrong, the possible
course could be to go to law, but the law was either a
party to the injustice or at best indifferent. The only
plausible remedy was somehow to make the oppressed realize
that they were being exploited and then to violently
overthrow the oppressors.

There is a disdainful sarcasm on the wretched
condition of man in the interspersed news insertion in
Midcentury "KEEPS A MAN SO ODORFREE A BLOODHOUND COULDN’T
FIND HIM" (p. 262). This degraded scene of homo-sapiens,
the supreme creation of God on earth, arouse Dos Passos’s
anger and annoyance. Dos Passos evinces in The Theme is
Freedom a strong denunciation of the capitalistic system
and the consequent reason for his leanings towards
communism:

It enabled me to join in the protests of the
various breeds of Marxists who were being more
and more effectively regimented by the Communist
Party without giving up my own particular point
of view. I could join my voice to theirs in the
outcry against the wave of repression which
culminated in the Sacco-Vanzetti case, whereby the
great industrial manufacturers were able to use
the machinery of the courts and the police power
to harass every effort to organize working people
into trade unions, without giving up the automatic
responses of the plain American patriotism I’d been
raised in. If we were going to bring about a
revolution in America it must be an American
revolution."
Dos Passos was convinced that mass production and the profit system shall crush the individual and that only a social revolution could re-establish or retain individual liberty. Judiciary, the last resort of a sufferer, had been purchased by the rich. At this juncture of injustice the social revolutionists to Dos Passos "projected their magic lantern slides of a future of peaceful just brotherhood if only the bosses of the present could be overthrown." It appeared to be the only viable means to overthrow capitalism, and ensure happiness.

Against the injustice and brutality of the capitalistic system, Ben Compton in 1919 raises a voice of protest. Developing a kind of hatred for the rich, he thinks that to be a businessman is to be "a shark and a robber." His first experience of the exploitation of the working class by the capitalists, occurs while he is in a road job and finds the Boss of the canteen, Hiram Volle, gypping the wages of the construction workers. His first defiance of the capitalistic system occurs on the morning when the Italian workers declare a sudden strike. He refuses to do what the Boss orders and joins the strikers. Volle thinks Ben is not mature enough to participate in the agitations, and laughs at Ben's decision to join the strikers and calls him a "kike." To Volle's utter discomfiture Ben replies, "I'm not a kike any more'n you are....I'm an American born...and I am going to stick with my class, you
dirty crook! (p. 463). But the class solidarity collapses at the first warning and Volle and his grand bosses at the gun point warn the workers either to return to work when the whistle blows or they shall be arraigned under the vagrancy laws of the State of Pennsylvania. The labourers submit before the iniquitous force of money and the government. Deserted by the workers, Ben and Nick Gigli, his co-worker, both idealists, set out in search of new jobs. The quest leads them to two weeks of dishwashing in a hashjoint run by a Greek. Despite these hazards Ben attends the Socialist Party meetings, reads Marx and is soon grounded in socialistic radical thoughts.

Ben's further involvement in socialistic activities is through Helen Mauer, a pale blonde five years older than him. She is a veteran of the labour wars, supports the syndicalists and had been arrested and blacklisted for activities in the Paterson textile strike. Ben Compton and Helen Mauer once attend a lecture arranged by the Socialist movement. After the lecture she takes Ben to the cosmopolitan cafe on second Avenue, introduces him to some people, who, she believes are real rebels. Ben's involvement with labour unions gets more and more deep despite the opposition and resentment of his poverty-stricken family.
His stay with Helen gives a picture of the insanitary and unhygienic living conditions of the working class. The workers lived in cellars and slums, unheated buildings without sewerage connections. Ben's Sexual indulgence with Helen is accompanied by observations like: "There were bedbugs in the bed, but they told each other that they were as happy as they could be under the capitalist system, that some day they'd have a free society where workers couldn't have to huddle in filthy lodginghouses full of bedbugs or row with the landladies and lovers could have babies if they wanted to" (pp. 469-470). Like normal human beings they also wanted to crystallize their love in the birth of a child, but are horrified to raise kids in dingy, stinking, cramped apartments.

Ben is depending on Helen for financial help, but when she is retrenched from her job because of the slack summer season, the couple is constrained to move to Passaic, New Jersey, where Ben takes up a job in the shipping department of a worsted mill. Soon after their arrival, the employees of the mill go out on a strike, and both Ben and Helen are on the committee. Ben is in the vanguard and extends all his support to the strikers and proves his mettle in carrying out the strike:

Ben got to be quite a speechmaker. He was arrested several times and almost had his skull cracked by a policeman's billy and got six months in jail out of it. But he'd found out that when he got up on a soapbox to talk, he could make people listen to him, that he could talk and say what he thought and get a laugh or a cheer out of the massed upturned faces. (p. 470)
After completing the jail sentence, Ben and Bram Hicks, another young radical from Frisco, work their way across the continent, arrive at the Pacific coast just when the clash between the I.W.W. and their vigilant foes is reaching a bloody climax. When Ben and Bram go with other wobblies on an organizing expedition to Everett, Washington, they are met on the docks by a drunken sheriff and a host of drunken deputies. The wobblies are arrested as soon as they step off the boat and herded down to the end of the dock. Then they are made to climb into a truck and taken out into the woods. The deputies stand around them with their guns pointed at them, while the sheriff, excessively drunk, talks to two well-dressed middle-aged men about what they will do with the prisoners. Ben overhears the word "gantlet". Ben can imagine the impending tragedy. The deputies fully armed form two rows, catch hold of the wobblies one by one and beat them mercilessly. Three deputies grab Ben and ask:

"You a wobbly?"

"Sure I am, you dirty yellow..." he began. (p. 474)

The sheriff came up and hauled off to hit him. "Look out, he's got glasses on." A big hand pulled the glasses off. "We'll fix that." Then the sheriff punched him in the nose with his fist. "Say you ain't."

...Blows with clubs and riflebutts were splitting his ears. (pp. 474-75)

Ben is brutally beaten and the scene is marked with poignancy. The callous incident leaves an indelible impression of Ben's mind and body. Dos Passos reiterates the agonising event with equal vehemence in *Adventures of a Young Man*. Ben
is hospitalized for three weeks. The brutal kicks in the back actually affected his kidneys which cause him frightful pain most of the time. To recoup his health he manages to get back to his parents by ship. Still, "there wasn't a night he didn't wake up with a nightmare scream in his throat sitting up in his bunk dreaming the deputies were coming to get him to make him run the gantlet" (p. 477). At home he plans to study law in the office of a radical lawyer Morris Stein. In the evenings he addresses protest meetings about the "Everett massacres," to the workers from varied sections, "the vast anonymous mass of all classes, races, trades in Madison Square Garden" (p. 478). By now, he has become a successful public orator, ringing the hall with his speech and the audience listens to him with rapt attention:

Then all at once he'd hear his own voice enunciating clearly and firmly, feel its reverberance along the walls and ceiling, feel ears growing tense, men and women leaning forward in their chairs, see the rows of the faces quite clearly, the groups of people who couldn't find seats crowding at the doors. Phrases like protest, mass action, united working class of this country and the world, revolution, would light up the eyes and faces under him like the glare of a bonfire. (pp. 478-79)

Ben, the ardent socialist is equally vocal in his condemnation of war. During the time when Woodrow Wilson declares war, he is a protégé of Morris Stein's sister, Fanya, a wealthy woman of thirty five who lends money to radical and pacifist causes. On the night of the America's entry into war she "went to beg with an hysterical crying
fit" (p. 479). Morris Stein fails to resist the patriotic storm and helplessly bows "before the storm" and quarrels with Ben who is determined to oppose the storm at all costs. On Stein's advice he has registered for the draft, but he has written "conscientious objector" on the card. Addressing a meeting at the Empire Casino in the Bronx, Ben Compton brings out the relationship between the war and capitalism:

The capitalist governments are digging their own graves by driving their people to slaughter in a crazy and unnecessary war that nobody can benefit from except bankers and munition makers. The American working classes like the working classes of the rest of the world, will learn their lesson. The profiteers are giving us instructions in the use of guns, the day will come when we will use it. (p. 483)

Wedded to the socialistic cause, Ben goes back to Passaic to live with Helen Mauer, but due to the war the two find their familiar socialistic world collapsing around them. They believe that it is a capitalistic war and fanatically adhere to their radical views. War brings money to the working class, who work overtime and mock at the idea of protest strikes or revolutionary movements. With the inflowing money, the workers purchase washing machines, liberty bonds, vacuum cleaners, and all the luxuries and amenities of a comfortable life. Ben Compton takes up a factory job and loses it after he refuses to buy a liberty bond. Frightened by the growing pressures, he takes Helen to a room in New York where they hide out under fictitious
names. For a while he toys with the idea of going to Mexico but the news of the Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia inspires him for new revolutionary efforts. Poised against heavy odds, Ben Compton's career is emblematic of the ironic gap between the "haves" and "have-nots".

In *Midcentury*, as Charles Rolo points out, "Dos Passos has documented, on a panoramic scale and in irresistibly convincing detail, the rottenness within the house of labor." Consistent with his mission as a social critic in the upright character of Terry Bryant, Dos Passos visualizes the possibilities of eradicating "the rottenness within the house of labor." But his sincere work antagonizes the self-seeking labour leaders who hatch conspiracies against him and finally kill him. Terry Bryant is the embodiment of all that is best in human nature, a devoted husband, a dedicated worker, an affectionate father. He is a World War II veteran and becomes a selfless and righteous worker in the Raritan Hard Rubber plant. A conscientious worker that he is, he rises to the position of shopsteward. He discovers that his union is run by and for a pair of labour racketeers known as the Slansky brothers. Terry rejects and struggles against the vested views of the labour leader. He fights for better working conditions by insisting that state safety regulations be enforced and demands "equal pay for equal work," and favouritism be eliminated in the plant. Terry is unanimously re-elected as
shopsteward. For the smooth running of the locals, he deems it pertinent to call for the International representative and Fred Russell is sent to organize the union in the Raritan Hard Rubber plant. Steve Slansky, brother of Milan Slansky, a field representative in the International, is elected as the President of the local union. Terry is elected Chairman of the new safety committee set up according to the rules laid down in the booklet Fred distributed to every member. Fred Russell rightly perceives Terry's idealism and dedication to work. He advises him to be more practical and not to be impatient for drastic changes at the plant and suggests, "Play your cards close to your chest, Terry. You're a small local. You've got this foreign born problem. In the big office they stick with the overall picture. They have to think of per capita" (p. 193). Terry, the idealist, argues, "I don't think what per capita's got to do with right and wrong" (p. 193). It is no surprise then that Terry's sincere work antagonizes the aspiring Slansky brothers who trade favours with the management. He comes to know of Steve Slansky's nefarious activities at the Atlantic City convention, where they had gone as local union representatives to organize an election campaign. Steve is invariably drunk and always surrounded by women. Terry asks him to intensify the election campaign but Steve claims, "Milan don't let
no grass grow under his feet and we ain't neither. The big wheel's got all the free theatre tickets, but we got the liquor and the dames. We saved one out for you" (p. 195). Laura is the girl chosen for Terry Bryant. Being a devoted husband, he will not indulge in sex with her. The secret of Steve's extravagance is revealed when Laura tells Terry in confidence that George Slansky, Steve's blood brother, is spending expense account money on behalf of Steve. Steve's conduct is outrageous and an eye-opener for Terry Bryant. Steve's indifference to the union cause is exposed when in the capacity of the president he refuses to let his local join the Hillsdale strike, unless there is a signal from his brother Milan.

Milan on telephone suggests:

| Hillsdale's a low wage area. They aint'g got no call to come here and louse up our contract negotiations. We're goin' to cross their goddam picket line. The stewards will police the plant. You'll all get your pay just like you was workin'. (p. 198) |

Doubtful of the sincerity of the Slansky brothers, Terry proposes to call a meeting for voting. But Milan retaliates, "Vote hell. This is under my jurisdiction," (p. 199) and hangs up the telephone.

Already sore with the Slansky brothers' anti-union activities, Terry one day physically fights with Steve over a case of favouritism initiated by Duke, a colleague on the plant. Duke who always supports his pets from one
job to another, wants to "bring a green hand" into the department. Terry declines Duke's proposal and argues that for mixing compounds only experienced hands are required. Duke incites Steve Slansky against Terry. Slansky is normally drunk even on the plant and lords over his underlings. Incited by Duke, he calls Terry a "trouble maker" and strikes a blow at him. Slansky had already been provoking Terry to a collision, and once he has struck a blow, Terry pays him back in the same coin, "Left, right. Left, right. By God I'll kill the bastard. Steve was down on the floor and his nose was bleeding before the other men could get between them" (p. 201).

Terry feels "ferociously happy," but the incident proves disastrous for him. Being a sycophant of the management and with the help of his brother Milan, Steve manoeuvres to turn the table on Terry. They spread the rumour that Terry is in an abnormal state of mind. To clarify his position and seek justice, Terry appeals to the higher authorities, Briggs and Frank Worthington, but the National Relation Board deserts him. He is discharged from the rubber factory as a "trouble maker." Cowed down by the powerful and influential leaders, his co-workers also shun him.

Terry fails in his efforts to bring about reforms in the unions. He is finally forced out of the union, because he does not let racketeers and politicians betray the workers.
The injustice meted out to Terry itself bespeaks the incompetence, favouritism and the malpractices which loom large in the labour unions.

Jasper Milliron is similarly victimized when he collides with the management of the unimaginative partners. Jasper Milliron, a business executive, is forced out of a huge milling company, because he fights for a scientifically-improved product. He wants to bring about democratic decentralization and a modernization programme. While still in his fifties, he is squeezed out of his high executive position.

IV

COMMENTATORS

Jimmy Herf and Stan Emery in Manhattan Transfer act as chorus to the industrialized - urban society, Fenian McCready in The 42nd Parallel, and Blackie Bowman in Midcentury observe and comment on the vices of capitalism. Jimmy is a journalist, a comfortable and congenial profession with Dos Passos in which to project his commentators. The profession provides the hero with an opportunity to seize, examine and comment on different situations. Jimmy admits that the "reporter looks at
Commenting on the modern industrialized metropolitan cities, Jimmy points out the profanity in marriage, the futility of affluence and opulence and the stupidity of the hectic race for worldly success. He drifts about the city and refuses to stick to a career that would circumscribe his movement and freedom. He is content to be a spectator and aware of his circuitious mobility tells Stan, "The trouble with me is I cant decide what I want most, so my motion is circular, helpless and confoundedly discouraging" (p. 176). Jimmy scathingly criticizes the vulgar conjugal relationship of Jojo Oglethorpe, a film producer and his actress wife, Ellen who cuckolds him by making love to Stan, a university student, whom she calls "precious idiot." In order to consummate their sexual act, Stan and Ellen find a hideout in Jimmy's apartment. Injured by his wife's infidelity, in a state of drunkenness Oglethorpe enters Jimmy's room. He accuses Jimmy of running a brothel, calls his wife a "slut" and announces his decision to commit suicide. Fuming and fretting he leaves the room and Jimmy comments, "The goddam fools they act like crazy people" (p. 196). The farcical episode is a wry mockery of the sanctity of marriage in an industrialized society. Again, toward the end of the novel, Jimmy points out to Congo, a rich bootlegger, his wife Ellen's hunger for wealth and glamour that has commercialized marriage:
Women are like rats, you know, they leave a sinking ship. She's going to marry this man Baldwin who's just been appointed District Attorney. They're said to be grooming him for mayor on a fusion reform ticket....The delusion of power, that's what's biting him. Women fall for it like hell. (pp. 383-384)

Jimmy the idealist rightly tells his aunt, Mrs. Merivale, that his articles on his own experiences cannot be published because he differs "radically in certain matters of opinion" (p. 283). In life, Jimmy is content even though he has been "stumped" in the "pursuit of happiness, an unalienable pursuit" (p. 365). He does not want material success and from his meandering thoughts one learns that he finds his liberty endangered in the morass of the industrialized society. He has the strength and means to amass wealth and win prestige, but he never hankers after them. In the section "The Burthen of Nineveh", he tells Congo, "The difference between you and me is that you're going up in the social scale, Armand [congo's newly adopted name], and I'm going down..." (p. 383). Jimmy declines the "delusion of power" that otherwise grips the social climbers.

In Jimmy there is an ever-growing recognition of the destructive effects of urban life. In later years he evinces an interest in social revolution. After Stan's death in a fire accident, Jimmy Herf and Ellen sitting in a restaurant overhear a man saying "But good God hasn't a man some rights? No, this industrial civilization forces
us to seek a complete readjustment of government and 

social life..." (p. 263). Ellen tries to laugh away the 

man's views but Jimmy emphatically asserts that the 

concentration of power in the hands of the few shall again 

be a revival of the "horrible slave civilizations of Egypt 

and Mesopotamia" (p. 263). Of his disgust with material 
pursuits and the decaying culture, he tells Stan Emery, 

"Well perhaps you can tell me why in this country nobody 
ever does anything. Nobody ever writes any music or 

starts any revolutions or falls in love. All anybody ever 
does is to get drunk and tell smutty stories. I think it's 
disgusting" (p. 193). Stan wisely perceives the 
intelligence and aloofness of Jimmy in a world of "Burglary, 

adultery, sneaking down fireescapes, cattreading along 
gutters," (p. 152) and tells him, "Herfy I think you're 

the only sensible person in this town. You have no 

ambitions" (p. 175). Stan himself, wants to escape from 

the world of success and soaring aspirations. His 

indulgence in sex and bouts of drunkenness are a gesture 
of indifference to and a rejection of the world around. He 
asks Jimmy, "Why the hell does everybody want to succeed? 
I'd like to meet somebody who wanted to fail. That's the 
only sublime thing" (p. 175). Baffled by the meaningfulness 
of life around, like Antoine Roquentin, the existentialist 
protagonist of *Nausea* (1938), he asks, "Who am I? Where am 
I? City of New York, State of New York....Stanwood Emergy 
age twenty-two occupation student" (p. 251). He understands 
the futility of urban development, and before his death he
expresses a wishful thought, "Kerist I wish I was a skyscraper" (p. 252). He imaginatively reads the fall of New York in the pattern of old, historical and once architecturally famous cities:

There was Babylon and Nineveh, they were built of brick. Atens was goldmarble columns. Rome was held up on broad arches of rubble. In Constantinople the minarets flame like great candles round the Golden Horn...0 there's one more river to cross. Steel glass, tile, concrete will be the materials of the skyscrapers. Crammed on the narrow island the millionwindowed buildings will jut, glittering pyramid on pyramid, white cloudsheds piled above a thunderstorm..." (p. 252)

Fenian McCreary is the first character of Dos Passos who fully shows a social awareness of American fin-de-siècle. His later conviction stems from the hazards he experienced in his early life. The collapse of the family -- the death of the mother, father sacked during a strike -- at the early stages of life and uncle Tim O'Hara driven out of business by anti-labour forces compel Mac to become an itinerant worker. He drifts like a shuttlecock from one place to another thus, providing a comprehensive view of the society with all its ills. His uncle Tim O'Hara, a social democrat, grounds Mac in socialistic philosophy. He believes:

It's the fault of the system that don't give a man the fruit of his labor...The only man that gets anything out of capitalism in a crook, an' he gets to be a millionaire in short order...

But an honest workin' man like John Mac's father or myself we can work a hundred years and not leave enough to bury us decent with. (p. 14)
Working at his uncle's printing press, setting up a hand bill "An Earnest Protest" on the linotype the sentence, "It is time for all honest men to band together to resist the ravages of greedy privileges," (p. 19) sticks in his mind and haunts him. Mac relinquishes the life of "the dependents and hangers on" at his uncle's house and starts his career with a bookseller, Doc Bingham, a swindler. He, however, bears Uncle Tim's parting injunction in mind, "You read Marx... study all you can, remember that you're a rebel by birth and blood... And don't sell out to the sonsofbitches, son" (p. 39). Doc Bingham turns out to be a licentious fellow who sells pornographic literature in the guise of classical literature. Mac is deserted by Doc Bingham, when the latter is discovered in bed with the wife of a farmer and is chased out with a shotgun. Mac sets out on the road alone with only a fifty cent piece, which he has found lying on the kitchen floor at the farmer's house.

Mac comes across a hobo George Hall, also called Ike, and they discuss the ways and means to "get out from under the interests." The conversation between Mac and Ike throws light on the evils of the capitalistic system and both ponder over the problem of abolishing it. Commenting on the summary narration of Bellamy's Looking Backward by his friend Ike, Mac says:
"That's what I always thought...It's the workers who create wealth and they ought to have it instead of a lot of drones."

"If you could do away with the capitalist system and the big trusts and Wall Street things 'ud be like that."

"Gee."

"All you'd need would be a general strike and have the workers refuse to work for a boss any longer...God damn it, if people only realized how friggin' easy it would be. The interests own all the press and keep knowledge and education from the workin'men."

"I know printin', pretty good, an' linotypin'....Golly, maybe some day I could do somethin'." (p. 67)

In 1905 Mac reaches San Francisco and finds work again as a printer. There he is very particular about attending socialist meetings. He hears Upton Sinclair's lecture about Chicago's stockyard. Significant experience is his meeting with Fred Hoff, a member of Bill Haywood's newly organized I.W.W., the Industrial Workers of the World.

During his stay at San Francisco, Mac falls in love with Maisie Spencer, a beautiful salesgirl. He decides to marry her and she surrenders herself to her "little husband" on the assurance of marriage. In the mean time Mac is invited by Hoff to join him and the workers in Nevada, in publishing a newspaper supporting a miners' strike. Before his marriage is legally acknowledged Mac surreptitiously leaves for Goldfield Nevada, leaving a note for Maisie, regretting his sudden and unexpected departure.

In Nevada Mac settles in a printing job and one day receives a letter from Maisie, informing him of her pregnancy and with an earnest appeal to return to San
Francisco immediately. Mac cannot withstand the emotional appeal from Maisie and tells Fred:

"But hell, Fred, I'm made of flesh and blood like everybody else. For crissake, what do you want us to be, tin saints?"

"A wobbly oughtn't to have any wife or children, not till after the revolution."

"I'm not giving up the fight, Fred...I'm not selling out, I swear to God I'm not." (p. 115)

Mac's resolution to return to Maisie defines his role as an observer. Ben Compton, too, had the family obligations and pressures, and the love of Helen Mauer and Fainya Stein, but he never allows the radical cause to be overpowered by any personal, sentimental attachment.

Mac returns and sets up a home in San Diego. Maisie proves to be a narrow-minded, dominating and possessive kind of wife. Mac's conscience starts nagging him when he finds that he is being supported by Maisie's brother. He frets about having been sold out to the bourgeois world. There he hears about the Mexican revolution, the fall of Diaz, the murder of Matero, the revolutionary leader. He wants to join the revolution, but feels handicapped. Once, he finds a sound pretext of departing from the constricthing atmosphere. Uncle Tim dies, and he sends money for the funeral of the old man from his little savings in the bank. Maisie takes exception to his taking liberty with financial matters and humiliates him. Finding it humanly impossible to stay there any longer, he resolves to go to Mexico and
the manner in which he leaves his wife and children is highly pathetic. Having left his house while walking in the falling rain, he feels:

He was almost crying thinking of the warm gentleness of Maisie when he used to pull the cover a little way back and slip into bed beside her asleep when he got home from work in the clanking sour printing plant, her breasts, the feel of the nipples through their nightgown; the kids in their cots out on the sleeping porch, him leaning over to kiss each of the little warm foreheads. (p. 139)

Yet, he feels free from the bondage of home and bourgeois imposition, "I'm free to see the country now, work for the movement, to go on the bum again" (p. 139).

Blackie Bowman becomes a spokesman of the years from the turn of the century to the Depression years. He is a garrulous invalid, speaking from the veteran's hospital and his flashback reminiscences move in a reverse order from his recent experiences of the Depression years, then of his experiences in the Greenwich village and finally of his boyhood and his initiation into the radical movement. Blackie, the "philosophical anarchist" recalls his life as a seaman, a miner and a wobbly of the I.W.W. The story of Blackie Bowman, writes Granville Hicks, "is a story of idealism, self-sacrifice, and courage."23 His reminiscences, presenting a chiaroscuro art, divulge the condition of the labour unions in their early poorly-organized stage in contrast to the over-organized and powerful labour unions of the New Deal era. As a foil to
the luxuriant and complacent lives of the labour bosses, Blackie hops trains to search for a job and to attend socialist meetings. He prophetically comments, "It's mass organization that turns man into a louse" (p. 60). Compared to the life of plenty of the labour leaders, Blackie leads a life of a mendicant, starves in the jungles and tells, "Me, I've starved plenty. The time I came nearest to really truly starving was somewhat about the time Franklin D. Roosevelt was being sworn in as President of the United States" (p. 74). He is aware of the fact that the unions "Opened up the Promised Land to dues paying members only, and then only so long as you keep your trap shut" (p. 60). He is sustained in his early life by the firm faith in the brotherhood of man. He joins the Bridgeman and Structural Iron Workers because, "I'd believed in myself because I was a wobbly. I'd believed in myself because I thought I was doing my little bit towards forming the structure of the new society in the shell of the old" (p. 74).

In contrast to the secure family life of Frank Worthington, Blackie's family life is miserable as his wife is a product of a new awakening among women and is always drunk and freakishly changing bed partners. Above all, it was a time when communists were spreading their tentacles in the organizations and Blackie perceives the real danger in the establishment of various organizations, "The great success of the Commies was because they were smart enough
to take advantage of the trend. They took all the hopes of mankind and turned into a concentration camp. If it hadn't been them it would have been some other goddam dogma. Everybody's got to wait till they get the word. We wobblies used to think every man ought to think his own up for himself" (p. 60). Blackie foresees the rising totalitarian power of the communists which turns the unions into regimentation camps.

From the foregoing pages we may easily infer that Dos Passos strongly upbraids man's craze for power and pelf, as an outcome of industrialized society. He is hostile to the mechanization of society because it leads to lethargy, sluggishness, and material values. Not only that the rich are prone to it, but the labour leaders who rise from rank and file also fall a prey to it. So, Dos Passos attacks both the capitalists and the labour leaders with equal bitterness. His reaction to the mundane influences is vividly and elaborately dramatized in Manhattan Transfer, the U.S.A. trilogy, and Midcentury. His characters who succumb to the allurements of the industrialized - urban society are not ingratiatingly drawn but those who reject or revolt against it arouse the author's admiration. The nature and extent of their involvement consequently, augurs next stage of their alienation.
REFERENCES


3 John Dos Passos, "The Changing Shape of Institutions," Occasions and Protests, p. 211.

4 Midcentury, p. 269.

5 "Joey", the name of the mechanical boy sounds like "joy". In this parallelism, Dos Passos suggests how science has mechanized man.


8 Ibid., p. 46.


10 loc. cit.

11 Ibid., p. 55.

12 Ibid., p. 60.


that arterial highway stretching from New York to Pittsburgh, through Cleveland, Chicago and Denver to San Francisco, along which pumps the lifeblood — the liquid cash — of contemporary American society. Here are concentrated most of the population, the cities, the money, the banks, the industry, the universities and other instruments of power and culture. Not only is this concentration increasing but it is reaching out to include London and Paris to the east, and Honolulu and Tokyo at its western extremities. Its standards are the familiar middle-class values of success, popularity and material well-being. The central tenet of its faith is that a man's value is measured by his ability to rise in the world — indeed, it is his moral duty to do so. Its hero is the self-made man.


17 Arnold Goldman, op. cit., p. 476.


20 John Dos Passos, "The Backwash of our First Crusade," The Theme is Freedom, p. 10.

21 Occasions and Protests, p. 36.
