

# John Dos Passos

## NEWSLETTER

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### COLORS THAT WILL NOT FADE

by

Roger B. Stein

As scholars well know, the Alderman Library at the University of Virginia is the major repository of the literary remains of John Dos Passos. Appropriately, the University's Art Museum was recently the beneficiary of a fascinating exhibition of the visual art of Dos Passos. Entitled "Colors That Will Not Fade"—as indeed they had not over the years—the exhibition, drawn primarily from the personal collection of the novelist's daughter, Lucy Dos Passos Coggin, originated at the McKissick Museum of the University of South Carolina, where it was curated by Richard Layman. When it came to Virginia this past summer, for a presentation from July 21 to September 16, 2001, the tasks of installation and local presentation in the Bayly Museum were coordinated by curator Suzanne Foley.

As I was a former art historical colleague in the Art Department next door and co-curator of a previous exhibition at the Bayly, Ms. Foley asked me to do a gallery talk on the Dos Passos show. I went to the museum to decline the offer, since my own American literary and visual studies had extended primarily from the late-seventeenth century to only about 1910; but I arrived just as Ms. Foley and her colleagues were uncrating the works, and I was immediately both dazzled by the strength of the colors and intrigued by what he seemed to be doing. Like most people who know of Dos Passos, including those I told about the exhibition, I had thought of him only as a literary artist; but several visits to the exhibition reinforced the initial challenge. The following observations, which I shared informally in a gallery talk with a Sunday afternoon general audience (if one excepts Lucy Dos Passos Coggin, who joined us from Richmond for this gallery presentation<sup>1</sup>), were the result.

That John Dos Passos was a visual artist is not a surprise to specialists, though his pictorial creation, it would seem, has received very little critical attention. I have turned up only a few articles by literary scholars<sup>2</sup>, the very brief introductions to exhibition catalogues in 1975, 1980, and the present one<sup>3</sup> and occasional mention, but no

sustained analysis, in more general works either on Dos Passos or on the period in which he worked.<sup>4</sup> I prepared myself for looking at the visual works and talking about them by going back to Dos Passos' writings, doing literary catch-up with especially *Three Soldiers* and *Manhattan Transfer*, and examining again my own copy of the 1946 three-volume edition of *U.S.A.* with the many well-known illustrations by Reginald Marsh.

The experience made clear immediately not only Dos Passos' awareness of both the practice and the history of art: he had been tutored on art subjects before college and studied briefly in Spain; Palma de Majorca early reminded him of the "soft clear colors of a Vermeer interior," as he wrote to his friend Arthur McComb in 1920, and in 1922 he sent McComb a droll art historical spoof about a newly discovered painter.<sup>5</sup> Later he said that when writing *U.S.A.* he was trying to capture in words what 13-14<sup>th</sup> century masters of tableaux had done with large figures of saints and many smaller people.<sup>6</sup> It was clear also that Dos Passos' imagination was itself powerfully visual, and that any gallery talk needed to deal with that for audiences who knew him only as a writer.

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But how to organize a gallery talk? The exhibition as configured at Virginia included some 74 works by Dos Passos, organized roughly chronologically from those created about 1918 to a very few after 1940, during the later decades of his life, and grouped by subject matter or location. This was its organization for the catalogue and the South Carolina venue. The Virginia presentation unfortunately did not include six of Dos Passos' notebooks, which would have given the audience a sense of his working method. But on the other hand, the Charlottesville exhibition did include an additional seven works, also generously loaned by Mrs. Coggin for this particular venue, a sampling of the art done by Dos Passos' painter colleagues and owned by him. These latter included two small oils by the French modernist Fernand Léger, tokens of their friendship, a large "Le Bistrot" [sic] by the American Abraham Rattner, with whom Dos Passos collaborated for the magazine *Verve* in the early thirties, a large sea scene by Harold Weston, and three works by Waldo Pierce recalling their shared time at Key West in 1929. Dos Passos' own works were on the whole small in scale: a frustratingly limited number of pencil or pen and ink drawings; a large assortment of works in watercolor or gouache (a more opaque form of watercolor) which ranged from delicate tones in the earliest that recalled James Abbot Whistler of the 1870s or even the pastel tones of Edouard Vuillard, to bold landscapes in strident primary colors, which suggest the influence of either the French Fauves of about 1905 or the German expressionists of the next decade. Another grouping included a striking poster, "Processional," and other works created in relation to the dramas of John Howard Lawson and for Dos Passos' *The Moon is a Gong* and still more of his radical theatrical work in the 1920s. In some ways one of the most interesting displays was a large vitrine

containing Dos Passos' dustjackets for his own literary works, because here we find Dos Passos himself visually interpreting his own verbal production.

Which leads us back to the initial question of how to cope with such an exhibition. A visual work of art is not a "reflection" of its artist's life or of a time or place or idea, any more than is a poem or play or novel. Reflection theory, however benign in intention, is fundamentally mistaken, because it denies the contingency of art and its constitutive function. Visual works inevitably interpret, through style and form, through the choices made about subject matter. Students of Dos Passos surely know this about *U.S.A.*, that it is an interpretation, rather than a "reflection" of its time; we must grant the same to visual artifacts. The images in this exhibition, themselves only a selection from his total visual output, are the work of a competent artist, who handles his media well, sometimes delicately, mostly forcefully, capturing his impressions of place or person.

Stylistically, Dos Passos as visual artist was not an innovator, boldly pushing against conventional ways of making of his time, though he showed awareness of visual conventions of both the past and the present. Where *Manhattan Transfer* and *U.S.A.* draw upon film, radio, and other media to redefine the novel as form, recasting the roles of narrative and character, in the visual work available in this exhibition one picks up "influences" and shifts over time, though without any single linear development of the kind critics have traced in his fictional life. Thus one can see echoes of the important early modernist theorist and practitioner Arthur Wesley Dow (Georgia O'Keeffe's early mentor) or of Whistler in Dos Passos' earliest landscapes here of about 1918, but within a few years the impact of Henri Matisse and the Fauves—they had been working in 1905 and thereabouts—are visible in Dos Passos' much more schematic and abstract landscape views, and elements of cubism in his figural studies, obviously indebted to Picasso, whom he knew through the Murphys.<sup>7</sup>

Passages from *Three Soldiers* which I read to the gathered group made clear how much Dos Passos imagined in color and spatial terms:

At the brow of the hill they rested. Chrisfield sat on the red clay bank and looked about him, his rifle between his knees. In front of him on the side of the road was a French burying ground, where the little wooden crosses, tilting in every direction, stood against the sky, and the bead wreaths glistened in the warm sunlight. All down the road as far as he could see was a long drab worm, broken in places by strings of motor trucks, a drab worm that wriggled down the slope, through the roofless shell of the village and up into the shattered woods on the crest of the next hills. Chrisfield strained his eyes to see the hills beyond. They lay blue and very peaceful in the noon mist. The river glittered about the piers

#### THE JOHN DOS PASSOS NEWSLETTER

The Newsletter seeks to promote scholarship on and interest in Dos Passos' writings and biography, and will publish short articles on these subjects. It will also publish news items, notes, letters, and queries on these and other relevant matters. Among these matters are work in progress, manuscript locations and accessions, bibliographies, and textual scholarship.

For return of manuscripts, contributors should send, along with their submissions, stamped envelopes addressed to themselves. They should address all queries and manuscripts to the editor, Melvin Landsberg, Department of English, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045-2115.

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of the wrecked stone bridge, and disappeared between rows of yellow poplars. Somewhere in the valley a big gun fired. The shell shrieked into the distance, towards the blue peaceful hills. (Opening of part 3, chap. 5)

The contrast between this precisely seen mostly gray, mostly tonal vision of Chrisfield—it reminds one of Stephen Crane in *The Red Badge of Courage* or even the Civil War landscapes of Whitman's *Drum Taps*—and the urban eye of John Andrews in the opening chapter of part five is striking:

He hurried into the gardens. Many people sat on benches in the frail sunlight. Children in bright-colored clothes ran about chasing hoops. A woman paraded a bunch of toy balloons in carmine and green and purple, like a huge bunch of parti-colored grapes inverted above her head. Andrews walked up and down the alleys, scanning faces. . . .

Clearly the author of this passage (and his musician-artist eyes of Andrews) has impressionist city scenes in mind when shaping prose like this. In the Bayly exhibition, a watercolor “View from the Upper Part of the Coliseum of Bicycle Racers,” dated ca. mid-1920s, looks down abruptly from the upper decks of the Velo d’Hiver in Paris, which Dos Passos attended with Hemingway (it was later infamous as the place where the Nazis herded Parisian Jews). To my mind the image recalls both a famous early John Singer Sargent oil of a rehearsal at the Cirque d’Hiver (1876; Boston, Museum of Fine Arts), and numerous Degas ballet scenes, with their exaggerated perspectives. The point here is not some simple mechanical notion of “influence,” though Dos Passos’ large familiarity with art doesn’t rule out his possible recollection. What is crucial in all of these examples are ways of seeing, critical points of view, angles of vision which (as any student of Henry James knows) are not mechanical devices but epistemological strategies, visual and verbal. These examples enjoin us to look back and forth with greater care and larger questions at Dos Passos’ visual performance.

The small urban watercolor scenes of skyscraper New York are surely not major visual achievements, not “masterpieces,” in their own right. For the student of Dos Passos and of *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) in particular, of the skyscraper and New York, and of the culture of the 1920s, they function in interesting ways within these contexts. Again the movement from the representational to the abstract, with various experiments in design (not always successful). Yes, Dos Passos lived in Brooklyn at certain points and in 1927 in a building with Hart Crane, and the Brooklyn Bridge was part of his life on the way to Manhattan; but the visual tradition of the Bridge was

a strong one, from the Roeblings’ monument itself (completed 1883) to the series of watercolors which John Marin did, initially in 1910 but also in the mid-twenties and into the 1930s. A number of these were exhibited by Alfred Stieglitz in his famous New York galleries, of which Dos Passos was surely aware, and the same can be said of the oil versions by Joseph Stella, who formed part of the Société Anonyme in New York. The four urban watercolors in the Dos Passos group at the Bayly along with the dust jacket which he created for the first edition of *Manhattan Transfer* (loaned for the exhibition by Richard Layman) function within this world, and their forms put us in touch both with the visual world in which he was living and with the new verbal ways of spatializing in the fiction he was creating at this moment. The watercolors are dated “ca. mid-1920s,” and a label reminded us: “He exhibited a work titled ‘East River, New York’ and two titled ‘Manhattan’ in the spring and fall 1925 Salons of America exhibits.” Good clues for further inquiry, but a caveat is necessary here: most of the titles of works in the exhibition are curatorial descriptions and generic, and the dates assigned on the labels are only approximate, as the curators were well aware. More precise work still needs to be done, and not just to calibrate influences and interactions.

The exhibition created groupings of his travel sketches which were labeled as from the mid-1920s in Morocco and both ca. 1928 and ca. 1932 in Mexico. Some of these are figure studies, which along with other earlier portrait studies are, in my view, the weakest part of the exhibition with one exception: a lovely pencil portrait of his artist-friend Adelaide Lawson. Otherwise, they may memorialize friendships or distance as “picturesque” people of other cultures, but visually on the whole they lack strength or individuality. (What one might want to say comparatively about Dos Passos’ strengths or weaknesses as a creator of fictional individuals is an interesting question.) Layman’s textblocks for these sections in the exhibition helpfully located the work within Dos Passos’ interests and friendships and writings: the creation of *Orient Express* (1927), which Dos Passos himself illustrated, his friendship with Diego Rivera and the Mexican muralists in relation to their revolutionary activities—all suggestive contexts which need further exploration to clarify the significance of the explicitly *visual* consequences. A brief exciting group elicits Dos Passos’ participation in set design for his and John Howard Lawson’s socialist theatrical projects, and then we are back to Mexican images.

The final section of the exhibition, “Focus on America 1934-1970,” was disappointing. The textblock argued the March 1937 death of José Robles as the turning point in his life, but rather blandly concludes: “for the rest of his career, Dos Passos’ writing and art focused more intently on American subjects.” The visual evidence we are offered consists of an undated and unidentified “Political Convention” image (obviously Democratic, given the clearly

visible F.D.R banner, but which convention? It could be important); a “Wiscasset, Maine” landscape, which evokes that most painful period of recovery after the death of his first wife, Katharine; a pair of small still lifes from the 1960s and an image of a black “Banana Man” with no explanation. Clearly for the student of Dos Passos’ life and work, nothing of the political drama, the personal tragedy, the struggles and achievements of these later decades is confronted in this exhibition. I wondered specifically, for example, how the loss of one of his eyes affected his work as visual artist. At the University of Virginia venue, one missed perhaps especially the local connections: to his Virginia home at Spence’s Point during these years, to any visual sign of his preoccupation with Thomas Jefferson, or of his time at the University, the beneficiary of so many of his papers, including visual materials on loan from Mrs. Coggin. The exhibition’s coda of those seven works by other artists which he owned was a nice note. But one comes away from this exhibition both with gratitude to those who made possible the opportunity to see an impressive and intriguing gathering of some of Dos Passos’ visual expressions, and an even stronger sense that the real task still is ahead: taking his visual art seriously not as “reflecting” his life and work nor trying to inflate it as major independent visual achievement nor vaguely labeling it and him as “impressionist” or “expressionist,” but examining these and the whole range of his visual oeuvre for the particular insights which they can offer us about his aesthetics, his notions of form and his interpretations of his subjects over time, what he learned from others and how that connected him (and us) to a visual and intellectual world within which he functioned in important ways.

### Notes

1. Mrs. Coggin was both generous and diffident about her father’s works in the exhibition, all done before her birth, most many years before. We are indebted to her stewardship of the works for their brilliant colors after some eighty years or so: watercolors especially fade badly if exposed to continuous light!

2. Most notably George Knox, “Dos Passos and Painting,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 6 (1964), 22-38, reprinted in Allen Belkind, ed., *Dos Passos, the Critics, and the Writer’s Intentions* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971), 242-64; and the record of his important correspondence with his art historian friend: *John Dos Passos’ Correspondence with Arthur K. McComb or “Learn to Sing the Carmagnole,”* narrated and edited by Melvin Landsberg (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1991).

3. Just after the Dos Passos papers went to the University of Virginia, the Library produced *John Dos Passos, Writer and Artist 1896-1970; A Guide to the Exhibition . . . January – April 1975*, compiled by Anne Freudenberg and Elizabeth Fake with special assistance and an Introduction by Townsend Ludington (the catalogue does not list which paintings were displayed); secondly, *Paintings and Drawings by John Dos Passos: organized by the Virginia Museum, Richmond, February 26 through April, 6, 1980*, some 16 pages in all; and *Colors That Will Not Fade:*

*The Art of John Dos Passos*, originally mounted at the McKissick Museum, University of South Carolina, 14 March to 4 April 1999, with a three-page introduction and brief sectional paragraphs by curator Richard Layman, from which the University of Virginia Art Museum labels and textblocks, quoted below, were drawn.

4. Jack Potter’s 1950 bibliography of Dos Passos, for instance, lists three items in its “Miscellany” section: two full-page reproductions of Dos Passos paintings appearing in *Esquire* in 1934, one illustrating an article by Ernest Hemingway (January 1934), p. 27, the other, entitled “Port of New York,” in the March 1934 issue, p. 11; and a Dos Passos painting reproduced on the dust jacket of Pio Baroja, *The Quest* (New York: Knopf, 1923). Potter also noted a critical commentary which Dos Passos and Hemingway did for an exhibition of the paintings of Luis Quintanilla, and a critical introduction, “Satire as a Way of Seeing,” for the Caresse Crosby edition of sixty Georg Grosz drawings entitled *Interregnum* (New York: Black Sun Press, 1937). Potter, pp. 64, 90.

5. Dos Passos to McComb, April 1920, in Landsberg, *Correspondence*, p. 141; and, for the spoof, p. 193.

6. Cited in Linda W. Wagner, *Dos Passos, Artist as American* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), p. 86.

7. Photographs of the Murphys’ artistic picnics at Antibes have been frequently reprinted. See, for example, *The Fourteenth Chronicle: Letters and Diaries of John Dos Passos*, ed. with biographical narrative by Townsend Ludington (Boston: Gambit, 1973), pl. XVII. The “Jazz Age” section of Ludington’s biography, *John Dos Passos, A Twentieth Century Odyssey* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1980), opens with a voluptuous nude drawing, also in the current exhibition, which to viewers at the Bayly Museum looked like the sculpture of Gaston Lachaise in an adjoining gallery. Ludington says he uses these sketches “to give the reader at least some small sense of Dos Passos’ artistic eye,” and adds that “most of these were quickly rendered during his travels”(xx). But typically, his own text says very little about Dos Passos as visual artist.

*Roger B. Stein, an American Studies scholar who has written on both American literary and visual subjects, has also curated exhibitions, most recently, with William H. Truettner, the Smithsonian’s Picturing Old New England: Image and Memory (1999). He is now Professor of the History of Art Emeritus at the University of Virginia.*

## REJOICING CITY THAT DWELT CARELESSLY: FROM *ORIENT EXPRESS* TO GROUND ZERO

by

Melvin Landsberg

As we turn the pages of John Dos Passos' short travel book *Orient Express* (1927), his eight paintings, each reproduced on a page of its own, compel our attention. Almost all the paintings are impressionistic, with red, white, yellow, and orange predominating, and convey just how much of Dos Passos' Near Eastern trip was through deserts and oases, usually under a burning sun.

The author's narrative too is mostly impressionistic. We experience events, but not fully, and analysis is rare and usually fleeting. There is much terrain for the author to cover; he is overwhelmed by sensations and experiences; his verbal record is intermittent, and his visual one has only tenuous connections with the text.

We note that most of his paintings appear timeless. The costumes, the houses, the streets, the bazaars, the oases, the rugs could be from hundreds of years back. Despite Dos Passos' choice of subject matter for these paintings, it is clear throughout the text that he has a strong sense of history, though in his paintings he has chosen to emphasize the near-stasis of the area.

Dos Passos embarked on the Orient Express train from Venice in July 1921. After disembarking in Constantinople, he proceeded to the new Soviet republics on the Black Sea, where he witnessed unforgettable poverty, starvation and disease, all growing out of World War I. Afterwards he traveled in a Soviet railway boxcar to the border of Persia, and the next day took a train to Tabriz. From there he went in a dilapidated four-horse carriage to Teheran, then by automobile and train to Baghdad, where he arranged to travel on by camel caravan to Damascus. Dos Passos' narrative substantially concludes with his arrival in that city.

In March 1923 he wrote a friend that he was planning to write a "novel about New York and go-getters and God knows what besides." That novel, *Manhattan Transfer*, appeared in 1925. Although *Orient Express* was published two years after the novel, the Near Eastern experiences preceded *Manhattan Transfer's* writing, and by their contrast with his experiences with New York, influenced the novel's form and content.

On the train from the Soviet Caucasus to Iran Dos Passos became friends with "the Sayyid," an Iranian who was returning to his country after completing studies in a German medical school. Dos Passos in *Orient Express* describes him as a strong proponent of political and tech-

nological change in Iran. In a railyard in Nakhtchevan, the author hears him "holding forth on Pan Islam and the resurrection of Persia." Later, in Iran, the Sayyid tells Dos Passos that he is the son of a "mujtahid, a very holy man," and if he had not gone abroad to study, he might have been a mollah, not a physician. Though not a Baha'i, he believes that all prophets have a bit of truth, and thinks highly of the Baha'is. "But the poor people," the Sayyid says, "were very ignorant and fanatic and believed whatever the mollahs told them."

For Persia to be a great nation it must industrialize, the Sayyid says. "I tried to tell him," Dos Passos adds, "that the life of an industrial worker in Europe and America was not all beer and skittles, and even wondered whether those people hammering away at their copper pots, miserably underpaid as they were, might not get more out of life than, say, the steelworker in Germany, for all his moving pictures and bierhalle with which to amuse himself."

Later, in Baghdad, an old Arab explains to Dos Passos that Great Britain and France had not acted according to Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points. "The American must tell his countrymen that the people of Iraq would continue to struggle for their freedom and for the principles announced by Sheikh Washiton and Meester Veelson." The Arab people would not, he says, be deceived with kings kept in power by the English.

Dos Passos' subsequent trip by camel caravan to Damascus lasted thirty-seven days. Protected by Jassem er Rawwaf, an Agail Arab who was a leader of the caravan, he survived raids by brigands which could have cost him all his possessions, if not his life. During the journey a discussion of America developed among the Agail. Some of their people had been there and reported that it was a place full of money. "I made a great speech," Dos Passos writes, "and said that if I had any sense I would live in the desert with the Agail and never go back; but they took it as a compliment and did not understand."

New York City, the subject of Dos Passos' 1925 novel, was the epitome of American industrial capitalism—the nation's financial, trade, and cultural center. The population in the city was huge, the anonymity unsurpassed, the economic competition hectic, the pace hasty, and the contrasts between rich and poor glaring. Dos Passos' book about New York is a collective novel, with scores upon

scores of characters, many of whom appear infrequently, or only once. It covers twenty years of the city's history, beginning around 1900.

Although Dos Passos has a painter's eye for the lights and colors of the city, his emphasis is overwhelmingly on the society itself. The novel depicts the post World War I depression, the conformity that business success requires, the quiet and sometimes noisy desperation of countless people, the crooked actions of business and political leaders, the insipidity of the commercial theater, and the deportation of anarchists by the Federal government.

The third and final section of the novel begins after the end of World War I, and the period covered is nearly contemporaneous with that of *Orient Express*. Part I of that section, titled "Rejoicing City That Dwelt Carelessly," has Jimmy Herf, the leading character, returning from overseas married to Ellen Thatcher, a beautiful young actress. Herf is an idealistic journalist, but no one will pay him to write about society and events as he sees them. Since he is a "failure," Ellen abandons Herf and agrees to marry the rising, dishonest politician George Baldwin. At the close of the book a penniless Herf abandons New York, desiring simply to get away from the city.

The novel again and again foretells Nemesis for New York. Thus in "The Burthen of Nineveh," the final section of the novel—immediately following a section titled "Skyscraper"—a tramp in a park says to two boys:

"Do you know how long God took to destroy the tower of Babel, folks? Seven minutes. Do you know how long the Lord God took to destroy Babylon and Nineveh? Seven minutes. There's more wickedness in one block in New York City than there was in a square mile in Nineveh. . . ."

On September 11, 2001, the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly suffered an attack, not from Bible-citing activists, but by Muslim suicidals. And the twin towers of the World Trade Center were reduced to "Ground Zero." Muslim elements like those who, according to the Sayyid, would believe whatever the mullah told them are vastly more dangerous today, in a shrunken and more technological world, than their counterparts could have been in 1921. As we ponder Ground Zero we spy not poetic justice but a zany conundrum.<sup>1</sup>

Rereading *Orient Express* after September 11, we wish that Dos Passos had interrogated the Sayyid closely about those ignorant fanatics and their mullahs—were the mullahs calling for jihads? If so, against whom? But he had capitalist industrialism, not Near Eastern mullahism, on his mind in 1921.

And with adequate reason, as his "biography" of Henry Ford in *The Big Money* later demonstrated so memorably.

Nor is capitalist industrialism anything to cheer about today; e.g., its incessant advertising denies our intellects and fogs our spirits. No writer has evident answers to our problems, but Dos Passos' *Orient Express* and *Manhattan Transfer*, though of lesser magnitude than *U.S.A.*, can still give us light.

## Notes

1. In contrast, the television evangelist Jerry Falwell two days after the attack said that God had allowed America's enemies "to give us probably what we deserve." Falwell later apologized. *Washington Post*, September 14, 2001, p. C03; September 18, 2001, p. C04. Both citations are from the World Wide Web.

## ABSTRACT OF PH.D. DISSERTATION

*We attempt to publish abstracts of recent dissertations on Dos Passos that may be of interest to our readers. Such publication depends, however, on receiving the author's permission.*

"Managing Materials: Montage and the Representation of Totality in Depression-era Fiction (John Dos Passos)," by Mark Stuart Frankel. 213 pages.

This dissertation examines the intersections between aesthetic form and political commitment during the 1930s. Beginning with an argument that one cannot read politics in direct relation to aesthetic form, this project explores the forces and ideologies that led so many critics to do just that. The dissertation looks closely at the rhetoric of hope that surrounded the complex novel, a literary form now almost forgotten. In the 1930s, however, American leftists championed the complex novel—perhaps best exemplified by John Dos Passos' *U.S.A.*—as a literary mode uniquely capable of representing the forces at work in contemporary capitalism. Neither *Bildungsroman* nor Soviet-style novel of group solidarity, complex novels cinematically "cut" from character to character, and from stream of consciousness to documentary; in doing so, the reader is challenged to discover the underlying forces that bind together the disparate elements.

The dissertation argues that these novels borrow from the techniques of Soviet film montage in order both to fragment narrative and to demand that the reader synthesize these fragments into a meaningful whole. Using Barbara and John Ehrenreich's theorization of the "professional-managerial class" as well as Richard Ohmann's recent elaboration of it, it argues that Depression-era intellectuals' commitment to montage must be seen as an outgrowth of their class's commitment to the ideals of management itself. Particular attention is paid to the work of John Dos Passos to show how his interest in Soviet film montage is related to the economic theories of Thorstein Veblen as well as to the scientific management doctrine propounded by Frederick Winslow Taylor. By analyzing the aesthetics of the left-wing professional-managerial class, this project stresses the dynamic interaction of art, ideology and culture.

State University of New York at Buffalo, 2001

## SCHOLAR'S QUERY

The Editor of the forthcoming volume of the Journals of Tennessee Williams, to be published by Yale University Press, is seeking the source of the following quotation attributed to Dos Passos:

"How can the new world full of confusion and cross purposes and illusions and dazzled by the mirage of idealistic phrases win against the iron combination of men accustomed to run things who have only one idea binding them together, to hold on to what they've got; how can the new world win?"

Tennessee Williams wrote it in a notebook containing journal entries for March to September 1943. It appears near the end of the notebook, among fragments of play dialogue. Given Williams' erratic use of notebook space, it is possible that the quotation was recorded earlier or later than the 1943 journal entries.

Below the Dos Passos quotation Williams responded: "The answer is. We have got to straighten out. We will."

And he added, perhaps at a later date: "(Thank you, Mr. Williams, for solving that problem)"

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