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**The Intellectual, History and Society in the
Novels of
John Dos Passos, Sembene Ousmane and
Ngugi Wa Thiong'o : A Comparative Study**

Thesis

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the Degree of Doctorate in
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**The Intellectual, History and Society in
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Ousmane and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o:
A Comparative Study**

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DISCLAIMER

I hereby declare that the substance of this thesis is entirely the result of my investigation and that due reference or acknowledgement is made, whenever necessary, to the work of other researchers.

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Signed :

DEDICATION

This doctoral thesis is dedicated to the memory of my beloved father who made me aware of both the importance of knowledge and the respect due to knowledge. His example kept me working in times of doubt and weakened willpower.

It is also dedicated to my mother whose support and encouragement sustained me throughout this research.

My Thanks also go to my husband, without whose steadfast support and great patience I could never have completed this work.

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Abstract

In this doctoral thesis, I explore Dos Passos's, Ngugi's and Sembene's treatment of the intellectual in Three Soldiers (1921), The 42nd Parallel (1930), The Big Money (1936), Weep not ,Child (1964), The River Between(1965) , Petals of Blood (1977), Devil on the Cross (1982), O pays, mon beau peuple (1957), Les bouts de bois de Dieu (1960) and Xala 1970). Though belonging to different historical and literary periods, though belonging to different societies, Dos Passos, Ngugi and Sembene most strikingly and unexpectedly fight on similar ideological grounds, share the same aspirations and respond to the same pressures. These novelists indeed express a similar interest in social and political protest, speak in the name of popular classes, and articulate projects of collective action. They are also equally aware of the importance of their people's history. Interestingly enough, they rely on the intellectuals to further their aims. In this thesis, I focus on the way these intellectuals respond to the historical and social events of their societies, more specifically to war, capitalism and the Leisure Class/ National Bourgeoisie respectively. I also study the revisionist and moral historical mission which they are entrusted with, relying on Julien Benda's, Antonio Gramsci's, Jean Paul Sartre's and Raymond Aaron's theories of the intellectual. Due to the heavy historical and social issues discussed in the novels, I am compelled to resort to New Historicism and Lukacs' materialism as critical approaches.

In the course of my investigation, I also concern myself with the writers' aesthetic evolution which is also strangely similar. In the novels dealing with the political establishment, and where the intellectuals stand against war, the writers chose 'Genteel Realism'. As for the novels dealing with ideology and revolution, and in which the

intellectuals revolt against capitalist exploitation, they use Socialist Realism. However, their desire to embrace the social and political aspects of their emerging modern societies further makes them turn to modernist techniques. The writers' later Utopian concerns and commitment to social change turn their novels (with varying degrees) into political/ ideological tracts.

The first part of this research, which is devoted to J. Dos Passos, is subdivided into three chapters, each one preceded by a socio-historical background.

In the first chapter of this part "the intellectual and the War Machine: the Quest for Freedom in John Dos Passos's Three Soldiers", I study the intellectual in conflict with the war 'machine'. In chapter two "the intellectual and Radical Reform in the 42nd Parallel", I look at the intellectual's relationship with radical movements. The writer's essentially Marxist interpretation of history is used as the basis of my analysis. Chapter Three, "the Intellectual and Money in the Big Money" tackles the intellectual's conflict with social institutions, especially American labor organizations and the Leisure Class.

The second part, which contains three chapters, deals with African novelists, mainly O.Sembene and W. Ngugi.

Chapter One "The African Intellectual in the Making: Ngugi's Weep, not Child, The River Between and Sembene's Ô pays, mon beau peuple!" concentrates on Ngugi's and Sembene's conception of the intellectual in the colonial period. I analyze the attitude of the Western – educated intellectual towards the colonial presence in his country. In Chapter Two "the Crisis of Post- Colonial Intellectualism: Sembene's Les Bout de Bois de Dieu and Ngugi's Petals of Blood", I concern myself with the intellectuals' attitude towards class-struggle. In chapter Three "A vivid Satire of the African National Bourgeoisie: Towards a Class-Struggle .Ngugi's Devil on the Cross and Sembene's Xala", I comment upon Ngugi's and Sembene's portrayal of the neo-

colonial leaders in Africa and on the fate of the intellectual who has failed by now to play his role in society.

In the conclusion of this research, I confront Dos Passos's, Ngugi's and Sembene's intellectuals to underline the similarities and differences in their political, ideological and social views. I assess the extent to which the writers succeed in fulfilling their mission as revolutionary and revisionist historians. In the end, I state the solutions they suggest for social change and the future direction they propose for their societies. I underline Dos Passos's call for a return to the democratic ideals which made America , Ngugi's longing for a pre-colonial past and Sembene's dream of an international proletarian revolution.

INTRODUCTION

Comparing John Dos passos, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Sembene Ousmane may look strange at first sight. The two African novelists seem to have very little in common with an American writer whom many critics place within the fellowship of 'Lost Generation' American writers. The present research, which explores the relationship between the writers' conceptions of the intellectual in some of their novels, may help us answer this question. My explanation of their texts, indeed, reveals that they not only concern themselves with the intellectual but with literary representations of this intellectual as well. As a matter of fact, these novelists who all show a great interest in protest use intellectuals who reflect on social reality, speak in the name of popular classes and articulate ideas that inspire collective action. This thesis deals with some of these intellectuals. In particular, it focuses on the way they respond to the historical and social events of their societies, more specifically to war, capitalism and the Leisure Class/National Bourgeoisie respectively. Though belonging to different historical and literary periods, Dos Passos, Ngugi and Sembene find themselves on similar ideological grounds, share the same aspirations and respond to the same pressures. Consequently, the intellectuals they create in their novels are endowed with the same solemn historical mission.

I will, indeed, distinguish three aesthetic stages in their writing careers. In the novels dealing with the political establishment, the characters of intellectuals stand against war, like the writers themselves who adopt aesthetics of resistance and liberation and thus a nervy style loaded with emotion. As for the novels dealing with ideology and revolution, the intellectuals revolt against capitalist exploitation. The writers thus use Socialist Realism. At the same time, however, their desire to express a total situation induces them to resort to modernist techniques. When the writers show a great interest

in social change and in the creation of a 'Utopian Society', they –involuntarily- turn their novels (with varying degrees) into political/ ideological tracts.

I have selected this subject for several reasons. First, I have felt the desire to go deeper into the striking thematic and, at times, stylistic similarities between the novels of J. Dos Passos, W. Ngugi and O.Sembene. War, the depiction of working class life, class-conflict, the condemnation of Capitalism, the hope for the creation of a better society are themes found in the three writers' novels; moreover, these themes are usually expressed by the same 'écriture' (with a difference in the complexity of style), though the writers belong to different historical periods and different geographical and cultural areas.

Secondly, the three writers' equal interest in history has further fed my enthusiasm about them and their novels. The importance of memory is one of their persistent themes. They want to provide their audience with a broad and pertinent framework of memory. That is why they recall their own experiences as well as those recorded in documents of the times. Dos Passos actually sees the novelist as "a sort of second class historian of the age he lives in, able to build a reality more nearly out of his own factual experience than a plain historian or biographer can"*.

He thinks that both historian and novelist are close together because interested in the explanation of events: the novelist deals with the events of the age he lives in, whereas the historian concerns himself with the past. Both are critics concerned with the way the past affects the present and the future. In fact, Dos Passos's great interest in history shaped his art into documentaries whose materials are events and their interpretation; this form dominates his trilogy, that book of memories which deals with America during the first third of the Twentieth Century. This documentary technique enables him to develop an historically-oriented theory of art. His Newsreels offer the official history of the new century; his

Camera Eyes constitute a memorial of its victims and his biographical portraits embody the history he wanted to tell.

Ngugi and Sembene are equally aware that the study of history offers the possibility of understanding the present, by shaping the forces and circumstances that brought Africans to their current situation. At the heart of their narratives is an assertion of their people's history. Being concerned by how the colonialists distorted African history, they set out to build it out of the ruins of colonial plunder to put the records straight. In all their novels, there is an attempt to revise their history, to restore those memories that have been silenced in the colonial period in order to re-establish a link with their cultural past and provide a foundation for their national identity.

Lastly, this thesis highlights the striking convergence in the writers' political and ideological views, though only Dos Passos and Ngugi have gone to university. Politically, they are all considered –with varying degrees – as social revolutionaries who have embraced Marxism and Communism¹. As writers, they have always felt an active indignation at injustice of any kind. Actually, though Ngugi and Dos Passos are more intellectuals than workers and Sembene is more a worker/trade unionist than an intellectual, the intellectuals of their novels are very much alike. This has led me to ask whether being an intellectual was innate or rather the result of specific social, political, cultural and economic conditions. The answers to these questions are the basis of the thematic and stylistic study of their novels.

To my knowledge, no contemporary study has grouped Dos Passos, Ngugi and Sembene nor treated the theme of the intellectual in their novels. In his Roman et Engagement: le laboratoire des années 1930 en Allemagne, aux Etats-Unis et en France (on Döblin's November 1918, Dos Passos's USA and Aragon's Monde réel) (2013), Aurore Peyrole deals with the notion of commitment in the context of the 1930's in France, the United States and Germany. Similarly, Vincent Ferré in L'essai fictionnel

chez M. Proust, H. Broch et J. Dos Passos (A la recherche du temps perdu, Les Somnambules et USA) (2003) studies the theme of abstraction in the representation of the town in the above-cited novels.

For his part, Ngugi has been compared to Steinbeck in Ndioga Syllain's Class-Struggle in Dubious Battle (1936) by John Steinbeck and Devil on the Cross (1982) by Ngugi (2009). This study deals with class-struggle in the United States and Africa as reported in Dubious Battle and Devil on the Cross. Likewise, Evan Maina Mwangi investigates the intersection between gender and artistic choices in Artistic choices and Gender Placement in the writings of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Grace Ogot (2002). As to Françoise Ugochukwu, she tries to show the relationship between philosophers and imaginative writers in Exploring Literature as political Philosophy: a Comparative Study of Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (2005). Jairus Omuteche studies the theme of identity and belonging in The Representations of Home in Toni Morrison and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (2013).

On the other hand, Martin Mc Clennan & L. Catherine in A Contrapuntal Examination of Selected Works by Roger Vailland and Ousmane Sembene, 1950-1960 (2009) apply to Sembene's and Vailland's works the theory of contrapuntal reading proposed by Palestinian – born, American-based academic and writer Edward Said in his 1993 text Culture and Imperialism. James Adera Ogude in The Emergence of Socialist Realism in African Literature: a Study of Sembene Ousmane, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Alex Laguma (1982) presents Sembene's God's Bits of Wood, Ngugi's Petals of Blood and Alex Laguma's In the Fog of the Season's End and Time of Butcherbird as socialist novels.

Uncertainty and even anxiety loom whenever the subject is the 'intellectual'. Who would dare claim the title of intellectual? What does being an intellectual entail? The people who consider themselves as intellectuals are generally confused and at odds

about what they are supposed to profess. It is beyond the purpose of this study to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the debate around the definition and the role of the intellectual². I will simply dip a toe into these troubled waters by focusing on two dimensions of the term ‘intellectual’, namely what I call a technical/socio-professional definition and a political definition to determine the limits of my topic and to avoid confusion. I will rely on the ideas of philosophers and sociologists such as Leszek Kolakowski, Julien Benda, Antonio Gramsci, Jean Paul Sartre and Raymond Aron. While the three writers under study, indeed, feel profoundly concerned with the problems of their societies and all lean towards the Marxist ideology which, according to them, suits the preoccupations of the masses best, the above-cited philosophers and sociologists similarly deal with war, exploitation, class-struggle and revolution. They also ask pertinent questions about the relations between intellectuals and the social groups to which they belong or for which they speak: these questions are worth exploring before starting the study itself.

In the words of Leszek Kolakowski, a Polish philosopher and historian of ideas, indeed, the term “ intellectual” refers to “all those whose profession is to create and communicate cultural values – in short- scientists, teachers, artists, journalists, propagandists and the like”³. However, Kolakowski adds that the above- cited definition is only a socio-professional one ; within this broad spectrum of intellectuals, only a small number “have achieved public recognition in their respective fields [...] and take a public stance on moral or political issues not related to their areas of expertise”⁴. Such people fall into what he calls the political category of intellectuals”^{*}.

Julien Benda, however, believes that modern thinkers, intellectuals, “should never embrace political and social ideologies at the expense of a reasoned and unbiased examination of cultural phenomena⁵”. In his famous work, La trahison des clercs, he

accuses the intellectuals of betraying their mission of safekeeping spiritual values by descending to the political arena. He asserts that learned people, whom he calls intellectuals, should be guardians of an irreproachable morality, a kind of ‘conscience of humanity’, responsible for administering the empire of justice and truth that transcends the world in which they live. They should rely on reason rather than on emotion or commitment to any social or political doctrine. They should be impartial and independent observers of the world around them. In Benda’s vision, the duty of the intellectuals is to denounce corruption, defend the weak and defy oppressive authority. In this sense, they are agents of a mission that, if betrayed, has harmful effects on society. Because they apply to all people, the values that they try to secure and preserve are universal. They are transcendent, trans historical and trans cultural⁶.

Benda protests against pragmatic contemporary intellectuals who worship utility. For him, nationalism, socialism and pragmatism are all “corrupters of the soul, enemies of the moral primacy accorded to spiritual matters and to the perception of universals”⁷. He believes that, under their corrosive influence, humanity is condemned to revert to a new medieval era “far more barbarous however than the first with the acquiescence and complicity of the very intellectual caste that should have resolutely refuted these doctrines and barred their impending triumph”⁸. For Benda, if the intellectual descends to the political arena, this can only mean that he has betrayed his function “to secure the triumph of a realist passion of class, race or nation”⁹. To be sure, the intellectual has the right to intervene in temporal affairs – since he is the champion of truth and justice- but only for the good of mankind. His ideals being absolute, he does not have the right to draw too close to the politician or even to the state. Benda believes that intellectuals should detach themselves from politicians; they should be ‘rare’ intellectuals who should constitute a ‘choice elite’. No reconciliation between ethics and political institutions is possible.

When The Treason of Intellectuals appeared in 1927, however, there was a deep on-going spiritual crisis, a waning of many bourgeois traditional values in the midst of a serious economic crisis. The intellectual, therefore, could not afford to remain imprisoned in his ivory tower dreaming of universal values while the world was to be governed by individuals with little leaning towards ideas. T.S Eliot, who published two reviews on this book, had great misgivings about its thesis, writing that it was “a counsel of despair, for it advise[d] leaving the regiment of the world to those persons who have no interest in ideas whatever”¹⁰.

The proper role of the intellectual, according to T.S Eliot, is to assist the course of history. By the time of World War One, history, indeed, was moving relentlessly towards an egalitarian direction which would culminate later either into a socialist or a liberal democratic welfare state. Still, in such a situation, the masses were in need, not of Benda’s “spiritual men” (clerics) who were too idealistic, but of another category of intellectuals whose preoccupations were closely related to reality and not to idea. And this is what Antonio Gramsci¹¹ meant when he asked for the consolidation of the ‘organic’ intellectual in order to serve as a spiritual guide by identifying with the needs of the destitute.

In his analysis of Italian society, Gramsci distinguishes between ‘traditional’ and ‘organic’ intellectuals. Traditional intellectuals are “[...] ecclesiastics and a full stratum of administrators, scholars, scientists, theorists, non-ecclesiastical, philosophers etc...”¹². They view themselves as an autonomous class detached from the social context of their society and see their work as “timeless” and “changeless”. However Gramsci believes that neither their autonomy nor their works are innocent, as they usually support the status quo with all its injustices and inequalities. As conservatives¹³,

they stand against any social or cultural development whose aim is the establishment of a more egalitarian society.

The organic intellectuals, however, are part of civil society: they spring from their own social classes and contests and their duty is to organize their social class “by means of education and organisational culture rather than by traditional means of legal and forceful coercion”¹⁴. They can belong to dominant groups, such as “the industrial technicians, political and economic analysts, cultural organizers and legal functionaries”¹⁵. They can also come from lower classes, in which case their duty is to work for those socio-structural changes that would bring about a more humane and egalitarian world¹⁶. In the latter case, these organic intellectuals can become revolutionary intellectuals. To quote Roger Simon “they are not only thinkers, writers and artists but also organizers such as civil servants and political leaders, and they not only function in civil society and the state, but also in the productive apparatus”¹⁷. Thus, according to Gramsci, each class creates its own intellectuals “ [...] no independent class of intellectuals exists, but every social group has its own stratum of intellectuals or tends to form one”¹⁸.

The working class, being incapable of organizing itself on its own, needs Gramsci’s revolutionary organic intellectuals who commit themselves to the cause of the masses. The intellectual organically linked to this class becomes a member of the political party which provides the leadership for the masses. Raymond Aron astutely says that, “l’intellectuel responsable du parti communiste encadre les masses, il les entraîne à la bataille, il les mène à l’école, il les incite au travail, il leur enseigne la vérité [...]. Il est devenu guerrier tout en continuant de penser ou d’écrire”¹⁹. Thus, this intellectual acts as “an ideologue, a constructor, organizer, permanent persuader and not just a simple orator”²⁰.

For Gramsci, the role of the political party – which is led by revolutionary intellectuals – is to weld together the organic intellectuals of a given group and to “educate the proletariat and train it to become the ruling class of the future”²¹. Having been himself a revolutionary organic intellectual who defended the rights of the oppressed and with great sympathy for the lowly and the outcast, he assigned the revolutionary organic intellectual several duties: to share the life of the masses; to commit himself to the ideals of freedom, equality and human solidarity; to be a kind of harbinger of hope and progress; to demystify the dominant ideology; to organize a “counter-hegemony helping to empower the masses and lead them as well as the entire human kind crippled by the capitalist order, to a high conception of life”²². Gramsci does not want these intellectuals to be mere movers of feelings and passions; he wants them to participate in practical life. They are required to use a simple mode of communication to be understood by the masses. They have to train working class intellectuals who would have “the capacity to develop a truly organic relationship with the working masses”²³.

The French philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre shares this point with Gramsci. He considers intellectuals as the moral conscience of their age. He sees it their duty to observe the political and social situation of their people, to put their status at the service of the oppressed and to speak the truth and expose lies. He wants them to put their body as well as their mind on the line against the system.

For Gramsci and Sartre therefore, an intellectual is a person with deep roots in his social context and aware of the oppressive and unjust forces operating around him. These forces he is not afraid to denounce publicly. In their case, knowledge and political action are thus combined for the purpose. However, contrary to Gramsci, Sartre does not consider engineers, doctors, teachers, lawyers as intellectuals but as “technicians of

the know-how”²⁴. Only from these technicians can intellectuals spring. Technicians are trained by the dominant class; they are implicitly entrusted with the task of imposing its ideology on the other classes to reinforce its authority²⁵. Being educated, they become members of the middle class: they are cut off from the masses; they even take part – indirectly – in their exploitation because they obey the orders of their employers who use them as middlemen.

Sartre believes that these technicians are faced with two possibilities. They either put their knowledge at the service of a minority (the dominant class) and live in passivity and submission, or develop doubts about the ideology of the class which has trained them. In the latter case, they become intellectuals, that is, men who question the principles that guide their lives and the place they occupy in society²⁶. He defines the true intellectual as follows :

l’intellectuel est l’homme qui prend conscience de l’opposition en lui et dans la société, entre la recherche de la vérité pratique [...] et l’idéologie dominante [...]. Cette prise de conscience, bien qu’elle doive pour être réelle s’opérer chez l’intellectuel, d’abord au niveau même de ses activités professionnelles et de sa fonction, n’est pas autre chose que le dévoilement des contradictions fondamentales de la société, c’est-à-dire des conflits de classe...²⁷.

For Sartre, the false intellectuals defend the ideology of the dominant class by means of vigorous arguments. They only pretend to work for certain groups of people, such as peasants and workers. They delude the masses with reforms to give the impression that they are not subordinated to the dominant class. Such an attitude has resulted in the condemnation – by the masses – of this category of intellectuals as moralists and idealists who oppose – on moral grounds – war and injustice and keep dreaming of a peaceable utopia.

A true intellectual is neither a moralist nor an idealist; he is a radical who commits himself to all the conflicts of his time because they are all – be they of class, nation or race – effects of the oppression exerted by the dominant class on the masses²⁸. He is required to side with the masses. He must fulfil all his duties: he has to fight against the perpetual rebirth of the ideology of the dominant class within the working class; he has to put the knowledge he has acquired within the dominant class at the service of popular culture; he is required to train intellectuals from within the lower classes; he has to universalize the objectives of the working class and to be a kind of custodian of the historical ends pursued by the masses²⁹. Being the leader of these masses, he is supposed to observe discipline and to adopt a critical view on everything that occurs around him; he has to take part in the struggle of his people³⁰.

In this thesis, the intellectuals present in the novels of Dos Passos, Ngugi and Sembene will be studied in terms of 'rare' intellectuals, 'traditional/organic' intellectuals and 'true/false intellectuals', following Benda's, Gramsci's and Sartre's definitions. And as these intellectuals are meant to reflect the social, historical and political preoccupations of their respective societies, I will ask next which aesthetic form was used by the writers for the expression of both their critical commentary on history and their desire to recreate or "mirror" life. To achieve this doublefold task, I will resort to New Historicism³¹ and to Lukàcs' materialism as critical approaches.

New Historicists indeed, rely on social and political circumstances in the interpretation of literary works. They encourage historical research³². For Greenblatt and his fellow Historicists, literature is more than a writer's attempt to solve certain problems. It is rather a social and cultural contract which shapes consciousness. If we want to understand it, then, we should study the culture and society that produced it. Their aim is not to represent the past as it really was -the job being utterly impossible-

but to present a new reality by re-situating it. According to them, literature must be assimilated to history as it is not a distinct category of human activity.

For the New Historicists, nothing can transcend history. Man himself -like any literary work-is a social construct, that is, his identity and behaviour are determined by social and political forces³³. That is why there can be no continuity between the man of the past and the man of the present. Greenblatt says in this context, “history is a series of ruptures between ages and men”³⁴.

Consequently, anyone who wants to study a literary work finds himself trapped in his own historicity. He cannot ignore his own social formation and ideological upbringing in order to understand the past on its terms. A modern reader can never experience a text as its contemporaries experienced it. The best solution for the New Historicist is, according to Catherine Belsey, “to use the text as a basis for the reconstruction of an ideology”³⁵. For the New Historicists, ideology refers to that political disposition, unknown to an author himself that governs his work³⁶.

As the recovery of the original meaning of a literary text is impossible, the New Historicists concern themselves with the recovery of the original ideology which gave birth to the text, and which the text in its turn, helped to disseminate throughout a culture³⁷. A traditional formalistic approach can never locate these ideological operations which New Historicists call “representations”³⁸ because it relies more on the form of a literary text than on the cultural content underlying it.

Like the leaders of many literary movements-such as post- structuralism which aims at deconstructing ideas in various disciplines to allow for a more accurate discourse- New Historicists believe in the doctrine of the plurality of meaning. Catherine Gallagher explains this new theory in terms of “reading literary and non-

literary texts as constituents of historical discourses that are both inside and outside of texts”³⁹; Greenblatt sees it as a “turn away from the formal decontextualized analysis” and suggests an “embeddedness of cultural objects in the contingences of history”⁴⁰. That is why they feel free to interpret the literary work, not through the writer’s intention, but rather according to the ideology of his age. A literary work, for them, can/should be relocated with other non-literary discursive practices of an age. Veesper says:

[...] the New Historicism has given scholars new opportunities to cross the boundaries separating history, anthropology, art, politics, literature and economics. It has stuck down the doctrine of the non-interference that forbade humanists to intrude on questions of politics, power, and indeed on all matters that deeply affect people’s parochial lives.....⁴¹

The purpose of New Historicists is to reconstruct the actual (as opposed to the represented) relation in which people lived during a particular time. They believe that artistic fiction does not imitate human action but rather mediates it. Fiction is only a means by which a certain portrait of human experience is brought into focus. This is the reason why they combat “empty formalism by pulling historical considerations to the centre stage of literary analysis”⁴².

The relevance of New Historicism for my purpose is the idea that history cannot be divorced from textuality; there is a dynamic dialogue between fiction and reality. New Historicism understands literature according to its cultural and authorial connections. It explores a literary text in an on-going contest for power within society, though a contest not limited to economic class struggle. And this is where the difference between the New Historicists and the Marxists lies. Both call into question the traditional view of literature as an autonomous discourse with its own forms, principles, activities; both dissolve the literary text into the social, historical and political context

from which it issued. But New Historicism tries to solve the theoretical difficulty faced by Marxist criticism in relating the cultural superstructure to the material base⁴³. In New Historicism, a group of characters is portrayed vying for attention and influence, expressing their different interests, impulses, values and attitudes. There is no unified world view. The text contains a variety of voices with which the critical reader must discourse to find meaning.

This interest in New Historicism does not mean that the Marxist approach will not be used in this study. As Dos Passos, Ngugi and Sembene deal with the conflict between the workers and their employers, I will need Lukàcs's materialism all along this research.

Socialist realist novels depict reality from a Marxist point of view. They reflect the class-structure of society and present social struggles from the point of view of class. Raymond Williams says in this context:

Marxism includes realism in artistic and literary creation but cannot replace it. Instead there is an emphasis on creative impulses rooted in the people and the proletariat and a corresponding opposition to creative impulses arising from other classes and ideologies. This, it must be remembered, is a definition of the work of socialist writers⁴⁴.

For Engels, realism consists of three components: "first telling the story truthfully and plainly, without artificial complications and adornments; secondly, presenting typical characters; and thirdly reproducing these characters under typical circumstances"⁴⁵. By "type" he means the convergence in a character or a situation of the social, political, ideological and moral contradictions of a time. George Lukàcs defines the type (which he sees as one of the hallmarks of realism in literature) as follows:

Le type selon le caractère et la situation, est une synthèse originale, réunissant organiquement l'universel et le particulier. Le type ne devient pas un type grâce à son caractère moyen [...] Il le devient par ce qu'en lui convergent et se rencontrent tous les éléments déterminants, humainement et socialement essentiels d'une période historique⁴⁶.

Authentic realism for Lukàcs does not represent man and society from an abstract and subjective point of view; it reproduces everyday individuals within their society⁴⁷. Authenticity is reached only if the writer creates types which imply a link between private man and man in public life or in society. The actions, feelings and thoughts of any individual, according to Lukàcs, are indissolubly linked with the life of society, with its ideology and politics⁴⁸. Therefore the hero of the socialist realist novel is labor, that is, "man organized by labor processes"⁴⁹.

While Lukàcs thinks that a work of art must not be evaluated according to the writer's political ideology, he asserts that the objectivity of realism compels the writer to describe the conflicts of an epoch: "realism does not mean ideological indifference"⁵⁰. It is for this reason that he stands against "avant-garde literature", i.e., modernism which for him had a basically liberal ideology. What he reproached the surrealists, the naturalists, the expressionists with was the stagnation of their work in terms of immediacy. He did not deny the value of the artistic style they created; what annoyed him was the lack of relationship between their works and social reality, their up rootedness from history⁵¹.

But Modernism, as defined by Bradbury, is more than what Lukacs understood it to be. It is indeed "a movement towards sophistication and mannerism, towards introversion and internal self-scepticism"⁵². While it undeniably rebelled against the Nineteenth Century academic and historical tradition, it embraced the social and

political aspects of the emerging modern world; it also expressed the disenchantment, dislocation and alienation of men in the world⁵³.

Indeed modernism had European roots and Bradbury adds that, “[it] was born from Europe’s intellectual, political and artistic tensions and contentions”⁵⁴. It was also part of their modernizing change, “they nurtured, developed and eventually transported the tendency, and in the measure of history it was they to whom the modernity of modern art belonged”⁵⁵. Clearly, it is an art born with the new technology. It refers to all the literary movements which emerged in the Twentieth Century as a reaction to realism. These movements, which include Symbolism, Imagism, Vorticism, Futurism, Dadaism and Surrealism, all have a new conception of the world and a new way of expression. They deal with a rapidly modernizing world, a world caught in a race for “industrial development, advanced technology, urbanism, secularization and mass forms of social life”⁵⁶. They also express the disillusionment of a world from which all traditions had departed, a world in which the future progress of mankind is uncertain.

The pre-war period in Europe knew an extraordinary literary creativity. The writers were aware that they were living in a new age; therefore they felt the need to invent new ways of understanding man and society and new forms of expressing what they felt and saw. The literary form they invented was very complex but made it possible for them to shape the disillusion about life around them, a disenchantment which other people could not feel. In other words, these modernist writers projected the decadence of modern civilization in advance of its time. That is perhaps why many of their works were not understood at the time they were written. It is only after the First World War which had destroyed the order of the European society that people discovered that the images of chaos, confusion and sterility found in the Modernists’

works were a prediction of the present state of this decadent modern civilization in which we still live.

A modernist work is fragmented and lacks conciseness; its themes are complex; the most frequent ones being the loss of faith in religion, in politics and in society (especially after WWI). The modernists attempt to replace this loss by art, meant to provide coherence, guidance and insight to the human condition. They also support the revaluation of ancient myths⁵⁷, as they believed that modern life was chaotic and futile. The modernist novel presents the world as one dominated by imperialism, materialism and racial superiority.

From a formal/stylistic view point, the modernist novel is characterized by irony, satire, juxtaposition, by the use of the first person narrative, by the lack of a traditional beginning-middle-end linear narrative, leaving an impression of enigma and open-endedness to the work. The use of the stream-of-consciousness for its part, focuses on the consciousness and sub-consciousness of the characters brought to light by recently established new disciplines, such as psychological analysis. The language of the modernist novel is a language of chaos, disintegration and fragmentation, giving the impression of things breaking away. There is a great use of images, symbols and metaphors. The handling of time is very complex. There is no chronological order of material. Using flashbacks, the modernist keeps shifting forward and backward in time. All these literary techniques are used, with varying degrees of complexity, in the novels of the writers under study. They will thus be analyzed thoroughly to see how modernistic Dos Passos, Ngugi and Sembene are.

It is worth mentioning that I have limited myself to the study of those novels which deal with the theme of intellectuals caught in a conflict with their social and historical setting and which are written in a more or less similar style. In the case of Dos

Passos, I focus on the novels written before he turned against Communism because it is in these novels that a comparison between him and the two African writers is possible.

The corpus of study of this dissertation comprises J. Dos Passos's Three Soldiers (1921)⁵⁸, the 42nd Parallel (1930), the Big Money (1936), W.Ngugi's Weep not, Child (1964), the River Between (1965), Petals of Blood (1977), Devil on the Cross (1982) and O. Sembene's Ô, pays, mon beau people! (1957), Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu (1960) and Xala (1970). As Sembene's Le Dernier de l'Empire and Ngugi's Matigari and Wizard of the Crow contain no characters that could be considered as intellectuals and as they are devoid of any literary stylistic complication, I have not dealt with them at length. Le Dernier de l'Empire is a very long novel (700 pages) relating the story of a putsch. Sembene is so busy with his ministers, mocking their conduct and their race for power and money that he seems to forget literature. As to Matigari, besides being a translation, it is a mere folk tale designed to be read with the ear rather than with the eye. Wizard of the Crow, also a translation, addresses mainly a non-literate popular Kenyan audience. It was read aloud in bars. Neither do I include the three writers' short stories, poems and films because I judge that characters are much more developed in novels. The scope of the novel, indeed allows writers to exploit their artistic skill in shaping their characters and grants them much more space to do so at length. However, I mention the short stories, plays, films, poems of the writers whenever I think this can help me pinpoint significant aspects. To ground firmly my thesis in their works, I also use non-fictional works authored by them. Lastly, for the sake of comparison, the novels will be grouped according to thematic and possibly stylistic affinities. At the same time, however, I try to respect the chronological order of publication of the novels in order to trace the writers' evolution of the concept of the intellectual.

In the light of these methodological considerations, It ought to be mentioned that I study the American writer separately from the two African writers. Indeed, adopting an alternating method for the three writers is impossible, due to the heavy historical and social American and African events discussed in the novels. I thus resort to the two methods used in comparative literature, namely ‘the monographic’ or ‘bloc method’ for the American part and the ‘alternating method’ for the African part and the conclusion . These two methods help me focus both the socio-historical background and the points of comparison.

The first part of this research, which is devoted to J. Dos Passos, is sub-divided into three chapters, each one preceded by a socio-historical background. I see it appropriate to associate the text to its context (New Historicism) since the novels under study are characterized by the way extra-literary references clarify the works by resorting to history. This dialectical link between text and context is helpful in gaining an understanding of the behavior of the intellectual towards war, his reaction against Capitalism and his position near the rise of social reforms. On the other hand, an examination of the choice of an artistic form will certainly illuminate the analysis of the novels.

In the first chapter of this part “the intellectual and the War Machine: the Quest for Freedom in John Dos Passos’s Three Soldiers”, I study the intellectual in conflict with the war ‘machine’. The role of formal education, the psychological effect of World War One upon his creativity, the political and ideological fragility he suffers from constitute the crux of my investigation. On the other hand, as Dos Passos deals with actual facts and aims at making the reader live/feel the horror of war, I will assess to what extent he remains faithful to literature while dealing with historical events.

In chapter two “the Intellectual and Radical Reform in the 42nd Parallel”, the intellectual’s relationship with radical movements and the writer’s essentially Marxist interpretation of history are used as the basis of my analysis. Considerable attention is paid to the biographical portraits Dos Passos draws on the intellectuals, scientists, politicians and trade unionists who embody the history he wants to refer to. It should be mentioned that, based on Dos Passos’s experiences and attitudes, these biographies are subjective. They express his political sympathies and judgments as well as his admiration for radicalism and scorn for the hypocrisy of the government that acts in the name of ‘democracy’ and freedom. Those biographies represent then the central authorial voice, but at the same time, they provide historical background for the first three decades of the Twentieth Century America. Some of them are positive, others are satirical. They are a means through which Dos Passos states his opinion on these people and reveals his prejudices and attitudes.

From a literary side, I will examine Dos Passos’s use of Modernist and Socialist techniques such as Newsreels and Camera Eyes, typicality and the collective hero to report the ideological upheaval that shook America in the Early Twentieth Century.

Chapter Three, “the Intellectual and Money in the Big Money” tackles the intellectual’s conflict with social institutions, especially American labor organizations and the Leisure Class. The majority of Dos Passos’s characters who could have been effective intellectuals sacrifice their creativity for material prosperity and social status and contribute to the destruction of the American social and moral values in the 1920’s. His belief in social responsibility and conscience, as the mainstays of the survival of both individual and national liberty, constitutes the focal point of my discussion.

To relate the social and historical events of contemporary urban America, Dos Passos resorts again to modernist techniques. Through biographies, he comments on some representative persons of the Twenties; through Newsreels, he synchronizes the

evolution of his characters with the real social/historical time; through Camera Eyes, he expresses his subjectivity; and through satire, irony and humor, he mocks his false intellectuals. These modernist techniques will all be thoroughly analyzed.

The second part of this investigation which contains three chapters, will deal with African novelists, mainly O.Sembene and W. Ngugi. Again, politics, ideology and social change are my focal points while analyzing the two writers' novels. A background of the social and historical events and conditions which shaped the writers' political consciousness as well as an investigation of their efforts to alter these conditions precedes each chapter, except the third one. As the latter deals with the national bourgeoisie – a theme I have already touched upon in the previous chapters – I thought it unnecessary to detail the socio- historical context in which it moves. It is true that it is in Xala and Devil on the Cross (and later in Le dernier de l' empire and Matigari) that Sembene and Ngugi indict this directly. But they have drawn the reader's attention to the nefarious nature of such a class so many times in their previous novels that he is familiar with it.

Chapter One "The African Intellectual in the Making: Weep, not Child, The River Between and Ô pays, mon beau people!" concentrates on Ngugi's and Sembene's conception of the intellectual in the colonial period. I analyze the attitude of the Western - educated intellectual towards the colonial presence in his country. I also study the effect of colonial education on the development of his personality and on his political and ideological commitment. On the other hand, I examine the literary form the young writers give to such content. Janheinz Jahn's 'literature of tutelage'⁵⁹ and Sunday Anozie's typology of heroes⁶⁰ will prove of considerable help in the study of these novels of apprenticeship. They will enable me show that the writers' style and world views are still determined by their colonial teachers

In Chapter Two “the Crisis of Post- Colonial Intellectualism: Les Bout de Bois de Dieu and Petals of Blood” I concern myself with the intellectuals’ attitude towards class-struggle. I investigate the role they play in this struggle, the stand they take and their revolutionary spirit. And since the novels’ preoccupation is with the conflict between the Capitalists and the workers, I investigate the literary devices Ngugi and Sembene use to serve their message. I want to know whether Socialist Realist, Naturalist and Expressionist techniques can be present at the same time, in the same novel, as they do in the 42nd Parallel.

In chapter Three “A vivid Satire of the African National Bourgeoisie: Towards a Class-Struggle .Devil on the Cross and Xala”, I will be commenting upon Ngugi’s and Sembene’s portrayal of the neo-colonial leaders in Africa. They are those Western-educated people who occupy high positions through which they enrich themselves at the expense of the masses. I will also look at the fate of the ‘true intellectual’ who has fallen apart by now. Equal attention will be paid to the future direction the writers propose for their societies. From a stylistic view-point, irony, satire and the use of the grotesque as a means to alleviate the reader’s repulsion from the horror of the African leader’s greed will be analyzed thoroughly.

The conclusion of this research is a synthesis of the topic under study and an answer to the questions asked before. I confront Dos Passos’s, Ngugi’s and Sembene’s intellectuals to underline the similarities and differences in their political, ideological and social views. I assess the extent to which these writers succeed in playing the role of reminders of history. In the end, I state the solutions they propose for social change and the future direction they propose for their societies.

End Notes

*Cited in his review of Hibben's Henry Ward Beecher. See J.Dos Passos, "A great American", The New Masses (December, 1927).

1-In 1926, Dos Passos helped found the New Masses, a Marxist political and cultural journal to which he contributed until 1930. In 1927, he was jailed in Boston for picketing on behalf of Sacco and Vanzetti. In 1928, he spent several months in Russia, studying their socialist system, though later he turned against authoritarian Communism. See Bahtas Vincent, "Writing for his Agendas: J. Dos Passos and his Novels of American Life," The Washington Times (Dec 29, 1996), p.37.

Sembene went to the ex USSR in 1961 for a training course in the Gorky Film Institute. See N. Sada and S .Gadjigo, "Interview with O. Sembene", Research in African Literature , ()Fall 1995, p. 175.

Ngugi visited Russia in 1970 while he was writing Petals of Blood. See D. Cook and M. Okenimkpe, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o: an Exploration of his Writings (London: Heinemann, 1983), p39.

2- Stefan Collini in his Absent Minds : Intellectuals in Britain (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2006) offers a persuasive analysis of the concept of the Intellectual and an extensive comparative account of how this question has been seen in the USA, France and elsewhere in Europe.

3- Cit in David Drake, "the Intellectual of the Twentieth Century", Sartre Studies International 3(2003), p.56.

4- Idem.

* -Idem

5- See Paul Berman, The flight of the Intellectuals (New York: Melville House, 2010), p.304.

6-Ibid., p.306.

7- See James O. Wilkinson, The Intellectual Resistance in Europe (New York: Harvard College, 1981), p1.

8- Idem.

9- Idem.

10- See James Pierson, “The Rise and Fall of the Intellectual”, the New Criterion, September 2006.

11- Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) was an Italian philosopher, journalist, political leader and theorist of socialism and anti-fascism. He was imprisoned for his anti-fascist activities and writings. He is known for Prison Notebooks, a book he wrote in his cell and in which he expressed his most valuable philosophical thoughts. Gramsci is remembered mainly for his concept of ‘hegemony’ as well as for his speculations on the intellectual.

12- Antonio Gramsci: Selections from the Prison Notebooks ; edited and translated by Q. Hoar & G. Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971), p5.

13- See F.P.A Demetrio, “Antonio Gramsci, Edward Said and the Roman Catholic Priest as a Modern Intellectual”, April 2006 Graduation Ceremonies, Saint Camillus de Lellie Seminary College.

14- Gramsci Op.Cit., 19th Notebook, p.6.

15- See F.P.A Demetrio Op.Cit, p.1.

16- This is what Upton Sinclair, the young American writer coming from a modest family does in his novel the Jungle in which he portrays capitalism as inhuman, destructive, unjust and violent. This capitalism destroys a Lithuanian immigrant family that comes to America to lead a decent life. These immigrants initially possess an idealistic faith in the American dream of hard work leading to material success, but they are slowly destroyed. And the novel illustrates that capitalism is to blame for their plight and emphasizes that the characters' individual stories are the stories of millions of people. The book ends with a socialist orator shouting, "Organize! Organize! Organize! [...] Chicago will be ours". The jungle (New York: Double day page & co, 1906). The Jungle was acclaimed as the most revolutionary piece of fiction of the age. For details see:

- William. A. Bloodworth, Upton Sinclair (Boston: Twayne, 1977). It includes a bibliography.
- Thomas. J. Jablonky, Pride in the Jungle: Community and Everyday Life in Back of the Yards (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).
- Christine Scriabine, Upton Sinclair and the Writing of the Jungle (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1981).

17- Roger Simon , Gramsci's Political Thought: an Introduction (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1991), p.90.

18- Gramsci, 19th Notebook, p.5.

19- Raymond Aron, L'opium des intellectuels (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), p.408.

20- James Joll, Gramsci (Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1977), p.93.

21- Ibid., p.96.

22- Antonio Gramsci, Prison Notes, Op Cit., pp. 332-33.

23-Hoare and Nawell-Smith, “Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci” in Roger Simon (ed); Gramsci’s Political Thought (London :Lawrence and Wishart,1978),p.10.

24- “des techniciens du savoir pratique”, J.P. Sartre, Plaidoyer pour les intellectuels (Paris : Gallimard, 1972), p.16.

25- Sartre says that these technicians « font passer abusivement pour des lois ce qui n’est en fait que l’idéologie dominante ». Ibid. p.26.

26- Ibid., pp.37-8.

27- Ibid., pp.40-1.

28- Ibid., p.74.

29- Idem.

30- For further details on these points, see Sartre,. Op.Cit., p.73.

31- The adjective ‘New ‘is used to distinguish between the ‘Old ‘Historicism of the1930’s and1940’s and that of the 1980’s. According to Jeffrey N. Cox and Larry Reynolds “New Historicism can be differentiated from Old Historicism by its lack of faith in ‘objectivity ‘and ‘permanence ‘and its stress not upon the direct recreation of the past but rather on the process by which the past is constructed or invented». In New Historical Literary Study. Essays on Reproducing Texts, Representing History (Princeton: Princeton University press, 1993), P.4.

If Historicism is informed by history only, New Historicism is informed by history and also by the Post-Structuralist Theory, the Reader –Response theory of the 1970’s as well as by the thinking of Feminist, Cultural and Marxist critics whose work was also new in the 1980’s. For more details, see Jerome J.Mc .Gann, The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

32- Veeseer says in this context, “it [New historicism] encourages us to admire the sheer intricacy and unavoidability of exchanges between culture and power, its politics, novelty, its historicity, its relationship to other prevailing ideologies all remain open questions”.H.Aram.Veeseer, ed. The New Historicism (NewYork : Routledge, 1994), p.XI.

33- For Stephen Greenblatt and Michel Foucault, “even something that seems timeless and universal has a history, even our most basic and deeply held feelings towards sex, identity, masculinity, femininity and love for instance, can be traced to certain historical events and occurrences”. Foucault taught Greenblatt that these attitudes are the products of culture. See Mitchell. Stephens, “the Professor of Disenchantment: Stephan Greenblatt and New Historicism”, West magazine (San Jose Mercury) (March 1st, 1992).

34- See Greenblatt’s Introduction to the special issue of Genre, 15 (1982) entitled “the forms of power on the powers of forms in the renaissance”, pp 3-6.

35- Catherine Belsey, Critical practice (London; Methuen 1980), p. 144.

36- See Dino Felluga, Critical Theory: the New Concepts (New York: Routledge, 2013),p.16.

37- See D.G. Myers, “the New Historicism in Literary Study”, Academic Questions2 (winter 1988-89), p.16

38- Idem

39-In “Marxism and the New Historicism”, H .AramVeeseer,The New Historicism Op.Cit., pp.36-7.

40-In Shakespearean Negotiations (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990),p.271.

41- See Veaser Op.Cit., p XI.

42- Ibid., p. XII.

43- See Myers Op.Cit., p 2.

44- Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1977), p.203.

45- Emmanuel Ngara, Art and Ideology in the African Novel (London : Heinemann, 1980), p.203.

46- Georg Lukács, Balzac et le réalisme français (Paris : Maspero, 1967), pp.8-9.

47- He says, « Le réalisme implique la plasticité, la possibilité de faire le tour d'un personnage, la vie autonome des hommes et des relations entre eux », Ibid. , p.9.

48- Ibid., p.12.

49-M. Gorki, “To Affirm Life as Action and Creativity”, *Socialist Realism in Literature and Art: A Collection of Articles*(Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), p.49.

50- Ngara Op.Cit., p.16.

51- Ibid., p.17.

52- Malcolm Bradbury & J.M. Farlane, Modernism (London: Penguin, 1976), p.26.

53- Daniel Joseph Singal makes a difference between modernism and modernity: “modernism”, he says, “should properly be seen as a culture – a constellation of related ideas, beliefs, values and modes of perception – that came into existence during the mid to late 19th Century and that has had a powerful influence on art and thought on both sides of the Atlantic since roughly 1900. Modernization by contrast denotes a process of social and economic development involving the rise of industry, technology, urbanization and bureaucratic institutions that can be traced back as far as the 17th century. In “Towards a Definition of American Modernism”, American Quarterly 39 (1987). The John Hopkins University Press, p .15.

54- Malcolm Bradbury, “the American Risorgimento : the United States and the Coming if the New Arts”, in Marcus Cunliffe (ed); (1975), American Literature since 1900 (London : Penguin, 1987), p.2.

55- Idem.

56- Bradbury, Modernism Op.Cit. , p.57.

57- Bradbury says in this context: “myth commanded itself as a highly effective device for imposing order of a symbolic, even poetic kind on the chaos of quotidian event, and offering the opportunity to short-circuit the intellect and liberate the imagination which the scientism of the modern world suppresses”, Ibid., p.82.

58- Before publishing Three Soldiers, J. Dos Passos had published his first novel entitled One Man’s Initiation 1917 in 1920. The themes of the two novels are not different, but the character of the intellectual is much more concretely elaborated in Three Soldiers; that is why I have chosen to analyze this novel and not the first one.

59- Jahn, Janheinz Jahn, Muntu: l’homme africain et la culture néo-africaine; trans from German by Brian de Martinoir [1958] (Paris :Seuil, 1961).

60-S.O. Anozie , Sociologie du roman africain (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1970).

Part One:
Dos Passos and the American
Intellectual

Chapter One

The American Intellectual and War in the Machine Age: the Quest for freedom in John Dos Passos's Three Soldiers

In Three Soldiers, John Dos Passos deals with the Americans' experience in World War One. What I would like to explore in this novel is the American intellectuals' attitude towards this war. I will in turn examine whether they really wanted to take part in it, that is, whether they agreed on the involvement of America in the resulting massacre and whether they represented the democratic character of American Society or rather helped the elite (the establishment) to exercise power. Attention will be also paid to the impact it had on their creativity.

In a second step, believing that no literary study is complete without referring to theme and style at the same time, I will look at the way in which Dos Passos handles the theme of war. I will focus on characterization, symbolism, imagery, language and interior monologue to see to what extent the writer manages to make the reader share the awfulness of war through the characters of his novel. In particular, I will assess to which extent he remains faithful to literature while dealing with historical events.

I have chosen to start with this novel because Dos Passos experiments here with 'a blue-print' he will use in his more mature works. Three Soldiers is marked by weaknesses in style. The writer's control of his material is not firm enough. In addition to this, the protagonist suffers from ideological and political haziness and lives in a world of dreams and illusions.

Though literary form is not neglected, the analysis of the novel is mainly socio-historical. For this reason, New Historicism imposes itself as the most suitable approach to such an analysis due to its desire to move beyond the intrinsically formalistic study of the literary text.

To analyse Three Soldiers, I shall begin by describing the complex web of the intellectuals' attitudes, ideals and points of view towards the First World War¹. In dealing with this point, I must consider how the circumstances of the writer's life may have influenced the discourses contained within the text. New Historicism, indeed, examines the psychological make-up of the author, his cultural background and the events in his life that might have influenced him². My aim is not to display the absolute truth of the text but only to participate in a historical discourse that may shed further light on the novel. Such an approach will certainly help me understand the behaviour of Dos Passos's intellectuals before, during and after the war.

I. Socio-Historical Background: America and World War One

I.1. American Intellectuals and World War One: from Neutrality to Support.

When the First World War was declared in Europe³, America adopted a policy of neutrality and isolation⁴. This approach had the full support of the majority of Americans who could not believe that a civilized "entity" like Europe would be associated with such a horrible and futile massacre. President Woodrow Wilson listened to what the public wanted because he wished to be re-elected in 1916. So, he maintained America's neutrality all the more eagerly since the Americans' interests were not threatened. America continued its trade with all the European countries, including Germany, as its business was financed by foreign banks. Besides, American bankers could lend money to both sides. When Britain, however, adopted the policy of blockading the Germans, it was all but impossible for America to trade with Germany. The latter was then compelled to introduce unrestricted submarine warfare as a response to Britain's policy.

On February 4th, 1915, the Germans announced that all merchants shipping in a specified zone around Britain would be legitimate targets. President Wilson warned them that if any American ship was sunk, he would hold them to account ⁵. But the German government promised to compensate for any American ship that would be destroyed. So, till the end of 1915, America's relationship with Germany was good.

In late December 1915, Wilson went as far as to start a peace initiative between Germany and Britain. Indeed his plan of mediation was put on paper by the signature of the House Grey Memorandum in 1916⁶. But some months later, Britain ignored the memorandum and increased its maritime activities with regard to stopping ships trading with Germany. Elected in November 1916, Wilson resumed his attempts to end war, but in vain.

At the start of 1917, British intelligence intercepted the "Zimmerman telegram"⁷, a secret German communication to Mexico promising United States territory to Mexico in return for supporting the German cause. Consequently, on April 2nd, 1917, Wilson finally asked congress for a formal declaration of war. Four days later, America joined the war on the side of allies.

Wilson's statement announcing a "war to end all wars" meant that he wanted to build a basis for peace that would prevent future wars and needless death and destruction⁸. His Fourteen Points⁹ were intended to resolve territorial disputes, ensure free trade and commerce and establish a peace making organisation. They summed up the ideology of a Presbyterian preacher who relied on high moral principles to reform the practice of international relations and to present the United States as a Millennial. Wilson actually believed that the U.S, basing itself on domestic experience with democracy and capitalism, should set the rules for international politics. Included in his "Fourteen Points", was the founding of the "League of Nations", which aimed at a

world without imperialism, that is, a world where the voices of democracy and self-determination would be heard as loudly as those of the strong.

To the American pacifists, however, the war was not about democracy, but about the expansion of the allied countries' imperial ambitions; hence, their opposition to it. Wilson therefore faced a hard task: he had to find a way to mobilize an unprepared America. He thus took many initiatives such as asking for volunteers and instituting a draft to build up an army for all America which had only a militia.

But convincing the Americans-who were isolated from what was happening in Europe- to support the war and feel the will to fight was difficult. The War-effort required propaganda¹⁰. Wilson launched "the Committee for Public Information"*, employing a legion of artists and the Hollywood film industry to produce pamphlets, movies and posters depicting Germans as Barbarians and 'Huns'. Religious leaders also supported the cause as strongly as the elites did. Liberal Protestants, Catholics all maintained that German militarism must be destroyed as a prerequisite for international peace. Churches and synagogues disseminated propaganda for the Committee on Public Information¹¹. As for intellectuals, including the Progressive ones who believed in national and world salvation through Big Government, they encouraged America's entry into the war, a war which provided the fulfilment of their dreams. They joined their interests to those of the big-businessmen¹². For their part, the pacifist intellectuals who had always refused to sanction or participate in any war before agreed on the American involvement in the struggle. Their opposition to war was followed by their support for international peace and reform programs which made for modern liberal pacifism¹³.

The Trade Unions for their part supported the war, though the United States was the only advanced capitalist country without a strong united labour movement. During

World War One, President Wilson gave labour fixed wages and regulated their conditions because war production became essential. His administration endorsed unionization and collective bargaining in exchange for union support of the war efforts. The American Federation of Labor affiliates¹⁴ used state support to organize mass production workers in ship building, metal fabrication, meat packing and steel, doubling union membership between 1915 and 1919. (But when the war ended, employers mobilized to crush the nascent unions)¹⁵. So, thanks to the combined efforts of the church and government, America and its intellectuals went to war.

The majority of American intellectuals then were forced to identify themselves with the least democratic forces in American life for fear that they should be taken for traitors. So, there was nobody left to denounce a war that went against basic undemocratic principles. Nobody had even the right to doubt the necessity of this war. H.L Mencken's¹⁶ opposition to Woodrow Wilson for driving America to war cost him his job as a newspaper columnist¹⁷

According to Randolph Bourne¹⁸, American intellectuals all agreed with America's participation in the war,

Socialists, college professors, publicists, new republicans, practioners of literature have vied with each other in confirming with their intellectual faith the collapse of neutrality and the riveting of the war-mind on a hundred million more of the world's people¹⁹.

The jingoist newspapers²⁰ played an important role. They exploited the ideas of nationalistic and democratic pride, the desire for an aggressive foreign policy to whip up Americans and to convince them of the necessity of war. To quote Noam Chomsky:

The first modern government propaganda operation [...] was under the Woodrow Wilson administration. [He] was elected president in 1916 on the platform 'peace without victory'. The

population was extremely pacifist and saw no reason to become involved in a European war. The Wilson administration was actually committed to war and had to do something about it. They established a public propaganda commission which succeeded within 6 months in turning a pacifist population into a hysterical, war-mongering population which wanted to destroy everything German (...).Go to war and save the world.²¹

Few could have imagined that these intellectuals who, two years before, would have deemed barbarian anybody who dared speak about shipping American men to die on the fields of France, would today find themselves creating their own “cleanly” reasons for imposing military service on the country. Bourne thinks that the origin of this change comes from Big Business²². Soon all Americans were convinced of the necessity of going to this war; for many reasons, to be out of it came to be seen as disreputable and even obscene.

The nerve of the war feeling was therefore very strong, starting with the affluent Anglo American classes (WASP). It was also noticeable within French or English business circles²³; it then spread all over the country as a class phenomenon, touching especially “those upper class elements in each section who identified themselves with this ruling group”²⁴. Of course these people were hardly liberal and even less democratic. The farmers, the small business men, the working men were all indifferent and showed no sympathy towards the war. All these people voted for President Wilson because they thought he would keep the U.S neutrality.

The intellectuals, during the last two years of the war, were busy studying and explaining to the common people the ideals and aspirations of the American democracy. They became servants of the state and junior partners in the state rule²⁵. In this new alliance of the state and intellectuals, each one helped the other: progressive intellectuals served the state by apologizing and justifying rationally all its decisions. With the birth of new sciences, they were called for important positions as planners and

controllers of the society and its economy. The state in turn, raised their income and the prestige of their professions and occupations. For example, historians, during the war, played an important role in providing the government with war propaganda to convince the public that the Germans were evil by evoking the “Satanic” designs of the “Kaiser”²⁶. Economists and statisticians also were of great importance in the planning and control of the nation’s economy during the war²⁷. Some journalists allied with the state and with big business to convince the masses to see war as “an aggressive tool for democracy”²⁸.

To such critics as Bourne, it would have been wiser for these intellectuals to spend all the time they wasted in war on educating their people (as their predecessors did in the previous period) or on finding a way for securing peace and making neutrality effective. They could have used their intellectual energy to attain generous ends for the entire world. Bourne says in this context,

The whole era has been spiritually wasted,
the outstanding feature has been not its
Americanism but its intense colonialism²⁹.

Bourne thought that these intellectuals could have made of America a “melting pot” for the attitudes of the different nations had they not found themselves under the force of Anglo-Americanism: “their opinion became more and more what could be read pleasantly in London, or what was written in an earnest effort to put English men straight on their war aims and war techniques”³⁰. This attitude resulted in the production of a counter-reaction from German –Americans like H.L Mencken, the most outspoken defender of liberty in America who spent thousands of dollars challenging restrictions on the freedom of the press*.

Neutrality meaning that one should search the truth, they could not even be neutral; they were not in a situation as easy as that of the intellectuals of the fighting countries because the latter had only to rationalize and justify what their countries were already doing. “The old colonials among the America college professors”, as Bourne says, “let their prejudice at once dictate their thoughts”³¹, and since then, they felt at ease. They learnt nothing from the war, and they managed to be satisfied by seeing prejudice submerge their younger colleagues.

It cannot be denied that the “true” Intellectual, the one that has not been swallowed by the military machine should call unceasingly for peace and for the suppression of all kinds of armaments in the world. He should also stand against a “liberal” world order founded on military coalitions and devote his energy and enthusiasm to education, art and culture. One comes to wonder whether this is what American intellectuals really did when the war ended.

I.2. American Intellectuals after the War: the Writers’ Disenchantment.

Coming back from the great adventure of World War One, with a persistent need for an authentic life and for acceptable intellectual structures, intellectuals were disappointed. Having lost its cosmopolitan culture, America had unfortunately nothing to offer. The Puritan constraint and repression were predominant. Intellectuals thus fled to Spain, Paris and London in search of a new way of life, glorifying paganism, personal development and art against the Puritan austerity which had become absurd. The most gifted American writers, such as E. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, went to Paris where they stayed till the beginning of the Great Depression.

Rejecting the values of “industrialized” America, and seeking a bohemian life style, they were called “the Lost Generation”, an expression coined by Gertrude Stein³².

Full of youthful idealism, they created some of the finest American literature to date. They considered themselves “lost” because their inherited values could not operate in the post-war world and they felt spiritually alienated from a country they considered hopelessly provincial and emotionally barren. Malcolm Cowley says in this context:

“American themes were lacking dignity. Art and ideas were manufactured under a European patent; all we could furnish toward them was raw talent destined usually to be wasted. Everywhere, in every department of Cultural life, Europe offered the models to imitate [...]. Indeed some even decided that this country was not even a nation: it had no traditions except the fatal tradition of the pioneer”³³.

However, though unhappy with American culture, these writers were instrumental in changing their country’s style from Victorian to modern. They were interested in theatre, paintings and music. They marvelled at Picasso, Stravinsky and many others. They moved in a climate of energy, creation and dynamism. The post war years saw the publication of many books in which the writers of the “lost generation” tried to write about what socialists failed in/or were forbidden to express through acts. Young American critics played an important role in those post-war debates about American culture and politics: Van Wyck Brooks published America’s Coming of Age in 1915, Waldo Frank published Our America in 1928 and later he started the edition of Seven Arts, a magazine in which he kept analysing, during two years, the intellectual situation of the United States³⁴.

All these writers, including John Dos Passos, stood against the Genteel Tradition denounced so strongly by Mark Twain because it immersed in conventional social, religious, moral and literary standards³⁵. They engaged in a quest for the depiction of that diverse and boiling American nation. In 1917, John Dos Passos denounced in Seven Arts the monotony and the lack of deep roots that characterized the writers of the time. He asserted that in all the countries he visited, writings were related to the land and to

the living tradition. In America however, people lost that indispensable link and believed that it was impossible to recover it. He thus wanted the American writer to determine his position as regards his future, since he has lost his past. He said in one of his articles,

[...] to go back is impossible, the link with the land will be more and more difficult to re-establish; the link with the past is broken. But industrialization, the modern, in sum, produces new ways of life that open the way towards a new future³⁶.

He then saw the hope of America in the future. He forced himself to accept that the American man is cut off from his origins, from his inherited past and turned towards “a modern American” in whom he put great hopes.

Three Soldiers was his first confrontation with a demystified American reality, the first study of the fate of man at grips with brutality, with the hypocrisy of certain institutions. As it happened, those institutions, that image of America which needed to be unveiled was that of the army/militia of a nation which was anti-militarist in its essence. This “war novel” is a bitterly ironic commentary on the ideals of universal peace, democracy, liberty and safety for which the First World War was fought. It sweeps a decade’s events from 1910 to 1919 and traces the devastating economic, social and psychological impact of the war on America.

Dos Passos was horrified by war, but he was eager to take part in it because his enlistment was a chance for him to acquire experience by mixing with men of different social classes. Despite his weak eyes, he joined the medical corps, in September 1918, but on November 11th, the Armistice was declared. So, a day after, he sailed with his section for Europe. In March, still a soldier, he joined the Sorbonne, after having slipped out of camp with the help of a sympathetic officer who discharged him³⁷.

Once a civilian, he left for Paris and then for London in search of a publisher for his first novel, One Man's Initiation 1917 and then he went with some friends to Spain where he worked on what would become Three Soldiers which he published in the United States in 1921 after having encountered many problems because no publisher accepted the novel³⁸.

Dos Passos's radicalism developed rapidly. He sympathized with the American farmers' associations, militant strikes and trade Union Organisations (as we shall see in the second chapter). He was a rebel sustaining anyone who attacked the established order. But when it came to supporting these victims of capitalism, he always did so uneasily. These contradictory feelings are expressed by the main character of Three Soldiers, John Andrews who is presented at the beginning of the novel as a 'naïve' intellectual, believing in war as a means to realize universal peace and democracy, but who after taking part in World War One and after much disappointment, becomes more conscious and decides to commit himself organically to the cause of the oppressed.

II . The intellectual as Artist and Soldier

The main characters of Three Soldiers³⁹ come from different social classes and different geographical areas, a way to give a wider view of the war and different aspects of the American experience. Dan Fuselli, a lower class "pacifist"! Italian American from San Francisco with a "conformist"! attitude to the army, Chrisfield, an Indiana boy, a representative of the innocent farmer who, though repelled by the horror of war, is promoted to the rank of corporal in spite of himself, and a young upper middle -class intellectual, John Andrews, a hyper sensitive recent graduate from Harvard who escapes to Paris to study music. While in this study of the intellectual I will focus on Andrews, I have thought it worthwhile to pay some attention to minor figures who underline the role of intellectual consciousness in the novel.

For these three soldiers – as well as for the majority of Americans- war was still a matter of young men. They went to it with innocence although each had his own personal reasons for enlisting. They were not afraid because they believed that the use of technology in warfare would indeed cost a lot but would avoid any loss of human beings. They did not realize the danger of “technologizing” a war, nor could they think that this technology would mean the destruction of man, the failure of social values, meanings and morality. Once in the battlefield, their attitude towards technology changed. They no longer saw in it a means to improve civilization, to live in a more humane, democratic peaceful society. They lost belief in the benevolence of science for human life. They were disillusioned⁴⁰. They even forgot their personal reasons for enlisting.

In fact, Fuselli has joined the army because he wanted to escape from a society in which he had no decent social status. War was a great adventure for him to realize his dream of becoming an officer and thus appearing brave and patriotic to his friends, neither of which he was. Even when humiliated by his superiors, he swallowed his pride and anger just to please them. Nevertheless, he never managed to be promoted to the rank of corporal. He ended court-martialed for venereal disease.

Chrisfield, on the other hand, went to war because, as a small businessman in his town, he could only hope to do business with the locals if he had served in the war. Moreover, he wanted to exhibit those values of manhood he had been taught in his rural area. While courageous and eager to meet the enemy, he realizes that, unfortunately, courage, pride and direct action no longer have any significance in this military “machine” whose aim is merely technological. He is never given the chance to meet the enemy and to let out the aggressiveness inherent in him. This frustration leads him to kill Anderson, a lieutenant in the army, an act which puts an end to his military career.

As to John Andrews, dubbed “the artist as soldier” by a critic, Robert C. Rosen⁴¹, he is a kind of alternative to Fuselli’s submissiveness and Chrisfield’s uncontrollable violence. He spent his childhood in Virginia and studied at Harvard. He also tried his hand at musical composition. He signed up because he wanted to submerge his individual identity in a collective consciousness. Dos Passos says that “he was sick of revolt of thought or carrying his identity like a banner above the turmoil. This was much better” (P26).

Unfortunately, the relief would not last for a long time. Andrews soon regrets his mistake. Once in the army, he realizes that soldiers are only “cogs” in the machine. The military was worse than he imagined. It could not be an escape from the modern/technological environment he was living in. He refuses to be enslaved and deserts. But caught by the MPs, he is sentenced to prison for the rest of his life.

To understand Andrews’s behaviour and situate him within a definite social category, I will deal with him at the beginning of his career as a young educated man believing in idealistic principles, such as democracy and safety to all the world and ready to sacrifice himself for ‘universal peace’. As this hero is soon crushed by the war ‘machine’, I will analyse the image Dos Passos gives of the army and the way it destroys soldiers. In a third step, I will come back again to Andrews who now grows into a worried conscious intellectual trying to commit himself to the cause of the oppressed. While developing all these points, I will pay attention to the stylistic devices Dos Passos uses to render his ideas.

II.1. Andrews, a Sensitive and Genteel Rare Intellectual?

John Andrews, the main character, has many of the characteristics of a romantic hero usually defined as “a literary archetype referring to a character that refuses

established norms and conventions, has been rejected by society, and has the self as the center of his or her own existence”⁴². He is a lonely alienated and isolated misunderstood character who relies much on his imagination as a gateway to transcend experience; he favours emotion over reason; he focuses on his passions and inner struggles; he believes that his creative point as an artist is more important than strict adherence to formal rules; he appreciates the beauties of nature deeply.

He is so disappointed by the wealthy upper class to which he belongs that he tries to connect with the commoners. In a time of war, John Dos Passos himself –being issued from the upper middle class- may be trying to reach out his equals for a connection, not to those above him, the ones fuelling the war, but rather to the common soldiers. But, just like his hero, though well-educated or probably as a result of that, he is ideologically and politically confused. So, he could hardly create a character who would be considered as an intellectual in the real sense of the word. I feel thus compelled to go back to the previous definitions of the intellectual, to Julien Benda’s conservative/utopian, Antonio Gramsci’s traditional /organic, J.P Sartre’s true/false intellectual to see which one describes best Dos Passos’s Andrews who wavers between conservatism and radicalism. These definitions will certainly help me classify him within a certain category of intellectuals to understand his behaviour.

Andrews represents the educated intellectual, a sensitive minority which Dos Passos himself was part of and whose reactions to the brutalities of war were indeed most emotional because unfamiliar with brutality and injustice. In fact, this character reflects the writer as both a naïve, impassioned artist and a Harvard man enjoying his superior and sophisticated culture. He is a genteel character, a John Alfred Prufrock in his weariness, regret, longing and sexual frustration. As it will be illustrated later, the upper world, a world of art, music, food, wine and women in which he lives, cuts him

off from reality. His class has saturated him with false culture and turned him into an introvert intellectual living in a fantastic world, lacking confidence in himself, always afraid of doing the wrong thing. Though materially well-off and socially secure, he is easily offended. He prefers to be alone because his life is drained of social contact. While longing for a stabilizing relationship, he fears rejection. He is most of the time worried and strict with himself but he is widely misunderstood and even ‘opposed’.

As a young intellectual, he is self-dissatisfied and rejects the formal schooling⁴³ he received. Having lost confidence in his class and its ideals, he decides to join the army as a defender of rights and to fight in a war which was not his⁴⁴. He was therefore not driven to fight by any political or ideological ideal. For some time, he thinks that his enlistment will help him reach a certain consciousness and interpret the world as he likes. It will also help him get rid of all his privileges in order to be able to mix with men of different social classes, to understand the common American and to defend hand in hand with him freedom, democracy and the great American tradition from which he has taken his own conception of life. Like the “Genteel intelligentsia”, he felt a sense of responsibility for the preservation of American Democracy and conventionality in social and moral standards⁴⁵. Though he does not say it implicitly, at the beginning, Andrews is presented as someone who believes in universal values, like justice and equality and who stands against exploitation and industrialization (itself an army)⁴⁶. Therefore, he can be considered as a “rare” intellectual, as Benda’s ‘clerc’.

Andrews knows that America has lost many of its ideals, such as equality, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, majority rules, the right to rebel⁴⁷ and is now engaged in the pursuit of materialism. For him, this country has been betrayed by the industrialists who are at the root of the problem; these people favoured money at the

expense of moral values. He believes that it is the duty of intellectuals to denounce the culprits or at least, to give explanations.

Unfortunately, in this war, he discovers another nightmare, that of the army, a cruel army which enslaves people and which opens his eyes to the reality, that is, to the real objectives of the war: profit making

In a week the great structures of his romantic world, so full of many colours and harmonies, that had survived school and college and buffeting of making a living in New York, had fallen in dust about him. He was utterly in the void. (p.18).

However, though reaching a certain consciousness, Andrews is so shocked that he does not know how to act. He tries to adjust to the reality of the army as an ally of the "machine" and of capitalists, but in vain.

II.2. The Intellectual as a Mere Cog in a Merciless Military Machine

While life in Three Soldiers is dominated by the army, Dos Passos uses the machine as a metaphor for the military and, by extension, of modern experience. He chooses war as a setting to convey pessimistic sentiments regarding the machine civilization. The military environment is used as a microcosm for more general problems with modern civilization. Throughout the novel, he protests more against the brutality and vulgarity of war itself and against the anti-democratic and anti-individualistic forces inherent in the military existence than against the brutality and vulgarity of the 'German atrocities'. In it, it is the machine that "rules over the individual and reduces to nothing all his pretensions and hopes" (p.80), a machine that absorbs the characters' thoughts and destroys their liberty, individuality and initiative through its regulations which are as flexible as the laws of the universe and through officers who are as unbending as the regulations they must obey.

While the main theme of Three Soldiers is not technology but the overwhelmingly oppressive power of the military on the individual, an old Jeffersonian theme, Dos Passos finds an excellent metaphor in technology, a metaphor understood by his contemporary readers living in a rapidly technologized environment. One of the central images of the novel is the machine to which he sometimes refers as “the system” or “the treadmill”. The technological and the military spheres parallel one another in their mechanical and monotonous quality as well as in their great influence.

The titles of the six main parts of the novel emphasize the domination of the characters’ thorough subjection to the military machine. These metaphorical titles define the sections and relate them to the novel’s major concern with the effects of WWI on American soldiers. They suggest a full technological cycle which stands for the soldiers’ experience in war. “Making the Mould” and “the Metal cools” evoke the production of steel and its casting into uniform shapes, producing perhaps the machines of part three. In these chapters, Dos Passos introduces the three characters who are indeed very different but united or “moulded” into the same shapes by the inhuman mechanism of the military machine.

Part three ,entitled “Machines”,in which Dos Passos evokes the only combat scenes in the novel, underlines the mechanization of the soldier who is fused with his weapons and cast into a half-human, half-mechanical entity. The title then refers more to the soldiers used as interchangeable machine parts in the larger military machine than to any kind of actual technological artefact. Part Four,“Rust”, which accounts for Andrews’s wounding and his rest in the army hospital, suggests that he has now become useless. In fact, all the injured soldiers who are put in hospital are no longer valuable; they are like rusted pieces of useless metal.

Part five, “The World Outside”, depicts Andrews as a relatively free man in the Sorbonne School Detachment, where he went to study music, and refers to the world outside the military machine. But this is only an illusion; nobody can go outside the system. Andrews is arrested for disobedience and sent to a labor battalion. Later, he deserts and tries to live in “the World Outside”, but he is defeated just like the two other characters. The Three Soldiers end up “Under the Wheels” (part six) destroyed by the military machine. Thus the cycle is full and everybody is inside, that is, all the soldiers are under the control of the army.

In the world of Three Soldiers, the army transforms men into automata. Soldiers are treated as lifeless objects/uniform beings without any traits of individuality. Andrews resents his superiors “who thought of him as a coarse automaton, something between a man and a dog” (p.223). The bugler blows in the morning and “throw[s] him into an automaton under other men’s orders” (p.255). Learning from his previous mistakes, Andrews “automatically gets off into the mud and salutes a captain” (p.251) and “automatically jumps to attention and starts to march at another officer’s commands” (p.557). When he escapes the dehumanizing effects of the military organisation and is thus – temporarily- outside the system, Andrews’s mind and body are still filled

with a reverberation of all the rhythms of men and women moving in the frieze of life before his eyes: no more like wooden automatons knowing only the motions of the drill manual, but supple and varied, full of force and tragedy. (p.289)

While this quotation shows the reduction of men to machines by the military forces, it could be seen in a wider context and applied to the context of the Twentieth Century modern experience. By the use of robot-like men and women, Dos Passos suggests monotony. Were it not inserted in its original context, the above passage could

refer to work in a mechanized factory. The machine is an image of the army, but this army in turn, is an image of a larger mechanical and monotonous life.

The machine –like quality of military life is also emphasized by the use of descriptive passages. The payroll clerk, for example, “pushed the money into the soldiers’ hands with a rough jerk and pronounced the names as if they were machines clicking” (p.333); Fuselli who can no longer cope with the military routine is “lost in the vast machine” (p.40); a lieutenant speaks “in short shrill periods, chopping off the ends of his words as if with a hatchet” (p.99). These descriptions and many others show that Dos Passos insists on portraying life in the military as subordinate to cold inhuman forces. The judgement of the characters and their fates are determined according to their relationships to the army machine.

The transformation is not only physical; it is also mental. Dos Passos registers the psychological effects of war on the characters; at the same time however, he mentions most of the important military and technological inventions and innovations introduced during the First World War. Thus, “outside the house was a sound of machine-gun firing, broken by the occasional bursting of a shell” (p.185), submarines, U .boats (p.42), “the gas is the godamnest stuff I ever heard of (...).Mustard gas, they call it”. (p.112) (underlining mine). Add to this, the transportation technology used in the war, in terms of trains, tracks, ambulances and motorcycles.

Though Three Soldiers, along with Ernest Hemingway’s A Farewell to Arms (1926) and Cummings’ The Enormous Room (1922) is one of the famous American ‘war’ novels, it is hardly a war novel in the traditional sense of the word. The writer does not evoke the horrors of warfare; neither does he provide us with information on the specifics of combat or with battle scenes. Even the image of the enemy is unconventional: the only Germans mentioned in the text are the P.O.W (prisoners of

war) (p.70), shown in propaganda movies on the German atrocities. (pp 26-62). The dead soldier that Chrisfield finds by chance in the forest (p.149) powerfully reminds us of Stephen Crane's The Red Badge of Courage (1895), a novel in which warfare is used as a fictional theme and treated with a sense of irony, just as Three Soldiers⁴⁸. The real enemy the characters are in conflict with in the novel is actually the army: the system, rather than the Germans.

Dos Passos tries to explain how an entire civilization has been mobilized for war.

Holger says in this context that

it is the machine of the living rather than the machine of killing which in Three Soldiers emerges as the ultimate destructive force; and what it destroys are precisely those traditional values of individual pride, individual success. For Americans, the Great Crusade was undertaken to protect and enhance⁴⁹.

II.3. Ambitious City Clerks, Innocent Farmers and Revolted Articulate Intellectuals

Dos Passos starts his attack on the army through the least articulate victim, Fuselli, the lower middle class character, aspiring for social and economic goals. He stands for the ambitions of the masses. He knows many songs glorifying war and patriotism; when he sleeps at night, he always remembers "long movie reels of freedom" (p.9). In fact, Fuselli is not courageous at all. He is interested neither in ideology nor in violence, but in "getting ahead"; that is why he is always cautious about "getting in wrong" with his superiors:

He must remember to smile at the sergeant when he passed him off duty. Somebody had said there'd be promotions soon. Oh, he wanted so hard to be promoted [...]. He must be more careful not to do anything that would get him in wrong with any

body. He must never miss an opportunity to show them what a clever kid he was. (p9)

Fuselli's entire career is based on a reversal irony because he does not understand what is happening around him. At the opening of the novel, he is depicted as an introvert dreamer surrounded by signs of power which he does not understand and even less hopes to share. Life around him is seen as a theatrical spectacle/representation ready to be consumed, and he, a passive spectator, a consumer of images: San Francisco, the rich avenues, the beautiful women are, as he says, "like the front of a high-class theatre" (p.12). It is only a spectacle for him to witness, never a reality to enjoy or control. His image of military life is also theatrical. His interior monologues on combat are taken from the popular films he and his generation used to entertain themselves with during World War One- films which, like genteel novels before them, glorify war and heroic action. Europe for him is like a post-card: everything is beautiful; life is easy and people are happy. He says,

It's swell over there ... everything's awful pretty-like. Picturesque, they call it. And the people wears peasant costumes ... I had an uncle who used to tell me about it. (p.27)

Fuselli's father came from Italy on steerage (Fuselli would have preferred to stay there, "I would stay home if I had to do that" (p.13)). And surprisingly, it is also by steerage that Fuselli is to travel overseas. Once in the boat, he is shocked by the way soldiers are treated. He sees himself and his comrades as slaves, modern slaves, slaves of the machine who reproduce the black slaves' transatlantic journey. America has not really changed then; it is still an 'enslaving country'. And it is only on board that he understands that his enlistment will be only a continuation and not a middle passage from his clerkdom. From that moment, he starts working for his corporalship in which he sees the only way to get rid of the humiliation soldiers are submitted to on the part of their superiors. He becomes sympathetic, sociable, and humble. He makes himself

appear unimportant in order to please his superiors whose orders he obeys blindly, reducing himself to a cog in the machine.

Fuselli does his best to join this machine. At the opening of the novel, Dos Passos presents him as standing “stiffly at attention in a khaki row that was one of hundreds of other khaki row, identical that filled all sides of the parade ground” (p.11). This image is meant to emphasize Fuselli’s submission to the army; it also shows the uniformity of soldiers or, in technological terms, their standardisation. But Fuselli does not succeed to be admitted within the military. When overseas, he even comes to lose confidence in that glorious heroism; he is seized with fear, especially after seeing a soldier who has come back from war with an emotional breakdown. He is struck with terror because this man does not fit his idealized picture of the “jolly soldiers in khaki marching into towns pursuing terrified Huns across potato fields, saving Belgian milkmaids against picturesque backgrounds (p.59). All this incites Fuselli to revolt against the military order.

In fact, his first attempt to rebellion is when he is assigned to be an orderly for an officer. He refuses to be the slave of any officer though he finally accepts to do so when he sees that the latter is sick. His rebellion reaches its climax when he discovers that the sergeant has a relationship with his girlfriend. Here, Fuselli has to make a choice: either to stand for his rights against the representative of the “system” or to submit to this representative in a hope to get a promotion. Whatever the decision he takes, he is doomed to failure. His is a matter of choosing how to be defeated.

Fuselli stood still with his fists clenched. The blood flamed through his head making his scalp tingle. Still the top sergeant was the top sergeant, came the thought. It would never do to get in wrong with him. (pp.114-5)

For the sake of corporalcy, Fuselli yealds his girl Yvonne to the lusty old top sergeant; he loses the woman he wanted strongly to share his life with, as well as his personality. He thus becomes victim of the destructive effects of the machine. The same night, he loses even his temporary corporalcy because the corporal he was replacing has come back from hospital, an event that puts an end to his chance for any promotion. His denouement is completed when a soldier in his company dies of a heart attack near him after having refused to obey the orders of his officer. Here, he discovers the actual cruelty of the army.

Ironically, Fuselli's military career for which he sacrificed so much is ruined by venereal infection, punishment for which is the court martial. During World War One, America indeed was imbued with Christian ideals, especially those related to the sexual purity of American "boys". Fuselli finally surrenders: his expectations for military status led him to court martial (though Dos Passos does not say how he was condemned). His last words in the novel are: "I don't give a damn".

As a matter of fact, Fuselli is a favourite target for any American intellectual. Dos Passos seems to have created him just to serve as a vehicle for criticism of the army, for indictment of the American dream of a land in which life should be better, richer and fuller for everybody, with opportunities for each, according to his abilities and achievements. This dream seems impossible to realize in a system dominated by brutality, oppressive power and selfishness.

Through this character, he further criticizes the narrow-minded lower middle class American of modern city who does not hesitate to give up all the virtues of thrift, loyalty and faith just to achieve a better social and economic status.

Chrisfield, a different type of American, is also a victim of the machine. A naive farmer, he cherishes the soil and lives instinctively by his emotions. He has joined the army without knowing the consequences of such a decision. Compared to the introvert Fuselli, he is an extrovert character, expressing openly all the anger and hatred Fuselli has repressed. He is very nervous and acts without thinking of the consequences. He is a child of nature, embodying the American dream of innocence (the American Adam). Inarticulate at times of crisis, he resorts to violence as an instinctive solution to problems too immediate or too deep for the frontier mentality to which man is superior and the world a bountiful alma mater⁵⁰.

The character of Chrisfield powerfully conjures up Herman Melville's seaman Billy Budd, that orphaned illegitimate child of innocence, openness and charisma. Though worshipped by all the crew, John Claggard, the ship's 'master of Arms' develops a great hatred towards him and falsely accuses him of conspiracy to mutiny. When Vere, the captain of the ship confronts them, Claggard makes his false charges near Billy and Vere. Billy, unable to respond with words strikes Claggard to death, an act for which he is condemned to be hanged^{*}. Likewise, Chrisfield, unable to cope with the cruelty and injustice of the military, kills Lieutenant Anderson. Both Melville and Dos Passos seem to oppose the scientific rational systems of thought which Claggard's and Anderson's characters stand for in favour of the more comprehensive, vitalist and benevolent pursuit of happiness embodied in Billy and Chrisfield. Though belonging to different historical and social periods, both characters are destroyed by the machine of war standing for modernity. Both are victims of their innocence and vulnerability.

Moreover, both are versions of the American Adam⁵¹, that fully realized independent individual who embodies the 'Romantic' ideal of refusing any concession to the demands of a repressive civilization. Billy and Chrisfield want to build a new

world of frontiersmen, with no judges, or courts, or army or system of prosecution, a world in which the frontiers man, his property and family would be protected by taking the law into his own hands. Unfortunately, both of them fail because the system proves stronger, though they themselves do not lack courage, bravery and violence. Their fall symbolizes the fall of the 'great American myth'.

In fact, Chrisfield does not hesitate to attack whoever approaches him. Like a cinema 'cowboy', his life is based on fighting. In view of his physical strength (being a farmer), his sanguine temperament and his hot anger, he can even be compared to a 'Cain' always ready to flare up, to kill whenever he feels he is the object of an injustice. He is a kind of independent protagonist much different from the two other characters. This may be due to the fact that Dos Passos deals with a myth. We feel that he has difficulties in creating such a 'strange' character. Chrisfield's courage, pride and direct action no longer have any relevance in this modern tightly organized military machine whose aim is merely technological. The loss of all these qualities affects him a lot. His blind vengeance leads him to kill the inoffensive Lieutenant Anderson in the chaos of a battle. Anderson has committed no other offense than that of being a representative of the 'machine'. It is for this reason that he has become the focal point of Chrisfield's frustration. This murder, almost a ritual one, is a way of taking revenge of the military system which is doing so much harm to the soldiers. It is thus different from Cain's murder. We can even say here that the 'righteous' Abel has been turned into a 'sinful' Cain.

Dos Passos seems to have created Chrisfield to punish the military because, for him, war is a sin, just as life itself is built on a sin (the sin of Cain who killed his brother Abel out of jealousy and thus committed the first crime on earth)⁵². He embodies in him the kind of violence the army wants to arouse in the soldiers. It is through him that he

reports the barbarity of war and the means by which men attempt to crush their fellows. He enjoys killing and fighting, not always in a conscious act of rebellion against authority, but sometimes in the form of personal vengeance and arbitrary rage. In the chaos that follows a botched assault against German positions, for example, Chrisfield engages in a gross abuse of “a ragged” German Soldier who attempts to surrender,

Chrisfield kicked him. The man shambled on without turning around. Chrisfield kicked him again feeling the point of the man’s spine and the soft flesh of his thighs against his toes with each kick, laughing so hard all the while that he could hardly see where he was going. (p.189).

The writer says about him just before he kills Anderson,

Chrisfield marched with his fists clenched; he wanted to fight somebody, to run his bayonet into a man as he ran it into a dummy in that everlasting bayonet drill, he wanted to strip himself naked, to squeeze the wrists of a girl until she screamed. (p.160)

Predictably, while turning Chrisfield into a ‘beast’ and symbolically putting an end to his innocence, the army, like a corrupter, promptly promotes him to corporal. This promotion is a kind of punishment for belonging to the mass herd which is more sinful than murder. Even more dramatically than in Fuselli’s case, the promotion consecrates Chrisfield’s ‘fall’ from a rebellious “wild man” to an opportunistic “member of the herd”. We feel this regression into a cowardly mob attitude when he meets Andrews at Coblenz. There, Chrisfield boasts about how ‘easy’ killing has become to him; he even rebukes Andrews for wanting to abandon the army; and finally he seeks to persuade him to join him in the prospect of “liv[ing] like kings up there in Germany” (p.265). Andrews is shocked by this change in Chrisfield’s attitude; he is irritated by his proposition, “the trouble is, Chris, that I don’t want to live like a king, or a sergeant or a major general”, says he, then he “jump [s] to his feet and take [s] leave unceremoniously” (pp. 265-266).

Even the language used by Chrisfield – and the other soldiers – is meant to offend. Words like “wopi”, “chink”, “kike”, “nigger” etc.... are used by all the soldiers, except Andrews who speaks in a very formal way even with his friends. The ‘military language’ may not be correct, but it is historically true. Dos Passos using it in print reminds us of how morally fallen and unpleasant America was at the beginning of the twentieth Century. He makes these terms more offensive –being derogatory- by inserting them into direct dialogues. I wonder if the writer shares the attitude of his trash-talking characters or if he does it just to give a realistic touch to his novel.

Finally, Chrisfield is promoted. But this does not mean that he rises from his fall; for soon after this promotion ,he deserts the army not out of “military necessity” but rather because of the war’s absurdity: the American soldiers went to war to defend universal values and do not deserve to be ill-treated by the system they sacrificed themselves for. For Holger,

the deliberate and sordid reduction of the individual according to military codes appropriate to nineteenth-century definitions of who and what the peace time ‘sodger’ was, but grotesque for an army composed essentially of civilians primed with heavy doses of propaganda to save the world*.

In this war, Chrisfield does not find any of those manhood values he has been taught in his rural area, values which do not allow a man to accept insult or to feel inferior to humiliation, “this ain’t no sort o ‘life’ for a man to be treated lahk he was a nigger” (p.139) “Ah didn’t git in this army to be ordered by a goddamn wop” (p.23). It is the violation of these codes which drives him to murder and desertion. In the end, he is crushed by an organization and that represents the end of his pride and virility.

Yet it is worth noting that in the case of Chrisfield, Dos Passos does not stress sufficiently that this character kills, not out of corruption, but out of anger with the army. Had he done so, Chrisfield would perhaps have become more interesting,

especially if we know that he is an Indiana boy, coming from the heart of America. We would not be surprised to see him think only of revenge. What we retain about him is his attachment to the American traditional way of life and his rejection of technology. The writer's spirit of conformity prevents him from stressing the importance of this 'fallen Adam'. He even entitles the section in which he kills Anderson "Machines" to suggest that even Chrisfield has become a 'machine':

Chrisfield looked straight ahead of him. He did not feel lonely anymore now that he was marching in ranks again. His feet bet the ground in time with the other feet. He would not have to think whether to go to the right or to the left. He would do as the others did (p.190).

Dos Passos would have certainly agreed with Leo Marx's The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the "Pastoral Ideal in America(1964), that work of literary criticism which dealt with one of the major themes of Nineteenth Century literature: the conflict between the pastoral ideal in America and the rapid transformation brought by machine technology. Just as in Three Soldiers, this tension is expressed by the recurring image of the machine in the garden, that is, the sudden and shocking intrusion of technology into a pastoral scene. Marx argues that "it is the role of literature to show us the contradiction of our commitment to both rural happiness and productivity, wealth and power"⁵³.

This 'Machine' has destroyed not only Fuselli and then Chrisfield, those common soldiers who have not had the chance to study. It has also destroyed Andrews, that Harvard Intellectual supposed to be wiser and more aware and who enlisted in the army because he wanted to sacrifice himself for a cause he thought universal. Andrews's predicament fully dramatizes the confrontation between the highly articulate intellectual and the ruthless machine which ends with no glory or victory for the former.

Right at the beginning of his enlistment, Andrews shows contempt for army life. The scene in which he is having his physical examination is presented in an ironic light. Dos Passos insists on the stupidity of the sergeant and the veneer of comedy given to the chronicle of 'low-grade men'. Andrews stands naked in the centre of a large room for a long time when the sergeant remembers him and orders him to "run around the room[....] so [he] can test [his] heart" (p.9). He loses his aura and stature: he "felt like a prize horse at a fair" (p.9).

Andrews is more affected by the slavery inherent in the army discipline than Chrisfield and Fuselli. He is depicted washing windows and collecting "little grey sordid ends of burnt out cigarettes" (p.11). To him, the other men do not feel what he feels because they come from the lower class and know nothing about "the glittering other world" (p.18) in which he has always lived. He fails to submit.

Andrews suffers from this modern slavery endured by soldiers who are ready to sacrifice themselves for the defense of their country's ideals. He is sensitive to all the scenes in which he is obliged to lower himself, such as the one in which Dos Passos says, "a narrow board wall led from the main road to the door. In the middle of his walk, Andrews met a captain and automatically got off into the mud and saluted." (P.270). Another humiliating scene affects Andrews most profoundly: to get transferred to the school detachment at the university of Paris, he resorts to moral corruption: he has to flatter and intrigue to get his name added to the list. Lowering himself in this way, is deeply upsetting,

the fury of his humiliation made tears start in his eyes. He walked away from the village down the main road, splashing carelessly through the puddles, slipping in the wet clay of the ditches. Something within him, like the voice of a wounded man swearing was whining in his head long strings of filthy names. (p.180).

And later, when an MP orders him to button his coat, he

[...] flushed and walked away without turning his head. He was stinging with humiliation; an angry voice inside him, kept telling him that he was a coward, that he should make some futile gesture of protest. Grotesque pictures of revolt flamed through his mind. [...] Would he have to go on this way day after day, swallowing the bitter gall of indignation, that every new symbol of his slavery brought to his lips? (p.235).

Andrews sees himself as a slave whose identity and humanness have been destroyed. He is so affected that he compares his plight to that of the slaves who actually built the pyramids: “we were working, unloading cement at Passy-cement to build the stadium the army is presenting to the French, built by slave labor, like the pyramids”. (p.422).

II.4 The First Response to the Machine: A Fragmented Self and Split Personality.

All these scenes of humiliation push Andrews to perceive war as an absurd juggernaut, as a cause which does not deserve to sacrifice oneself for. He gets confused. Dos Passos resorts to psychology to report this psychic split in his personality through the use of the image of the mirror:

The major's office was a large white-painted room, with elaborate mouldings and mirrors in all four walls, so that while Andrews waited, cap in hand, to go up to the desk, he could see the small round major with his pink face and bald head repeated to infinity in two directions in the grey brilliance of the mirrors... Andrews stepped up to the desk. On both sides of the room a skinny figure in dive-drab, repeated repeated endlessly, stepped up to the endless mahogany desks which faded into each other in an endless dusty perspective (p.339).

Through this infinite image of the major in the mirror, Dos Passos wants to show that all the military are the same.

In addition, this passage seems to symbolize Andrews's condition of fragmented consciousness. When he is wounded, he peers into a pool of water studying "the outlines of a stained grimacing mask" (p.193), a mask which reflects Andrews's other personality which is affected by the military behaviour. Andrews knows that it is the military that has driven him to see his life in terms of two antithetical beings. To illustrate this, he refers again to the mirrors in the major's office:

The thought of the major's office that morning, and of his own skinny figure in the mirrors, repeated endlessly, standing helpless and humble before the shining mahogany desk... In these office buildings, with white marble halls full of the clank of officers' heels, in index cards and piles of type written papers, his real self, which they had power to kill if they wanted, was in his name and his number, on lists with millions of other names and other numbers. This sentient body of his, full of possibilities and hopes and desires, was only a pale ghost that depended on the other self that suffered for it and cringed for it. (p.227).

This bruised self is the result of the humiliation he endures in the army. Dos Passos goes further in this problem of split personality when he suggests that Anderson and Chrisfield can be considered as 'doubles' of Andrews. At a certain point in the novel, a character asks Andrews, "Did you say your name was Anderson?", (p.227). This can be considered as a psychological symbolism⁵⁴; Dos Passos wants the reader to see the lives of all the characters inter-related; they live under the same system and are submitted –with varying degrees- to the laws of that system. In the third chapter of Part Three, surprisingly, Anderson and Chrisfield relate to Andrews, although Anderson is a Lieutenant and belongs to the category of the privileged, while Chrisfield and Andrews are simple soldiers whose fate is no different from that of the other soldiers. And it is through this difference that the writer completes one with the other. If Chrisfield embodies asocial impulses, Anderson represents the socially acceptable behaviour. Andrews for his part, is supposed to reject the violently criminal behaviour of

Chrisfield; at the same time, he must reject conformity to any unjust/enslaving system represented by Anderson. Andrews is really the man in the mirror, that man who cannot have a self. He stands between Chrisfield on the one hand and Anderson on the other. Self-recognition is too positive. In fact, he finds in them his deepest fears, failure and success. Andrews must, like Anderson, arrest Chrisfield because he has committed a crime by killing the harmless Anderson; and like Chrisfield, he must destroy Anderson who stands for the military system which is doing so much harm to the soldiers. So both Chrisfield and Anderson symbolize Andrews's internal conflicts. Both have suicidal actions. Unable to be like them - he cannot be a murderer, nor can he belong to the 'machine', to the military oppressive system- he escapes from this problem by deserting the military and seeking refuge in love and later in art. These fields generally fit the intellectual who wants to avoid social engagement and to live quietly in an 'ivory tower' instead of committing himself to the social issues of his time and seeking the truth lying hidden behind the veil of distortion and misrepresentation, ideology and class-interest.

II.5. Escape to the Ivory Tower of Sex, Cosmopolitanism and Art for Art's Sake:

Illusion and disenchantment

Indeed Andrews is engaged in several love affairs: the first one with Jeanne whom he met during his wanderings on the edges of the Seine. She, a simple girl from the lower class – a choice which is not surprising for Andrews who wanted to 'declass' himself, to become a common man, to mix with ordinary people – whom he finds quite sympathetic, warm hearted, and receptive. However, as soon as they spend a night together, "he [feels] shame creeping up through him like nausea. He [feels] a passionate disgust towards himself and Jeanne. He has impulse to move furtively as if he had stolen something" (p.229). In fact this relationship was superficial and light.

As soon as he becomes better acquainted with her, he is quickly forced to realize that she belongs very much to the mundane world of “wooden automatons” who are merely struggling to advance and whose eyes are firmly fixed up to the social oracle. When he speaks to her about the importance of being free, she answers in a way that shocks him:

But what’s the good of freedom? What can you do with it? What one wants is to live well and have a beautiful house and be respected by people (p.225).

She does not give any importance to the ideal of existential freedom which he is struggling for. When he tells her,

It’s funny Jeanne, I threw myself into the army. I was so sick of being free and not getting anywhere. Now I have learnt that life is to be used, not just held in the hand like a box of bonbons that nobody eats (p.221).(Emphasis mine)

she only stares “at him blankly” (p.221) unable to understand his anxiety and to follow his existential notions of freedom. She thinks of life in purely materialistic terms, hoping to be rich someday, like princes and princesses in fairy tales (p.218). And the well-to-do Andrews is merely a means to attain her goals.

He lives the same experience with Geneviève Rod, the great lady from the sophisticated aristocratic class whose manners he rejects totally. Contrary to Jeanne, she is cold, sexually aloof and condescending. He discusses with her a lot about music, but he does not like the people of this class, the European aristocrats. Like Strether, the main character of Henry James’s the Ambassadors (1903) who goes to Europe in pursuit of Chad, his widowed fiancée’s son, he is impressed with the amenities of European culture only to find that he is uncomfortable in Paris and to return to America⁵⁵. Andrews also can not disguise the fascination Europe held for him – and for all the other American soldiers whose lives had been isolated from influences external to their

borders. Yet, after spending some time in Paris, he finds the rigid French attitudes foolish and absurd, though cultured. When he leaves Geneviève's house, he is seized with a confused feeling that "he had made a fool of himself, which made him writhe with helpless anger" (p.219). He even had a feeling of inferiority even though he himself belongs to the 'upper middle class', which is not very far from the aristocracy. When Geneviève invites him to dinner, he answers her, "I was badly brought up [...] and you French must always remember that we are barbarians [...]. Some are repentant barbarians... I am not" (p.219).

Geneviève is unable to share Andrews's contributions as an intellectual, that is, his commitment to American Democracy through his notions of individual freedom and sacrifice and his ideal of the common man because she is imbued with European beliefs in the respectability and bourgeois pragmatism of the middle class. She is depicted as a gentle woman living in a world of art-though she is not an artist- all the time engaged in her long motor excursions through the French countryside with many men. She is not interested in Andrews as a man or even as an artist; she uses him as "a tame pianist as an ornament to a clever young woman's drawing room" (p.416).

Andrews can no longer cope with the behaviour of such a selfish disrespectful woman. His disappointment about himself for the loss of male control over her leads him to act, to make his final 'gesture'. He leaves her and patiently awaits his impending arrest. Andrews does not love this woman, nor Jeanne. These two relationships do not show any passion; they are meant to reveal Andrews's confusion – confusion due to his middle class culture- near any sexuality, a paralysing fear from flesh. On the other hand, they testify that even love, human relationships are 'dehumanized' by the pursuit of material well-being. People are no longer able to love for the sake of love; material

interests come first. So, love for Andrews ceases to be a trustful/faithful refuge from the world of the machine.

In Part Four of the novel opening with his going to hospital after being wounded, Andrews decides to desert the army and to make his stand to change the world in whatever way he can. Ironically, when he recovers, the war is already over. Nevertheless, he is ordered back to his division. He manages, however to get a transfer to the student detachment at the Sorbonne University in Paris⁵⁶. He spends his evenings with some hard drinking friends and works on his music which becomes, on the one hand, a means to revolt, to express “the thwarted lives, the miserable dullness of industrialized slaughter” (p.290), and on the other, a way to free himself from his inhibitions. He is obsessed with the composition “the Queen of Sheba”⁵⁷ because it deals with knowledge and wisdom as well as with sexuality.

Andrews is first attracted in this story of the ‘Queen of Sheba’⁵⁸ by ‘Solomon’, both king of Israel and an intellectual, like him. Solomon was known with his wisdom and knowledge in all fields: theological, philosophical, scientific⁵⁹. He governed his kingdom with justice and righteousness. His wisdom was not only for his benefit but for the blessing and the well-being of all his people⁶⁰. Andrews may admire him for all these universal qualities, for his strong personality as well as for his power to govern. He finds in him a good example to follow. He wants to be like him, to serve his people, to help the common men.

He is further interested in the Queen because he wants to set himself free from his inhibitions and to express freely his sexual desires and passions that run counter to the restrictions imposed by the machine. Moreover, in La tentation de Saint Antoine, there is an emphasis on disillusionment and on philosophical failure on the part of Flaubert who just like Andrews – and thus Dos Passos- finds his bourgeois background

burdensome and rebels against it, a rebellion that led to his expulsion from school. Indeed, Flaubert completed his education privately in Paris, so Andrews who is thinking of rebellion against the army, against his class and also against his culture feels very near to him and tries to imitate him.

However, art does not set him free because it is not easy for him to liberate himself from the patterns of his past: isolation, retreat, dreams, reveries and to replace them by a human presence, that is, through friends, companions or love relationships. Throughout the novel, we find in him those vague aspirations and that mobility to fulfil them. After many efforts, he decides to live “recklessly”; he thus deserts the army. But even this desertion does not emanate from him. Surprisingly, a kid actually persuades him to jump into the Seine to become free. He did it because he could no longer endure the brutalisation of the military men, especially that of Handsome, the Lieutenant who beat him in the midst of an orderly conversation,

[...] Handsome made a step towards Andrews and hit him with his fist between the eyes. There was a flash of light and the room swung round, and there was a splitting crash as his head struck the floor. He got to his feet. The fist hit him in the same place, blinding him, the three figures and the bright oblong of the window swung around. A Chair crushed down with him, and a hard rap in the back of his skull brought momentary blackness (p.243).

Rebellion therefore is justified by the inhumanity of the war-machine which itself reflects industrialization. The titles of the six sections of the novel, as already seen, lead us to think that the writer is speaking about industrialization and not about war. “Making the Mould” , “the Metal Cools” ”Machines”, ” Rust”, “Under the Wheels” are used to suggest that life in the military is subordinate to cold inhuman forces.

II.6 The Regenerative Power of Nature

Interestingly, from time to time, Dos Passos seeks refuge in nature to escape this ‘mechanized’ world. To be sure, nature also has been affected by war/technology. It has been raped and abused: the landscape appears as a wounded diseased waste land, like that found in T.S Eliot’s long poem the Waste Land in which civilization is symbolized by a bleak desert in desperate need of rain for an eventual spiritual renewal. Trenches and bomb shells destroy the surface of the earth. The sounds of explosions and the clatter of machines become a substitute themselves for the voice of nature,

The whip-like sound of rifles had chined in with the stuttering of the machine gun. Little white clouds sailed above him [Andrews] in a blue sky, and in front of him [Andrews] was a group of houses that had the same color, white with lavender – grey shadows, as the clouds (p.185).

The pastoral seems to be over.

Nevertheless, we feel the presence of nature through the rain, the smell and sounds, as in the following passage, “outside it had begun to rain softly and a smell of wet sprouting earth came through the open door” (p.117). Later, Andrews expresses the contrast between his present slavery and his free youth dreaming in his garden (p.199). One spring, Andrews feels in his own breathing “the faint premonition of the stirring of life in the cold earth” (p.260). And when he is with Geneviève in the country side, he compares his love to the “sappy richness of vegetation” (p.410).

While the section called “the World Outside” suggests the world outside the military, it can also stand for the world outside, that is, nature. Dos Passos draws a great symbolism out of the seasons. The novel covers two years. Part one starts in Autumn, the time of decay, the time when the three soldiers – Fuselli, Chrisfield and Andrews – join the army. In Part Three, it is the first Spring; Dos Passos stresses Andrews and

Chrisfield's early hopes. But by the end of this part, with Winter approaching, Chrisfield kills Anderson. In Part Four which is still set in Winter, Andrews is wounded. In Part Five, we are in Spring again and the writer deals with Andrews's recovery and with the latter joining the school battalion in Paris. Part Six, the last section, portrays Andrews in his full creative vitality; but by the end of the section, (early Autumn), he is arrested by the MP's. So, Dos Passos establishes a link between the rhythms of nature and the mood and actions of his characters. At the same time, this cycle of seasons constitutes the plot of the novel.

Nature is given a "Romantic" dimension; it symbolizes the natural 'organic' state of man: It is a safe refuge from the world of the machine, from the awfulness of the military. Dos Passos refers to it mainly in Part Two entitled "Machines" when Chrisfield and Andrews leave the regiment for a while to take a walk:

on both sides of the road were fields of ripe wheat, golden under the sun. In the distance [...] low green hills... blue, pale, yellow [...] ripe grain [...] a thick clump of trees or a screen of poplars [...] long smooth hills [...] hedgerous [...] blue corn flowers and pappies [...]. The bees droning in the big dull purple clover heads and in the gold hearts of the daisies (p.153).

Another important natural image is that of the sea which characterizes Andrews's aspirations. After his arrest by the MPs, he is sent to a battalion where he does hard work. When unloading cement bags from a barge, he notices "the black water speeding seawards" (p.370). He escapes from his battalion by jumping into the river and, saved by an anarchist boat man, "goes seawards to the country side". This escape is preceded by many symbolic sea images. After reading Flaubert, "Andrews's mind was full of intangible floating glow, like the ocean on a warm night" (p.208). He is optimistic. We feel that, he is on the point of taking a wise decision. Later, the writer says that the beauty of Andrews's music is like "the great rhythm of the sea" (p.334).

He says also that this music is a “great wave” that has “rhythm” like a “flowing river” (p.348). Later again, he makes him escape to the countryside through the river and this has a symbolic implication: water suggests baptism or at least a regeneration, that is, Andrews is going to be born again after his escape as a new man and an intellectual.

II.7. Renewing the American Dissenting Tradition: Towards the commitment of an Organic Intellectual and Artist

Andrews starts freeing himself from the social guilt of “thinking about himself, talking about himself” since he has now a faith – though naïve – in collective thought and organisational action. He thus starts building a new personality. This unrepentant individualist becomes conscious, as never before, that he is greedy for human participation. The social structure is responsible for the failure of his attempts for self-realization and thus ought to be condemned, though this condemnation may stay useless. That is why he decides to move from ‘art for art’s sake’, an art divorced from social and political preoccupations to anarchism, to action, to the overthrow of the established government.

At a certain point in the novel, we feel that Andrews renews the traditional American commitment from genteel individualism to radical commitment, another American tradition. He stops being a “rare Intellectual”, that is an intellectual still believing in ideals like honesty, equality, justice and democracy and living in a ivory tower far from the preoccupations of his society. There is an attempt on his part to become an “organic intellectual”, to fight on the side of the masses and to defend their cause. He renounces his individualism and joins the defeated ones who sacrifice their lives for the integrity of the individual. In fact, meeting people who are less educated than him, like Chrisfield who left school at the age of twelve and finding them honest, sane and admirable (contact with Adam), has allowed him to develop a certain sympathy

for these people. Dos Passos himself had a lot of sympathy for the American soldiers.

He said about them,

You can't imagine [...] the simple and sublime amiability of the average American soldier-here is the clay for almost any moulding. Who is to be the porter? That is the great question⁶¹.

Once the identification between these two worlds is made, Andrews begins to see that life's miseries were not caused by ordinary human beings but rather by a modern industrialized system that has negated the value of work, comradeship and scorn. Work has become a mind-numbing industrial labor: Andrews's "washing windows", Fuselli's "endless sweeping" and Chrisfield's "cleaning latrines"; comradeship has been reduced into enforced cooperation: "marching in ranks", "running with the pack", "the crowds dutifully cheering; and scorn has spread to reinforce divisions : Fuselli's intolerant hatred of "kikes", "frogs" and "socialists".

Andrews concludes that civilization is an edifice of sham and war is no more than its most ultimate expression. He, a companion of the genteel tradition, comes to resent his education and even wants to act against it. It is true that he hates war strongly but one should not forget that it is this war that has led him to self-realization and helped him mix with the common man.

Dos Passos adopted the same attitude towards war, R.C Rosen says,

The letters and diaries he wrote at Camp Crane express not only his characteristic fluctuations between hope and despair, but also tension between a certain condescending elitism and a genuine concern for the average American soldier. Six months later, he still wanted to learn "the mechanics of declassing oneself"; the army he felt had not done it for him⁶².

The necessity of Andrews as an intellectual in his society is shown through the friendship he develops with Chrisfield/Adam (a metaphor of the American pastoral), a

friendship that gives meaning to the latter's life. Andrews is his source of inspiration. He cannot conceive his life without his knowledge. Chrisfield though naturally spontaneous, has difficulties in communicating with others. His awareness is latent and has always to be awakened by his association with Andrews.

Moreover, Andrews discovers when he mixes with soldiers that the average Americans are friendly, simple and kind-hearted. He wants to help them with his knowledge, to raise their consciousness and to organize their revolt against the established order. He thus abandons his composition "the Queen of Sheba" and decides to work on another symphony he calls "the Soul and Body of John Brown" in honour of the American radical abolitionist leader of the attack at Harpers Ferry⁶³. This political act includes a reorganization of his usual form of escape: women. Nevertheless, it is a gesture that deserves to be saluted, for, though still weak, it testifies to Andrews's growing maturity. Now, he no longer works on myths but rather on actual revolutionaries who sacrificed their lives for freedom and equality.

Andrews wants to be a John Brown but whereas John Brown wanted to abolish slavery, segregation between whites and blacks, he, on his part wants to put an end to another kind of slavery, a modern one, that of the military machine which uses people's lives to reach its materialistic aims. As an intellectual, he sees this task as his duty. Unfortunately, his political conviction is not yet strong enough to lead an insurrection against the establishment, as John Brown did. At least he wants to use his art, to write a symphony whose aim would be to raise the consciousness of the masses used by the "machine" to serve the interests of a certain class.

Andrews's sickness as an intellectual lies in his difficulty to make his ideals a reality. He never embraces explicitly revolutionary politics. At times, he hates the army and the society that produced it and at other times, he thinks of the war as the ultimate

expression of what he vaguely calls ‘civilization’. When he visits the deserters’ hideout in Paris, he shows great enthusiasm at the news that the general strike has begun. He registers with his land lady as John Brown – in memory of the liberator of slaves – and writes his army serial number for the passport number. All this symbolism is reinforced by his symphony “the Body and Soul of John Brown”. Again when he is with Geneviève, he feels the desire to jump to his feet and shout:

Look at me; I’m a deserter. I’m under the wheels of your system. If your system does not succeed in killing me, it will be that much weaker; it will have less strength to kill others (p.292).

Because of a lack of faith / ideology, however, he fails to become an organic intellectual, that is, to commit himself to a definite side: that of the oppressors or that of the oppressed. The anti-human forces of the outside world have proved stronger and more rigid. In that world, perception and understanding mean pain, while courage means death. No art is admissible but that of war. Knowledge is the thing which the forces of war have to destroy. War kills people able to live; it spares only the dead. If anyone shows but a will to live, it attacks his will and destroys his nerve, till he succumbs. On the eve of his arrest, he becomes pessimistic. He tells Geneviève, “human society has always been that, and perhaps will always be that: organizations growing and stifling individuals and individuals revolting hopelessly against them, and at last forming new societies to crush the old societies and becoming slaves again in their turn.” (p.294).

II.8. Towards a New Type of U.S Organic Intellectuals: Clergymen and Opportunists

Who survives? Who wins in the novel? The system! The establishment! Only the least human, those who provoked this war, the officers who destroyed the civil order and promoted the war, the clergymen whom Gramsci lists with intellectuals, the “y”

men, as Dos Passos calls them, those who wore the uniform and who sided with the military men and encouraged them to kill and die ‘for the safety of their country’, for ‘justice’, ‘democracy’! ,the Christians supposed to love peace and their fellowmen. Dos Passos treats these ‘religious men’ with great irony. When a “y” man witnesses soldiers of Chrisfield’s unit rooting baby birds out of their nests, he comments, “an American Soldier being deliberately cruel. I never would have believed.” (p.149). This remark is ironic after all the cruelties that have come before in the narrative. The “y” men are used to purvey propaganda in favour of the war all along the novel. Before a stage atrocity film shown at the training camp, a “y” asks soldiers to recite an anti-German song “Harl [...] we’re going to get the Kaiser” (p.13). The film itself is meant to produce outrage and animosity.

But the film had begun again [...]. There were hisses and catcalls when a German flag was seen [...]. Andrews felt blind hatred stirring like something that had a life of its own in the young men about him [...]. The terror of it was like ferocious hands clutching his throat. He glanced at the faces round him. They were all intent and flushed, glinting with sweat in the heat of the room (p.15).

When the film is finished and the soldiers depart the “y” men hut, they make hateful comments, such as, “I hate them [...]. They’re [...] full of the lust for power like their rulers are...” (p.15) or “Ah’d lahk te cepture a German officer an’ make him shine ma boots an’ then shoot him dead” (p.15). These movies are considered as propagandistic entertainment. They engender an automatic response in the soldiers’ minds. They are meant to incite hatred. The irony lies in the fact that these films are shown by ‘men of God’ who are supposed to preach peace, love and wisdom. And surprisingly, these are the men who survive.

Among the people who have taken part in the war and who have also managed to survive and remain more or less human are those who succeeded in pooling/dodging authority and in hiding the central parts of their humanity. Andrews’s friend Henslow

survived by carefully hiding his idealism and thoughts and by tricking his superiors by vigorous action and a cynical opportunism. Heinemann, his friend of the same kind will survive too. Andrews could have survived had he followed his friend's advice-dodging the authorities. Instead, he threw himself into them. He himself admits his irrationality, though this acknowledgement does not excuse his irresponsible acts. He tells Geneviève,

I must be as you say, a little mad, Geneviève [...].
But now that I, by pure accident, have made a
gesture, feeble as it is, towards human freedom, I
can't feel that.... Oh, I suppose I'm a fool.... But
there you have me, just as I am, Geneviève (p.295).

The character of the intellectual in Three Soldiers, John Andrews, is thus still in the making. He is neither Benda's rare intellectual whose duty is to speculate about justice, good and evil, nor Gramsci's traditional or organic intellectual each one of whom acts for his specific social class or context. Nor is he Sartre's 'true' intellectual who puts his knowledge at the service of his people. He is an American intellectual confronted with the challenges of the machine. In his opposition to war and violence to obtain political, economic or social goals, in his call for freedom, for the defense of his community and for the abolition of the institutions of the military and war, he looks like a pacifist intellectual, though again not strong enough. Definitely, he has not failed. He needs more faith and more experience to become stronger, just as Dos Passos himself at the time of writing Three Soldiers.

The novel in general is semi-autobiographical. The life and ideas of the hero reflect those of the writer himself. If the former is in search of his intellectual identity, the latter cannot be said to be ideologically and politically mature. We feel, however, in Dos Passos a growing socio-political commitment. The background of the last chapters of the novel is based on the agitated 1919 Paris, the strikes, the workers' movements and revolutionary subjects. With Three Soldiers, the voices of revolution are open. The

hope for a better social order is born, although still precarious. All these themes will be taken up again with intellectuals much more committed than Andrews in the first novel of Dos Passos's trilogy USA, the 42nd Parallel.

End Notes

1- On the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars ,Karl Van Clausewitz –a Prussian soldier best known for his military treatise “Von Krieger”, (On War 1832) says: “war was a trinity composed of the policy of the government, the activities of the military and the passions of the people. Each of these must be taken into account if we are to understand both why the war- any war- happened and why it took the course that it did”. Cit in Michael Howard, the First World War (New York: Oxford university press, 2002), p 1.

2- See Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, Practicing New Historicism (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 2000),p.25.

3- For full details on World War One see: Hunt Tooley, the Western Front: Battle Ground and Home Front in the First World War (New York: Macmillan, 2003). See also Richard Gamble, The War for Righteousness: Progressive Christianity, the Great War and the Rise of the Messianic Nation (New York: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2003).

4- None of the reasons for which a country goes to war cited by Bernard Luther in War and its Causes (that is, fear of aggression, financial and administration Imperialism, a need for expending markets, a lack of raw materials, food or living room) applies to the situation in the United States before World War One. Cit in Peter Aichinger, The American Soldier in fiction 1830-1863: A History of Attitudes Towards Warfare and the Military Establishment (Ames: Lova University Press, 1875), p XXV.

5- On May 7th 1915, the ‘Lusitania’ was sunk and 128 Americans who were on board were killed. Fortunately, the German Chancellor Beth-Hollweg succeeded in solving the problem by adopting another tactic, “the Cruiser tactic” which consisted in attacking a ship by guns fitted on the ships’ decks, so, he avoided a major diplomatic issue. See Hunt Tooley Op.Cit.

6- On this memorandum, see Robert W.Tucker, Woodrow Wilson and the Great War: Reconsidering America’s Neutrality. 1914-1917 (Charleston: University Press of Virginia, 2007).

7- For details on the Zimmerman Telegram, see Barbara. W.Tuchan, The Zimmerman Telegram (New York: Ballantine Books, 1958). This book provides many details on

Wilson's political biography, his fate and his ideas on the creation of a "League Of Nations"

8- in 1915, Woodrow Wilson (who was a Presbyterian preacher) could still say that in the raising and arming of American forces, there was no threat lifted against any man, against any interest but just a great solemn evidence that the force of America is the force of moral principle. See Peter Aichinger Op.Cit., P. XX.

9- On President Wilson's "Fourteen Points" and on how America entered the war, see Michael Howard, The First World War (New York: Oxford University Press. 2002) See also Thomas Knock, To End all Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order (New York: Princeton University press, 1992).

10- For details on the role of propaganda in manipulating public opinion see Edward Bernays, Propaganda (New York: Horace Liveright, 1928).

*On the role of the Committee on Public Information(CPI), see Robert A. Wells,"Mobilizing Public Support for War : an Analysis of American Propaganda during World War One".A paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, New Orleans ,L.A, (March 24-27,2002).

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11- See Richard Gamble Op.Cit.

12- See the New Republic Magazine founded in 1924 as the legal intellectual organ of progressivism. It was the embodiment of the alliance between big business interest and the growing legion of collectivist intellectuals.

13- See Charles Chatfield, "World War One and the Liberal Pacifist in the United States" in The American Historical Review 75 ,7 (Dec 1970) : 1-18.

14- We shall deal with the American Federation of Labour in detail in the second chapter.

15- For Details on American Trade Unions in World War One, see Kevin Boyle ed; Organization, Labor and American Politics -1894-1994. The Labor Alliance (New York: State University Press, 1998).

See also Richard Freeman and James Medoff, What Do Unions Do? (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

16- H.L.Mencken was a German-American journalist, critic, satirist, and magazine editor who commented widely on the social scene and on prominent politicians. During World War One, he was distrustful of British propaganda. For more on his position towards America's involvement in WWI, see an article written by himself, "A Bad Guess", Baltimore Evening Sun, (Nov 11, 1931). For more on him, see Murray N. Rothbard "H.L.Mencken : the Joyous Libertarian", The New Individual Review 2, 2 (Summer 1962):16-27.

17-In fact, he lost his job a second time when he, again, denounced President Franklin Delano Roosevelt for amassing dangerous political power and for manoeuvring to enter WWII: "The government I live under has been my enemy all my active life. When it has not been engaged in silencing me, it has been engaged in robbing me. So far as I can recall, I have never had any contact with it that was not an outrage on my dignity and an attack on my security. Cited in Jim Powell,"H.L Mencken, America's Wittiest Defender of Liberty", The Freeman, 45. 9 (September1995).

18-Randolph Bourne was an American progressive writer deeply influenced by Karl Marx. A pacifist, he was one of the main figures in the movement against the involvement of the U.S in WWI. He wrote many anti-war articles in his own magazine "the Seven Arts" as well as for the New Republic and the Masses.(I shall deal with him in detail in the second chapter).For more on him see Dell .Floyd, Homecoming (New York: Farrar Rivehart Incorporation, 1933)and Casey Nelson. Blake, Beloved Community: the Cultural Criticism of Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank and Lewis Mumford (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

19- Randolph Bourne, "the War and the Intellectuals", Seven Arts, 1917, p 1 (<http://www.bigye.com/the war.htm>).

20- On Jingoism see Bernard Porter, The Absent Minded Imperialists. Empire, Society and Culture in Britain (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 2004).

21-Noam Chomsky, Media Control [1991] (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002),p.13.

22- Bourne Op Cit., p 2.

23- Peter Aichinger says that before the American civil war, there existed a certain element of interference in American affairs from Great Britain which wished to see North America divided into a number of sovereign states that could be played off one

against the other in order to maintain the primary influence of the British fleet in the Atlantic. See The American Soldier in fiction Op.Cit., p. XX

On the other hand, in War and its Causes, Luther. Bernard argues that the United States participated in the Spanish-American War and in World War One under pressure from Anglo-American industrialists who had most to gain from extending their markets or who needed to protect loans made to the allies in World War One (Cited in Aichinger Op.Cit., p. XXX).

24- Bourne Op.Cit., p 2.

25-See Noam Chomsky, “The Responsibility of Intellectuals”, the New York Review of Books, (February 23,1967) [www. Chomsky.info/articles/1970223 htm](http://www.Chomsky.info/articles/1970223.htm)

26-See Robert Higgs, Crisis and Leviathan.Critical Episodes in the Growth of American Government (New York: Oxford University Press,1987),pp.123-58.

27- See Murray N.Rothbar, “War Collectivism in World War One”,in R.Radosh and M.Rothbard.(eds)., A New History of Leviathan: Essays on the Rise of the American Corporate State (New York: Dutton,1972),pp.66-110.

28- The magazine The New Republic, though originally Rooseveltion, became a supporter of the war and a virtual spokesman for the Wilson war effort. This magazine founded in 1914 as the leading intellectual organ of progressivism was, as Murray N. Roth Band says, “a living embodiment of the burgeoning alliance between big business interests, in Particular the House of Morgan and the growing legion of collectivist intellectuals. In “World War One as Fulfilment: Power and the Intellectuals”, The Journal of Libertarian Studies, XI, 1 (winter 1989).

29- Bourne Op.Cit., p. 3.

30- Idem

*- For more details on this point, see Jim Powell Op.Cit.

31- Bourne Op .Cit., p.3.

32- For details on the “Lost Generation”, see Nina Bayne, The Norton Anthology of American Literature (New York: Mc Grandill, 1994), see also Jill Tripodi & Jackie

Cross, the Lost Generation; John Glasco, Memoirs of Mont Parnasse (London: Penguin Books, 1983).

33- Cited in Dubkin Kid, Malcolm Cowley's "Exile's Return", American Studies, 35 (2001), p 491.

34- For details on Van Wyck Brooks and Waldo Frank see Casey Nelson Blake, Beloved Community: the Cultural Criticism of Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks and Lewis Mumford (North Carolina: University of North Carolina,1990).

35- For details on the Genteel Tradition see: Robert Dawidoff, The Genteel Tradition and the Sacred Rage. High Culture Vs Democracy in Adams, James and Santayana (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998). See also Malcolm Cowley, After the Genteel Tradition American Writers, 1910-1930 (New York: South N Illinois University Press, 1984).

36- Cited in Georges Albert Astre, John Dos Passos (Paris: Lettres modernes, 1974).

37- For details on the biography of John Dos Passos, se Robert C. Rosen,John Dos Passos: Politics and the Writer (New York: University of Nebraska Press,1981) and Georges Albert Astre. Op.Cit.

38- Once published, the novel provoked an intense critical response. Dos Passos was attacked for antimilitary realism. The New York Times published two front- page book reviews, three editorials and two additional articles which denounced the novel's false picture of the army and its "unmanly intemperance both in language and in plot". One of the articles went as far as to say that the writer ought to be arrested were the book published while the war was yet in progress, see: Robert. C. Rosen, John Dos Passos. Politics and the Writer .Op.Cit., pp 23-25.

39- Three Soldiers (New York: George H. Doran Company,1921). All citations will be taken from this edition.

40 – WWI was called a 'big war' because it was estimated that it killed 10 million people. Moreover this war affected not only men but women and children as well. So, the adjective 'great' conveys little admiration.

41- Robert C.Rosen, John Dos Passos: Politics and the writer.Op.Cit., p.17.

42-James .D Wilson, “Tirso,Hat and Byron : the Emergence of Don Juan as Romantic Hero”, The South Central Bulletin, 32, 1972 : 246-8.

. For details on romanticism, its characters and the conditions in which it appeared see:

- Nicholas Roe, Romanticism: an Oxford Guide (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

43- John Dos Passos himself held the same view on formal education. He says about Harvard, “I got quite a little out of being at Harvard, although I was kicking all of the time I was there [....]. I probably would not have stayed if it had not been for my father who was anxious for me to go through. At that time, the last of the old New Englanders were still at Harvard. They were really liberal-minded people, pretty thoroughly independent in their ideas [....]. But that essentially valid cast of mind was very much damaged by the strange pro-allied and anti-German delusion that swept through them [....]”. See David Sanders, “Interview with John Dos Passos” in the Paris Review – the Art of Fiction n°44.

[the-parisreview.org/.../the-art-of-fiction....](http://the-parisreview.org/.../the-art-of-fiction...)

44- J. Dos Passos enlisted for the same reasons. He wrote: “When the war started, [....] I was curious to see it, even though theoretically I disapproved of war as a human activity. I was anxious to see what it was like [....]. When I got out of college in the summer of 1916, I was anxious to get started in architecture, but at the same time I was so restless that I had already managed to sign myself up in the volunteer ambulance service. My father was determined to put that off, so we kind of compromised on a Spanish expedition, and I went to Madrid to study architecture. Then my father died in January 1917, and I went ahead in the ambulance service. I suppose that World War then became my university.” Ibid, p.3.

45-On the Genteel Tradition see Douglas L. Wilson (ed); The Genteel Tradition: Nine essays by George Santayana (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1967).

46- In 1916, Dos Passos had already challenged the mechanization of American society. In one of his essays published in the Harvard Monthly in 1916, and entitled “a Humble Protest”, he said, “Has not the world today somehow got itself enslaved by the immense machine the industrial system? Millions of men perform labour narrowing and stultifying even under the best conditions, bound in the traces of mechanical industry without even a chance of self-expression, except in the lactic pleasures of suffocating life in cities. They grind their lives away on the wheels producing, producing,

producing.... Is this what men have been striving for through the ages? Is this ponderous suicidal machine civilization?”. See “John Dos Passos, witness to our time” written for the New Hampshire Humanities Council 1998. Chautauqua Programs, “Beginning the American Century”, written by Richard Johnson, professor of American History, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona.
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47- See the Declaration of Independence for more details.

48- On similarities and differences between Crane’s and Dos Passos’s novels See: John.H.Wrenn, John Dos Passos (New York : Twayne Publishers, 1961), p.109.

49- Klein Holger (ed); The First World War in Fiction (London: Macmillan, 1976), p.23.

50- On the Frontier Mentality, see Slot kin Richard, Regeneration through Violence: the Mythology of the American Frontier; 1600-1860 (USA: Oklahoma University Press, 1973).

*- On the story of Herman Melville’s Billy Budd, see Clare Spark, Hunting Captain Ahab: Psychological Warfare and the Melville Revival (Kent: Kent University Press, 2006). See also:

- Hershel Parker, Reading Billy Budd (Evanstone: North Western University Press, 1990).

51- On the American Adam see: Ihab Hassan, Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary Novel (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p.59.

- Victoria Pâtea, “The Myth of the American Adam” in Victoria Pâtea & Maria Eugenia Diaz (eds); Critical Essays of the Myth of the American Adam (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2001), pp. 15-45.

52. On the story of Cain and Abel, see André Lacocque, Onslaught against Innocence: Cain, Abel and the Yahwist (New York : Cascade Books, 2008).

*- Holger Op Cit., p.25.

53-Leo Max, The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America [1964] (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000),p.226.

54- Here, we think of that German concept in fiction and folklore called “doppelganger” meaning ‘double walker’, a paranormal double of a living person, typically representing evil or misfortune or as Stephen Wagner says “a shadow self that is thought to accompany every person”. In: paranormal.about.com/ob/Doppelgangers/a/doppelgangers.htm

55- For details on Henry James, the Ambassadors, see:

- Oscar Cargil, the Novels of Henry James (New York: Mac Millan and Co, 1961).
- Edward Wagenknecht, The Novels of Henry James (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing & Co, 1983).

56- Dos Passos also, still a student (March 1918), had enrolled at the Sorbonne. He deserted his camp with the help of an officer who discharged him. See Rosen Op.Cit., p13.

57- The mystical figure known as “the Queen of Sheba” is recorded in the First Book of Kings in the Old Testament. It states that around the 10th century B.C, the queen of Sheba decided to meet the Great Jewish King Salomon, the ruler of Israel. Hearing about his great wisdom, she brought many hard questions to test him. When his replies met with approval, she gave him many gifts. In return, Salomon gave the Queen “all her desire”, and after their meeting, she returned to her country with a child from him named Menyelek (son of the wise). For details on the story of the Queen of Sheba see:

- Lind, Tary, King Salomon and the Queen of Sheba (New York: Pitpopany Press, 1997).
- H. St John Phil, The Queen Of Sheba (London: Quarter Books, 1981).
- Robert. G. Hoylard, Arabia and the Arabs from Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam (London: Routhledge, 2001).

58- Andrews is not interested in the mythological story of the queen. He writes about her in his musical composition as she is presented in Flaubert’s La Tentation de Saint Antoine which he read while in hospital. In this novel, Saint Antoine, the main character, is confronted with many temptations, among which that of sexuality and lust embodied in the ‘Queen of Sheba’, that fabulous woman known with her beauty and her gift of seducing men. The temptation juxtaposes opposite poles: it joins faith and doubt; holiness and temptations, monastiasm and debauchery. Flaubert himself felt excited by nuns and prostitutes equally : “My heart begins to pound every time I see one of those women in low-cut dresses walking under the lamp light in the rain just as monks in the

corded robes have always excited some deep ascetic corner of my soul “, Quoted in Ferial Ghazoul, Flaubert from Dervish to Saint. The Oriental Imitation to Creative Borrowing, W3, Ugrenoble 3.fr

59-His wisdom is reflected in his famous proverbs and love letters cited in The Song of Solomon and in the Book of Ecclesiastes

60- For details on the ‘Wisdom’ of King Salomon see: Philip Graham Ryken, King Salomon: the Temptations of Money, Sex and Power (Illinois: Crossway, 2001).

61- Cit in C. Rosen. Op.Cit., p.13.

62- Ibid, p.14.

63- John Brown (1800-1859) was a radical abolitionist of the United States. He attempted a liberation movement among enslaved African-Americans in Harpers Ferry, Virginia in 1859. He was tried and convicted to treason and murder and was executed in 1859. Though his attempt was unsuccessful, many historians agree that his raid gave birth to high tensions that a year later led to secession and to the American Civil War. Many writers – such as Hugo, Emerson and Thoreau – praised him for having killed slavery and sparked the civil war and the seeds of civil rights. For details on John Brown see:

- Robert E. MC Glone, John Brown’s War Against Slavery (Cambridge: CUP, 2009).

- Delia Ray, “A Nation Tom”. The Story of How the Civil War Began (New York: Lodestar Books, 1990).

- Louisa J.R de Caro, John Brown – the Cost of Freedom. Selections from his Life and Letters (New York: International Publishers, 2007).

Chapter Two

The Intellectual and Radical Reform in Dos Passos's the 42nd Parallel

“The Twentieth Century will be American [...] the regeneration of the world, physical as well as moral has begun ...” (the 42nd Parallel, p.21)¹. Dos Passos starts his trilogy with such a significant sentence uttered by Albert. J. Beveridge, a Republican U.S senator during Theodore Roosevelt’s presidency². Indeed at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, America was open to progress. Her democratic social order, her technological innovations, her advanced life-styles, her industrial capacities made her ready to lead the way into the modern world politically as well as artistically.

USA is a kaleidoscopic portrait of this nation buzzing with history and life. It tells the story of the American people over nearly three decades, starting from the early 1900’s and ending in the late 1920’s. This period was referred to as a period of radical reform³. In all fields, Americans were engaged in a quest for new and appropriate ways of apprehending reality. It was also a period during which America was corrupting itself, disturbing its citizens psychologically, immersing itself deeply in the triumphant capitalist world. The American intellectual of this period was trusted with the duty of enlightening the public by exposing malpractices in business and politics and by leading Americans in their political protest and social reform.

In this chapter, I shall be commenting upon Dos Passos’s first novel of the trilogy, the 42nd Parallel -and occasionally referring to the second one 1919- in which he denounces social injustice and underlines the need to struggle against capitalist exploitation and corruption. My concern in this thesis being the intellectual, I would like to stress his position in that conflict which opposed the businessmen to the workers. I will be exploring whether he remained faithful to the cause of the oppressed or whether he surrendered to the temptation of wealth in which the majority of Americans were engaged.

The second point that interests me is the revolutionary techniques used by the writer to relate his aesthetic activity to the American historical process. Globally, Dos Passos does not deal simply with the history of a crisis. He uses techniques to give shape to History. That is why he needs both socialist-realist techniques and modernist ones. The trilogy, indeed, oscillates between two modes of writing: on the one hand, it is considered by such critics as Barbara Foley as a collectivist epic⁴ of American life in which Dos Passos uses many socialist realist literary devices; on the other, it is viewed by Donald Pizer and John Brantley – among many other critics – as a modernist anti-epic where there is no collective meaning but rather a loss of meaning. Underlying these two modes of writing, is an idealistic image of America embodied in its ancient myths, collective hopes for a better future and the possibility of a new great civilization.

In my analysis of the 42nd Parallel, I am not going to study all modernist techniques, nor do I intend to take into account all socialist-realist devices. I will rather select the most recurrent ones in the novel. From a modernist viewpoint, I shall focus on the break in the narrative frames, on the stream of consciousness (the camera eye), on collage (Newsreels) and on the mechanization of human figures. As to the socialist-realist devices, I shall deal mainly with Dos Passos's treatment of history as a process (through the use of biographies), the use of a pluralizing narration, the typicality of characters and situations. My aim is to assess Dos Passos's success in expressing the crisis of America through the use of two opposing kinds of literary devices.

It would be difficult to understand the behavior of the fictional and even real/historical intellectuals in the 42nd Parallel without a survey of the social, political and intellectual life of America between 1900 and 1919, a period characterized by the rise of many social and political movements led by the intellectuals of that period, mainly Progressivism, Socialism and Unionism. Dos Passos lived that period and was

profoundly affected by the changes these movements brought to America which in fact furnished much material to his novels because of a fusion between politicians and artists.

I .Social-Historical-Literary Background

The Progressive era in the United States spans from the 1890's to the 1920's. It was characterized by social and political reforms in all fields. Being disturbed by the waste, corruption and injustices of the American society of that time, the progressives were committed to changing and reforming every aspect of the state, society and economy. This movement aimed at purifying the government, eliminating corruption and denouncing political machines and bosses. It also promoted women's suffrage⁵. Major trade union organizations were linked to this movement, notably the AFL (the American Federation of Labor) which was the first major labor organization to admit that the wage-earning class was a permanent feature of American life⁶.

The progressives believed in man's ability to improve the conditions of life of all the American people; they also trusted the experts' impact on economic and social affairs and on the creation of an 'open' society where man was neither chained to the past nor condemned to a deterministic future.

Progressivism gained popularity because it tried to modernize old ways by transforming history, economics and politics into sciences. It was supported by many intellectuals, like lawyers, teachers, ministers and businessmen who believed in technology as a solution to the weakness of the American society.

The progressive movement encouraged the appearance of many parties in America. The socialist party, for example, was included within the progressive movement. It was born and grew between 1900 and 1912 under the charismatic leadership of Eugene Debs (the first biography of the novel is devoted to him). It dealt with American problems in an American manner. The socialists of that time felt no obligation to adhere to an international party line⁷. Debs indeed insisted that he was a Marxist, but he was more interested in poverty and injustice than in the typical socialist concerns about the class-struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat, two of Marx's major preoccupations*. In his program, he insisted on improving labor conditions, housing and welfare legislation, as well as the right for all people to vote in elections.

Till 1912, this party made considerable progress, but World War One and the Russian revolution caused deep divisions within its ranks. By 1921, its strength was further undermined by its opposition to American intervention in World War One that it denounced as a crime against the people and called to resisting the military draft*. The government, however, responded sternly to this anti-war position. President Wilson went as far as to consider it as "disloyalty" and promised to repress the socialists, especially after the signature of the Espionage Act and the Sedition Act in 1917⁸. Under those acts, the government arrested more than 1800 people, including Debs. There was an anti-socialist hysteria called the "Red Scare"⁹, a great fear of communists, especially after the Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia, along with a series of labor strikes. By the mid-Twenties, following Debs's death, the party was deeply divided along racial and ethnic lines.

All the same, the socialist movement in the United States never succeeded because of the egalitarian character of American life. There has always been a lack of class-consciousness in the American society and so no class-conflict. The American workers' standard of living was much higher than that in most European countries. The American people were and are still divided along natural lines of gender, age and ethnicity but never along class-lines. The belief of Americans in the ideology of individualism, democracy and opportunity also undermined the appeal for socialism. Added to all this is the social mobility and the division of the working class into conflicting ethnic groups which have all contributed to the weakening of socialism.

The IWW (the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World) ,another radical wing of American socialism played an important role in that period and endured the same repression from the government .Founded in 1905 by William D (Big Bill) Haywood, Daniel de Leon, Eugene Debs*, it consisted of socialists, anarchists¹⁰, trade unionists from all over the United States. It stated that “all workers should be united as a class and that the wage system should be abolished”¹¹.

The aim of IWW was to unite workers - skilled or unskilled - to overthrow capitalism and rebuild society on a socialist basis. The methods it used were direct action, propaganda, boycott and strike¹². The IWW was created because unionists, socialists, anarchists and radicals no longer trusted the AFL which they accused of organizing the United States working class according to narrow craft principles which divided groups of workers. The ‘Wobblies’¹³, as they were called, wanted to organize the workers as a class. They promoted industrial unionism – as opposed to the craft unionism of the AFL; they stood against leaders who would bargain with employers on behalf of workers. That is why their efforts were met with violent reactions from the government.

At the time of World War One, the IWW opposed U.S participation. The organization passed a resolution against the war at its convention in November 1916¹⁴. For them, war represented a struggle among capitalists in which the rich became richer while the working poor died at the hands of other workers. They were thus accused of treachery and the government seized this opportunity to crush the organization by raiding on 48 meeting IWW halls across the country and arresting more than 165 leaders¹⁵. Adding to the union's troubles, was the fact that a good portion of the membership was made up of migratory and casual laborers who were difficult to organize into a cohesive group. The organization thus weakened and the government seized the occasion to decapitate it¹⁶. In today's America, there still remains an anarchist sect that some Americans call IWW but not strong enough to contribute positively in the revolutionary struggle. The best militants in IWW were repressed by the state at the end of WWI and by new communist parties after it.

The communist party in the United States was created in 1919 by Jay Lovestone, John Reed and others who advocated the policies of the Bolsheviks in Russia. This party appeared in a year considered as the worst year in Twentieth Century American history, "a year", as Bradbury says, "of anti-Bolshevik feeling and defeat for progressive expectations that opened the way to intolerance, isolationism, pure materialism, flouted capitalism and cynicism"¹⁷. The end of WWI did not bring peace and security in the United States; everything went wrong. There was labor unrest; many strikes were organized, the most important ones (those cited in the 42nd Parallel and 1919) are the Seattle Docks Strike, the Boston Police Strike, the Steel Workers Strike and the Passaic Textile Strike of 1926 (the first communist led work stoppage in America)¹⁸. All wanted to organize workers in their respective industries, to gain higher wages and to achieve wage controls. Some commentators accused the leaders of these

strikes of being inspired by un-American (communist) ideologies, which provoked the rise of the anti-red hysteria which characterized the Red Scare of 1919.

From April to June 1919, America was shaken by a series of leftist bombings because the anarchists thought that corporations oppressed the people and held too much power. They advocated a class-warfare and sent a number of bombs to high profile individuals. This series of bombings created the Red Scare. There was a fear that the radicals would overthrow the U.S government and replace it with a Bolshevik dictatorship as the one established by the Russian revolution in 1917. So President Woodrow Wilson took serious measures to put an end to this situation¹⁹. He charged Attorney General Mitchel Palmer with the mission of 'restoring peace' in the United States. The latter used the Espionage and Sedition Acts to launch a campaign against radicals and left-wing organizations. There was a series of detentions and deportations of suspected radicals²⁰ – with President Wilson's consent.

Consequently, the public disapproved of this assault on civil liberties, America's involvement in WWI and the 1919 events. Add to this his failure to pass the Treaty of Versailles²¹ as well as a failure to win America's support for the League of Nations. The president suffered a major stroke which incapacitated him; as a result, the country ran without president for 18 months. Americans thus suffered from a sense of purposelessness, ideological vacuum and cultural sterility. Radicalism weakened, mainly after the Versailles Peace Talks of 1919 and after the America of the Twenties immersed in a new commercialism.

The American intellectuals of that period could not remain indifferent to these events. Be they politicians, journalists or artists, they all revolted, each in his own way; hence the alliance between political radicals and avant-garde artists. Artistic experiment, radical politics, Freudianism²², feminism²³ -a movement then aiming at defining,

establishing and defending equal political, economic and social rights for women-furnished material for the intellectuals. The new campaigns both in politics and in the radical arts were growing together giving birth to new life styles and patterns of behavior, showing clearly that the progressive spirit had united a new principle of political, artistic and radical experience.

In this context, new ideas coming from Europe helped to further repudiate the Genteel Tradition because it legitimized the Establishment. In his America's Coming of Age (1915), Brooks called for an era of independent creative living, a rejection of the irrelevant past and present in favor of a new future. Like George Santayana, he assaulted the Genteel Tradition of the post-civil-war era and, like Mencken and Bourne, he considered the tradition as "Puritanism". Anglo-Saxonism, for him, was colonial and thus ought to be rejected. He saw America's future as one based on native cosmopolitanism²⁴.

If America were to have a literature, it would be necessarily a literature of the future, since it had little of a past literature and an unstable present one. Avant-garde movements then developed a modernist art which experimented with new forms and also challenged the materialism in which the new America threw itself. Assuredly, the roots of such forms/techniques were not to be found in the American tradition. The American Modernist Movement, indeed, owed its origins to the artistic adventures of Europe. But the Americans nativised it to suit their own traditions and sensibilities. Though some of them, like Eliot and Pound succumbed to the European traditions of the new, others went back to their past, like Tennessee Williams.

This American modernism started first in poetry with some notable poets like Robert Frost, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens and others. Social criticism

was intensified mainly in the works of H.L Mencken (1880-1956) and Randolph Bourne (1886-1918).

This new experimental spirit reached the novel much later; the modern movement was not very apparent in the American novel till the Twenties. The American writers of this period adopted modernist devices used in European modernist fiction²⁵, such as the mechanization of human figures and a sense of psychic damage. These were used to express the generation gap, the dislocation of consciousness and the fragility of sensibility. To quote Bradbury,

The American 20's saw an outburst of experimental fiction which in one way linked the new American novel with the great adventures of modernism which dominated the European 20's – yet in another provided the ideal means for responding to all that was speeded and accelerated about contemporary American existence²⁶.

The epoch during which Dos Passos built his trilogy was marked by the coming back of American intellectuals to their native country. To be fulfilled, his project required the invention of a new novelistic form, a semi epic, semi satirical mode in which the novel would have the capacity to express a total situation. The need to cover the totality of an epoch and of a continent was general. These writers succeeded in resolving their quest for artistic form when they discovered the documentary technique, a form through which they commented on their own memories and the recreated memories of their time. Wrenn considers it as “peculiarly adapted to the American frontier experience”²⁷ because “its materials are events, its method their interpretation, and its purpose to teach”²⁸.

Ideologically, during the Twenties, most of these writers were steadily moving towards Communism²⁹ and Anarchism. The political implications of Dos Passos's early writings were clearly socialistic. As a political reporter for the New Republic in the

1930's, the most important topics he dealt with were labor flare-ups, political conventions, Capitalism and the Depression. And these are the major themes we find in the 42nd Parallel.

II. The Intellectual between Reality and Fiction

The 42nd Parallel starts at the beginning of the Twentieth Century and closes with the entry of the United States to World War One in 1917. In this first novel of the trilogy, the writer depicts a young country facing great political, social and ideological changes. The main characters, Fenian Mac Creary, a trade unionist, Janey Williams a secretary, Eleanor Stoddard, an artist and J. Ward Moorehouse, a publicist are thrown into a difficult situation characterized by problematic relations between labor, industry and the government. What all these characters have in common is that they each epitomize some facet of the new American socio-economic picture of the emerging Twentieth Century.

Dos Passos's most important ambition seems to insert the historical within the fictional, that is, to establish a link between the real and the fictional, between history and individual adventure. Moreover, as the fictional characters of this novel are nearly all determined by the social universe that surrounds them, the relation between them and some representative figures of American history is very important. Therefore he introduces some biographies which act as a recording of the American century, the American deeds and thought being revealed by some key figures like Debs, Big Bill Haywood, William Jennings Bryan, Andrew Carnegie, Lafollette and others. These biographical portraits are crucial to the novel, though sometimes giving the impression of an encyclopaedic dictionary of historical personages³⁰. The positive ones depict people as actors, and more than this, praise people who act for the good of their culture

while the negative ones attack those public figures who pursue their interests at the expense of the masses.

To show the destructive currents of America, to present that vital struggle between the forces of ‘death’ and the ‘democratic strengths’, Dos Passos chooses two kinds of historical heroes : those who are for the people and those who are against them; those who stand for the real American values and those who embody their falsification. All through the novel, he tries to keep some parallelism between the fictional characters and these biographies which function as explanatory texts. Some of these biographies are sympathetic, others are not. Some are positive, others are not. The only standard by which these people – and even the fictional characters – are judged is their courage and ability to maintain democracy, whatever their births, origins or ends. If they work to uphold the dignity of the individual, like Eugene Debs, Luther Burbank, Lafollette, Big Bill Haywood and the like, they are true intellectuals; if they are scornful and do not feel concerned with the consequences and results of their works on mankind, like William Jennings Bryan, Minor C. Keith, Andrew Carnegie, Charles Proteus Steinmetz (all these people are going to be defined in what follows), they are false intellectuals following, of course, J.P Sartre’s distinction between authenticity and falseness, between “true” and “false” intellectuals.

My first step in this chapter is, indeed, to see whether the intellectuals – fictional or real-life – of the 42nd parallel fulfill all the duties Sartre attributes to the “true intellectual”, that is, putting his knowledge at the service of popular culture, committing himself to the conflicts of his time, universalizing the objectives of the working class, preventing the rebirth of the dominant class ideology within the working class, training intellectuals from within the lower classes and leading the masses in their struggle against the capitalists. In a second step, the ideology professed by the industrialists and

the businessmen maintaining the status quo tries to lure Americans to the materialist fold. This ideology operates not only through industrialists, but also through ‘false intellectuals’, that is, learned Americans who have put their knowledge at the service of politicians and businessmen to safeguard their interests.

Contrary to the first novel, Three Soldiers, in which the characters and the writer himself have not committed themselves to a definite ideology, in the 42nd Parallel, each category is supposed to have chosen its side as regards these conflicting ideologies. In fact, even Dos Passos is now supposed to have committed himself, as an author, to one or the other of these opposing ideologies. To quote Terry Eagleton, “authorial ideology is never to be treated in isolation from general ideology, but must be studied in its articulation with it”³¹. By authorial ideology he means, “General ideology as lived, worked and represented from a particular over determined standpoint within it”³².

Moreover the aesthetic ideology within which the writer chooses to work is determined by authorial ideology and general ideology. For Eagleton aesthetic ideology is the result of an aesthetic working of general ideology in its turn worked and determined by authorial biographical factors³³. Ideology then furnishes the materials for the text’s formal aesthetic operations. In this context, Lukàcs aptly says that “style is rooted in content” or that “content determines form”³⁴. It is not surprising then that Dos Passos who lived in Paris in such a politically and artistically rich period as that of the Twenties gives such a sophisticated content and form to his trilogy.

The second part of this chapter examines Dos Passos’s use of the documentary technique .I will look in particular at the use of the camera eye sequences (autobiography), the Newsreels which document the reader on the American life between 1900 and 1919, the notion of typicality (of characters and situation), which have long been recognized as integral to our understanding of the fictional narratives,

presenting outside information that contextualizes and colors their inner reality. My analysis will be based on the works and theories of modernists like Bradbury and socialist realists like Georg Lukàcs and Terry Eagleton.

II.1.The Historical characters

II.1.1. Radical Politicians as True Intellectuals

The positive biographies of intellectuals for Dos Passos number political leaders like Eugene Debs and Bob Lafollette, union organizers like Big Bill Haywood and Joe Hill, inventors like Thomas Edison and Leftist writers like Randolph Bourne and Jack Reed.

A“Lover of Mankind”, and therefore a hater of war, Eugene Debs opens the biographies of the 42nd Parallel. He is deeply involved in the politics of his country.A secretary of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, “[h]e traveled all along the country as” organizer” (p.37). Though he left school at fourteen, he continued his education by himself. He learnt much through the trade union movement of which he was a member. He worked as editor of the locomotive Firemen’s magazine. He, a member of the Democratic Party, was elected to the Indiana legislature in 1884³⁵. And in 1893, he was elected the first president of the American Railway Union. He was a regular contributor to the American radical socialist newspaper “Appeal to Reason”in which progressives like Jack London, Upton Sinclair and Stephen Crane also contributed*. In 1901, he was the Socialist Party of America candidate³⁶. An excellent orator, poet and humane man, he succeeded in developing a strong following in America³⁷.

Debs and his followers from the socialist party were strong opponents of WWI, the cause of which he saw in the imperialist competitive system. In an article published in 1915, he wrote,

I am not opposed to all wars, nor am I opposed to fighting under all circumstances, and any declaration to the contrary would disqualify me as a revolutionist. When I say I am opposed to war, I mean ruling-class war, for the ruling class is the only class that makes war. It matters not to me whether this war be offensive or defensive or what other lying excuse may be invented for it, I am opposed to it; and I would be shot for treason before I would enter such a war³⁸.

As a consequence of this declaration, Debs was arrested and sentenced to 10 years in Atlanta penitentiary³⁹.

Debs's message carries the idealism and the generosity of all the American people; he says: "while there is a lower class I am of it, while there is a criminal class I am of it, while there is a soul in prison I am not free"(p.39). This declaration of solidarity, of love of mankind is at the root of his socialism. He sacrificed all his life for the fight of the workers' rights, for the freedom of belief and action. Nevertheless, despite this altruistic life, he was forgotten by everybody and died alone. For all this commitment to the cause of the oppressed, Debs deserves the title of Sartre's "true intellectual".

In this biography, Dos Passos is not interested in how Debs gained ascendancy; he rather stresses his imprisonment for his opposition to war and to anti-socialist sentiments as well as his betrayal by the working class, "but where were Gene Debs' brothers in nineteen eighteen when Woodrow Wilson had him locked up in Atlanta for speaking against war"(p.38). These workers made their leader's imprisonment possible both because they were offered better wages and were afraid of the Red Scare. They feared his invitation to socialism. They were not only afraid to be with him but even "to

think much about him for fear they might believe him” (p 39). Debs’s idealism is solitary; that is why it fails near the powerful forces of capital and also near the misunderstanding of the masses. His fate illustrates the lack of political maturity of the American working class.

Just like Debs, Robert Marion “fighting Bob” La Follette did much to the American masses. A university graduate in law, he occupied several important political functions: member of the US House of Representatives, governor of Wisconsin and senator from Wisconsin. He campaigned for social security, women’s suffrage, more protection of civil liberties, stronger law to help trade unions. He also called for an end to American imperialism in Latin America

He was a man who tried to fulfill all the duties attributed by Sartre to the true intellectual. When he was in the Senate, he stood against American involvement in World War One and opposed the prosecution of Debs and other pacifists. He opposed the arming of American merchant ships as well as the Wilson administration request for a declaration of war in 1917⁴⁰. He was critical of Wilson’s foreign policy⁴¹. He was hated by many people in America because he insisted that his country had no business in the war and that it had been led to it by lies and trickery⁴². For this, he was accused of disloyalty and many organizations called congress for his expulsion: “The press pumped hatred into its readers against La Follette, the traitor; they burnt him in effigy in Illinois” (p.305). His sincerity, integrity and complete devotion to his ideal were indubitable. Indeed he was a fighter for peace⁴³. Bob La Follette was defeated because he was “a willful man expressing no opinion but his own” (p.306), whatever the consequences. Dos Passos presents him as someone who struggled

to save democratic government, to make a farmer’s
and small businessmen’s commonwealth, lonely
with his back to the wall, fighting corruption and

big business and high finance and trusts and combinations of combinations and the miasmatic lethargy of Washington (p.305).

Big Bill Haywood, Joe Hill and Wesley Everest have the same fate as Debs and Lafollette, facing the same public disapproval by an unsympathetic press. But they are presented as heroes or martyrs of the working class movement. These are true intellectuals who thought critically and tried to restore the meaning of American democracy.

Though Big Bill never received much education, he cannot but be called a true intellectual because he devoted all his life to the workers' cause. He , a positive hero who struggled for the little man is a working class leader known from coast to coast. "Now the wants of all the workers were his wants, he was the spokesman of the west of the cowboys and the lumberjacks and the harvest hands and the miners" (p.91). He was a founding member and leader of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), that movement which pushed the Wobblies to fight for justice directly against their employers. He was an advocate of Industrial Unionism, that labor philosophy which aimed at the organization of all workers in an industry under one union regardless of the specific trade or skill level. He favored direct action over political tactics (and this is what alienated him from the socialist party and contributed to his dismissal in 1912)⁴⁴.

Joe Hill, for his part, a Swedish-American labor activist, song writer and member of IWW did much to the workers' cause: he wrote popular songs and cartoons for the radical union; he organized the workers of the Utah. Through his artistic activities, he expressed the harsh but combative life of the workers and the perceived necessity of organizing to improve conditions for working people⁴⁵. Unfortunately, he was accused of murder and executed in 1915. "Don't mourn for me, 'organize', was the last word he sent out to the working stiffs of IWW" (p.68).

Wesley Everest served the American workers' cause also. He was a member of the IWW and a veteran who took part in WWI. When he came back from Europe in which he fought to make it safe for 'democracy', he wanted to help the 'wobblies' in their struggle for 'industrial democracy'. At that time, however, "the wobblies were reds" (p.713). Everest and many wobblies were killed in the Centralia Massacre in 1919, that bloody incident that occurred during a parade celebrating the first anniversary of Armistice Day⁴⁶.

Big Bill Haywood, Joe Hill and Wesley Everest are wobbly martyrs. They all died tragically. Haywood was exiled to Russia; Joe Hill was executed for a crime he did not commit. As to Everest, he was savagely hanged by a group of citizens after having cut his genital parts with a razor (p.716). The most heinous crime these people have committed is that they organized the IWW. Being a member of IWW meant to the popular press being anti-American. These people are victims of the Red Scare. They stood for those anti-capitalist radicals who have been destroyed by repression.

II.1.2 Radical Scientists as True Intellectuals: Fighters of Truth and Freedom

Dos Passos's positive biographies however are not all concerned with politics. Intellectuals like Luther Burbank and Thomas Edison devoted their lives to scientific discovery without thinking of the political profits these discoveries may have. They were self-made men and stood for the American genius. They fought for truth, enlightenment and freedom of thought.

Burbank was not only a scientist, a botanist and a pioneer in agricultural science but a free thinker as well. He stood against the court's decision to block the teaching of evolution. What he said about the court's verdict shows his strong personality and deep thinking:

Those who legislate against the teaching of evolution should also legislate against gravity, electricity and the unreasonable velocity of light and also should introduce a clause to prevent the use of the telescope, the microscope, and the spectroscope or any other instrument of precision which may in the future be invented, constructed or used for the discovery of truth which may in the future be invented, constructed or used for the discovery of truth⁴⁷.

A scientist, he rather wanted to make people understand, to clarify their minds, to make them reasonable. Despite his fame, he lost the esteem of many Americans when he once declared that he was an infidel: "I do not believe, I am a doubter, a questioner, a skeptic. When it can be proved to me that there is immortality, that there is resurrection beyond the gates of death, then I will believe. Until then, No!"⁴⁸. This declaration created shock in many parts of the world. Most Christians and clergymen turned against him. But his aim was not to blaspheme. He was misunderstood. The press denigrated him through its attacks⁴⁹.

Though a wizard in electricity and a millionaire, Edison spent his life working and inventing for the benefit of mankind. The proof is that when the American government asked him during World War One to head the naval consulting board which examined inventions submitted for military use, he indeed worked on several projects. However his moral indignation toward violence made him work only on defensive weapons, and later, he refused totally to be involved in matters of war. He had never invented weapons to kill. He kept to his desire to fulfill the promise of research and invent things to serve mankind. And this is exactly how Sartre sees the true intellectual⁵⁰.

II.1.3. Graduates Beyond the Ivory Tower of Academic Knowledge

As to the intellectual who went to university and who carried degrees in several fields, Dos Passos cites John Reed and Randolph Bourne who spent their lives struggling against all forms of mystification and betrayal, denouncing the evils of the American government and informing the people on the actual objectives of World War One. These are the ‘talented’ sons of democracy who were not crushed by it and who went beyond the academic straightjacket of university.

John Reed incarnates what Dos Passos could have done, that struggle against Harvardian temptations, that openness to the world. A graduate from Harvard, he was an American journalist, a poet, an adventurer and a communist activist who worked very hard for human rights. His life as a revolutionary writer ended in Russia where he died at the Age of 38. Nevertheless, he was considered as a hero of a generation of radical intellectuals.

Though he graduated from Harvard, he showed little interest in politics and only occasionally attended meetings of the socialist club. He lived in the Greenwich Village with poets and artists. He was seriously interested in social problems and thus adopted a radical position. He allied himself with the IWW and joined the Socialist Party of America, as he could not stand the cruel inequality between rich and poor people⁵¹. Dos Passos says about him, “he could not keep his mind on his work with so many people out of luck; in school hadn’t he learnt the Declaration of Independence by heart ? Reed was a Westerner and words meant what they said” (p.353).

He worked as a journalist for the magazine The Masses. He was sent to Mexico to report the Mexican revolution in 1913⁵². In 1914, he went to Paris as a war correspondent. There, he understood that the war was due mainly to imperialist

commercial rivalries and thus showed little sympathy for all the participants. He then returned to New York a converted pacifist. Thinking that the re-election of President Wilson was the best way to prevent America from entering the war, he joined forces with other radicals in the campaign to re-elect Wilson, as he was strongly against this war. Unfortunately, his country soon raced towards war, and the radical Reed was marginalized. When Wilson asked for the declaration of war, he shouted. “[...] this is not my war and I will have nothing to do with it”⁵³.

His career soon lay in ruins as he was charged with sedition and with violating the Espionage Act by publishing anti-war articles in the Masses and in Seven Arts⁵⁴. He turned communist by the end of the war and fled to Russia where he suffered much and died of typhus in 1920. For the communist party to which he belonged, he became a symbol of the international nature of the Bolshevik revolution.

A graduate from Columbia University and a resident of Greenwich Village, Bourne was, like Reed, a writer, a journalist and a pacifist. Dos Passos praised him highly in his biography in 1919 and drew heavily on the ideas he developed in his ironic “War is the Health of the State” in his novel. He wrote many articles for The Seven Arts and for The New Republic. He was an anti-war intellectual who believed that America was using democracy as an end to justify the war. For him, democracy was never examined. He was fired from the New Republic because of his radically anti-war views on the eve of the U.S intervention in the war. He was followed by spies, deprived of his manuscripts and prevented from publishing his work. Dos Passos says about him,

[...] in the crazy spring of 1917 he began to get unpopular where his bread was buttered at the New Republic, for new freedom read conscription, for democracy, win the war, for reform, safeguard the Morgan Loans for progress civilization. Education service, buys a liberty bond, strafe the Hun, jail the objectors (p.425).

He died of the Spanish flu after the war⁵⁵. But his ideas have been very influential for the coming generations, especially those developed in his essay “War is the Health of the State”.

And through him, Dos Passos expresses his ideas not only on World War One but also on the Versailles Treaty and on Normalcy*. He says, “He [Bourne] did not live to see the big circus of the peace of Versailles or the purplish normalcy of the Ohio Gang. Six weeks after the armistice, he died planning an essay on the foundations of future radicalism in America” (p.426).

II.1.4. Fighting Oblivion: Commemorating the Victims of the Red Scare

Through the biographies of Bourne, Reed, Lafollette and the others, Dos Passos not only records that history of American involvement in World War One, of political defeat, he also mourns it. At the same time, he wants the reader to remember those defeated radicals the Red Scare wanted to obscure. For example, he says that Everest’s corpse was buried “nobody knows where” by the savages who murdered him. Other radicals, like John Reed and Big Bill Haywood, died abroad. So, they are forgotten by the nation. “But we will remember”, he says of Lafollette. Those who are still alive must remember that communal tradition that has been destroyed. Dos Passos expresses this will of continuity when he speaks about the unfinished work left by Bourne “[when he died] he was planning an essay on the foundations of future radicalism in America”, or again of the “undelivered speech left on Lafollette’s desk when the senate would not let him speak. It is up to the reader to take up the work in the present.

What we can notice is that all these ‘true’ intellectual, be they university graduates or self-made men, be they scientists, politicians or trade unionists, all fought for the same ends. As progressive pacifists, they worked for the well-being of

Americans, for equality, freedom of belief and action and for the preservation/restoration of the actual meaning of American Democracy. They were all condemned to impotence once they encountered the hard reality.

What is satisfactory and encouraging is that they have not been crushed by “capitalistic democracy”: they have not been influenced by the pursuit of wealth in which many American people were engaged in that period during which America was preparing herself to be the leading country of the world. And that’s exactly what Dos Passos reproaches the intellectuals for when they gave up their mission for the sake of money.

II.2.1 Well-Known Industrial, Financial and Technical Wizards as False Intellectuals : the Betrayal of the American Democratic Ideals

The negative biographies include those of public figures, like Minor C Keith, Pierpont Morgan, the symbols of the great intellectuals who either manipulated or betrayed the ideals ‘true’ intellectuals fought for. Dos Passos recognizes that they did many positive things but he does not consider them as successful men because their main aim was financial gain. This gain alone meant nothing to Dos Passos who was interested, not in the material, but in the social outcome of a person’s efforts, as it will be demonstrated later.

Minor C. Keith – prototype of the great industrial fortune – stands as a type for the economic imperialism of the Twentieth Century that, as Brantley says, “led to the necessity of protecting American investment abroad and made war an instrument of foreign policy”⁵⁶. He was an American railroad and banana entrepreneur. He built a railroad from the Costa Rican Atlantic Coast into the interior and developed bananas as one of the country’s cash crops.

Minor C. Keith⁵⁷ is portrayed as a villain because he favoured his own interests over the lives of the workers:

[...] he offered a dollar a day and grab and hired seven hundred men. Some of them had been down before in the filibustering days of William Walker. Of that bunch, about twenty five came out alive. The rest left their whiskey-scalded carcasses to rot in the swamps. On another load, he slipped down fifteen hundred; they all died to prove that only Jamaica Negroes could live in Limon. Minor Keith didn't die (p.208).

What shocks Dos Passos is that, contrary to the forgotten true intellectuals, his photos were published in many newspapers, after his death. In that period, American newspapers published many articles dealing with the necessity of optimism founded on personal struggle and self-confidence; and to legitimize everything, they demonstrated that big businessmen succeeded in becoming rich because of their value. These newspapers helped the consolidation of the dominant culture.

Steinmetz is another consistent target for Dos Passos's criticism. As a German-American mathematician and electrical engineer who made possible the expansion of the electric power industry in the United States, formulating mathematic theories for engineers⁵⁸, he put all his knowledge at the service of a company. Thus he lost his title of 'true' intellectual. Sartre's definition of the 'false' intellectual (clerc) or what he calls the "technician of the know-how" (le technicien du savoir pratique) suits him perfectly, "l'intellectuel est dorénavant une âme inquiète qui se sent mal à l'aise dans la société de son temps particulier, comme le fait [...] le faux intellectuel, le clerc d'aujourd'hui qui joue agent d'une hégémonie, un rôle de conservation et de reproduction du savoir hérité"⁵⁹. Dos Passos deprives him of any personality, "all his life Steinmetz was a piece of apparatus belonging to General Electric" (p.273). He gave up his socialist beliefs for the sake of industrialists who mocked him and turned him into a mere source of profit,

General Electric humored him, let him be a socialist, let him keep a greenhouse full of cactuses lit up by mercury lights [...] and the publicity department talked up the wizard, the medicine man who knew the symbols that opened up the doors of Ali Baba's cave (p.273).

Dos Passos portrays this character (together with that of Edison and Burbank) precisely to testify to the presence of science in the American society of that time, to the strategic role of engineers within an economy more and more invaded by the machine in all its forms. But Steinmetz – like many intellectuals of the period – makes a mistake; he becomes the slave of industrialists, and that prevents the common people from taking advantage from his knowledge. He is thus blamed and cursed.

Dos Passos uses Andrew Carnegie also to indict the disintegration of all ethical values under the chaos of capitalist offensive. The Scottish American Industrialist and the most important philanthropist of his era (the second richest man in history after J.D. Rockefeller) did much good to mankind: he encouraged scientific research; he contributed to periodicals on labor issues; he wrote many books (among them Triumphant Democracy 1886 and the Gospel of Wealth in 1889); he gave most of his money to establish libraries, schools and universities in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom⁶⁰. Though he could receive the title of “true intellectual”, Dos Passos satirizes him because he contributed with his steel to the building of a modernized U.S navy. His charity is therefore suspect,

Andrew Carnegie gave millions for peace and libraries and scientific institutes and endowments and thrift whenever he made a billion dollars he endowed an institution to promote universal peace. Always
Except in time of war (p.225).

The writer has the same critical opinion on J.P. Morgan, the financier of the progressive era whom he lists as one of the major causes for American entry into the war. He transformed American business through his dedication to efficiency and

modernization. While the conservatives of the progressive era hailed him for his strengthening of the national economy, his civil responsibility and his devotion to arts and religion, the left Wing felt threatened by his enormous economic power⁶¹. In fact, many critics accused Morgan and his partners of controlling the nation's high finance. Dos Passos uses his biography as an allegory for the financial environment in America after World War One⁶². What he reproaches him and his family for is the accumulation, transmission and control of American wealth from generation to generation. He says,

And into the House of Morgan represented by his son, he committed when he died in Rome in 1913, the control of the Morgan interests in New York, Paris and London, four national banks, three trust companies, three life insurance companies, ten rail road systems, three street rail way companies... (p.614).

The Morgan fortune is the most satiric biography in the novel. Dos Passos traces in it the growth of an economic empire within the framework of American democracy, a democracy such high-graded people, statesmen, as Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt were supposed to protect. The analysis of the biographies of these two famous progressive presidents confirms the degeneracy or the loss of the old American virtues that, to Dos Passos, has caused America's illness. These causes are therefore ethical.

II.2.2 The Betrayal of politicians: the Fall of the Progressive Idols and the decline of the Democratic Orators

The corruption of the spirit of adventure – having become mere amateurism and derisory parade – is linked to the destiny of Roosevelt. Dos Passos accuses him of bigotry and of patronizing all the Americans except the privileged ones. He sees him as an imperialist who lacked awareness about genuine humanistic concerns. Roosevelt was defeated by his own legend.

As to Wilson the idealist, he illustrates the corruption of moral idealism, turned into a sterile eloquence very far from the reality of men. The virtues of the 'country of God' have fallen into a metamorphosis. It is towards him that Dos Passos is the most severe. Published first under the title "Meester Wilson" in the New Republic on the thirteenth of January 1932, the text accuses the man who, according to Dos Passos, took America to war in the name of pacifism itself. Of all the historical characters of the novel, Wilson is the most ill-treated - to the point that he becomes a symbol of repudiation in that decisive period of the century. The writer rejects his "crusade" for the defense of democracy. For him, the war has destroyed the Republican institutions, and Wilson was the cause. His violent attitude towards him, then, is only an expression of the major orientations of the American conscience.

Wilson is presented in this biography as a grotesque deplorable puppet, not even as a victim of an authentic idealism. Wilsonism appeared when the main ideas of Americans were no more than a perfect alibi for the projects of capitalism. Wilson was erecting as a defender of truth, liberty, faith. He said, "[...] the United States will never again seek one additional fact of territory by conquest" (p.538). Yet "he landed the marines at Vera Cruz" (p.538). For Dos Passos, there has been a corruption of democratic principles, an incessant contradiction between principle and behavior, between words and acts. "If you objected to making the world safe for cost plus democracy you went to jail with Debs" (p.538). Wilson the democratic hunted the trade unionists and imprisoned Debs. This pacifist was forced to decide the entrance of America into World War One. He would not then have been more than a transient step between that civilization linked to the sacred and a fulgurating flight of the modern bourgeois of America

There is indeed in the portrait and evocation of Wilson an excessive simplification, but this biting satirical writing was indispensable to portray the falling apart of the American dream. Dos Passos does not give his opinion on the justice or injustice of the allied countries' cause; he only expresses his anger against the one who, according to him, was responsible for throwing America to that nightmare, for sacrificing a generation of young Americans to the corruption of a corporate America. The destructive irony of the writer is relentless. Hollow words have separated Wilson from American men.

With Wilson and Bryan, words which used to be sacred became now useless. The word in the 42nd Parallel and in 1919 is a mask, a disguise, an alibi. Words are now used in anaesthetic slogans. Wilson betrayed his people – according to the writer – with false words, “talking to save his faith in words, talking to save his faith in the League of Nations, talking to save his faith in himself, in his father's God” (p.541).

The deepest accusation however is hurled at the people who misuse America's words, towards William Jennings Bryan whom he considered as an immoral person guilty of propagandizing the American people. Bryan, the leading American politician, the first secretary of state under President Wilson, adopted a pacifist position towards World War One; he supported populist democracy and stood against banks and railroads, against imperialism and Darwinism⁶³. But for Dos Passos, he misused his gift of language; he never meant what he said,

The silver tongue chanted on out of the big mouth,
chanting pacifism, prohibition, fundamentalism,
nibbling radishes on the lecture platform, drinking
grape juice and water, gorging big corn belt meals
(p.152).

Keith, Carnegie, Wilson, Bryan, Morgan and Steinmetz have taken their society in the path of monopolism. Voluntarily or involuntarily, they have nurtured wars abroad

and hatred and oppression at home. They have protected the 'big business' interests at the expense of the workers' rights.

Yet, despite his severity with his 'false' intellectuals, Dos Passos cannot prevent himself from admiring them, were it only for their great achievements and their motivation by discovery. All the heroes of the biographies he has chosen – be they positive or negative – have qualities as well as short comings. The admiration he has for Debs, the leader of the workers, or the sympathy he shows for Lafollette or even for Bryan, the prestigious orator, lies mostly in their aptitude to succeed, in that obstination to force destiny which is also that of a Carnegie or a Keith.

The difference lies only in the application of their discoveries or in their ends. Gelfant perceptively says that

the test that Dos Passos has applied to each of his symbolic figures is whether or not they supported the war: if they did, they represent the historic force of oppression, and if they did not, they stand for the common cause of the people who are the force behind the progress towards democracy⁶⁴.

The writer wants all these intellectuals to work for the well-being of America, for making of it the first country of the world by sacrificing themselves for American ideas. The only things he reproaches the false intellectuals with are their love of conformism, compromise, distortion of words, loss of ideal dignity and, most importantly, their acceptance of war and their worship of money before anything else. He thus condemns them to failure.

II.2.3 Writing the Intellectual in American History: Modernism Versus Popular Sentimentalism

Most of these biographies are about national figures. Through them, Dos Passos creates a consciousness of the nation; he also gives much historical information.

However they cannot be considered as historical sources (in fact ,there cannot be any) because they reveal – after all – the individual prejudices of the author. They are intrinsically biased (though I do not personally believe in objective history). In fact, the writer’s history is a novelistic one, a subjective one. History is used to serve fiction, that is, historical events provide a backdrop for the action of the fictional characters. Through them, Dos Passos wants to lend his fictional world a validity and very-similitude not otherwise possible. He wants to show the reader that he is dealing with reality. By including these historical elements in his fictional work, he creates the illusion of historical truth even as he subjectively refashions history. And to avoid falling in the trap of historical documentation, he fictionalizes his biographies, that is, he gives them an artistic form.

These biographies are presented in a free verse form in which sentimentality is limited while irony is played up as when he says “all his life Steinmetz was a piece of apparatus belonging to General Electric”(p.273). They are characterized by an unconventional punctuation, a lack of capitalization, irregular line lengths and a mixing of public and authorial voices, as when he says

Half musician, half educational theorist (weak health and being
Poor and twisted in body and on bad terms with his people
Hadn’t spoiled the world for Randolph Bourne; he was a
Happyman), loved die Meistersinger and playing Bach with
His long hands that stretched so easily over the keys and
Pretty girls and good food and evenings of talk. When he
Was dying of pneumonia a friend brought him an egg nog;
look at the yellow, it’s beautiful, he kept saying as his life
Ebbled into delirium and fever....(p.425) .

With this ‘ballad’ form, Dos Passos gives an impressionistic touch to his biographies. And he proceeds in exactly the same way when he deals with his fictional characters for the treatment of whom he uses Newsreels and Camera Eyes.

III. Creating the Intellectual Character

If Dos Passos treats his biographies as fictional elements, he also puts his fictional characters in a historical/spatial perspective. As Astre says in this context, "un roman historique ne saurait être de l'histoire [...] le roman s'oppose à l'histoire encore plus fortement quand l'historien et le romancier peignent les mêmes personnages et racontent les mêmes actions"⁶⁵. People in the 42nd Parallel come from everywhere: Mac from Connecticut, Moorehouse from Delaware; Joe and Janey from Washington, Eveline Hutchins from Chicago. Though learned people belonging to the elite, they are not "true" intellectuals because they do not put their knowledge at the service of their people and they do not commit themselves to the cause of the oppressed. They are young protagonists Dos Passos uses to typify the youth of Twentieth Century America, a youth which is lost because it finds itself cut between two societies, two Americas which confront each other: the America of the workers and that of the exploiters. It is in the light of this idea that I intend to classify the fictional characters, according to the stand they take in that struggle between 'true' and 'false' intellectuals.

The South however is not represented, most likely because the drama had to be centered on the 42nd Parallel (which does not cross the South). All the people are linked to one another by this 42nd parallel that crosses the nation. They are all attracted towards the prestigious cities of the East, towards money and the big industrial companies which created a tension that opposed the American West to its East⁶⁶. It is this symbolically horizontal conflict that Dos Passos deals with in his novel, a conflict intensified by the birth of that post civil war business class which was the cause of the conversion of many rural/natural Americans into complex urban ones.

As to the social origin of the characters, it is also diverse, though Dos Passos seems to exclude from the novelistic scene the "big businessmen"⁶⁷ whose action directs

all the American life. Their victims however interest us, be they the common Americans or those 'public counsels' whom they use as intermediaries and whose role is to safeguard their interests by influencing the middle class and dominating the working one. As such, they act as false intellectuals.

III.1.1 The Radical Working Class and the Lures of Money, Success and Conformity

Mac is the typical figure of pre-war working-class radicalism⁶⁸. There is a close relationship between his history and the biographies of such mentors as Eugene Debs and Big Bill Haywood. Through this character also, Dos Passos tells the story of the hobos' fight against the capitalists⁶⁹. He devotes to him seven narrative segments (140 pages) in which he presents him as the antagonist of the 'trusts' who, through economic power, undermined the basis of political democracy

Mac's story develops by episode and successive adventures, as if Dos Passos were writing a traditional linear novel. In fact, his life can be the life of many others: the son of a night watch, taken early in his childhood to Chicago, he becomes a typographer with the help of his Irish-American uncle Tim Ohara and is soon initiated to the principles of Marxism through his reading of "Bellamy's Looking Backward" (p.73). Later, again with the help of his uncle, he prints and distributes revolutionary tracts and sees in socialism the best way to reconstitute man's dignity which capitalism had deprived him of,"when they (he and his friend Ike) got on the train they were full of the coming socialist revolution..." (p.73). Through Mac, Dos Passos incites to revolt: "[...] remember that you're a rebel by birth and blood", says Tim (p.46).

But Mac is trapped in a contradiction. While engaged in a moral quest for justice and freedom, he feels a social obligation for a race for money. He embraces the ideals of

IWW with great enthusiasm, but he is included Willy-nilly in that material success frenzy. When his uncle is pushed to bankruptcy by the capitalists, he tries to find a place where his competences would be recognized.

He starts his career with the first swindler of the trilogy, a new kind of false intellectual, Doc Bingham who illustrates clearly that American process of travesty. It is under the disguise of propagating the truth and spreading knowledge “light comes from education, reading of books and studies” (p.56) that Doc Bingham sells his pornographic books. Ironically enough, he goes as far as to cite Shakespeare, to use humanistic and religious values in order to convince those people who want to satisfy their sexual wickedness but need a moral alibi as a justification for their acts. In the end, Bingham is on the verge of being killed for adultery.

When Mac finds himself in the street, failing in his first job as a book (pornography) salesman, he returns to his socialist ideals. He is soon joined by Ike, a perfect type of the American wanderer found in the American highroads. Both take the train to Seattle in a quest for fortune⁷⁰, and through the temporary jobs they do, they discover America. The talk of the two boys is filled with “the revolution” and the “Appeal to Reason”, that weekly political newspaper of the Socialist Party of America. When Ike asks Mac whether he read Marx, the latter answers, “No... golly, I’d like to though” (p.66). Though Ike is young, he already aims to be a socialist. However, he has a very simplistic view of the situation: “if you could do away with the capitalist system and the big trusts and Wall Street things’ ud be like that [...]. All you need is a general strike and have the workers refuse to work for a boss any longer” (p.66).

Mac and Ike significantly go westward, fleeing the corrupted business world of the East (just like the first pioneers). Mac really believes that when one works, he gets money. Unsurprisingly, he is disappointed. Unable to realize social and financial

victory, he integrates history by joining the IWW. Here Dos Passos introduces the biography of Big Bill Haywood, the founder of the movement, to give authenticity to the fictive part. He also uses a camera eye in which he speaks about the life of a young man who could be a Dos Passos liberated of all constraints (the Camera Eye 10.pp.92-3).

Mac faces many crises in his life. The first is when Maisie, his wife, sends him a letter from San Francisco, telling him that she is pregnant while taking part in an important IWW organized miners' strike in Nevada led by the charismatic Big Bill. As a future intellectual/leader of the workers, he faces a dilemma: he wants to remain faithful to his class ideals and commitment to IWW, "a wobbly oughtn't to have any wife or children, not till after the revolution", says Fred, his friend (p.97). On the other hand, he wants to join Maisie who aspires to a place within the middle class. Then Big Bill and Maisie are, as Pizer says, "the good and evil angels who seek to persuade Mac as every man to adopt a course of action that will determine the fate of his soul"⁷¹. After deep hesitation, he opts for his wife and her monotonous conformist life.

III.1.2 Radicalism as Escape into Adventure, Company and Exoticism

However, this "petit-bourgeois" life which is being prepared to him by Maisie and her brother pushes him again to commitment. Mac does not resist the temptation of a new activity within the ranks of IWW. He confuses revolutionary determination and nomadism, the thirst for adventure (as it was the case for many Wobblies). The reasons for his determination, however, are hardly Marxist ones. Being fired by his wife after a violent dispute, he says aloud, "I'm through [...]" as if he were speaking to somebody else. Then only did the thought come to him. "I'm free to see the country now, to work for the movement, to go on the boom again" (pp.113-4). Moreover, being a Wobbly means the company of the 'comrades'.

We come to see in his reactions, not a progressive option, but rather an escapist one, as if he were asked to disguise in a modern political behavior a return to out-dated modes of rebellion and protest. Dos Passos never depicts him as a strong militant with a strong project (his failure is predictable in advance). He wants to live at the same level as the other men; Debs's "I want to rise with the ranks, not from the ranks" (p.40) haunts him.

He takes to adventure again, and Dos Passos finds an occasion to use again a personal experience: he indeed went to Mexico in 1926⁷² and collected the material necessary for this part; hence the dominance of the documentary technique over the fictional one. These pages are purely descriptive, fragments of conversation. The Mexico Mac goes to is that of Zapata and Obregon, the leading figures of the Mexican revolution, known with violence and death whom he ironically never gets into contact with.

For the long methodical class-struggle of the Marxists, Mac- and thus Dos Passos- substitutes the Mexican anarchist struggle which is more in conformity with the aspirations of the 'Lost Generation' (Hemingway and many other American writers have shown the same interest in Mexico and its struggle between 1925 and 1930), because this country is fascinating by its primitivism, its non-modernization and also by the role the sacred plays there, a thing which no longer exists in America⁷³.

In this Mexican symphony disappear gradually Mac's energy, combativity and political responsibility. He is confronted to a deep confusion: easy Mexican women, American bars, provisional work and "Big Business", oil prospectors wanting him to negotiate agreements and to establish cooperation between the American monopolies industry and the Mexican government. He ends up buying a bookstore in Mexico City and thus becomes a 'business man' in the midst of the Mexican revolution he intended

to work for when he went there - a thing he never did. He becomes a member of the petty bourgeoisie and puts an end to his hobbo days and also to the possibility of becoming one day a revolutionary intellectual. So, Mac has become what he had always dreaded, an ally of the capitalists and an enemy of the working class he had always dreamed of belonging to. In short, he has become Sartre's "false intellectual. Consequently, Dos Passos lets him down and sees no use in pursuing his story further. And he symbolizes Mac's self-betrayal, or more exactly, his self-destruction by the physical death of an old hobbo Mac meets in the train he takes to San Francisco (pp.104-5).

III.1.3 The difficulty of Being a Radical Intellectual in America

We can conclude that Mac's involvement in the radical movement was not motivated by intellectual conviction. It came rather from his absorption of radical ideas from his milieu: from his uncle Tim Ohara, a kind of father figure, from his friends and from his own experience of the injustices of the American system. At first, he thought he could change the world; he wanted strongly to remain faithful to his radical ideals. He did his best to resist the petty bourgeois comforts offered by his brother-in-law.

But as time went on, he seemed to be concerned more with resisting the changes invading his world. He was dominated by the fear of selling out, of failing responsibility to his class. He kept wavering between his obligation as a militant and his desire for a family life and comfort. But in the end, he succumbed fully by joining the businessmen. Like all the other members of the American radical movement, he betrayed Debs; he betrayed his class, the working class. Thus Dos Passos drops him down by putting an end to his segments (though he reappears from time to time in the segments of other characters).

I personally think that if Dos Passos created Mac for the cause, he was not successful at all. Through him, he reintroduced the hesitation which years along prevented him from committing himself. Nevertheless, Mac's non-efficiency is very informing: through his behavior, we deduce that the problem of the Twentieth Century American lies in the temptations, the weakness and the moral instability of the lower middle classes and the workers, as well as in the strength of the capitalists. This failure may be further due to the total discrepancy between the surviving past ideals/ values and the real mode of existence. It can also be the result of that brutal change from a religious attitude into a secular one or from nomadism of the pioneer life to stability of urban life.

Mac never becomes a radical leader/intellectual; that is why Dos Passos does not always depict him as admirable and virtuous. Nevertheless, he shows an apparent sympathy for him. Indeed he presents him as a well-intentioned character, but he is never idealized or turned into a hero. In 1919, he adopts the same attitude towards Ben Compton, the communist labor organizer, another type of the American working class intellectual.

III.1.4 The Committed Working Class Intellectual as Labor Organizer

The story of Ben as a 'hobbo' does not have a great importance in 1919, the predominant themes being war, revolution, sellouts, lynching, hysteria, fraud and violence. America was engaged in imperialism. The Randolph Bourne and John Reeds were no longer needed in that new American society now based on power. Likewise, there was no place for the old-fashioned hobbos of the Wobbly variety in America, nor for those who wanted to apply to the American reality a pure Marxist perspective.

Nevertheless, the importance of this fully committed character lies in the fact that Dos Passos uses his experiences to inform the reader on the 'hobbos' struggle with

the capitalists for the defense of civil liberties and the destruction of this movement , a fact that engendered a fatal turn in American history. Like Mac, he has the merit of not belonging to the Bourgeois culture and he is not under its influence, but unlike him ,he is fully committed to the cause of the workers; he has chosen his side.

Being taught by the Italian anarchist Nick Gizli, he becomes a great militant. His mentor encourages him to study law to serve the revolution and the working class, “Benny you learn and study ... be great man for working class [...]” (p.692). A devoted intellectual, he takes part in the Seattle actions, gives himself courageously to the working class and is bravely imprisoned. Thanks to some friends, Ben discovers Marx, adheres to the socialist party, then to the IWW and becomes a professional militant, fighting for the trade union cause of Seattle in New York. He attends several meetings against the capitalists’ war before being condemned to 20 years, then to 10 years detention in Atlanta.

Ben is dedicated but his efforts are pathetic and futile. Dos Passos interestingly makes him fail because he rejects the idea that Ben wants to sacrifice or to manipulate the individual for the party cause⁷⁴. The writer is too much concerned with the American traditions of independence and individualism to have a positive view on anyone who is ready to sacrifice the needs of the individual to those of the organization. He believes in the necessity of the workers and little people to organize and cooperate against the inequities of the capitalist system. But at the same time, he was afraid of those forces that submerged and strangled the individual, and according to him, these forces were big business, big government and the communist party. And it is with some of these forces that J. Ward Moorehouse and some female characters allied.

III.2.1 New Types of American False Intellectuals: Pragmatic Corporate Intermediaries and Professionals and the End of Ethical Values

J. Ward Moorehouse, Eleanor Stoddard and Janey Williams could have been ‘true’ intellectuals. These are articulate and educated persons who analyze and criticize. They could have put their knowledge at the service of their people. Instead, they have chosen to engage in the pursuit of success and wealth. Like the businessmen of the biographies, they are selfish pompous and inhumane. They are neither admirable, nor successful.

A self-made millionaire, a publicist and labor politician, Moorehouse is a prototype of the ruthless American opportunist. Intellectually, he is not outstanding; that is why he conforms easily to all kinds of myths, be they new or ancient, provided he can get profit from them. He is a kind of parasite, a non-productive person who is haunted by the idea of joining the upper class by all means. His intellectual/ethical poverty becomes a practical superiority in a society where the notions of “right” and “wrong” are replaced by those of “success” and “failure”.

Interestingly, Moorehouse is offered his greatest chance with America’s entry into World War One which he sees as an occasion for a better social status even at the expense of moral values. Now a public relations counsel, he, at 32 years old, prepares himself to the great adventure in his own way. Here starts the decisive operation: the modification of the social structure which Dos Passos wants to denounce. Supposed to pursue moral ends, the public counsel will, however, do his best to neutralize the so-dreaded trade union opposition and to promote reconciliation between the capitalists and the workers.

The period chosen by Dos Passos is difficult; it is characterized by a rapid growth of trade unions. In addition to the repression of popular forces, a new strategy is

applied : dialogue between the leaders of the workers and the representatives of the capitalists (public counsels).

The new type of patronage to whom Moorehouse was the servant consisted in the elaboration of a new technique of conciliation between employers and employees. A modern American way of life invented by businessmen, monopolies and trusts appeared. It aimed at preserving the businessmen's interests by carefully engineering their image and thus trying to soften the social impact of their harsh politics. And this was Moorehouse's specific duty.

According to Dos Passos, the American government wanted to prevent the trade unions from being influenced by Marxist ideas which were spreading rapidly among the Wobblies. It thus judged it necessary to explain to the common man that America was an exception. It was impossible to interpret in Marxist terms, with an ideology issued by Europe and suitable for it only a reality and a situation specifically American. Americans had to prove very quickly that the most important point in Marxism – class conflict – could not be accepted in the United States. The theory of natural rights, the principle of equal opportunities for everybody, the dogma of the perfect equality between all the citizens of the “country of God”, were specifically American. A class ideology could never be conserved in these old respectable institutions.

III.2.2 Technicians of the Know-How: Technicians of Language, Image and Persuasion

The ‘public counsels’, like Moorehouse, were at the service of the dominant class. It was their duty to convince public opinion that America was totally original: the friendly cooperation between the worker and his boss was very easy. Such a propaganda could be rationally organized. Dos Passos recognizes he has been inspired by Ivy Lee in

the creation of Moorehouse⁷⁵. Lee was one of the first leaders of the burgeoning public relations industry that was being advanced by former newspapermen who recognized a new, specialized fact of the press industry⁷⁶. Dos Passos met him in Moscow in 1928 and learnt much on his opinions⁷⁷. Just like Moorehouse, Lee became famous by helping businessmen guilty of bad labor practices benefit from having their views presented correctly to the public. He became more famous – like Moorehouse again – when he served as a publicity director and later an assistant to the chairman of the American Red Cross in World War One. Like Wilson and Bryan, Lee accepted to turn language into a device for the manipulation of public belief and this is what made Dos Passos use him as a prototype. Moorehouse is also a perfect user of words that affect. Among his favorite terms to disguise the injustice toward labor and the public are “cooperation”, “understanding” and “education”.

Dos Passos accompanies each of Moorehouse’s narrative segments (there are only two in the 42nd Parallel and none in 1919 and the Big Money) by a biography of a person who speaks about the danger of misappropriating the American popular faith or its language. The biography preceding the first narrative segment of Moorehouse is that of William Jennings Bryan, “the Silver Tongue of the plain people” (p.171). Minor C. Keith is of the same kind: “the Emperor of the Caribbean” exploits the workers for his own interests in the name of the classic American success myth”. Carnegie is another example of the people who succeed in masking the truth by honorific public images and language. He was himself at the head of the Bessemer companies, conciliating delicately the demands of Capitalism with those of his legend. All these biographies refer to hypocrites who adopt public roles and use language to disguise their real intentions. That is why Dos Passos inserts them in Moorehouse’s segments.

Through such a character, Dos Passos denounces the manipulation and corruption of language .Moorehouse misuses it to protect “the myth of success”. All along his life, he does not realize that he is using others to serve his own interests, and he calls this loyalty; when corporations use their employees to their own advantages, he terms this “cooperation” (p.230). He does not do this on purpose. His belief in this language is so strong that he cannot see the truth. Not only does he have a great faith in the myth of success, he is also endowed with a power to control and to blind. Indeed Moorehouse is important, but his importance is destructive. He stands for the betrayal of American values, of sincere old words.

Dos Passos reproaches his characters, not with what they do but rather with how they do it and how they become by doing it. He hates Moorehouse, not because he has cheated the workers by the creation of the labor-relations board, but rather because he uses false words to reach his aim. Likewise G. H. Barrow, the duplicitous labor faker, is presented negatively, not because he betrays labor, but rather for his lies, for his talking about ‘the art of living’ when he means concupiscence. These two characters have studied. They could have won the title of intellectuals had they not chosen to lie to the people and to put their knowledge at the service of ‘Big Business’. Doc Bingham, on the contrary, is not hated despite his palpable fraud because though he lies to everybody, he is honest with himself. What interests Dos Passos then is not the usefulness of an action but rather the quality of the person who does it.

On coming back from Europe, this ‘modern wizard of publicity’ becomes an authentic ‘public counsel’: he strives hard to show to the common American the place the Big Enterprise plays in the American community and to prove that it works for the happiness and prosperity of all Americans. He insists again on that relation of confident cooperation that should be created between workers and employers, what he calls “the

team spirit”. He says, “capital and labor those two great forces of our national life neither of which can exist without the other are growing further apart” (p.229).

Once again, Dos Passos bases his narrative on an exact documentation, on social and economic realities. Each rise in the prices of the U.S steel, for example, is preceded by a rigorous psychological preparation which shows that society is working for the common good and is acting according to law and justice. Now with Moorehouse, the American dream is being realized, thanks to American Capitalism and to the devotion of the monopolies. (Likewise on the opposite direction, but with the same aspirations, the IWW pretends to have realized absolute justice). Nevertheless, it efficiently neutralizes the dangerous activities of the Wobblies and attributes all the achievements realized by the Unions to the Trusts. This is the new science of public counselling, and also one of the methods of American Capitalism.

Moorehouse, in a conference with the judge Bowie Planet, a minor character who incarnates law but is in fact a horrible speculator, and with Mr. Barrow, a former secretary of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (the working world), now at the service of the businessmen, exposes his views. He wants to create an agency destined to solve the conflicts between the workers and their employers in a friendly way. “I’ve rarely heard a businessman speak with such sympathy and understanding of the labor situation”, says Judge Planet to Moorehouse (p.230). It is important to establish contact with the working class without alarming them. The period is propitious, “this war in Europe [...] is America’s great opportunity”, says Barrow (p.230). Moorehouse’s solution to the conflict between employers and employees will be exposed the day after during a rotary lunch: to educate the public is an urgent necessity; both employers and employees should serve the public; the workers will be included in the world of ‘Big Business’; they will be given some shares at low prices; they will be accomplices

without however including them in the intended immense profits. Only in this way will the dangers of Socialism and demagoguery be avoided. In this case, an education campaign is necessary to build a public opinion (see p.231).

Moorehouse' ascension is a cruel satire of the naivety of the American individual. Through him, Dos Passos condemns the behavior of the 'Trusts' responsible for this artificial way of life as well as for the wars from which they live. He never mentions the industrialists directly; he keeps alluding to them through Moorehouse who is no more than their servant. Through this character, Dos Passos underlines the dominant pattern of American society. Moorehouse carries along with him his secretary Janey Williams and his platonic mistress Eleanor Stoddard. These women are interesting because, being learned, like Moorehouse, they could have become intellectuals –like the Greenwich Village women of that time-had they not been blinded by money.

III.2.3 Educated Women as Passive False Intellectuals: between the Power of Tradition and the Call of Modernity, Success and Prestige

Before dealing with Eleanor and Janey, it is worth giving an idea on the image of the woman as portrayed by Dos Passos in his trilogy. Critics who dealt with the female characters of these three novels could be divided into two categories: the earlier category which is rather sexist saw Dos Passos's women either uninteresting or flat. Geismar, for example, thinks that they are "thwarted women succumbing to money, power, prestige, to art, fads, to everything in short but their natural role as women"⁷⁸. The second category composed mainly of feminist critics reproaches Dos Passos with a lack of serious attention towards women. Linda Wagner underlines the absence of critical interest in the female characters of USA⁷⁹.

As to the biographies and Newsreels which are used to record public action, they devalue women. Except Isadora Duncan in the Big Money, Dos Passos excludes them from the pantheon of the biographies. This may be due to the fact that the American society Dos Passos depicts was a sexist one: history shows that in the field of labor disputes, big business and war, women were nearly completely absent⁸⁰.

The presence in the Newsreels testifies to their inferior and debased social status, as if Dos Passos is expressing his disapproval of Wilson. Their role is limited to the domestic field. They do not participate in politics and business; independence for them is restricted to dressing and courtship. In Newsreel 11, for example, Dos Passos says :

the bride's gown is of charmeuse satin with a chiffon veiled lace waist. The veil is of crepe lisse edged with point de venise a departure from the conventional bridal veil and the bouquet is to be lilies of the valley and gardenias (p.134).

The Newsreels dealing with women are dominated by male violence against women, rape, physical abuse and sexual harassment. In Newsreel 12, the writer depicts the crime of a 19 years old girl,

The crime for which Richardson was sentenced to die in the electric chair was the confessed murder of his former sweet heart nineteen-years-old Avis Linnell of Hyannis a pupil in the New England Conservatory of Music at Boston.

The girl stood in the way of the minister's marriage to a society girl and heiress of Brookline both through an engagement that still existed between the two and because of a condition in which Miss Linnell found herself.

The girl was deceived into taking poison given her by Richardson which she believed would remedy that condition and died in her room at the young women's Christian Association (pp.149-50).

Women are ravaged by men; they are objectified, minimized. Dos Passos uses a popular song in which a woman marries because her husband promises her "rings on [her]

fingers. And bells on her toes” (p.224). In this song, women are turned into “trifling ornaments”. However, an exception is to be made in Newsreel XV in which a woman gives her opinion on a social issue in the name of all the women. She says,

I’m against capital punishment as are all level minded women. I hate to think any women would attend a hanging. It is a terrible thing for the state to commit murder (p.223).

And in 1919, women become more politically and socially conscious (see Newsreel 27).

As to Dos Passos’s female ‘intellectuals’, they are no better. Most of them succumb to money, prestige or power. Eleanor Stoddard is an artist, but she never fulfills her duties as an intellectual in her society. To be sure, Sartre says that to be an intellectual is an attitude not a job⁸¹, but an artist is supposed to take a stand in his society. Eleanor is utterly passive: She never comments on the events happening around her – at least in the name of universal ethics as intellectuals/artists do; she does not contest the socio-political situation of America in such agitated a period as the pre-war one, nor does she oppose the capitalists’ exploitation of the workers. Though she decides to take part in World War One by going to France as a nurse, she never tries to understand the reasons for such a war. She is a typical uncommitted educated woman unable to make up her mind politically and culturally. Dos Passos depicts her cruelly to punish her for such an attitude.

The pseudo culture she inherited constituted an important challenge for her as a genteel intellectual. It prevented her from adapting to modern life. She is frozen, relentless, ruthless, a kind of “mort vivante”. She is the most tragic character of the novel. Her world changes according to exterior impulses because it has no lasting values. She moves from aestheticism to the practical job of interior decorator to gain more money. She is the closest friend of Moorehouse. Both vacillate between modern life and the badly protected debris of their old culture. Consequently, they adopt a new

confused attitude characterized by frustration, cynicism and ambition: they accept the new norms of success easily because of the weakness of their own values.

Likewise, Janey Williams is trapped in the conventions of lower-middle-class life which transform her into an automaton. Intellectually, she is very limited; politically, she is uninformed. But she has a sympathetic nature which allows her to take part in social change and thus to deserve the title of intellectual. Unfortunately, she is confronted to those conventions proper to white Southern girls that prevent her from expressing her feelings, especially towards men. Dos Passos presents her as a kind of “Iron Virgin”. She feels at ease only with Moorehouse because he is the only person she can worship without danger, being a man who believes in conventional ideas in all fields of life.

Bernard de Voto reproaches Dos Passos for depriving his characters of any intellectual life, any faculty of analysis, any ordinary dreaming⁸². The story of Janey illustrates this point perfectly, especially in 1919. Her life is marked by a degradation due to a lack of moral structures on the one hand, and a pressure from new norms, on the other. At the beginning, she accepts easily this invasion of her conservative world by a new artificial one.

She also admits without hesitation, her existence as an alienated woman. Her toughness and coldness are due to her disappointing relationship with her man-friend Alec which affected her early in her life: her natural love for this man could have saved her, had he encouraged it. Being himself a victim to “the new material myths”, he preferred his ‘motorbike’ to her. She is then compelled to live according to the social standing of this new world since a personal life is impossible for her. To forget this disappointment, she devotes herself entirely to the satisfaction of her desires of ambition and luxury: cigarettes, cinemas, drugstores; she even has several affairs with men. She

thus joins all the other disappointed women who have become businesswomen, secretaries or club presidents. Moreover, she embraces blindly the opinions of her boss without ever thinking about the profound significance of the cause for which she is working. She becomes the docile robot of Moorehouse.

Janey is morally and spiritually dead. Death is inside her, as it is inside Eleanor and Moorehouse. Her situation of a psychologically disturbed woman characterizes the essential malaise of the American woman before the psycho-affective liberation of the Twenties, before the advent of Freudianism which generated other psychological problems in women*.

In her usefulness to Moorehouse, Janey resembles Steinmetz who, as already stated - let down his socialist beliefs and put all his discoveries at the service of General Electric, thus becoming “the most valuable piece of apparatus” (p.273) the firm ever had. Significantly, Dos Passos juxtaposes her narrative with his biography.

Moorehouse, Eleanor, Janey⁸³ and all the other fictional characters, be they on the side of the workers or on that of the businessmen, never indulge in thinking as intellectuals. They care about nothing except their desires and appetites. Living in a world with no moral concern, they are not affected by any intellectual values. Nothing stimulates them; that is why they can be neither memorable nor individually significant. Consequently, the reader in search of intellectual suggestion cannot identify with them; nor can he be touched by their lives.

The hunger for power, wealth, influence and success prevents them from reflecting on what is happening around them or at least on their fates. Moreover, The dehumanization of the modern American society which came as a consequence of rapid technological improvements and industrial modernization prevented them from being

intellectuals. They are automata. Moorehouse could have exploited the high social position he reached more positively. He could have contributed to the well – being of the American people in general – not to that of the big businessmen only. He had all the possibilities for that: money, intelligence and social status. Nothing obliged him to betray the old American values. Eleanor the artist could have devoted her artistic abilities to the service of the masses instead of turning them into a mere source of income. Janey, for her part, though intellectually limited, could at least have worked out a professional model for women.

IV- Newsreels and Camera Eyes: a Mirror of America's Intellectual Life in a Collective and Autobiographical Context

Dos Passos narrates the lives of these characters in a discontinuous rather than linear sequence. He deals with a character then leaves him for a while only to pursue his course later on. He devotes to a character as many segments as necessary till he is fixed as a type, till he is no longer needed in the historical moment he is dealing with. Then, he does not abandon him, but absorbs him in the narrative of others. On the other hand, the characters who do not have segments are mentioned in the narratives of others with varying degrees of prominence. This indeed results in a certain confusion if the concentration of the reader is not complete. But if the novel is read with more attention, one can have a whole image of the character. By merging these characters and by portraying them at significant moments in their lives, Dos Passos wants to show that all these lives are subordinate to a collective whole. That they evolve in such a large area suggests the rootlessness of man's existence in this modern American life.

To help the reader understand further the behavior of his fictional characters, Dos Passos tries to recreate the collective mind of the time through the use of 'Newsreels' and 'Camera Eyes'. These techniques – initially used in films – are given a great

importance in the trilogy because they are linked to that documentary vogue that spread in the Thirties' culture through the use of the sound film, radio and photography, the vividness and immediacy of which the literature of the time attempted to assimilate. These means were considered by intellectuals as the main channels for the spread of ideas and information⁸⁴.

The Newsreels narrate the history and 'Zeitgeist' of the period as they document the reader on the American life between 1900 and 1917. They represent the public voice of the media and popular culture. They introduce different sections with bits of newspaper headlines corresponding to the actions of the characters described. Mac's second segment which contains Debs's biography opens as follows," In his address to the Michigan to the State Legislature the retiring governor, Hazen S. Pingree, said in part [...] there will be a bloody revolution in less than a quarter of a century in this great country of ours" (p.35). And to report the emotions of the time, Dos Passos resorts to poetry, as in:

On a moonlight night
You can find them all
While they are waiting
Banjos are syncopating
What's that they're all saying
What's that they're all singing (p.205).

He even uses popular songs (p.292), advertisements and slogans. These elements inform the reader on the general atmosphere of the episode dealt with. The private action then is related to the public one: the writer reminds us how things were in general when a character was facing a given situation in his own life. The Newsreels show then that private life is part of the culture in which it is embedded and that the spirit of the citizen is colored by the world in which he lives.

The topics of these Newsreels deal with politics, society, labor, disasters and scandals. They are a reproduction of what Americans used to read at the period Dos Passos dealt with. These topics are not chosen at random; they are meant to show how the serious business of the world is carried on. The ‘false intellectuals’ use them to dope the public mind.

These Newsreels are unstructured. They are often presented in the form of headlines and citations from newspapers which the writer sometimes starts in mid-phrase or even breaks off in mid-word. They form a kind of ‘literary montage’ collected from the flow of thoughts of a newspaper reader whose eye jumps from one headline to another. Dos Passos wants to make the reader feel that he is not involved in the selection of these Newsreels which in fact set up the boundaries of the novel. One of their characteristics is that they are dominated by the absurd, especially in the titles of the U.S press.

All America is in the Newsreels, but a falsified America. The American people are submitted to a big pressure. Dos Passos reveals the background of the social consciousness led by the interests of the big businessmen. The Newsreels hold responsible the press for its propaganda in the trial the writer makes on the new American way of life. Its working method makes possible the triumph of the oppressors whose hypocrite and tyrannical domination they must reject. Hence a fierce satire of the nice sentences that convert facts naturally horrible and absurd into inept slogans and stupefying narratives: “Want Big War or None” (Newsreel 15 p.223).

The Newsreels of the 42nd Parallel deal generally with the U.S nationalist expansion, the struggle of the ‘good’ American against the ‘bad’, the adaptation of the old American values to selfish and material exigencies and the drama of the American involvement in World War One. The opening ‘Newsreel’ in the novel thematizes

conflicts through references to wars in South Africa and the Philippines (Newsreel 1. pp.20-21), but it is really a prelude to U.S appropriation of the Twentieth Century itself. Thus Senator Albert Beveridge is quoted as declaring that the Twentieth Century will be American (p.21). In this Newsreel, the writer establishes the global theme to which all the other Newsreels will return constantly.

Though the theme of war is presented first in non-fictional elements, it is taken again in several Newsreels “Czar loses patience with Austria” (Newsreel 15.P.223), “General War Near” (p.223), “Assassin Slays Deputy Jaures” (p.223). Just after this Newsreel, we have the biography of Andrew Carnegie, ‘prince of peace’ and then another Newsreel which repeats the refrain “It’s a long way to Tipperary” after which we find headings like “Joffre asks Troops Now” (p.292). Such Newsreels give authenticity to the fictional action and structure the chronology of the novel by marking constantly the historical date of the general action while synchronizing the individual development of the characters with the purely social/historical time.

Though the Camera Eye can be a device through which Dos Passos completes the lives of his characters, it is mostly biographical. It traces the writer’s early childhood and develops his personal reactions to social and historical events. Camera Eye 1 describes that feeling of insecurity Dos Passos felt when, as he was having a walk with his mother, a demonstration started. The demonstrators, mistaking them for British citizens, threw stones at them. The young Dos and his mother fled to the postcard shop,

Quick darling quick in the postcard shop its quiet
the angry people are outside and can’t come in non
nein nicht englander amerikanich americain Hoch
America Vive l’amérique. She laughs My dear they
had me right frightened (p.21)

The theme of this Camera Eye, ostracism, is most hated by Dos Passos. We feel it in several other Camera Eyes in which the writer expresses his longing to become part of a

group, a community, a larger social force. In Camera Eye 7, Dos Passos portrays a “skating party on the pond” (p.81) near Choate, a boarding school he attended as a child. In this party, he depicts himself as not belonging to the social class that separated itself from the “muckers” and working class boys:

We clean young American Rover Boys handy with
tools Deer slayers played hockey Boy Scouts and
cut figure eights on the ice Achilles Ajax
Agamemnon I couldn't learn to skate and kept
falling down (p.81).

The difficulty of being accepted by his classmates in Choate School is continued in Camera Eye 8 in the depiction of a fight scene (pp.83-4).

In Camera Eye 3, the writer moves to another theme. He tells us about his childish fright when, one day, he saw from the window of a train the black smoke and flame of potteries at night, and his mother telling him that people work there all night, “working men and people like that laborers travailleurs greasers” (p.37). Then she tells him the story of the greaser who had been shot in Mexico (p.37). Just after this, as a perfect example of his ironic juxtapositions, Dos Passos introduces the biography of the “Lover of Mankind”, the Socialist intellectual Eugene Debs, the defender of the workers.

In Camera Eye 26, by the end of the novel, the writer deals with an explicit social theme. He reports on the repression the socialists were submitted to at that time, a theme he will develop fully in his next novel, 1919. He describes his experiences at a political event in the Madison Square Garden and then at an anarchist rally in the Bronx Casino with Emma Goldmann as one of the speakers. His aim is to retrace the importance of “Old Words” (pp.290-1) and to describe the trouble that comes after the speech:

They [the police] charged the crowd with the Fords and the searchlights everybody talked machine-guns revolution civil liberty freedom of speech but occasionally somebody got into the way of a cop and was beaten up and shoved into a patrol wagon and the cops were scared and they said they were calling out the fire department to disperse the crowd (pp. 290-1).

In general, the Camera Eyes which appear 27 times in the 42nd Parallel (and 51 times in the trilogy) tell much about Dos Passos's interests and life history. He talks about himself travelling with his mother in Europe, at school in England and later, his four years in Harvard and his participation in protest meetings in New York on the eve of America's entry to World War One. He uses this device also as a means to demonstrate the ability of the private consciousness to survive in that modern world; that is why he resorts to the stream - of - consciousness prose poetry which is not a pure interior monologue. It is rather the combination of an exterior event with an interior reflexion on this event. Again, the world outside determines the consciousness of the individual. It is for this reason that the consciousness depicted in the Camera Eye changes according to the socio-historical events the writer witnesses.

Indeed, the characters constitute the background of the narrative, but the new literary devices – biography, Newsreel and Camera Eye play an important role in the unity of the novel. Claude Edmund Magny compares them to that music which accompanies films, a music nobody listens to but which everybody hears⁸⁵ and which prepares the spectators' sub-conscious to the coming images. These devices present to the reader/spectator the film of life, actual life. The Newsreel informs us on the events happening in the world and which have a great influence on individual destinies. The Camera Eye which is indeed the writer's interior monologue could easily be the monologue of a collective consciousness. It is constituted of all the elements that give an epoch its historical colour: all the anonymous fragments floating in the consciousness

of the common man, all the news this man collects from his daily life. As to the biographies, they throw light on a given figure that marked the history of a given epoch or that incarnates the collective aspirations of that fallacious and prestigious world of business.

Lukacs's notion of typicality, for its part, helps the writer embody in his fictional characters all the confusions and contradictions of their time without however depriving them of their humanity. They are so real that the reader feels them on the pulses. He even becomes a participant and an observer. Dos Passos succeeds in drawing him into the complex interplay of character and circumstance in the particular instances of the narrative. He even treats him to a glimpse of the wider historical forces at work behind those instances.

From a thematic point of view, my aim in this chapter was to know whether Dos Passos's intellectuals remained faithful to the cause they were fighting for, namely industrial democracy. History has already answered this question as the only intellectuals present in the novel are historical ones (discussed in the biographies). From the way the writer depicts them, some succeeded and others failed, some remained faithful to the cultural tradition of the intellectual left and others betrayed it.

For Dos Passos, if intellectuals succeeded in distinguishing between collective and individual aspects of life; if they recognised that the former aspects of life were basically important, while the individual ones were of small interest ; if they understood the reasons of the conflict between the present dominant forces and other better rising forces and that those rising forces would certainly overcome the dominant ones; if they represented the continuum before and during World War One, then these intellectuals would be positive (It is the case of Debs, Haywood, Lafollette, John Reed, Randolph

Bourne and Edison of the biographies). They would conform to the image of “the true intellectual” Sartre has spoken about.

But if these intellectuals were lured by wealth, social prosperity and succumbed to material status and allied with the greedy and unscrupulous businessmen, they would inevitably lose that clean title of ‘true intellectuals’ to become only “technicians of the know-how (des techniciens du savoir pratique, in Sartre’s parlance), that is, persons who accepted to make themselves slaves of the new Trusts and monopolies, such as Carnegie, Stenmeitz, Moorehouse, Eleanor and Janey.

This being said ,though there are no true intellectuals in this novel – except those cited in the biographies - the literary devices Dos Passos uses give much information on the intellectual life of the period in America, a life dominated by speculation, materialism and loss of values. No true intellectual could be allowed to work in such a situation. The Trusts, the monopolies, the Big Businessmen processed anyone who dared question what was happening. It is no surprise then that Dos Passos omitted such a category from this novel. He seems to believe that no intellectual can do his duty in such a repressive world as that of the Twenties unless this world is cleaned from all its corruptors. And this is what he does in the last novel of the trilogy, the Big Money which is a violent attack on the American intellectuals who have chosen to join the ‘Leisure Class’ in its pursuit of material goals at the expense of their creativity. Dos Passos mocks the members of this class – when he does not kill them – using, as in the 42nd Parallel, satire, irony and humour as stylistic devices.

End Notes

1- John Do Passos, USA (London: Penguin, 1966). The 42nd Parallel was published in 1930, 1919 in 1932 and the Big Money in 1936. But they have been put in a single volume in the form of a trilogy in 1938 by Penguin Books. All future references to these novels will be taken from this edition and page references will be put between parentheses and inserted in the text. I do not have the intention to analyse fully 1919, but I will be referring to it (mainly to its biographies) whenever necessary.

2- Albert Beveridge (1862-1927) was an American historian and a U.S senator from Indiana. He supported the progressive legislation proposed by President Theodore Roosevelt. He was a fervent supporter of American imperialism. He subsequently retired from public life to write several historical works, including the four-volume Life of John Marshall (1916-1919) which won a Pulitzer Prize. For more on him, see Claude Bowers, Beveridge and the Progressive Era (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1932) and John Braeman, Albert J. Beveridge: American Nationalist (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1971).

3- John Stauffer defines radicals as “groups who seek revolutionary alternatives to hegemonic social and political institutions and who use violent or nonviolent means to resist authority and to bring about change”. “Radicalism”, in Journal for the Study of Radicalism (2008).

4- On the collective novel see: Barbara Foley, Radical Representations. Politics and Form in U.S Proletarian Fiction, 1929-1941 (New York: Duke University Press, 1993), pp.398-443.

5- On progressivism see:

- John D. Buenke & Robert M. Crunden, Progressivism (London: Cambridge M.A, 1985).
- Maureen Flanagan, America Reformed: Progressives and Progressivisms: 1890's – 1920's (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
- Lewis L. Gould, America in the Progressive Era, 1890-1914 (London: Longman 2001).
- Michael Mc Gerr, A Fierce Discontent: the Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America: 1870-1920 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

6- Yet the AFL never challenged the organization of the economy. It concentrated only on improving the wages and hours of its members within the existing system. See Julie Green. Pure and Simple Politics: the American Federation of Labor and Political Activism: 1881-1917 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

7-See Socialism in America <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/2006051facebook86346/cynthia-sanborn-feli...>

*-In www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAdebs.htm

*-Idem

8- The Espionage Act of 1917 was drafted to jail “anyone who interfered with the draft or encouraged disloyalty [to America] and provided for jail sentence of 10 to 20 years. The Sedition Act imposed severe penalties on anyone found obstructing the sale of U.S war bonds, discouraging recruitment, uttering ‘disloyal or abusive language’ about the government, the constitution, the American flag or even the U.S military uniform”. See Socialism in America., Op.Cit.

9- R. Levin Murray defines the Red Scare as “a nation-wide anti-radical hysteria provoked by a mounting fear of red monkeys and anxiety that a Bolshevik revolution in America was imminent, a revolution that would change church, home marriage, civility and the American way of life”, in Political Hysteria in America: the Domestic Capacity for Repression (New York: Basic Books, 1971). See also Richard Gid. Powers, Not Without Honor: A History of Anti-Communism (New York: Free Press, 1997).

*All these trade unionists are cited in the novel under study.

10- Anarchism is generally defined as “a political philosophy that holds the state to be undesirable, unnecessary and harmful”, in George Woocock, Anarchism: a History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements (New York: Broad View Press, 2004), p.389.

See also Erik P. Kauffman, the Rise and Fall of Anglo-America (Cambridge: MA Harvard University Press, 2004). Most anarchists stand against all forms of aggression, support self-defense and nonviolence. Social anarchists call for a public ownership of means of production and a democratic control of all organizations without any government authority. Voltairine de Cleyre summarizes the objectives of Anarchism as follows: [...] Anarchism seeks to arouse the consciousness of oppression, the desire for a better society and a sense of the necessity for increasing warfare against Capitalism and the state”, in McKinley’s Association from the anarchist stand point (1907).

11- Preamble to the IWW Constitution/Industrial Workers of the World
[/www.org.retrieved2009-08-20](#).

12- See Lenny Flank, IWW: a Documentary History (Florida: Red and Black Publishers, 2007). See also Watter C.Smith, Sabotage: its History, Philosophy and Function 1913.

13- The origins of the expression ‘Wobbly’ are attributed to the language difficulties a Chinese restaurant keeper who was confided the task of feeding members passing through his town during a strike had. When he tried to ask “Are you IWW?”, he said all loo eye wobble wobble?”, see Mortimer Downing, Nation Sep 5, 1923. See also the IWW: the Failure of Revolutionary Syndicalism in the USA, 1905-1921, International Review (January 15, 2006), [en.internationalis.org](#)

14- See Peter Carlson Roughneck, The Life and Times of Big Bill Haywood (New York: Norton, 1983).

15- See Melvyn Dubofsky, we Shall Be all: a History of the Industrial Workers of the World (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

See also Archie Green, Wobblies, Pile Butts and others heroes (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1993).

16- Grevin sums up the causes of the IWW failure saying: “first the organization as a whole failed completely to give a political leadership to the proletariat against the war. Second the utter failure to understand what the war meant on the historic level in the development of capitalism led the leadership to trust in bourgeois democracy and ‘due process of law’ at the great IWW trial. As a result, the IWW was essentially smashed, its treasury depleted, its leading militants imprisoned or in exile, and this left it incapable of playing its part in throwing the immense weight of the American proletariat into the balance in support of the revolution in Russia”, in “The IWW and the Failure of Revolutionary Syndicalism in the USA”, International Communist Current, May 2006.

17- Malcolm Bradbury, The modern American Novel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.79.

18- For details on these strikes see: Joseph G. Rayback, A History of American Labor (New York: Macmillan Publishing and Co., Inc, 1966).

Joseph Slater, "Labor and the Boston police strike of 1919", in Aaron Brenner, Benjamin Say & Immanuel Ness (eds); The Encyclopedia of Strikes in American History (New York : M. E Sharpe, 2009), pp.239-51.

David Brody, Labor in Crisis: the Steel Strike of 1919 (New York : Greenwood Press, 1982).

David Lee Mc Mullen, Strike the Radical Insurrections of Ellen Dawson (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010).

Paul Murphy, Kermit Hall & David Klaasen, The Passaic Textile Strike of 1926 (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing & Co, 1974).

19- The Espionage Act (1917) provided penalties of 20 years imprisonment and fines for those convicted of interfering with military recruitment. This act "was amended by congress to target those individuals guilty of sedition, i.e., those who publicly criticized the government – including negative comments about the flag, military or constitution". www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1343.html.

20- See Regin Schmidt, Red Scare, FBI and the Origins of Anti-Communism in the United States – 1919-1943 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2000), pp.236-90 (Palmer Raids).

21- Wilson believed that the aim of the Treaty of Versailles was to prevent war from happening again, and not to take revenge from Germany. He promised a treaty that would go fairly light on the latter, but the allies did not agree. He could not impose his view because of America's relative lack of involvement in the war which had as its result America's loss of bargaining power and influence among the allied countries. The main reason the US did not agree to the treaty was that it did not want its foreign policy decided by another body.

For details on the Versailles Treaty, see:

David A. Andelman, a Shattered Peace: Versailles 1919 and the Peace we Pay Today (New York: J. Wiley, 2008). Margaret Macmillan, Peace Makers (London: John Murray, 2001).

22-Freud visited America in 1908. His ideas made a great impact on young Americans who soon developed an interest in Psychoanalysis. See Richard Ruband and Malcolm Bradbury, From Puritanism to Post-Modernism. A History of American Literature (London: Penguin Books, 1992), p.270.

23- In the United States, Feminism started in the late 1800's. Women fought for their rights to be heard and allowed to vote. In the 20th Century, it focused on the desire for women to become more socially equal. For details on Feminism in the U. S see, Steven Buechler, Women's Movements in the United States: Woman Suffrage, Equal Rights and Beyond (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1990).

Elizabeth Frost & Cullen DuPont, Women's Suffrage in America: an Eyewitness History (New York: Facts on File, 1992).

24- See Richard Rusband & Malcolm Bradbury Op Cit., p. 272.

25- Though American Modernists assimilated into their fiction some European formal experiments, they advocated at the same time a return to American myths and expressed the American cultural conflicts of the Twenties. Moreover, it is true that the American Modernist works of the Twenties – just like the European ones – were characterized by despair, disorder, displaying a deep sense of psychic, cultural and historical extremity; there is in the American novel an optimistic excitement and a national confidence which are strongly opposed to the pessimism of the European novel.

26- Malcolm Bradbury, The Modern American Novel, Op. Cit., p. 81.

27- John H. Wrenn, John Dos Passos (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc, 1961), p. 147. (In this book, Wrenn gives an overview on the development of the documentary form).

28- Idem.

29- Alice Béja summarized Dos Passos's involvement in the Communist Party in a few lines, "In 1925-26, John Dos Passos reported the Passaic Strike, one of the major strikes led by communists. In May 1926, he was one of the founders of the radical magazine New Masses which in the 1930's under the guidance of Mike Gold became a mouthpiece for the C.P. USA. In 1926-27, he actively participated in the campaign to save Sacco and Vanzetti, and even went to jail for taking part in a demonstration shortly... before their execution [...] In August 1930, he headed with Theodore Dreiser, the Emergency Committee for Political Prisoners [...]. In October [1932] he campaigned for the communist candidate to the presidential election by joining the League of Professional Groups for Foster and Ford", in "Radically American: John Dos Passos, Culture and Politics", Reconstruction: Studies in Contemporary Culture (8-1-2008). www.academia.edu

30- This is also – unfortunately – the unavoidable impression our study will give while analyzing these biographies.

31- Terry Eagleton, Criticism and Ideology: a Study in Marxist Literary Theory, [1957]; (London: Verso, 1978), p.58-9.

32- Ibid., p.59.

33- Ibid., pp.59-60.

34- Georg Lukàcs, the Meaning of Contemporary Realism (London: Merlin Press, 1963), p.19.

35- See www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/usadebs.htm.

*This newspaper opposed America's entry into World War One but later it came to change its policy under the government pressure when Wilson decided the entry of the U.S into this war. For details see: www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAappealR.htm

36- Idem.

37- Max Eastman, an American journalist wrote about him, "[...] there is both fighting and love in American socialism and Debs knew how to fight. But that was not his genius. His genius was for love [...]. That gave him more power than was possessed by many who were better versed in the subtleties of politics and oratory", Idem.

38- Idem.

39- For details on Debs and his activities within the Socialist Party as well as within the IWW see,

Harold W. Currie, Eugene Debs (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1976).

Wayne H. Morgan, Eugene V. Debs: Socialist for President (New York: Literary Licensing, 2011).

40- See Nancy Unger, Fighting Bob La Follette: the Righteous Reformer (Wisconsin: Wisconsin Historical Society, 2008), pp.247-249.

41- He says, "when we cooperate with these governments, we endorse their methods; we endorse the violations of international law by Great Britain; we endorse the

shameful methods of warfare against which we have again and again protested in this war”, Cited in “Opposition in Wilson’s War Message” <http://www.mtholyke.edu/acad/intrel/dol119/.htm>.

42- See Ross Ryan Halford, Oratorial Encounters: Selected Studies and Sources of Twentieth Century Political Associations (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, inc, 1988).

43- For more on Lafollette see: Carl R. Burgchardt, Robert M. Lafollette, Sr (New York: the Voice of Conscience Greenwood Press, 1992). See also John Brondal, “The Ethnic and Radical Side of Robert M. Lafollette”, Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era (2011) 10 (3): 340-53.

44- On Big Bill Haywood see:

Howard Zinn, A People’s History of the United States (New York: Harper Collins, 2009).

Bruce Watson, Bread and Roses: Mills, Migrants and the struggle for the American Dream (New York: Viking, 2005).

45- For more details on Joe Hill, see: Paul Buhl & Nicole Schulman eds.; Wobblies! A Graphic History of the Industrial Workers of the World (New York: Verso, 2005).

Davidson Jared, Remains to Be Seen: Tracing Joe Hill’s Aches in New Zealand (Wellington: Rebel Press, 2011).

46- In Tom Copeland, “Wesley Everest, IWW Martyr”, The Pacific North West Quarterly, 77, 4 (Oct 1986) : 122-29.

47- www.nndb.com/people/751000026673/.

48- Idem.

49- For details on this point, see Peter Dreyer, A Gardener Touched with Genius: the Life of Luther Burbank, (New York : Couard & Mc Cann, 1975). See also:

Frederick M. Clampelt, Luther Burbank: our Beloved Infidel, his Religion of Humanity (New York: Praeger, 1970).

50- Sartre says in this context: « [...] On n’appelera pas ‘intellectuels’ des savants qui travaillent sur la fission de l’atome pour perfectionner les engins de la guerre atomique : ce sont des savants, voilà tout. Mais si ces mêmes savants, effrayés par la puissance destructrice des engins qu’ils permettent de fabriquer, se réunissent et signent un

manifeste pour mettre l'opinion en garde contre l'usage de la bombe atomique, ils deviennent des intellectuels », in Plaidoyer pour les Intellectuels (Paris : Gallimard, 1972),p.72.

On Edison see:

- Martin M. Melosi, Thomas A. Edison and the Modernization of America (Illinois: Scott, Foresman, 1990).

- Robert Connot, Thomas A. Edison: a steak of Luck (New York: Dakapo Press, 1979).

51- On these point see John Reed. co.UK/reedhtml. www.spartacusschoolnt.

52- See Eric Homberger, John Reed (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p.55.

53- Homeberger Op.Cit., p.122.

54- See John Newsinger (ed); Shaking the World. John Reed's Revolutionary Journalism (London: Book Marks, 1998).

55- On Bourne see Jonathan M. Hansen, The Lost Promise of Patriotism: Debating American Identity. 1890-1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). See also Clayton. Bruce, Forgotten Prophet: the Life of Randolphe Bourne (Baton Rouge: Luisiana State University Press, 1984).

*The term "Normalcy" will be defined in Chapter Three.

56- John D. Brantley, The Fiction of John Dos Passos (Paris: Moriton, 1968), p.72.

57- On Minor C. Keith see: B.C. Forbes, Men who Are Making America (New York: Forbes Publishing & Co, 1917).

58- See Ronald Kline, Steinmetz: Engineer and Socialist (New York: John Hopkins University Press, 1998).

59- In Plaidoyer pour les Intellectuels Op.Cit., p.12.

60- See David Nasaw, Andrew Carnegie, (New York: Penguin Press, 2005).

61- See Steve Fraser, Everyman a Spedator. A History of Wall-Street in American Life, (New York: Harper Collins, 2005).

62- For more details on Morgan see Dan Rottenburg, The Man who Made Wall Street, (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001) and Hannah Leslie, “J.P. Morgan in London and New York before 1914”; Business History Review 85 (Spring 2011) :113-54.

63- See Michael Kazin, A Godly Hero: the Life of William Jennings Bryan (New York: Anchor, 2007) and Gerald Leinwand, William Jennings Bryan: an Uncertain Trumpet (Lanham: Rowman & Little Field Publishers, 2007).

64- Blanche Gelfant, The American City Novel (Norman : Oklahoma City Press, 1954), pp.267-8.

65- In Thèmes et structures dans l'œuvre de John Dos Passos (Paris : lettres modernes, 1974), p.354.

66- In the 19th Century, the American West had succeeded in defying and destroying the leadership of New England aristocrats. In the 20th Century, the East seems to be taking its revenge but at the expense of the falsification of all the values which made its power. Merl Curti explained well this American bi-polarisation in his book entitled The Growth of American Thought (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1953), pp. 253-99.

67- The businessman is not portrayed sympathetically or neutrally in the literature of the thirties. His image is tainted. It is indeed one of the characteristics of this literature to avoid in its characterization businessmen or any successful men from any occupation or profession. On this point see Charles R. Hearn, The American Dream in the Great Depression (London: Greenwood Press, 1977).

68- The character of Mac is inspired from a real person, Gladwin Bland, a former member of IWW whom Dos Passos met in Mexico before the revolution. See Donald Pizer, Dos Passos's USA (Charlotte Ville: University Press of Virginia, 1988), p.118.

69- James P. Cannon, The IWW: the Great Anticipation (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1956), pp. 27-30.

70- Trains play an important role in Mac's life. They serve as a link to the biography of the novel, that of Debs who spent all his life as a rail road workers' leader.

71- Pizer,. Op.Cit., p.121.

72- See John H. Wrenn,. Op.Cit.,p.144.

73- On this point see S.T. Williams, The Spanish Background of American Literature (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955).

74- And this is what makes a difference between the USA trilogy and the proletarian novel which measures the worth of a human being according to the degree of his devotion to the workingman's cause. See Charles R. Hearn, the American Dream in the Great Depression (London: Greenwood Press, 1977), p.129.

75- See Pizer,. Op.Cit., p.126.

76- See Ray Eldon Herbert, Courtier to the Ground: the Story of IVY Lee and the Development of Public Relations (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1966).

77- Pizer,. Op.Cit., p.126.

78- Maxwell Geismar, Writers in Crisis. The American Novel between 1925-1940 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960),p.103.

79- Lynda W. Wagner, Dos Passos. Artist as an American (London: University of Texas Press, 1979), p.77.

80- See Janet Galliani Casey, "Historicizing the female in USA Re-Vision of Dos Passos's Trilogy, Twentieth Century Literature 41, 3 (Autumn, 1995) : 249-65.

81- "Etre un intellectuel est une attitude, pas un métier", in Qu'est ce que la littérature (Paris : Gallimard,1948),p.69.

82- Bernard de Voto, « John Dos Passos: Anatomist of our Time », the Saturday Review of Literature11, 3 (Autumn 1995) :249-64.

*Some of these problems are depicted in 1919 and in the Big Money ,as we shall see later.

83-On women in Dos Passos see Janet Galligani Casey , *Dos Passos and the Ideology of the Feminine* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press ,1998).

84-I do not intend to deal with Dos Passos's 'Newsreels' and 'Camera Eyes' in detail because these are techniques studied fully by many critics. I only refer to some of them to show that the public events they deal with have repercussions on the private life of the characters. On these techniques see, among many others,

- Donald Pizer, "The Camera Eye in USA: the Sexual Center", Modern Fiction Studies 26 (1980), pp.417-30.

- Robert Weeks, "The Novel as Poem: Whitman's Legacy to Dos Passos", Modern Fiction Studies 26 (1980), pp.431-46.

- Juan A. Suaréz, "John Dos Passos's USA and Left Documentary Film in the 1930's: the Cultural Politics of 'Newsreels' and 'Camera Eye', Twentieth Century Literature 23, 2 (May 1977) : 195-228.

85- Claude Edmund Magny, L'âge du roman américain (Paris: Seuil, 1948), p.139.

Chapter Three
The Intellectual and
Money in the Big Money

Dos Passos's 'false' intellectuals who had started a race for success in the 42nd Parallel have now, in the Big Money¹, the last volume of the trilogy, joined the "Leisure Class", that post-war class which engaged in the pursuit of wealth, prestige and power at the expense of human dignity, political freedom and economic equality.

The members of the Leisure Class I am concerned with in the present chapter are those intellectuals who, after WWI, subvert human and moral values to economic ones. They are represented by that new generation of Americans who, after taking part in the war, decide to give up their talents for the sake of wealth, among them Charley Anderson who could have been an excellent mechanic engineer, Richard Savage, who, instead of making a career as a poet, chooses to succeed to Moorehouse in subverting language, Eveline Hutchins and Eleanor Stoddard who give up their artistic careers as interior decorators for the sake of money.

Charley Anderson the intellectual/mechanic engineer is the typical figure of the Big Money. Through him, the writer portrays the destruction of the American social and moral values in the 1920's. He comes back from the war as an aviation ace and soon starts – with his friend Joe Askew – the Askew - Merrit Aviation Company, thus throwing himself in the midst of money. However, he does not find his happiness in material success. As soon as he embraces metropolitan life, he gets acquainted with Eveline Hutchins, a married woman who starts a career in illicit sexual relationships. After several failed love affairs which lead him to a series of drunken jugs, he sells his shares of the Askew - Merrit Company- and enters the world of speculation. Once he rises socially, he betrays all his friends and gives up his passion for mechanics .He leaves for Detroit where he gets involved in stock-market gambling and a high society marriage with Gladys Wheatley, daughter of a famous businessman. Unable to bear the disdain of the American industrialists, he goes from one disaster to another. Foreseeing

his downfall, Gladys divorces him and his friends the bankers drive him out of his company and then out of the stock market itself. Feeling lonely, he engages in a commercialized sexual relationship with Margo Dowling, a prostitute. He ends his glittering career cracking up in a motorcar.

To the disintegration of Charley is associated the disintegration of many other characters in the novel. J.Ward Moorehouse, the public counsel of the 42nd Parallel, is seriously ill, Dick Savage, the former Harvard intellectual and potential radical, replaces him in his role of publicity wizard, but he soon succumbs to the influence of the 'Big Money'. He ends up bankrupted, surrendering to prostitutes. Margo Dowling, the most awful of these prostitutes is pathological, if not amoral. All these characters who could have been effective true intellectuals are a kind of summary to the human disintegration of the 1920's. They are typical products of that era of material abundance which the American theoretician and economist Thorstein Veblen predicted in his economic treatise the Theory of the Leisure Class² which is, just like The Big Money, a social satire about the American way of life and the pursuit of prestige through the ownership of consumer goods. Dos Passos tried to adapt this treatise to the recent developments he depicts in his novel. Veblen seems even responsible for the orientation of the Big Money.

In the Theory of the Leisure Class, Veblen examines the nature of economy and the meaning of "leisure" and the "leisure class". This theory was dominated by one principle : the tendency to compare oneself with others and to compete with them. Veblen thinks that human societies have abandoned the peaceful state of the past for a modern state, a state of brutal predacity, where struggle is the only means for survival. He sees America as a nation divided into two different classes: a Leisure Class and a Working Class. He believes that all classes are dominated by the desire to acquire

wealth and thus compete with one another. And this entails a disorder in the social mechanism of the nation.

He tries to demonstrate that this class is wasteful and does not contribute to the development of economy. He criticizes violently “its conspicuous consumption”: the spending of money for luxury goods, products that are not considered essential and are associated with affluence to display economic power publicly and thus attain or maintain a social status³. Only a certain category of people are admitted in this class : those who have been tested and have shown gifts for predacity and have survived thanks to their financial aptitudes. He considers the members of this class as non-industrial; they exploit human beings and get their wealth from appropriated goods.

For him, there has been no proletarian revolution in the United States, as Marx had predicted, because the workers did not seek to overthrow the upper class, but rather were eager to join it. He saw the end of Capitalism, not in a proletarian revolution, as Marx believed, but in the machine, a machine that would be under the supervision of a corps of engineers- a new type of intellectuals- who would “take over the running of the economy”⁴; if this did not happen, “then the plundering spirit of big business would increase until the system gave way to Fascism”⁵.

There were profound affinities between Veblen and Dos Passos. What attracted Dos Passos to him was essentially that “non-belonging”, that striving for a complete freedom, that antagonism between the businessman and the technician/ the intellectual who wanted to remain independent: the businessman trying to dispossess the technician/ intellectual, to frustrate him from his efforts (this antagonism is one of the themes of the Big Money).

Moreover, both Veblen and Dos Passos hoped that one day, the working class would triumph and take over the machine of production before the businessmen had drawn America down into the dark again.

Following Dos Passos's fictional representation of this situation, I shall concentrate on the danger this class represents for the economy, culture and values of fictional America, notably on its capacity to pervert and subvert. I shall also pay attention to the role Dos Passos's revolutionary intellectuals play in the struggle of the masses against such a class.

In the first section, I deal with Dos Passos's Leisure Class as it is depicted through Charley Anderson, Dick Savage, Eleanor Stoddard, Eveline Hutchins and Margo Dowling. With the exception of Margo, all these "wealthy" people are educated; they could be what Gramsci calls "reactionary organic Intellectuals" – intellectuals who use their knowledge for their own purposes and for those of the Capitalists they work for, instead of furthering those of the nation. Attention will be paid to new stylistic devices such as irony and satire which serve to ridicule these people.

In the second section, I examine the role Dos Passos attributes to the revolutionary organic intellectuals in the struggle of the workers against this new "Leisure Class" and against the distortion of American values. Attention will be paid to Mary French and Ben Compton who work within the Communist party. I will query whether they really accomplish all the duties of the revolutionary intellectuals cited by Gramsci, whether they serve the revolutionary cause and whether they are an organic part of the community.

These two sections will be preceded by a socio-historical background in which will be related the most important social, political and cultural events that marked the

history of America between 1920 and 1929 and that Dos Passos cites in the Big Money (these facts are indeed important for the understanding of the works of all the writers of the period).

The Big Money is also a literary work, a product of a strict literary imagination. But because the writer has dealt with the most expansionist period in American modern history -1919 – 1929, confers to his novel an authentic knowledge of contemporary urban America. The social and historical events are not related directly, Dos Passos resorting again (as in the 42nd Parallel and 1919) to many techniques, mainly that of the Camera Eye inserted here and there in the narrative. Through this device, he expresses his subjectivity in the midst of the impersonal events that constitute the common experience as well as the story of his growing consciousness of the social tragedy that submerges the country.

Newsreels help him express the collective mentality, reveal social time, structure the chronology of fictional action and synchronize the evolution of a particular character with the real social /historical time. The biographies, for their part, are used as a commentary on a representative person of the moment or epoch dealt with. Moreover, like the Camera Eyes and Newsreels, they are closely related to the personal narratives which they sometimes interrupt and sometimes accompany through a rigorous thematisation.

I shall then concentrate on those non-fictional devices that assure the representation of the post 1920's economic crisis and the cynical trampling of old American values, which are the main themes of the novel and whose historical context I deal with next.

I. Socio-Historical Background

I.1 The American Presidency in the Twenties

Between 1920 and 1930, America experienced the leadership of three Conservative Republican presidents who established a close relationship between the government and Big Business. In 1921, the Americans voted for the Republican Warren Gamalliel Harding against the Democrat James M.Cox⁶. This victory expressed the Americans' frustration with Wilson and his optimistic reform policies. Harding, the Ohio Newspaper editor, with Calvin Coolidge, his secretary of state took office with a burden of unresolved problems in business which was shot to pieces, in industry which was stagnant, in the high rate of unemployment, in high taxes and inflation.

Americans demanded and expected a fair deal. As the majority worked for their living, attention had to be paid to their welfare. What labor wanted was only justice; it did not want the new administration to favour the big interests or to crush the trade unions. It longed for a return to Christian values, less government interference in their lives and less immigration. Harding's policy of a "return to Normalcy" was welcomed by the majority of the people. By "Normalcy" he meant a return to the way of life before WWI, that is, to the pre-war mentality. In July, 1921, he said, "By Normalcy: I don't mean the old order, but a regular steady order of things. I mean normal procedure, the natural way, without excess"⁷. With this slogan, he wanted "to return a war-weary country to the peace and happiness of a bygone era. Everything would return to normal", as Russel Ainto says⁸.

Harding was conservative on trade and economic issues. He favoured pro-business government policies; he reduced taxes and stopped anti-Trust actions. He knew little about foreign affairs; he was rather interested in securing foreign markets for

wealthy American banks (such as Rockefeller's). He was determined to make the federal government serve U.S Business Interests.

The Harding years also witnessed the introduction of what was called at that time the "American Plan"* through which businessmen tried to stop Trade Union activities by offering workers what they called a "Welfare Capitalism". This plan made workers benefit from "insurance, pensions, cheap lunches in company cafeterias, paid vacations and stock purchase options in return for leaving or not joining trade unions"⁹. It was meant to reduce the number of strikes: Henry Ford reduced work hours and gave higher pay to keep the workers from joining the union, as is shown in his biography.

However, once in office, Harding recognized that he was a better publisher than politician. Moreover, he was surrounded by dishonest cheats known as the "Ohio Gang", a group of politicians who helped him during his campaign with their financially powerful positions. They soon corrupted the government, as most of them were involved in financial scandals¹⁰. Today, historians consider him as the worst president in U.S history.

Despite these weaknesses, one cannot deny that it is during his presidency that American women voted for the first time in American history¹¹, that prohibition was applied, that farming interests were protected. After Harding's death in 1923, these policies were applied and led to the "Boom" of the Coolidge years. Calvin Coolidge cleaned the white house from the Harding scandals and presided over a booming economy. During his term, America lived a period of rapid economic growth known as the "Roaring Twenties".

But this rapid growth gave birth to speculation that culminated in the stock market crash. The president acted as an arbiter rather than an active entity. And this

attitude continued even under the next president Herbert Hoover, the self-made millionaire who took power when America was prey to the most aggressive of Capitalisms, when democratic liberties were violated and advertisements and lies dominated the country (all these facts are cited in the novel and are related to the Sacco/Vanzetti case). He worked the depression hard but failed.

Hoover revolutionized relations between government and business by promoting cooperative voluntary partnership between the two. He encouraged international trade by opening offices overseas that gave help and advice to businessmen. He believed in the concept that public-private cooperation was the way to achieve high long-term growth (an idea expressed by J.Ward Moorehouse in the Big Money). He also believed that if the government intervened too frequently, this would destroy two important American values: Individuality and self-reliance¹².

The 1929 economic crash happened eight months after he took office. He did his best to combat this depression with volunteer efforts, increase in taxes, public works projects. But he never managed to reach economic recovery in his term. His ideas were used later by F.D Roosevelt in his New Deal¹³. He was not re-elected in 1932 because, according to some historians, he did not succeed in ending the economic crisis¹⁴.

I.2 The 1920's: An Orgy of Spending, a Frenzy of Speculation and a Dizzy Search for Pleasure

During the mandates of the three above-cited presidents then, America turned back on itself and concentrated on economic growth, technological development and commercial expansion. The American society of the 1920's was characterised by individualism, self-advancement and the pursuit of abundance for all.

Economy boomed and materialism triumphed over idealism. The country was engaged in an orgy of spending, a frenzy of speculation and a dizzy search for pleasure.

Mechanisation and mass-production resulted in a concentration of wealth and a new consumerism. Wages rose and the urban life attracted all Americans. There was a growing blurring of the urban-rural divide. Thus, cities expanded quickly.

The American life-style was transformed by technology: all the urban homes were then equipped with electric lights, irons, vacuum cleaners, radios, record-players, typewriters, sewing-machines. Some Americans even acquired “the ultimate status symbol”, the automobile which facilitated mobility to both country and city people. All Americans were satisfied with these modern commodities because they were American inventions and American-made. America was transformed from a production to a consumer- centred economy.

I.3 A Social and Cultural Revolution

Prosperity and consumerism were closely linked to the development of the advertising industry. This new science was highly needed to market all the American consumer goods. It soon invaded tabloid press, women’s magazines and the radio. Bradbury even says that “within a decade advertising developed from announcement to image maker”¹⁵. It is now linked to psychology with its emphasis on self-discovery and fulfilment. What helped this rapid development in the 1920’s was the creation of schools of business studies by the IVY League Universities¹⁶ to persuade Americans to buy more and more¹⁷. Advertisers resorted to idealization; they used such values as Democracy, the family, bourgeois comfort and modernity to represent products (this is

what Moorehouse does in the Big Money). As inflation was low, the prices of many goods had declined.

It is worth noting that advertising, together with “Welfare Capitalism”, was one of the causes of the decline of union membership¹⁸. Indeed power was concentrated in the hands of employers, but the workers were happy to enjoy the material benefits of the age. The 1929 crash destroyed that idea of Welfare Capitalism (Moorehouse’s most important idea) as employers did not keep to the promise of continuing to look after their workers.

Americans were interested in personal pleasure, leisure activities and entertainment (movies, jazz music and sports events). There were radical changes in mores and lifestyles. Wealth separated the American past from its present, the country from the city. A new kind of Americanness emerged, characterized by prohibition, speakeasies, flappers, psychoanalysis and film stars.

The American society and culture were transformed and puritan values collapsed; prohibition was approved by the 18th Amendment to the constitution in 1919. This amendment was designed to fight alcoholism. In reality, it only created a large number of bootleggers¹⁹ (illegal distributors or producers of liquor or other highly taxed goods), who were able to supply the public with illegal alcohol. It also caused the proliferation of speakeasies and night clubs which were adequate venues for organized crime. The pastoral became a social jungle.

The 19th Amendment in 1921 granted women the right to vote and provoked a revolution in manners and morals. The image of the American woman changed. No

longer a conservative Victorian mother ,her short hair, mini-skirt, make-up, smoking, drinking, dancing partying turned her into a provocative woman, “a flapper”²⁰. She gained a considerable place in her society, as she had more opportunities and held some jobs that were previously reserved for men.

Unfortunately this modern American woman did not make a difference between sexual availability and personal freedom (like Margo and Eveline). She lived in the “sex era”, an era in which sex drive was socially accepted. In the 1920’s both men and women were liberated from their inhibitions by Freud’s psychoanalysis which became very fashionable. The generalization of the automobile and the development of the movies industry also had a great influence on the style, morals and manners of the Americans (Rudolph Valentino and Herald Lloyd, both cited in the Big Money, were among the heroes of the silent film). Add to this, the Jazz Age, that new form of music which was also characterized by excess and dissolution.

The loss of moral values caused the rise of terrorism .The revival of the Ku Klux Klan²¹ targeted Negroes, Jews, Catholics, aliens and radicals. The KKK of the 1920’s was a response to the new issues of urbanization, immigration and industrialization. It advocated extreme nativist ideas, such as white supremacy, white nationalism and anti-immigration; this it expressed through terrorist acts. It called for strict morality, better enforcement of prohibition and demanded the purification of politics which had become a means to serve the businessmen’s interests.

I.4 Towards the 1930's: Towards Renewed Radicalism and Commitment

Politically, the 1920's was a decade of somnolence dominated by an apolitical climate. Americans lost confidence in politicians and even in noble causes. They no longer trusted the progressive politics of the period. They saw in Communism a foreign threat to the American way of life; they were afraid of a Communist revolution from the left. Moreover, the Socialist and Communist parties lost their influence as they were persecuted and suffered from factionalism²². They stuck to the American principle of abundance for all. They had no time to recognize the failure of politics, of America's ideals, of its democratic heritage. Their foreign policy was marked by isolationism. Americans cut themselves from the rest of the world because they suffered great losses in the war and they decided never to get involved again in European conflicts. They even refused to join the League of Nations. Moreover, this policy conserved the wealth of the nation. It was meant to keep the boom within America.

However the execution of the Italian anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti repoliticized that period which split conservatives and radicals (this is the main theme of the second half of the novel). The affair is wide and important because it is situated in a singular social and political context: in the midst of the offensive of American Capitalism against any liberty. Henry Ford forbade the existence of any trade Unions in his factories; many companies possessed their own police and their own workers. Between 1926 and 1932, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) lost half of its adherents; the "Reds" were pursued everywhere; the Ku Klux Klan resumed its activities. Any suspect public meeting was forbidden. The nation built by Jefferson seemed to belong to the past.

Undoubtedly, the year 1927 attests the beginning of a collective consciousness. It is in these conditions that Sacco and Vanzetti were going to be executed. America

was profoundly shaken by this news. For a leather worker, Nicola Sacco, for a fisherman Bartolomeo Vanzetti, condemned seven years earlier for a hold-up of which they were innocent, all liberal America was to fail because the two men were going to die. These men were going to become myths, symbols. Their execution would mean, as once in France with the Dreyfus condemnation, that the spirit of truth abdicated openly near unfair imperatives. That moral order rejected ostensibly the sacred principles of “self-government”. After a Seven year procedure, those who rejected the dictatorship of “Big Business”, those who wanted to keep believing in the moral continuity of the ‘country of God’ organized a great battle together with all those who in many countries understood the symbolic importance of the affair. Meetings, defence committees and petitions multiplied.

That year, the 1920’s radical intellectuals let down any aesthetic activity and devoted themselves to the struggle. Dos Passos took part in the Defence Committees and wrote his famous text “Facing the Chair” which he produced since in The Theme is Freedom. He was jailed for picketing State House in behalf of Sacco-Vanzetti defense. These intellectuals could not accept the electrocution of two men whose ideas were as radical as theirs. If Sacco and Vanzetti were guilty ,so were all the radicals because it was clear that they were condemned for anarchism and not for murder.

Added to that rejection of injustice, these intellectuals stood also against the “success ethic” that dominated American life. They ridiculed the American obsession with material success. They regretted the simplicity, the moral certainty and the peace of their past. In the Greenwich Village²³ in New York City, some sought refuge in cultural pluralism and in the celebration of the primitive. Some of these intellectuals left America, complaining that American artistic culture lacked the extensiveness of European work. They went mainly to Paris where they could live affordably, publish

and start their own journals. They were to generate the Second American Literary Renaissance. The best writers of this period served their apprenticeships in newspapers (the 1920's were known with great newspapermen, Columnists and editors, among them H.L Mencken).

Despite that atmosphere of decadence and nihilism, they could produce works that made of this decade one of the greatest eras of American art, a second "American Renaissance". Among these writers, Ernest Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis, Virginia Wolf, Ezra Pound and John Dos Passos. These writers were notable because they could pioneer new literary styles and techniques. Some of them even incorporated Freudian psychology in their works to explore the workings of the psyche of their characters. Hemingway and Dos Passos were also known with their use of the techniques of journalism. The literature of 1920's was intensely creative, even revolutionary. Many American literary classics were published in that period, among them Fitzgerald's the Great Gatsby, Eliot's "the Waste Land", Hemingway's the Sun also Rises and Faulkner's the Sound and the Fury.

The "Roaring Twenties" boom ended in 1929, when America was struck by a dramatic stock market crash, provoking the collapse of its imposing economic edifice. All of a sudden, It moved from prosperity to poverty: its industrial production went down and new investments dried out. As a consequence, factories and banks closed while the Americans lost their jobs and homes. The national economy was dominated by "Hobbs", those unemployed who took to the road. American labor unions regained ascendancy and organized many strikes.

In that period of the 1930's, many Americans leaned towards Marxism because it seemed to explain convincingly the causes of Capitalism's collapse. They saw in the Soviet Union a model for a more humane society, as it was the first successful Marxist –

inspired revolution. For them, this revolution was a concrete embodiment of what they called “the Socialist experiment”. Furthermore, the Communist parties in the United States and in Western Europe provided intellectuals with a feeling that they were no longer lonely individuals suffering from the consequences of Capitalism. They made them believe that they were taking part in the making of history²⁴.

Despite this sympathy for Russia and Communism, Americans were nevertheless afraid of totalitarian ideologies. Many preferred to keep to the virtues of American Democracy and the decency of the American citizen. They advocated a reaffirmation of their own cultural past and its traditional democratic ideals. They believed that the problems of the present could be solved by correcting the intellectual mistakes of the past, “only when one’s purpose was fixed, by examples from the past, could the future be shaped with a determination to impose new purposes”, says John Starabinsky²⁵.

I.5 The Return of the Committed Artist: the Case of Dos Passos

The American radicals of the 1930’s agreed that history needed to be rewritten. As John Higham says, “[in the 1920’s] history had somehow gone wrong”²⁶. Of course, the duty of re-writing American history was attributed to American left- wing novelists poets, playwrights and journalists; to the leftists who seemed to offer a convincing explanation of what had gone wrong and a prescription for radical change.

These left-wing intellectuals were those who in the 1920’s sought refuge in the Greenwich Village or who fled their country to express their disappointment about the materialism of America by exploring new forms and by joining the revolution of the word. In the 1930’s – just after the economic crash – they returned home to help solve the problems of their own culture which has changed so radically overnight .They made

what Malcolm Cowley called an “Exile’s Return”. These writers wanted to reassess every aspect of their national life. Their commitment took the form of an attraction to Marxism in which they found a great help because it was an ideology which had faith in progress, science and “a richer life through the humanitarian reform of Industrialism”²⁷. Marx’s revolution represented the best solution to renovate their society. They believed that this revolution would help them put an end to unemployment. By 1935 however, many turned against Communism because of the crimes committed by Stalin and the Communists against their Bolshevik colleagues, Trotskyists and even anarchists in Spain (among them Jose Robles, Dos Passos’s closest friend).

Without renouncing to Modernism and its fragmentation which seemed relevant to the cultural situation of America, these writers now re-engaged themselves politically as progressive attitudes renewed themselves and muckraking²⁸ and Naturalism were called back. Some famous writers like Dreiser, Upton Sinclair and Dos Passos started writing about radical causes and publishing articles in new radical journals on themes as the Depression, unemployment, urban despair and rural deprivation*. They were also interested in the “toiling masses” but were confronted to the problem of literary commitment. Mike Gold re-opened his communist paper The New Masses in 1926 and he urged writers to go left, to identify with the cause of the workers, to record the proletarian world and to radicalize it*. According to Bradbury, after the 1929 crash, “the New Masses sponsored in New York the foundation of John Reed Club for younger writers, its slogan “art is a class Weapon”²⁹.

The 1930’s American writing in general was characterized by a return to realism³⁰ and naturalism and by a leaning towards proletarian literature, a literature born in Russia but which is now argued in America, especially by Mike Gold. At the start of the 1930’s, the dominant literary debate was about proletpcult with its proponent Michael

Gold, but Dos Passos, like Hemingway and Fitzgerald, did not succumb. He continued to center on social preoccupations, but never admitted the superiority of Communism on the American way of life. He never felt at ease in the USSR, never was he persuaded – despite his desire to end Capitalism – that it was the only possible issue. He really needed to express his views through a structure, to transform his words into actions.

From 1925 to 1935, Dos Passos was really engaged in radical activities. He got rid of his hesitations. He ceased to be a hypersensitive intellectual tortured by doubt and who never committed himself entirely. He regretted his past indignation. At last, he discovered the reality of the American society, a society divided between the Capitalists and the dispossessed, between those who governed and those who were exploited. It is in that period that he managed to identify with the average citizens and to fight openly for freedom for which he had always had a great sympathy. His friendship with Hemingway drew him towards left-wing circles in Europe and in America³¹. His desire to know how class-struggle was enacted in other countries pushed him to travel around the world. In Morocco in 1925, he observed the Berbers' resistance against the French; in 1926, in Mexico, he marvelled at the Mexican revolutionary art³². Later, he went to Spain during the civil war, and it is there that he broke with the left, after the murder of his friend Jose Robles³³

Nevertheless, he always took part in the battles waged by the left against Capitalism and reported strikes and demonstrations in The New Masses and The Daily Worker³⁴. He contributed regularly to the columns of The New Masses till the beginning of the 1930's when he disagreed with Mike Gold on the relationship between culture and politics³⁵. In fact, just after the publication of Manhattan Transfer, in 1926, Mike Gold had asked him to commit himself completely to the proletarian cause. This idea was reinforced by the Sacco/Vanzetti murder which disappointed radical

intellectuals, as most of them really believed that the condemnation would be revised. But the judges were adamant.

Dos Passos found himself in a dilemma as to the political attitude he would adopt: would he join the Communists or rather continue to be an individualist? According to him, Anarchism was more compatible with American individualism. As Marxism did not call for personal independence nor for the idea that each person must try her chance and play the game of success (notions that are purely American), Dos Passos could not commit himself to communism. Moreover, as the communists did not have a great influence on the trade Union movement and on the proletariat, their methods could not be applied in the United States.

As an ambitious radical intellectual, he was preoccupied by the question of how to reach the largest public. He could not use the “big press”, but at that time, there were many magazines in which the radical intellectuals and adepts of the Greenwich Village could express their opinions, like The Nation, New Republic and The Freeman. For a certain time, he also thought that through theatre, he could reach a larger audience. He thus created “the New Playwright Theatre” by the end of the 1920’s and produced many plays (between 1927 and 1928) which were very popular as they expressed the workers’ revolt, among them Airways Inc in which he stood violently against Capitalism and sympathized openly with the revolutionary cause³⁶. In these plays, he associated modernist techniques to a radical content. They were designed to a working-class audience. Dos Passos was influenced by the Russian director Sergei Eisenstein and his technique of montage which had later an impact on his fictional works³⁷.

However, at the time Dos Passos was interested in theatre, the idea of a “mass-theatre” was not yet possible in America. Moreover, he preferred to remain faithful to a more personal, more individualist literature, a literature nearer to anarchist positions

than to Marxist ones. His case shows that the intellectual issued from the liberal bourgeoisie never sides completely with a radical Marxist cause; he never throws in his lot; his conversion is never complete. Irr Caren aptly depicts him as “a coach on the sidelines, a fellow traveler at times but not a party man by nature”³⁸.

In the Big Money, Dos Passos deplores the failure of the liberal bourgeois ruling-class in which Hamilton had once put great hopes. As he himself belonged to this class, he was the first to feel the falling apart of that American myth. He wanted to analyse this situation deeply, to demonstrate to himself and to his contemporaries the whole mechanism of such a disastrous system. As an Intellectual, he could not escape the disturbance of his conscience: he felt he did not have the right to remain useless. He had to clarify the drama of the American nation according to economic and sociological laws: to ask Veblen or Marx for explanations.

II- The Billion Dollar Speed Up: a Myth of the 1930's

In a Newsreel on profit, Dos Passos announces the essential theme of the Big Money, “The desire for profits and more profits kept on increasing and the quest for easy money became well-nigh universal. All of this meant an attempt to appropriate the belongings of others without rendering a corresponding service” (p.887). What is at stake is again man’s destiny in the country of “God’s Blessing”. The novel relates the catastrophe that swallows up all those participants in that famous race for power, happiness and material comforts and pleasures, a race that proves to be a race towards death. Through Charley Anderson, Dick Savage, J.Ward Moorehouse and others, we move from the quest for success (the main theme of the 42nd Parallel) to the pursuit of material possession which means the end of the moral self. The Big Money is a story of damnation; it shows how people go to hell. It is as losers that these characters throw themselves into Veblen’s “Leisure Class” built on “Conspicuous Consumption”.

II.1 Veblen's Theory of the Two Americas: the Organic Intellectual's Response to Consumerism and Technology

Dos Passos tried to adapt Veblen's writings to the recent development of the situation in America by correcting or lengthening them. When he says, "all right we are two nations" (p.1105), he echoes Veblen's Theory of the Leisure Class in which the latter discussed the place and value of the middle class in modern life.

In the Engineers and the Price System(1921)³⁹, mainly in the third chapter entitled "the Captains of Finance and the Engineers". Veblen underlines that

all the civilized people are suffering privation together because their general staff of industrial experts are in this way required to take orders and submit to sabotage at the hands of the statesmen and the verted interests⁴⁰.

All the events that happened in America in 1929 and after show that the old man who had just died on August 3rd 1929 was right. He had predicted the 1929 crash that destroyed the economy of the country.

The portrait Dos Passos draws of Veblen in The Big Money is that of a revolutionary organic intellectual who has fulfilled all his duties :he spent all his life denouncing the sabotage of production by business, defending the IWW leaders, "he signed the protests against the trial of the hundred and one Wobblies in Chicago" (p.813).He wrote many books in which he dealt with the economy of his country, such as "the Theory of Business Enterprise, the Instinct of workman-ship, the vested interests and the common man" (p.812). Dos Passos summarizes the tasks he fulfilled in his biography:

He established a new diagram of a society
dominated by monopoly capital
etched in irony
the sabotage of production by business,

the sabotage of life by blind need for money profits,
pointed out the alternatives: a warlike society strangled by the bureaucracies of the monopolies forced by the law of diminishing returns to grind down more and more the common man for profits, or a new technology (p.812).

Veblen hoped that engineers, technicians, non-profiteers would carry on the fight the working class had failed in. According to him, the makers of history were no other than those who “are functional indispensable, the technicians, the inventors, all those whose activity is inventive” (p.814).

Apart from this biography, Dos Passos includes three of Veblen’s theories in the Big Money, theories which are presented as part of the narrative. The first is the one in which Veblen states that economic development depends inexorably on technological progress and that technology has become an uncontrollable power that has excluded man from production.

The second Veblenian theory in the Big Money concerns the extension of credits in a highly capitalistic society. The theory says that the big capitalists have lost any contact with the world of industrial production because of the wide gap they created between pecuniary and industrial interests. To raise the rate of production, they have irrationally increased the capital of the enterprise through the extension of credits without thinking of the effects this could have on industry. This situation has been exacerbated by the use of advertisements which aimed at increasing profits at the expense of industrial performance.

The importance of Veblen here is to help Dos Passos create an atmosphere. Trapped in the whirlwind of events, individuals are drawn towards superficial consumption, dreams of prosperity, the danger of workers’ revolts. They are an easy prey to the advertising machine orchestrated by high finance. Many Newsreels reflect

plainly this Veblenian conception of increasing consumption through credits and advertising. Newsreel 45 deals with the automobile and its symbolism: “tired of walking, riding a bicycle or riding in street cars, he is likely to buy a Ford.” (p.741)..

Veblen’s third theoretical influence concerns culture. The representation Dos Passos makes of America, a country teetering in disaster because of the destructive power of Capitalism and the assimilation of the Leisure Class values by the masses had already been diagnosed by Veblen in the Theory of the Leisure Class⁴¹. Nearly all the major characters of the Big Money are shown as people engaged in an awful pursuit of money which Dos Passos and Veblen consider as a sign of moral disintegration.

II.2 Taylorism and Fordism: the Betrayal of the Veblenian Intellectual

Two biographical portraits of reactionary intellectuals in the Big Money reproduce particularly well this Veblenian criticism of the destructive use of technology: Frederick Taylor and Henry Ford, both members of “false” America and false intellectuals because they devoted themselves to a dehumanizing system of industrial efficiency and production at the expense of human values. Both consider people as commodities and exercise a great physical and moral authority over their workers to reach what they call efficient production.

In real life, Frederick Taylor is celebrated as an American engineer responsible for starting the great technological thrust that brought the total alienation of the worker from the fruit of his efforts. He is considered as the father of scientific management or what is known as “Taylorism”, that theory of management that aimed at improving economic efficiency and labor productivity. He was the first to apply science to management. This ‘scientific management’ consisted of four principles: a scientific study of tasks, a scientific selection, training of employees, equal division of work

between managers and workers⁴². He believed that with such approach, Unions would not be needed.

But Taylor is presented by Dos Passos as a reactionary Organic Intellectual who devoted himself to the promotion of his own interests and those of his class. He used the knowledge of the workers and artisans for his profit, “[...] he was on the management’s side of the fence, gathering in on the part of those on the management’s side all the great mass of traditional knowledge which in the past had been in the heads of the workmen and in the physical skill and knock of the workman” (p.746). His major preoccupation was the increase in production by all means, “[...] the right way means increased production, lower costs, higher wages, bigger profits: the American plan” (p.747).

Taylor’s “American Plan” was based on the increase of production through efficiency. It denied the individuality, freedom and activity of the workers who were turned into automatons and zombies who “neither think nor read” (p.746). And to exploit easily the workers, he chose “the plain handymen” (p.747) because “the skilled mechanics were too stubborn for him” (p.747). He considered the machine as the ideal worker.

Dos Passos’s biography of Taylor dramatizes that passage from moral values to an awful tyrannical inhumanity. Taylor worked for American “grandeur” in his own way to promote his interests. The writer resorts to irony when he wants to mock him; thanks to him, “(the old Quaker families of Germantown were growing rich, the Pennsylvania millionaires were breeding billionaires out of iron and coal) production would make every first class American rich”(p.749).

Newsreel 45 places Taylor's biography in its social and political context. It sets up a link between Taylorism and Consumerism. Dos Passos evokes the Leisure Class's exhibition of wealth. He stresses the role of the Leisure Class woman who is engaged in a conspicuous wasteful consumption of goods. He presents her as an index of man's power and progress,

Just as soon as his wife discovers that every food is like every other food and that nearly everyone has one, she is likely to influence him to step into the next social group, of which the dodge is the most conspicuous example (p.744).

Soon, all the family is contaminated by this conspicuous consumption, "father wants economy, mother craves opportunity for her children, daughter desires social prestige and son wants travel, speed, get-up-and-go" (p.744). And it is Taylor who helps these people become richer and consume endlessly.

Ford, for his part, could have been a positive intellectual. He was an engineer who made many inventions and contributed to the development of his country. He opposed WWI because, according to him, it was caused by greedy financiers who sought profit in human destruction (though he manufactured amunitions and weapons and promised to give his profits to the government)⁴³. Nevertheless, Dos Passos does not consider him as an intellectual who serves his people. He sees in him the exploiter of the workers, a member of the Leisure Class whose preoccupation is to get wealthier. He gives a negative image of him in his biography. He describes him as an efficient entrepreneur but totally deprived of that Veblenian notion of "work instinct" indispensable for a sane industrial organization. Like Taylor, he has contributed to the separation of production from finance. In fact, both Taylor and Ford set up a deterministic process governed by historical laws that can be controlled by man.

Henry Ford is no different from Taylor with whom he shares a similar appetite for profits, irrespective of the means. He wanted Americans to consume, to buy his Model T automobile to make more money. He is known for Fordism which means “mass production of inexpensive goods coupled with high wages for workers”⁴⁴. He saw in consumerism the best means to establish peace. The Model T was so cheap that in the 1920’s the majority of Americans could buy it. He helped himself with the creation of a publicity machine in Detroit to ensure every newspaper carried advertisements about the new product.

As for his relation with labor, he – a pioneer of Welfare Capitalism – wanted to improve the workers’ conditions to encourage them double the rate of production. He never thought about the well-being of the workers. The wages he raised, the working hours he reduced were based on profit as he wanted them to afford the cars they were producing and thus be good for the economy. He called this policy “profit-sharing” rather than wages⁴⁵. In fact, he was against trade unions, believing that union leaders provoked economic crises to maintain their own power⁴⁶. He was an exploiter of the workers. He appropriated Taylor’s “American Plan” for his factories,

The American plan; automative prosperity
seeping down front above; it turned out there were
strings to it (p.772).

The ‘strings’ mentioned above mean a loss of the workers’ autonomy, manhood and vitality:

At Ford’s production was improving all the time;
less waste, more spotters, straw bosses, stool pigeons
(fifteen minutes for lunch, three minutes to go to the toilet,
the Taylorised speedup everywhere, reach under, adjust
washer, screw down bolt, shove in cotterpin [...]
underadjustscrewdown reachunderadjust, until every
ounce life was sucked off into production and at night the
workmen went home gray shaking husks (p.774).

All the biographies are written in a rather poetic style, but “Tinlizzie” (Ford’s biography) more than any other. Sometimes there is no punctuation, sometimes words merge into each other; commas are replaced by spaces, as if Dos Passos were writing a poem,

[...] sitting there at the lever jauntily dressed in a tight buttoned jacket and a high collar and a derby hat, back and forth over the level ill paved streets of Detroit,

Scaring the big brewery horses and the skinny trotting horses and the sleek rumped pacers with the motor’s land explosions,

Looking for men scatterbrained enough to invest money in a factory for building automobiles (p.769-70).

He shows nostalgically how times were changing, how the agricultural past was being usurped by the modern age of the machine. Detroit, the birth city of the motorway used to be an agricultural area. But at the beginning of the 20th Century, it emerged as an industrial city. In this extract, Dos Passos mentions brewery horses, “skinning lotting horses”, and the sound of the motorcar passing through it. He refers to men who were daring enough” to invest money in a factory for building automobiles. In the past, the car was such a new invention that people who invested in its development were seen as scatter brained.

At the opening of the biography, Dos Passos presents Ford as a wholesome achiever, a pacifist “[during WWI], he hired a steamboat, the Oscar, and filled it up with pacifists and social workers to go over to explain to the princelings of Europe that what they were doing was vicious and silly” (p.773), But he soon demystifies him and shows him as a prejudiced right-winger,

The Jews had started the man, Bolshevism, Darwinism, Marxism, Nietzsche, shoot skirts and lipstick. They were behind Wall Street and the international bankers, and the whiteslave and the movies and the Supreme Court and ragtime and the illegal liquor business (p.773)

He ends his biography in a bitter satirical way. Ford was a victim of his inventions. He describes him as an old man who, despite his achievements in the motor industry, sought refuge in the simplicity of his childhood. After the depression cracks his inhuman system, he finds himself facing that “New America of starved children and hollow bellies and cracked shoes stamping on soupliners” (p.776), a time which he had disliked. He ends as an antiquarian trying to return to the “way it used to be in the days of horses and buggies” (p.776). This ending suggests that Ford has misgivings about this false America he has contributed to create. The indictment Dos Passos makes against Ford and Taylor is meant to show that the “big money” is shared by the new industries which exploit educated people for their own purposes and turn them into their agents. The intellectual is once more a cog in the machine as the fictional characters.

II.3. The Intellectual Undoing of a Revolutionary Engineer: Charley Anderson and the Illusion of Profit, Sex and Easy Money

We cannot but agree with Max Lerner that the most Veblenian character in the novel is Charley Anderson, “the engineer destroyed by the power of industry”⁴⁷. It is this power which is accused in each page of the novel. Charley’s destruction is unavoidable from the moment he sacrifices his vocation of Intellectual /engineer/ inventor to become a non-productive, capitalist, a “tycoon”. This attitude conforms to the Veblenian anti-thesis between production and business.

Charley starts as a true intellectual in the labor movement, joins the AFL (American Federation of Labor) and participates in an IWW strike. He works as a skilful mechanic before he goes to WWI which makes of him an ace in aviation. When he regains America after the armistice, he is still in possession of the best American national virtues: courage, bravery and naivety. But he is faced with a new unrecognizable America, an America haunted by material, “well, Charley, that’s where

they keep all the money. We got to get some of it away from 'em"; says Joe Askew his friend (p.735). "Wish I knew how to start in, Joe" (p.735), answers Charley. This shows that he could have been an excellent cow-boy, a very correct Western-hero incarnating traditional values, such as bravery and brotherly friendship.

This man who appears strong, brave and self-confident, is in fact very weak; he is the prey of those new myths of the America of the 1920's, those collective representations that besiege him from everywhere and to which he soon surrenders. His qualities are no longer required in this soulless world of speculation, hence his failure. He symbolically ends up being run over by a locomotive after he drunkenly tries to race it with his car, killed by the machine.

Through Charley, Dos Passos comments on the hollowness of the American success myth during those boom years of the 1920's; he adores money in a sacrilegious way: when he opened his wallet and counted his cash, "he brought[the bills] up to his nose to sniff the new sweet sharp smell of the ink. Before he knew what he had done, he had kissed them. He laughed out loud [...]. Jesus, he was feeling good"(p.910)

He also demonstrates the sabotage of production by the pursuit of profit and the reduction of high tech "know-how" into a means of material ascendancy. For money, Charley sells out the most precious thing he possesses: the instinct of workmanship. But he never reaches accomplishment; he never succeeds in having access to the reality of money, nor to that of women; hence his desperate love relations and his incessant frustrations. For example, when he bought his new car, "a sackard Sports phaeton with a long low custombody upholstered in red leather" (p.908), he immediately drove down to the dock to meet his girl friend, the wealthy Doris and her mother Mrs Humphries who were coming back from London. He was very happy to park his car near those "well-dressed people chattering round piles of pigskin suitcases, patent leather hat boxes,

ward robe trunks with the labels of Ritz hotels on them, in the central part of the wharf building” (p.908). But to his surprise, Mrs Humphries did not like the car; Charley is seized with anger and remorse. He drinks more and more heavily and is finally frozen out by his Detroit partners. The speculators who ruin Charley will first lead him to betrayal. He betrays his old friend Joe Askew by trading away the stock in his company to go and work for his competitors. He accidentally kills his best friend, the mechanic Bill Cermak, the only worker in the novel, and abandons his passion for mechanics.

From time to time, he realizes that moving up from his position of mechanic to that of businessman makes him lose his soul; but he gets this feeling only when he is drinking with his loyal friend Bill Cermak. When the latter calls him “Boss”, though drunk, Charley gets angry, “Hell, I ain’t no boss, I belong with the mechanics.... Don’t I Bill? You and me Bill, the mechanics against the world.” (p.980). They happen to quarrel when Bill tells Charley who is now so removed from production that he no longer knows what is happening in his shop and that the workers are exhausted, “you’ll lose all your best guys”, says Bill, “slavedrivin may be all right in the automobile business, but buildin’ an airplane motor’s skilled labor” (p.980), Charley replies. He carries on, “Aw, Christ, I wish I was still tinkerin’ with that damn motor and didn’t have to worry about money all the time...” (p.980). He feels guilty at losing his skill.

But after another drink, he changes his mind and says, “I know what the boys are up against but I know what the management’s up against too” (p.983). While he used to be a great supporter of labor, he now forgets his own origin and tells Bill how the company intends to handle the conflict between managers and workers:

We’re goin’ to fire the whole outfit....hell, if they don’t like it workin’ for us, let’em try to like it workin’ for somebody else....
This is a free country; I wouldn’t want to keep a man against his will (p.981)

He wants Bill to understand that he is under a great pressure, “the pressure’s too great now. If every department don’t click like a machine, we’re rooked” (p.983). The managers no longer care about the quality of what is produced; they want more production. There is a degradation of techniques by finance, of genius by greed, of moral values by material.

Dos Passos illustrates this idea by referring to the disaster that happened when Bill and Charley were testing the new “Tern Light Plane” to see whether it could fly or not. Something in it went wrong and she cracked on taking off. Charley was badly injured but Bill died immediately. His death was caused by the speed up against which he had vainly protested. So the pressure Charley was referring to was not the pressure of industrial efficiency but rather that of technically careless profit expansion. This accident shows that Charley, the supervisor of the ship’s construction betrays his job for money.

II.4 Cases of Real-Life Committed Engineers and Inventors

In Newsreel 63, Dos Passos contrasts the failed dishonest Charley with a great intellectual, the American aviator Charles A. Lindbergh who made the first solo non-stop flight across the Atlantic Ocean in 1927, which gained him international fame⁴⁸. Lindberg worked with millionaires businessmen but, unlike Charley, he never sacrificed his genius for money. Indeed he made money in aviation shares, but he did not throw himself into that awful race for the dollar. The latter was the pride of the Americans with his flight. His plane attested to the great development of American manufacturing techniques and hence to the truth of progress. Nevertheless, Dos Passos would have preferred him to have worked alone, not to have been helped by businessmen who in fact financed the cost of the plane he used in his non-stop flight. Likewise, he did not

want him to work with great millionaires – like Daniel Guggenheim ... to encourage aviation – related research⁴⁹. That is why he prefers the Wright Brothers.

The Wrights, Orville and Wilber, were pioneers of the pure type, and the aircraft they built and put in the air was their own creation. Belonging to the pre-war period, they stood against the Commercial spirit of the 1920's as well as against the impersonality and the complexity of the decade's organisation. They were pure Intellectuals/inventors.

The writer evaluates Charley's behaviour along to that of the Wright Brothers to whom he devotes a biography. If Charley is destroyed by success, the Wright Brothers, despite their fame and honors, "don't seem to have been very much impressed by the upholstery and the braid and the gold medals and the parades of push horses; they remained practical mechanics and insisted on doing all their own work themselves, even to filling the gasoline tank" (p. 959). Unlike the Wrights and Lindberg, Charley is blinded by his love for money. He says to an acquaintance that "if [he] could pull out with enough jack [he]'d like to build [him] a wind tunnel all [his] own". But as soon as he makes more money, he forgets this ambition. The Wrights, however, built an air tunnel when they were still poor mechanics and it was "their first contribution to the science of flying and tried out model planes in it" (p.998).

It is worth noting, however, that by embodying the Veblen virtues in the Wright Brothers who symbolized old American individualism, Dos Passos unconsciously subverted Veblen. The latter believed that workmanship was based on cooperation, that it was impersonal. He also favored 'technique' which he considered the most important element of Industrialism; he was for Industrial development, while the Wright Brothers were not; they were afraid of the consequences of technology, just like Dos Passos .

II.5 Fall of the Poet: the Snares of Corporate Arts and Luxury

Richard Elsworth Savage is another character who misses the possibility of becoming a great revolutionary intellectual because of his pursuit of material. From a bourgeois family – his mother being a general's daughter– he studied at Harvard and wrote poems while still a student ,as he is endowed with a nice artistic sensibility. When America enters WWI, he takes part as an ambulance driver for the Red Cross. But as he becomes conscious of the atrocity of war, he voices his convictions and pacifist sentiments and is consequently fired.

He seeks refuge in poetry which he transforms into a means of raising the consciousness of the people, of inciting them to revolt against the Establishment. He can indeed be considered as a revolutionary organic intellectual. But as soon as he gets a commission in the army, he betrays his pacifist feelings and surrenders to the pressure of the machine. Feeling guilty, he writes a long sarcastic letter in verse about his gaining the commission. But again, when he gets a chance of becoming an officer, he throws the letter in the toilet and puts an end to his independence. In France, he is introduced to the world of business and refuses to marry Ann Elizabeth, the girl he has impregnated for fear of affecting his career. The young woman soon dies in a plane accident.

After the war, Savage joins J. Ward Moorehouse, the famous public counsel of the 42nd Parallel and 1919 whose job in the Big Money still consists in showing that 'Big Enterprise' in the American society works for the happiness and prosperity of all , proving that friendly cooperation between the worker and his boss is easy to achieve in America. He makes his own Moorehouse's mission of betraying the American people, of making them believe in the myth he created –a conciliation between the workers and the monopolies- a myth he himself cannot believe in; he accepts to play that soulless game with Moorehouse and his gang: Senator Planet, Doc Bingham and judge/Colonel

Cassidy. Like these people, he detaches himself from the ancient culture and submits entirely to the new idols. He becomes no more than a ruin who thinks only of acquiring more wealth. Through this succession, Dos Passos suggests that the process of rotting is intensifying; moreover it seems to be transmitted from a generation to another. That is why it ought to be stressed.

Contrary to Moorehouse who knows success to the end, Savage, by the end of the novel, is presented as someone who incarnates defeat by abdication, intelligence without any moral capacity. He could have become a revolutionary intellectual had he stuck to his early principles, but the system turned him into a public counsel, associate and then successor of the most dishonest character of the novel. On the point of becoming a big boss, he succumbs to the forces of death: alcoholism, erotism, moral breakdown, "I feel lonely and hellish, my life is a shambles" (p.1124), he says to Eveline. The brilliant Savage has now become a lonely drunken man begging love from prostitutes, victim a despairing night of some hooligans who steel his money and make him live with the fear of being black mailed. Here again, Dos Passos does not hesitate to turn to irony: the advertising campaign in which Savage succeeds to Moorehouse recommends an auto-therapy for everybody.

Both are aware of the reality and both choose – consciously – to surrender to the machine. Yet, Moorehouse is less condemnable because he gives himself to the system as it is; he never hesitates to join it even when he is profoundly wounded by it: Annabelle Mary Strang, the wealthy aristocratic lady, betrays him, but he does not hesitate to marry her for material reasons. Savage, on the other hand, corrupts himself in a conscious way. He understands better the machine before he makes his choice. His experience in the war could have helped him take an intelligent decision. Yet, when the moment of choice comes, he gives up his poetry and even his conscience. He is blinded

by greed. And because he is conscious of the depravity of his choice, Dos Passos punishes him and provides for his complete degradation.

II.6 The Perversion of the American Democratic Press: the Case of Randolph Hearst

To understand Savage – and thus Moorehouse – better, Dos Passos precedes his segment by the biography of William Randolph Hearst, a famous publishing tycoon who had a great influence on American journalism and who was known with his “yellow Journalism” which Martin Lee and Norman Solomon defined as “Hearst’s routinely invented sensational stories, faked interviews, ran phony pictures and distorted real events”⁵⁰. Hearst treated news in an unprofessional and unethical fashion. Dos Passos describes Hearst as an immoral person, ready to write anything that would increase his paper’s circulation. He violently attacks his comment, “when there is no news, make news” (p.1112). According to the writer, Hearst became the boss of the press by corrupting democracy and the right to information and freedom of the press, relying “on the gee whizz emotion” (p.1112).

Upton Sinclair criticized him in his book entitled the Brass Check: A Study of American Journalism⁵¹. He accused him of inciting nations to enmity and driving them to murderous war⁵². According to him, in the 20th Century, Hearst’s newspapers lied remorselessly about radicals, banned the word ‘socialist’ from their columns, “Jail the Reds” (p.1116) and rewrote the news already published in the London Morning papers and then fraudulently republished them in American Afternoon papers under the names of non-existent Hearst correspondents in many capitals like London, Paris, Berlin, Rome, Venice⁵³. He was also charged with accepting bribery from foreign countries to slant the news⁵⁴. At the same time, he was considered as a hypocrite who, in public,

lambasted magnates such as JP Morgan but in private entered into partnership with them in lucrative ventures⁵⁵.

What gives a great value to the biography of Hearst is Dos Passos's impartiality. He neither blames nor stigmatizes him; nevertheless, in each sentence he writes, we feel his indignation. His indictment is not even based on Hearst's acts but rather on his essential insufficiency. Dos Passos succeeds in presenting him as he is actually, in condemning him only by describing him faithfully.

This indignation goes beyond the individual to reach the entire system that produced him. There is a silent protest not only against capitalism, but against the human condition itself, against the world as it is, against all those people who helped develop the industries that resulted in that awful pursuit of wealth and fortune. Eveline Hutchins, Eleanor Stoddard and Margo Dowling are among those people.

II.7. The Committed Artist in the World of Business: from Talented Designing to Party Going and Party Making

Eleanor's aspiration for ascendancy makes her lose her value as a respected intellectual who used to appreciate arts. In the Big Money, she is still that selfish woman we left in the 42nd Parallel and 1919. Now - more than ever before – she abandons completely her artistic career as an interior decorator to enter the world of business and to seek for a better life style. She becomes Moorehouse's associate in his striving to belong to the 'leisure class'.

A talented interior decorator, she betrays Democracy and loses the notion of ideological commitment which is one of the features of the intellectual. By the end of the novel, she, who used to identify with Moorehouse the capitalist, is depicted organizing a great party in which she invites wealthy people and a group of "émigrée Russians in tiaras" (p.1124), "the grand duchess" (p.1125) and offers them a great

banquet with Caviar and Salmon (p.1126). Eleanor lights candles near an icon (p.1125) and offers her guests tea in “Silver Samovar” (p.1125). Now that “she is filthy with money” (p.1124), as Eveline her friend says, she has the right to belong to the ‘Leisure Class’, especially after she has decided to marry the Russian prince Mingraziali (p.1127). Capitalism and socialism no longer mean anything to her.

Eveline is another artist who falls victim of the machine. Like her friend Eleanor, she, another interior decorator, appears to be a sophisticated woman with a refined literary and artistic culture. Indeed, early in her life, she is endowed with an artistic talent and a passion for the poetry and art of the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Later, she is even involved in radical politics when she gets acquainted with the Communist Don Stevens. But this is only a façade behind which hides a woman devoid of any commitment to human values. Her life is dominated by social relations in which she mixes feelings with business. Like Eleanor, she now belongs to the Leisure Class. She keeps organizing parties in which she invites society people who come to exhibit their wealth. When Mary French and Ada Cohn go to attend one of her parties, Eveline leads them to “[...] a high-ceiling room dusky from shared lights and cigarette smoke where they were swallowed up in a jam of well-dressed people talking and making faces and tossing their heads over cocktail glasses”(p.1175). These parties are a waste of time; people keep drinking, smoking and laughing (p.1175). She sacrifices her inward life, her artistic capacities for such a milieu, for money and social approval. Like Eleanor, she alienates herself from the area she used to live in to seek for a better style of living. She fails in whatever she undertakes and her boredom with this habit of failure leads her to suicide, another form of punishment on the part of Dos Passos.

Like many American women of the 1920's, she is obsessed with sex. She confuses it with experimental / immoral art: she poses nude for an artist who seduces her. She

marries the innocent Paul Johnson because he has impregnated her, while she, at the same time, is engaged to many other men, among them Charley Anderson and Dick Savage.

Dos Passos is disappointed with the behaviour of Eleanor and Eveline; he would have liked them to remain clean artists/ intellectuals, to put their art at the service of their nation. This disappointment takes him back again to the past and to compare Eleanor to the famous American architect / intellectual Frank Lloyd Wright to ascertain the process of the degradation of U.S art and thus of the U.S intellectual.

II.8. Remembering Frank Lloyd Wright: the Designer who never Surrendered

The biographical portrait he draws of Frank Lloyd Wright is that of the greatest interior designer and educator of his time who devoted his life to designing structures which were in harmony with humanity and its environment, a philosophy he called “organic architecture” :

The modern ideal and the teaching so much needed if we are to see the whole of life and to now serve the whole of life, holding no traditions essential to the great tradition. Nor cherishing any preconceived form fixing upon either past, present or future, but instead exalting the simple laws of common sense or of super-sense if you prefer determining form by of the nature of materials⁵⁶.

He built schools, offices, churches, skyscrapers, hotels, museums. He developed the concept of the “Usonian home”, that is, practical houses for middle-class clients. He designed the interior elements of his buildings, such as the furniture and the stained glass (colored glass as a material). He wrote 20 books, many articles and lectured in the United States and Europe⁵⁷.

What Dos Passos celebrates in Lloyd and what makes him different from Eléonor is, above all, to have remained faithful to the American tradition, “projecting

constructions in the American future instead of the European past” (1078). This biography is dominated by symbols, by the hope of building the marvellous city, the New Jerusalem at least free from the oppressions of the old world. His ambition was to beat through glass and steel the ancient curses,

[...] the imperial hotel in Tokyo that was one of the few structures to come unharmed through the earthquake of 1923 (the day the cable came telling that the building had stood saving so many hundreds of lives he writes was one of his happiest days (p.1079).

Lloyd wanted his design to be light, mobile, a design that would express the American spirit of modernity and progress, “steel intension” (p.1078). He did not want his liberating style to be “cooped up by the plaster-board partitions of finance routine” (p.1078). He succeeded in satisfying his imagination with the practical demands of the real world. The Usonian city he wanted to build was an attempt to fulfill the pioneers’ dream of protecting man against the threat of hostile nature, but “only in freedom can we build the Usonian City” (p.1080).

It is through this architect forgotten by his own people, “not without honor except in his own country” (p.1080), the symbol of the authentic American haunted by the conquest of a wonderful existence, that Dos Passos shows clearly that he has sided with those promoters of the “American dream”, that fabulous dream destroyed by an awful quest for material. While Lloyd is preoccupied with making possible “a new life” (p.1078) of freedom and creativity, the fictional artists are pursuing material success, narcissistic experiments and sensations at the expense of art.

II.9. The Betrayed Promises of the Experimental Movie Artist: the Star as a Media-Made Sex Symbol

The degradation of art which Dos Passos considers as a falling apart of any true culture constitutes a fundamental aspect of American decadence. And it is reported not

only through Eleanor and Eveline but more through Margo Dowling who mixes art with sex in her experimental movie career.

An orphan Blonde who grows in an artistic milieu, she dances and has several relations with wealthy men, among them Charley Anderson. Through an awful exploitation of art and of the 'Sex Appeal', she becomes a great theatre and silent film star in Hollywood, a parasite profession. The convent in which she spent many years did not teach her righteousness. On the contrary, it taught her to view every problem in her life from purely social and economic viewpoints. Thus, though she started her life badly with a Cuban husband (Tony) ⁵⁸ whom she married at the age of 16, she quickly took advantage of the security Charley offered her:

Mr A, as she called him kept offering to set Margo up in an apartment on Park Avenue, but she always said nothing doing [...]. She did let him play the stock market a little for her, and buy her clothes and jewelry and take her to Atlantic City and Long Beach week-ends (p.996).

After Charley's death, she goes to Hollywood and wants to make a good impression. After a series of seductions, she marries Sam Margolis, the Hollywood director (now that her husband is dead) and becomes a star, "the nation's newest sweet heart". Her "whole career seems to be an example of how American Democracy works at its very best pushin' forward to success the most intelligent and best fitted and weeding out the weeklin's" (p.998) ⁵⁹.

Margo's dream is corrupted and betrayed by the artists of the 'Leisure Class'. This being said, one cannot deny that this class had at the time of its radiance an art stamped with grandeur and authenticity. When Mandeville, an old actor in the Big Money, speaks about ancient shows, he highlights the corruption of the modern scene by the attractions of the music Hall and the Broadway style. The habitual process of depersonalisation develops inexorably with Margo though she is not worse than Charley

or Dick. This character is so real that we have the tendency to think that Geismar's comment on her that

[...] this child accustomed to deceit, thieving, sexual depravity; this glamorous lady who would be deeply pathological if she were not totally amoral; who rises through the ranks of prostitution, Vaudeville and the cinema to become America's sweetheart in the fabulous extravaganza of the success myth which Hollywood typifies.⁶⁰

is too severe.

She gives herself to stage managers and accepts with no enthusiasm a universe where everything can be bought in a world built on lies and absurdities. Ironically, Margo becomes the 'fiancée of America' on the screens at the moment of her complete submission to material imperatives by taking part in stupid scenarios. When the narrative ends, we already know that this new idol will fall down in her turn, her voice unable to adapt to talkies. Dos Passos means that technology destroys artists.

Like Margo, Valentino is a mere product of the media .He symbolizes popular culture writ large (capricious, ephemeral, ultimately cruel). He represents the collective aspirations concentrated in the factual and prestigious world of dance and cinema. He is a symbol of the absurdity of the age. Dos Passos uses him as a cliché. Through him, he traces the role of news coverage. A great part of his biography deals with his death and the way the media reported it.

The writer exaggerates when he devotes a whole biography to a media-made dancer, a 'gigolo' who contributed nothing positive to American culture to be so well-known. Through him, he actually stresses the decay of art. He makes the reader understand that it is thanks to his physical appearance and not his gifts that he succeeded in being admitted in the leisure class. Because Valentino "photographed well" (p.883) he attracted all the wealthy women who helped him spend his life

[...] in the colorless glare of Klieg lights, in stucco villas obstructed with bric-a-brac, oriental rugs,

tigerskins, in the bedrooms of hotels, in silk bathrobes in private cars.

He was always getting into limousines or getting out of limousines, or patting the rock of fine horses. Wherever he went the sirens of the motorcycle cops screeched ahead of him... (p.883).

In this biography, Dos Passos stresses the public response to him, a pathetic image for the sensibility of mass culture. He treats him with great irony because he knows that his fame is undeserved,

[...] the street were jumbled with hysterical faces, waving hands, crazy eyes, they stuck out their autographbooks, yanked his buttons off, cut a tail off his admirablytailored dress-suit [...] his valets removed young women from under his bed (p.884).

The newspapermen exploited him till the end. They took advantage even of his death “to make the evening newspapers” (p.885).

Valentino’s splendid corpse decays!

When the doctors cut into his elegantly molded body, they found that peritonitis had begun; the abdominal cavity contained a large amount of fluid and food particles; the viscera were coated with a greenishgray film.... (p.884)

This scene is symbolic: the dream of splendour ends in decay, crime and punishment. Tragic America! American culture, American art are in decay, not only with Valentino, but also with Margo Dowling, Eveline, Eleanor, with all the 20th Century American artists who have chosen to abandon their talents and to throw themselves into an artificial, valueless world. Consequently, they all end up in failure and ruin.

II.10. Resistance and the Female Artist: Isadora Duncan

Margo and Valentino are obvious counterparts to Isadora Duncan, a disinterested priestess of real art, a pioneer of what was to be known as ‘the Free Dance’ movement of the early 20th Century. Dos Passos introduces her biography in between Margo’s

segments to recreate an image of the modern artist. With her mythic dance, she attracts the public as well as contemporary artists.

Duncan was seen both as a vamp and a revolutionary woman because she violated the Victorian 19th Century codes of bodily movement, as well as the social mores of her time: she danced partially naked and involved herself in extravagantly publicized affairs with both men and women who, like her, were irreverent towards the standard moral, social and aesthetic conventions. She became the symbol of the body's freedom from mid-Victorian taboos⁶¹.

“Art meant Isadora [...] Art was whatever Isadora did” (p.857), wrote Dos Passos. He compared his famous expression “the speech of the people” to her revolutionary experimental art. In fact, he discovered a revolutionary spirit in her art. This attempt at revitalizing language (as it will be elaborated in the following pages) was similar to her turning to ancient Greece to break the codes of the 19th Century ballet and make of ‘Dance’ a high art, a religion- instead of a mere means of entertainment.

As words have become old and false, Duncan wanted to find a means to express what she felt. She says,

My art is just an effort to express the truth of my being in gesture and movement. It has taken me long years to find even one absolutely true movement. Words have a different meaning. Before the public which has thronged my representation, I have given them the most secret impulses of my soul. From the first, I have only danced my life⁶².

Isadora's artistry was spontaneous and honest. She gave a great enthusiasm to the world by her American innocence. She was a friend of art and of the people who reject oppression:

She was an American like Walt Whitman; the murdering rulers of the world were not her people; the marchers [Strikers] were her people; artists were not on the side of machineguns; she was an

American in a Greek tunic; she was for the people
(p.857).

She was a radical, but this radicalism soon disintegrated as she was accused of living her prime. Dos Passos takes this idea in Newsreel 53 by presenting disintegrated images of dance, most of the time sexualized, materialized and detached from the old ideals of art even while paradoxically calling them in allusions to the arts of antiquity as in Newsreel 53,

You too can quickly learn at home without music
and without a partner.... produces the same results
as an experienced masseur only quicker, easier and
less expensive. Remember only marriageable men
in the full possession of unusual physical strength
will be accepted as the Graphic Appolos (p.860).

As Dos Passos believed in a possible revival of ancient sources of beauty, he took up Isadora as a strong but equally vulnerable representative of art in the modern world.

He treated her with respect, unlike Margo, because she hated the materialism that plagued the Americans of the 1920's. Much of the money she gained was given to the poor. She never thought to save it for later years when she would no longer be able to dance.

Dos Passos seems to punish all those people who could have been revolutionary intellectuals, who could have fought Monopoly Capitalism – be it through their art or through their genuine – but instead allied with it to safeguard their material interests. He presents them as traitors; they have betrayed their country, so they deserve punishment. Valentino perishes tragically. The destiny of the fictional characters is no better: Margo will not be able to be a star in the Spoken film; Eveline commits suicide and Eleanor gives herself to an awful Russian prince.

Moorehouse, the central character of the whole trilogy suffers a heart attack after he and Savage bribe a U.S Senator to protect an important advertising account. Despite

his immense capacities, he voluntarily chooses to become a mere propagandist for big business. He thus ends up as a lonely old man. Dick Savage, by the end of the Big Money, lives with the fear of being blackmailed and thus seeks refuge in alcohol; Charley dies in a race he starts with a train.

The real-life/historical figures are also punished. Ted Taylor dies in a depression crisis before realizing his work “the American Plan”; Henry Ford who kept exploiting the system till the latter turned against him, becomes old and imprisons himself in his father’s farmhouse, protected by an army of detectives from the ‘New America’ he had contributed to create: the America of the unemployed and of the hungry.

III. Towards Commitment again : A Return to the Primal Eden

In Camera Eye 50, Dos Passos declares openly that he has at last chosen his side, “all right we are two nations” (p.1105). He emerges as a public man committed to the cause of the average people. He shows this commitment through the use of the pronoun “we” all along the camera to refer to himself and to all those Americans oppressed by Capitalism. He also uses the pronoun “they” to refer to the Capitalists and all their allies, “they have clubbed us off the streets... they are stronger they are rich....” (p.1105). Later, he even addresses the Capitalists directly using the pronoun “you”, “all right you have won” (p.1105) (emphasis mine).

He was a bourgeois intellectual who kept wondering which one of the two Americas he belonged⁶³ till the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927. This case divided America into two nations: on one side were the authorities like the governor of Massachusetts, the judge who headed the case and the president of Harvard who was asked to review it. On the other side, were most America’s intellectuals who were persuaded that Sacco and Vanzetti were not being tried for improvable actions, but

rather presumed opinions. This trial showed America as a sick society, given over to violence, aggression and falsehood. It thus transformed any hesitant intellectual into an audacious militant.

If the America of the rich is represented in the Big Money by the members of the 'Leisure Class', that of the poor is reported through the revolutionary organic Intellectual Mary French and the member of the Communist Party Ben Compton. And if Dos Passos is inspired from Veblen in his depiction of the 'Leisure Class', he now relies on the Sacco/Vanzetti trial to report the revolutionary fervor of the epoch, now using fictional characters like Mary French and Ben Compton and now Camera Eyes and Newsreels.

III.1. Revolutionary Intellectualism :Mary French

Mary French's life reflects some of Dos Passos's political Commitments in the late 1920's and early 1930's, especially his involvement in the Sacco- Vanzetti case. Like him, she devotes all her time to the release of the two anarchists. She works hard to tear up the death sentence against them. She, in her turn, takes part in the Sacco-Vanzetti committee; she is beaten and arrested by the police. The idea of their electrocution haunts her.

Mary is the only fictional character who could be considered as a revolutionary organic intellectual. She indeed succeeds in developing her mind and spirit as she moves through her experiences. As a result, she becomes mature and directs her life purposefully.

Dos Passos indicates her social belonging with precision, just as he does for Margo and Charley – to show in which direction a social category can progress. Like him, she feels the need to refuse her belonging to the upper middle-class and converts

herself partially to proletarian values. Her awareness of a divided America starts from the differences she notes between her parents. The French are typical members of the middle class; they live at the hinge of the upper and lower class. Doctor French, her father, sides with the oppressed while Mrs French opts for the 'the Big Money' and has many prejudices towards the poor. After inheriting the fortune of her father, she divorces and leads her life as a rich woman – member of the 'Leisure Class'. She sends Mary to Vassar for many years, but the girl does not adhere to that 'mythological America' her mother imposes upon her: she reads Herbert D.Croly's the Promise of American Life (1909), but she soon lets it down when she discovers Veblen's Theory of the Leisure Class and she finally opts for the 'true' America, the America of the oppressed.

Mary's interior world is in a way that of the Dos Passos of that period, a Marxian Committed writer. As an authentic militant, she incarnates quite well what he would exclusively want to be: one must throw himself among the oppressed as among the inhabitants of an unknown land,

[she] got herself a job doing research on wages, living-costs, and the spread between wholesale and retail prices in the dress industry for the International Ladies' Garment Workers. [...]She liked the talks with the organizers, the wise cracking radicals, the working men [...]. At least she felt what she was doing was real (p.1086).

It is through her that Dos Passos expresses all that nostalgia for the ancient American purity. It happened to him to work as a glazier for some time, just to join the people⁶⁴. Mary who has always dreamed of being close to the common man decides to work for Bloomydale as a shop-assistant (p.1086). She did this at a time such an act was considered as a class-betrayal. Her experiences help us follow the evolution of the trade union and working class movement started by Mac in the 42nd Parallel.

Mary works for the Union organizations at Pittsburgh. She does not waste her time discussing radical doctrine, like most of Dos Passos's communists. Though very close to the Communists (like the writer), she never adheres to their party. She is interested only in her work within the labor movement. Being one of the opposers of the machine and the status quo, she wishes to belong completely to the workers and she works so hard that she is frequently on the verge of collapse:

[...] Mary worked more and more desperately hard. She wrote articles, she talked to politicians and ministers and argued with editors, she made speeches in union halls. She wrote her mother pitiful humiliating letters to get money out of her on all sorts of pretexts. Every cent she could scrape up went into the work of her committee (p.1097).

In reality, she chooses to work with the comrades. With the impossibility of the resurrection of the ancient America, a Whitmanian America with all its moral values, it was necessary to opt for this participation to an on-going history, to give the American man a new chance. Dos Passos has chosen her as a sort of counterpoint to the moral disasters and corruptions of the America of the time.

Mary's physical movements are accompanied by a certain inward development: it is during her travels that she reads Upton Sinclair's The Jungle, and this novel helps her expand her vision of the world. Later, when she reads Veblen's Theory of the Leisure Class, she decides to leave "the choky" confines of Vassar to start a more open life. After her father's death, she rides East, "she seemed to be seeing things unusually vividly"(p.1093). Her movements in space thus stimulate a corresponding movement in the mind, and this helps her liberate herself from the restrictions her society imposes upon her.

Her growing consciousness is shown by the end of the novel when she detaches herself from her past: she ceases to depend on her mother who is described as "a metal

ring around her head” (p.1170); she lives in a house surrounded by “garbage cans” (p.1180); she puts an end to her friendship with Ada Cohn, a bourgeois artist who has always reminded her of conventional expectations. She says to Rudy, a worker in the party, “If Ada Cohn calls up again, tell her I’m out of the office I have too much to do to spend my time taking care of hysterical women a day like this” (p.1181); she rejects the “parasite life” (p.1180) in Eveline’s party during which she tells George Barrow, an ex-syndicalist who makes a brilliant career at the expense of the workers (by allying with the Capitalists) that she no longer belongs to his “sell out crowd” (p.1177), but at the same time, she makes him understand clearly that she is “not a party member” (p.1177). She leaves Ada and Barrow angrily when they accompany her home after Eveline’s party, telling them harshly that she wants to “walk up alone” (p.1180). Now that she has withdrawn the egocentric and materialistic world that paralysed her, she can organize her life as she wants. She no more wants to depend on the upper – middle – class values nor to conform totally to the standard party line which has turned so many of Dos Passos’s leftists into victims. Her mastery and understanding of the situation is the result of a long process of growing maturity, a process identical to that of Dos Passos which he expresses in the nine cameras of the novel.

III.2 The Camera Eye: a Mirror of Dos Passos’s Growing Consciousness

These cameras retrace the gradual maturing of the writer, his search for identity from the moment he comes back from WWI till the execution of the two Italian immigrants – till he becomes a committed intellectual. They show how he has liberated himself from the grips of a family past and a society which for many years confined him to an empty upper-middle class life. They are only nine (compared to the 42nd Parallel in which there are 27 and 1919 in which there are 15) and they are general (unlike those of the 2 previous volumes which are very personal as they deal with his childhood, his

experiences in WWI and his life in Paris).⁶⁵ Their contents could have been written by any American who lived in the 1920's or who felt involved in the Sacco-Vanzetti case. The writer seems to have understood that his memories are no longer really important.

In camera 43, he expresses his disillusion about the reality of New York life when he returns from war. As he cannot accept such a world, he soon leaves it for Europe and then starts his adventurous trip to Istanbul, Caucasus, Persia and the Syrian desert (Camera Eye 44, pp.754-5). And in Camera Eye 46, he is back in New York in 1922 suffering from a moral crisis,

If not why not? Walking the streets rolling on your
bed eyes sting from peeling the speculative onion of
doubt if somebody in your head top dog?
Underdog? Didn't (and on union square) say liar to
you (p.862).

He walks in the streets of Manhattan looking for "a formula of action" (p.851) and sees in post-war America a kind of 'Quick Sand' (p.851). Disappointed, he seeks refuge in Whitman and Marx (p.851). Now, he understands clearly that society is run by "top dogs" who "prey-upon the masses" (p.851), but he is also drawn to the perception that "the West is flaming with gold" (p.852). He is caught between such lyrical and political impulses. He is paralysed; he cannot act effectively; he does not know which direction to take.

The other cameras depict him wandering aimlessly on a boat heading "Westbound to Havana puerto-Mexico Galveston..." (Camera Eye 48, p.922) or taking part in cocktail parties. They also portray the empty existence of the wealthy people during the Jazz Age. These people care only about themselves. And this Camera prepares the reader for the adventures of Margo and her Cuban husband.

It is in Camera Eyes 49 and 50 that Dos Passos gets out of his dilemma as these Cameras both center on the conflict between the "haves and have-nots" and report the

Sacco-Vanzetti execution. Camera 49 deals with the years preceding the execution when Dos Passos worked on the Defence Committee and Camera 50 comes after a Newsreel containing the headline “Sacco and Vanzetti must die” (p.1104). These two cameras play an important role in the Big Money because Sacco and Vanzetti are human personifications of the failure which the writer illustrates through the lives of his fictional characters. They are the ultimate victims. Dos Passos writes in Facing the Chair,

If they die what little faith many millions of men
have in the chance of justice in this country will die
with them⁶⁶.

In Camera 49, he asks a question, “how can I make them feel [...] who are your oppressors America” (p.1083-4). He does not answer this question even in Camera 50 where hope and defeat speak simultaneously, “all right we are two nations [...]. The men in the death house made the old words new before they died [...]. We stand defeated America” (pp.1105-6). By “old words, he means the language of the common heritage which unites the American people and identifies their uniqueness as a people. “Old words” imply those ideals on which the pioneers built their nation: life, liberty, equality, the pursuit of happiness, Democracy”. For him, this phrase has broad implications; it equals another famous phrase “the American Dream”.

In this camera, there is uncertainty as to the final indictment of the novel. This uncertainty is introduced through the narrator of the Camera who visits emblematic places of American beginnings, places where many Italians live, among them Sacco and Vanzetti, such as Massachusetts Bay “where the immigrants landed the round heads the Sackers of Castles the Kingkillers haters of oppression....” (p.1082), the Cordage Company from which Vanzetti was fired for advocating “a world unfenced” (p.1083); the residential area where the man still on the move meets Vanzetti, “barber the man in

the little grocery store, the woman he [Vanzetti] boarded with" (p.1083), "the railway station on the way to Boston; the Charlestown jail" (p.1084). All these people and places he visits are part of an America which has become an uncertain area for the speech of its people. The persons the narrator encounters in these places knew Vanzetti and bought from him the day the crime was committed. Dos Passos reports their fear, "You ask them what was he like? Why are they scared to talk of Bart Scared because they knew him scared eyes narrowing black with fright? (p.1083). All this is the narrator's inner dialogue. Those people do not give answers, but we can guess their opinions through the counter-questions they deliver back,

[...] In scared voices they ask why won't they believe? We knew him we seen him every day why won't they believe that day we buy the eels? (p.1083).

Nobody believes these people, and in Camera Eye 50, Dos Passos explains the situation: what has happened is that "the old words of the immigrants" (p.1106), "the clean words our fathers spoke" (p. 1105) have no significance in this America dominated by a corrupted language created by Moorehouse and technology.

There is only one person who is not scared, the boy he meets and who tells him about his dream of rising in American life through education. Dos Passos is elated with this classic vision of America. He encourages the boy telling him, "Don't let them scare you" (p.1083). He thus gives a hint of hope for renewal, for making "the old words new" (p.1106).

Later, when he is in the train to Boston, he thinks about a way to fuse his individualistic Whitmanian self with his collectivist Marxist self, something he did not manage to do in Camera 46. He now considers himself as an intellectual committed to the restoration of the 'true' America, the America of the founding fathers who believed in democracy and justice.

[...] how can I make them know who are your betrayers America or that this fishpeddler you have in Charleston jail is one of your founders Massachusetts (pp.1084-5).

With his art which is now rooted in Socialism, he wants to solve particular problems of the day. He sees America as a process of continual discovery, endless becoming. He considers Vanzetti who is now jailed in Charlestown as the new founder of America because he has provoked a re-awakening in the American conscience which will certainly end in freedom and social justice. Dos Passos sees himself as Frank Lloyd, a dissolver of old ideas which block the human spirit and “a creator of new forms that would liberate consciousness and thus bring change in history.

This is the idea he deals with in Cameras 50 and 51 in which he focuses on the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, an event that marked the end of American innocence and betrayed the American dream. He explains this clearly:

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 (p.1105).

Dos Passos, a foreigner by up-bringing, is disappointed at the injustice of the country he had chosen as his own. He loses faith in language and thus calls for regeneration. Though these Camera Eyes are dominated by great despair, they are positive statements that oppose modern violence and repression. In Camera 50, he asserts that those in power have “bought the laws and fenced the meadows and cut down the woods....” (p.1105).

But the winners are actually people like Sacco and Vanzetti who “made the old words new before they died” (p.1105). Camera Eye 49 shows clearly the implications of the Sacco-Vanzetti case for the nation. Dos Passos puts this case in its historical context. First, it is significant that Bartolomeo Vanzetti lives in Plymouth where 300

years ago, “the immigrants landed the roundheads the sackers of castles the Kingkillers haters of oppression this is where they stood in a cluster after landing from the crowded ship that stank of bilge, on the beach that belonged to no one (pp. 1082-3). Second, Vanzetti is a descendent of those freedom lovers who founded America, “this is where another immigrant worked hater of oppression who wanted a world unfenced” (p.1083).

The “strangers” who killed them do not know that they turned them into martyrs. Their opposition to the system will certainly help reawaken what is best in America, thus ending undoubtedly in “triumph” (p.1105) which rises out of defeat. But the ultimate irony is that those who have won are afraid of being seen in the streets. Thus, it is only a pyrrhic victory, a victory gained at too great a loss. Instead, “the streets belong to the beaten nation” (p.1105).

In the last Camera Eye, he at last finds an identity-after the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti. He is no longer that “unidentified stranger” of the previous cameras. He now belongs to the “we”, to those country miners, labor organizers, the common men who are fighting against “power superpower”. Though Americans failed to defeat monopoly Capitalism, Dos Passos achieved a certain victory in the midst of a larger defeat. Now, he is part of the group standing defiantly against the Establishment. And this is his greatest achievement.

He reaches the same achievement as Mary. To stress her deep awareness, Dos Passos compares Camera Eyes to her narrative: Camera 46 shows him walking the streets of New York “thinking about the future of America” (p.850) while Mary in the preceding chapter is depicted walking the streets of New York also, looking for a job to improve her condition. Cameras 49 and 50 dramatize Dos Passos’s involvement in the Sacco-Vanzetti case and the chapter between them deals with Mary’s activities on the Sacco affair in Charlestown. He adds to this sequence the history of the time through

Newsreel 66, “Washington keeps eye on radicals”, “Sacco and Vanzetti must die” (p.1104). These juxtapositions are meant to show that Mary’s political work is part of her moral and intellectual awakening.

Mary is probably the most real of the revolted characters. She is associated to words all along the novel. She commits herself to renewing them and making them efficient in the battle for justice, though she does not use them a lot because they are constantly submitted to perversion within her comrades, the apparent renovators of words. Words in the Big Money have been corrupted. The only hope for redemption lies in the character of Mary. Though overwhelmed by corruption, she speaks and acts in the name of the noble values of cooperation, brotherhood, liberty and democracy.

As an intellectual committed to the workers’ cause, she has a very strong personality. She is the only character who resists social pressure and opposes that trivialized search for the ‘big money’. Likewise, she is the only woman whose life does not depend economically on that of any of the male characters; that is why Dos Passos shows more respect and consideration for her than for the professional women.

Moreover, it is at the moment everything falls apart around her and in her private life, when she finds herself in total loneliness after Don Stevens – a party organizer- betrays her by marrying another party woman that she works harder. If Eveline commits suicide when her friend lets her down, Mary, on the contrary, becomes stronger and more determined to devote her life to the service of the weak, “I have a great deal of work to do organizing a protest [against the murder of Eddy Spellman, a party member]” (p.1181), says she to Ada who had called her to announce Eveline’s suicide.

This does not however mean that Mary is a mere revolutionary automaton deprived of her femininity, as many critics described her⁶⁷. Her activities within the party do not prevent her from having relations first with Benny Compton and then with Don Stevens. She loves each of them sincerely, though both prove incapable of sharing her feelings. Dos Passos would have punished her had she given her life up for the party cause, as he did with Benny Compton

III.3 The Collapse of the ‘Hobbo’ Intellectual :Benny Compton

Ben is characterized unfavourably and criticized for his willingness to sacrifice the individual for the political cause. Through him, the writer marks the distance between USA and the typical party - line proletarian novel. Ben is a typical Jewish Marxist intellectual (a new type of modern American intellectual) who embraces the Russian revolution for the famous hope it gave to IWW and the great trade Union and Socialist efforts to increase their members and to organize better in that difficult period of the after-war.

In 1919, he was depicted as an intelligent individual who committed himself early to radical militantism. He devoted himself to the revolutionary cause in a Marxist sense of the word. His story ended in 1919 when he was jailed for evading the draft. However, he reappears in the Big Money in one of Mary's segments.

Now that he is released, he is puzzled by the changes in the revolutionary movement. The new radicals reject the techniques and tactics of IWW, “the free-wheeling syndicalism of the old days is over” (p.1164). Now, there are no free speech fights. City workers, factory conflicts, strikes are the major preoccupations.

To move with the times, Ben joins the Communist party, but it is impossible for him to cut himself off from his past. He cannot get rid of the IWW attitudes and

methods. Consequently, he is expelled from the party he sacrificed his life for as an “oppositionist Exceptionalist” (p.116), as a socialist agitator. Even Mary refuses to help him. When he asks for relief work, she tells him, “the discipline isn’t so strict. I don’t think they want any disrupting influences in the ILD” (p.1167). He thus becomes politically isolated; therefore no more is heard of him. The new society that is in the making is based on power and betrayal. It makes no room for the old fashioned hobbos. Ben’s story is thus one of the most depressing stories of the novel. It is meant to suggest that the courage and dedication of the ‘hobbos’ enrolled in IWW is no longer needed in the world of the “Big Money”.

Dos Passos uses Ben, his reactions and his behaviour to draw a kind of portrait on the weaknesses of the American Socialism of the after - war period, an old-fashioned Socialist. It ought to be mentioned that his suspicions of the left increased during the course of writing the trilogy and they reached their peak with a sharp critique of the movement in the Big Money.

Dos Passos has a lot of sympathy for the individual little man, not because of his radicalism or Marxism, but rather because of his worship of the traditional American ideal of the common man. This seems to be a return to Democracy. In *Camera Eye* 46, he refers to Whitman, not to Marx,

I go home after a drink and a hot meal and read
(with some difficulty in the Coeb Library trot) the
epigrams of martial and ponder the course of
history and what lever-age might pry the owners
loose from power and bring back (I too Walt
Whitman) our story book democray (p.861).

According to his vision of America, the only way to put an end to the little man’s oppression is not through an imported ideology, as that embodied in Ben, but rather through the recovery of the true spirit of American liberty and Democracy. Granville is right when he says, “he [Dos Passos] could come to communism only by an American

route”⁶⁸. Ben does not succeed in reconstructing the corrupted words, nor in rehabilitating their authentic meaning.

III.4 Towards a Perpetuation of American Values : Vag

Dos Passos reinforces his idea of rehabilitating the corrupted words through ‘Vag’, that strange person who closes the trilogy and who stands for the depression youth, a youth deprived of the American dream and forced to take the road. Vag is hitchhiking to go west; he aspires towards a purer American dream. At the beginning of the trilogy, a mere observer trying to absorb the American speech “mostly USA is the speech of the people” (p.7), or what Dos Passos calls also “old words” and to ask questions, Vag the outsider, the wanderer has become in the epigraph scene of the Big Money a weak starving man no longer able to listen to that speech.

His role in the trilogy is very significant. He is a man who has no place in society. He indeed goes from “nowhere to nowhere” (p.6). We do not know anything about his origins, nor about his destination. He has no real name to limit his identity; even his fictive name suggests an indeterminate self. He has no social status, “no job, no woman, no house, no city” (p.8); he is a modern version of Twain’s Huckleberry Finn. His world is symbolized by fast-moving cars, drifting rivers and clouds which “Westward burst and scatter in tatters over Straw Colored hills” (p.1183).

Be it at the beginning or in the end of the trilogy, Vag is depicted as a perpetual wanderer who is tired, hungry and disappointed. But he does not submit to despair, like Eveline, nor does he sell out to a deadening complacency like Moorehouse. If Eleanor and Moorehouse choose to move ‘East’ in search of material success, he, Vag moves “West” in search of what remains of the American dream of freedom and self-fulfilment. He has rejected all the materialistic goals pursued by the other characters:

Went to school, books paid opportunity, ads promised speed, own your home, shine bigger than your neighbour, the radio crooner whispered girls, ghosts of platinum girls coaxed from the screen, millions in winning were chalked up on the boards in the offices, paychecks were for hands willing to work (pp.1183-4).

As such, he differs thoroughly from the businessmen who fly overhead in search of more money though they are already rich enough:

The transcontinental passengers sit pretty, big men with bank accounts, highly paid jobs, who are saluted by doormen. Last night after a fine dinner, drinks with friends, they left Newark (p.1182).

This symbolic scene reinforces Dos Passos's idea of a divided America with the superior class in the air and the inferior starving on the road.

But Vag is not interested in climbing the ladder of success. His hunger is not only for food, but more for life. His destination is not known; he is going nowhere in particular, but everywhere in general. Through him, Dos Passos affirms the continuity of basic American values, such as individualism, even in the most difficult of times.

The people Dos Passos entrusts with the task of renewing language are all revolutionary persons/intellectuals. Apart from Mary and Vag, Sacco and Vanzetti also do their best to give words their real meaning. When Dos Passos says in the Camera Eye 50 which is an apocalyptic conclusion of the Sacco and Vanzetti case, "the men in the death house made the old words new before they died" (p.1106), he expresses his hope to rebuild the ruined words in order to recover "our story book nation" (p.1106). Though this camera is dominated by despair and exhaustion, there is nevertheless a hope for renewal to be brought about by the words of Vanzetti, words "renewed in blood and agony" (p.1106). Vanzetti sees the regeneration of the word in the experience of catastrophe: for him heroisation creates new meanings.

What we can notice in the Big Money, and especially in the Camera Eyes, Newsreels and Biographies is that the writer is no longer that objective, passive, observer; he is now a spokesman for social issues.

III.5 Dos Passos and Style

Dos Passos wants his message to be understood ; that is why he disregards conventional style and uses new forms. The most important innovation is that fusion of poetry and prose.

The biographies allow him to report the tragedy of the American people. Through them, he adopts an ironic attitude towards the past. The biographies of the reactionary organic intellectuals are tragic: their talent, ambition and love are all drained away into war, profit, prohibition, intolerance and oppression. The writer resorts to satire to mock these people, as he believes that a satirist is that “man whose flesh creeps so at ugly and savage and incongruous aspects of society that he has to express them as brutally and nakedly as possible”⁶⁹. And this is what he does to Taylor, Hearst, Ford and Insull. He ridicules them and then destroys them one after the other.

These biographies are marked by a long line movement detail building on detail. They are punctuated by some periods, but most of the time, punctuation is absent.

Likewise, many Camera Eyes are not punctuated. In Camera 49, for example, there are only six question marks in 60 lines of text. To indicate other poses, Dos Passos uses indentation and enlargements of spaces between words. Sometimes, he capitalizes some words to indicate the beginning of an utterance. However, in many cases, we find difficulties in separating sentences. Through this technique, the writer wants these pieces to be read as inner dialogue; it is also a means to give multiple meanings to his text. In Camera Eye 49, the question,

How can I make them feel how our fathers our
uncles haters of oppression came to this coast how
say don't let them scare you make them feel
who are your oppressors America [...] or that this
fishpeddler you have in Charlestown Jails one of
your founders Massachusetts? (pp.1084.5)

illustrates this point quite well: the extra spaces can be considered either as commas or as full stops and in each case we obtain a different meaning. The narrator here alludes to the obvious betrayers of America: Moorehouse, Savage and Wilson. These 'traitors' - according to him - draw their energy from the "old words" of the founding fathers, from those of Veblen and Vanzetti.

The Newsreels of the Big Money, for their part, are marked by confusion and incoherence. They treat several major themes like the pursuit of jobs, the passion of the Americans of the 1920's for life, the dangers of the machine 'murderous' days in business, stupid songs, personal tragedies. In general, they express the collective mentality of the 1920's. Their precise function is to reveal social time which is at the heart of American life.

Stylistically, the techniques of Camera Eyes and Newsreels are over-reactions from Dos Passos against the aestheticism he had inherited from the 1890's, from the "Genteel Tradition". What he reproached this tradition for was that, it was dominated by 'Anglophiles' who wanted to impose English class-values "upon a pluralistic, inspiringly Democratic native culture"⁷⁰. Down to the 20th Century, American art and literature were still dominated by provincialism, 'innocence' as well as by a sense of cultural seclusion that persisted till after WWI⁷¹. However, in the 1920's, the Genteel Tradition was confronted to raw social fact, to a society divided between the material and the cultural, the provincial and the cosmopolitan. There was a conflict between the Old and the New, a conflict dramatized by many events, such as the Red Scare and the Sacco-Vanzetti execution. So, writers needed new forms to express these events.

Contrary to the traditional novels in which there is always a hero, none of the characters of the Big Money is a hero. Charley Anderson dominates the first half of the Big Money because through him, Dos Passos traces the degradation of the American Intellectual from a respectful engineer, inventor/scientist known for his knowledge which he devotes to the well-being of his people to an awful member of the leisure class who succumbs to greed and waste. The other half of the novel is dominated by the Sacco-Vanzetti Trial, the event that pushed Dos Passos to see America as two nations opposed to each other: a nation of workers and a nation of exploiters.

In fact, the author wanted also to write the history of a collective man. He resorted to another new technique, that of juxtaposition. Indeed, if we take the stories of Charley, Margo and Mary separately and entitle each with the name of its hero, we can obtain three autonomous short novels or long novellas. But the lives of these characters interact; such is the case of Charley and Margo who become lovers after the former's divorce; or Eveline and Mary who are closely related to each other (it is Mary who informs us about Eveline's suicide because she attended her party the night before). Likewise, from the moment Margo becomes a Hollywood star, we no longer know anything about her directly. It is only in the last segment centered on Mary that we come to know about the final failure in her career caused by the advent of the spoken film in which her voice is not strong enough to be recorded.

Juxtaposition of events seems to be one of the new techniques Dos Passos uses to avoid the traditional linear novel which is too limited to satisfy a writer who wanted to cover the whole life of the Americans of the 1920's. Moreover, in a traditional novel, the writer could not have mixed his fictional characters with his new literary fragments: the biographies, Newsreels and Camera Eyes which are closely related to the personal narratives which they accompany and interrupt.

The first chapters of the novel illustrate that close relation between narration and the Newsreels. The essential themes are already announced when Paul Johnson – a secondary character who is on the point of disembarking on the American harbor, after WWI, says “Well we’re back in God’s country” (p.734). This self-satisfaction which is purely American is soon destroyed by the campaign of inflation which is being prepared on the eve of the Americans’ return from WWI. The silencing of the workers by the trusts, the moral break of the rescued soldiers, all these are announced in the first chapter by Olie – another secondary character, “we could stand the war, but the peace has done us in” (p.734). This idea is repeated in Newsreel 44, “only survivors of crew of Schooner Onato are put in jail on arrival in Philadelphia” (p.737).

Juxtaposition is also an excellent opportunity for Dos Passos to use irony, humor and emphasis. The juxtaposition of the closing words of Camera Eye 51, “he lifts his hands towards the telephone the deputies’ crowd in the door we have only words against” (p.1155) and the title of Samuel Insull’s biography “Power Superpower” (p.1155) illustrates the effect obtained through the careful ordering of the sequences of the different sections.

There is irony when Dos Passos juxtaposes the biography of the Wright Brothers, those faithful intellectuals/inventors to the story of Charley Anderson who gives his genius up for money. Margo’s career as a prostitute is juxtaposed to that of Isadora Duncan who gave so much to American culture; Eleanor the artist who turns her career into a mere means of enrichment is juxtaposed to Frank Lloyd Wright, the artist who renovated American architecture by the creation of the Lusonian City. The biography of Veblen is followed by the segment of Mary who uses her leisure time – when she visits her mother – to read the Theory of the Leisure Class. This is in turn juxtaposed to Mary’s mother who inherits some stock and lives luxuriously.

But despite these new techniques of discontinuity, the reader feels a unity of impression because the different parts of the novel are very carefully arranged.

As to the characters, they are easily understood by the reader because they are put in their socio-historical context: the writer gives all the information necessary which helped form them, mainly time, place, social milieu. These backgrounds are usually presented through the memories of the characters as well as through Newsreels and biographies. Characters give, in their turn, a geographical, historical and social image of the American society of the 1920's.

What the reader cannot fail to notice is that the characters of the Big Money are not flat; they are more real than those of the two previous volumes of the trilogy; they can no longer be considered as documents or political puppets or again as Sociological data. They typify the average men and women moulded by the complex forces around them. The reader can easily identify with them because they are convincing people; he is also compelled to share their defeat as they symbolize the dissolution of a central institution in American society which used to be cohesive. Yet, they remain pure products of imagination.

It is true that the writer's materials are all taken from his study of American society and history – as well as from some painfully - remembered events from his own life. But it is through the use of his imagination that he built from these materials an organic unity, which described the nation he made his own. He is indeed a kind of artist-reporter. Nathian Asch's distinction between the artist and the reporter can easily be applied on him:

The usually vague distinction between the artist and the reporter [...] consists in the artist having more depth and comprehension and sympathy, may be more love for humans living. He has many functions, but when he recreates something that

really happens, he does a better job than would an apparently cold, objective, will-not-take-sides reporter. Events in his head become a part of life and place themselves in time's duration⁷².

What adds to the success of the characters is the realism with which they are depicted: Mary suffers not only from her relationship with the hypocrite George Barrow, the ally of the capitalists but also with the militants Ben Compton and Don Stevens who, though her comrades in the party, are incapable of sharing her love. The militants who oppose the system also suffer from the unhappy relationships that characterize the middle-class characters. And it is not always women who are victims. When Ben Compton goes to jail for the first time, his girl-friend gets acquainted with another comrade, to console herself.

Even the biographies, positive or negative, are full of emotional failures and scandals: Veblen and his bad/unlawful behaviour with his wife who just like Moorehouse's wife is to be admitted in an asylum; Isadora and her unsteady life; Frank Lloyd and his adventures with women.

In general, all the devices Dos Passos uses in the Big Money are meant to develop the theme of the novel and to carry the characters forward in their conflict with the machine: those who submit to it reach material success but lose all spiritual direction in the process; those who do not understand the system are crushed by it or are destroyed if they oppose it.

The reactionary intellectuals of the novel, "the strangers", as Dos Passos calls them, be they real people cited in the biographies, such as Ford, Taylor, Hearst or mere products of the writer's imagination, such as Charley, Savage, Eleanor, Eveline are all un-American because their words and actions betray and deny the "old words", the values and principles on which the 'founding fathers' built their democratic America. The writer resorts to irony and satire to denounce them and sometimes even to mock

them. He punishes them severely: some are killed, others are destroyed economically and some others end up with moral break down.

As to the revolutionary organic intellectuals, true Americans, such as Thorstein Veblen and Mary French, they remain faithful to the original idea of America though they end up as members of “the beaten nation”. Dos Passos admires Veblen for his being a doubter, a questioner and a provoker. But what he likes most in him is his belief in a humanly-oriented capitalism. Veblen wants Americans to consider great wealth and technology, not as ends in themselves but as means of achieving a just society, of realising the “vast possibilities for peace and plenty offered by the progress of technology”. This would be the realization of the pioneers’ dream.

Dos Passos embodies in Mary all the characteristics of a revolutionary intellectual. It is true that she does not adhere to the communist party, but she works within it because it provides leadership for the masses; moreover, Dos Passos does not attribute a Communist Connotation to the term ‘masses’ or ‘workers’; for him these words include all categories of Americans: Seamen, workers, vagrants. He thinks that one need not be a Communist or a Socialist to be considered as a revolutionary intellectual. When he was asked whether a writer/intellectual should join the Communist party, he answered,

It is his own goddamn business. Some people are naturally party men and others are natural scavengers and camp followers, matter of temperament. I personally belong to the scavengers and camp follower section⁷³.

Mary adopts the same attitude. She has a great sympathy for the common American; she commits herself to his defence; she cherishes all the ancient values of the ‘founding fathers – Democracy, Freedom, Equality, human solidarity; she fights for a better social order; she rejects the dominant ideology and fights against it; she helps the

masses/common men and leads them in their struggle for their rights. In short, she fulfills all the requirements of a revolutionary intellectual fixed by Gramsci ,without however committing herself to any ideology other than that of serving mankind.

By the end of the novel, Dos Passos seems to have faith in the liberals of the middle-class, like Mary French. For him, these take a neutral position in that war opposing work and capital. He does not see in Communism or Marxism a solution to the problems of America. What interests him in Marx is that economic oppression exerted on the workers, but he rejects totally a violent revolution (in a Marxist sense) as a political solution because, according to him, it goes against the profound values of America. To save the nation from its moral corruption, he advocates a return to the agrarian America of Thomas Jefferson; he wants Americans to re-unite with the soil, to reconcile with the land, a task which proves nearly impossible because his characters are rather linked to the urban civilization of the North East, mainly to the New York life. To reach an ethical moral unification is to go back to that ancient moral code and that sacred system of values, after having been stricken by the dishonesty of the world of ‘big business’ which has destroyed their authenticity.

The prevailing atmosphere of the Big Money is one of disillusion and lost faith, a climate of disenchantment and hedonism bred by the moral failure of the war. Dos Passos underlines the alienation, failure and despair of individual destinies destroyed by an urban money and power – obsessed society. That is why his novel is marked by pessimism and failure. One should mention that in the depression era, the stories that attracted attention were those of failure, not those of success. The literature of that period was dominated by failure, hardship and loss. This was an objective response to the economic reality of the era ⁷⁴.

The same atmosphere is found in many colonised African countries after the two World Wars when the Africans discovered that they had been betrayed by the colonialists who had not kept the promise of granting them their independence. If the Americans suffered from the two world wars and from the 1929 economic depression, the Africans, for their part, endured three wars: World War One and World War Two in which they fought with the Europeans against Germany, and a third war, their war, the one they waged against the colonialists to regain their independence. Add to this, the disillusionment at post-independence Africa when African leaders took power and engaged in an awful race for social prestige and material at the expense of the masses. African writers were shocked by this situation, among them the Kenyan Ngugi Wa Thiong'o only a certain category of people and the Senegalese Sembene Ousmane who committed themselves to the problems of their people. They indicted the theme of war/colonial exploitation in their early novels and later dealt with that conflict between the capitalists and the proletariat to end up with a harsh attack of the national bourgeoisie.

End Notes

1- John Dos Passos, the Big Money [1936] (N. York: penguin 2001). All page references are to this edition.

It should be noted that the first segment of the novel, “Charley Anderson” was published in 1933 under the title “Back Home 1919” in Esquire. In fact several parts of the Big Money have been published in many magazines under different titles, mainly in New Republic and Esquire.

2- Thorstein Veblen, the Theory of the Leisure Class [1923] (New York, The New American Library, 1953).

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4- See Robert Louis Heibroner, “the Savage Society of Thorstein Veblen”, The Worldly Philosophers.

5- Idem. For details on Veblen’s Theory of the Leisure Class, see:

- Rick Tillman, Thorstein Veblen, John Dewey, C Wright Mills and the Generic Ends of Life (New York: Rowman & Littlefield 2004).

- John Patrick Diggins, Thorstein Veblen: Theorist of the Leisure Class (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

- Stephen Edgell, Veblen in perspective: his Life and Thought (New York: M. E Sharp, 2001).

- Janet. T. Knoeller, Robert E; Prasch & Dell P. Champlin (eds); Thorstein Veblen and the Revival of Free Market Capitalism (New York: Edward Edgar Publishing, 2007).

6- See Michael Beschloss & Hugh Sidey, the Presidents of the United States of America (New York: Diane Publishing, 1998).

7- See New York Times, July 21,1921, p.7.

Already in May 14, 1920, he had said, “[...] America’s present need is not heroics but healing; not nostrums, but normalcy; not surgery, but serenity; not agitation, but adjustment; not surgery, but serenity; not the dramatic, but the dispassionate; not experiment, but equipoise; not submergence in internationality, but sustainment in triumphant nationality”. See: Warren G. Harding, “Return to Normalcy”, May 14, 1920 in Teaching American History. Org.

For further details, see Burl Noggle, Into the Twenties: the United States from Armistice to Normalcy (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974).

8- Russel Ainto, “the Strange Life and Death of President Harding” www.trutu.com/libracy/crime/terrorists-spies/assasin/warren_harding/6html.

*Dos Passos deals with the ‘American Plan’ in Fred Taylor’s biography.

9- In American President Warren Gamaliel Harding millercenter.org/president/harding/essays/biography1

10- One of the greatest scandals of the time was the Teapot Dome Scandal which ended in suicides and prison terms. See Charles L. Mee, the Ohio Gang: the World of Warren G. Harding (New York: M. Evans & Co, 1981).

11- In 1919, Congress passed the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote.

12- See William E. Leuchtenburg, “the Wrong Man at the Wrong Time”, American Heritage 59, 2(Summer 2009).

13- To get out of the economic depression, Roosevelt came with a series of economic programs. He focused on what was then called the 3 Rs: Relief, Recovery and Reform. Relief for the unemployed and poor, recovery of the economy to normal levels, reform of the financial system to prevent a repeat depression”. He summarized the New Deal as a “use of the authority of government as an organized form of self-help for all classes and groups and sections of our country”. See Ronald. Edsforth, the New Deal: America’s Response to the Great Depression (New York: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

Roosevelt was adored and hated. Some Americans loved him because – according to them – he saved the country from revolution; others hated him because they thought his punitive taxation and bureaucracy had eroded American liberty and self-reliance. It was him who instituted inheritance taxes to break up large fortunes. But despite this, the rich

remained rich. For more, see Neil M. Maher, Nature's New Deal: the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

14- For more details on Hoover, see:

- Glen Jeansonne, the Life of Herbert Hoover: Fighting Quaker, 1928-1933 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

- Timothy Walch (ed); Uncommon Americans: the Lives and Legacies of Herbert and Lou Henry Hoover (New York : Greenwood Press, 2003).

15- Malcolm Bradbury & Howard Temperley (eds); [1981], Introduction to American Studies (London: Longman, 1998), p.228.

16-It has already been mentioned in the previous chapter that the character of J. Ward Moorehouse, the public counsel of The 42nd Parallel and 1919 was built on Ivy Lee.

17- See Malcolm Bradbury & Howard Temperley Op.Cit., p. 210.

18- Trade Union membership decreased from 5 million in 1920 to 3,5 million in 1929. Idem.

19- On prohibition and bootlegging, see:

- Edward, Behr, Prohibition: Thirteen Years that Changed America (New York: Carroll & Graff, 1999).

- David E. Kyvig, Repealing National Prohibition, (Kent: Kent University Press, 2000).

- Thomas R. Pegram, Battling Demon Rum: the Struggle for a Dry America, 1800-1933 (Chicago, Ivan. R. Dee, 1998).

20- The term Flapper originated in England to refer to young women in a society when there was a shortage of men during and after the war, but it reached America where it acquired frivolous connotations. See Mathew J. Bruccoli, "Fitzgerald's Eras, Social and Political Backgrounds of the 1920's and 1930's".

mhtml: <file:///E:/fitzgerald's%20Eras.mht>.

21- The Ku Klux Klan was founded in 1865 by William Nathan Bedford who started a terror campaign against the blacks and their white supporters. On this movement, see: Wyn Graig Wade, The Fiery Cross: the Ku Klux Klan in America (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

- David Mark Chalmers, Hooded Americanism: the History of the Ku Klux Klan (New York :Duke University Press, 1987).

- Nancy K. Mac Leon, Behind the Mask of Chivalry: the Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

22- The presidential election of 1928 during which the Socialist party candidate Norman Thomas received the lowest socialist rate since 1900 (270 000 votes) testifies to the fallen fortunes of the left. See Peter Conn, The American Thirties: A Literary History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p.209.

23- On the Greenwich Village see. Luther S. Harris, Around Washington Square: an Illustrated History of Greenwich Village (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

24- On these points see George Novack, “Radical Intellectuals in the 1930’s”, International Socialist Review 29, 2 (March- April 1968): 21-34.

25- Jan Starabinski, 1789: the Emblems of Reason (Charlotte Ville: University of Virginia Press, 1982), p.104.

26- John Higham, History: Professional Scholarship in America (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), p.198.

27- See Richard Ruland & Malcolm Bradbury, From Puritanism to Post-Modernism (London: Penguin, 1992), p.319.

28- Before WWI, the term was used to refer to a writer who investigates and publishes truthful reports to perform an auditing or watching dog function. Upton Sinclair’s Jungle [1906] was one of the Key documents that defined the work of the muckrakers as it was written with the intent of addressing unsafe working conditions in the meat packing industry. See: Gallenger Aileen, The Muckrakers American Journalism during the Age of Reform (NewYork: the Rosen publishing Group, 2006).

*- See: Fine Sidney, Association and the Open Stop Movement 1903-1957 (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1995), p. 203.

*- See Jon H. Wrenn, John Dos Passos (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc, 1961), p.14.

29- Malcolm Bradbury, The Modern American Novel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.125.

30- The 1930's were characterized by different kinds of realism such as proletarian Realism; Bourgeois Realism, Urban/ Rural Realism, Wasp Realism, Black/White Realism... . These different kinds of Realism – as well as Naturalism – seemed to be the most appropriate way to record a changing and troubled Society.

31- On the friendship between Dos Passos and Hemingway see Stephen Coch, the Breaking Point: Hemingway, Dos Passos and the Murder of Jose Robles (London: Robson Books, 2006).

32- See Alice Béja, “Radically American: John Dos Passos, Culture and Politics”, Reconstruction: Studies in Contemporary Culture Op.Cit. See also Jon H. Wrenn, John Dos Passos Op.Cit., pp.51-52.

33- On this event, see John Dos Passos, Travel Books and Other Writings 1916-1941 [1931](New York : the Library of America, 2003).

34- Ludington Townsend says about him, “He could repeatedly join political groups, sign petitions, or lend his name to organizations like the National Executive Committee of the Moscow-based Proletarian Artists’ and Workers’ League-acts that many people took to mark a firm commitment but he did not because he remained a skeptic” in John Dos Passos: a Twentieth Century Odyssey [1980] (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 1998).

35- On the disagreement between Dos Passos and Mike Gold and the Communists, see Allen Belkind (ed); Dos Passos, the Critics and the Writers’ Intention (London: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971), p.161.

36- There is a striking resemblance between the hero of “Airways Inc.”, Elmer and Charley Anderson of the Big Money. Both are cynically exploited by the businessmen who want to use their knowledge in mechanics for the promotion of their companies.

Through them, Dos Passos shows how correct individuals become accomplices of corrupted dead companies.

37- On the writers and artists who influenced Dos Passos, see Jean-Pierre Morel, John Dos Passos (Paris: Berlin, 1998), p.83.

38- Irr Caren, The Suburb of Dissent, Cultural Politics in the United States and Canada during the 1930's (New York: Duke University Press, 1998), p.235.

39- Thorstein Veblen, the Engineers and the Price System (New York: Harcourt, 1921).

40- Ibid., p.473.

41- The Theory of the Leisure Class, Op.Cit., p.164.

42- See David Body, Management: an Introduction (New York: Pearson Education, 2002) and Daniel Nelson, A Mental Revolution: Scientific Management since Taylor (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1992).

43- Ibid., p.103.

44- In Douglas G. Brinkley, Wheels for the World: Henry Ford. His Company and a Century Progress (New York: Viking, 2003), p.134.

45- Ibid., p.166.

46- See Henry Ford & Samuel Crowther, My Life and Work (New York: Doubleday, 1922), pp. 253-266.

47- Max Lerner, The Radical Novel in the United States: 1900-1950 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952), p.369.

48- See James Cross Giblin, Charles A. Lindbergh: A Human Hero (New York: Clarion Books, 1997).

49- Ibid , p.9.

50- In Unreliable Sources: A Guide to Detecting Bias in News Media (New York: Carroll Publishing, 1992).

51- Upton Sinclair, The Brass Check: a Study of American Journalism (New York: Carroll Publishing, 1919).

52- Idem.

53- Idem.

54- See George Seldes, Facts and Fascism (New York: In fact. Inc, 1949), p.67.

55- Idem

For more on him, see: Ben H. Procter, William Randolph Hearst: the Later Years, 1911-1951 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

- Nancy Fazier, William Randolph Hearst: Modern Media Tycoon (Wood bridge: Black Birch Press, 2001).

56- Frank Lloyd Wright, the Natural House (New York: Bramhall House, 1954), p.3.

57- See Deborah Gans & Kuz Zehra, the Organic Approach to Architecture (New York: Chichester Willey, 2003).

58- For details on Tony as a homosexual character see “Main Character in the Margin: Homosexual Voice in the Big Money by John Dos Passos”, Sunday, Dec 20, 2009.
<http://www.question.com>.

59- For more on Margo, see Joseph Fishtelberg, “the Picaros of John Dos Passos, Twentieth Century Literature 34, 4 (Winter 1988): 434-52.

60- Maxwell Geismar, Writers in Crisis. The American Novel 1925-1940 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960), p124.

61- See Kurth Peter, Isadora: a Sensational Life (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2001).

62- Isadora Duncan, My Life (New York: W.W. Norton, 1927), p78.

63- Who am I? What do I want? Where am I going? Are questions he kept asking himself when he was about to leave New York for Russia in 1928. This was reported in his book In All Countries (1934), p.113.

64- See John H. Wrenn, Op.Cit., p.43.

65- For details on these Camera Eyes , see James N. Wester hoven, “Autobiographical Elements in the Camera Eye”, American Literature 48, 3 (Nov 1976) : 340-64.

66- John Dos Passos, Facing the Chair, Story of the Americanisation of Two Foreign Born Workmen (Boston: Sacco-Vanzetti Defense Committee, 1927), p.127.

67- See John Wrenn in John Dos Passos, Op.Cit. and John Brant, The Fiction of John Dos Passos (Paris: Mouton, 1968).

68- Granville Hickes, “the Politics of John Dos Passos” in Allen Belkind, Op.Cit., p.113.

69- John Dos Passos, Introduction to Grosz’s Inter regnum (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1948), p.18.

70- See Marcus Cunliff (ed), American Literature since 1900 (London: Penguin, 1987), p.380.

H.L Mencken was among those who expressed this condemnation. He rejected any form of cultural over lordship, especially that of the old priests of the Genteel Tradition. See Cunliff, Op.Cit., pp (381-5).

71- Idem.

72- Cited in Daniel Aron, Writers on the Left (New York: Harcourt & Brace & World, 1961), p.347.

73- Cit in Belkind Op.Cit., p.115.

74- See Charles Hearn, the American Dream in the Great Depression (London: Greenwood Press, 1977), pp. 129-30.

Part Two:

Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Sembene Ousmane and the African Intellectual

Chapter One

The Intellectual in the Making :

The River Between

Weep not, Child and Ô pays, mon

beau peuple!

In the first chapter of this work, I dealt with the American intellectuals' views on their country's involvement in WWI as they were portrayed in Dos Passos's Three Soldiers. Similarly, in this chapter, I deal with the reaction of Kenyan and Senegalese intellectuals to their people's struggle against colonialism as portrayed in Ngugi's novels Weep not Child¹ and the River Between² and Sembene's Ô pays, mon beau peuple!³. My aim is to know whether the American and African intellectuals adopt the same attitude towards war –be it a World War in a foreign country or a colonial war at home. For this purpose, I examine the way the protagonists of these novels- Njoroge of Weep not, Child, Waiyaki of the River Between and Oumar Faye of Ô pays, mon beau peuple! respond to the colonial presence in their respective countries to see if they are really convinced of the necessity of putting an end to the whites' presence in Africa, if they take part in the struggle of the masses for independence or rather opt for a reconciliation between the colonizers and the colonized. I also stress the effect of colonialism on the development of their personalities and on their political and ideological commitment. At the same time, I pay attention to the stylistic dimensions of these novels, mainly their simplicity-not to say simplicism- in terms of plot, style and diction. Such an investigation cannot be overlooked, for it is through it that I shall uncover / unveil the vestigial forms of subservience as well as the incipient forms of subversion that characterize all works on the threshold of freedom.

Like Dos Passos's Three Soldiers, these three novels are considered as novels of "apprenticeship" because they are in fact an emulation of European models. They are saturated with images, descriptions and characters that echo a literary tradition which is essentially Western in character. The writers' style and world views are still determined by their colonial teachers. Janheinz Jahn considers this literature which he calls "literature of tutelage" as a sign of youth: the writer imitates his foreign models and uses their language, as a way of showing his indebtedness to them⁴. Sembene is

influenced by many progressive writers and artists, among them, Richard Wright, Nazim Hikmet, Jack Roumain and John Dos Passos⁵. As a matter of fact, many similarities between Roumain's Gouverneurs de la Rosée and Sembene's Ô pays, mon beau peuple! are noted; Ngugi in the River Between and Weep not, Child is still under the effect of the ideology embedded in the Arnoldian and Leavisite basis of his formal education at Alliance High School and Makerere University⁶. He has not yet overcome the colonial bases of his European education.

What further unites all these early works is the desire of the writers to create their own heroes. In the first novels they write, they cannot prevent themselves from being inspired by those Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Western realist novels characterised by their focus on the psychological and moral growth of a 'remarkable' protagonist/ hero⁷ from youth to adulthood. However, obsessed with the idea of recovering African dignity and self-esteem, they want their heroes to be concerned with the preoccupations of their people and to take part in their struggle against colonialism; they want them to be intellectuals. Consequently, they either go back to the past to restore their legendary heroes, as Ngugi does in the River Between or simply invent fictitious ones, like Njoroge in Weep not, Child and Oumar Faye in Ô pays, mon beau peuple!

Weep not, Child, the most autobiographical of Ngugi's novels, tells the story of Njoroge, a sensitive and vulnerable Western educated young man –like the writer himself– living in the midst of a dispossessed Kikuyu family during the years of the Emergency. His parents decide to send him to school to acquire the Whiteman's knowledge, that is, to become an intellectual, and then come back to help his people recover their stolen lands and put an end to colonial exploitation. However, his studies are interrupted by many social and historical events such as the Mau Mau uprising and

the state of Emergency. Moreover, being tempted by the peaceful world offered by the British college, he proves unable to adopt an attitude regarding the violence or resignation of his people. By the end of the novel, he is pulled out of school. He is so disappointed that he attempts to commit suicide.

The River Between ,for its part, deals with Waiyaki, an idealistic youth who dreams with messianic fervor of leading his people out of colonial tutelage, peacefully, by acquiring the whiteman's education, that is, by becoming an intellectual .However, the Western knowledge he receives at the Whiteman's mission school keeps him away from the ideological and political problems of his community. Instead of working to undo the evils of colonialism, he keeps preaching reconciliation between two Kikuyu communities, Makuyu which has adhered to Western Christian beliefs and Kamenno which has stuck to the traditional tribal ways. He thus fails in his mission.

Likewise, Sembene Ousmane in Ô pays, mon beau peuple! entrusts Oumar Faye, his hero with the mission of liberating his people from colonial exploitation. After taking part in WWII, Oumar comes back from France as a conscious enlightened man. He wants to awake his people and to sensitize them to economic freedom. But the colonialists stand in his way because they see in him a threat to their political and economic interests. They kill him on the eve of the realization of his project, the creation of an agricultural cooperative.

Just like the protagonist of Dos Passos's Three Soldiers, John Andrews, Njoroge, Waiyaki and Oumar – with varying degrees – lack political and ideological maturity. They live in a world of dreams and illusions. At the time of writing these novels, Ngugi and Sembene suffered from the same lack of ideological and political maturity as that of Dos Passos at the beginning of his literary career. They were

uncommitted and they could not be considered as ‘true’ intellectuals. So, they could hardly produce characters that could be seen as intellectuals.

In fact, Sembene has never believed in the necessity of the intellectual in society. When asked what the term ‘intellectual’ meant for him, he answered as follows,

Je n’ai pas peur du mot intellectuel; socialement, je ne vois pas son utilité. Ou alors, un intellectuel est un bureaucrateun pousse-papier par où s’imbibe le néo-colonialisme⁸.

If we go back to Sartre’s views on the intellectual, we can say that Sembene does not distinguish ‘true’ intellectuals from ‘false’ ones; the people he calls bureaucrats are in fact those Sartre considers “false intellectuals”⁹, people who have studied but have chosen to use their knowledge for the class in power. Sembene ignores the existence of true intellectuals who devote themselves to the defense of universal humanistic values and who take part in the struggle of the oppressed. He even refuses to call Oumar Faye of Ô pays, mon beau peuple! an intellectual ; for him, he is no more than a militant¹⁰. If – still according to Sartre – intellectuals can only emerge from among those he calls “les techniciens du savoir pratique”¹¹, that is, degree and diploma holders, Oumar is far from being an intellectual since he has left school early, though he is better educated than the rest of his community. There are other characters that conform to Sartre’s definition, like seck the teacher and Agbo the doctor, but these do not play an important role in the novel.

On the other hand, Waiyaki of the River Between and Njoroge of Weep not, Child are not mature enough to be considered as intellectuals; they are still too young and too naive. Furthermore, though they are the most learned characters of the novels, they inherit the ideological haziness of the writer himself – just like John Andrews in Three soldiers.

Nevertheless, in the present analysis, I shall regard the educated Waiyaki, Njoroge and Oumar as intellectuals for three reasons. First, they somehow use their intellect in raising the consciousness of their people. Second, I consider all the people endowed with the gift of leading others and with the moral strength of inducing them to adopt their viewpoint as intellectuals. Third, I make my own Kester Echenim's view of the intellectual in fiction:

L'intellectuel en tant que personnage romanesque
doit être perçu comme porteur des valeurs de
l'espérance pour la collectivité en inscrivant son
comportement dans le sens du bien être collectif¹².

Indeed, Waiyaki, Njoroge and Oumar are characters destined to concretize the aspirations of their communities whose fate is necessarily put in their hands as leaders. Their ambition and relentless optimism fill the hearts of their people with the hope for a better future, though some fail in their missions (Waiyaki and Njoroge) and others die before the realisation of their projects (Oumar).

Waiyaki and Njoroge, just like Andrews of Three Soldiers, belong to a category of heroes Sunday Anozie, in his examination of West African novels, calls "the intro-active heroes"¹³, otherwise known as problematic individuals. The protagonists of the three novels are engaged in a quest for their identities. If Andrews wavers between the middle class in which he was brought up and the new class of workers to which he wants to belong, Waiyaki and Njoroge are torn between their desire to remain faithful to their traditions and their struggle to belong to the modern world. This uncertainty estranges them from their people with whom they no longer identify. While Andrews rejects the traditional values of his middle class society, Waiyaki and Njoroge for their part struggle to detach themselves from the traditional world in which they live. The impositions of their societies paralyse their actions and prevent them from committing themselves to the cause they judge most adequate. In their quest for self-esteem and

identity, they are often subjected to that phobia of fear of failure and weakness, of not being in control of the situation. They thus live an interior revolt of sorts caused mainly by the severing of the umbilical cord that bound them to their society. They all end up in despair.

Oumar, on the other hand, is rather Anozie's extro-active hero, a detribalized champion of socio-political justice with traits of ideological messianism¹⁴. He is a fully developed character. Contrary to the intro-active Waiyaki, Njoroge and Andrews, he has a marked tendency to confront any external threat. He opposes all non-convincing situations, be they local or foreign: he revolts against the colonial presence in his country and even against some anti- progressive traditional customs. He is a very independent man, endowed with a certain capacity to lead others. He gets recognition from his community for his complete rejection of the colonial predicament. He conforms to the views of Anozie when he says,

C'est le héros rebelle qui se révolte soit implicitement soit ouvertement contre la colonisation à plusieurs stades de ses manifestations socio-économiques. C'est aussi un homme qui rejette le statut du colonisé, image qu'il considère soit par honte, soit en pleine connaissance de cause comme détestable et imposée. On constate donc chez ce personnage la présence du colonisé qui se révolte¹⁵.

Unlike Waiyaki, Njoroge and even Andrews, he surmounts futile psychological or family problems. He is rather preoccupied by matters concerning his country at large. He tries hard to bring change in his society. He is much more mature and more positive than Ngugi's heroes. He is, as Anozie says again, the individual who incarnates the ideal of the progressive group and who embodies all the suffering of the oppressed classes¹⁶. He has adopted a definite attitude towards colonialism and he is ready to die for the cause he is defending.

I shall then examine the writers' conception of the hero – a conception identical to the conventional realist protagonist found in Dos Passos's Three Soldiers. The three protagonists are endowed with "heroic" features: the notion of "messianism" in the case of Ngugi's heroes and that of "Charisma" in the case of Sembene's will be found pertinent. The three heroes wish to bring change to their communities and to raise their consciousness, and this makes intellectuals of them. Waiyaki and Njoroge see in education the best weapon of liberation; while Oumar believes that only an economic revolt can free the Senegalese from colonial exploitation.

I shall relate Waiyaki and Njoroge to some secondary characters from, Ô pays, mon beau peuple! mainly Seck the teacher and Agbo the doctor with whom they share many features. Their individualism, their a-sociability and their political and ideological confusion are worth underlining; they remind us of Andrews of Three Soldiers with whom I shall compare them all along this chapter. On the other hand, Oumar of Ô pays, mon beau peuple! will be grouped with Boro and Kiarie from Weep not, Child and Kabonye from the River Between (all secondary characters) as their attitudes towards colonialism seemingly come from the same mould. And as these characters resemble Chrisfield, the 'innocent farmer' in Three Soldiers, reference will be made to him whenever necessary. In fact, all these characters act according to the social, political and historical situations in which they find themselves. That is why I have judged it necessary to start with a socio-historical background of the period covered by the novels to understand the behavior of the characters, mainly that of the intellectuals.

I- Literary- Social-Historical Background

I.1 The African Writer: A Committed Spokesman for his World

The African intellectual of the colonial period is the product of colonialism. He is profoundly influenced by Western education; the colonialist teachers assailed him with their abstract universal values. They taught him individualism; “le colonialisme s’est infiltré en lui avec tous ses modes de pensée”¹⁷, as Fanon says. His ideas are completely different from those of his people; therefore he cannot even communicate with them. Sartre sees this intellectual and all the Western-educated Africans as victims of European duplicity:

On [l’élite européenne] sélectionnait des adolescents, on leur marquait sur le front [...] les principes de la culture occidentale [...]. Après un bref séjour en métropole, on les renvoyait chez eux, truqués. Ces mensonges vivants n’avaient rien à dire à leurs frères¹⁸.

This intellectual is aware that his country men are in trouble, but he does not know how to remedy the situation. He does not realize that the colonialist has no reason and no right to stay in his country. He is cut off from his land, a land he no longer reveres like the peasants because he has been taught that “la richesse est celle de la pensée”¹⁹, as Fanon says. He is usually a loner, a silent person who doubts in his abilities and ends up in despair. He rejects violence adamantly because inside himself, he believes that the enemy is invulnerable; as Fanon says, “pour eux [les intellectuels et les dirigeants des partis nationalistes] ... toute tentative de briser l’oppression coloniale par la force est une conduite de désespoir, une conduite suicide. C’est que dans leurs cerveaux, les tanks des colons et les avions de chasse occupent une place

énorme”²⁰. Thus, this kind of intellectuals do not take part in the armed struggle; they serve only as intermediaries between the colonialists and the freedom fighters.

It is the duty of committed intellectuals to stir the consciousness of these hesitating intellectuals, and to convince them of the necessity of leading their people in their struggle against colonialism. Among these committed intellectuals, the writers who have decided to devote their writings to the cause of their people. When they start writing, the African continent is already colonized. As intellectuals, they have to take a stand vis-à-vis colonialism and later even to take part in the elaboration of political systems for their people. As A. Arab says, “the source and driving force of modern literary creation in Africa lies in the permanent and fundamental antagonism between colonialism and what can be broadly called the African revolution”²¹.

To be sure, before espousing the nationalist cause, the African writer in general has been indoctrinated by the colonial educational and religious systems. The liberal humanist tradition, that tradition which considers literature as ‘Criticism of life’, ‘openness before life’, aspiration to universality, is thus embedded in diverse degrees in the early works of many African writers, mostly those who went to university in colonial Africa (Ngugi, Achebe, Soyinka). Balance, fairness to both the colonial and the nationalist sides are to be found expressed in their early novels. While being convinced of the necessity of forging a decolonized literature, they still look toward the former mother countries for stylistic inspiration. Thus, since Africa is politicized by the colonial situation, the African writer is politicized from the start, tending towards committed literature, art for the sake of political freedom, while harbouring the vestigial forms of liberal humanism. However, exposed to the anti-colonial ideology, he becomes little by little the propagandist of African nationalism, that ideological movement aiming at the attainment of African autonomy and which Thomas Hodgkin

defines as “an organization or group that explicitly asserts the rights and aspirations of a given African society in opposition to European authority whatever its institutional form or objective”²².

Commitment is, as Raymond Williams says, “a choice of position”²³ and committed literature is “the application of commitment to the special field of literature”²⁴. For Max Adereth, a committed man is “a man who feels a sense of responsibility to his fellow men and who takes practical steps to help them”²⁵. If writers want to contribute to solving the problems of their societies, they have to take sides in the political and moral debates of their times, they have to commit themselves. From a Marxist view point, the efficacy of a writer depends on his ability to provide society in general with a true mirror of itself, of its conflicts and its problems. This means that he must not be a mere spectator in what he depicts; he must be an actor as well, “a conscious actor”, as Adereth says²⁶. What is important in committed literature is that the committed writer knows that in modern society, he must side with certain social forces against injustice. He must also refuse to compromise with the oppressors. For him, literature becomes what Sartre calls an integrated and militant function (*une fonction intégrée et militante*)²⁷. Sartre sees commitment as inherent in the act of writing²⁸. To write for him is to speak, and to speak is to reveal an aspect of the world in order to change it. Literature is therefore the outcome of an attitude – conscious or unconscious – towards the world. He believes that a committed writer is different from others, “not because he is involved in the world, but because he is aware of it [...] because he transfers his commitment from the level of the immediately spontaneous to the level of consciousness”²⁹. He says,

Je dirai qu'un écrivain est engagé quand il tâche de prendre la conscience la plus lucide et la plus entière d'être embarqué, c'est-à-dire lorsqu'il fait

passer pour lui et pour les autres, l'engagement de la spontanéité immédiate au réfléchi.³⁰

Committed African writers hold the view that to write on Africa is necessarily to be involved in its social, political and economic problems; it is also to state one's attitude towards colonialism and neo-colonialism as these are part and parcel of the history and life of Africa³¹. Indeed, most of them affirm their commitment. Chinua Achebe, for example, believes that,

[i]t is impossible to write anything in Africa without some kind of commitment, some kind of message, some kind of protest [...]. Commitment is nothing new; it runs right through our work. In fact, I should say all writers, whether they are aware of it or not, are committed writers.³²

Writing is therefore for the African writer, the expression of a parti-pris and of the necessity of making his voice heard³³. Sembene Ousmane and Ngugi WaThiong'o are of the same opinion as Achebe and Sartre. They believe that writers cannot help being committed in their writings. Sembene says that if a work of art is divorced from the preoccupations of the society in which it is produced, it may prove unauthentic:

Quand j'écris, j'engage ma responsabilité d'écrivain avec tout ce que je suis : mes opinions politiques, culturelles et le reste [...]. J'écris un peu pour moi bien sûr parce que j'aime écrire, mais je pense que j'écris surtout pour les autres, pour mon pays d'abord, pour la société urbaine ensuite. A mon avis, le travail d'un auteur doit se juger selon son utilité.³⁴

At the beginning of his literary career, Ngugi perceived the necessity for a writer to be involved in the problems of his people and warned against the kind of artistic detachment that becomes

an escape, something that has nothing to do with people's lives. The artist cannot afford to keep himself detached from the problems that are around him. People's agonies must be his agonies, a nation's joy must be his joy too ... an artist is not a hermit. He is concerned with the daily business of living.³⁵

Ngugi's and Sembene's itineraries are closely linked to the history and life of their people. They spend their childhood in the colonial period, their manhood during the nationalist struggle and their maturity in post-colonial Africa characterized by political and social conflicts as well as promises for a better future. To understand their writings better, one should draw a parallel between them and history, between their professional lives and political action, as their lives have always been involved in the changes their societies knew.

I.2 Ngugi and the Kenyan Colonial Period

To understand the context in which Ngugi grows up and which he portrays in Weep not, Child and the River Between, we should remember some essential dates: when in 1947 he goes to school, the African soldiers who fought in WWII were just coming back home. They had seen war, India's independence and had rubbed with Europeans. Now, in their turn, they wanted to be free, to get rid of colonialism, to restore the lands the British took from them as early as 1895 when Kenya was proclaimed a British protectorate³⁶. The colonial government, for its part, turned the Kenyans – mainly the Kikuyu – into wage laborers in their own lands³⁷, squatters who were exploited and deprived of their rights and whose farming was subordinated to that of the settlers³⁸. Most of all, for the first time, Africans saw Europeans killing each other. That was contrary to the teachings of the European missionaries and this surfaced many questions in the minds of the Africans, such as the value of the Whiteman's education and the whole idea of white supremacy. Now Africans are convinced that the stolen lands could be restored only through political action³⁹.

The fiercest opposition to the colonial authorities came from the Kikuyu people who had been evicted from their traditional areas to make way for the European farmers. The African peasants were forced to abandon their traditional agricultural

methods and did not have access to the new technology that would make extensive agriculture viable. Thus, the Kikuyu could not feed themselves. They were desperate. Moreover the settlers attacked their culture by forbidding the practice of certain traditional customs such as female circumcision (a theme Ngugi treats in the River Between).

It is in these conditions that the Mau Mau Movement was formed. It forced the Kikuyu to swear an oath to take back the land the Whiteman had stolen. This movement was politically motivated towards national independence. That is why the colonialists stood against it. They saw the Mau Mau as savage and violent people who sought to take the Kikuyu back to “the bad old days before British rule”⁴⁰. They described them as “an irrational force of evil, dominated by bestial impulses and influenced by world communism”⁴¹. In the 1960’s, however, many civilian leaders portrayed it as “an essential radical component of African nationalism in Kenya”⁴². Some even saw it as “a nationalist response to the unfairness and oppression of colonial domination”⁴³. The revolt was essentially limited to the Kikuyu people because they were the most affected by colonialism.

The British government reacted by sending troops to Kenya to help fight against the Mau Mau Movement. As a response, the Kenyan government declared a state of emergency in 1952, an act which pushed many Mau Mau adherents to flee to the forest around Mount Kenya. Kenyatta, President of the Kenyan African Union was arrested for alleged Mau Mau involvement and sent to Kapenguria⁴⁴. At the same time, suspected Mau Mau activists were arrested; many schools were closed in Kikuyu tribal areas. Some months later, the Mau Mau declared open rebellion against British rule in Kenya. British forces responded by the arrest of over 2000 Kikuyu suspected of Mau Mau membership. Anyone who administered the Mau Mau oath was killed. Soon, a

wave of hysteria – similar in intensity to that of the Red Scare in America – swept through the European settlers⁴⁵.

The Mau Mau Movement was however crushed as early as the end of 1956 because the Kikuyu tribe was dominated by several currents: those who embraced christianism and those who wanted to conserve their identity, while benefiting from modern education. The latter created independent churches, like those of the missionaries, among them the African Independent Pentecostal Church and the African Orthodox Church⁴⁶. Independent schools (like that in which Waiyaki of the River Between and Njoroge of Weep not, Child studied) were also founded. They were financed and led by two village associations: the Kikuyu Independent School Association and the Kikuyu Karing'a Educational Association⁴⁷ (both mentioned in the River Between and Weep not, Child).

Ngugi himself in 1949 went to Karing'a, an independent school dominated by religious principles but also by a nationalist and independent fervor that will be noticed within the young teachers of the River Between. Though he was interested in Kikuyu, these schools claimed the English language. In fact, the Kikuyu youth ,in general, wanted to have access to the international language, the language of progress and social promotion.

Ngugi entered Alliance High School in 1954, when rebellion reached its paroxysm, the year one of his brothers joined the freedom fighters in the bush. The government insisted on the immoral side of rebellion in churches, at school and in the radio. Rebellion was described as an atavistic regression towards darkness, a mental disease. But adolescents already suffering from guilt, the guilt of escaping to schools instead of taking part in the struggle against colonialism could only be attracted by a rebellion that aimed at the rehabilitation of a people and the reconstruction of their

personality. Guilt, responsibility, rejection of / fascination by violence, a vision sometimes of courage, sometimes of fascination, all these themes treated in Ngugi's novels are, at the same time, elements of his passage from adolescence to manhood.

In 1959, being very good in English, he was admitted in Makerere College in Uganda, the only University College in Africa depending on the university of London. There, he studied English literature and took part in a literary magazine⁴⁸. The few students there, the ones who mastered the English language, were conscious that they constituted an elite of choice, prodigal sons (like Waiyaki and Njoroge) chosen by their people to go to school, acquire the Whiteman's knowledge and come back to save their country from poverty and exploitation. This was a hard responsibility, a burden Ngugi puts in Waiyaki and Njoroge. Added to this, the fear of failure which haunted them.

In 1964, Ngugi worked as a journalist for the Nairobi Daily Nation⁴⁹. He soon left for Leeds University where he did research on Joseph Conrad⁵⁰. There, he got acquainted with world literature, mainly Caribbean and Russian writers. He also lived in a political milieu more radical than Makerere. "Leeds systematized my thinking", says he⁵¹. (It is in that period that he wrote A Grain of Wheat dealing with the years before and just after independence).

When he wrote his first two novels, Weep not, Child (1964) and the River Between (1965) in which he tried to link his experience to what he knew about Kenyan history, mainly the Mau Mau Movement, female circumcision and the clash between the Kikuyu and the missionaries, the history of rebellion and of its relation to political life was not yet written. The first serious studies will be published from 1964 on together with Weep not, Child. The texts written by the colonialists, the missionaries or the politicians are all characterized by incomprehension, ignorance and propaganda. (A Grain of Wheat(1967) is in fact an answer to those Europeans who tried to disfigure the

history of Kenya through their writings in which they glorified the colonialists and presented the Mau Mau movement as an irrational movement led by savages). Among these writers, Elspeth Hexley in Nellie, Robert Ruark in Uhuru and Something of Value and Karen Blixen in Out of Africa⁵². Kenyatta's post – independence speech itself is ambiguous: he avoids being associated with the Mau Mau⁵³. There is amnesty, pardon for the violence committed by the two camps, but it has never been admitted that the independence of Kenya had any link with the Mau Mau still presented as a tribal atavistic movement completely different from the internationally recognized movement in Algeria, the FLN (Front de Libération Nationale) which organized the war for a victorious liberation. It was seen only as a guerilla suppressed eight years before independence and concentrated only in a small part of the country.

In his treatment of the theme of history in his novels, Ngugi is similar to Dos Passos. Both want to record the history of their respective countries to make their people remember it. They do not want them to forget their glorious past. They insist so much upon it that the reader sometimes no longer makes a difference between history and fiction. He even comes to wonder whether the two writers are fictionalizing history or rather historicizing fiction.

I.3 Sembene a Trade Unionist rather than a Historian

Sembene however has not included as much history in his novels. He has not dealt directly with the colonial presence in Senegal, nor with the clash between the two cultures because, in fact, there has been no clash and no Senegalese struggle against colonialism. When in 1955, president de Gaulle circulated a referendum against the French African colonies where he offered immediate independence or a continued cooperative relationship with France, the Senegalese voted for the rejection of independence. Some revolutionary intellectuals however, stood against the French

communauté and expressed their disagreement through leaflets they issued in which they urged people not to vote at all because they considered this vote as a violation of the Cotonou resolutions which demanded immediate political independence⁵⁴. Moreover, he left Senegal just after WWII to come back to it only after independence.

This does not however mean that Sembene was for colonialism. He is a Casamancian. The Casamance has never accepted servitude; it is rather known with its resistance to colonial occupation⁵⁵. It even refused to take part in the two World Wars and was severely punished: the colonial government imposed high taxes on the Casamancians; they were beaten and humiliated⁵⁶. Sembene lived this colonial violence. He also attended all the political meetings which were most of the time held in the house of his father, Moussa, a notable who suffered from land appropriation and who refused any form of conformism or religious fanaticism.

But at that time, he had no fixed opinion on the events happening around him; he only endured them. Though adopting an anti-colonial attitude, he was devoid of structured political consciousness. That is why when WWII started, he – unlike the Casamancians – was ready to fight those Germans who dared occupy his ‘second country’. The majority of the Senegalese were taught that this war was fought for liberty and that if France lost it, the Germans would take the colony⁵⁷. Moreover official propaganda which made him believe that the real enemy of the world was Germany, had a great impact on him. One of the religious men, echoing the propaganda the clergymen in Dos Passos’s Three Soldiers make against the Germans, says in a mosque, “J’espère que les peuples civilisés qui veulent la paix dans le monde se mettront du côté de la France et de ses alliés pour rayer de la carte du monde cet immonde peuple d’Allemagne”⁵⁸. And when France was defeated by the Germans, Dakar was upset. The Imams prayed for it in the mosques; the Senegalese youth volunteered to help the

French⁵⁹. As to the educated ones, among them Sembene, they believed that France owed them something, were it only for the education it gave them. At school, all songs glorified France, its force and its beauty. They were also told that, black or white, they were all its children. But once in the war, the black soldiers were submitted to segregation and racism. They were treated like slaves.

And when, by the end of the war, they decided to fight for their own liberty, the French did not hesitate to shoot them by thousands, as it did in the Thiaroy Camp in Senegal and at Sétif in Algeria. Such experiences opened Sembene's eyes on the reality. He was no longer that man in a quest for a way, an identity; nor was he still overwhelmed by contradicting ideas. It is true that his experience in the war was brief, but it really changed him. He expresses his disappointment about it through Oumar Faye of Ô pays, mon beau peuple! (as it will be demonstrated later). So, after WWII, though he had enjoyed French citizenship since his birth, he became an anti-colonialist. He started being politicized. He even rejected French assimilation. Now, he wanted a complete independence from the French. He even joined the Parti Africain de l'indépendance in 1957⁶⁰. He stood against those African intellectuals educated in French who, during WWI were claiming their right for French citizenship and never thought about independence, because, for them, assimilation was more important than independence. And during WWII, these same intellectuals continued to claim only citizenship. They were acting against all Africa.

On this point, Sembene was convinced that citizenship for an African worker was a non-sense and rejected this status in 1960. For him, assimilation meant that the African worker enjoys the same rights as the French worker. And it is this struggle that the Senegalese working class has chosen as early as the end of WWII.

In 1947, he left Dakar for France in search of a better living. He remained there till 1960, the year Senegal was granted its political independence. He soon adhered to the CGT (Confédération Générale des Travailleurs) in France, the strongest political dockers trade union created in 1885 whose sole aim was the defense of the workers' rights, left wing or right wing, . Later it was bound to have political objectives as it was born under the impulse of a revolutionary trade unionism⁶¹. The CGT wanted to collectivize the means of production. It did not trust in the state. Most of its members were also members of the French Communist Party.

Sembene joined this trade union because he wanted to fight against capitalism and imperialism. Within the CGT and the PCF, knowledge was seen as an indispensable means for the attainment of power by the workers. So, he spent all his free time reading, persuaded, like Dos Passos and Ngugi, that any revolution had first to be cultural to guarantee its success. Add to this, his milieu was characterized by a great intellectual fervor. The CGT and the PCF were his second home in the 1950's. This universe was characterized by a refusal of racism: blacks and whites lived together in a community. Their slogan was brotherhood and solidarity in the struggle⁶².

The members of the CGT supported all oppressed people. They stood with the Algerian FLN as there were many Algerian dockers in Marseilles. There are echoes of the Algerian war in Sembene's first literary works, then in *Camp de Thiaroy* (1984). It is not by chance that Algeria took part in this film. The Thiaroy massacre is identical to that of Sétif in 1945. Sembene participated also in the protest movements against the colonial war in Indochina (1953) and the Korean War (1950-1953).

Marxism which he discovered during the courses he attended at the CGT provided him with an ideological and intellectual basis. What he liked most in that theory was the fact that it called for a Proletarian revolution that would socialize the means of

production that were in the hands of the capitalists and put an end to the class-system and to the state. He also understood that the junction between the French workers and the African ones was the only solution to the problems of his community. Appointed secretary general of Black workers in France, he was thus in close contact with both class and race conflict. He did not accept the idea that African workers form their own trade union according to the color of their skin. He said,

Un syndicat, ce sont les ouvriers d'une même corporation luttant pour améliorer leur situation. Quand je suis arrivé à Marseille, la CGT était un grand ensemble et je m'y suis incorporé en tant que travailleur, sans chercher à savoir s'il y avait là-dedans des noirs comme moi ou des jaunes. J'y voyais en outre un outil de formation personnelle, car le syndicalisme, c'est une grande école⁶³.

Being open to this universal trade unionism, Sembene was aware that real universality required that all the workers of the world be free. The colonised countries had therefore to have their independence. In the same spirit, he was convinced that the fate of the black worker in France was closely linked to the liberation of Africa. He strove to put his knowledge at the service of his African brothers living in France, be they black or Maghrebean. He wanted to raise the consciousness of his continent through a European revolutionary syndicalism.

To reach his aim, he read a lot. At the Communist Party library, he discovered the works of Jack London, one of the greatest socialist writers of the 20th Century (also known by Dos Passos). According to him, the works of London helped him take the decision to become a writer⁶⁴.

Other contemporaries like John Dos Passos, André Malraux, Ernest Hemingway and Langston Hughes helped him establish the relation between art and politics⁶⁵. Among the other writers he read, Dostoyevsky, Albert Camus and the Communist

Turkish Nazim Hikmet. In his quest for knowledge, Sembene read Paul Eluard's poems as well. He made his own all the cultures of the world⁶⁶.

Marseilles suited him quite well. Since the late 1920's and early 1930's (the period during which Dos Passos himself was in France), it knew a great creativity in all fields: literature, poetry, cinema⁶⁷. It received anti-fascist intellectuals and artists, persecuted Jews and Communists from many countries of the world⁶⁸. The offices of the magazine Cahiers du Sud received people like Paul Valery, Simone Weil, André Breton, Claude Lévi Strauss, Picasso and André Malraux⁶⁹ (Dos Passos himself met all these people in Paris). Even if Sembene did not meet them, he read their books through which he knew about what was happening around him. He came to the conclusion that it was impossible to change the world without understanding it.

However, in all the revolutionary works he read, Africa was never mentioned. He was obliged to seek refuge in the writers of the black American diaspora. He thus felt near to Richard Wright and Claude McKay, without accepting the idea that solidarity between the Blacks of Africa and those of America should be based on race. His struggle was indeed a class struggle, not a race – struggle. He said,

pourquoi automatiquement il faut coûte que coûte qu'il y ait une unité entre noirs Américains et Africains ? Un capitaliste Américain et un capitaliste Africain s'entendent bien. Un militant Africain et un militant Américain peuvent s'entendre. L'entente passe donc par cette ligne politique... je pense que forcément il y aura une solidarité entre les noirs par ce que nous avons un dénominateur commun qui est l'oppression coloniale [...] ⁷⁰.

He learned a lot through his contact with the intellectuals of France, but he was always haunted by a question: "ce que j'ai appris des artistes et hommes de culture progressistes du monde, comment l'appliquer au cas de l'Afrique?"⁷¹. He indeed wanted to become a writer, mainly to flee his situation of Docker, but he has always learnt that

for all colonized Africans, liberation from colonialism had to be a priority. He saw it his duty to take part in the struggle of all colonized people for national independence and for social revolution. And this is the main theme of Ô pays, mon beau peuple!.

Many African writers lived in France in the 1920's. Before going to Paris, they went through Marseilles which was considered as a door open on Africa. In Le Quartier Latin in Paris, relations were soon established between them and their black American counterparts. This gave birth to many magazines like l'Etudiant Noir and Présence Africaine (1947). Sembene followed the activities of these intellectuals, mainly the Senegalese Ousmane Socé Diop, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Abdulaye Sadi and Alioune Diop. He read their writings, but he judged the literary production of this period severely:

à ses débuts, la littérature africaine n'était pas du tout orientée vers l'Afrique. Elle s'adressait aux européens pour leur dire ; nous avons une culture et vous nous opprimez. C'était en somme une littérature d'auto-défense. C'est dans ces conditions qu'est née la négritude, elle n'était pas autre chose en 1933 que le désir de certains nègres vivant en Europe et bourrés de complexes d'être acceptés par la culture occidentale⁷².

But though he criticized this literature, he understood its utility in the colonial context. It started the cultural struggle, and though it was written in Europe, in foreign languages, it has had a great impact on Africans.

Moreover, as Africa between 1945 and 1960 was living a moment of ideological confrontation and political boiling, Sembene got interested in the activities of politicians like Léopold Sédar Senghor and Houphouët Boigny who were deputies in Paris⁷³. He did not like these people who, according to him, were pure products of the colonial system and fragile intellectuals incapable of bringing change in Africa. He did not trust

them. He reproached them with the fact that they did not choose their side openly. (He will attack them in his next novels, as we shall see later).

It is worth noting , however,that though playing an important role in the political awakening of Africans – especially those living in France – through his militant commitment, Sembene remained an artist, “je suis, à qui veut l’entendre, à la fois un artiste et un militant, mais je ne suis membre d’aucun parti politique, je milite à travers mon art”, says he⁷⁴ .

Most African writers are militants and artists, like Sembene. But being a self-taught proletarian and having escaped the influence of Western teachers, Sembene used representatives of the working class (peasants, workers and sometimes trade unionists) as the central heroes of his novels, like Oumar in O pays ,mon beau people!, while others, among them Ngugi (especially in Weep not, Child and the River Between) opted for those educated Africans ,Waiyaki and Njoroge, caught in a conflict within themselves or with their society, having been taught that ‘positive’ heroes could only be modernist and Westernized prodigals.

II- The Birth of a Hero :Towards the Creation of a Future Intellectual

Waiyaki, Njoroge and Oumar impose themselves as heroes thanks to their noble ascendancy and their high Qualities. They are entrusted with the mission of liberating their people from colonial exploitation. But while Ngugi attributes his heroes a messianic role, being inspired by Christianity and Kikuyu mythology, Sembene on the contrary makes Oumar a charismatic leader, being more politicized and less religious.

Generally, writers endow their heroes or protagonists with heroic features⁷⁵, such as courage, strength, fortitude, nobility of purpose. Waiyaki, Njoroge and Oumar, being the protagonists of The River Between, Weep not, Child and Ô pays,mon beau

peuple! and the future intellectuals of their people, are distinguished from the other characters by their extraordinary physical and moral power. Waiyaki is named after the first Kikuyu nationalist martyr Waiyaki Wa Hinga who fought against the efforts of the imperial British East African Company to take over the Kikuyu highlands of central Kenya⁷⁶. When the novel opens, Waiyaki is presented as a special young man noted for feats of courage, strength and wisdom. He is able to stop a fight between two of his friends, Kamau and Kinuthia – though much younger than them- by calling for unity, “Didn’t we swear that we of the hills were comrades?” (p5). Moreover, he has already a badge of courage, a curved scar on his left eye caused by a wild goat he attacked with his stick to rescue a herd boy, “The goat turned on him and jabbed him with its horn, tearing the flesh to the bone” (p.6). This wound was his first mark of heroism.

Chege, his father, is a respected man of the ridges, a believed descendent of the famous Kikuyu seer Mugo Wa Kibiro, who foretold the coming of the whites and of the messiah who would liberate the ridges. He is famous with his knowledge of the ways of the land and “the hidden things of the tribe” (p.7). With such honorable origins, Waiyaki will undoubtedly gain the respect and the confidence of his people. He will be their leader.

Similarly, Sembene endows Oumar, the protagonist of *Ô pays, mon beau peuple!*, with many characteristics of heroism. Already in the boat that is bringing him back home from France with his white wife, he attracts the attention of all the passengers with his physical appearance: tall, strong, with a long steady look. Later, we know that he took part in WWII where he was injured twice. He has thus been awarded “La Médaille Militaire et la Croix de Guerre” (p.14). This too is seen as a badge of courage. Moreover, all along the novel, he is presented positively: he is self-confident; whenever he is faced with a crisis, he has an intrinsic belief that he is capable of

handling the challenge; he is all the time concerned with the well-being of his people, always ready to help, even endure personal risk, as when he dares beat a Whiteman who mistreats the blacks. He keeps working to achieve his goals, even after multiple setbacks.

Like Waiyaki, he belongs to a noble steady family. His father Moussa, is the Imam of the mosque. He is a wise elder who has succeeded in gaining the respect of all the villagers who consult him even on private matters. As to his home, it is a symbol of peace and unity, though he has three wives. As Sembene says, “le vieux Moussa gouvernait sa barque à sa façon. Jamais de disputes entre ses femmes” (p.16). This reminds us of what Ngugi says about Ngotho, Njoroge’s father “Ngotho’s home was well-known for being a place of peace” (p.11). Both Moussa and Ngotho are ex-soldiers who took part in WWI.

II.1 The Intellectual as a Political Messiah

When Ngugi wrote the River Between and Weep not, Child, he was deeply Christian, though under the influence of traditional Kikuyu mythology. He considered the legendary ancestors Gikuyu and Mumbi as the African counterparts of the biblical Adam and Eve. In their mission of delivering their people from colonialism, Waiyaki and Njoroge draw inspiration from the Old Testament. They compare this mission to that of Moses whom they try to imitate. If God gave Moses the mission to lead the slaves out of Egypt, the Kikuyu people choose Waiyaki and Njoroge as redeemers of their stolen lands. There is a strong belief among the Kikuyu that as long as they have not restored the lands Gikuyu and Mumbi had given them, they are regarded as sinful and thus cut off from their God.

But this problem of land which seems purely religious has also a political implication since the Kikuyu land has been appropriated by the colonialists. Consequently, Waiyaki's and Njoroge's mission is more political than religious. In the present analysis, I am not interested in the intrinsically religious sense attributed to messianism and which consists in the coming – one day – of a person chosen by God on earth, a “messiah” or a Jewish King to gather the Jews back to the Land of Israel and to live in an era of peace. I will rather look at its political dimension in Africa in the early 1920's: the claim of some African political leaders for the independence of their countries and their urge to create a nationalist sentiment within the African Community. For Ibrahima Baba Kaki, an African historian,

Le mouvement [messianique] prend très vite un caractère de revendication politique. Le thème de la reconquête de l'indépendance revient dans les cantiques. Plus tard, des mesures concrètes seront envisagées : que les blancs envahisseurs, source de souffrance s'en aillent [...] que chacun abandonne le pagne du deuil et prenne le pagne blanc de la joie, de l'espérance ... les blancs vont s'en aller. C'est le dernier impôt que nous payons⁷⁷.

For this historian, political messianism is a movement⁷⁸ devoid of any mysticism or prophecy. Its objective is the liberation of African thought. The mission of a political messiah is the struggle for political independence and for the improvement of the social, political and economic conditions of his people. Both these objectives are given the emotional intensity of a messianic ideal.

The Kikuyu people, as depicted in the River Between and Weep not, Child believe strongly in the coming of a messiah who would deliver them from colonial oppression. They prepare Waiyaki and Njoroge for such a mission by sending them to missionary schools to learn the wisdom of the colonialists. Such wisdom will help them gain insight into the ways of the Whiteman and thus equip them for the future struggle for the recovery of their land. The families of the two protagonists insist much upon the

education of their sons because they see it as a prerequisite for the messianic mission they will be entrusted with later. Chege expresses this quite well when he says to Waiyaki before sending him to school⁷⁹ :

go to the mission place. Learn all the wisdom and all the secrets of the Whiteman. But do not follow his vices. Be true to your people and the ancient rites. (p.17)

Chege urges his son to acquire the Whitemen's knowledge and then fight them with it. What he fails to take into account, however, is the possibility that this knowledge may "contaminate" him with the colonialists' vices. Waiyaki may also be impressed with his acquaintance with the whites to the point that he can forget his own people. Chege seems to ignore that "human beings are", as Rice says, "the sum total of their experiences" and that "each event they meet, be it of a physical, intellectual or spiritual nature exerts a subtle influence which gradually changes their world view"⁸⁰.

Njoroge's education is motivated by the same objective: to bring enlightenment to his people and help them recover their lands from the colonialists. But though no messianic mission is imposed upon him, messianism is implicit in the very act of education. In this context, Echenim's explanation is very convincing:

Envoyer Njoroge à l'école constitue une décision capitale qui dans de contexte socio-politique du Kenya, ne peut avoir que des effets positifs à quelque niveau d'interaction que ce soit – personnel, familial ou national. C'est donc à cet égard que l'image de l'enfant instruit, donc acculturé assume une dimension messianique, car il est le symbole des aspirations individuelles et collectives qui vont dans le sens d'une amélioration globale du destin du groupe⁸¹.

Njoroge, though still a young boy, feels a sense of mission in his family's desire to educate him. He knows that they rely on him for their liberation from the grips of colonialism. He compares their plight to that of the children of Israel who were enslaved

by the Egyptian Pharaoh and later released by Moses. He sees himself as a “Kikuyu” Moses destined to free his people. At the same time, he is interested in Jomo Kenyatta, that political leader the Kenyans considered as their savior because, though Western-educated, he labored endlessly to unlock the right of freedom for his nation. In fact, the Kikuyu have a great faith in Western education. For them it is the best arm for political struggle. Echenim says in this connection:

L'acculturation [instruction] acquiert une valeur libératrice. C'est une arme efficace et fondamentale pour la récupération des terres, et grâce à ce statut spécial, elle transcende toute négativité, car la possession de la terre est un droit inaliénable pour les Kikuyu⁸².

Unfortunately, both Waiyaki and Njoroge are trapped by this revered education which, instead of helping them save their people, misleads them. Waiyaki shows an exceptional dedication to his people's cause. But as soon as he enters the missionary school, he gradually distances himself from the ways of his ridge and its rituals. We see clearly the impact of missionary education on him. During the circumcision ceremony which takes place a few years after his admission to Siriana School, he refuses to join his friends. He stands as an outsider; he is annoyed by the songs of circumcision sung by the young Kenyan boys and girls of his age. When he is pushed into the circle dancing around the fire, his body moves mechanically. The voice of Livingstone, the headmaster of the missionary school, gives him a feeling of guilt, so he cannot put his heart in it. Indeed, Waiyaki is now alienated from his own culture. Now that he has started studying, he no longer wants to be identified with his people⁸³. As A. Arab says “the gradual estrangement from their roots is the price these youngsters [African students] have to pay to acquire Western education”⁸⁴. Waiyaki rejects the most important ritual in Kikuyu life, circumcision on which Ngugi says:

Circumcision was an important ritual in the tribe. It kept the people together, bound the tribe. It was the

core of the social structure and something that gave meaning to man's life... (p.79).

This Western education puts him in a dilemma. On the one hand, Chege sends him to a missionary school to acquire the knowledge necessary to enable him to carry the prophecy forward. On the other hand, the missionaries, having noticed his great capacities, want to convert him to help them spread Christianity in Africa and thus advance the interests of the British Empire; they also want him to back them in the administration of the natives. Both sides entrust him with a mission; unfortunately, the goals of these missions are completely opposed to each other: Chege sees in him a future savior of his people from the missionaries and Livingstone wants to turn him into a Christian leader of the church who will help him to convince the Kikuyu to embrace the Christian religion. As a matter of fact, he ends up in confusion.

Waiyaki and Njoroge find themselves in a paradoxical situation: they are required to develop political consciousness through the acquisition of Western education in a socio-political context that does not favor entirely this development. They are caught between two antagonistic forces: their legitimate aspiration for the deliverance of their people from misery and the colonial universe which negates this aspiration. Léopold Sedar Senghor, a French educated Senegalese recognizes to have lived this paradoxical situation. He says,

In fact my feelings were quite early torn between the call of the ancestors and the attraction of Europe, between the requirements of African culture and those of modern life [...]. I have always attempted to resolve these conflicts by a conciliatory agreement [...] thanks to confession and direction of conscience in my youth, thanks later to the spirit of method taught by my French masters⁸⁵.

John Andrews in Dos Passos's Three Soldiers finds himself in the same dilemma: Chrisfield, the representative character of the American common man wants him to be his guide and to raise the consciousness of the soldiers with his education; he also asks him to organize them in their revolt against the 'Established Order'; On the other hand, Geneviève Rod, the great aristocratic lady who symbolizes the attitude of the upper society towards him, wants to attract him to her world and to turn him into "an ornament to a clever young woman's drawing room" (p.416), Andrews is lost; he does not know which side to follow.

Njoroge in Weep not, Child, suffers from the same confusion as Waiyaki's and Andrews'. He does not perceive the real meaning of education / knowledge; neither does he know how to make it serve his society. Because he is well received by the missionaries in Siriana, he idealizes education. He does not even realize that the missionary teachers are cutting him from the matters of his community and turning him into a mere dreamer of a better world to come, a world in which the missionaries and the Kikuyu will live in harmony.

In all cases, the three heroes are made useless .They are psychologically disturbed. Furthermore, they suffer from a lack of maturity. Politically, they are uncommitted: Waiyaki never manages to choose his side in the political conflict of his community; he wants to become a Kikuyu leader without having to break away from the missionaries. Njoroge withdraws from the political activities of his people to seek refuge in dreams, a decision which is no different from that of Andrews who lets down the army to look for a shelter in love and later in art because he can neither belong to the 'machine' nor stand against it.

II.2 Western Education: a Destroyer of the Intellectual's Ambitions

What causes Waiyaki's downfall is his failure in establishing a link between education and the political preoccupations of his tribe. His exact leadership role having never been fully explained by his father who is now dead, he sees it as that of ensuring that the two ridges get education. That is why he keeps building more and more independent schools. He fails to understand that this education is meant to be a means of liberation from the missionaries. He thus loses sight of the political preoccupations of his people. He is conscious that the conflict between Kameno and Makuyu can end tragically, but he does not know how to use education to reconcile his people. Each time he organizes a meeting with the students' parents, he intends to preach reconciliation. Ironically, each time he forgets about it and keeps talking of his project of propagating Western education in the ridges. Unconsciously, he spreads the colonial ideology. He thus violates the oath of purity he has taken and becomes a false intellectual.

Failing to reconcile his people through education, he, being submitted to Christian influence, tries another means: love as a way of achieving personal and communal redemption. He clings to the idea of uniting his people against the colonialists by sowing love in their hearts. And his love for Nyambura symbolizes this wish - just as Andrews's love for Jeanne symbolizes his desire to join the common people / the lower class. He, a member of Kameno falls in love with a woman from the antagonistic ridge, Makuyu; moreover, she is the daughter of his enemy, the Christian Joshua. He clings to the dream that if he succeeds in concretizing his relation with Nyambura by marrying her, this will certainly put an end to the rivalry between the two factions. But love is a Western notion and the Kikuyu people can show no consideration for such a sentimental outlook because their hearts are pervaded by the feeling of injustice, oppression and antagonism. Love cannot be appreciated by such wretched

people. Moreover Waiyaki's love for Nyambura – just as that of Andrews for both Jeanne and Geneviève – is selfish. He himself recognizes this selfishness when he says to the Kiama who ask him to justify his relation with the daughter of their enemy that this is part of his 'private' life, hardly a notion for a public leader.

Moreover, just like Andrews, he is presented as an individualist. He never communicates with his people. He takes decisions alone, without consulting the elders of the village, even when these decisions concern the community at large. He refuses to conform to the rituals and prescriptions of the established order, a behavior that is totally rejected in a community where people are still under the rule of the tribe, another factor that contributes to his downfall.

Njoroge also is known with his individualism. When his father dies and his brother Kamau is imprisoned for life, instead of assuming his responsibility towards his two mothers who are now left alone, he decides to leave town with Mwihaki, his girlfriend; and when the latter refuses to accompany him, he makes an attempt to take his own life and leave his mothers alone, just to flee war.

Waiyaki and Njoroge typify the false/organic intellectuals of the pre-independence period who opposed armed struggle and kept asking for reforms without obtaining any positive results. Waiyaki naively believes that political emancipation can be achieved through education for unity and reconciliation. The reader is tempted to doubt in his good intentions. Ngugi having written the novel when he was still under British influence, Waiyaki's desire for reconciliation between the two opposing factions of his tribe may perhaps be at the same time a desire for reconciliation between the Kikuyu and the colonialists, as Sanders suspects it⁸⁶. Waiyaki and Njoroge are against violence because they are afraid of the colonialists. They want to recover the lost lands without resorting to violent means at a time the Kenyans are in most need of

violence. Their non –violence should not be taken for Pacifism as represented in Three Soldiers by Andrews who enlists in the army because he thinks that WWI is fought to realize peace and democracy all over the world. But as soon as he discovers the objectives of such a war, he stands against the entire military establishment. He is horrified by the violence with which the soldiers are treated and to which they are asked to respond.

By the end of the novel, neither Waiyaki's nor Njoroge's plans of reconciliation prove to be efficient. In such a bitter quarrel, one has to choose his side. If Waiyaki and Njoroge are to become 'true intellectuals', they have to commit themselves to one of the conflicting sides. Unfortunately – like Ngugi himself who did not take part in the Mau Mau insurgency – both heroes remain neutral because they are afraid of political entanglement. So is Andrews in Three Soldiers who, though hating the 'machine' and standing against it, does not manage to commit himself to the cause of the oppressed till the end because he is afraid of getting politically involved and thus separating completely from his bourgeois culture / belonging.

If Andrews's upper-middle class education paralyses him and prevents him from being ideologically and morally strong, the Western education, economic dependence and social oppression Waiyaki and Njoroge are submitted to affect deeply the development of their personalities. The difficulties they encounter destroy all their ambitions and result in strange reactions of resignation. If they are conceived as future intellectuals who will lead the people in their struggle against oppression, they will never be successful because they lack the political maturity and the nationalistic conviction necessary for such a task.

If such a mission had been attributed to Kabonye instead of Waiyaki and to Boro instead of Njoroge, these would have succeeded because, though lacking knowledge,

they are committed men who are ready to fight colonialism and to sacrifice themselves for the recovery of the peasants' lands. However, such a choice would imply the writer's definite desire to break up from colonialism, and the young Ngugi who is still under colonial influence at the time of writing these two novels seems not yet ready to adopt such an attitude.

In fact, this blind belief in education unites Ngugi's and Sembene's intellectuals. They all believe in its utility; at the same time, they are all paralyzed by it. Agbo the doctor in Ô pays, mon beau peuple! attacks Diagne violently when the latter holds a negative view on Western education; for him, the acquisition of Western education does not lead to the repudiation of one's culture. Like Waiyaki, Njoroge and even Andrews, he is convinced that without education, humanity can never progress. He says to his friend :

Comment voulez-vous que l'Afrique secoue sa somnolence avec des types comme Diagne ?... Au lieu d'essayer de compléter leur instruction, ils passent les soirées à chercher de nouvelles victimes pour leur couche (p.95).

Despite his consciousness and his knowledge, Agbo never tries to help his people get rid of colonial exploitation. To ridicule him, Sembene makes Joseph the white doctor tell him, "Ce que je ne comprends pas c'est que chez vous il n'y a aucune envie de former une nation" (p.97). Even Isabelle, Oumar's wife, is surprised at the passivity of the black educated Africans, "Moi qui ne suis des vôtres que par alliance, j'étouffe parfois" (p.97). They are all paralysed; they do not react, nor do they put their knowledge at the service of their people, as 'true-intellectuals' do.

Agbo is a wise far-sighted man; yet, he suffers from the same dilemma as that of Waiyaki, Njoroge and Andrews. If he stands against the colonialists, he may be dismissed from his job, and if he allies with the peasants, he will be met with distrust

because they will see in him a member of the elite who has nothing to gain from their cause. Like all Western - educated intellectuals, he is rejected by both classes, the class of the rulers and that of the ruled, and he understands this quite well, “nous sommes des forces ignorées, c’est ce qui fait notre grandeur et, si nos hommes nous ignorent, pensons à les éduquer” (p.147). Like Waiyaki and Njoroge, he thinks that the solution for the peasants’ problems lies in education. He urges them to go learning. He fails to understand that their situation is too bad and thus requires a rapid solution. Like Ngugi’s learned characters, Agbo is out-maneuvered by less educated persons, like Oumar Faye who refuses to stand by as a passive observer and engages in the mission of bringing change in the social, political and economic structure of his community.

Dos Passos makes the same mistake when he neglects Chrisfield, that frontiersman who stands for the common American perfectly. Were he entrusted with the mission of saving his people from the ‘machine’, he possesses all the qualities necessary for such a task: courageous, brave and strong. He could easily have rebuilt that lost world of the frontiersmen. But the writer fails to give such a character the value he deserves because he has not yet liberated himself from the grips of the upper-middle class he belongs to; he has not yet ‘declassed’ himself. He still sees knowledge / education as a means to save people from oppression. What Chrisfield cannot do in America, Oumar manages in Africa.

II.3 The Intellectual as a Charismatic Leader : a Strategy for Affecting Social Change

Charisma is generally a theological term which means “a supernatural gratuitous gift conferred not for the purpose of sanctifying the recipient, but for the benefit of the community, for the edification of the mystic body”⁸⁷. This gift can be wisdom, knowledge, faith, prophecy, a power for healing. However the context in which I intend

to use this term is divorced from any supernatural power or mythic belief. Socially, charisma is defined as “the quality that sets an individual apart from ordinary men so that he is recognized as having other uniquely exceptional powers and qualities”⁸⁸. Priests, politicians, artists, revolutionaries are usually the persons endowed with charismatic qualities. The latter can be innate, teachable or the product of a situation. A leader is said to have charisma⁸⁹, not only when he is supposed to fulfill a mission, but also when he is recognized to possess some uncommon and unusual characteristics and abilities.

Charismatic leaders can be considered as intellectuals because they are powerful agents of social change. They generally appear in “societies suffering from social crises arising from political and economic instability, or from rapidly changing beliefs, values and modes of behavior”⁹⁰. They often call for a break with traditional institutional authority and work hard to persuade their followers to embrace innovative or revolutionary ideas. Charismatic leadership “often carries with it the idea of mass excitement and collective fervor. It always challenges ordinary established practices and generally results in radical societal change”⁹¹. We find many of these characteristics in Oumar Faye.

Oumar deserves the title of ‘charismatic leader and thus of intellectual because, besides being courageous, forceful, active, demanding and politically aware, he presents an ability to bring about radical change; he is ready to do good for others; he attempts to persuade his society to embrace progress; he voices his nationalism in a period of political submission; he commits himself to the plight of the oppressed. His return from France coincides with the period of economic and political disintegration in Senegal. It is an occasion for him to use his charisma to reorganize his rural community by pushing his people to work in agriculture instead of restricting their activities to fishing.

Oumar is a self-made man. He left school at an early age to enter the “school of life”. He lived in France for certain time and then took part in WWII, an experience which opens his eyes on the reality of colonisation and through which he learns how to ask for his rights. As Albert Memmi puts it :

L’expérience de la deuxième guerre fut tellement décisive. Elle n’a pas seulement [...] appris imprudemment aux colonisés la technique de la guérilla. Elle leur a rappelé, suggéré la possibilité d’une conduite agressive, libre⁹².

Like Andrews, Oumar goes to this war with the idea of fighting for “universal freedom”. Like him again, he endures suffering and humiliation and discovers the real objectives of this war. For a certain time, he is disillusioned, but then he starts analyzing what was happening around him; he reaches the conclusion that before this war he knew nothing⁹³. It is in fact this war which teaches him the value of one’s nation. He comes to realize that the victory gained was not his and the freedom acquired did not include him, “j’ai compris que nous sommes des sans-patrie, des apatrides. Quand les autres disent ‘nos colonies’, que pouvons-nous dire?” (p.117). Just after this war, he comes back to Senegal as a fervent nationalist who swears never to leave it again. When his wife is ill-treated by the colonialists and asks him to go back to France, he reacts violently and angrily.

[...] tu voudrais que je m’en aille ? Pour aller où ? Que ferais-je ailleurs ? Vois-tu, je suis chez moi, maintenant, et si je n’arrive pas à me faire respecter ici, qu’en est-il de mon honneur ? La dignité de l’homme n’est pas seulement de faire des enfants, pas plus que de porter de belles étoffes, c’est aussi son pays (p.117).

This war raised the consciousness of many Africans; it taught them their rights, mainly the right of any citizen, any country for freedom. In the case of Oumar, it provided an ideological framework for his ideas and shaped his personality. Like Sembene himself, he embraced Marxism and devoted himself to the defense of the

oppressed. Politically, he stood against colonialism. Contrary to Waiyaki and Njoroge, he rejected it categorically. Though he married a French woman, he did not succumb to colonial culture. In fact, he succeeded in persuading his wife to renounce her country, to come and live with him in Senegal and to accept the customs and traditions of his people. He remained a fervent Wolof though rejecting some customs which he deemed irrational, as when he stood against his father's religious fanaticism.

Like Diaw Falla, the protagonist of Le docker noir, Oumar adopts a pantheistic view of religion. He believes strongly in God, but he stands against the reliance of his people on this power to overcome their difficult situation. He rejects their fatalistic attitude. He is pragmatic. If a change is to occur in the casamancians' life, it can be brought only by the people themselves. That is why he works very hard to realize his project.

Oumar's mission consists in putting an end to economic exploitation through rural development. He wants to convince the peasants of the necessity of an agricultural revolution if they want to preserve their future. But as the majority of the Wolofs have always been fishermen, Oumar's sudden interest in the land is met with suspicion; it is even seen as a betrayal of the ancestors. Rokhaya his mother expresses the peasants' disappointment when she tells him, "ton père, le père de ton père tous étaient des pêcheurs, mais toi le toubab, tu veux la terre. Je ny comprends rien". (p.81).

What the peasants seem to ignore is the fact that the French have colonised Senegal for economic interests and the suppression of these interests is the only means through which they can get rid of colonialism. Oumar understands this quite well. He wants to create a cooperative to compel the peasants to work together and constitute a force that can oppose colonial economic exploitation. He is definitely against the French capitalists; he opposes fiercely their exploitation of the Senegalese peasants; yet the

reader cannot prevent himself from suspecting some claim to superiority and even some kinship with them.

When he comes back from France, he isolates himself in the bush and prefers to live alone rather than mix with his people. He distinguishes himself with the beautiful well-equipped house he builds, a house which is no different from the colonialists' houses. He adopts a Western way of life and reduces his friends to a minority of educated young people he receives in his house.

John Andrews in Three Soldiers falls in the same contradiction: though he rebels against capitalist exploitation and strives to 'declass' himself and be an ordinary soldier, he enjoys a privileged and advantageous life in the army. Instead of living in barracks with the other soldiers, he rents a room in Paris; while the other soldiers are fighting in the front, he is attending classes at the Sorbonne University. Compared to others, he enjoys a complete freedom (though by the end of the novel, he puts an end to these advantages by deserting the army).

There is another contradiction in the character of Oumar: he keeps denouncing colonial exploitation, but sometimes he deals with the peasants as if he were a capitalist, as when he says, "... je payerai bien ceux qui travailleront pour moi" (p.106). This language cannot be but that of a capitalist, that of a Ford or a Taylor. Later, when he buys a farm, he compels his peasants to work very hard, "d'eux il exigeait davantage. Ces hommes travaillant avec des moyens archaïques ne pouvaient donner plus. Le soleil tapait sur les reins nus" (p.119). Sembene seems not to be aware that at a certain time in the novel, he can no longer control Oumar who ceases to be a militant and turns rather into a bourgeois who strives to benefit from all the privileges of the whites and to lead the same life as them.

Still, one cannot deny that he has succeeded in raising the consciousness of his people. For this, he deserves the title of intellectual. After his death, the Wolofs decide to fight colonial exploitation. As never before, they are resolved to unite in a single force to get back their stolen lands. And this was Oumar's project. The peasants have at last understood their charismatic leader. Thus they turn him into a "legendary hero" after his death; they immortalize him. Sembene expresses this plainly, though rather romantically in the last paragraph of the novel:

Oumar Faye, lui était bien mort et gisait dans la terre [...]. Ce n'était pas la tombe qui était sa demeure, c'était le cœur de tous les hommes et de toutes les femmes. Il était présent le soir autour du feu et le jour, dans les rizières ; lorsqu'un enfant pleurait, sa mère lui racontait l'histoire de ce jeune homme qui parlait à la terre et, sous l'arbre de palabre on honorait sa mémoire. Oumar n'était plus, mais son 'beau peuple' le chantait toujours... (p.187).

Oumar has really succeeded in being a charismatic leader; he has assumed a mission which ought to have been assumed by more educated persons, like Agbo the doctor or seck the teacher. One can conclude that advanced education in such case – especially when it is a Western education – is not sufficient for leadership. With Ngugi, for example, the educated characters mislead people instead of leading them. It is neither Waiyaki nor Njoroge who raise the consciousness of the peasants. It is rather the illiterate kobonye in the River Between and Boro and Kiarie in Weep not, Child who urge the peasants to revolt against colonial exploitation. These characters deserve attention because in them we find that strong commitment for the cause of the oppressed which is absent in Waiyaki and Njoroge, a fact which causes their failure as intellectuals.

II.4 The Man of Thought versus the Man of Action

Kabonye has never gone to school, but his experience in the First World War raises his consciousness and helps him achieve a certain political maturity. He is the only character who realizes that Waiyaki's plan of education is doomed to failure because it excludes politics. Moreover, he is haunted by the idea of using force against the colonialists. This testifies to his strong commitment to the restoration of his country's land.

Yet, Ngugi surprisingly turns him into a wicked person running after power. He seems to forget that Kabonye's urge to revolt foreshadows the ideal of the early Mau Mau leaders. However, one should not blame Ngugi for such a contradiction because the novel was written when he was still under the influence of the missionaries. And he himself testifies to this ten years after the publication of Weep not, Child :

If I wrote this book today, I don't know if I would write it in the same way. I would not have been as sympathetic to Waiyaki as I probably was [...]. I would look at the role of Kabonye though much more deeply and seriously than I did at the time⁹⁴.

Ngugi makes the same mistake with Boro – Njoroge's elder brother – the leader of the Mau Mau whom he turns into a nihilistic man dominated by a passion for revenge.

Like Oumar, he has many charismatic qualities: he is physically and morally strong, self-confident, and ready to take risks; most importantly, he identifies with his people and is sensitive to their needs. Though he has never been to school, he is aware of the danger of the colonial presence in his country. He accepts to take part in WWII because the British colonial administration promises to reward the Kenyan peasantry and working class who defend the imperialist interests during this war. Unfortunately, in one of the battles, he loses his brother⁹⁵. This tragic event affects him profoundly and

turns him into a psychologically disturbed man who lives only for revenge. After the war, he develops a deep hatred towards the colonialists; he decides to fight them. He thus takes the Mau Mau oath and goes to the forest with his brother Kori and his friend Kiarie.

These three freedom fighters contribute to the awakening of the peasants; they tell them the story of the missionaries who used the bible and the sword to appropriate their lands; they explain them how the wicked white man drove the naïve Africans to the two world wars. They now want them to take the oath to fight for the liberation of their country from these foreign exploiters. In one of his speeches to the peasants, Kiarie says, “Today we, with one voice, we must rise and shout; the time has come, let my people go! We want back our land now!” (p.58).

These young men have reached a high degree of consciousness; they have had a role in change; they have also convinced the peasants to fight the colonizer but they cannot replace the intellectual because they lack intellectual stamina and organization. When Boro and his friends organize a strike to call for higher wages for the black workers, they do not succeed because they are not strong enough to impose themselves on the peasants and to oblige them to respect their instructions. Ngotho, Boro’s father, breaks the strike by attacking Jacobo the traitor to prove his courage to his son. He has disobeyed Kiarie who warned the peasants not to resort to violence.

Like Dos Passos in Three Soldiers, Ngugi in the River Between and Weep not, Child and Sembene in O pays, mon beau people, are not in full control of their educated characters who suffer from confusion and uncertainty because they themselves probably had not consciously subscribed to a definite viewpoint.

John Andrews, Waiyaki, Njoroge, Agbo and Seck are all failed intellectuals, and this failure is due mainly to the education they received (be it a middle-class education like that of Andrews or a colonial education like that of the African protagonists), an education that alienated them from the preoccupations of their communities and deprived them from the necessary forces for directing the life of their societies. These young intellectuals cannot make decisions in relation to the needs of their people, nor can they commit themselves to the cause they are fighting for. Education turned them into persons abstracted from their reality. They vacillate between the challenges of the machine and the demands of their society. They leave the political arena and turn into 'pretended pacifist intellectuals' who keep preaching peace, democracy and justice while their people are dying in battlefields or enduring colonial oppression. These intellectuals are not mature enough to adopt a definite position towards the struggle of their people against the Establishment. This attitude reflects that of the writers themselves at the beginning of their literary careers. Dos Passos, Ngugi and Sembene were not politically and ideologically mature.

This lack of maturity is felt even in their style, especially in the case of Ngugi and Sembene. When they wrote their first novels, they had not developed their own idiosyncrasies yet. Instead of using their own stylistic devices to report the social and historical events of their respective countries and to create their own heroes/intellectuals, they either remain prisoners of the stylistic power of the Western writers they studied before or fall into an exaggerated moralism and didacticism at the expense of artistry, as if the novels were destined to a European audience.

II.5 Stylistic Coming of Age

It is true that the francophone African literature of the early fifties was marked by ethnographic realism⁹⁶ which stressed much real facts, comprehension and the

representation of any culture in all its aspects .But Sembene exaggerates in his depiction of the Casamancians’ customs, habits and daily life. His desire to make his culture and social organization understood properly drives him to give a profusion of details which, most of the time, tire the reader out. Illiteracy being still widely spread in Senegal in 1957 makes the reader think that the novel is designed more for a European readership than for an African one. The writer uses many Wolof words which he translates into French, such as Toubab, Tara, gueule, papeles⁹⁷. He goes as far as to explain some Wolof customs and traditions, such as when he says, “La politesse en Afrique noire serait considérée comme timidité en Europe” (p. 43), or “une barrique est égale à un quintal dans le langage du paysan africain” (p.156). Still, “l’art de marchander ici joue le premier rôle. Rien n’est à prix fixe” (p.65). The Senegalese and even the Africans in general are supposed to be familiar with this; Sembene need not stress the point. Moreover, he turns Isabelle, Oumar’s wife into an informant: he makes her write letters to her parents in France in which she explains the Senegalese way of life. In one of her letters, she says,

[...] ici la famille joue un rôle énorme. Tout est mis en communauté, on n’a rien à soi et lorsqu’on donne, c’est avec l’idée que si demain on a besoin de prendre, on pourra le faire. (p.11)

The novel is devoid of any artistic complexity. The narrative is very sequential; the story is told in the third person; the first person narrator is totally absent in the text. Symbolism, metaphor, irony, ambiguity, allusion are nearly inexistent in this novel and when used from time to time, they are weak and unconvincing. The following metaphor, for example, is used before Sembene says that Oumar has been killed by the colonialists: “Oumar chercha en vain une ouverture [in the game of chess he is playing with his wife]. Les pions qui lui restaient étaient bloqués partout. Je crois que j’ai perdu, dit-il” (p.118). This is a crude shadowing of Oumar’s fate. Sembene seems not to have

been influenced by any literary tradition when he wrote Ô pays, mon beau peuple! as well as his first novel, Le Docker noir (1956). This is not the case with Ngugi.

While he was a student at Makerere College, he indeed came under the influence of a conflicting and dissonant mixture of colonialism, Christianity and Western liberalism, especially from reading such writers as Joseph Conrad, D.H. Lawrence and Mathew Arnold⁹⁸. The River Between and Weep not, Child reflected that background. In those two novels, he started using some of the Conradian and Lawrentian techniques and devices, though somewhat inefficiently.

The River Between opens with the image of the mountain ridges – Kamenno and Makuyu- which stands for that antagonism between two competing native constituencies – the main theme of the novel. These two ridges are both divided and united by the powerful flows of the Honia (cure) river, a symbol of sustenance and growth:

The two ridges lay side by side. One was Kamenno, the other was Makuyu. Between them was a Valley. It was called the valley of life. Behind Kamenno and Makuyu were many more valleys and ridges, lying without any discernible plan. They were like many sleeping lions which never wake. [...] A river flowed through the valley of life.... The river was called Honia, which meant cure, or bringing back life. Honia never dried: it seemed to possess a strong will to live, scorning droughts and weather changes (p.1).

When Chege and Waiyaki are in the sacred grove, they see Kamenno – home of the novel's protagonist, symbolizing a continuation of indigenous cultural traditions- and Makuyu which has succumbed to the exigencies of Christianity and British education systems as antagonists, rivals ready to struggle for the leadership of this isolated region. Waiyaki, a luminary who occupies an intermediary position between the two ridges is entrusted with the mission of negotiating between the two for an eventual unity. But the

task proves difficult because, on the one hand, he wants to save Kamenno traditions and on the other, he wants to acquire British education.

Apart from this dominating image, imagery is not highly used in this novel, except when Ngugi says, “Waiyaki’s fame spread like a fire in a dry bush” (an echo of Achebe’s Things fall Apart in which he says that Okonkwo’s fame spread like a bush fire in the harmattan) or when he says again that Waiyaki appears as “the hawk that snatched his piece of meat” (p.35).

Ngugi resorts to symbolism to highlight the first signs of division among the Community ridges represented by the wrestling match between the converted son of Kabonye, Kamau and Kinuthia, a traditionalist boy from another ridge. This fight, in which Waiyaki acts as a mediator, symbolizes the latter’s attempt to arbitrate the polarized differences of the two ridges, Kamenno and Makuyu.

The writer also attributes several symbolic implications to the river Honia : it is a source of life and a means of purification. The ceremony of Circumcision, that traditional ritual seen as a transition from boyhood to manhood is celebrated there; a simple contact with the freezing water of the river purifies the boys and alleviates their suffering, as if it had a healing effect. Moreover, this river symbolizes Waiyaki’s mission. If Kamenno stands for traditional society and Makuyu for the converted Christian Kikuyu, the river between them then refers to Waiyaki who does his best to unite the two. This natural image of the river is similarly used by Dos Passos in Three Soldiers who turns it into a place in which Andrews purifies himself from the sins he inherited from his class.

Weep not, Child, also starts with imagery. To show the negative effect of Colonialism, Ngugi opens his novel with a quotation from Walt Whitman,

Weep not, Child
Weep not, my darling
With these kisses let me remove your tears,
The ravening clouds shall not be long victorious,
They shall not long possess the sky...

The images of “ravening clouds” reflect the darkness of colonialism whose controlling forces are limited like the weather. Despite this optimistic introduction, the land of the ridges is to be dominated by the white colonialists and their black collaborating homeguards. Ngugi’s subsections in the novel, “Waning light”, “Darkness falls” chronicle the destructiveness of the colonial penetration in the central highlands. Likewise, the second part of the novel in which the Nguni family breaks down is dominated by images of darkness and despair. Ngugi opens this part saying, “woman add more wood to the fire and light the lantern for darkness falls” (p.11).

The image of the “road” divides the people into economic zones. The African peasants were forced to live in the least productive areas. The “road” introduces the conflict between the White Settler, Howlands, and the peasant, Nguni. The construction of this road acts as a record of colonial exploitation. It symbolizes the divisiveness of colonialism that segregates the Kenyans into classes. Likewise, the image of the household rubbish outside Nguni’s home can refer to the problems this family is about to have.

On the other hand, the destruction of Nguni’s home is a metaphor for the destruction of all the Kenyan society. When Njoroge is on the point of committing suicide, Ngugi says, “He moved from a road that had no beginning and no end” (p.152). This is a blunt metaphor for Njoroge’s life which had led him nowhere and which will probably drive him towards an unknown future. It could also be considered as a metaphor for the whole society, especially at this time of intense political activity.

Ngugi tries also to use some modernist techniques which are very recurrent in Conrad's novels, the stream of consciousness and the interior monologue. From time to time in Weep not, Child, he makes the reader share Njoroge's intimate thoughts through his interior monologues. When his mother tells him that she and his father have decided to send him to school, "he [Njoroge] wondered. Had she been to a magic worker? Or else how could she have divined her child's unspoken wish, his undivulged dream? And here I am with nothing but a piece of Calico on my body and soon I shall have a shirt and shorts for the first time" (p.4). On the other hand, Ngugi makes the reader share the character's memories and experiences through his constant reference to experiences already stated, such as the events beside the river, Waiyaki's boyhood fight and his visit to the sacred grove.

These stylistic innovations represent a premature attempt on the part of Ngugi to imitate the style of the English writers he studied at university. The influence of the latter on him is not restricted to the artistic side of the novel. The title of his first novel itself, Weep not, Child, is taken from Walt Whitman's poem "on the Beach at Night". The love stories between Waiyaki and Nyambura in the River Between and Njoroge and Muihaki in Weep not, Child seem to have been drawn from Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. In politics and the novel in Africa, A. Arab suggests the possible influence of Peter Abrahams's early works on Ngugi in Weep not, Child as well as that of Alan Paton's Cry the Beloved Country⁹⁹. Add to this the lack of complexity in plot, in the creation of the characters as well as in syntax and phrasing.

If Dos Passos is deeply inspired by Stephen Crane and Herman Melville (as mentioned before) in Three Soldiers, Ngugi for his part, cannot liberate himself from the stylistic power of Conrad, Lawrence, Shakespeare, all being writers he studied at university. As to Sembene, he is deeply influenced by Roumain's Gouverneurs de la

Rosée in Ô pays, mon beau peuple!. This influence may certainly be the result of an attraction by the Haitian's ideological inclinations which were not different from his. In fact, it is Roumain who founded the Haitian Communist Party in 1934 of which he was secretary general¹⁰⁰. Likewise, in 1950, just before publishing his first novel, Le Docker Noir, Sembene adhered to the communist party¹⁰¹. It is perhaps Roumain's great concern with the preoccupations of the masses – though he belonged to a well - to - do family¹⁰² – that attracted Sembene – the popular writer– to him. It ought to be underlined however that at that time, Sembene – just like Ngugi in fact – was far from being ideologically mature. The behavior of the characters of the novels can testify to this. When the two writers make their educated characters speak, the reader cannot fail to notice a certain naivety and a lack of political awareness. These characters prove to be incapable of committing themselves to a definite side; they fail in fulfilling their mission. They are, in a way, anti-heroes, not very different from Andrews in Three Soldiers.

The different socio-intellectual contexts in which Ngugi and Sembene grow up make their conception of the intellectual differ. Sembene who has frequented a workers' and trade unionists' environment could not entrust the interests of the masses to Western-educated characters, like Seck and Agbo, intellectuals who are generally known for their moderation and their dependence on education. He confides more in the self-made Oumar. The latter is indeed educated but not at an advanced level. As it has already been mentioned, Sembene does not believe at all in the intellectual whom he considers as a man who lives above the problems and preoccupations of ordinary people. What such a man of the people needs is someone ready to fight – even if not violently – someone who possesses the skill to convince and to motivate.

Ngugi for his part has always been submitted to the colonial system. Like Dos Passos, he has been taught that knowledge is the key to any problem. That is why the two writers show a great confidence in the intellectual at the beginning of their literary careers. And these different opinions – Dos Passos's and Ngugi's on the one hand and Sembene's on the other - have repercussions on their novels, mainly on the typology of their heroes.

Like Three Soldiers, Ô pays, mon beau people!, the River Between and Weep not, Child are semi-autobiographical novels. Their heroes' search for their identity, their lack of political and ideological maturity reflect those of the writers themselves. A certain ideological haziness is felt in these novels, though it is more apparent in Three Soldiers and the River Between and Weep not, Child. This haziness is responsible for the novels' stylistic weaknesses. What further unites these three writers at the beginning of their literary careers is the fact that they were all initiating themselves into writing. From a stylistic view point, it would be too exaggerated to say that their novels are mere exercises in style, without any literary value. Despite some weaknesses, they represent an attempt to reproduce the reality of their respective countries at a given time of their history.

However, Ngugi's and Sembene's poetics and social attitudes – just like those of Dos Passos – changed considerably. By the time Ngugi's Petals of Blood and Sembene's Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu are published, the writers become more mature ideologically and politically. They also succeed in getting rid of many stylistic weaknesses found in the previous novels. Now, they perceive the necessity of giving a new form to their radical content, just as Dos Passos did in the first novel of his trilogy, the 42nd Parallel.

End Notes

1- James Ngugi, Weep not, Child (London : Heinemann, 1964).

2- James Ngugi, the River Between (London : Heinemann, 1965).

3-Ousmane Sembene, Ô pays, mon beau peuple ! (Paris : Le Livre Contemporain, 1957).

All further page references are to these editions.

4- “ La littérature de tutelle est un signe de jeunesse. L’auteur s’exprime dans une langue étrangère, s’astreint à imiter des modèles étrangers et témoigne de sa gratitude envers ses éducateurs”, in Muntu : L’homme africain et la culture neo-africaine ; translated from German by Brian de Martinoir[1958] (Paris : Seuil, 1961) p.243.

5- See Samba Gadjigo, Ousmane Sembene : une conscience africaine (Paris : Homnisphères, 2007), p.27.

6- He himself recognizes the influence of Conrad and Lawrence on him in an interview with Dennis Duerden in 1964 published in : Dennis Duerden & Cosmo Piters, African Writers Talking (London : Heinemann, 1972), p.124.

7- The original title of the River Between was the Black Messiah. A Messiah is not an ordinary man, and so Waiyaki who was supposed to bear the title, was not meant to be an ordinary man.

8- Personal correspondence with Sembene Ousmane, 16 February, 1989.

9- Plaidoyer pour les Intellectuels. Op.Cit., p.26.

10- “ Oumar Faye, Bakayoko pour moi sont des militants et font corps avec leurs idéaux ”. Personal letter from Sembene. Op.Cit. Note the positive dimension attached to the word ‘militant’.

11- Plaidoyer pour les intellectuels. Op.Cit., p.27.

12- E. Kester, “ Liberté créatrice et option collective : La problématique de la création romantique en Afrique”, l’Afrique Littéraire, 71-72 (1984), p.17.

- 13- S.O. Anozie, Sociologie du roman africain (Paris : Aubier Montaigne, 1970), p.42.
- 14- Ibid. p., p.57.
- 15- Idem.
- 16- “L’individu qui incarne l’idéal du groupe progressiste et qui réunit en lui les souffrances des opprimés et des ouvriers ”. Ibid., p.191.
- 17- Frantz Fanon, Les damnés de la terre[1961], (Alger : ENAG, 1984), p.30.
- 18- J.P. Sartre, Situation V : Colonialisme et néo-colonialisme (Paris : Gallimard, 1964), p.167.
- 19- Fanon Op.Cit., p.14.
- 20- Ibid, p.27.
- 21- A. Arab, Politics and the novel in Africa Op.Cit. , pp.7-8.
- 22- Nationalism in Tropical Africa (London :Frederick Muller, 1956), p.23.
- 23- Marxism and Literature (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1977), p.200.
- 24 Max Adereth, “What is littérature engagée?”, in David Graig (ed); Marxists on Literature : an Anthology (London : Penguin, 1975), p.482.
- 25- Ibid., p.480.
- 26- Ibid., p.445.
- 27- J.P. Sartre, Situations II (Hollande : Gallimard, 1964), p.185.
- 28- Raymond Williams has the same opinion : “ It is a central position of Marxism [...] that writing, like other practices, is in an important sense always aligned; that is to say, that it variously expresses, explicitly or implicitly, specifically selected experience from a specific point of view”, Marxism and Literature Op.Cit., p.199.
- 29- Cited in Max Adereth. Op.Cit., p.452.
- 30- Qu’est-ce que la littérature ?(Paris : Gallimard, 1948), p.98.

31- The consciousness of black African writers can be shown only through their commitment. Already in 1959, during the Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists held in Rome, the importance of commitment was underlined. All the participants reiterated its necessity in the works of black African writers and artists as “l’expression vraie de la réalité de [leur] peuple longtemps obscurcie, déformée ou niée au cours de la période de colonisation”. See « Résolution concernant la littérature » , Présence africaine, 24-85 (1959), p.389.

32- Cited in Francis Anani Joppa, L’engagement des écrivains africains noirs de langue française (Canada : Novembre, 1982), p.165.

33- Committed writers, as Claude Roy says, write “ non pas parce qu’ils sentent la nécessité de se faire décerner un certificat d’utilité publique, mais parce que c’est plus fort qu’eux, qu’il leur faut dire ce qu’ils ont à dire ” in Défense de la littérature (Paris : Gallimard, 1968), p.62.

34- Interview published in l’Afrique, 25 (Juin 1963), p.49.

35- J. Ngugi, “Must we Drug Africanness into Everything?”, Sunday Nation (2 Septembre 1962) , p.10.

36- Shamsull S.M. Alam, Rethinking the Mau Mau in Colonial Kenya (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.1.

37- Land expropriation affected mainly the Kikuyu ethnic group. The latter soon mounted a legal challenge to this expropriation but a Kenya High Court Decision proclaimed its legacy in 1921. See William Ormsbi Gore, Report of the East African Commission (London : Government Printer, 1925), p.29.

38- See Tabitha Kanogo, Didan Kimathi : A Biography (Nairobi : East African Educational Publishers, 1962), p.8.

39- See Fred Majdalany, State of Emergency : the Full Story of Mau Mau (Boston : Houghton Mifflin Company, 1963), p.15.

- 40- See Frank Füredi, The Mau Mau War in Perspective (London : James Currey, 1985), p.4.
- 41- See Jack. McCulloch, Colonial Psychiatry and the African mind (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.64-76.
- 42- Bruce Berman, “Nationalism, Ethnicity and Modernity: the Paradox of Mau Mau”, Canadian Journal of African Studies 25 (2), pp.183-186 .
- 43- Frank Füredi. Op.Cit., p.7.
- 44- See M.D. Koinange, The People of Kenya (Detroit : Kenya Publication Fund, 1965), pp.23-48-69.
- 45- For details see Fred Majdalany Op.Cit.
- 46- See Jacqueline Bardolph, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o. L’homme et l’oeuvre (Paris : Présence Africaine, 1991), p.12.
- 47- Idem.
- 48- Ibid., p.16.
- 49- G.D. Killam, An Introduction to the Writings of Ngugi (London : Heinemann, 1980), p.3.
- 50- Idem.
- 51- D. Cook & M. Okenimkpe, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o : An Exploration of his Writings (London : Heinemann, 1983), p.35
- 52- For details see W. Ngugi, Writers in Politics (London: Heinemann, 1981), p.16.
- 53- Ngugi says about Kenyatta, “Kenyatta described the Mau Mau as an evil thing which I have done my best to denounce [...] and if all other people had done as I have done, Mau Mau would not be as it is now”, in Barrel Of a Pen : Resistance to Repression in Neo-colonial Kenya (New Jersey : Africa World Press, 1983), p.10.
- 54- The Cotonou resolutions of 1958 are summed up in three points: 1- immediate independence, 2- an African Federation Nation, 3- a Multi-National Confederation of Free and Equal Peoples (confederation multi-nationale des peuples libres et égaux). The

Cotonou resolution and the two leaflets are to be found cited in Abdullah Ly, les masses africaines et l'actuelle condition humaine (Paris : Présence africaine, 1955), pp.45-50. For more details on the Cotonou Congress see: David Mendissi Diop 'Le congré de Cotonou : Interview de Mr Bertin Borna', Présence africaine ,20 (Juin – Juillet 1958): 11-9.

See also Gilles Néra, La Communauté (Paris : PUF, 1960).

Georg R. Manu, « Qu'attendre de la communauté ? », La revue des deux mondes, 3 (Juillet 1961).

55- See Gadjigo. Op.Cit., P.66.

56- Idem.

57- See Cheikh Faty Faye, l'opinion publique dakaroise, 1940-1944, Mémoire de maîtrise, département d'histoire, Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines, Université de Dakar, 1973.

58- Idem.

59- Mamadou Moustapha Mbaké, a marabout, sends a letter to the FOA Governor General in which he says, “ Je viens au nom de toute la collectivité mouride, vous prouver et vous renouveler mon attachement... Nous sommes prêts à tous les sacrifices matériels et moraux pour sauver la France ”, in l'opinion publique dakaroise ,Op.Cit., p.62

60- See Gadjigo. Op.Cit., p.194

61- Alfred Pacini, one of the founders of the CGT says in this context, “les années 1948-1950 étaient troubles, incertaines, le parti communiste était si fort qu'il faisait terriblement peur. De fait, au-delà des revendications professionnelles, nous menions un combat politique. En clair, il s'agissait pour nous d'instaurer un nouvel ordre”, See Alfred Pacini & Dominique Pons, Docker à Marseille (Paris : Payot, 1996), p.70.

62- See Gadjigo. Op.Cit.p.174.

63- Cited in Carrie Dailey Moore, Evolution of an African Artist: Social Realism in the Works of Ousmane Sembene (Michigan :Univ Micro films, 1973), pp.250-1.

64- See Gadjigo. Op.Cit., p.213.

65- Ibid., p.216.

66- His first poem entitled “Liberté” published in 1956 confirms this idea.

67- See Gadjigo. Op.Cit., pp.205-6.

68- Idem.

69- Idem.

70- Carrie Moore, Evolution of an Artist, Op.Cit., p.239.

71- Cited in Gadjigo. Op.Cit., p.215.

72- Cited in Pierre Haffner .Op.Cit., p.24.

73- See Gadjigo .Op.Cit., p.207.

74- Cited in Pierre Haffner, “Eléments pour un autoportrait magnétique : Ousmane Sembene”, Afrique Littéraire 75 (1985), p.4.

75- As Joseph Campbell says, “ The tendency has always been to endow the hero with extraordinary powers from the moment of birth, or even the moment of conception. The whole hero life is shown to have been a pageant of marvels with the great central adventure as its culmination”, in The Hero with a Thousand Faces (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1968), p.319.

76- For further details on Waiyaki, see Roseberg & Nothingham, the Myth of Mau Mau Nationalism in Kenya (N. York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1966), pp.14-17.

77- Cited in Isabelle Grenier, Resistances et messianisme (Paris : San Frank, 1977), p.83.

78- Among the messianic movements that appear in Africa between 1920 and 1960, we have Kimbanguism, Ngouzism, Mpadism, the cult of Mavouda N’tangu, Matsouanism etc... For full details on these movements, see Isabelle Grenier. Op.Cit.

79- This reminds us of that passage in Achebe’s Arrow of God in which Ezeulu says to his son Oduche whom he also sends to school: “I want one of my sons to join these people [the missionaries] and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it you will come

back. But if there is something, you will bring home my share”, Arrow of God (London: Heinemann, 1964), p.46.

80- Michael Rice, “The River Between – a Discussion”, English in Africa, II (1975), 15.

81- Kester Echenim, “Le thème de l’enfance dans *Enfant ne pleure pas*”, l’Afrique littéraire 82 (1987), p.44.

82- Echenim. Op.Cit., p44.

83- In Peter Abraham’s Tell freedom [1954]; rpt (London : Faber & Faber, 1981), one of the characters has this to say : “A boy is satisfied with his village and the life of his village because he knows no other [...]. And then the Whiteman comes [...][the boy] goes to school. Knowledge brings new desires, new beliefs: the God of love in place of the pagan gods of war of old; the new view of the stranger, the foreigner as a brother to be welcomed, rather than an enemy to be destroyed or feared [...]. And so the boy turns his back on the old world of his ancestors, opens his arms wide and reaches hungrily for the new superior ways that offer a whole new world”, (p.536).

84- Politics and the Novel in Africa (Alger : OPU, 1982), p.48.

85- Cited in Paul Mercier, ‘the Education of the Senegalese Elite’, UNESCO Bulletin of Social Sciences, 8 (1956), p.11.

86- In “Two Views of the Conflict of Cultures in Pre-Emergency Kenya (a Comparative Study of James Ngugi’s *The River Between* and Elspeth Hexley’s *Red Strangers*)”, the Literary Half Yearly, XIX, 2 (1978), p.45.

87- “Un don gratuit surnaturel conféré non pour la sanctification du sujet qui le reçoit, mais pour le bien de la communauté, l’édification du corps mystique”, Xavier Ducros, Dictionnaire de spiritualité, Vol.II (Paris : Beauchesmne, 1953), 503-7.

88- Marlis Kruger & Frieda Silvert, “Charisma”, Encyclopeadia Americana, VI (1968), 296.

89- The term charisma never refers to a leader’s cause or the end for which he strives. It refers only to leadership qualities. Hitler and Roosevelt can be classified as leaders who had strong charisma, Idem.

90- Idem.

91- Idem.

92- Portrait du colonisé précédé du portrait du colonisateur et d'une preface de Jean Paul Sartre (Hollande : J.J. Paurest, 1966), p.131.

93- Sembene holds the same opinion. He says, "l'école ne m'a rien appris de la vie; je dois tout à la guerre". Cited in Carrie Daily Moore, Evolution of an African Artist : Social Realism in the Works of Ousmane Sembene (Michigan : University Microfilms, 1973), p.235.

94- Cited in Reinhart Sanders, Op.Cit., p.46.

95- Boro's brother who died in WWII and to whom Ngugi alludes in this novel refers to the latter's actual brother lost in the war.

96- For details on the ethnographic novel, the ethno-historical novel and other types of African novels – mainly the autobiographical novel, the social novel, the satirical novel, the psychological novel, the philosophical novel... see Robert Pageard, Littérature négro-africaine, Le mouvement littéraire contemporain dans l'Afrique noire d'expression française (Paris : Le livre africain, 1966).

97- The meanings of these words are to be found translated into French in the novel.

98- Ngugi himself recognizes the influence of Conrad and Lawrence on him in an interview with Dennis Duerden in 1964 published in Dennis Duerden & Cosmo Pieters, African Writers Talking (London : Heinemann, 1972), p.124.

99- A. Arab, Politics and the Novel in Africa Op. Cit., pp.290-3.

100- Gouverneurs de la Rosée : Presentation by Mourad Yelles – Chaouche, p.XI.

101- See P. Haffner, « éléments pour un autoportrait magnétique » Op. Cit.

102- In this context, Jaques Stephen Alexi, one of his best friends says, " Il regarde le peuple, il observe les élites vautreées dans la confortabilité [...]. Une idée se fait jour dans sa tête, s'impose à lui et devient une force qui l'emporte contre sa famille même, qui l'emporte irrésistiblement vers le peuple ", Cited in Gouverneurs de la Rosée, Presentation. Op.Cit., p.XI.

Chapter Two

The Crisis of Post- Colonial Intellectualism: Les bouts de bois de Dieu and Petals of Blood

In Petals of Blood¹ and Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu², Ngugi's and Sembene's intellectuals adopt definitive attitudes towards the social, political and ideological events happening in their respective countries. At the same time, the two writers have at last liberated themselves from that literature called "literature of tutelage"³. Now, they develop their own style. Definitely, they are committed ideologically as well as artistically.

These novels offer a scathing critique of capitalism in Africa. Like Dos Passos's USA, they are a loud cry against social injustice and an incitement to revolt against capitalist and imperialist exploitation. Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu was written between 1957 and 1959. At that time, Senegal and many other francophone countries were still under French rule. Indeed the novel is set in the colonial period, but at no time does Sembene claim for a national independence. He deals with the railway men's strike of 1947 which he presents as a class-struggle. As soon as their demands are met, the strikers resume work. The novel then portrays one of those unceasing struggles between the capitalists and their workers.

The story of Les bouts de Bois de Dieu is told in the form of several episodes that occur simultaneously in Bamako Thiès and Dakar⁴. The determination of the strikers to put an end to capitalist exploitation constitutes the common point of these episodes. This struggle against the capitalists is led by the youth. Bakayoko, Lahbib, Tiémoko and many others play the role of revolutionary leaders/ intellectuals who organize the masses during the strike. They also act as intermediaries between the workers and their employers, the directors of the railway company (Dejean and Isnard). At the same time, they stand with the women in their glorious march to Dakar, a march through which the workers regain their rights.

Petals of Blood is set in post-independence Kenya. Ngugi published it fourteen years after independence⁵. Now that his partisan line is explicit and unwavering, he deals directly with the working class. Right at the beginning, he fictionalizes the lives of dispossessed little people broken by an imported capitalist system. The four major characters of the novel – Munira a teacher, Karega a teacher and trade unionist, Abdulla, an ex-freedom fighter and Wanja, a prostitute- are all misfits of independent Kenya. They come to Illmorog to seek personal peace and modest new beginnings. In the grips of a prolonged draught, the revolutionist Karega and the desperate villagers undertake an epic march to Nairobi to lay their troubles before the Mp for the area. Ironically, instead of being assisted, he and the villagers who accompany him attract the attention of local and foreign exploiters who soon swarm upon Old Ilmorog to ‘develop’ it. They eventually deprive the peasants of their lands, exploit the workers and establish ‘New Ilmorog’. Consequently, the villagers revolt: local leaders, Chui, Mzigo and Kimeria, are burned to death in Wanja’s whorehouse; revolutionaries, Karega and Abdulla, are being held by the police on suspicion of murder ; the workers for their part organize a general strike, like that of the railway men in Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu. Ngugi tells all these events through the report Munira, the headmaster of a public school in the village and a significant narrator in the novel, writes to the police.

My analysis of this variety of intellectuals will be based on Aron, Sartre and Gramsci’s definitions. The role these intellectuals play in the struggle of their people against capitalist exploitation will determine the category – traditional, organic, revolutionary – to which they are to belong.

Raymond Aron believes that any person who carries a diploma in under-developed countries is considered as an intellectual⁶. If we take into account this definition, we cannot but consider the members of the French National Assembly in Les

Bouts de Bois de Dieu and the Lawyer, Munira, Karega, Chui, Mzigo and N'Deri Wa Riera in Petals of Blood as intellectuals because all these people have knowledge. On the other hand, the teachers, lawyers, doctors and even priests whom Sartre considers only as “technicians of the know-how”⁷, are for Gramsci, precisely “traditional” intellectuals, as opposed to “organic” intellectuals⁸. The former are entrusted with the task of intellectual leadership in a given society. Most of the time, they impose (sometimes without being aware of it) the political, cultural and moral values of the power group on the masses. They work for their own profit. And the ruling class which has educated them has taught them to believe in “universal values” and in their own independence, an attitude which cannot be accepted because they cannot remain neutral, especially in a society in which there is a class conflict. In such a case, they are compelled to commit themselves to one of the conflicting sides. Thus, if they ally themselves with the ruling class, they become reactionary organic intellectuals or what Sartre calls ‘false intellectuals’, and if they join the masses, they are considered as revolutionary organic intellectuals, ‘true intellectuals’, in Sartre’s words⁹.

Gramsci sees it the duty of any traditional/false intellectual to join the revolutionary class, a view he shares with Marx and Engels. As already mentioned in the introduction, the intellectual organically linked to this class becomes a member of the political party which organizes the masses, a kind of ideological leader. For Raymond Aron as well,

L’intellectuel responsable du parti communiste encadre les masses, il les entraine à la bataille, il les mène à l’école, il les incite au travail, il leur enseigne la vérité [...]. Il est devenu guerrier tout en continuant de penser ou d’écrire.¹⁰

If I base my analysis on these definitions, I can say that Bakayoko and Karega – just like Eugene Debs and Big Bill Haywood in Dos Passos’s The 42nd Parallel and

Mary French and Benny Compton in the Big Money and Oumar in O pays, mon beau peuple – though only trade – unionists, deserve the title of revolutionary intellectuals since they educate and organize the masses. I personally disagree with the self-taught Sembene – himself a trade- unionist, who considers Bakayoko only a militant, and with Ngugi who does not believe strongly in the utility of the intellectual since he turns Karega whom he first presents as a teacher into a trade unionist.

We have seen how Dos Passos resorted to new artistic forms in USA to challenge the materialism in which America threw itself in the 1920's. Ngugi and Sembene seem to have felt the same need to new forms in Petals of Blood and Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu because they wanted to express a new content and a new genre: the effect of capitalist exploitation on the Kenyans and the Senegalese. In these two novels, there is a mixture of modernist, socialist realist and even naturalist techniques which make them both proletarian and avant-garde.

Generally, the conflict between employers and employees is considered as a mere preoccupation of socialist writers or of proletarian literature, but avant garde movements also revolt against declining dominant classes and show a profound scorn for those who destroy and pervert man. Some of the techniques they use to express this could fit some ideas dealt with in Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu and more possibly those developed in Petals of Blood.

Proletarian novels have many characteristics: they are built upon a verifiable documentation; the militant and pedagogical aims of the writers are stressed. There is a great use of reports and meetings' reviews, techniques akin to the revolutionary press; the confrontation between the workers and their employees is markedly caricatural and far from the complex contradictions which characterize their encounter in reality*. There is an increasing interest in the little man who is portrayed sympathetically and is

invested with a plenitude of dignity and goodness; the worker is characterized as a victim, leader or hero and the writer insists on his worth as a human being and his significance as a literary subject. The businessman, on the contrary, is treated contemptuously and his image is stained*. The characters, including the intellectuals, are simple and unsophisticated. At the same time, they are boring and fleshless. They do not develop or when they do, they do it all of a sudden. They are devoid of humanity; their human relationships are not engaged in a changing process. Most of the time, they are reduced to automata¹¹.

The language proletarian writers attribute to their characters lacks “the capacity to render the complexity of reality”¹². It is poor and stereotyped, not different from that used in descriptions of meetings or public demonstrations. For David Caute,

Proletarian literature refers to a faithful densely documented portrait of working-class environments combined with an emphasis on class-struggle and on the necessity of a revolutionary situation¹³.

There are many of these characteristics of proletarian literature in Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu and Petals of Blood; but Ngugi and Sembene have introduced sophistication to this literature by referring sometimes to Lukàcs’ socialist realism and sometimes to Brecht’s avant-garde literature which are also proletarian but do not sacrifice form for the sake of content. Contrary to the proletarian writers, Lukàcs and Brecht believe that there should be a balance between aesthetics and revolutionary potential.

For Lukàcs, writers are supposed to portray reality as it is, to create typical characters able to represent totality. He believes that writers should draw their inspiration from the 19th Century realistic form. He suggests the narrative scheme of Balzac and Tolstoy as the best example to follow. He rejects all that is new, which Brecht disagrees with.

Brecht thinks that when Lukàcs imposes old forms on new contents, that denies any dialectic between content and form¹⁴. For him, since reality is in a constant flux, writers should have the means to represent it in different ways; they should have the possibility to use different modes of writing to render the contradictory and diverse aspects of life. When reality changes, the ancient modes of representation become useless for Brecht. It is the duty of the realist writer to find new ones* (and this is what Ngugi and Sembene do). His method then is better adapted to the intense artistic activities of the present epoch.

Brecht has been influenced by Expressionism¹⁵, but he can never be considered as an expressionist. What interests him in this movement is only its capacity for protest. He wants artists to adopt a revolutionary attitude, taking into account experimental art in order to invent weapons better suited for the struggle of the masses. These weapons/new forms are to be inspired from Marxist and Leninist discourses. He believes strongly that if “newness” is adapted to everyday life, people can understand it. Moreover, he wants art to be collective, an art whose aim is to teach moral and political ideas. Brecht aims at forging a communal consciousness and at awaking a sense of communion/solidarity¹⁶. Ngugi and Sembene share these objectives.

For him, a revolutionary writer has to deal with the plight of the rising class, the proletariat, to portray their misery and despair. In his theatre, he incites his actors to become men of action and of reflexion at the same time.

For their part, socialist realist writers aim at portraying life as it is. We should not, however, fail to mention that naturalists also want literature to be a mirror of reality. In fact, there are many affinities between the naturalists and the Marxists. Both resort to colloquial dialogue and detailed description. But Socialist Realism, contrary to Naturalism, emphasizes man’s rationality and his ability to change the world; that is

why it gives a great importance to hero and plot¹⁷. While Zola wrote to depict the world, the Marxists wrote to change it, and while he went against the inclusion of a future vision of reality in the naturalists' writings, the Marxists established a historical dialectics between the present and the future. As David Caute writes,

Despite disagreement, socialist realism owes much to naturalism. In fact, the naturalists adapted and accentuated certain features of say, Balzacian realism and these features in their accentuated form were subsequently fed back into the latter realism¹⁸.

The main concern of this chapter is to demonstrate that Petals of Blood and Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu – just like Dos Passos's the 42nd Parallel – are informed by an ideology of change, an ideology whose aim, as Caute says, is “to infuriate, activate and mobilize public sentiment”¹⁹.

As I have done in relation to the 42nd Parallel, I shall concentrate on the class nature of the struggle; on the role played by the intellectuals in this struggle; on the side they take; on their revolt against the bourgeoisie²⁰; on their revolutionary spirit; on the way collective consciousness is rendered and on the typicality of characters and situation. I shall classify the intellectuals of the two novels together because they share many features. I shall compare them to those of the 42nd Parallel – and sometimes even to those of the Big Money – whenever possible.

Again, as I have proceeded concerning the 42nd Parallel, throughout the analysis, I shall be alluding to the above - mentioned characteristics of Socialist Realism, Expressionism and Naturalism, without however following any specific order. From an expressionistic vantage point, I shall stress on the strong desire for change and transformation; rebellion – rebellion being the epitome of expressionism – rebellion of the new against the old; the rupture in time and place; the world of dreams, symbolism, all techniques used by Dos Passos in both the 42nd Parallel and the Big Money.

Attention will be paid also to detailed descriptions of crowd scenes as naturalistic techniques. In the end, I shall compare Ngugi's and Sembene's measure of success to that of Dos Passos in conveying the content of their novels through a new form.

However, as Sembene deals with a historical event in Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu – the 1947 railwaymen's strike – and Ngugi in his turn analyses the effects of capitalist and imperialist exploitation on the social and political life of the Kenyans in post – independence Africa, I need to go back to the history of these two countries, precisely to the periods covered in the novels to assess to what extent Ngugi and Sembene have succeeded in rooting their intellectuals in the social and historical life of their societies at a critical period.

I. Socio-historical Background

In general, post – independence in Africa is considered as a period of gradual disillusionment. It is marked by the general collapse of the hopes and dreams that, barely a decade earlier had attended the attainment of political independence in such states as Kenya and Senegal. The peasants have not recovered their lands; they are still the hewers and carriers of wood, this time not for the Whiteman, but rather for the “black white men” as Ngugi says²¹.

By “black white men”, he refers to those black intellectuals who take power after independence – being the most educated – and form what Fanon calls a ‘national bourgeoisie’. Fanon theoretically regards an actual national bourgeoisie in an under – developed country as one whose members put the intellectual and theoretical knowledge they inherited from colonial education at the service of the masses²². But seldom does the African bourgeoisie adopt such a selfless attitude. On the contrary, it exploits the masses and steals the national wealth (according to Fanon). The dynamic and inventive

spirit attributed to the European Bourgeoisie is here absent. Its world view is not clear and its doctrinal ideas are impractical. It keeps repeating the philosophical and political concepts inculcated by Europe, concepts like Humanism, human dignity and Democracy which it does not even implement.

For this national bourgeoisie, independence is an occasion to acquire wealth and social status. Ngugi says in this context:

It [the national bourgeoisie] grabs at jobs in the civil service and jostles for places on the directing boards of all the foreign companies – shell, I.C.I, Unilever, Union, Minière, Anglo-American banks and mining – corporations that rally the economy of the country. It surrounds itself with country houses, cars, washing machines, television sets and all the consumer durables that are associated with an acquisitive middle class²³.

This class which resembles much Dos Passos's leisure class in its pursuit of wealth (as it will be demonstrated in the next chapter) uses its power to entrench its economic position. Moreover, its members act as agents of neo-colonialism, a system that is now continuing the control of Africa started by the formal imperial power with the economy of the country now run by foreign companies²⁴. The social, political and economic situation is organized according to the political and economic demands of Europe²⁵. There is an alliance between international economic forces and the African national bourgeoisie, which results in the appearance of what is called "the theft economy" in new African states²⁶, an economy which refutes any egalitarian distribution of wealth.

I.1. The African Intellectual in the World of Dictatorship and Corruption

Post-independence Kenya illustrates this situation quite well. After independence, the new Kenyan government adopted European Capitalism with its free-market economic system²⁷. The colonial state carefully chose the leaders of the independent regime so as to lead the grounds for Neo-Colonialism. Jomo Kenyatta who

used to be a radical nationalist was appointed president of Kenya. He soon imposed a conservative bourgeois politics on his people. While he indeed improved the overall economy and land distribution, he allowed white colonial residents to retain property rights. He also favored his Kikuyu ethnic group who received preferential treatment in the distribution of wealth, land and offices. And to silence critics and potential rivals, he resorted to authoritarian methods. Anyone who criticized the government was placed in detention or murdered by order of the president²⁸.

The Kenyan political life of that time was marked by violence. In 1969, Tom Mboya was assassinated, together with J.M. Kariuki in 1975, all disturbing political men. Oginga, the opposition leader was imprisoned in 1967. The same year, KANU became the only party and Kenyatta and his friends extended their control of the state apparatus²⁹. The gap widened between the minority which prospered in a spectacular way under the liberal system and the dispossessed peasants who fought for independence but who have now been trapped a second time by neo-colonialism.

Kenyatta neither nationalized nor seized the settler's property; instead, he recognized their property right and went as far as to finance the purchase of white – owned lands to redistribute them to Africans. Some settlers left in good terms, others on the contrary, remained in Kenya and aided in the investment³⁰. Consequently, as Berman says, “the [colonial] state apparatus expanded in size, grew even more complex and remained the foundation of the state with restored and augmented powers”³¹.

When he died in 1978, his successor Arap Moi took power. He led the country into a more explicit dictatorship. Corruption spread widely throughout the government, economy fell and the Kenyans were exposed to draught and famine. Thus, Kenya which began its independence as an economic model soon sank into poverty and corruption in all fields.

Fanon believes that it is the role of the progressive revolutionary intellectuals and the masses to denounce this bourgeoisie:

L'effort conjugué des masses encadrées dans un parti et des intellectuels hautement conscients et armés de principes révolutionnaires doit barrer la route à cette bourgeoisie inutile et nocive³².

Writers represent an important faction among these progressive intellectuals, of this intelligentsia capable of serious independent thinking. Though they themselves belong to the elite³³ with their education and social position, they nevertheless attack the establishment which exploits the masses. But most of the time, African political leaders abused the confidence their people have placed in them; therefore writers, especially the progressive ones attack them in their writings. And this is what Ngugi does in Petals of Blood which covers the period extending from the late 1960's to the early 1970's³⁴.

The principal theme of the novel is disillusionment with independence. The white elite which was holding power and money in Kenya is replaced by a black elite while those who fought for change are marginalized and enjoy no benefit. Ngugi reports true frustration on the part of those Kenyans unable to move out of abject poverty. The inhabitants have thrown off the British yoke merely to replace it with an African one. Capitalism, poverty and corruption still dominate Kenya.

Ngugi tried to find a way to reanimate radical African nationalism. In Petals of Blood ,he expressed the effects of a rapidly Westernizing Kenya as well as the skepticism about change after the Kenyans' liberation from the British empire through an imaginary pastoral village, Illmorog so far from the civilized world that it did not even have a primary school. But it was soon transformed into a modern city, causing the loss of the peasants' lands, customs and traditions. This transformation is both a metaphor for and a microcosm of the moral decline of Kenya from the high hopes of post-independence to the business corruption and thuggery of a generation later. This

situation resembles that studied in the 42nd Parallel when the 1920's Americans were immersing themselves in the new capitalist world, giving up the moral values their ancestors fought for.

The publication of Petals of Blood in 1977 marked a turning point in the life of Ngugi. The novel is somehow didactic, inspired from the Socialist Realism of the Soviets. Part of it was written in Yalta where Ngugi was invited by the Soviet Writers Association³⁵. It is also a meditation and an open invitation to action against African leaders. The Ilmorogians' march towards Nairobi ends up in a general strike – like that of Sembene's Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu. The achievement of national independence resulted in a loss of trade union independence; a single party regime was formed, leaving little or no room for free independent labor unions. Ngugi was seen as a trouble stirrer, a threat to the new businessmen who were exploiting the masses. As a result, he started having problems with the Kenyan government.

I.2. The African Intellectual and Trade Unionism

His novel being situated and published in colonial Senegal, Sembene for his part escaped this difficulty. As already mentioned in chapter I, just after WWII, the Senegalese workers started asking for their rights. Between 1947 and 1960, Sembene was a member of the CGT (Confédération Générale de Travailleurs)³⁶. There, he was taught that all the workers, be they white or black, had the same rights. This trade union incited African workers to ask for their rights to improve their conditions. It was convinced that their struggle was a class struggle.

Already in 1946, there has been a strike organized by the Commerce, Industry and Banks workers (EMCIBA) in Dakar. It lasted for 14 days and paralyzed all the concerned sectors³⁷. This movement gained ascendancy, especially after the repressive

measures taken by the French authorities against the strikers³⁸. “L’union des syndicats confédérés” was born as a consequence of this strike³⁹. The builders’ trade union of which Sembene was a member was linked to this union⁴⁰.

Sembene lived this strike; he attended all the meetings organized by trade unionists. The orators were all radicals who refused to identify with the Senegalese political leaders asking for the French citizenship⁴¹. The workers asked for a radical change. They wanted to have the same rights as the French workers. As they were conscious of their force, they threatened to extend the movement on all French West Africa. The success of this movement was so great that the French authorities, for the first time in the history of the colony, were obliged to negotiate with the Africans. The strike ended in January 1946 because the workers won notable wage increases and family allowances⁴². The most important point in these events was that they unveiled the absurdity of what was then called “Franco-African Fraternity”⁴³ which guaranteed the African worker neither equality nor liberty.

Sembene was profoundly marked by this strike which was his first trade union school. He took part more in it than in that of 1947 – 1948 which nevertheless inspired his masterpiece Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu in which he described the misery which pushed the workers to revolt and to endure the repression they met from the French Generals as well as from the local leaders.

Like Ngugi in Petals of Blood, Sembene in Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu tells the story of ordinary Africans submitted to an oppressive capitalist system operated by European bureaucrats and collaborating African elites. In this novel, he portrays African politicians as self-enriching profiteers who are completely divorced from their constituency. Like Ngugi, he shows a great scorn towards them and punishes them severely. He raises revolutionary intellectuals against them.

II. The Emergence of a Variety of Intellectuals

Ngugi's and Sembene's intellectuals in Petals of Blood and Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu are of the same kind. Some are "traditional intellectuals" who do not serve their society at all, like Munira and the lawyer in Petals of Blood and – more or less – Ndèye Touti in Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu. Others are either reactionary organic intellectuals who have decided to serve the dominant class, like Chui, Kimeria and Nderi Wa Riera in Petals of Blood and the members of the French National Assembly in Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu, or revolutionary organic intellectuals who devote themselves to the organization of the masses, like Karega in Petals of Blood and Bakayoko in Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu.

II.1 A Useless Education : Traditional Intellectuals

Though Ngugi, in his first novels, conceived education as a means of liberation from injustice and oppression, in Petals of Blood however, loses faith in western – educated people. These are not strong enough to take definite sides, not courageous enough to get rid of their selfishness and devote their knowledge to the cause of their people. Ngugi is now self-confident enough to criticize the educational system as a whole. He no longer sees it as a means of liberation. It is rather a problematic institution in independent Kenya since it produces people like the lawyer and Munira the teacher who, despite their knowledge, have no ability to guide their people and prefer to stand back and keep their beliefs for themselves. Since they are uncommitted learned men, they can be seen as Gramsci's "traditional" or Sartre's "false" intellectuals. They consider themselves as independent and autonomous; they do not avow their belonging to the ruling class which exerts such a great influence upon them that they cannot separate from it.

The lawyer is a humane man. He shows a great interest in the poor peasants of Illmorog. He is also conscious that Capitalism represents a danger to his society. However, he cannot help being a bourgeois who lives in a nice house in town, far from the wretched Illmorogians. He is a typical figure of the petty bourgeois as described by Marx:

The petty bourgeois is necessarily from his position a socialist on one side and an economist on the other, that is to say, he is dazed by the magnificence of the big bourgeoisie and has sympathy for the sufferings of the people. Deep down, in his heart, he flatters himself that he is impartial and has found the right equilibrium which claims to be something different from mediocrity. A petty bourgeois of this type glorifies contradiction because contradiction is the basis of his existence. He is himself nothing but social contradiction in action⁴⁴.

Ngugi admits having been inspired by Martin Shikuku, the populist Member of Parliament, in the creation of the character of the lawyer. According to him, this man “had made a reputation for raising awkward issues in the house of honorables”⁴⁵. However, in the novel, he does not enjoy such a high position. He is presented – briefly – as a character who has acquired a high degree of knowledge, but who, unfortunately, kept this knowledge for himself, instead of putting it at the service of his people. He cannot even communicate with them. He seems not to be aware that their level of understanding is inferior to his. When he receives them in his house, he really seems to be holding a dialogue “with an inner self and [that] they were only spectators at this raked wrestling with his own doubts and fears” (p.163).

The utility of such a character seems to be restricted to the communication of the author’s ideology. Ngugi forces him to echo his own thoughts⁴⁶; he reduces him to a mere “authorial agent”, as Gikandi says⁴⁷. He does not even give him a name. He is not only a failed intellectual but a failed character as well.

Munira however, though a failed intellectual, is a successful character. He resembles Andrews, the hero of Dos Passos's Three Soldiers⁴⁸. Both are alienated intellectuals tormented by class guilt; both waver between the upper class which has trained them and the lower one to which they want to belong, but do not know how; both have difficulties in taking decisions or involving themselves in the problems of their respective countries; and both suffer from an inferiority complex because they lack confidence in themselves. But while Andrews seeks refuge in art and later in women, Munira, on the contrary, escapes to Illmorog, a traditional village where he tries vainly to make a career in teaching.

Again like Andrews, he is an idealist who opposes – though only morally – injustice and keeps dreaming of a peaceful world to come. Ngugi turns him into a liar and a hypocrite who allies with the capitalists, since he similarly contributes to the destruction of one of the revolutionary leaders of the peasants, Karega.

When they come back to Illmorog after the peasants' journey to Nairobi, Karega is busy organizing the masses for the great strike they were preparing. And instead of helping him, Munira escapes into religion. He joins a Christian movement whose main doctrine is to scorn this world and fight only for the "Kingdom of God". He is thus "reborn" in a fanatical evangelical way. Through this passage from education to mysticism, Munira wants to cut himself completely from his people, to avoid being involved in their problems. To mock him, Ngugi resorts to irony. He makes him the hero who clears Olmorog from corruption by killing the three local corrupt "worthies". Munira has at last overcome his hesitations. He has managed to take a decision alone and ceased to be a spectator. However, Ngugi soon makes it clear that the fire he set to kill the local leaders was rather meant to get rid of Karega and Abdulla of whom he was jealous. The selfish Munira is far from acting for the well-being of his community.

Despite his education, he never tries to establish justice or at least to raise the consciousness of his people and to open their eyes on the reality of their situation.

We have seen how Andrews dominates Three Soldiers and how, despite his weak personality, a great part of the novel is told from his point of view because Dos Passos embodies in him all the contradictions of the educated intellectuals of his time. Similarly, Munira is the character with whom the reader spends most of his time. “His personality”, as David Cook says, “is related to the structure, texture, atmosphere and tempo of the novel from beginning to end”⁴⁹. The texture and structure of the novel are based on the report he writes to the police. The atmosphere in which the characters act is determined by his behavior: a certain peace is felt within the peasants when he admits Karega in his school. This peace is soon replaced by hostility and uncertainty when he fires him or when he attends the tea party (an act which is seen as a betrayal to the peasants’ cause). The tempo of the novel rises when he kills the local leaders. Furthermore, he is involved in all the complex symbolism of the novel. The title ‘Petals of Blood’ itself is associated with him. When he tells his pupils “the flower with petals of blood is a fruitless one, a worm-eaten flower. It cannot bear fruit” (p.22), he is alluding to himself; he is that worm eaten flower because he cannot bring anything positive to his society.

In fact, Andrews, the Lawyer and Munira commit the same mistake, though they belong to different historical periods, cultures and geographical areas: they do not manage to fulfill their duties as intellectuals because they cannot make up their mind ; they do not join the common people. They are, to use Gramsci’s metaphor, “members of a vanguard without an army to back it up, generals without followers”⁵⁰. Their pseudo-aristocratic ascendancy and their false heroism have maimed them; they have prevented them from committing themselves to the cause of their people. They have committed what Gramsci calls “the major error of the intellectual” and which

Consists in believing that it is possible to know without understanding and especially without feeling and passion... that the intellectual can be an intellectual if he is distinct and detached from the people nation... in the absence of such a bound, the relations between intellectuals and the people-nation are reduced to contacts of a purely bureaucratic formal kind; the intellectual becomes a caste or a priesthood⁵¹.

Dos Passos and Ngugi know that their intellectuals have failed in their mission; that is why they punish them severely. Andrews and Munira are condemned to spend the rest of their lives in prison and the Lawyer dies, though still young.

Such intellectuals cannot be admitted in the world of Sembene who is much less moderate than Ngugi. When he publishes Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu, he is already committed to the cause of the workers. For him, there can be no fence – sitting in a class conflict. Intellectuals have to choose their side; they must be linked organically either to the ruling class or to the proletariat. That is why he excludes traditional intellectuals from his novel.

N'dèye Touti, the only character who shares some features with them is impelled to leave school and to embrace the workers' cause. The colonial education she has received has turned her into a 'westernized African' who denies her origins because she has been taught that her people are savages. She rejects her customs and traditions and lives in an imaginary world similar to that shown in European films or books. She stands for those wrongly educated women who embrace Western culture blindly, a culture which teaches them to deny their own belonging.

She is completely submitted to the dominant ideology. She opposes the march of the women because, for her, they have violated the law. She believes that anyone who errs must be punished. She refuses to admit that these women have not erred and that they are only asking for their right, supposed to be protected by the law she is speaking

about. This woman has been indoctrinated to such a point that she feels released at the sight of the burning down of her ancestral home. At last, she is liberated from her shameful past.

Sembene perceives the danger of these emerging ‘Westernized’ women in Africa who, most of the time ally with the establishment. He attacks them through N’Dèye whom he ridicules: the colonialists she nearly worships turn against her and reduce her to a non-entity; Bakayoko scorns her and refuses to marry her. Now that she has no place in her own society, she is compelled to go back to her past which becomes a refuge from a hostile present. This new attitude is represented by the destruction of her books which in fact symbolizes the destruction of her illusions and an attempt to put an end to colonial hegemony. Sembene treats her harshly, but as she represents a new phenomenon in Africa – educated girls being rare in the Africa of the 1960’s – he integrates her in her society, with the hope that she will now join her people’s struggle and cease to flunk her intellectual mission which consists in putting her knowledge at the service of her people. Only then, may she perhaps become an intellectual organically linked to the cause of the oppressed and ready to counterbalance the influence of powerful reactionary intellectuals ⁵².

II.2. Organic Intellectuals

II.2.1. The Reactionary Organic Intellectual as Betrayers:the Western- Educated Africans

Like Dos Passos’s Moorehouse, Eleanor Stoddard and Janey Williams, the black members of the French National Assembly in Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu and Chui, Kimeria and N’Deri Wa Riera in Petals of Blood could all have been ‘true’ intellectuals. They are persons who have knowledge; they could analyze and even criticize what was

happening around them. They could have raised the consciousness of their respective people. Instead, they have adopted the oppressor's point of view: being all educated by the colonialists, in colonial Senegal they serve colonialism and in post-independent Kenya, they become agents of neo-colonialism. In both cases, they work for the preservation of Western hegemony in Africa, just as Moorehouse and his secretary work for the preservation of the business men's interests in the conservative America of the 1920's.

These local leaders have opted for the pursuit of social and political success and for the acquisition of more and more wealth. Their selfishness and inhumanity turn them into awkward characters the reader disgusts. They do not feel concerned with the exploitation and injustice their people are submitted to. While the workers are starving, the MPs are busy making money. Their role is depreciated. Their people lose confidence in them; they are persuaded that these parasites are unable to improve the situation. And this idea is expressed clearly by the revolutionary Bakayoko when he says to Dejean who asks him to seek the intervention of the black députés to resolve the conflict, "Nos députés, dit-il avec un sourire ironique [...] savez-vous ce que nous en pensons? Pour nous leur mandat est une patente de profiteur." (p.281). For Bakayoko, these people do not oppose the looting of their country; they even take part in it:

Ils ont appartement, villa, auto, compte en banque,
ils sont actionnaires dans des sociétés [...]. Ils sont
devenus des alliés du patronat et vous voudriez que
nous portions notre différend devant eux ? Non,
non, mille fois non! (p.281).

Like Veblen in the Big Money, Sembene believes that this national bourgeoisie (the equivalent of Veblen's Leisure class)* shows its superiority through material

consumption. That is why he insists on all that is material or superficial in their life. His description of the député-maire, stressing his golden teeth, confirms this :

Posément il installa sur son nez court des lunettes à grosse monture d'écaille. Quand il ouvrit la bouche pour parler, on vit briller deux dents orrifiées [...]. Il parlait français en détachant ses mots (p.334). (Emphasis mine).

What Sembene says about the materialism, the selfishness and the waste of this class may be true, but blunt. He keeps underlining the danger of this class and the inevitability of its down fall because it exploits human beings and gets its wealth from appropriated goods. Unfortunately, he does this at the expense of literature. In fact, he seems to forget that he is dealing with literature and not with politics.

Dos Passos similarly attacks the capitalists in the 42nd Parallel, but in a subtler manner. Most of the time, he resorts to irony to mock them, without sacrificing literature to politics. He makes them lie, cheat and use 'false words', as when Moorehouse says in a rotary lunch:

Both employers and employees should serve the public. The workers will be included in the world of 'Big Business' [...]; they will be accomplices without however including them in the intended immense profits⁵³.

The reader receives the message without ceasing to appreciate the literary value of the novel. This difference between Dos Passos and Sembene testifies to the importance of literary experience, though the reader's degree of intellectual consciousness is not to be neglected.

The same exaggeration in the local leaders' denunciation is noticed in Petals of Blood. Ngugi reduces Chui, Kimeria and N'Deri into mere hypocrites who succeed in imposing a social order through which they guarantee their perennity.

Through the character of Chui, he expresses his loss of faith in education too. This character started his career as a radical student at Siriana. At that time, he was genuinely concerned with the plight of the oppressed. One could see in him a future intellectual / leader of his people. But as soon as he travels around South Africa and America, he undergoes a brainwashing which devoids him of his revolutionary fervor and sows in him the seeds of self-conceit and causes his morbid contempt for his people's culture. All that interests him is the accumulation of wealth, power and status, even if this entails the destruction of his own culture and history. His first speech as headmaster of Siriana High School, which is in fact his master's voice, testifies to this. He announces that he does not want,

to hear any more nonsense about African teachers, African history, African literature, African this and that. Whoever heard of African, Chinese or Greek mathematics and science? Literature was literature and had nothing to do with the color of one's skin [...]. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Napoleon, Livingstone, Western Conquerors, Western inventors and discovers were drummed into our heads with even greater fury... (pp. 171-3)

Dos Passos makes Moorehouse attribute all the achievements realized by the unions and the IWW to the Trusts, but in not so direct a way⁵⁴. Though Moorehouse is also a liar and a traitor, he says things in a more discreet/ tactful way.

Chui refuses to have any relation with his people. He does not help them, even when he can. When the marchers go to his house to seek help from him, he is disgusted by their wretchedness and orders his guards to pursue them with gun shots because these wretched people have frightened one of the wealthy ladies whom he invited to his house.

Kimeria is no different. Not only is he selfish and inhuman, he is also a traitor who collaborated with the whiteman during the Mau Mau struggle for independence. As

a reward for his betrayal, he is appointed public officer in independent Kenya. He is thus given the chance to perpetuate his betrayal. He is responsible for Wanja's expulsion from school and her turning into a prostitute; he uses the money stolen from the peasants by the K.C.O (the Kenya Cultural Organization). "We are all members of K.C.O", says he "some of us have even been able to borrow a little, shall we say thousands from the money collected from the tea ceremony" (p.53). When Illmorog is invaded by the capitalists, he takes part in the dispossession of the peasants from their lands. He is N'Deri's friend, for as he says, they are "all fighting for the same end" (p.153).

N'Deri the MP who once stood for the defense of the Kenyan peasants and for the protection of their culture has slid into power and money. All his political speeches are no more than 'Opium for the people'. He reminds us of some of Dos Passos's biographical politicians who manipulate language for their own purpose, among them William Jennings Bryan, "the silver tongue of the plain people", Minor C. Keith, the "Emperor of the Caribbean" and Andrew Carnegie⁵⁵. These people are all hypocrites who misuse language to disguise their real intentions.

An opportunist, N'Deri conforms to the egocentric assumptions of the leaders without criticizing their ethics. He uses his political position as a means to acquire wealth. He remembers the people who chose him as their representative only when he needs their votes⁵⁶. To get richer, he does not hesitate to prostitute his society and to trade with its traditional culture. He turns this cultural heritage into a means of attracting European tourists to Kenya so as to make more money, even if this entails its distortion or the suppression of its spiritual significance. He creates a tourist club in which he perverts the meaning of all the dances and songs which used to animate circumcision and harvest ceremonies and to sustain freedom fighters during the Emergency.

Ngugi sees in this kind of politician a social plague, a corrupter; that is why he deals with him also with irony. When Nderi holds a meeting with his people to persuade them to vote for him, Ngugi makes him turn all the disasters that have befallen the Ilmorogians into achievements for which he deserves praise.

The road had brought trade to the area: small shopping centres were springing up on either side of the road [...] he had proposed [...] for Chiri county council to set up a properly planned, sewaged shopping centre at Ilmorog. A few acres of land would of course be taken from the people for the purpose, but the county council would pay adequate compensation. Then as a result of his representations and remonstrations with the central government, it had been decided to develop the whole area into ranches and wheat fields. A tourist center would be set up and a game park further on... (p.267).

Ngugi treats him with sarcasm when he says, “Long live N’Deri Wa Riera. We gave him our votes. We waited for flowers to bloom” p.268).

II.2.2. The Reactionary Organic Intellectuals as the Subverters of Religion

All these false intellectuals in both Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu and Petals of Blood are backed by the most influencing force in any society, the religious men, whom Gramsci considers as intellectuals. For him, the clergymen lost their organic link with the landed aristocracy when the Feudal system lost its strength and the supremacy of the church weakened. They became reactionary organic intellectuals. Their role was restricted to providing the ‘opium’ of the masses in the interest of a social order⁵⁷.

The religious men of Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu and Petals of Blood are of this kind. They have allied with the class in power which uses them as intermediaries between the Establishment and the people in exchange for material privileges.

In Three Soldiers, they were depicted using religion to regiment the public mind. In the name of God, they appealed to those doubters who saw WWI as a foreign war their country should shun to support the national endeavour. They made use of the mental clichés and the emotional habits of the public to produce mass-reactions against the alleged atrocities, the terror and the tyranny of the Germans. These men of God whose duty was to preach love, brotherhood and peace went as far as to make soldiers recite anti-German songs and to show them films which incited hatred in them.

In Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu, Sembene assigns the Sérigne of Dakar and El-Hadji Mabigué a mediating role between the employers and their workers; but they side with the former for some awards. They are at the service of the colonial administrators and substitute themselves for the legal authority. For example, when the police fail to establish peace within the women protesting against Ramatoulaye's arrest, it is the Sérigne of Dakar, not the army, who intervenes and calms the crowds; "il avait une telle autorité que la foule demeura silencieuse" (p.185), says Sembene. His physical appearance intensifies this authority :

Le sérigne Ndakarou fit son apparition. Sa haute taille rehaussée d'un turban, sa silhouette majestueuse drapée dans un immense boubou blanc sur lequel s'étalait une rangée de décorations. Il était si impressionnant que la foule s'écarte sur son passage. (p.195).

The Sérigne pays a high price for all his badges. He is required to put the law of God at the service of the Establishment. He defends the oppressors in the name of Islam. He uses this religion to convince the masses that what is happening to them is 'the will of God' (La volonté de Dieu); so whatever they do, nothing will change their situation. He even tries to convince them that the presence of the Whiteman in Senegal is the will of God, and without them, the Senegalese are worth nothing :

Dieu nous fait coexister avec les Toubabs français, et ceux-ci nous apprennent à fabriquer ce dont nous avons besoin ; nous ne devons pas nous révolter contre cette volonté de Dieu dont les connaissances sont un mystère pour nous. (p.196).

To get rid of that strike which disturbs his bosses, the sérigne does not hesitate to organize a 'religious' campaign against the strikers and to brand the revolutionary leaders as prostitutes and atheists.

The Imam El-Hadji Mabigué further justifies the class-system using religion. He says to his sister :

Je sais que la vie est dure, mais cela ne doit pas nous pousser à désespérer de Dieu. [...].. il a assigné à chacun son rang, sa place et son rôle. Il est impie d'intervenir. Les Toubabs sont là. C'est la volonté de Dieu. Nous n'avons pas à nous mesurer à eux car la force est un don de Dieu et Allah leur en a fait cadeau. (p.83).

The role of an Imam is to provide a religious education to the Muslims and to teach them how to help one another to live in harmony, which Mabigué seems to ignore. He lives in comfort while his family is starving. To mock him, Sembene makes him name his ram – which is better treated than human beings – Vendredi (Friday), the most important day in Islam. It should be noted, however, that Sembene's criticism of the Imams is not a criticism of religion as such, but its use for non-religious ends⁵⁸.

Similarly, Ngugi's priests in Petals of Blood are hypocrites and traitors. In this novel, religion no longer exercises the influence it did in Weep not, Child and The River Between. As in Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu and even in Three Soldiers, God is used for political purposes. The local leaders use Christianity as a means to justify their sinful behavior. The life story of the priest Ezekiel, Munira's father, summarizes the writer's views on this religion.

Like the Sérigne of Dakar, Ezekiel is a traitor. Before Kenya's independence, he was the 'running dog' of the British and now in independent Kenya, he helps the neo-colonialists in their exploitation of the peasants. He goes as far as to use Christianity to encourage the shameful taking of an oath meant to consolidate tribalism and to rob the peasants. To ridicule him, Ngugi makes him say,

It [the oath] is for peace and unity and it is in harmony with God's eternal design... this KCO is not a bad thing. We shall even have a church branch. It's a cultural organization to bring unity and harmony between all of us, the rich and the poor. God helps those who help themselves. (p.95).

This reminds us of that passage in Dos Passos's Three Soldiers in which the religious men are mocked and treated with great irony and sarcasm. When one of these clergymen sees soldiers rooting baby birds out of their nests, he says astonished, "an American soldier being deliberately cruel, I never would have believed"⁵⁹.

Religious men who used to be a source of love, peace and brotherhood are now turned into profiteers who trade in religion. American millionaires send people they call revivalists to Africa to collect money⁶⁰. To show the wickedness of Revivalism, Ngugi associates it with evil characters. He represents it through Lilian, a prostitute; he turns Munira who embraces it into a murderer; he makes Reverend Jerrod Brown— another hypocritical priest — build his church near Wanja's whorehouse; and on one of the walls of the whorehouse, there is the inscription, "Christ is the head of the family" (p.287).

In these two novels, however, the common people have understood that capitalism and its allies, the local compradores and the religious men are responsible for their wretchedness. They therefore see in "a trade union revolution"⁶¹ the ideal solution for their problem. The leadership of this revolution is to come from intellectuals who have succeeded in reconnecting themselves to the physical, spiritual and cultural roots of their nation. Bakayko in Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu and Karega in Petals of Blood

are the revolutionary intellectuals who are entrusted the organization of such a revolution.

II.3. Towards Social Change: the Revolutionary Organic Intellectuals' Responsibility

In the 42nd Parallel and 1919, I have dealt with Mac and Benny Compton as “true intellectuals” or what Gramsci’ calls “revolutionary organic intellectuals” because they have taken part in the organization of strikes and contributed to the education of the masses. Likewise, Bakayoko and Karega deserve this title because they act as organizers of the political party which provides leadership for the revolutionary class. Bakayoko has many points in common with Mac and Ben. Like them, he is self-taught and has always been interested in radical change. Karega, however, has been a traditional intellectual before espousing revolution. The Western education he received bound him to the colonialists’ hegemony. It inculcated in him a certain idealist philosophy and utopian vision of life. But the poverty and the exploitation to which his people are submitted stir his consciousness and make him leave his ivory tower to be the leader of the revolutionary class.

II.3.1. Bakayoko, another Ben

Bakayoko and Ben are men of the people. They have never belonged to the upper class. Their socialist inclinations come from the books they read. They have a real philosophy of struggle: they are self-confident and morally strong. Ben is ready to sacrifice himself for the party cause; he refuses to marry Mary and start a family life for fear they might effect his devotion to the revolutionary cause. Bakayoko gives his family up for the sake of the strike: when he receives the news of his mother’s death, with courage, he tells Bakary, an elder who advises him to attend the funeral, “père il y

a beaucoup de maisons telles que la mienne, des maisons où comme en 38 le deuil est entré. Nous ne devons pas penser aux morts mais lutter pour les vivants” (p.293).. When Doudou, a militant in the party, dies, he also refuses to take part in the burial ceremony because he is too busy. Mary French in the Big Money adopts the same attitude when Ada calls her to announce Eveline’s suicide. “I have a great deal of work to do ...” says she⁶². These reactions prove their strong commitment to the cause they are fighting for; however, they also attest to their callousness and lack of feeling. The reader sees them as automata. But through such an inhuman attitude, Dos Passos and Sembene show that in a revolutionary party, one should sacrifice his family and personal interests for those of the community.

Bakayoko is a new type of African who refuses race divides⁶³. He is convinced that there is no difference between whites and blacks. When he meets Dejean for the first time, he tells him, “[...] nous sommes ici pour discuter entre égaux” (p.277). In fact, he views race in terms of class. The only difference between the strikers and the whites that he admits is that they belong to different antagonistic classes, “Il ne s’agit ni de la France ni de son peuple, il s’agit d’employés qui discutent avec leurs employeurs” (p.282), says he again to Dejean. Through Bakayoko, Sembene destroys that inferiority complex the blacks have always felt towards the whites by introducing other parameters, such as the class struggle.

Bakayoko is indeed a perfect revolutionary intellectual. Again like Ben, he fulfills the duties of a political leader: he mediates between the different centres of the strike (Dakar, Thiès, Bamako) and he represents the workers in meetings. He is a man of action: he imposes his opinions on others, as when he says, “pour moi c’est ainsi qu’il en est de cette grève, nous devons faire corps avec elle”. (p.323). But like all revolutionary intellectuals, he has some moral imperfections. A bossy man, he does not

give a chance to the other militants to express themselves ; he paralyses them with his authority, an attitude that puts the future democracy in jeopardy. The only militant who dares criticise him is his friend Alioune :

Vois-tu ce qu'il y a de difficile avec toi, c'est que si tu comprends très bien les problèmes, tu ne comprends pas les hommes, ou, si tu les comprends, tu ne le montres pas. Et toi tu leur demandes de te comprendre à demi-mot, sinon tu te mets en colère, alors la peur les habite, la peur d'être critiqués. Quand tu n'es pas là, personne n'ose plus rien faire, et tout retombe sur toi... (p.323).

Still, he remains an admirable person and an unforgettable character, were it only for his bravery and for his sacrifice for the cause of the people.

We eventually come to have a pretty clear idea about Bakayoko's personality because he is presented from various points of view,⁶⁴ a technique which is also used in Dos Passos's trilogy – especially in the Big Money – to avoid the traditional linear novel⁶⁵. He appears for the first time in the novel on page 264. Sembene introduces him gradually, as if he wanted the reader to take part in his creation. However, the other characters make us know everything about him because he is so important to them. Like Moorehouse in the three volumes of USA, he is omnipresent, ubiquitous. Sembene makes of him a charismatic character who dominates the novel from beginning to end. The constant evocation of his name and the waiting for his return give the novel a particular rhythm. Even when he is not in the party, the workers continue to work; they are guided by his moral strength.

The unity of struggle is achieved through his mobility; he keeps moving from one town to another to have complete control over the strikers who in their turn refer to his ideas whenever they are on the point of making a decision. That he is presented to the reader indirectly, that is, through the other characters, gives strength and complexity

to his personality. Sembene, for example, announces his return to Dakar through a splendid metaphorical language:

Comme semées à la volée, les étoiles piquetaient le ciel de leurs grains dorés. La terre refroidissait sous une brise nocturne descendue du haut Sénégal qui annonçait la prochaine venue du changement de saison, les insectes et les oiseaux chantaient leurs hymnes à la nuit. L'obscurité était si dense qu'on ne pouvait distinguer l'homme qui d'un pas sûr et régulier, suivait l'enchevêtrement des ruelles [...]. Il sifflotait un petit air guilleret (p.264).

The stars that decorate the ceiling stand for the positive change that will accompany Bakayoko's coming back. If these stars illuminate the dark night, Bakayoko, for his part, will enlighten the strikers with his advice and experience. On the other hand, the seasons' change which is mentioned in the passage symbolizes the change that Bakayoko causes in the situation of the strikers*. He is made to face the most important moments in the struggle: the long- expected meeting between the strikers and their employers and the rally day in Dakar.

Unlike Moorehouse, Wilson and William Jennings Bryan, the false intellectuals who misuse language and even turn it into an alibi for the projects of Capitalism⁶⁶, Bakayoko modulates his. He varies it according to the persons he addresses. When he talks to the employers, it is cold and ironic; when he addresses the strikers, it becomes friendly and persuasive. Thus, to attract the workers to his side and work with them in harmony, he avoids any topic that may raise disagreement. For example, he defends polygamy in front of the whites, though he has always stood against it. He attacks all the issues that disturb the masses, such as slavery and exploitation which the Blacks have ceased to consider as an ancestral blemish. They rather see it as an injustice and they are determined to fight against those ideological discourses that consider blacks as animals. The struggle for the future starts with this kind of psychological therapy which helps the blacks regain the confidence and courage necessary to face their oppressors.

Now, they deal with the whites with no inferiority complex. Tiémoko proves this quite well when he says, “En quoi un enfant blanc est-il supérieur à un enfant noir ? En quoi un ouvrier blanc est-il supérieur à un ouvrier noir ? ” (p.25)

What makes of Bakayoko a strong revolutionary leader is his determination, his strong belief in a better future and his eagerness to learn, hence his insistence on the importance of reading, as it will be shown. These qualities are also found in Karega, though he is younger, less experimented and less convincing than Bakayoko.

II.3.2. Karega, another Mac

At the beginning of the novel, Karega believes that if Kenya had humane and responsible leaders, the problems of exploitation and poverty would be solved. But later, he changes his mind; he advocates a complete rupture with the authorities. He suggests the following solution:

[...] the poor, the dispossessed, the working millions and the poor peasants are their own lawyers. With guns and swords and organization, they can and will change the conditions of their oppression... they will seize the wealth which rightly belongs to them. (p.326).

Thus, he reaches the conclusion that the ideal nation can be created only by organized labor, a labor ready to take up arms to achieve a more equitable distribution of wealth.

Karega shares many features with Mac, the radicalist of the 42nd Parallel. Their lack of education and their decent stable income do not prevent them from fighting to right social wrongs. They do their best to raise the consciousness of their people as they move from job to job in their respective countries. Like all authentic revolutionaries, they believe strongly in the possibility of a better future. From their childhood, they had this revolutionary fervor. If Mac is initiated to the principles of Socialism and revolution through his Irish – American uncle Tim Ohara and through his readings on

Marxism, Karega for his part is expelled from Siriana School because he leads a strike there. Later, in Nairobi, he is introduced to the Lawyer, a symbol of justice, who opens his eyes on the reality of the post – independence Kenyan leaders, though he later disagrees with him on many issues. While the Lawyer, for example, stands against violence and only aspires to dissuade the leaders of this unjust society from pursuing their course of action, Karega opts for a violent and total destruction of the corrupt Establishment. And while the former believes in the efficacy of parliamentary reform, the latter advocates the destruction of Capitalism and the construction of a Socialist society. Like Mac, he sees in socialism the best way to reconstitute man's dignity which has been thwarted by Capitalism. The difference between the two characters, however, lies in the fact that while both started as mere radical nationalists, Karega ends up – through reading – a Marxist and commits himself to trade unionism, while Mac succumbs to petty-bourgeois comforts, thus putting an end to his radical career.

What is however common to all these self-made characters – be they those of Dos Passos or those of Ngugi or Sembene – is that they all seek refuge in books whenever they encounter difficulties in understanding what is happening around them or in taking a decision. Mac and his friend Ike, though still young, read Marx and Belamy⁶⁷. Mary French in the Big Money reads Upton Sinclair's the Jungle and Veblen's Theory of the Leisure class thanks to which she commits herself to the cause of the workers⁶⁸. Doudou, the secretary of state's committee in Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu relies on books in all the decision he makes. Bakayoko tells him, "Je t'ai donné des livres. Prends le soin de les lire. Ne nous fais pas risquer un échec par maladresse" (p.22). Tiémoko, another trade unionist, is conscious of the complexity of his mission. He relies on books to avoid any mistake and to assume his responsibility easily: "Il lui fallait lire, apprendre, s'instruire. Chez lui, il se livrait à de véritables orgies de lectures" (p.166).

These characters perceive the book as a means through which they can understand what is happening in the world. Tiémoko is convinced that the revolutionaries can defeat the capitalists only if they succeed in penetrating their world, in discovering how they apprehend reality, which can be realized only through reading. Moreover, suffering from a lack of political maturity, he relies on books to help him put an end to this weakness that can destroy his radical mission. The book becomes a source of regeneration, a means of strengthening one's personality. Zola in Germinal gives the same importance to books. The self-taught Etienne, the main character suffers from an inferiority complex due to his lack of education:

Un seul malaise lui restait, la conscience de son manque d'instruction qui le rendait embarrassé et timide, dès qu'il se trouvait devant un monsieur en redingote. S'il continuait à d'instruire, dévorant tout, le manque de méthode rendait l'assimilation très lente...⁶⁹.

Contrary to Etienne, Tiémoko assimilates his readings; when he reads Malraux's La Condition humaine, he criticizes its content, "Et puis ce livre est compliqué et je ne suis pas d'accord avec son auteur" (p.148), though he draws the idea of Diara's trial from it.

Likewise, Karega assimilates the books the lawyer sent him. After reading them, he notices that they did not deal with the history and political struggles of the Kenyans (p.200); so they could not serve his cause. He thus posts them back to him. But in his answer, the lawyer convinces him that books are not enough; he incites him to look about himself, to choose his side (p.200). He thus regains confidence in himself and decides to continue his struggle for a better future. This hope is rendered in a symbolical language of a natural cycle of regeneration, "he [Karega] looked out of the window and saw the green crops, the new growth: crops will flower and later we shall harvest, he muttered to himself" (p.200).

Ngugi embodies his political and ideological views in Karega. As Sembene has done with Bakayoko, he does not present him at the beginning of the novel, but through Munira's report to the police. Ngugi's intention is either not to avow his ideological views openly or to give the reader the time to come to grips with the writer's ideological inclinations in the end.

The characters' inner world is linked to their history through Karega. It is he who explains how and why Illmorog has been invaded by the capitalists. However sometimes, he speaks where it is not necessary. He comments on scenes which are obvious and clear. When he says, for example, that Wanja's abuse by Kimeria "is a collective humiliation [...]. Whenever anyone of us is degraded and humiliated, even the smallest child, we are all humiliated and degraded because it has got to do with human beings" (p.161), this is pure propaganda, "a naked ideological cliché"⁷⁰, as Gikandi says. We find the same technique in the 42nd Parallel –though in a discreet and tactful way – when Dos Passos makes Ike say, "If you could do away with the capitalist system and the big trusts and Wall Street things' ud be like that [...]. All you need is a general strike and have the workers refuse to work for a boss any longer"⁷¹. Towards the end of the novel, Karega's language is fraught with clichés, as when he says,

They [the masses] would continue struggling until a human Kingdom came; a world in which goodness and beauty and strength and courage would be seen [...] in one's contribution in creating a more humane world.

One of the most important duties of the intellectual is to create a collective will within the masses. Like Mary French, Karega and Bakayoko are organically linked to their people. They teach them, organize them and even consult them. But both Ngugi and Sembene attribute all the important actions to the masses. They are against

“individual heroism”. It is the collective aspect of the struggle that interests them. They seem to share Lucien Goldmann’s opinion that,

presque aucune action humaine n’a pour sujet un individu isolé. Le sujet de l’action est un groupe, un « nous » [...]. Il y a entre les hommes une autre relation que celle de sujet à objet, de je à tu, une communauté que nous appellerons le « nous », expression d’une action commune sur un objet physique ou social⁷².

III. Towards a Collectivization/ Mobilization of the Masses

As in Dos Passos’s trilogy, in Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu as well as in Petals of Blood, a great number of characters take part – each in his own way – in the events that concern them all. These writers make it clear that the struggle concerns all the oppressed people. They all insist on the collective participation in the communal cause, but at the same time, they preserve the personality of each person, be it a man or a woman.

Each character is nearly a type in the Lukacsian sense: while maintaining his individual traits, he at the same time reflects the society, the epoch and the class in which he lives. He synthesizes between the general and the particular. According to Lukàcs, characters conserve their individuality when they take a personal position, a position which is decisive for their destiny vis-à-vis abstract problems⁷³.

The Lukacsian type possesses an individual prominence, but at the same time, a clear consciousness of the situation in which he lives. The type must relate the individual to the social being. All the important moments of a historical period must be present in a historical type. In the destiny of the characters must be reflected the vision of the totality of the world and all the urgent problems of society.

We have seen how Dos Passos has succeeded in making of Mac a typical figure of the pre-war working-class radical, of Moorhouse a prototype of the ruthless American opportunist, of Mary French the most representative type of the American revolutionary intellectual through the embodiment of all the social, political and historical preoccupations of their people in them. Sembene and Ngugi for their part reach this typicality through the use of the communal voice.

The conflict in Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu takes the form of a collective drama represented by a group of people instead of an individual hero. That is why Sembene uses the pronouns “on” and “nous”, “ils” more frequently than “Je”, as in “lorsqu’on jugea Diara [...] on remarquait...” (p.131). Before this, Bakayoko says, “l’homme que nous étions est mort et notre seul salut pour une nouvelle vie est dans la machine” (p.127). This recalls Dos Passos’s “We stand defeated America...”⁷⁴, “the clean words our fathers spoke”⁷⁵, “America our nation has been beaten by strangers who have turned our language inside out...”⁷⁶.

Bakayoko sees all the workers as one man; all united by the same cause. He himself identifies with them. We feel this in his answer to Edward who wants to talk to him alone, “je ne suis pas seul ici monsieur...” (p.269). when Sembene makes the omniscient narrator talk, he refers to all the strikers in general:

Tout cela avait été leur vie. Ils y pensaient sans cesse, mais gardaient jalousement ces pensées comme un secret, tout en s’épiaient l’un l’autre comme s’ils avaient peur de voir le secret échapper à quelqu’un d’entre eux. Pourtant ils sentaient confusément que la machine était leur bien commun et que la frustration qu’ils éprouvaient tous leur était également commune. (p.127).

The strike reinforces this communal spirit. It unites all the workers and puts an end to tribal chauvinism. The Bambara, Peuhls, Wolofs or Toucouleurs all work

together for the same cause. They accept their trade union leaders, whatever their origin. They are all united by a strong desire for liberty and equality between all the workers.

In Petals of Blood also, Ngugi does not fail to demonstrate that the struggle against the capitalists and their allies is the matter of all the Kenyans, be they intellectuals, peasants or workers. Like Sembene and Dos Passos, he uses the pronoun “we” which is identified as a member of the community to refer to the whole Illmorog, as in “he [Munira] became one of us (p.10). Sometimes the “we” is used to express the feelings of the group towards some intimate events happening in Illmorog as, “we were soon intrigued, fascinated, moved by the entwinement and flowering of youthful love and life and we whispered [...] we shall eat our fill and drink Theng’eta at harvest time” (pp.242-3). It also establishes a link between private relationships and group responses, as when the trans-Africa highway is mentioned, “the Trans-Africa road linking Nairobi and Illmorog to the many cities of our continent...” (p.262).

However, Ngugi sometimes turns this “we” into an observer who keeps an eye on the behavior of the characters to see if it conforms to communal norms; sometimes, this “we” represents the authorial narrator and sometimes it expresses the naïve response of the Illmorogians to some events, such as the return of Wanjia to Illmorog :

[...] soon we were all singing and dancing, children chasing one another in the shadows, the old men and women occasionally miming scenes from Illmorog’s great past. It was really a festival before harvest time a few months away. (p.32).

In this passage, the narrator is the communal chorus, not the author, and this is shown through the use of the word “festival” which is in fact not a happy event; it underlies an irony on which Ngugi later comments, this time using the third person plural instead of the first:

But their laughter concealed their new anxieties about a possible failure of the crops and the harvest. When a good crop was expected it was known through a rhythmic balanced alternation of rain and sunshine. A bad crop was preceded by sporadic rains or by a continuous heavy downpour which suddenly gave way to sunshine for the rest of the season. The latter was what happened this year. (p.32).

As already mentioned, the communal voice in both Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu and Petals of Blood refers to all the people who are involved in the struggle against the capitalists, be they educated or illiterate, men or women, and Ngugi and Sembene grant women a leading role in this struggle.

III.1. Women as Active Leaders: Between the Power of Tradition and the Call of Commitment

The young African women of the two novels are more positive than their American counterparts as they are depicted in the trilogy – with the exception of Mary French in the Big Money. As already mentioned in the American part, Eleanor, Janey, Eveline are all learned women who could have been true intellectuals. They had the possibility to help the workers in their struggle against exploitation; they could at least defend universal values, such as Democracy, equality and justice. Instead, Dos Passos reduces them to materialistic women interested only in the accumulation of wealth.

They are the opposite of Penda in Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu and Wanja in Petals of Blood – to cite only these – who no longer wait on the side lines for the new-social order, as structured by men, to emerge. Like their men – sometimes better – they fight for the liberation of their countries from the grips of capitalist powers. They are new female characters in African literature, completely different from those traditional, melodramatic, male dependent heroines. Like Mary French in the Big Money, Penda and Wanja – though not very well educated – see it their duty to fight on the side of

men. In fact, they typify those new emancipated African women who refuse the passivity of their mothers. We find in them Mary's determination, her combative spirit and her self-reliance. These three women demonstrate a firmer resolve and a deeper understanding than their male counterparts. The idea of the march to Dakar comes from Penda. Neither Bakayoko nor Lahbib have thought about it. In her motivation and conviction in executing her plans, Wanja surpasses Karega in his commitment to the struggle, just as Mary French's determination to stand against the capitalists surpasses that of Benny Compton and Don Stevens.

III.2. Revolutionary 'Masculine' Women

When we meet Penda for the first time in the novel, she, like Margo Dowling in the Big Money, is a prostitute who lives in a world of dreams and illusions. But as soon as she comes back to her people, she involves herself gradually in their struggle. At the beginning, her task consisted in distributing rice to women. Then she gets involved in more serious matters, such as the organization of women on the arrival of Bakayoko to end as leader of the women during the journey to Dakar. And it is during this journey that she proves her wisdom and her capacity for endurance. Sembene presents her more like a male character than a female one. He deprives her of her femininity : "De ses deux poings durs comme des poings d'homme, elle martela le visage et le ventre de la femme jusqu'à ce que celle-ci [...] allât s'affaler à moitié inconsciente au pied d'un arbre" (p.308) or, "en tête marchait Penda dans un ceinturon militaire..." (p.296). By making her wear this military belt, Sembene wants to show that she is ready for struggle, a struggle she faces bravely despite the hardships she encounters. He uses beautiful metaphors to show the difficulty of the struggle, such as that in which he mixes the seasons: winter / summer or nature: women / land:

Des averses de soleil frappaient au cœur les herbes
et les petites plantes pompant leur sève [...]. Plus
loin entre des seins de terre brune se profilaient des
toits de chaume dansant dans la buée chaude
(p.297).

This passage implies that women and land are equally engaged in a hard struggle for life, a struggle symbolized by “des centaines de pieds qui faisaient monter une poussière rougêâtre (p.257). The hot sun, its burning rays excite the marchers and push them to react. It is in this unbearable atmosphere that Penda shows her endurance. She acts as a commander. All the marchers obey her. She succeeds in keeping them united till they arrive in Dakar as a single force strong enough to face the military waiting for them.

The march helps Penda recover her dignity, a dignity she lost when she was a prostitute. She is even more self-confident and more responsible. The morale of her story is: we can make mistakes, but if we show at times of intense struggle a will to correct them and if we accept to learn from the experiences of others, we can be forgiven, we can even become heroes. But despite all the efforts she makes, Sembene seems not to want this new society to be made of prostitutes and law breakers. That is why he makes Penda and Samba Ndoulougou who raped the blind defenseless Maimouna die. This punishment reminds us of that in which Dos Passos makes Eveline the prostitute commit suicide and Charley the traitor die in a tragic car accident. However, contrary to Dos Passos, Sembene glorifies their deaths because they behaved bravely, a way of showing consideration for the role they played in the workers' struggle.

III.3. Wanja: a Symbol of Kenya's Prostitution

The journey to Nairobi in Petals of Blood seems to have been inspired from the women's march to Dakar. It is an occasion for the Illmorogians to unite as a single force

and to create a collective will, a strong unity which gives birth to the Theng'etta Breweries workers' union which will in its turn organize a strike in the end of the novel.

Like Penda, Wanja gives herself entirely to the march. Ngugi portrays her as a woman with a double personality: sometimes she appears innocent, and sometimes she turns into a temptress in spite of herself. It is through her that Ngugi establishes unity in the novel as she links all the characters of the novel together. Though a prostitute in a small African village, she remains a lady respected by all for her bravery, resilience, determination and light-heartedness. She is completely different from Margo Dowling, Dos Passos's prostitute in the Big Money who is presented as an immoral parasitic woman who distorts art and even turns it into prostitution. Margo is used by the system, while Wanja fights it. Like Penda, she learns much through the journey. She also becomes aware of her true self. She discovers that she is a wonderful woman ready to offer the best of herself to help her people in that difficult situation, though she is not an intellectual.

Ngugi shows much consideration for her. He knows that she is the product of the disintegration of Independent Kenya. He sees no difference between her prostitution and that of Kenya at large. Unlike Sembene who excludes Penda from the Senegalese society after using her, even 'exploiting' her for the benefit of the proletarian cause, Ngugi sees in her a victim of social conditions. He thus reintegrates her into her community, but only after purifying her through the fire Munira sets in her whorehouse, a fire which becomes in fact a symbol of cleansing in both Petals of Blood and Les bouts de bois de Dieu since even N'Déye Touti burns her books before committing herself to the cause of her people. Wanja emerges from the accident as a clean woman able to bear children and to reconcile with her mother and with society at large. She is ready to continue Karega's revolutionary action.

IV. A Nervy Style: a Mirror of an Agitated Africa

The intellectuals of Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu and petals of Blood find themselves in a revolutionary situation similar to that of the 42nd Parallel in which revolutionary intellectuals and trade unionists are struggling against capitalist exploitation. Like Dos Passos, Ngugi and Sembene use an aesthetics of revolt to express this content.

I have already mentioned that Dos Passos opens the 42nd Parallel with a Newsreel that portrays an atmosphere of war and conflict, mainly in South Africa and in the Philippines⁷⁷. Similarly, on the first page of Petals of Blood, there is a quotation from the New Testament (Book of Revelation) dominated by violence and death, “fighting riders were given authority over the fourth part of earth to kill with sword and with famine and with death” (p.1). Then images of monarchical rulers who fight people revolting against oppression soon follow. They are taken from one of Walt Whitman’s poems. Ngugi names the people responsible for this oppression: hangman, priest, tax gatherer and soldier. The first chapter opens with evidence of this violence and suppression. The police invade Illmorog and arrest some people because a crime has been committed. The reader soon guesses the atmosphere of the novel through the recurrence of such words and phrases as “confrontation”, “hospital”, “strength”, “police station”, “threatening moods”, “guns”, “injuries”... (p.4).

The characters of Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu, for their part are set in an atmosphere of high tenseness. Sembene sets the action in October, the beginning of the hot season. The workers are excited by heat; the lack of water increases their suffering. This heat leads them to become violent, agitated; some even suffer from emotional crises. The writer uses bright colors, like red, that suggest anxiety and danger. Heat

dominates the whole novel; it disturbs all the characters. He also uses blinding images, like “trait lumineux, projecteur celeste, rayon”(p.13).

As the three authors are interested in the history of a collective man, they all use the technique of juxtaposition. We have seen that Dos Passos makes the lives of his characters interact in order to distance himself from the traditional linear novel which does not allow him to cover such a rich period as that of the 1920's nor to use new literary techniques, like Newsreels and Camera Eyes. In Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu, this juxtaposition takes the form of a series of events happening in different places along the whole of the Dakar- Niger line. Sembene's chapters, like Dos Passos's, are not numbered. While the headings of the former are names of characters, the latter bear the name of the town in which the action takes place and the name of the character in that particular scene as sub-heading. The use of the technique of simultaneity / juxtaposition which is in fact a cinematographic one, allows Sembene to offer a multiple vision of the situation in different places. The strike is presented in several episodes that occur simultaneously in Dakar, Thiès and Bamako; the perspectives are diverse. The reader thus feels a certain density. These space shifts prove that the struggle is a collective one; they also back up the solidarity of the workers. Stylistically, it is a means of consolidating the dynamic unity of the novel. All the towns involved in the strike obey to the same decisions, whatever the place these decisions are taken in, “dans toutes les gares où je suis passé on m'a dit, ‘si Thiès tient bon, nous tiendrons’”, says Bakayoko (p.288).

Juxtaposition in time also is an excellent means to move from present to past or vice-versa. The use of flash backs – though sometimes giving the impression of disorder – helps the reader understand the present reality better. When Sembene is telling the story of Diara's trial, he interrupts it on page 131 with another story – that of the

renegades – to take it up again later. The evocation of past events is a means to confirm Diara's betrayal. Similarly, we have a clearer idea on the behavior of Bakayoko through Niakoro's recollections; we also have information about the 1938 strike through the evocation of Sounkaré's past; in his meeting with Dejean, Bakayoko gives a retrospective view on the causes of the strike and its consequences.

The narrative of Petals of Blood also is built on the juxtaposition of events. The novel is indeed divided into four parts which tell the story of Illmorog chronologically: from before the draught, through the journey to the city and the fall of the rain to the capitalist invasion of the village. However, within this linear movement, there is a deep complexity. The chapters are divided into sections which are not always numbered. Chronologically, Ngugi starts telling the story of Illmorog from its end, then in chapter two, he evokes Munira's arrival in Illmorog, twelve years before and so takes us back to the beginning of the story. In Chapter Three, Munira is writing his statement to the police after the local leaders' murder which sets us in the present. The reader is sometimes misled because he is taken backward and forward. But as the writer is conscious of this, he keeps using expressions and sentences which function as reminders, such as, "but all that was twelve years after Godfrey Munira [...] first rode a metal horse through Illmorog" (p.5).

The collective consciousness built up by the use of flashbacks is reinforced by the evocation of the characters' secret past through the technique of confession which allows the reader to know the characters better and to link them one to the other. The dream is also another technique through which Ngugi plunges into the psyche of his characters. Wanjia, for example, keeps dreaming of fire, which expresses her strong desire for purification from all her sins.

As to Ngugi's narrative discontinuities, they are meant to keep the reader's attention and to arouse his curiosity. These interruptions are used at climactic moments: When Wanjia is on the point of being abused by Kimera, Ngugi moves to another scene. We do not know what happens to her till pages later; Nyakinyua starts telling her past life on page 212, but we do not know the end of this story till page 224. Sembene also interrupts the scene of Ramatoulaye in which she dares slaughter her brother's ram to feed the strikers. The event is very important. The reader gets anxious; he wants to know what happens to her after such a dangerous act, but he has to read about 90 pages more to know that she has been taken by the police and been released.

The narrative structure of Petals of Blood is also based on a series of contrasts which resemble those we have encountered in the Big Money and in which Dos Passos opposes the Wright Brothers to Charley Anderson, Margo Dowling to Isadora Duncan and Eléonor to Frank Lloyd Wright to underline the degradation of science and art in the America of the 1920's. The major contrast in Petals of Blood is between ancient Kenya, the land of martyrs and heroes who sacrificed themselves for the liberation of their people from the grips of Colonialism and Neo-Colonial Kenya, a Kenya characterized by a declining culture, suffering poverty, political and social betrayal and economic exploitation by British imperialism. All this is found in Ilmorog (a pseudonym for Limuru, Ngugi's own home town), a village plunged in a literal drought⁷⁸ where men have been turned into blind beggars forgetful of their past glories and exploited by a group of politicians selling Ilmorog's assets to multi-national imperialists for selfish material gain.

As in the trilogy, the conflict in Petals of Blood and Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu, is between two classes: the rich and the poor. Indeed Dos Passos denounces the race for material comforts and pleasures in which the members of the Leisure class in the Big

Money are engaged. But he never contrasts – directly – their luxurious life with the poor living conditions of the workers. What he deplores most is the loss of moral values, the interference of interests in ethical structures. Ngugi and Sembene, on the contrary, stress the material differences between the two classes. And they do this through blunt descriptions which sometimes turn their novels into propaganda. Ngugi juxtaposes the city where the capitalists live to the small villages occupied by the peasants. The city which plays the role of corrupter is distinguished by its tall buildings, its hotels, bars, restaurants, big houses. To this nice world, Ngugi opposes the shanty locations, the mud racks and the wretched life of the exploited. These differences are soon noticed in Illmorog after its invasion by the capitalists.

Sembene for his part gives more details about the difference between these two classes, especially when he confronts the high residence of the Governor to the poor houses of the blacks :

Brutalement lancé à travers le rideau de nuées, tel le trait lumineux d'un projecteur céleste, un rayon vient frapper de plein fouet la résidence du gouverneur dressée comme un pain de sucre blanc au sommet du Koulouba. Au centre de la ceinture de collines, les concessions de torchis, les termitières semblables à des obélisques trapus, l'herbe encore sèche de la chaleur du midi baignait dans l'eau rouge du soleil couchant. (p.13).

In some other descriptions, like that of Thiès, Sembene goes as far in his propaganda as to include derogatory adjectives to justify the workers' revolt. He seems to forget the possibility of stirring the reader's disgust. He says :

Thiès: un immense terrain vague où s'amoncellent tous les résidus de la ville, des pieux, des traverses, des roues de locomotives, des fûts rouillés, des bidons défoncés, des ressorts de sommiers, des plaques de tôle cabossées et [...] des morceaux de vieilles boîtes de conserves, des amas d'ordures [...] des carcasses de chats, de rats, de poulets dont

les charognards se disputent les rares lambeaux...
(p.35).

He also describes the “Vatican”, that heavenly city where the whites live. But this description comes 200 pages after that of Thiès, as if the separation between the black world and the white had to be emphasized even at the level of the text. The poor and dirty Thiès does not deserve to be described on the same pages as the wealthy houses of the “Vatican”.

Sembene’s descriptions in Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu center on the depiction of crowds in movement or on collective meetings. They are mainly used to portray the wretched living conditions of the workers in a realistic way. But sometimes, they are cruel, horrible. The best example is that in which he follows Houdia Mbaye’s movements when she is facing death under the police hoses:

Le jet l’atteignit au visage et, tel le coup de poing d’un géant, lui rejeta la tête en arrière. Elle ouvrit la bouche pour crier, l’eau s’y engouffra. Dans le giclement brutal on n’entendit pas le petit bruit dérisoire des cartilages brisés. Houdia Mbaye battit des bras comme pour s’accrocher à l’air ainsi que font des noyés, puis ses mains s’agrippèrent à sa camisole qu’elles déchirent, elle tomba sur le côté à moitié nue, ses maigres seins semblables à des gourdes oubliées au soleil pendant la saison chaude.
(p.194).

Through these descriptions, Sembene expresses his compassion with the oppression of the masses. His ideological stand is highly felt in them.

The major difference between Dos Passos’s novels and those of Ngugi and Sembene lies in the fact that the former are characterized by a pessimism which dominates the narrative all along the novels; no hope is felt even in their endings. All the characters fail, among them Moorehouse, Savage, Eleanor, Margo ; some even die, like Charley and Eveline. The latter, on the contrary underline the idea that as long as exploitation prevails, the masses will never give up their struggle. The creation of a

socialist Kenya is Ngugi's dream in Petals of Blood. That is why by the end of the novel, the Illmorogians as well as the Nairobi workers are preparing a general strike to put an end to capitalist exploitation. They want to realize Karega's vision of a new Kenya :

Tomorrow it would be the workers and the peasants leading the struggle and seizing power to overturn the system of all its preying blood-thirsty gods and gnomic angels, bringing to an end the reign of the few over the many and the era of drinking blood and feasting on human flesh. Then and only then, would the kingdom of man and woman really begin (p.344).

The novel thus ends with "A Luta Continua" as a tribute to (the late) Amilcar Cabral.

Similarly, Sembene ends Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu with the idea that the movement has acquired such a strong impetus that the capitalists can no longer control it. He says, "mais que pouvaient quelques chéchias devant ce fleuve qui roulait vers la mer" (p.313). The Symbolism included in this sentence is interpreted by Emmanuel Ngara as follows:

The river is a symbol of the particular and the sea of the universal. The Senegal river is characterized by particularity. It belongs to the specific region of West Africa – but the Atlantic Ocean into which it blows is universal. It belongs to no land [...]. The river and the sea [...] stand for the idea that the struggle of the masses of French West Africa is linked with the aims and purposes of universal ⁷⁹insurgence.

Thus, for both Ngugi and Sembene the socialists, the struggle will continue till an egalitarian social order is reached. Just as the lawyer of Petals of Blood says, "one man one Kiosk" (p.301). Sembene entrusts this struggle to Bakayoko's daughter, Adjibidji, another woman and Ngugi to Joseph, a student at Siriana.

V. The African Educated Youth: a Symbol of Hope for the Future

Adjibidji's name has a symbolic implication. In Arabic – a language spoken in Senegal – it means Djibi... dji, which means: Bring... It will come. This equals Bakary's "Aide-toi, je [God] t'aiderai", (p.43). This name carries hope; it alludes to the inevitability of triumph for anybody who devotes himself to a cause. Adjibidji may stand for the woman of tomorrow. Though still young, she is already distinguished by her broad-mindedness and her progressive ideas. As she is a student, she is perhaps the revolutionary intellectual of the future who will lead the workers in their struggle for social justice.

Joseph, on the other hand, less revolutionary and less politically determined, is nevertheless chosen by Ngugi as a future leader of the peasants. What is surprising in this choice is that he is a character nearly unknown to the reader. He does not play any role in the struggle. Ngugi presents him as a child whose growth he does not follow. He makes him reappear as a grown up student planning a strike against Chui in Siriana. He is not very different from the lawyer. He seems to be needed only to deliver a similar blunt ideological message, such as when he says:

Chui ran the school from golf clubs and the board rooms of the various companies of which he was a director, or else from his numerous wheat-fields in the Rift Valley. The junior staff [...] were going to join us. And one or two teachers were sympathetic [...]. But even now we are determined to put to an end to the whole prefect system... and that all our studies should be related to the liberation of our people. (p.339).

Akinye, another unknown character is entrusted with the same mission. The reader encounters her once at the beginning of the novel when Karega is arrested by the police after the murder of the local leaders. She reappears by the end when the workers choose her to transmit a message of hope to Karega who is still in prison. She informs

him about the organization of a march in which “all the workers in Illmorog and the unemployed [...] and the small farmers... and even some small traders”. (p.343) will take part. When she is leaving, she tells him, “you’ll come back” (p.344)⁸⁰.

Although Ngugi and Sembene do not believe in the utility of the intellectual in society, their novels think differently. Some of their “learned” characters in Petals of Blood and Les bouts de bois de Dieu are intellectuals not different from those we encountered in Dos Passos’s The 42nd Parallel, as their functions in the novels are the same. They all conform to one or the other of Gramsci’s revolutionary/ reactionary organic intellectuals, Sartre’s true/ false intellectuals or Aron’s left-wing/ right-wing intellectuals.

Karega’s and Bakayoko’s commitment to the revolutionary struggle incites me to classify them with Dos Passos’s real-life characters (Debs and Lafollette, among others) and fictional characters (Mac and Ben), as they all assume the duties of Gramsci’s revolutionary organic intellectuals or Sartre’s ‘true intellectuals’ who are at the same time political leaders: they help create a counter hegemony; they participate actively in practical life; they raise the consciousness of the masses and sustain their commitment to the cause they are defending. Moreover, they all favor collective aspects of life over individual ones which are of small interest to them, as they believe that the fate of the individual is determined by social forces.

On the other hand, Chui, Mzigo, Kimeria and N’Deri in Petals of Blood and the members of the French National Assembly in Les bouts de Bois de Dieu, just like the fictional Moorehouse, Janey Williams and Eleanor Stoddard and the real-life Carnegie, Minor C Keith and Steinmetz in The 42nd Parallel, are all reactionary organic or false intellectuals who equal Aron’s “right-wing” intellectuals. They serve the dominant social group in society. Through them, the ruling class maintains its hegemony over the

rest of the people. In exchange, it makes of them privileged political and economic functionaries who ally with the unscrupulous businessmen (in the case of Dos Passos's characters) , with the corrupted African local leaders (in the case of Ngugi's characters) and with the colonial capitalists (in the case of Sembene's characters). Be it in the 42nd Parallel, Petals of Blood or in Les bouts de Bois de Dieu, all the intellectuals have chosen their side; they have allied either with the oppressor or with the oppressed , with the exception of the Lawyer and Munira in Petals of Blood who have not been courageous enough to avow their commitment to any of the conflicting sides. Because of their utopian vision of life, they are classified with that category Gramsci calls "traditional Intellectuals", a category which is absent in the 42nd Parallel.

In their next novels, Ngugi and Sembene lose confidence in the intellectual. The few 'true intellectuals' still present in Devil on the Cross and Xala , which they conceived as caricatures of the African national bourgeoisie, are those who struggle for the creation of a society devoid of any conflict between ethics and politics, law and private conscience . They are not different from Dos Passos's intellectuals in the Big Money.

End Notes

- 1- Wa Thiong'o Ngugi, Petals of Blood (London : Heinemann, 1977).
- 2- O. Sembene, Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu (Paris : Le livre contemporain, 1960).
- 3- See chapter one of the African part, p.225.
- 4- The same narrative technique is used in Malraux' l'Espoir.
- 5- Ngugi was arrested in the same year, but the arrest had nothing to do with the publication of Petals of Blood. In his answer to Ali Mazrui's speculation that the arrest was caused by the support Ngugi received from the Soviets when writing Petals of Blood, he says. "This [...] was a deliberate invention. I went to Yalta in the Soviet Union in 1975. I was arrested and detained in 1977. My visit was not secret. Even the Kenya ambassador in Moscow hosted a reception for me [...]. Petals of Blood was started in Evanston, Illinois, USA, the bulk of it was written in Limuru, Kenya, the rest in Yalta. I was in Evanston for a year, and in Yalta for a month, in Limuru for most of my life time", Detained : a writer's Prison Diary (London : Heinemann, 1981), p.XVII.
- 6- R. Aron, L'opium des intellectuels [1955] rpt : (Paris : Gallimard, 1958), p.287.
- 7- See Introduction pp.9-10
- 8- These have already been defined in the introduction.
- 9- These categories of intellectuals have already been defined in the introduction
- 10- Aron Op.Cit., p.408.
- *-See Frederick J. Hoffman , The Modern Novel in America (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company,1951) ,pp. 145-6.
- * See Charles R . Hearn, The American Dream in the Great Depression (London : Greenwood Press, 1977) ,p. 129. For more details on the proletarian novel see : Peter Conn ,The American 1930's: A Literary History (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press ,2009).

11- C F David Cauter, the Illusion : an Essay on Politics, Theatre and the Novel (London : André Deutsch, 1971), p.54.

12- Idem.

13- Ibid., p.56.

14- Brecht believes in the perennity of art. He argues that modern man can have aesthetic feelings towards some works of the antiquity, but we have to admit that the works he admires are not the same as the ones the Greeks used to admire. See Jean Marc Lachaud, B. Brecht, G. Lukàcs, Questions sur le réalisme (Paris : Anthropos, 1981), p.152.

*Idem

15- For Frederic Ewen, the autobiography of the soul, the irrational, the unconscious, the repressed, the world of dreams, all this mingles in the expressionists' dramatic world. Discontinuity, interior monologue, time and space shifts help portray the image of the history of the soul. The symbol unveils interior reality. The character becomes abstract because he is conceived as universal. See Bertolt Brecht : sa vie, son art, son temps. Traduit de l'Américain par Elizabeth Gille [1967] (Paris : Seuil, 1973), p.34.

16- For details, see Ibid., p.186.

17- For details see Cauter Op.Cit., p.91.

18- Ibid., p.88.

19- Ibid., p.63.

20- Ewen defines expressionism as an intellectual revolt against the bourgeoisie which is on the brink of suicide, and the expressionists as prisoners of a non-affranchised epoch within which they affirmed absolute liberty, "une revolte intellectuelle contre la bourgeoisie qui est au bord du suicide, et les expressionnistes comme les prisonniers d'une époque non-affranchie, au sein de laquelle ils affirmaient la liberté absolue", B. Brecht : Sa vie, Son art, Son temps , Op.Cit., p.33.

21- Wa Thiong'o Ngugi, Homecoming : Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics (London : Heinemann, 1972), p.56.

- 22- Frantz Fanon, Les Damnés de la terre Op Cit. , pp.96-7.
- 23- Wa Thiong'o Ngugi, Detained :A Writer's Prison Diary (London: Heinemann, 1981), pp.56-7.
- 24- Kofi Awoonor sees Neo-colonialism as a force that 'still terrorizes and holds to ransom the whole of the African continent' in the Breast of the Earth (London : Anchor Books, 1975), p.32.
- 25- Idem.
- 26- Leonard Barns uses this term in Africa in Eclipse (London : Vistor Gallancz, 1971).
- 27- See David A. Percox, Britain, Kenya and the Cold War. Imperial Defence, Colonial Security and Decolonization (London : L.B. Tauris Academic, 2004),
- 28- For details on this point, see Bruce Berman, Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya : the Dialactic of Domination (London : James Curry, 1990), pp.426-7.
- 29- See Jacqueline Bardolph, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o : L'homme et l'oeuvre (Paris : présence africaine, 1991), p.21.
- 30- Bruce Berman Op.Cit., p.432.
- 31- Ibid., pp.426-7.
- 32- In Les damnés de la terre Op .Cit.,p.101.
- 33- The term 'elite' is commonly used to refer to the existence, in any society, if a group of people who for a reason or another hold high positions and benefit from many privileges. Nadel, a sociologist, defines it as follows, "the existence in many, perhaps most societies of a stratum of the population which for whatever reason can claim a position of superiority and hence a correspondingly measure of influence over the fate of the community". See S.F. Nadel, "The concept of social Elites", International Service Bulletin, II, 3 (1956), 413. The new elite in Africa and most developing countries is made up of "political leaders who, to a large extent, have come forward from the middle class and who have a relatively high degree of education", in Tom Kertiens, the New Elite in Asia and Africa (London : Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), p.12. For details on the

African Elite, see Ekondy Akala, “Les élites africaines et les relations raciales”, présence africaine, 56 (1965), pp.3-66.

34- On this period in Kenya and in Africa in general see: Basil Davidson, The Black Man's Burden : Africa and the Curse of the Nation State (London : James Currey, 1972). See also Colin Legum, Africa since Independence (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

35- See Bardolph Op.Cit., p.23.

36- See Samba Gadjigo Op.Cit., p.119.

37- Ibid., p129.

38- For details, see Idem.

39- Idem.

40- Ibid., p.119.

41- Ibid., p.129.

42- For details on this strike, see Christian Roche, Le Sénégal et la conquête de son indépendance : 1930-1960 : chronique de la vie politique et syndicale de l'empire français à l'indépendance (Paris : Karthala, 2001).

43- Samba Gadjigo Op.Cit., p.131.

44- Cited in Grant Kamenju, “Petals of Blood as a Mirror of the African Revolution”, in Georg M. Gugelburger (ed) ; Marxism and African Literature (London : James Curry L.T.D., 1985), p.133.

45- Detained Op.Cit., pp.102-3.

46- In this context John Chileshe says, “it is the contradictions inherent in authorial ideology and his objective position in the Kenyan situation that necessitate the lawyer's role in the novel. The lawyer is in a similar position, in the Kenyan context, to Ngugi vis-à-vis a worker character like Karega”, “Petals of Blood : Ideology and Imaginative Expression”, Journal of Commonwealth Literature XV, 1 (1980), p.135.

47- Simon Gikandi, Reading the African Novel (London: James Curry, 1987), p.141.

48- By the time Dos Passos wrote the trilogy, this kind of intellectual has disappeared from his novels. True or false, traditional or organic, his intellectuals have sufficiently grown up to be able to choose their side politically and ideologically.

49- David Cook and Michael Okenimkpe, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o : an Exploration of his Writings (London : Heinemann, 1983), p.109.

50- Joll, Op.Cit., p.94.

51- Ibid., p.101.

52- For details on N'Dèye see : Ortova Jarmila, "Les femmes dans l'oeuvre littéraire d'Ousmane Sembene", Présence Africaine 71 (1969), pp.69-77.

* I will deal with this point in detail in the following chapter.

53- See p.125 of the second chapter of the American part.

54- Idem.

55- Ibid., pp.105-8.

56- On this theme see Ngugi's short story, « A Mercedes Funeral » in Secret lives (London : Heinemann, 1975), pp.113-137.

57- See Joll Op.Cit., pp.91-2.

58- Despite the presence of religious characters such as Mabigué, the Sérigne or even the wise man Fa Keita, religion in Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu is marginalized in contrast to Le Mandat where it is so much a feature of the local color. We see the characters in all their activities but never at prayer. The religious characters are meant only to demonstrate that even religion is affected by the conflict of classes. On the theme of religion in Sembene's novels, see Firrine Ni Chreachain, "Islam in the Works of Sembene Ousmane", African Literature Association Conference (Dakar : March 20-23, 1989).

59- See page 72 of the first chapter of the American part.

60- Ngugi mentions such a case in Detained Op.Cit., p.22.

61- Aron says that, “Les theoriciciens du mouvement ouvrier [ont] conçu [...] trois méthodes que l’on pourrait en simplifiant appeler celle de la révolution, celle de la réforme, celle du syndicalisme révolutionnaire... La dernière à bien des égards la plus attirante, supposait la révolution sur le lieu du travail, par les ouvriers eux-mêmes, conscients et fiers de leur classe, refusant de se soumettre au paternalisme des capitalistes et de se confondre avec la petite bourgeoisie ”. See R.Aron, L’opium des Intellectuels (Paris : Colmann Lévy, 1955), p.98.

62- See the third chapter of the American part, p.203.

63- Sembene holds the same opinion, He says, “[...] un syndicat pour moi, ce sont les ouvriers d’une même corporation luttant pour améliorer leur situation”. Cit in Gadjigo Op.Cit., p.176.

64- The multiple vision adopted by Sembene allows him to present Bakayoko in his entirety. This technique is generally used by the cubists.

65- See pages 210- 211 of the third chapter of the American part.

* The same symbolism of the seasons dominates the narrative of Three Soldiers , as already shown. See the first chapter of the American part , pp.66-67.

66- See page 110 of the second chapter of the American part.

67- See page 114 of the second chapter of the American part

68- See page 195 of the third chapter of the American part.

69- Emile Zola, Germinal [1885] rpt; (France : Garnier, 1979), p.235.

70- Reading the African Novel Op.Cit., p.146.

71- The 42nd Parallel Op.Cit., p.66.

72- Lucien Goldmann, Le Dieu Caché (Paris : Gallimard, 1955), p.25.

73- “Les personnages sont individualisé grâce a leur prise de position vivante personnelle et determinante pour leur destin vis-à-vis des problèmes abstraits ”, cited in Lachaud’s B. Brecht, G. Lukàcs : Questions sur le réalisme Op.Cit., p.12.

74- The Big Money Op.Cit., pp.1105-6.

75- Ibid., p.1105.

76- Idem.

77- See pages 133-4 of the second chapter of the American part.

78- Christine Pagnouille compares Illmorog to “a waste land, a place of starvation”, in “Ngugi Wa Thiong’o’s Journey of the magi: part 2 of Petals of Blood”, Research in African Literatures 16, 2 (1985), p.266.

79- Emmanuel Ngara, Art and Ideology in the African Novel (London : Heinemann, 1985), p.58.

80- Akinye’s scene equates what Ngugi says about his daughter’s photograph (which he received when he was in prison): deep inside me I know that Njooki (his daughter born when he was in jail) was a message from the world, a message of hope. A message that somewhere outside these grey walls of death were people waiting for me, thinking about me, perhaps even fighting with whatever weapons for my release”, Detained Op.Cit., p.12.

Chapter Three

The Intellectual and the

African Bourgeoisie:

towards a Class Struggle.

Devil on the Cross and Xala

If Dos Passos's the Big Money is a satire of the post-war leisure class, Devil on the Cross¹ and Xala² in their turn are satirical critiques of neo-colonial Kenya and Senegal. They are scathing condemnations of the African neo-colonial leaders who give themselves entirely to the pursuit of imperial - like life styles while their people are living and dying in poverty. Through these two novels, Ngugi and Sembene invite the proletariat, including the exploited oppressed people and the masses of peasants, to act and liberate themselves from the grip of that regime of kleptocrats.

Xala is the first novel in which Sembene addresses directly the issue of that national bourgeoisie³ which succeeds to the colonialists in the control of the nation's economy. The members of the Import-Export Trading Company and their French allies constitute this class in Xala. El Hadji Abdelkader Bey, the protagonist, is a member of this business-men's group. The novel opens with the celebration of two events in his life: his election as head of the Local Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a task attributed for the first time to an African, and his third wedding ceremony, a ceremony which is in fact the cause of his rapid decline from affluence to total humiliation and ruin because he is struck by "Xala"⁴ (or sexual impotence). This 'xala' affects every aspect of his life: as he is preoccupied with curing himself, he neglects his work and spends huge amounts of money on marabouts and charlatans, a fact which provokes his business bankruptcy. Empoverished and accused of embezzlement, he is sent out of the Chamber of Commerce while most of his luxurious possessions are confiscated. Finally, he discovers that his impotence has been caused by a beggar whose land he had stolen years ago. Ironically, his 'xala' can be cured only if he accepts to be humiliated by the Dakar beggars.

Devil on the Cross, for its part, is built on Wariing'a's story. This young secretary, who has always dreamt of a career as an engineer, has fallen on hard times.

After being sexually abused by her wealthy boss, her promising academic career - the only key to repay the corrupt society- is ruined .She thus prepares a journey to her family home in Illmorog. Once in the bus, she receives a mysterious card from a students' leader, advertising a Devil's feast and competition to select the seven best thieves and robbers. This feast is to be held the next day, in the very town she is heading for. Along the way, she meets several other people: Gaturia, a radical music student attempting to compose an oration on Kenya's history, Wangari , a dispossessed mother and Muturi, a leader of the workers' revolutionary movement. And the bulk of the novel concerns them and their interactions with the thieves and robbers who turn out to be local businessmen competing to steal the most from the people and to enter the good graces of foreign corporations. Two years after this celebration of corruption, Wariing's indeed succeeds in becoming an engineer/intellectual, and with the help of Muturi, and Wangari , she organizes a revolt against those people Ngugi calls 'capitalist thieves', members of the national bourgeoisie.

These people, be they in Devil on the Cross or in Xala, are typical products of the post-independence period in Africa, a period known for corruption, material opulence and loss of moral values. In fact, this class shares many characteristics with that American 'Leisure Class' I dealt with in the Big Money, though the origins and the contexts are different, as it will be demonstrated later.

In this study of the intellectual, the African bourgeois who interest me in this chapter are those western educated people who assume the leadership of their countries after independence and enjoy high positions through which they exploit the masses and grab the wealth of the nation. In Devil on the Cross, they are typified by the local businessmen and in Xala, they are represented by import-export tycoons. As I have done in the Big money, I will concentrate on the danger this class, an influential one,

represents for the economy, culture and sovereignty of fictional Kenya and Senegal respectively, due to its mercenary role, its exploitative capacity and its contempt for national culture.

Politics and didacticism dominate the novels under study. Ngugi and Sembene act as teachers of the people, advocates of social change, and trampeteers of a new world. In their portrayal of exploitation and greed, they are like Brecht who “points out where the truth is, what can be done to disalienate the oppressed”⁵. Their writings report reality as it is; they function as “Galileo’s telescope: to look through and speak of facts as what they are in the hope of facilitating directly needed change”⁶.

Devil on the Cross and Xala deal with that struggle between the oppressors and the oppressed, with the oppressed in need of intellectuals to guide them. The best kind of intellectual for such a case would be that defined by Michel Foucault as the one “supposed to be the clear individual figure of a universality of which the proletariat is the obscure collective form”⁷. This intellectual is supposed to propagate truth even if through clandestine means – as Brecht’s Galileo does; to obstruct the plundering spirit of the national bourgeoisie; to put an end to corruption in all its forms; to prevent his country from economic regression and to pre-empt the emergence of an anti-democratic regime. My aim is to look for this kind of intellectual in the two novels under study, to see how he mediates between the emergent African bourgeoisie and the African masses and if he fulfils the expectations of Foucault’s intellectual, that is, if he struggles against power, a struggle aimed at “revealing and undermining power where it is most invisible and insidious”^{8*}.

Ngugi wrote Devil on the Cross in 1978 while he was in detention. It was during that period that he realized that content was the overdetermining category in the shaping of a literary work⁸; hence his newly articulated revolutionary commitment. It should be

mentioned that this novel was originally written in Kikuyu as it was primarily designed for a Kikuyu peasant audience. Ngugi thought it the best way to be closer to the people who were fighting poverty, social exclusion and oppression. He thus created a novelistic form that would first of all be accessible to that audience he wanted to address.

Devil on the Cross is not as complex as the previous novels. Some critics see it as a woeful simplistic and self-indulgent book; others consider it as a mere allegorical Marxist fantasy novel⁹. The narrative structure is very close to Kikuyu oral traditions*, its speeches being Kikuyu oral discourses, biblical narratives and contemporary urban stories. Ngugi excludes all the Western techniques he used before*. I personally deplore the superficiality of characters. They are no longer those full blooded protagonists of the River Between and Weep not, Child, nor those typical characters of A Grain of Wheat and Petals of Blood. They are reduced to mere medieval “humors” through Ngugi’s allegorical discourse. They are no different from William Langland’s characters in Piers the Ploughman (as I shall demonstrate later).

The Devil’s feast which Ngugi portrays in Devil on the Cross is horrible, even terrifying. The venue, a cave, is a hell, a world of disembodied voices and social cannibalization. The participants in the competition of thieves and robbers resemble predatory animals. To free the reader from any fear or anxiety and avoid shocking him, the writer mixes this horror with laughter which is an efficient way to relieve somehow tension and unease. In fact, in many passages of the novel, the comic and the terrifying are associated with the extravagant, the exaggerated and the abnormal. Ngugi’s intention is to make an impression on the peasants and workers, to draw their attention to the decay of the social system, to jolt them into consciousness.

In his book, The Grotesque, Philip Thomson says that

The shock-effect of the grotesque may [...] be used to bewilder and disorient, to bring the reader up short, jolt him out of accustomed ways of perceiving the world and confront him with a radically different, disturbing perspective¹⁰.

He also thinks that the grotesque produces two opposing effects: a release and an alienation effect¹¹. He means that when we see something comic, we laugh at it, but this laughter is cut short by the horrifying. Sometimes however, the feeling of disgust is undercut by the comic aspect of the grotesque. The grotesque then aims at denouncing the horrifying and disgusting aspect of existence, but it makes this aspect less harmful by the introduction of the comic. And this is exactly how Ngugi proceeds in his novel, as it will be demonstrated.

Mikhail Bakhtin goes deep in his analysis of the grotesque. In Rabelais and his World, he traces the difference between the grotesque of the Middle Ages and that of the pre-Romantic and Romantic periods¹². For him, the Medieval Grotesque is experienced during carnivals which are temporary suspensions of set hierarchies, "a licensed misrule, a celebration of exuberant life force, the victory of the physical, of nature, over human-made authorities"¹³.

Carnavalesque events provide a temporary release from restraints. They combine the celebration of exuberant irrepressive life forces and the questioning or undermining of authority. They question fixed positions – in power as well as in life – where human beings act different roles throughout their lives. They have an ambivalent nature: they are simultaneously an occasion for laughter and joy and a negation of what is turned upside down¹⁴. They are dominated by laughter which is in fact the laughter of the people at large. The abusive language is regarded as something positive. Everything that is out of measure in the body enjoys popularity. The Grotesque images of the body have a special meaning, as Bakhtin explains:

One of the fundamental tendencies of the grotesque image of the body is to show two bodies in one; the one giving birth and dying, the other conceived, generated and born. This is the pregnant and begetting body, or at least a body ready for conception and fertilization, the stress being led on the [...] genital organs. From one body a new body always emerges in some form or other¹⁵.

The Grotesque was revived during the pre-Romantic and Romantic period but its meaning changed completely. Bakhtin says that “it became the expression of a subjective individualistic world out look very different from the carnival folk concept of previous ages (although still containing some carnival elements)”¹⁶. It turned into mere irony, sarcasm and cold humor. It was reduced into a means of instilling fear in the reader. While carnival was a festival set in Spring, a season known with vivid colors, sunrise and light, the Romantic grotesque was nocturnal. It was dominated by images of the Devil which were terrifying. And it is on this negative aspect of the Grotesque that Ngugi bases his novel, as it will be demonstrated.

While studying the intellectual, I will focus on the ideologies informing the novels and the manner in which they are expressed. I will pay attention to the stylistic devices Ngugi and Sembene resort to to give an immanent meaning to their novels. This chapter will thus be divided into two sections.

The national bourgeoisies of Ngugi’s “Devil’s feast” and El Hadji’s wedding ceremony will constitute the core of the first section. The majority of these bourgeois people can be considered as Sartre’s ‘false intellectuals’: they are educated but they exploit their knowledge for their own purposes instead of furthering those of the nation. I will compare them to Dos Passos’s members of the ‘Leisure class’ in the Big Money, mainly in their blind race for money and social climbing. The ancient American middle class, a result of industrialization, was indeed known for affluence, but leisure was a sin

for it. It was set on strong moral principles which guided its members. It was a genuine class distinguished for its cultural and religious knowledge. It played a positive role in its society. However, after WWI, it lost its originality since its members became interested only in social status, profit-making and consumerism. And it is this negative aspect that it shares with the African national bourgeoisie.

The latter on the contrary, is not authentic. It is a mere product of colonialism. Its members keep imitating blindly the colonialists and deny their own culture. At no time do these people use the technical knowledge they have acquired in colonial universities for the benefit of their nation. They are a mere caste of profiteers. As the two writers resort to the grotesque and symbolism to ridicule this class, particular attention will be paid to these stylistic devices.

As to the second section, it will center mainly on the attitude of Ngugi's and Sembene's anti-imperialist / revolutionary intellectuals towards the national bourgeoisie and on the role they play in the determination of the future direction of their societies. In this context, it is worth bearing in mind Juliet Okonkwo's statement, "the analytical mind of the intellectual is very much required in the restructuring of societies and in the founding of new roads to progress"¹⁷.

Attention will also be paid to the relationship between these intellectuals and the masses. I would like to know whether they are still considered as 'saviors' whom the peasants and workers wait for to come and deliver from the grips of capitalism. I will also underline Ngugi's and Sembene's disillusionment, their loss of faith in the intellectual and, as a result, their return to the people to resolve the crisis of the African society.

I. The African 'Leisure' Class

Ngugi's and Sembene's depiction of the African national Bourgeoisie forcefully reminds us of Dos Passos's leisure class. The differences between these two classes have already been mentioned; as to the similarities, they are many. The three writers present these classes as wasteful. They criticize violently their conspicuous consumption, their desire to display economic power and to maintain their social status. These people, be they American or African, are associated with waste, corruption and futility. They obstruct the economic development of their countries and sacrifice their talents and their moral principles for money and material comfort.

The three writers see it their duty to denounce – each in his own way – these parasites who have created a class - conflict in their societies, a conflict between the rich and the poor, the rich having become rich through the exploitation of the poor.

The members of the national bourgeoisie in Devil on the Cross are presented as people who strive to resemble the foreign bourgeoisie which they imitate blindly. Instead of being attracted to its inventive and inquisitive spirit, they are rather tempted by its quest for material possession, even if this entails the loss of the moral self. Wealth becomes a means of attaining social status. So, they spend large amounts of money on luxury goods – cars, villas, clothes – to display their economic power publicly. Only predatory people have access to this class.

Dishonesty, the denial of one's culture and history are further characteristics of this bourgeoisie. Indeed the bourgeois of Devil on the Cross deny their customs and traditions; they adopt a Western way of life and detach themselves completely from their people.

The thieves in the cave are all businessmen. Like the businessmen of the Big Money, they direct the economy of the country. They are protected by the people in power who also belong to this class and who in their turn are protected by the Western bourgeoisies because they are their agents. Ngugi says in this context:

These mimic men have not even the blood and spirit to play their role with conviction. They are a kind of artificial limb where their European counterparts are real biological extensions of the mother capitalist class¹⁸.

Sembene's national bourgeoisie in Xala is no different. Its role is restricted to the protection of the French interests in post-independent Senegal. It is a class which has never succeeded to improve the living conditions of the masses. Most of its members are products of prestigious French business schools. The businessmen's deputy-manager has studied banking; nevertheless, his position is not important, the head office of the bank being in Paris. The député elected to safeguard the interests of the people becomes a protector of the imperialists' stakes in Africa.

Though the country is independent, all its public institutions are run by French executives. The African clerks obey orders from Paris. They are rewarded according to their faithfulness to the mother country. Indeed, the chamber of commerce is for the first time headed by an African, but as soon as El Hadji starts having financial problems, he is dismissed. The Senegalese seem to be incapable of independence from the French.

El Hadji's two wives symbolize this duality between Africa and France. Awa, the first wife is a typical African woman endowed with dignity and sincerity. She accepts her traditional subservient role without undue concern for money and success. The second wife, on the contrary, is obsessed by money as well as by Western culture. She addresses her husband and children in French, dresses Western style and likes to

appear sexy. Sembene seems to have conceived her as a symbolic figure of neo-colonial influence.

It is in parties that Sembene and Ngugi, just like Dos Passos, make the bourgeois display their wealth. These parties are in fact a way of showing one's belonging to the leisure / bourgeois class. Dos Passos says that in Eveline's party, Mary French and her friend Ada Cohn "[...] were swallowed up in a jam of well-dressed people talking and making faces and tossing their heads over cocktail glasses"¹⁹. Likewise, in El Hadji's wedding ceremony, the rich parade with their clothes²⁰ and jewels. They consume the best food and drinks. They conform to Veblen's description of the American leisure class consumption²¹. This atmosphere of wealth is also felt in the reception the rich Old Man holds on the occasion of Gatuiria's return from abroad and his engagement to Wariing'a in Devil on the Cross, "the men had on dark suits, white frielled shirts and bow ties. The women wore very expensive clothes of different colors. But they all wore hats and white gloves". (p.247)

These bourgeois Africans of Xala and Devil on the Cross are not real businessmen. They are not producers of wealth. Like Moorehouse and Dick Savage in the Big Money, they are only intermediaries between the producers and the consumers. They owe their wealth to acting as "cover ups" for neo-colonialist interests. Some of them even mimic the methods of the colonizers. The testimony of the thief Gitutu Wa Gataangurù in which he explains how he has become rich reveals that –to say the least– the ethos of colonial rule is still present in the bourgeois class of post-independence Kenya:

Learn from the whites, and you'll never go wrong.(...)
I'll talk frankly. The Whiteman came to this country holding
the bible in his left hand and a gun in his right. He stole the people's
fertile lands. He stole the people's cattle and goats under the

cover of fines and taxes. He robbed people of the labour of their hands (p.102).

He then boasts about how he accumulated money after Uhuru buying the lands the Mau Mau had died for (p.103). Gitutu's testimony reveals that the ethos of colonial rule is still present in the bourgeois class of post-independence Kenya.

If the thieves of Devil on the Cross have accumulated their wealth through the exploitation of the masses, El Hadji's villas and cars come from the land he has once appropriated from a peasant (a member of his family) who has consequently become a beggar²². And the fate of this beggar symbolises the dispossession of the common peasants at the hands of the new elite. Both Ngugi and Sembene scorn the latter, and both resort to the grotesque to ridicule it and to attract the reader's attention to its awfulness.

In one of the passages of Devil on the Cross, Ngugi reenacts the crucifixion of Jesus in the most grotesque and blasphemous way:

She [Wariinga] saw first the darkness, carved open at one side to reveal a cross which hung in the air. Then she saw a crowd of people dressed in rags, walking in the light, propelling the Devil towards the Cross. The Devil was clad in a silk suit, and he carried a walking stick shaped like a folded umbrella. On his head there were seven horns, seven trumpets for sounding infernal hymns of praise and glory. The Devil had two mouths, one on his forehead and the other on the back of his head. His belly sagged, as if it were about to give birth to all the evils of the world. His skin was red, like that of a pig. Near the cross he began to tremble and turned his eyes towards the darkness... (p.15).

The crucifixion of Jesus was interpreted by the Jews and the Christians in two opposing ways. First, the Jewish leaders who enjoyed considerable local autonomy under Roman

rule felt threatened by the attention Jesus was receiving because of the miracles he performed and his claims to be the Messiah. Any popular insurrection was a menace to their rule. But Jesus refused to lead such an insurrection, thus the people turned against him and crucified him. Second, Jesus believed that the will of his father for the “kingdom come” could be realized only through his death, so he went to Jerusalem to die in obedience to that will.

Ngugi perverts the Christ’s crucifixion. In fact, it is no longer the Christ who is crucified in the novel, but the devil. And the way this crucifixion is presented can be interpreted in two different ways: on the one hand, the crowd of the “people dressed in rags” the writer refers to in the passage may symbolize the masses who induce the devil to crucify himself. In this case, Ngugi seems to say that only workers can stop the devil, that is, the national bourgeoisie, from stealing the wealth of the country. On the other hand, the devil may have ironically chosen to crucify himself to make the world safe for the Kenyan affluent businessmen.

In his description of the thieves in the cave, Ngugi resorts again to the grotesque. The reader laughs at the comic manner Ndaaya Wa Kahuria – the first competitor – steals chicken. But when the Master of Ceremonies intervenes: “[...] here in this cave, we are interested only in people who steal because their bellies are full” (p.95), the laughter is cut short; it is turned into mere nervous grimacing. The manner Ndaaya lures the chickens is indeed comic, but theft is no laughing matter, especially when done by a “full belly”.

The way Gitutu Wa Gataangurû is portrayed arouses horror and disdain:

Gitutu had a belly that protruded so far that it would have touched the ground had it not been supported by the braces that held up his trousers. It seemed as if his belly had absorbed all his

limbs and all the other organs of his body. Gitutu had no neck at least, his neck was not visible. His arms and legs were short stumps. His head shrunk to the size of a fist (p.99).

What is disgusting in this description is the proportions the belly has taken compared to the rest of the body. In folk culture, a big belly used to symbolize fertilization, birth, regeneration. But Ngugi makes it stand for the thieves' awful desire for wealth.

Satire is another instrument of social correction. Ngugi uses it to shame the thieves and ridicule them²³. Although it is usually meant to be funny, its greater purpose is rather social criticism; the writer unveils the follies, vices, abuses and shortcomings of the African bourgeois. In a purely satirical mood, he makes Kihahu Wa Gatheeca, another thief, denounce his vices:

[...] I'm very grateful to the masses of the Kenyan people. For their blindness, their ignorance, their inability to demand their rights are what enable us, the clan of man eaters, to feed on their sweat without their asking us too many awkward questions (pp.116-7).

The reader is shocked by such a statement, but he does not remain indifferent. He soon realizes that these thieves who are attacking one another, insulting and denouncing one another are responsible for their misery.

Later, he similarly ridicules the representatives of the colonial powers, thus indirectly drawing a link with the local robbers. He reduces them into mere comic caricatures when he portrays them wearing suits made out of the paper-money of their respective countries and confessing the unlawful methods they use to manipulate the Kenyan economy. Ngugi's aim here is to unleash the peasants' fury, to prompt them to act.

The thieves' confessions seem to be a condition for the purification of Kenya, before its regeneration under a clean social system. The apocalyptic atmosphere they create reminds us of William Langland's allegory / social satire, Piers the Ploughman, that long medieval poem in which Piers dreams of Reason preaching in the plain to the whole Realm and rousing all the people to confess their sins. Each of the Seven Deadly Sins (pride, Lechery, Envy, Anger, Avarice, Gluttony and Sloth) makes a confession to Repentance, who then prays to Christ to forgive them all. The people afterwards set out as pilgrims in search of Truth, but they are still ignorant and soon lose their way. Then Piers the Ploughman suddenly speaks up from among the crowd and claims that he is the servant of Truth and can direct them to his mansion with his common sense and clean conscience. He is identified with Christ, trying to get men to work toward their own material relief from the current abuses of worldly power²⁴.

The confessions of Langland's characters are strikingly similar to those of Ngugi's thieves. Even their physical descriptions are the same. Avarice, for example, is presented in the following way:

And then came covetousness: no words can describe him, he looked so hungry and hollow, such a crafty old codger! He had beetling brows and thick, puffy lips, and his eyes were as bleary as a blind old hag's. His baggy cheeks sagged down below his chin, flapping about like a leather wallet, and trembling with old age. His beard was all bespattered with grease, like a serf's with bacon fat. He wore a hood on his head with a lousy cap on top and a dirty brown smock...²⁵.

Then he makes his confession:

[...] I learnt to lie in a small way to begin with, and my first lesson was in giving false weights. Then my master would send me to the fairs at Weyhill and Winchester with all kinds of wares; and God knows they would still be unsold to this

day, but for the grace of guile which crept among them [...]. Then I was shown how to stretch the selvedge and made the cloth look longer. My chief lesson was with the best, stripped stiff – how to pierce it with pack-needles and join the strips together and lay them in a press, till ten or eleven yards were stretched into thirteen...²⁶.

Envy's description in its turn is as shocking as that of Avarice:

He was as pale as ashes and shook like a man with the palsy. His clothes were so coarse and shabby, I can scarcely describe them [...]. His tongue was like an adder's: every word he spoke was backbiting and detraction. He made his living by slander and bearing false witness [...], he displayed his manners by flinging dirt at everyone²⁷.

Then Envy confesses:

I would be shriven, if only I dared [...] but I am far too ashamed [...]. There's one near neighbor of mine whom I've almost ruined. I've so slandered him to the gentry that he's lost all his money, and my lies have turned even his friends against him. It makes my blood bail to see him in luck, or getting credit for anything. I cause such strife among folk with my evil talk, that It sometimes ends in loss of life or limb...²⁸.

Whether Ngugi has read Langland or not remains to be proved; nevertheless the similarities of confessions are striking. Moreover, as Medieval learning was essentially orally transmitted, I wonder whether such a poem drew Ngugi's attention to the importance of oral learning, especially if we take into account the fact that Devil on the Cross was written in Kikuyu (as it has already been mentioned) before the writer himself translated it into English.

Ngugi declares openly that the content of this novel is "the Kenyan people's struggle against the neo-colonial form and stage of imperialism"²⁹. He addresses the

masses directly. His aim is to stir their consciousness and to incite them to revolt collectively against the present social system. That is why the novel is loaded with propaganda, and the writer himself frequently turns into a teacher. Thus, he compares the Harambee of the homeguards to that of the Mau Mau through the mouth of Muturi, a trade unionist:

... the Harambee of the homeguards and Imperialists was an organization designed to encourage bestiality :a man would throw children and the disabled, into the fire as he rushed for the debris and leftovers of the imperialists. The Mau Mau's Harambee was an organization designed to spread humanitarianism, for its members used to offer their own lives in defence of children and the disabled. The homeguards' organization aimed to sell our country to foreigners; the Mau Mau's aim was to protect our country... (p.39).

He later explains that neo-colonialism is only a continuation of the politics of colonialism and that Africans used to facilitate this continuation (p.84). In such cases, the novel becomes too didactic; it loses its literary value, as in,

You, lord and master, member of the white race, I have discovered your tricks. I have also discovered your real name. Imperialist, that is your real name, and you are a cruel master; why? Because you reap where you have never sown. You grab things over which you have never shed any sweat (pp.84-5).

This is mere blustering. It has no relation with literature. The reader gets annoyed because he does not appreciate what he is reading. When Ngugi says "hunger multiplied by thirst brings about mass famine, and mass famine is the source of the wealth of a cunning grabber..." (p.105), we have the impression that he is addressing illiterate persons. But this is perhaps done on purpose: his concern for having his work

accessible to those who constitute the primary subject of his novel, the peasants, incites him to simplify his style so as to make his message understood.

The grotesque mode and the propagandist purpose dominate Sembene's Xala too. Ngugi's 'devil's feast' is replaced by another great feast organized on the occasion of El Hadji's third marriage. Again, Sembene insists on the materialist and conspicuous aspect of the national bourgeoisie. The guests are received according to their social rank. They are depicted eating, drinking and dancing. The women are exhibiting their Western – style clothes and their jewels. The business men use an obscene language (see p.26). Unfortunately, this atmosphere of joy is soon replaced by sadness with El Hadji being cursed by sterility, a sterility which in fact stands as a symbol for the sterility of the bourgeois opportunists who are destroying the promises nationalist leaders made to the people before independence.

The first grotesque scene of the novel is that in which El Hadji confronts his fellow businessmen after losing his virility, his social standing and his material assets. He tells them, "What are we? Mere agents, less than petty traders! We merely redistribute. Redistribute the remains the big men deign to leave us. Are we business men? I say no! Just clod hoppers" (p.91). One of the businessmen answers him: "I protest, Mr President [...]. He is insulting us. You eat from the same dung heap as we do" (p.91). This confrontation is no different from that of the thieves of Devil on the Cross. It is also meant to mock and ridicule those African bourgeois enslaved by neo-colonialism.

Like Dos Passos who punishes all the characters who side with the oppressors, Sembene submits El Hadji, the representative of the local bourgeoisie, to the harshest of punishments. He makes the beggars assault his house to spit on him. The scene is

comic, absurd and horrible at the same time. The reader cannot prevent himself from having a feeling of disgust, revulsion, even abhorrence:

A legless cripple, his palms and knees covered with black soil from the garden, printed a black trail on the floor, like a giant snail [...]. Another with a maggoty face and a hole where his nose had been, his deformed scarred body visible through his rags, grabbed a white shirt and putting it on admired himself in a mirror, with laughter at the reflexion of his own antics. A woman with twins [...] rested a foot with a cloven heel and stunted toes. A hunchback walked warily round the tailor's dummy. He undressed it, placing the crown on his flat, rachitic head..." (p.108).

This scene reminds us of that Seventeenth Century French "cour des miracles", those dirty slum districts of Paris where beggars, bandits and unemployed migrants from rural areas concealed their pretended infirmities. These beggars faked injuries and diseases to receive alms. By the end of the day, they went back to their slums (la cour des miracles) to drop their characters*.

Sembene's beggars and their disgusting filth stand probably for the peasants and workers and their living conditions. He confirms this when he says, "[...] Quand je montre dans mon film des mendiants (qui symbolisent l'ensemble des masses populaires accablées) cracher sur un représentant de la bourgeoisie compradore, je rends hommage à travers eux à tous les opprimés, travailleurs des villes et paysans..."³⁰. Yet, those oppressed people do not play an active role in the novel. They are passive; they never comment on their situation. It is rather the bourgeois class that makes the story lively. It is only by the end of the novel that their presence is really felt, when they are at last given the right to react, to spit on El Hadji.

Sembene's punishment of El Hadji is in fact a punishment of all the members of the national bourgeoisie for their sins. But after this punishment, he purifies them. If

Ngugi purifies Wanjia – in Petals of Blood – through fire, Sembene opts for a two-dimensioned method: on the one hand, the spitting is a way to humiliate El Hadji and all the members of his class; on the other, it is a chance for the oppressed to take their revenge. But most importantly, it is a means of purification. El Hadji has to taste humiliation to be cured from humiliating others. The act of spitting brings no change in the situation of the beggars; there is no redress for the wrongs done to them. It is rather a means of reintegrating El Hadji into his culture and society after Sembene has stripped him from his wealth and deprived him of the two women he married after Awa³¹ (the equivalent of Eve, the first woman on earth), his first wife. Significantly, in the house of Awa, who in fact represents traditional Africa, El Hadji regains his manhood. His return to her house symbolizes the exile's complete return to his cultural womb.

A long precession of beggars goes to El Hadji's house. They tell him that they and only they can cure his impotence by a folk method of purgation if he accepts to submit himself to being spat on. They order him to strip himself naked before his wife and daughter so that each beggar would spit three times on him. El Hadji submits himself to the blind man's demand. He succumbs to those he once called "human rubbish". He receives nearly the same punishment as Ngugi's thieves (p.207).

The difference between Sembene and Ngugi however is that while Ngugi stereotypes his characters by presenting the exploiters as ridiculously evil and the exploited as simply heroic, Sembene like Dos Passos (as already mentioned), does not hate his characters, be they evil or good. He shows empathy for the beggars as well as for El Hadji. By the end of the novel, we even think that he has forgiven El Hadji because he seems to make a difference between human nature and the corrupting influence of imposed systems and cultures on Africa. After all, El Hadji is only a victim of Neo-Colonialism.

The titles of both novels are symbolic. Xala which means temporary sexual impotence symbolizes the temporary political impotence of the African national bourgeoisie³². There is hope in the adjective 'temporary': the rule of this class will one day come to an end. The devil in Devil on the Cross, for its part, stands as a metaphor for the evil of the bourgeois society. Thus the workers and peasants crucify him. When Ngugi puts the devil on the cross, his intention is not to invite people to worship Satan instead of Jesus or to attack the Christian religion; he rather means that it is the Devil that the capitalists really worship. The symbolism of the two novels is simplistic, like their style, a style which is much less complex than that of The Big Money, because the major preoccupation of the two writers is to make their message clear to the masses and to prove to the reader that they have now embraced fully the cause of the proletariat. Both express their strong belief in the ability of the masses to lead their struggle against the new local leaders. This explains the intellectuals' lack of importance in both novels.

II. The Distrust of Intellectuals: a Return to the Common People.

By the time Ngugi and Sembene write Devil on the Cross and Xala, they lose confidence in the Western educated intellectual. Though intellectuals are still present in both novels, they are definitely relegated to the background. The masses no longer need them. They have reached such a degree of awareness that they can now claim for a fairer situation alone, without feeling the necessity of being led by any educated person (as in the previous novels, mainly the River Between and Weep not, Child).

II.1. The Loss of Ethic : Intellectuals as Instigators of Theft

In Devil on the Cross, Ngugi not only mocks educated people, he goes as far as holding them responsible for the exploitation of the masses. Mwierere, one of the thieves, is a learned man: he has studied commerce, economy and business

administration in Kenya and even abroad. But this knowledge is badly assimilated. Instead of helping his people with it, he prefers to implement his diplomas in the art of stealing and exploiting the wealth of his own country. He shows no respect for the Western academic ethic. He even admits and defends the existence of a class system in Kenya when he says, “there are two types of human beings in every country : the manager and the managed, the one who grabs and the one who hopes for leftovers, the man who gives and the man who waits to receive” (p.79). Ngugi resorts again to satire to ridicule him, as when he makes him admit that it is thanks to the education he received abroad that he learned the art of stealing and exploiting:

My education has shown me that all the nations and countries that have made progress and have contributed to modern civilization have passed through the stage of exploitation. Among such nations power has been taken away from the workers and peasants and given to the heroes of theft and robbery – in English we might say, to those who have capitalist business know-how (p.165).

Another thief who could have been considered as an intellectual is Kihahu Wa Gatheeca. As a teacher, he used to see in education the best means to attain cultural and economic development. But later, he betrays ethic again. Being lured by money, he turns his education into a means of illegal enrichment. He cheats those innocent children who come to his school to acquire Western education for very high fees. He follows the path of Moorehouse and Dick Savage in the Big Money who pervert innocent Americans through their mis-use of language and incite them to consume more and more products to heap up more and more money. Later he even becomes a member of parliament by cheating in the votes and resorting to violence to oblige people to vote for him. And it is through his seat in Iciriri county council that he facilitates the exploitation of the masses to all his friends. He reminds us of senator planet in the Big

Money, who accepts bribery (a big amount of money) from Doc Bingham in exchange for a help in selling his proprietary medicines.

Like Dos Passos, Ngugi has understood that these people do not deserve the title of ‘true intellectuals’ despite their education because they do not keep to ethic and they do not stand with their people. This attitude is felt in the way he deals with the Western - educated Gaturia.

II.2.The Paralyzing Effect of Education : Gaturia

Like Andrews in Three Soldiers and Mary in the Big Money, Gaturia belongs to the bourgeois class. Being very rich, his father sends him abroad to study business administration and come back to manage the family property. However, he refuses to follow on his father’s foot steps. While Andrews of three Soldiers rejects his formal schooling and loses confidence in his class and Mary of the Big Money escapes from that ‘mythological’ America her wealthy mother imposes upon her, Gaturia similarly cannot stand his family’s way of life. He is disgusted by his father’s treatment of the plantation workers. He thus lets him down and – again like Andrews – seeks refuge in art instead of committing himself to the defense of these workers.

When he comes back from America, Gaturia is surprised by the corruption that prevails in his country:

To tell you the truth, I could hardly believe that I was actually in Kenya... Modern theft, modern robbery... so it is really true that the edifice of progress is erected on top of the corpses of human beings (p.131).

He is conscious of the danger of such a situation, but he cannot react, he is paralysed by his family’s false education, an education that taught self- centeredness and turned him, just like Andrews at the beginning of Three Soldiers, into an introvert intellectual,

lacking confidence in himself. As René Winegarten says, “the drama of the modern intellectual [be he African or American] is that he would like to be a revolutionary but cannot make it”³³. Again like Andrews, he fills the void in his aching heart in art. Both are interested in composing ‘revolutionary’ music while their people are seething with anger³⁴. These two protagonists resemble Waiyaki of the River Between who keeps preaching reconciliation while the Kikuyu are starving to death.

The problem with these educated characters is that they do not choose their side. Gatuiria expresses this quite well when he says,

We the intellectuals among the workers, which side are we on? Are we on the side of the producers or on the side of those who live on the products of others? Are we on the side of the workers and peasants or the side of exploiters? Or are we like the hyena which tried to walk along two different roads at the same time? (p.205)

Symbolically, it is Muturi the worker who asks him to join the workers, “my friends [Gatuiria and Wariinga], you should come and join us too. Bring your education to us, and don’t turn your back on the people. That’s the only way” (p.205). Similarly, it is a kid, still too young to have a high education, who persuades Andrews to jump into the Seine to free himself from the army and thus to commit himself to the cause of the masses.

If these characters cannot reach a decision, it is because they are immersed in their milieu and they have not received the adequate kind of humanist knowledge which teaches the intellectual the importance of devotion to human interests and to the defense of the oppressed. Indeed, Andrews never embraces explicitly revolutionary politics. Likewise, Gatuiria does not make up his mind. He is not even able to help the workers take decisions. When Muaura is on the point of joining the thieves, he informs him

about his will, but he proves incapable of advising him, of dissuading him, “That’s why I always say that education is a good thing, a very important thing. Now if it had been Muturi and Wangari, they would have tried to dissuade me. Why? Because they don’t have much education” (p.160), says Mwaura sarcastically. What is shocking is that he does not react even when Wariing’a kills his father. He does not give his opinion on such an important event. He is a passive irresponsible man. That is why Muturi prefers to give a gun to Wariing’a rather than to him. He tells her, “Those educated people are often not sure whose side they are on. They sway from this side to that like water on a leaf” (p.211).

III. The Future Anti-Imperialist Intellectual

III.1. The Local-Educated Student

Through the character of Gatuiria, Ngugi expresses clearly his distrust in Western education. Now, he relies on local educated would – be intellectuals, young students, like those who call the police after the thieves’ confessions in the Devil’s feast. He expresses this idea clearly when he says:

At the university of Nairobi and Kenyatta college, there had over the years developed a new breed of young scholars – bright, confident, original, honest – whose simple life – style was a stunning contrast to the dominant imported culture of borrowed plumes. They fit the Fanonist honest, anti-imperialist intellectual³⁵.

Ngugi suggests that the leadership of Africa be confided to these ‘local’ anti- imperialist intellectuals. But this time he does not want them to be distinguished from the peasants and workers. He wants the three forces to be at last united: peasants, workers and anti-imperialist intellectuals. Together, they will eradicate exploitation. What is however surprising in this new attitude is that Ngugi inverses the roles. The students are not the

ones responsible for raising the peasants and workers' consciousness. It is rather the contrary. Muturi says,

Come and let's stride about in pride, for some of our educated youth have opened their ears and they have started seeing the light that shines from the great organization of the workers and peasants (p.204).

Ngugi has total confidence in the people to find correct solutions to their problems. The experience of his contact with the masses through the plays he wrote has helped him overcome an inner sense of guilt that the colonial education hammered into him. He says, "My involvement with the people of Kamiriithù (the Kamiriitù popular theatre) had given me the sense of a new being and it had made me transcend the alienation to which I had been condemned by years of colonial education"*. After this experience, he revises his attitude towards the intellectual as leader of the masses. Now he believes that the intellectual should join the peasants and workers.

III.2. The Female intellectual, an Ally of the Masses: Wariing'a

In fact, Ngugi's conception of the intellectual is synthesized in the character of Wariing'a: she has been assimilated and acculturated by the Western education she received, like Waiyaki; for a long time, she has remained uncommitted like the lawyer, but in the end she succeeds in becoming a revolutionary organic intellectual, like Karega. At the same time, she is the allegorical figure for all Kenya's struggling working class.

Being a woman and a worker, she has been submitted to sexual as well as economic and cultural exploitation. As a woman, she has been sexually abused by her boss Gitahi. This experience has turned her from a vibrant girl, full of promise and goals for the future into a defeatist. At that time, she had a very weak personality: she rejected her blackness and could not appreciate the beauty of her body because she had not been

taught by her culture that her physical attributes were part of her personality. In a world where everything was commodified, poor women could only commodify their bodies. She tried to change her physical appearance, even to incarnate other selves. Like Andrews, she lacked confidence in herself; she attempted suicide several times and people felt contemptuous pity for her. Despite her education, she was incapable of understanding or analyzing what was happening around her.

However, the Devil's feast which she attends opens her eyes on the reality; it helps her understand the origin of her dual exploitation. She thus ceases to be a spectator and decides to take part in the struggle between exploiters and exploited. The change in her view is vividly expressed when she says, "We [educated men and women] who work as clerks, copy typists and secretaries, which side are we on? Are we on the side of the workers or on the side of the rich? Who are we?" (p.206). She is first a secretary, yet grows conscious. She becomes her community's spokeswoman. And two years after the Devil's feast, Wariing'a is a new woman; she has resumed her studies and is now a mechanical engineer who puts her degree at the service of her people. Now everybody envies her for her courage, self-control, resourcefulness and the fierceness of her resolution. She is an extraordinary successful woman. Her devotion to the cause of the oppressed makes her deserve the title of "anti-imperialist intellectual" (in Fanon's parlance). She sacrifices her personal pleasure and satisfaction for the welfare of the peasants, workers and students. She fights for mass participation in the arrangement of public affairs. She denounces the profiteers and she calls for an armed struggle; she perceives the solution to Kenya's problems in another Mau Mau War.

She first sees this in a dream, "[the people in rags] scattered and went to the forest and to the mountains, singing songs I had not heard before" (p.239). As she carries a

gun, she is the first to resort to violence by killing the rich Old man*, her fiancé's father³⁶. Her 'crucifying of the Devil' signals a new beginning of her quest for Uhuru.

Though she is arrested in the end, she succeeds in uniting the masses and in preparing them for a general revolt against all the devils of Kenya. This success conveys a message to the Kenyans, who are in fact seen as a microcosm of all Africans, that capitalism, Neo-Colonialism and Imperialism should be fought by unity. Wariing'a becomes an intellectual.

III.3. The Female Intellectual between the Decadence of Modernity and the Purity of African Tradition: Rama

Like Ngugi in Devil on the Cross, Sembene in Xala avoids entrusting the struggle of the masses against the national bourgeoisie to Western educated characters/intellectuals because he does not confide in them. He opts for the local- educated Africans.

Rama, El Hadji's daughter, is a learned woman. She is a refreshing counterpart for her corrupted bourgeois father who exploits the masses and perpetuates the French neo-colonial presence in Africa. Though still a university student, she is already worried about the situation of her country. Years before, she stood against Colonialism and took part in the struggle for independence by organizing street demonstrations and pasting up posters at night. After independence, she feels concerned politically. She becomes a kind of progressive revolutionary woman. She joins political associations and rejects that race for money in which the members of her class are engaged. She is dressed in the traditional boubou'. She rides a moped, though her father can offer her one of those luxurious machines of the Western world. She shows her opposition to Senegal's economic and cultural dependence on France by refusing to drink Evian water. Unlike

the other members of her family – except her mother – she rejects the French language and advocates the use of Wolof as a national language. This seems a way to recover African identity, especially if we know that ninety percent of the Senegalese speak Wolof.

Through her, Sembene expresses hope for the future, when Senegal may perhaps be ruled by Ngugi's 'local anti- imperialist intellectuals' able to keep the positive aspects of traditional Africa while making use of Western culture. She is the only character who has succeeded in assimilating both traditional African and European Cultures into a coherent synthesis beyond their often paradoxical nature. She does not reject French culture entirely, she takes only what is useful to her. Sembene embodies in her his wish for a modern and truly independent Africa. According to him:

This young girl is like a step forward in a society which must find a synthesis.it must do so, but how? One can no longer be traditional but neither can one completely resign oneself to European ways³⁷.

At the same time, she opposes some African customs which ,according to her, block the development of her society, like polygamy. She severely criticizes her father's third marriage. She goes as far as to insult him saying, "every polygamous man is a liar", though she knows that as an African girl, she does not have the right to confront her parents. She is an emancipated independent woman. Sembene does not stereotype her, as he does with Oumi and N'Goné, El Hadji's wives. He does not idealize her either. He nevertheless makes it clear that her strong personality and her self-assurance are not related to her Western education; they are rather the product of a purely local culture.

Sembene tests her faithfulness to the cause of the dispossessed when he makes her attend the beggars' assault of her father's house. Despite her awareness, she does not react,

[...] Rama herself was bursting with anger. Against whom? Against her father? Against these wretched people? She who was always ready with the words revolution and new social order! Felt deep within her breast something like a stone falling heavily into her heart, crushing her (pp.112-3).

She sides neither with the beggars nor with the thieves (for even El Hadji is a thief). In fact, she wants to protect both sides. We feel this when she accepts to speak French to the policemen who have come to arrest the beggars; on the one hand, she does not want them to be arrested because they are innocent; on the other, her father will not regain his virility if the police take them. Here again, she knows that if her father is cured, it is not only the family, but the whole community that will be cured. Sterile, El Hadji and thus Senegal, will interrupt that process of purification for regeneration or death / rebirth. The spitting, thus, has a symbolic implication: it is a means of regeneration.

In fact, even El Hadji is not presented positively, though he is the main character of the novel. The image Sembene gives of him is that of a corrupted local leader/ intellectual striving to maintain his social and economic status. The real protagonist of the novel is the beggar who is at the origin of El Hadji's 'xala'. This beggar resorts to "magic" to destroy the bourgeois. I wonder whether we are moving from a class – struggle to a "grigri" struggle? I also wonder what has become of Sembene's dialectic materialism. I would like to suppose that this is only an attempt on Sembene's part to make his message understood by the peasants and workers. But in this case, is the novel primarily destined to the beggars? Is it wise from Sembene to propose 'magic'* as an efficient means for the peasants to defend themselves and get rid of the national

bourgeoisie? To avoid a positive answer to these ‘dangerous’ questions, I consider the writer’s resorting to such a folkloric belief as a way of reconnecting with the past and reinstituting a unified subjectivity rooted in tradition.

On the other hand, the ending of the novel leaves open some other probing questions about future social transformations. After the spitting, it remains to be seen what the new El Hadji will become after enduring this humiliating ritual, what his daughter will do and what the beggars will gain from this limited insurrection since armed guards charged with maintaining law and order patrol the streets outside. The reader wonders if this is a call for action, for Fanon’s revolution.

IV. Fanonism Revisited

The national bourgeoisie Ngugi and Sembene have dealt with is a mere product of Colonialism and Neo-Colonialism. The African local leaders are presented as thieves who grab the wealth of their countries and pave the way to foreign exploiters. The two writers show great contempt towards this class; as an inference from this fact, they mock them – as Dos Passos did with his leisure class in the Big Money – hence their resorting to the grotesque, irony, satire, caricature and even sarcasm to denounce them. They also punish them severely. If Dos Passos kills some and ruins others, Ngugi turns them into ‘Devils’ and Sembene destroys them economically and socially.

As to Western –educated intellectuals, they have ‘fallen apart’, they have lost the trust of the writers because they did not prove to be strong enough to resist to Western influence, to wage a war against the exploiters and to be creative. The alternative is then to go back once again to Fanon’s theory of peasant/worker revolution; that is why Ngugi and Sembene raise the consciousness of the peasants and workers. They want them to be capable of leading a revolution against the bourgeoisie and neo-colonialism

to free themselves from their grips, as they once did to liberate themselves from Colonialism.

To consider the class conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat depicted in Devil on the Cross and Xala as specific to Kenya and Senegal is to limit the scope of the two novels. These two countries are in fact only a microcosm of the present state of Africa, a continent paralyzed socially and economically as its elites and leaders are oblivious of the workers and peasants' needs and of their despair³⁸. Ngugi and Sembene see it their duty to denounce the prevailing evils that ruin post-independence Africa, to bring the national bourgeoisie to trial, a trial presided over by peasants and workers. Both believe that the solution lies in the latter's hands. Sembene expresses this in an interview, "seules les masses possèdent la véritable solution à nos problèmes..."³⁹. And Ngugi in his turn says that he believes in an alliance between the Kenyan peasants and the working class for the creation of a new Kenya⁴⁰. The difference between the two is that while Sembene does not propose any definite solution⁴¹, Ngugi, for his part advocates violence as an efficient and legitimate means; he calls for another Mau Mau War, but this time against the bourgeoisie.

V. Stylistic and Thematic Assessment

In Devil on the Cross and Xala, Ngugi and Sembene deal with the same theme as Dos Passos's the Big Money: the false intellectuals' race for power, prestige and wealth at the expense of human dignity and social and economic equality. However, while Dos Passos succeeds in maintaining an artistic distance from the realities of life, Ngugi and Sembene are overtly political. Sometimes, they become mere pamphleteers who sacrifice the artistic form of the novel to promote socialist propaganda. The style and the ways the stories are told read more like a treatise on leftist politics than a work of art. The characters are stereotypes based on cultural and social ideas and thoughts.

The reader cannot identify with them. They are completely different from Dos Passos's characters in the Big Money who really typify those American men and women of the 1920's and who are so convincing that the reader cannot prevent himself from sharing their defeat as well as their victory. Ngugi and Sembene's characters seem to be conceived for the sole purpose of driving home a political point. The modernist techniques, the interior monologues, the complex flashbacks, the stream of consciousness, the complex symbolism that gave such a dense texture to Petals of Blood and A Grain of Wheat before it, have disappeared completely in Devil on the Cross. Similarly, the strong narrative structure of Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu, its complex characterization and its thoroughly studied language are replaced by a simplistic group of stereotyped characters and a prosaic diction in Xala. The two writers may have seen in modernism, a sign of alienation; that is why they drop it.

Regarding intellectuals, Ngugi and Sembene seem to have lost faith in the Western-educated ones as well as in the Marxist theory of the intellectual as the vanguard of the revolution. The petty bourgeois intellectuals in Devil on the Cross and Xala are "false intellectuals", like their American leisure class counterparts in the Big Money. They are far from fulfilling the duties Sartre and Gramsci assign the intellectual. Ngugi's businessmen and Sembene's members of the Commerce Chamber, just like Dos Passos's Charley, Savage, Moorehouse, Eléanor and Eveline, are all learned people who surrender to greed, humiliation and treachery instead of putting their knowledge at the service of their people who are engaged in a severe class-conflict. The only exceptions are Wariing'a and Rama who, though educated, manage to denounce the abuse of political privilege and power as well as the destructive ascent of the local leaders and their followers. These revolutionary intellectuals resemble Dos Passos's Mary French and Benny Compton in their complete devotion to the cause of the oppressed. But while Dos Passos avoids turning Mary into a mere revolutionary

automaton and even punishes Ben for his excessive commitment to the political cause at the expense of his private life ,Ngugi and Sembene exaggerate Wariing'a's and Rama's commitment to the point of making of them mere allegorical figures, a kind of ideological puppets, devoid of any truthfulness.

In their next novels, Matigari and Le Dernier de L'empire, Ngugi and Sembene do not include "true intellectuals". They rather deal with ministers, "false intellectuals", in Sartre's parlance⁴², who engage in a pursuit of wealth, prestige and power.

The one-party system and dictatorship become Sembene's target in Le Dernier de l'Empire. The novel is set in independent Senegal; it deals with a military coup against the president Leon Mignane who disappears mysteriously leaving his country in popular unrest till the army steps in. Sembene's preoccupation is with the incompetence, nepotism and abuse of public power.

To put an end to this insecurity, Sembene advocates a military solution. He thinks that only the army can stand against the present rulers who imprison, torture and even kill those who oppose the regime, among them true intellectuals who become the first enemies of the system. According to him, the military can save Africa if it puts itself at the service of the people. He seems to be dreaming of a "democratic" 'enlightened' dictatorship⁴³.

In Matigari too, Ngugi suggests that the quest for truth and justice can only be realized through arms. Matigari, a former Mau Mau fighter, comes back from the forest carrying a gun. He looks for his family to rebuild his home and start a new and peaceful future. But his search soon becomes a quest for truth and justice as he finds his people still dispossessed and the land ruled by corruption, fear and misery. He thus decides to resort to arms to achieve his true liberation. He wages a violent battle against the state

with the help of a prostitute and a child (symbol of the coming generation). In the end, Ngugi makes him die to suggest that the quest for justice is to be paid with one's life. As in Le Dernier de l'Empire, the young revolutionary / progressive intellectuals are completely nonexistent. The struggle is to be waged a second time by peasants, freedom fighters, and this is a return to the Fanonian thesis again.

In Wizard on the Crow⁴⁴, the intellectual is turned into a wizard. Kamiti, an archetypal new man with two university degrees and no job prospects, sets up a shop as a wizard with the help of a quiet secretary, Nyawira, the secret leader of the people's resistance movement. He dispenses therapeutic sorcery to peasants who find witchcraft less ridiculous than their daily life. Ngugi does not fail to chronicle despotism, greed and corruption in this fictional republic of Aburiria in which the 'Ruler' and his cabinet plan to climb to heaven with a modern day tower of Babel funded by the World Bank. The project is to be realized by a group of businessmen jockeying for a piece of the pie. Meanwhile, the unemployed masses are waiting in endless lines behind every help-wanted sign. Ngugi disguises Kamiti as a sorcerer and entrusts him with the mission of putting an end to Africa's dysfunctions. This return of magic seems to characterize countries in which knowledge and technology are imported.

In these three novels, Ngugi and Sembene show clearly their loss of hope in today's intellectuals. They have ceased to entrust them with the mission of safeguarding their people from exploitation and injustice. Sembene seeks the help of the army and Ngugi decides to wait for the next generation by giving Matigari's gun to the child and now attempts sorcery to convince the peasants of the necessity of struggle.

End Notes

- 1- Wa Thiong'o Ngugi, Devil On the Cross (London : Heinemann, 1982).
- 2- Ousmane Sembene, Xala trans by Clive Wake [1974]; (London: Heinemann, 1976).
As the original text (in French) is not available, I have been compelled to use a translation.
- 3- Sembene says, "Xala est d'une certaine manière, le récit d'une histoire vraie: celle de nombre d'actuelles bourgeoisies du tiers-monde dont certains représentants après avoir combattu dans le passé le colonialisme français, britannique ou américain [...] se sont constitués depuis les indépendances en nouvelles classes qui ne savent qu'imiter les bourgeoisies occidentales", Afrique Asie (du 24 Mars au 6 Avril, 1975), p.64. See also the following articles :
 - Michel Serceau, "Xala une fable sur la bourgeoisie africaine", Afrique littéraire, 7 (1985).
 - Salim Jay, "Xala par Sembene Ousmane", Afrique littéraire, 73-74 (1984).
 - A.V Ohaegbu, "Literature for the People : an Analysis of the Money Order and Xala", Présence africaine, 91 (1974).
 - Martin O. Dechene, "Review of Xala", World Literature Today, 52 (1978).
 - Lynne J Thomas "Politics, Plunder and Post- Colonial Tricksters : Ousmane Sembene's Xala", International Journal of Francophone Studies, 3, 6 (2003) pp.183-95.
 - Saber Ahmed, Ufahamu, "Ousmane Sembene's Xala: an Anti-Bourgeois Novel", Journal of the African Activist Association, 3 (Fall 1993), pp.16-26.
 - 4 - "Xala" means sexual impotence. It is caused by the spell a beggar (thus a class enemy) has cast on the protagonist because he has once dispossessed him of his land.
- 5- Cited in Georg, M. Gugelburger, "When Evil Doing Comes like Falling Rain : Brecht – Alioun Fantouré – Ngugi Wa Thiong'o". Paper Presented at the 10th Anniversary Meeting of the African Literature Association (Evanston, Illinois; North Western University), (March 29, 1985), p.6.

6- Ibid., p.14.

7- Michel Foucault, 'the political function of the Intellectual' Radical Philosophy, 17(Summer 1977), p.12.

*Michel Foucault, "Intellectuals and Power: a Conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze", in Donald Bouchard (ed); Language, Counter-Memory, Practice : Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault (Paris: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp.47-53.

8- See Detained Op.Cit., p.8.

9- In fantasy literature, the writer can use any story telling element to strengthen the narrative: dragon, magic, devils. Its style is devoid of any complication. For details on this literature, see: Brian Attebery, Strategies of Fantasy (Bloomington : Indiana University Press,1992) and Richard Mathews, Fantasy. The Liberation of Imagination (London: Routledge,2009).

*On the theme of orality in Ngugi's novels see: A.Mazrui & L.Mphande, "Orality and the Literature of Combat: the Legacy of Fanon", in C.Cantalupo(ed); The World of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (New Jersey: Africa World Press,1995),pp.159-183.

*On this point see C .Lofin, "Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's Vision of Africa" in Peter Nazareth (ed),Critical Essays on Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (New York: Twayne Publishers,2000),pp.261-280.

10- Philip Thomson, The Grotesque (London :Heinemann & Co. LTD, 1972),p.58.

11- Ibid., p.59.

12- Rabelais and his World[1968] trans by Helène Iswalsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p.5.

13- See Neil. Rhodes, Elizabethan Grotesque (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1980).

14- See Naomi. Liebler, Shakespeare's Festive Tragedy: the Ritual Foundations of Genre (London: Routledge, 1995).

15- Rabelais and his World Op.Cit., p.26.

16- Ibid., p.59.

17- Juliet Okonkwo, “The Intellectual as Political Activist: a Character Type in Recent African Fiction”, Présence africaine 130 (1984),p.14.

18- Wa Thiong’o Ngugi, Barrel of a Pen (London: Heinemann, 1983), p.20.

19- The Big Money Op.Cit., p.175.

20- On the theme of the Bourgeoisie’s clothes see: Perrot Philippe, Les dessus et dessous de la bourgeoisie : une histoire du vêtement au XIVème siècle (Bruxelles :Ed Complexe, 1981).

21- See chapter III of the American part, pp.151-152.

22- This is what happens to Dieng,the old man, in Le Mandat. He receives a money order from his nephew who lives in Paris, but the bureaucracy of post-independence Senegal prevents him from cashing it. He thus seeks the help of a cousin, Mbaye. The latter is a business man of El Hadji’s brand. He promises to cash the order for the old man but in the end he pockets the money and swears in the name of “Yalla” that it has been stolen from him. See The Money Order with White Genesis trans by Clive Wake; (London : Heinemann, 1965). In this context Sembene says in an interview that money is the only apparent value left (l’argent est devenu la seule valeur reconnue),cited in Firinne Ni Chreachain. Adelugba, “Self and Other in Sembene Ousmane’s Xala” in Kolawole Ogungbesan (Ed); New West African Literature (London : Heinemann, 1979), p.93. On Le Mandat see : Marcata Franca, ‘Introduction à la lecture d’un récit africain d’expression française : Le Mandat d’Ousmane Sembene’, Présence Francophone, 14 (1977).

23- On Satire, see Brian Connery and Kirk Comb (eds); Theorizing Satire : Essays in Literary Criticism (New York :St Martin’s press, 1995).

24- William Langland, Piers the Ploughman, trans into modern English by J.F. Goodridge (London : Heinemann, 1959), p.61.

25- Ibid., pp.66-7.

26- Ibid., p.67.

27- Ibid., p.64.

28- Idem.

The similarities between Langland's and Ngugi's descriptions of their characters and the presentation of their confessions are so striking that I have taken the freedom to use many quotations.

29- Detained : A writer's Prison Diary (London :Heinemann, 1981),p.8.

* For more details ,see: Robert Chesnais, Truands et Assassins dans le Paris du Roi-Soleil (Paris: éditions Nantilus,2008),pp157-67. See also André Rigaud, Paris ses rues et ses fantomes.La vraie cour des miracles (Paris: Berger Levrault,1972),pp.231-326.

30- Cited in Guy Hennebelle, "Entretien avec Sembene Ousmane. Face à de nouveaux dangers", Afrique Asie 83 (du 14 Mai du 1er Juin 1975), p.46.

31-This may be done to show that Sembene is against polygamy.

32- For details on the symbolism of the title see : Monique Hennebelle, "Xala, une impuissance sexuelle bien symbolique", Afrique Asie, 79 (du 24 Mars au 6 Avril, 1975).

33- René Winegarten, Writers and Revolution : the Fatal Lure of Action (New York : New View Points, 1970), p.279.

34- Sékou Touré says in this context : "Il ne suffit pas d'écrire un article ou un chant révolutionnaire pour participer à la révolution africaine. Il faut faire cette révolution par le peuple, avec le peuple et les chants viendront eux-mêmes", in "Le leader politique en tant que représentant d'une culture ", Address to the Second Congress of Black Writers and Artists, Rome, 1959 in Présence africaine (special issue) ;Deuxième Congrès des écrivains et artistes noirs, Rome, 1959, N°24-25 Feb. May 1959, p.104.

35- Barrel of a Pen., Op.Cit., p.26.

*Cited in Detained Op.Cit.,p.98.

*Ngugi does not give a name to the Rich Old Man because he is a symbolic representation of the Kenyan upper class.

36- For more details on Wariing'a see, Charles Nama, "Daughter of Moombi, Ngugi's Heroines and Traditional Gikuyu Aesthetics", Carol Boyce Davis and Anne Adams Grams (eds); Ngambika (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1986).

- Brendon Nicholls, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Gender and the Ethics of Post-Colonial reading(London : Ashgate Publishing Limited,2010).

- L. Arlene Elder, "the Paradox of Women's Liberation in the Novels of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o", ASA Association (1988).

- Chijoke Uwasomba, "the Politics of Resistance and liberation in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's Petals of Blood and Devil on the Cross", The Journal of Pan-African Studies, 1,6 (December 2006).

37- Cited in Jean and Ginette Delmas, "Ousmane Sembene :un film est un débat", Jeune Cinéma, (Dec 1976 Jan 1977), p.16. trans by Françoise Pfaff. For more on Rama see Mushengyezi, Aaron, "Reimagining Gender and African Tradition? Ousmane Sembene's Xala Revisited", Africa Today, (Fall 2004), pp.16-26.

*On the theme of magic, see Brenda Cooper, Magical Realism in West African Fiction (London: Routledge, 1998).

38- Herbert Ekwe Ekwe says in this context : "[...] Ngugi's characterizations are so clear and over whelming that he could as well be describing the nouveaux riches in any of the African capitals from Tunis to Lusaka, and from Dakar to Nairobi", in "Africa and Devil on the Cross : Revolutionary Themes in the Ngugi Novel", Monthly Rview (June 1983), p.28.

39- Cited in Guy Hennebelle, "Sembene Ousmane : Dénoncer la nouvelle Bourgeoisie", Afrique Asie,79 (du 26 Marsau 06 avril, 1975),p.64.

40- "Je crois absolument et sans aucune honte à l'alliance entre paysans Kenyans et classe ouvrière dans la lute pour créer réellement un nouveau Kenya", in "Le rôle de la culture dans la révolution africaine", Table Ronde réunissant Ngugi Wa Thiong'o et Mougane Wally Serote, Parti Communiste Sud-africain (Londres, Juin 1988).

41- Sembene has been accused of not giving solutions or suggesting means of getting rid of the bourgeoisie. But he justifies himself saying, "Il ne faut pas que les films [this can also be applied to the novels] soient conçus de telle façon que les spectateurs se

donnent le sentiment confortable de faire la révolution par procuration, assis dans leurs fauteuils ”, Cited in Guy Hennebelle, “Entretien avec Sembene Ousmane, face à de nouveaux dangers”, Op.Cit., p.46.

42- Foucault, for his part, calls them “specific intellectuals” as opposed to “universal intellectuals”. They are learned people who work in specific sectors (housing, the hospital, the asylum, the laboratory, the university etc...). They are supposed to encounter problems which are specific, different from those of the proletariat, the peasants and the masses, namely the multi-national corporations, the judicial and police apparatuses, property sectors, etc... . These specific intellectuals face certain dangers: “the danger of immersing themselves in conjunctural struggles, in pressing claims within particular sectors, the risk of letting themselves be manipulated by the political parties or union apparatuses directing these local struggles” ,Foucault Op .Cit.;p.12. And this is what happens to the ministers of Matigari and Le Dernier de l’Empire. That is why I personally refuse to consider them as intellectuals since they do not put their knowledge at the service of their people. For details, see Michel Foucault. Op.Cit., pp.12-4.

43- For details on Le Dernier de l’Empire see, Abdulaye A. Berte, “Le Dernier de l’Empire”, Présence africaine, 130(1984), pp.170-9.

44- Wa Thiong’o Ngugi, Wizard of the Crow (NewYork: Anchor Books Edition,2007).

CONCLUSION

This research has been concerned with the role played by intellectuals in the disasters that prevailed respectively in the United States during and After WWI and in Kenya and Senegal before and after independence. The United States, Kenya, Senegal and many other African countries were so shaken by the political, economic and social problems caused by these traumatic events that writers such as Dos Passos, Ngugi, Sembene and many others, though neither from the same generation nor from the same cultural and geographical areas, could not do but denounce the injustice and exploitation that resulted from them.

It remains now to reach some conclusions about the view of the intellectual held by Dos Passos, Ngugi and Sembene and to assess the general quality of their novels as art in relation to the intellectual.

My study has been conducted along three major axes: the first axis concerned the attitude of American and African intellectuals towards war. I have dealt with Dos Passos's Three Soldiers which portrays the American society during WWI, Ngugi's the River Between and Weep not, Child which report the Kikuyu struggle against colonial domination and Sembene's Ô pays, mon beau people! which depicts the Senegalese fight against the French for economic freedom.

The role of formal education unites these novels whose protagonists are young intellectuals setting out to fight for universal peace and democracy. John Andrews, Waiyaki, Njoroge, Seck and Agbo are formally educated persons who aim to understand their society in order to change it, with the interest of the common people in mind. They seek to define the problems of their people, articulate their grievances and frame their social and political demands. Focusing on these educated intellectuals in specific societies and historical contexts, this axis dealt in particular with the way these

learned people develop and disseminate their ideas and social interaction with others, in particular with the people they claimed to represent

These intellectuals articulate their ideas in diverse historical, political and cultural contexts. But they do share some significant traits. Andrews, Waiyaki, Njoroge, Seck and Agbo are people who can not articulate their reflexive knowledge on the communities they live in and are not able to make an ideological and political analysis of their societies. They hold no authoritative position within the political struggle of their people and their education is not instrumental for militancy (in the case of Andrews) or political leadership (in the case of Waiyaki, Njoroge, Agbo and Seck). Despite the different historical circumstances and the socio-economic and cultural contexts in which they emerged, they react in the same way.

Though possessing the explicit ambition to transform society and to put into practice their plan for change, they do not combine their reflexive activity with cultural and political activism. They intend to use their knowledge to change the conditions of their people, but do not succeed. They even fail to re-articulate history and memory. Though with authority, knowledge, position, honor and dignity, Andrews's genteel belonging and Waiyaki, Njoroge, Seck and Agbo's Western dependence turn them to unpractical dreamers and unreliable activists seized with the fear of not being able to fulfill the duty of serving their people. While engaged in a battle against evil represented by the military or the colonial Establishment, these intellectuals /heroes all succumbed to what proved to be too powerful for a lone quester.

In the creation of such heroes, Dos Passos, Ngugi and Sembene, at the beginning, were inspired by the form of the Western realist novel characterized by remarkable protagonists. Their desire to create acceptable novels induced them to imitate writers they had already read. And as Dos Passos was still under the influence of

his genteel middle-class culture and Ngugi and Sembene under the domination of the occupier's, they neglected ideology and politics.

It was not surprising then, that the characters they conceived as intellectuals in those first novels were members of the middle-class-in the case of Dos Passos- and members of the Westernized elite- in the case of Ngugi and Sembene. Andrews in Three Soldiers is an artist, Waiyaki in the River Between is a teacher, Njoroge in Weep not, Child is a student and Agbo in Ô pays, mon beau people! is a doctor while Seck is a teacher. All these intellectuals, be they American or African, are idealists who believed in universal values, like equality, freedom and democracy. They were actually in a quest for their identities at a time their people were in most need of them. Indeed, they were Benda's "clercs". They all revered education and saw in it the key to the problems of their societies. At the same time, they were paralyzed by this education which turned them into introverts, lacking confidence in themselves.

It should be specified, however, that while Dos Passos and Ngugi made of these intellectuals the heroes of their novels, Sembene on the contrary, presented them as minor characters. His hero, being self-taught, escapes the influence of Western education though his way of life and his intellectual make up were nearer to those of the intellectual than to those of the peasant's. If Sembene had not left School at an early age¹, he would certainly have made the same choice as the university educated Dos Passos and Ngugi.

Another reason for such a difference may be the semi-autobiographical nature of these early novels. The personalities of Waiyaki in the River Between, Njoroge in Weep not, Child, Andrews in Three Soldiers and Oumar in Ô pays, mon beau people! reflected those of the writers. The self-taught Sembene who entered the school of life very early and who had frequented the Dockers' milieu for years had certainly had

enough time to set himself free from Ngugi's and Dos Passos's inhibitions and ideological hesitations.

The second axis of this study centered on the intellectuals' denunciation of capitalist exploitation and corruption. My analysis focused on the 42nd Parallel, the first volume of USA in which Dos Passos expresses his anger against social injustice and portrays that conflict which opposed the businessmen to the workers, Ngugi's Petals of Blood which deals with the political struggle of the peasants and workers against Capitalism and neo-colonialism and Sembene's Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu which depicts the revolt of the Senegalese railway men against their Capitalist employers.

As the three writers had by then committed themselves to the cause of the oppressed, their novels have a distinctly Socialist turn. Their intellectuals /heroes, therefore, are no longer those maudlin genteel middle class American romantics. They are men of action who, deceived by consumer capitalism, were driven naturally to the workers' movements. They take charge of the workers' problems, behaving like what Socialist Realism calls "positive heroes".

Mac in the 42nd Parallel, Karega in Petals of Blood and Bakayoko in Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu are no longer teachers and artists. Indeed, they have a certain degree of knowledge but the latter is no longer a prerequisite to win the title of intellectual: the gap is too wide between books and the urgency of the problems to be solved. They were presented as militants who devote themselves to the leadership of the masses in their struggle against Capitalism. They succeed in becoming ideological activists, holding an authoritative position within labor movements. They are committed intellectuals who combine their knowledge with ideological activism. Some of them have acquired this knowledge outside of the realm of formal education, like Mac, while others have started out as 'traditional intellectuals' but redefined their position and political mission, as is

the case of Karega. Others have opted for the leadership of industrial workers from the start, like Bakayoko. Whether intellectuals or just popular leaders, they are involved in the same struggle. They all focus on the historical consequences of the conflict and aim at reproducing and articulating history and memory. Though a teacher, Karega's past as a trade unionist enables him to analyze the political and economic situation of his people. He undoubtedly teaches well, but he plays better the role of spokesman for the peasants near the new urban power. Mac, Bakayoko and Karega are 'true' intellectuals, intellectuals organically linked to the people.

There are other intellectuals in those novels, like Moorehouse the advertiser, Steinmetz the electrical engineer, Morgan the financier in the 42nd parallel, Chui the headmaster of Siriana School, Nderi the MP in Petals of Blood and the members of the French National Assembly in Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu (to cite only these). But they are depicted as 'false intellectuals', traitors, because they allied with Capitalism.

The aesthetic and ideological maturity of those novels contrast with the simplistic style of the previous ones. The three writers deal with aesthetics and politics at the same time. Dos Passos uses socialist-realist literary devices as well as modernist techniques to draw a complete portrait of the American Society immersing itself deeply in the new Capitalist world in that period of radical reform. Ngugi also resorts to both Socialist and Modernist techniques – though not as successfully and as deeply as Dos Passos – to make the reader share the Illmorogians' turmoil near the Capitalists' invasion of their village. Sembene's style in Les Bouts de Bois de Dieu combines the techniques of proletarian literature with those of Socialist Realism, Naturalism and less frequently, those of Modernism.

As to the third axis, it dealt mainly with that violent attack against the post-war American leisure class and the masterful post-independence African national bourgeoisie whose intellectuals are inevitably false. The three writers called for a general revolution in the American and African politics and social life. The common point in this axis is that in the Big Money, Devil on the Cross and Xala, Dos Passos, Ngugi and Sembene chose women characters as revolutionary intellectuals influencing the political discourse of the novels. Mary French², Wariing'a and Rama are active organizers who spare no effort for the movement. They sacrifice their personal lives for the working class. They are positive women, radical protagonists or characters (in the case of Rama). But while Dos Passos still trusts the liberal intellectuals of the middle-class with leading the workers in their struggle against capital, Ngugi and Sembene prefer to attribute that task to the peasants and workers who had then grown conscious enough to liberate themselves by themselves. Both Africans lost confidence in the intellectual who, though still present in their novels is either superseded by peasants and workers or denounced as a petty bourgeois whose power threatened the economy and culture of the nation.

In fact, in those novels dealing with post-war America and post-independence Kenya and Senegal, Dos Passos, Ngugi and Sembene adopt the same ideological stance: they all reject the social, political and economic systems of their countries. They are courageous enough to question ruthless political systems and to challenge the practices of their governments. Till 1936, Dos Passos made of WWI and of the American leisure class the target of his scathing satire. Likewise, Ngugi and Sembene adopted a satirical style to denounce the post-colonial national bourgeoisie and to unmask the new African leaders who are in fact 'false intellectuals'. However, the stylistic approach adopted to express such a theme is different. While relying on irony, Satire and the grotesque to mock the bourgeois people, Dos Passos maintains the same aesthetic complexity as that

which characterized the previous volumes of the trilogy. For their part, Ngugi and Sembene are very “harsh” with the African bourgeoisie which they attacked bluntly. They sacrifice literature for the sake of politics, turning their novels into mere political tracts.

To sum up the writers’ interest in the intellectual, history and society, one would say that they all want their intellectuals to struggle for the creation of a society devoid of any conflict between ethics and politics, law and private conscience and to devote themselves to the leadership of the masses in their struggle against all forms of injustice and oppression.

In their conception of the intellectual of the future, they have faith in young students to set up a new political ,ideological and cultural system in their societies. They do not want these intellectuals to be submitted to the influence of the class in power .Dos Passos wants his ‘tomorrow intellectual’ to go back to the sources to restore the ancient values on which the founding fathers built their nation: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. He wants him to impose these values on the present society to purify it from the corruption of the Capitalist system. For their part,Ngugi and Sembene want their future intellectuals to be local- educated anti-imperialist intellectuals who unite and collaborate with the peasants and the wokers in their struggle against social, political and economic exploitation . They entrust them with the mission of fighting the ills of modern society and replacing them with more beneficial values and practices. They also want them to be able to preserve the positive aspects of the African heritage while making use of European cultures.

Regarding the relation between literature and history, the three writers consider the novel as a theory of history. They conceive literature as a reminder of the history of a people,a means to ensure continuety. The vitality of memory is a persistent theme in

their art. They want their readers to remember their past, to wake up to the forces of history engulfing them. They criticize those forces and their effect on the present to set the mind of tomorrow's generation. The great achievement of these writers is to have succeeded in linking their concept of history to their artistic creation. The creation of the characters of their novels aims, above all, at a faithful and accurate record of a phase of history. Thus, the individual characters of their novels are part of a phase of history, rather than self-reliant personalities. In this respect, the ultimate goal of their novels is to portray a totality of history. This strong consciousness of the importance of history has contributed to the epic quality of their novels which concern the destiny of a community as a whole more than the fate of the individual.

As intellectuals themselves, these writers/ historians saw it their duty to point out the unwanted and unchallenging transformations that split the heart of their people, to raise their consciousness and to lead them in the path of progress. They trusted that sooner or later, humanity would prevail over the malignity of the oppressive privileged few.

However, while they wanted human dignity to be restored and a fairer redistribution of wealth to all, they held different opinions as to the way self-achievement should be conducted. Ngugi believed in violence for the masses to achieve fulfillment. In a world fragmented into social classes, he saw it the duty of the writer/ intellectual to call for the "crucifixion" of the 'devils' who exploit the people. Sembene, for his part, advocated an international proletarian revolution, without however giving precisions on the way this revolution is to be organized. Whereas Dos Passos urged man to dare self-sacrifice for the common good and advocated love and friendship for mankind to reconcile. He wanted the welfare of the community to be extended to all the

people, poor and rich. He let his readers know that he did not intend to harm the well-provided class. His ultimate aim was to modify the attitude among the rich and the poor.

In fact, in those novels dealing with post-war America and post-independence Kenya and Senegal, Dos Passos, Ngugi and Sembene adopted the same ideological stance: as intellectuals, they all rejected the social, political and economic systems of their countries. They were courageous enough to question ruthless political systems and to challenge the practices of their governments. Till 1936, Dos Passos made of WWI and of the American leisure class, especially of its intellectuals who betrayed their mission as guardians of moral and ethical values for the sake of material and social status, the target of his scathing satire. Likewise, Ngugi and Sembene adopted a satirical style to denounce the post-colonial national bourgeoisie and to unmask the new African leaders whom they consider as 'false intellectuals', no longer claiming any accountability for their people.

The difference however between those three writers is that while Dos Passos remained faithful to literature and to his sophisticated style, despite the conversion of his early hero from aesthete to revolutionary, Ngugi and Sembene turned into mere pamphleteers, subordinating art to revolutionary action. They sacrificed aesthetics for the sake of political discourse; hence their failure to reconcile doctrine and creativity. They let ideology win over literature.

They even gave up their literary talent as writers when they decided to let down a literature written in a foreign language, which, for them, could not be understood by the masses, those harbingers and masters of the future. Ngugi resorted to Kikuyu and has published three novels in that language – Devil on the Cross, Matigari and Wizard of the Crow; at the same time, he has kept writing in English more political/ propagandist

essays while in exile – a fact which ironically estranged him from his peasants and workers.³

As to Sembene, he opted for the cinema which he saw as the best means to reach the masses⁴. He produced films in Wolof, his native language, in which he rendered authentically the condition of the African underdog. He believed strongly that cinema was more straight forward, more “real” and more “authentic” than literature. Though both writer and film-maker are men of imagination, the latter, for Sembene, was nearer to the masses, “[...] un film a forcément plus de spectateurs qu’un livre n’a de lecteurs, surtout en Afrique pour la raison que vous avez dite [analphabétisation]”, says he to guy Hennebelle in an interview⁵. His films allowed him to experience the problems of his people, to live with them, to identify with them, to be one of them.

Like Ngugi and Sembene, Dos Passos in USA (before his right wing conversion) cared about politics. But his political faith did not affect him as craftsman; it did not have a negative influence on the moral qualities and on the sensibility of his works. His tradition was stronger. Like the famous writers of the 1930’s, Hemingway, Dreiser, Steinbeck, Wolf, Lewis, he succeeded in using politics rather than being used by it, as happened with Ngugi and Sembene who subordinated their craft to politics in their latest novels. He did not see politics as “a distinctive mode of existence, with values and manners of its own”⁶. He rather considered it as part of social existence. USA is intensely political; yet as the writer covered a wide area of American life, it could not be thought of as strictly political. It included the whole of the social, political and economic system of the United States. It communicated the author’s own interpretive reading of American life; it indeed appeared to be an almost direct transcription of American life (especially in the Newsreels and narrative), a record of its dissonances in the machine age. Dos Passos succeeded in stylizing the Americans’ experience; he

made of the American society the real hero of his trilogy; at the end, USA became as aesthetically exciting as it was intellectually impressive.

Yet, what is astonishing is that after such a success, Dos Passos surprisingly proved to be still a maturing writer, a growing writer, a divided writer whose fundamental emotional stresses had yet to be resolved when he reoriented himself as an artist in his latest works, after the communists' murder of his best friend José Robles in the Spanish Civil War. The bullet that killed Robles had also shot down his art. This event put an end to any vestige of sympathy he held for the communists. He understood that Stalin was no different from Hitler. After 1937, his enemy was no longer Capitalism but rather Fascism and Communism. He realized that all those regimes aimed at establishing despotic rule. He then decided to move to the right⁷, giving up all hope of any real social change driven by the masses. His later novels Adventures of a Young Man (1939), Number One (1943) and Mid Century (1961) became more and more clichés by the time he embraced the right of the Republican Party. He thus joined the enemy he had so much hated in his early years.

This change may be due to the fact that, as an intellectual, he had never been strong enough to commit himself completely to a movement. The disgust he had felt towards the Communist Party could have led him to return to the anarchists and the IWW, his old political friends, but these were no more fashionable. Instead, he joined the allies, people he had earlier despised. This caused the loss of his great talent, a talent which produced some of the finest works of literature. As Stephen Coch said,

[...] The driving force behind his life as an artist, the dazzling medium that had once lifted his talent into genius and inspired a generation of radical artists around the world, had been maybe fatally wounded.... Somehow the great modernism of Manhattan Transfer and USA had died in Valencia⁸.

He isolated himself from the harsh realities of American life and increasingly sounded like an apologist for the power elite. He lost faith in revolutionary ideas and actions and in the decent humanity of the common man to find solutions to the economic and political problems of his society. This change shocked many of his friends. Several literary critics regretted it. The new Dos Passos seemed more eager for security than for understanding. He ceased to be Sartre's 'true intellectual'. That is why I limited my analysis to the novels he published before his conversion to the right.

To sum up the three writers' interest in intellectuals, history and society in the novels studied in this thesis, one would say that political activists of the "left" should honor them for erecting in enduring words monuments to their perspectives. Literary artists, for their part, owe them certainly a great debt for their craftsmanship of the novel. As far as Dos Passos is concerned, he will never be forgotten for the variety of real-life and fictional intellectuals he portrayed in his trilogy USA and for his powerfully deep indictment of Capitalism, though he abandoned that indictment later. As his biography can testify, he was betrayed by the forces of his own past. Despite his strong commitment, he did not manage to retain his integrity in the midst of the great political storms of the 20th Century.

Nevertheless, it is to this great intellectual and to the intellectuals he creates in his novels that we owe our understanding of many 20th Century issues. It is him who portrays the emerging power of the Capitalist system; it is him also who pushes us to question the fairness of such a system and to inquire about the relationship between war and profit making. Thanks to him, we experience the disillusionment and the failed hopes of post-war intellectuals near the decline of morality and the blind pursuit of material goods by urban Americans. With him, the reader keeps wondering how to

continue enduring moral values, how to preserve honesty and justice and how to keep caring deeply and sincerely about each other.

Likewise, Ngugi and Sembene have succeeded in creating several categories of intellectuals that highlighted the different historical and social conflicts that marked 20th Century Africa. These intellectuals have acted as spokesmen of their people, expressing their aspirations and fears and serving as a reflective mirror for their experience. The nexus of Ngugi and Sembene's literary work is generally a critique of the conflictual relationships between the colonizer and the colonized, the state and the people, the rich and the poor, tensions created by power relations. All this work has been important to the intellectual development of many Africans. Their novels, essays, plays, films provide a framework for understanding the history, politics and poetics of Africa. These works articulate and dramatize the dangers of colonialism and the crisis of independence in uncompromising ways. They also underline the necessity of political and social change in a post-colonial situation often defined and driven by ephemeral material concerns and power politics. Their aesthetic engagement is political; consequently, they cannot address social reality in ways other than political. I personally agree with Frederick Jameson when he says that the intellectual in the third world is "always in one way or another a political intellectual"⁹.

End Notes

1- See Sembene's biography in Daniel Serceau, "Sembene Ousmane: Dossier Réuni", Afrique Littéraire, 76 (1985). See also Samba Gadjigo Op.Cit.

2- Dos Passos took pains to create Mary as a female radical character. The attainment of women's suffrage in 1919 had not resulted in much a corresponding improvement in social and economic conditions and women in America in the 1920's and 1930's remained inferior to men both legally and culturally. Moreover, in that period, leftist circles of power were restricted to males in political as well as in literary intellectual terms. Thus it was not easy for women to be radicals.

3-For a complete list on Ngugi's writings see :Ngugi Wa Thiong'o .The Hegelian Lord and Colonial Bondsman : Literature and the Politics of Knowing
<http://www.lib.uci.edu/about/publications/wellek/wellek-series>.

4-Sartre says in this context, "Le cinéma par essence parle aux foules, il leur parle des foules et de leur destin [...] Il faut apprendre à parler en images ... " in Qu'est ce que la littérature (New York : New Viewpoint, 1974), p.299.

5- Guy Hennebelle, "Sembene Ousmane: dénoncer la nouvelle bourgeoisie ", Afrique Asie 83 (du 19 Mai au 1^{er} Juin), 1975, p.64.

6- See Irving Howe , Politics and the Novel (New York : Plume, 1987).

On the American political novel, see Joseph Blotner, the Modern American Political Novel. 1900-1960 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966).

7- Daniel Aaron felt this change of heart in the Big Money in which, according to him, Dos Passos's concern extended to the lone individual. See Writers on the Left: Episodes in American Literary Communism (Columbia: Columbia University press, 1992), pp. 343-53.

8- Stephen Coch, The Breaking Point: Hemingway, Dos Passos and the Murder of José Robles (New York: Counterpoint, 2006).

9- In "Third World Literature in the Era of Multi-National Capitalism", Social Text 15 (1986), pp65-68.

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ملخص

ما الذي قد يجمع بين روائيين أفريقيين هما واتيونفو نفوفي 'Wa Thing'o Ngugi' و سيمبان أوسمان 'Ousmane Sembene' و روائي أمريكي من أدباء 'الجيل الضائع' و هو جون دوسباسوس 'John Dos Passos' ؟ إن المقارنة بين هؤلاء الروائيين تبدو في أول وهلة غريبة، بيد أن هذه الدراسة المقارنة التي تسبر أغوار بعض أعمالهم من حيث تصوّر هؤلاء للمثقف كفيلة بالإجابة عن هذا التساؤل. فهؤلاء الروائيون منشغلون بالمتقف و يستعملونه مرآة عاكسة للواقع الاجتماعي و متحدّثًا بلسان طبقات الشعب و مُعبرًا عن أفكار تدفع إلى العمل الجماعي. و هذا البحث يقوم على دراسة هذا الجانب بالذات، إذ هو يركّز على كيفية استجابة المثقفين للأحداث التاريخية و الاجتماعية في مجتمعاتهم و بخاصة استجابتهم للحرب و الرأسمالية و البورجوازية. و على الرغم من انتماء هؤلاء الروائيين إلى مراحل تاريخية و أدبية مختلفة إلا أنهم يتساوون من حيث الأيديولوجيا، و يتقاسمون المطامح نفسها، و يتفاعلون مع الضغوطات ذاتها. و نتيجة كل هذا هو أنهم يعهدون إلى شخوص رواياتهم من المثقفين القيام بالمهمة التاريخية الجليلة نفسها. و من خلال هذه الدراسة يبرز التمييز بين ثلاث مراحل فنية في كتابات هؤلاء. ففي الروايات التي تعالج النظام السياسي القائم يكون شخوص هذه الروايات من المثقفين مناهضين للحرب، مثل الروائيين أنفسهم الذين يتبنّون جمالية المقاومة و التحرير، و من ذا يظهر أسلوبهم كتابتهم هائجا و مشحونا بالعواطف. أما في الروايات التي تعالج الأيديولوجيا و الثورة، فنجد المثقفين ثائرين ضد الاستغلال الرأسمالي، و من ذا يستعمل الروائيون الواقعية الاشتراكية، غير أن رغبتهم في التعبير عن وضعية عامة يدفعهم إلى اللجوء إلى تقنيات حديثة. و عندما يُظهر الروائيون اهتماما بالتغيير الاجتماعي و بخلق مجتمع طوباوي، فإنهم، و دونما قصد منهم، يجعلون من رواياتهم، و بدرجات متفاوتة، مناشير سياسية/أيديولوجية. و قد اخترت هذا الموضوع الذي أوازن فيه بين ثلاث روايات لدوسباسوس و أربع روايات لنفوفي و ثلاث روايات لسيمبان لأسباب عدّة. فحسب علمي، ليس هناك من دراسة معاصرة تناولت هؤلاء الروائيين الثلاثة مجتمعين، و لا بحثت في موضوع 'المثقف' في رواياتهم. و قد أحببت أن أعمّق في دراسة التشابه الملفت للنظر في هذه الروايات من حيث المواضيع المعالجة و الأسلوب. و فضلا عن هذا، فإن الاهتمام المتساوي لدى هؤلاء الروائيين بالتاريخ حفّزني للنظر فيهم هم أنفسهم و في كتاباتهم. ثم إن هذه الدراسة تلقي الضوء على التوافق الملفت للنظر أيضا لدى هؤلاء الروائيين في نظرتهم إلى السياسة و الأيديولوجيا. و يتناول القسم الأول من هذه الدراسة المثقف و آلة الحرب؛ المثقف و الإصلاح الجذري؛ المثقف و علاقته بالحركات الراديكالية؛ المثقف و المؤسسات الاجتماعية و بخاصة منظمات العمل الأمريكية و الطبقة البورجوازية في روايات دوسباسوس. أما القسم الثاني فيتعرّض إلى كُتاب الرواية الأفارقة و بخاصة سيمبان و نفوفي حيث يفصّل البحث في مسائل عديدة مثل تصوّر هذين الروائيين للمثقف زمن الاستعمار؛ و موقف المثقف المتكوّن تكوينا غربيا من الاستعمار في بلاده؛ و أزمة المثقف بعد الاستعمار؛ و موقف المثقفين من صراع الطبقات؛ و تصوير هذين الروائيين لقادة الاستعمار الحديث في أفريقيا. و في القسم الثالث أدرجت مقارنة بين المثقفين في أعمال الروائيين الثلاثة بحثًا عن أوجه التشابه و الاختلاف في مواقفهم السياسية و الأيديولوجية و المجتمعية، و عن مدى قيامهم بدور المذكرين بالتاريخ، و الحلول التي يقترحونها من أجل التغيير الاجتماعي؛ و فيه أيضا تقييم عام لنوعية أعمال هؤلاء الروائيين كونها أعمالا فنية ذات علاقة بالمثقف.