JOHN DOS PASSOS:
FRAMEWORKS OF AMERICA IN MODERNITY

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts
in English

By
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Sincerely,

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ABSTRACT

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Master of Arts in English

In this thesis I closely examine the trilogy of U.S.A. by John Dos Passos, and demonstrate that it is a significant literary text of American Modernism. Modernism was an aesthetic movement of radical change in response to the transformation of social and cultural paradigms conditioned by historical events in the early twentieth century. As a movement, modernists wished to capture external forces and conditions by advocating reflective introspection in terms of textual representation that challenged previous literary conventions. A distinguishing text of that period is the U.S.A. trilogy, a culmination of three collective but distinct novels: The 42nd Parallel (1930), 1919 (1932), and The Big Money (1936). Using an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates modernist principles to supplement a psychoanalytical theory of language and “méconnaissances” (misrecognitions) developed by Jacques Lacan, I will argue that Dos Passos presents an unconventional protagonist by the construct of a collective consciousness through four apparatuses of narrative: the “Newsreels,” the “Camera Eye,” the “Biography,” and fictional narrative. I claim that the author incorporates modernist techniques to develop a
“subject” (elaborated “I”) situated by a place and time to illustrate America as the protagonist in *U.S.A.*, suggestive of a collective consciousness affected by the textual determinant of mass media of print. I will argue that each modal narrative is part of an encompassing relation of perspectives functioning as utterances of interpretive experiences in a discourse. These contiguous frameworks sequentially delineate cohesive continuities among a seemingly fragmented structure of relations in three novels. The stylistic narrative reflects the psychological composition of a collective consciousness, forming a structural portrait of America coping with the early twentieth century and modernity. Dos Passos’ “chronicle” of a milieu negotiates three developments of America spanning approximately three decades. *U.S.A.* is an avant-garde textual representation of a national identity, a major work in the literary history of American literature and modernism.
Introduction: Framing *U.S.A.* in American Modernity

“Dos Passos has purposely chosen the perspective of history to tell a story.”

~Jean-Paul Sartre

1. Approaching Criticism

After reviewing a 1938 French translation of *1919*, the French philosopher and author Jean-Paul Sartre proclaimed John Dos Passos to be “the greatest writer of our time” (“John Dos Passos and 1919” 80). In retrospect, as Harry Levin noted in “Revisiting Dos Passos’ *U.S.A.*,” the endorsement may have been self-serving of Sartre’s own beliefs as the proclamation may reveal a philosophical leaning which “fitted in particularly well with Sartre’s existentialist position” (401). In any case, it is not difficult to view Dos Passos as a modernist writer of his time. His life resembles the characteristics of a modernist: a cum laude graduate from Harvard, multilingual, world-traveler, a former war-time ambulance driver for the American Red Cross, and a literary figure in early twentieth century. The author’s fiction is comparable to many of his modernist contemporaries who were also experimenting with different forms of writing to a modernist aesthetic in confronting a burgeoning century of new perceptions on (but not limited to) representation of the human psyche through stylistic form. The reason(s) behind such readings from the likes of Sartre do not detract from the value and criticism of Dos Passos’ *1919*, which probably marked a period that was the height of a literary career in radical and modernist experimentation for the author. The relevance of Sartre’s view, at least for this analysis, is his observation on Dos Passos’ literary technique to present a unique narrative of America from the reflective perspective of history, which suggests an underlying historical consciousness.
The criticism surrounding Dos Passos’ life has overshadowed his literary works. Many critics, like Barbara Foley, have analyzed *U.S.A.* through a Marxist/proletarian approach because of Dos Passos’ political association at the time, suggesting that “Dos Passos subscribed to a class-based analysis of social conflict in *U.S.A.* and developed a narrative method that was profoundly dialectical and materialist” (*Radical Representations* 426). Even though Dos Passos never committed himself politically to a proletarian doctrine or to Marxism, criticism has primarily been from one particular view where, as Janet Galligani Casey observes, “Dos Passos scholars have interpreted *U.S.A.* almost exclusively as a socialist text that highlights […] the devastating effects of capitalistic greed” (250). Yet, it is difficult to ignore the facts surrounding Dos Passos and his literary career, as Melvin Landsberg simply states the point in his biography of the author: “*U.S.A.* is not the work of a proletarian, but of a Harvard-educated middle-class radical familiar with many lands, tongues, and literary traditions” (188). The political presence of Marxism is evidently embedded in the text for criticism, especially when the text addresses a period entrenched with industrial revolution and class conflict. However, such an approach seems exclusively to relegate the scope of *U.S.A.* (and Dos Passos) to a single ideology set in America where the notion of “Dos Passos’s conception of historical contradiction is shaped by a Marxist [or proletarian] notion of class struggle” (Foley 425). Other critics have suggested that *U.S.A.* is written less from a Marxist slant and more from an artistic merit that reflects modernist themes of literary experimentation. In “Novelist of America: John Dos Passos,” Mason Wade postulates that “In Dos Passos’ case the [Marxian] revolt has been intensified by the fact that he has lived in the most dollar-dominated era of our nation’s history;” which Wade further claims that Dos Passos
“has not allowed his Marxian convictions to dominate his sensibilities […] to overcome his integrity as an artist” (367). The criticism from both sides is valid in its own right, but I would add that the creation of *U.S.A.* is neither strictly political nor artistic. In light of differing criticism, a conclusion can be made that there is still much to be found in analyzing Dos Passos’ American trilogy, *U.S.A.*

In hopes of broadening the previous scope of analyses, I argue that, along with many other modernist writers that were similarly attempting different ways to reflect a changing world in a new century, Dos Passos may also be seen in the context of a particular social and cultural epoch. I propose that it is significant to reconsider the form that Dos Passos chose to present because he, in his own words, “wanted to write objectively” (“Contemporary Chronicles” 239). It is not to say that he was not political, in any sense, but that he distinguished himself between a citizen and a writer, where a writer is “not to make themselves figureheads in political conflicts. […] his function as a citizen and his function as a technician are different, although the eventual end aimed at may in both cases be the same” (“The Writer as Technician” 171). Dos Passos drew on many historical events that are embedded in the currents and undercurrents from his particular period: “There is no escaping the fact,” Dos Passos says, “that if you are a writer you are dealing with the humanities, with language of all the men of your speech of your generation with their traditions of the past and their feelings and perceptions” (171). The emphasis on language in a particular time is a significant distinction. Dos Passos’ literary technique may then be more ingrained with the empirical experiences that reveal much of the author’s concern with writing and recording history. *U.S.A.* is a modernist experimentation with an outlook on history and language in the humanities, as
a relation between subjects (individuals) and objects (empirical reality). In short, for Dos Passos, language is history. The latter may be interpreted as a construct of the former. History is derived from layers of differing experiences articulated together by language. Dos Passos’ narrative experimentation is geared towards a modernist vein that pervaded an epoch seeking new forms of expressions and representations—to give transparency to the modes that influence the notion of recording history.

I argue that the four frameworks in *U.S.A.* provide a portrait of a projected collective consciousness of a protagonist, which is alluded to by the interpretive juxtaposition of each framework. These contiguous apparatuses are language constructs of history that mirror the fragmentary perspectives reflecting particular experiences in the culmination of a main subject in the trilogy. This thesis claims that Dos Passos paints a collage of America as the collective consciousness of a conflicted “masses” through the “Camera Eye,” the “Biography,” the “Newsreel,” and fictional narrative, chronicling a nation and its multi-layered impression of three decades in American history. Through an interdisciplinary approach into philosophical notions of language, historicism, psychoanalysis, and Marxism, I argue this collective consciousness is an image of a particular group/masses coping with the alienation of early twentieth century. The juxtaposition of four frameworks layers narratorial voices that are referent to particular distinguishable modes of apparatuses that construct the understanding of a collective—however fragmented—of “self” as it is posited within history. Each framework or apparatus serves as an imprint of an American social and cultural paradigm woven together. Although many critics have noted that the protagonist of *U.S.A.* is the nation itself, this thesis will demonstrate that the contiguous frameworks delineate a cohesive
relation of a collective consciousness, in a seemingly fragmented structure, that reflects a protagonist subjugated by social and cultural paradigms, as the four frameworks suggest four strains of experience that are interpretive perspectives in the narrative of a collective nation. Dos Passos’ tale is about an America in a modernist epoch, a unique portrait in the structural complexity of a narrative exploration.

2. Project Outline

This thesis is composed of five parts: an introduction, a theoretical premise, and three following chapters of analyses. The introduction consists of a critical overview of the trilogy with an analysis of “U.S.A.” and “Vag.” Chapter one discusses the four frameworks as a concept of framing a collective as a protagonist of the trilogy. The following three chapters each analyze a novel: respectively, *The 42nd Parallel, 1919*, and *The Big Money*. In this introduction, to set a precedent for the analyses of each respective novel that make up *U.S.A.* the trilogy, a brief contextual presentation of Dos Passos’ text in relation to the most apparent characteristic—the modernist form—is addressed prior to explicating the content for a cogent interpretation in the following chapters. The purpose for doing so is for a reading to reveal the relational aspect each framework has in the interwoven tale of a singular but collective protagonist. This will include an account on the significance of “U.S.A.” and “Vag” to the interpretive writing style Dos Passos chose to employ, which is the culmination of frameworks in a discourse—determining their meaning or purpose for later incorporation into an already massive and complex narrative. I will contextualize Dos Passos and *U.S.A.* in Modernism to justify the text as “modernist,” which encompasses various amalgamations and mutations of the term with
other subgroups in other mediums of art—Futurism, Cubism, Expressionism, Imagism, and, to some extent, Proletarian literature (or proletarian modernism). Distinct in their own way, such groupings in various regions of the world are allocated under the wide and influential umbrella of a modernist aesthetic, which is basically to “make it new” (as Ezra Pound would dictate) by constantly changing the previous standards or practices.

The following chapters after the introduction will discuss the portrait of a collective consciousness as protagonist in *U.S.A*. In chapter one, a theoretical premise will be proposed along the lines of such theorists as Jacques Lacan’s conception of the mirror-image in order to substantiate an analysis of each respective novel by discussing the relation of each framework as they function to develop a distinct collective consciousness progressively changing throughout the entire trilogy. The purpose of such an approach is to illuminate the congruent frameworks as modals of construction that affect narration and the characters in sequentially depicting three impressions of a developing America: *The 42nd Parallel* on the rise of an American collective consciousness in the twentieth century, *1919* on the deterioration of a collective consciousness, and *The Big Money* on the subjugation of a collective consciousness. The result of such a format is basically to set the theoretical premise or lens for my analysis of each significant part in the following three chapters on the stylistic form and content, which emphasize the importance of relationality and composition to give text a multidimensional narration of a collective consciousness to the fiction’s main character, U.S.A.
3. Retrospective of Modernism

Literature is a reflection of vying social and cultural tendencies presenting themselves at a particular moment in time. Modernism brought about an interdisciplinary approach to literature in response to and rejection of the previous generation of literary conventions and traditions. Writers took into account burgeoning concepts that were dominating contemporary narratives in other fields of study to broaden the literary landscape. According to Steven Matthews’ “Introduction” in Modernism: A Sourcebook, “novelists […] sought to re-envision and re-style the processes and scope of the creations. That, from the 1890s onwards, there was a shared impatience with, and anger at, the conventions received from the immediately preceding generation” (2). The old forms of the past were inadequate to represent the changing times and a new generation of writers. The new century marked a disconnection from a previous era that became outdated by new discoveries and theories that coincide with the industrial revolution of the early twentieth century. Modernism became a social and cultural phenomenon that blurred categorizations. The term “modern” took on many forms where different fields amalgamated into one another. In his “Preface” to The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism, Pericles Lewis says, “Other terms have been used for related phenomena [of modernism]: ‘modernity’ in philosophy, ‘modernization’ in sociology, ‘modern music,’ ‘modern art,’ and ‘modern history.’ Literary modernism is intimately bound up with these other phenomena” (xvii). Literary representation shared similar perceptions that contributed to astounding changes, insights, and perspectives about the mind, reality, existence, and its representation:
manifestos, statements, and ‘blasts’—which often themselves stray into the areas of art and music criticism, philosophy and psychology—appeared in these years in order to justify and explain the poems, novels and plays that the writers were themselves working on, or which they had recently published. (Matthews 2)

The turn of a new century signaled a revolution of inspiration and thought wrought by a changing system already shifting towards industrialization. The impact of such historical events affected the approach to literature as it must confront an unfamiliar world. In 1930, Dos Passos recollected that his generation of writers may have been waiting and set for “a new outburst of inventiveness and a new broadening of the field of language […] forced to make a fresh set of adjustments to a changed world” (“Introductory Note to The 42nd Parallel” 180). The social and cultural change of the period unhinged previous epistemological notions about language that writers took as a freedom to explore new modes of expression that incorporated studies from psychology and philosophy to justify and explain contemporary text being written.

Many writers like John Dos Passos—Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Virginia Woolf—were experimenting with new modes of writing to reflect the historical events they were experiencing. They were a group Gertrude Stein unwittingly coined as “a lost generation” (or “une génération perdue”) of writers exploring the internalized narrative perspective, and diverging from the descriptive convention of exhaustive detailing (Hemingway 29). Modernist writers, according to Dos Passos, were obligated to represent, or include, the language of the world that exists in their own time, to construct a language that is referent and particular
in time, and sensitive to its historical milieu. “The professional writer,” Dos Passos says, “discovers some aspect of the world and invents out of the speech of his time some particularly apt and original way of putting it down on paper” (“The Writer as Technician” 269). Exhaustive detailing and the prospect of an omniscient narrator became obsolete to a period that ultimately found such conventions not reflective of the changes taking place. “Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown” (1924) is an exemplary modernist essay by Virginia Woolf advocating the importance that literature differs as the relations among people and the changes in time. She rejects the previous literary convention as inadequate for the new epoch:

> The literary convention of the time is so artificial—you have to talk about the weather and nothing but the weather throughout the entire visit—that, naturally, the feeble are tempted to outrage, and the strong are led to destroy the very foundations and rules of literary society. Signs of this are everywhere apparent. Grammar is violated; syntax disintegrated [...].

(Modernism 396)

Modernism attempted to sever itself from the previous convention and strictures of literary representation in early twentieth century literature. Dos Passos and Woolf were conscious of the impossibility of an omniscient narrator to reveal externalities in the minutest details of a story, like an omnipotent being in a guise to manipulate the reader into a suspension of disbelief. Such practices were no longer relevant for their time to reflect properly the diversity of a new century. Writers explored various styles and techniques in writing to adjust for diverse epistemological and ontological notions that became available to literary representation.
Narrative techniques became apparent as foreground in novels to represent not merely the world but to mirror a psychological point-of-view in the act of perceiving, a perspective addressing the hermeneutic limitations of text in presentation and interpretation; in some instances, these narratives abandoned the formal or traditional convention of representing the world entirely. As Woolf says, “Life is not a series of gigs; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end” (“Modern Fiction” 397).

In modernist literature, as in empirical reality, life for the modern man or woman is not laid out plainly for the reader. Instead, it is only partially visible from a single point of observation, unable to gather and penetrate the fullest extent of experience. It is a culmination of fragmented images and multiple viewpoints, and not a series of prearranged events unfolding in a linear fashion for one singular meaning. Hermeneutically speaking, narration is further complicated as modernists consider the diversity and inconsistency of interpretations. Any understanding of continuity is by the illumination of language that articulates events. Dos Passos simply explains as such: “If several people describe the same scene, say a man and a woman sitting at a table in a room and talking, the results are sure to be very different” (“Introductory note to the The 42nd Parallel” 179). Since every individual has a viewpoint, then every individual has a distinctly unique recollection of witnessing an event, and each recollection is further complicated as it must be articulated within the guidelines of language. A string of words may not adequately depict a particular moment without the loss of mood, time, or impression, which also depends on a person’s mastery of language. Dos Passos’ depiction demonstrates the inconclusiveness of descriptive narration. The indefinite conclusion of
its depiction is inescapable. The prospect of a universal certainty or absolute telling is elusive, and may only be represented through various forms of mediation by language. The conception through a system of vantage points, especially a collection of reflective images, must ultimately differ because of the variety of perceptions and interpretations that exists. The modernist abandons the singular universal vantage point that supposedly reveals everything that is knowable and denies the linear perspective of narration. With such radical concepts, literary interpretation must go through filtration to be further understood by a “cross-fertilization” into psychoanalysis for an epistemological premise of cognitive perception (Matthews 5). In short, more writers gave consideration to the psychology of a narrator as revealing the narration itself.

Psychoanalytic notions found their way into the consciousness and works of many literary writers from the early twentieth century. The impact of psychoanalysis popularized an exploration of introverted or internal self-examinations in literary Modernism, evident in the presentation of an interior monologue employed by Dos Passos in the Camera Eye section to imitate the uninhibited narrative that a psychoanalytic process may reveal. The historical conditions of the early twentieth century conscripted psychoanalytic notions for literary representation. As Terry Eagleton indicates, psychoanalysis affected human relations that “constituted [experiences] in a new way as a systematic field of knowledge. This field of knowledge is known as psychoanalysis, developed by Sigmund Freud in late nineteenth century Vienna” (“Psychoanalysis” 131). Although the paradox of representation defies a definitive meaning, especially through text, a psychoanalytic approach projects to reveal an underlying actuality—in the sense of mental cognition—that is to be more reflective of a
psychological process in the narrative presentation by a narrator imposed through the structure of language.

One such tool is termed an interior monologue in literary practices. This interior monologue, which is an uninhibited stream of consciousness similar to Freud’s concept of “free association” or “talking cure,” is a widely known process established in the field of psychoanalysis where the “patient says whatever comes into her [or his] mind, with no effort to screen or select thoughts, and is encouraged to become a passive observer of her [or his] own stream of consciousness [...]” And,

Free association unhinges the patient’s speech from ordinary subjectivity, ego concerns, needful attachments to imaginary others. [...] It is this disposal of the conventional subject that allows the unconscious Subject, the Other, to speak through the patient. In this way something deeper than the ordinary awareness of the subject finds its distinctive voice. (Mitchell 199)

It is easy to see the kind of attraction such concepts held for modernist writers. The technique emphasizes breaking away from conventional means of human understanding—as something is perceived or conceived. The “unhinging” or “disposal” suggests something is hidden or restricted. The Other, or the true Subject bound by the social and cultural language, achieves an awareness of its own distinct voice. This Other is closer to attainment of empirical actuality in awareness and voice. In the same vein with modernist endeavors, free association is a process that attempts an “unhinging” of conscripted expectations to reveal a narrative beyond a superficial façade. As a literary tool that aptly coincides with modernist aesthetics, this process, in theory, purports to
uncover a deeper meaning—justify and explain the text—beyond the “ordinary awareness” reception in the imperfect and unguided narrative that is nearest to depicting a natural (unmediated) speech. This method bypasses the conventional subject (ego as a scripted narrative) composed of restrictions from social and cultural conventions and traditions (Mitchell 199). The free association in stream of consciousness reveals itself as an interpretation needful of decoding. Decoding the stream of consciousness gives further understanding by disposing illusions of certainty for uncovering “the unconscious Subject, the Other,” which underlies the complexity of such modernist texts.

The notion of meaning is then contingent on psychological verities, which have theoretical implications on the text. The prospect of interpretation—i.e., receiving/transmitting—complicates the construction of an adequate form to acquire a definitive meaning that is not necessarily reliable, and is demanding of the reader. The notion of subjectivity then lends focus on the strictures of language that transpose meaning. There might be a consensus—an ideal—of a general “truth” but that has its ambiguities. There are always “gaps” where pieces of information are lost in transmission or interpretation. According to Eagleton, “Meaning is always in some sense an approximation […]. We can certainly never articulate the truth in some ‘pure,’ unmediated way […]” (146-47). Parts of the original, or “pure,” meaning are lost in the act of transmission between one source (or sources) to another because of an ever existing “gap” between word and meaning, which echoes the complexity of describing one scene by several people in Dos Passos’ example discussed earlier. The reason is the instability of articulation and reception of meaning through a constructed systematic language for understanding, as vocalization or transmission of the precise meaning is lost
through the compromise of conditioned strictures in wording and grammar. Meaning once conceived is already lost because the constant flux that exists in attempting communication through sense and discourse, which cannot fully be actualized because articulation must adhere to restrictions of the social and cultural paradigms that standardize language. As Woolf concludes, “we must reconcile ourselves to a season of failures and fragments. […] so much strength is spent on finding a way of telling the truth itself is bound to reach us in rather an exhausted and chaotic condition” (“Modern Fiction” 397). Meaning is always imperfect because it cannot be completely, or absolutely, presented or comprehended through an inconclusive medium such as text.

With such epistemological notions, literary representation shifts focus from external to internal exploration by modernists. Psychological concepts of reality or the experience of reality, in the empirical sense, are significant in the construction of form as a mirror into the preconditions of a narrator, or narration itself. This reflection of interior mechanics is the preoccupation with self-examination and psychical interpretations. The advent of psychoanalysis in the early twentieth century is then a historical event that presented itself as a literary tool, as an available condition at that particular period in time. In “Composition as Explanation” (1926), the modernist advocate Gertrude Stein adamantly states that the composition of a work is reflective of the changes that dictate composition. As periods differ, so does the composition of representing life, not for what it is but from the observance of systems. Literature changes with the actions that determine the history of the world: “Each period of living differs from any other period of living not in the way life is but in the way life is conducted and that authentically speaking is composition” (424). As a literary modernist, Stein’s focus is not on life itself
but the systems that condition life. She is disposing of the importance in determining
definitive meaning of an ontological certainty or “truth.” Instead, her emphasis is on the
systems that regulate the epistemology of existence, or the strictures that a person is able
to function in the social and cultural paradigms. Such systems are historically bound
because the available conditions are unique to a particular time, and composition is bound
by the changing systems shifting through history. Conscious of such uncertainties of
medium, Stein observes that the events influencing the world are historical and literature
must reflect history.

Dos Passos shares similar modernist attitudes. He declared that “American writers
who want to do the most valuable kind of work will find themselves trying to discover
the deep currents of historical change under the surface of opinions, orthodoxies,
heresies, gossip and the journalistic garbage of the day”—features very much present in
the stylistic composition of *U.S.A.* (“The Writer as Technician” 171). For Dos Passos, an
underlying history exists beyond the surface of systemic noise, or the traditions of social
and cultural paradigms. In literary representation, on perceiving empirical or concrete
reality, the epistemological limits are defined: “No one is ahead of his time, it is only that
the particular variety of creating his time is the one that his contemporaries who also are
creating their own time refuse to accept” (Stein 422). In Stein’s view, a writer who does
not believe in representing his time is in denial of the fact that he cannot be absent of his
time. For many modernist writers like Dos Passos, Woolf, and Stein, form is historical,
and the composition that gives meaning to modernist writings. Their emphases are on the
discourse of language and its connection or disconnection with the social and cultural
paradigms of early twentieth century.
4. Two Portrait Sketches to *U.S.A.*

Dos Passos later wrote two portrait sketches in 1938—“U.S.A.” and “Vag”—for the American one-volume collection that included *The 42\textsuperscript{nd} Parallel, 1919*, and *The Big Money* (the culminating collection receiving the title *U.S.A.*). Although conceived after the trilogy, the two portrait sketches are part of the experimental frameworks in *U.S.A.* proper, particularly since Dos Passos also refers to the Biographies as “portraits” in the 1930 publication of “Introductory Notes to *The 42\textsuperscript{nd} Parallel.*” The two portrait sketches, in some sense, are two halves of one Biography and may be analyzed as a set. As the Biographies are of real people, the two portrait sketches are together one whole portrait/biography of a real subject, *U.S.A.*

“U.S.A.” and “Vag” elucidate further on the narrative form of the collective trilogy, encapsulating a long discourse consisting a series of shifting sequences to portray a unique form emblematic of its time. Both are instrumental for inducting the reader into a text that is encompassing, demanding, and ambiguous in its narrative, defying a linear reading in the three substantial novels. “Each event is irreducible,” says Sartre, “a gleaming and solitary thing that does not flow from anything else, but suddenly arises to join other things” (72). The two portrait sketches are not merely the prologue and epilogue to a singular “real protagonist” suggested by Blanche H. Gelfant in “The Search for Identity in the Novels of John Dos Passos,” or simply to set up and conclude the plot of a story (157). The portrait sketches serve as a premise to the complex narrative structure in the three respective novels, maintaining modernist themes that deal with issues concerned with such things as urban life, loneliness, alienation, and a longing for the past. In some respects, both are better referred to as sketches of a “portrait” because
“U.S.A.” and “Vag” are two parts of one condense and symbolic portrait that prefigures a larger portrait where, according to Wade, “[Dos Passos] has painted an unmatched portrait of America” (360). Together, “U.S.A.” and “Vag” outline the parameters of a narrative construct that resonates throughout U.S.A. proper, which anticipates the treatment of America through four stylistic modal components. The incorporation of the two portrait sketches as part of the massive work warrants significant consideration in offering a sense of relevant thematic synopsis to the trilogy’s narrative structure of shifting sequences in a similar vein with modernist aesthetics.

“U.S.A.” establishes a relation of the singular to the plural (or masses) that are interconnected by the construct of utterance, or “speeches.” The narrative begins with the perspective of a singular character until he is overwhelmed by his external experiences of a unique time wrought by modernization that changed a nation and its people. The connection between the two is on the bases of “speeches,” as the young man longs to “catch the speech” of the people and “U.S.A. is the speech of the people” (2-3). The role of “speech” (or narrative as utterance) is significant in the construct of representation, or the construct of the young man and U.S.A. The juxtaposition between the young every-man and young every-American draws attention to the function of inscription, in the theoretical sense, as Levin notes that the trilogy is “the interweaving and shaping of private existences by public events” (405). It sets the scope of the narrative; its horizon of expectation ranges from the very minute “YOUNG MAN” to the very massive “U.S.A.” To borrow from Alfred Kazin in “Dos Passos and the ‘Lost Generation’”: “The tragic ‘I’ has become the tragic inclusive ‘we’ of modern society” (1). The simultaneous mixing of ordinary or “average Joe” with the masses of a nation strikes a thematic modernist
principle, blurring literary practices and redefining narrative modes. The story is neither high-brow nor low-brow, big nor small, important nor insignificant; it is about everything of a nation all at once, and such a proposal is reflected in the narrative form.

The first portrait sketch inaugurates the reader into the historically unique character of an American in the early twentieth century. The narrative is very clear and simple at the beginning:

THE YOUNG MAN walks fast by himself through the crowd that thins into the night streets; feet are tired from hours of walking; eyes greedy for warm curve of faces, answering flicker of eyes, the set of a head, the lift of a shoulder, the way hands spread and clench; blood tingles with wants; mind is a beehive of hopes buzzing and stinging; muscles ache for the knowledge of jobs […]. The young man walks by himself searching through the crowd with greedy eyes, greedy ears taut to hear, by himself, alone. (1)

The first sentence is from the perspective of a nameless “young man” wandering and looking for work. However, there is no direct depiction of the young man. The image of him remains vague and uncertain. There are no specifics as to who he is, what he looks like, where he is going, or anything definitive of the young man, other than a sense of the seemingly modernist theme in his loneliness at reflecting and searching for meaning to a life he cannot afford without a job or place in society; and in turn, the young man is devalued by the absence of a society: “The streets are empty” (1). His state of mind (or confused condition) is the only clear “portrait” of him—that he is alone and struggling (mentally and physically): “At night, head swimming with wants, he walks by himself
alone” (2). The descriptive depiction is more directly focused on his surroundings—city life—than the supposed protagonist; the multitude of things slowly overwhelms any sense of the young man wandering by himself. He is subsumed by his environment, and yearning to catch a familiar tale or image:

People have packed into subways, climbed into streetcars and buses; in the stations they’ve scampered for suburban trains; they’ve filtered into lodgings and tenements, gone up in elevators into apartmenthouses. In a showwindow two sallow windowdressers in their shirtsleeves are bringing out a dummy girl in a red evening dress, at a corner welders in masks lean into sheets of blue flame repairing a cartrack, a few drunk bums shamble along, a sad streetwalker fidgets under an arclight. From the river comes the deep rumbling whistle of a steamboat leaving dock. A tug hoots far away. (1)

His experience leaves him to his only recourse, which is to reflect on his memories of the speeches that defined his hopes of a nation. The existential reflection of the young man’s recollection changes the tense of the narration that reconstitutes the parameters of a narrative technique.

The narrative technique is of a supposed observer who becomes less important than the impression of a milieu. The impression of the young man is mainly through his relation to the empirical experiences of material events. He is indirectly given substance through a perspective of his peripherals, and serves as a narrative vehicle recollecting external moments. He walks alone on a street that is immediately emptied once day becomes night. In an instant, time has passed him by, and the young man is already
forced to recall its disappearance. His experience is but a constant memory, quickly fading into a blur of “wants” tingling in the blood and “a beehive of hopes” in the mind as the remaining remnants of his days (1). These internal reflections are the only things left as all the people disappear into their lives—things to do, places to be—and he wishes to follow them if he could just satisfy his deprived muscles “for the knowledge of jobs” (1). The narrator becomes a figure that is segregated and, at the same time, included in a collective portrayal that is not of him but includes him. His experiences of historical conditions give rise to a tale of something other than himself.

The internalized polarization of the young man to his external condition (or U.S.A.) is through his displacement between two temporal constructs of America. The reason is because he is composed of the words of his past, which conflict with his present: “in his mother’s words telling about long ago, in his father’s telling about when I was a boy, in the kidding stories of uncles, in the lies the kids told at school, the hired man’s yarns, the tall tales the doughboys told after taps” (2). He grew up embedded with old stories uttered to him from his youth, evoking old traditions and spirits of an America and an American dream he is unable to discover: “[in the] speech that clung to the ears, the link that tingled in the blood; U.S.A.” (2). There is nothing for him—“No job, no woman, no house, no city”—except struggling to cope in his yearning to feel less alone by returning to the past telling of his mother, father, uncles, schoolmates, and of other relations that are not presently with him (2). But with the forced realization that “one life is not enough,” the young man is alienated to a lonely wanderer searching for a future (1). He would need more than a lifetime to cope. The young man must confront the fact of
somehow finding solace between his past and present in his struggle to survive. The America he wishes to find is then reconstituted by the America he must face.

The young man is dehumanized to a national statistic. He is unable to participate in a new century because he cannot keep up with the pace of its modernization: “[he walks] fast but not fast enough, far but not far enough (faces slide out of sight, talk trails into tattered scraps, footsteps tap fainter in alleys)” (1). A binary construct is initiated between the two polarized entities: one is in the telling from the young man’s past and another emerging out of the telling from a concrete U.S.A. Both impressions draw substance in the narrative of speeches (or narrative as utterance) that condition differing perspectives, alluding to the conflicting images inscribed onto the young man and U.S.A. by social and cultural paradigms. The composite of U.S.A. is of various speeches that tell its own story, or rather, the manifestation of an entity as collective consciousness in the fiction. By the fifth full paragraph, the narration transitions from the young man to the underlying focus of the portrait: the speeches of a nation composed of cities and its milieu. “It was not in the long walks through jostling crowds at night that he was [the young man] was less alone, […] it was speech that clung to the ears, the link that tingled in the blood; U.S.A.” (2). U.S.A. is a construct of many narratives: companies, trade unions, laws, picture theatres, stock quotations, newspapers, history books, bigmouthed officials, men buried in their uniforms, and the many variants of modernity (2-3). As the narrative transitions from the young man to U.S.A., the wandering young man becomes a bystander reflectively observing what is outside of him. The narrative perspective is turned inside out. U.S.A. portrays a different perspective with the inclusion of the young man: that is, the things the young man depicts as being apart and outside of himself is
then viewed as components of a U.S.A. the young man must accept. In telling his story, the young man is relating the history of America because “U.S.A. is the speech of the people” (3). America has its own telling of stories. The transition is intentional, and the telling of U.S.A. follows in the trilogy for the young man to embrace. By the end of the portrait sketch, the young man is superimposed as a composite to a U.S.A.

By the end of the trilogy, “Vag” returns to the young man for the last impression of U.S.A. He is given to summarize the binary construct of an opposing American dream to an American modernity that is alluded to in the first portrait sketch. However, the nostalgia of the young man’s telling since the first portrait sketch has been replaced by the memory of brutal concrete experiences: “The punch in the jaw, the slam on the head with the nightstick, the wrist grabbed and twisted behind the back, the big knee brought up sharp into the crotch” (1239). The American dream and American modernity are worlds apart. The displaced young man, or the symbolic common man, is left stranded “on the side of the road”—remaining a bystander—while the rest of U.S.A. is quickening its pace, with the echoing reminder that the young man and modern society are constantly “A hundred miles down the road” apart from one another (1240). Dos Passos, according to John Rohrkemper, “eloquently explore[s] the dark side of the American dream and at the same time help to reshape our notions about the possibilities of form and style in the novel” (x). The young man waits for an America that has distanced itself from him. And in the narrative of “Vag,” U.S.A. is nowhere to be found but in the parenthesis of a geographic wish-fulfillment while cars drive by and a far-off airplane fly over the abandoned young man.
“Vag” concludes a seemingly non-stop narrative of the three preceding novels, emphasizing a modernist attitude of ennui that mixes restlessness with memory, desire, and disconnect between the symbolic young man and the modernity of America. The narrative in “Vag” is compartmentalized, at best, as U.S.A. is indirectly referenced to in parenthesis. The narrative structure itself reiterates the alternating and sequencing of two opposing vantage points, which are the constructs that cast two very different perceptions of U.S.A. The disparity is as spacious as the distance between the young man and the transcontinental passengers in the plane, which might as well be a hundred miles away. While the young man on the ground is filled with the hopes and desires for an American dream, the transcontinental passenger high above him is an empty shell filled with only the thoughts of dollar signs as their plane survey over the country:

The transcontinental passenger thinks contracts, profits, vacationtrips, mighty continent between Atlantic and Pacific, power, wires humming dollars, cities jammed, hills empty, the indiantrail leading into the wagonroad, the macadamed pike, the concrete skyway; trains, planes: history the billiondollar speedup (1240)

American modernity is very different from the hopes and desires of the young man’s American dream. For the young man, the two do not coincide because, in the end, he has been lured by false promises of an American ideal:

[the young man] went to school, books said opportunity, ads promised speed, own your home shine bigger than your neighbor, the radiocrooner whispered girls, ghosts of platinum girls coaxed from the screen, millions
in winnings were chalked up on the boards in the offices, paychecks were for hands willing to work (1240)

The juxtaposition is a heavy contrast of two conflicting impressions that emerge out of the American landscape. The contrast indicates the dark side of an American dream. The young man is a traveler seeking his fortune, or a life for himself, but does not find success because he is guided by empty promises. This is exemplified by the image of a plane unaware of his existence: “Overhead in the blue a plane drones. Eyes follow the silver Douglas that flashes once in the sun and bores its smooth way out of sight into the blue” (1239). The plane moves at a pace beyond the young man’s vision, leaving him behind. Although the American dream exists, per se, it is a construct of illusions. For the young man, the American dream is based on desires by constructs of his past. These constructs are contrary to his empirical experience. However, the transcontinental passenger has probably attained a semblance of an American dream, but this person views America as a commodity. The passenger is a traveler with a view from above, and sees the conditions of modernity on America. In the end, U.S.A. is a nation of two images.

“U.S.A.” and “Vag” are two counterparts of a thematic portrait that overlay the bulk of a text set at the center of the two portrait sketches. The two portrait sketches are a minor portrait in anticipation to the portrait of U.S.A. proper. The themes embedded in the short narratives are of modernist intentions. “As a technician,” says Levin, “[Dos Passos] developed his own new modes for expressing the complications of modernity” (415). These themes translate throughout the three novels even before the inclusion of “U.S.A.” and “Vag” in 1938, but their conception aid to realize the opposing thematic
point-of-views embedded in the trilogy. The 42nd Parallel, 1919, and The Big Money are bound together by the precepts that are alluded to in the “portrait” of a collective consciousness in U.S.A. The suggested subject entailed by these portrait sketches is that the tale is of a nation, and the tale is a construct of four different perspectives that make up that identity (or collective consciousness) from the narrative utterances (“speeches”) of dominant social and cultural paradigms. “U.S.A.” and “Vag” clarify and illustrate a model of relations to foreshadow the four modal narratives in U.S.A. proper, between a symbolic “common man” (later suggestive of a narrator behind the “Camera Eye”) and all the figures involved in the construct of a collective consciousness, which includes the “Newsreels,” the “Biographies,” and fictional narrative.
Chapter I: An Interdisciplinary Discourse of *U.S.A.*

“Man is a creature who makes pictures of himself,
and then comes to resemble the picture.”

~Iris Murdoch, ‘Metaphysics and Ethics’

John Dos Passos uses four narrative apparatuses in the *U.S.A.* trilogy to depict a story about America. The narrative form projects a collective consciousness of a protagonist in the trilogy, since the trilogy is clearly about the self-titled U.S.A. The protagonist is deliberated by the collaborative perspectives of the “Camera Eye,” “Newsreel,” “Biographies,” and fictional narrative. The four frameworks are interwoven by a discourse that culminates into a collective consciousness. They are reflective constructs of social and cultural paradigms that are a discourse of multiple narratives. Together, the interplay and juxtaposition of the frameworks suggest a projection of a collective consciousness, in the sense that each modal or framework is a narrative voice with its own “speech” in language that manifests an identification of a subject from four fragmented and contiguous strains of experience (which I will clarify in detail below).

This propositional approach is better understood in reference to Jacques Lacan’s interpretation of the imaginary (or mirror stage) in psychoanalytic experience. To use Lacan’s theory as a basis for analysis, the composition of Dos Passos’ four frameworks mirror apparatuses of psychoanalytic experience that reflect the discourse of social and cultural paradigms and a body of characters in the portrait of an American consciousness as the protagonist.

The relevance between Dos Passos’ four frameworks and a Lacanian approach is with the interpretation of language and history. Lacan’s notion on language coincides with modernist aesthetics. Both share the aesthetic principle that language and history are
interconnected. As mentioned earlier in the introduction, literary modernists propose that composition of language in literature should reflect history. Modernists, like Dos Passos, set out to modify textual representation to the influence of history in their experimental writings. The distinguishing difference in a Lacanian viewpoint is in the origin of reflection. Lacan understands language in the opposite direction, as history reflecting language or that language is historical: “language and its structure exist prior to the moment at which each subject at a certain point in his mental development makes his entry into it” (Lacan 1291). His notion is based on the theory that language and its structure are precursors of a subject before taking part in a discourse, a discourse which later establishes the subject into a tradition that awaits the “drama of history” (or drama that projects an individual into history) (Lacan 1288). He theorizes that since language predates mental development or recognition of an individual, one does not create something that exists prior to one’s being but is conditioned by it: “he is not creating the language he is speaking, but, rather, that language predates him and shapes his experience” (Mitchell 199). For Lacan, language is a system one enters into when becoming a part of a community. In consideration of modernist aesthetics from a Lacanian perspective, the drama of history perpetuated by language imposes itself on the creative composition of literary experimentation. Literary expression is then dictated by the history of language, as oppose to the language of history. The narrative structure is closely tied to spatial and temporal utterances. In context of the trilogy’s narration, language—in the sense that each framework is representative of a type of speech or narrative voice—dictates the form of composition, which U.S.A. is conditioned by such constructs of the early twentieth century. The frameworks are representative of the
conditions that determine a particular narrative voicing. Modernist’s emphasis on language gave rise to dominating factors that led to such experimentations with montage, fragmentation, and introspective narration: “Whatever the nature of the content, the writer’s task [is to] make *presentation* the centre of attention” (Matthew 13-14). The modernist theory and Lacanian theory are connected based on their focus on language. The difference between modernist and Lacanian perspectives may simply be a matter of interpretation itself.

Lacan posits language and its structure as the carrier of social and cultural paradigms determinative of epistemological and ontological recognition. It is the understanding that self-recognition is identification with an illusionary “self,” an image that is conditioned by social and cultural paradigms (Lacan 1291). The notion suggests that the perception of the visible world is a construct determined by language. The perception that one has of oneself, one’s surrounding, of others, and others of oneself is a fictional mirror-image. For Lacan, nothing exists without the authority of language. He rejects the Cartesian statement of “I think, therefore I am (cogito ergo sum)” for a more appropriately revised “I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think” (“From The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious” 1300-02). It is a spatial and temporal concept of experience where, although interaction is empirical, actualization is based on pre-existing systems. The revision relocates the subject within the discourse of language. The subject as “I” which “thinks” is doing so within the system of language. It is misrecognition by a fictional narration in the tradition of language and its structure. For instance, the label of “American” signifies a chain of traditions and expectations conditioning the ontological precept of a subject. The subject identifies itself on
prefabricated stipulations conditioned by consensus in repetitive utterances within the subject’s experiences. Lacan’s revision postulates that identification is rooted in the depiction of an illusion by the authority of language where, from very early on, the child experiences in a series of gestures: “the relation between the movements assumed in the image and the reflected environment, and between this virtual complex and the reality it reduplicates—the child’s own body, and the persons and things, around him” (Lacan 1285). Thus, the concept of “I” that is believed to reaffirm a subject by the occurrence of thought is a misrecognition, a mimicry of the “imago”—i.e., likeness, statue (Latin)—in a repetition of social and cultural paradigms that projects an illusionary construct on to the subject (1286). Language and its structure dictate—in various forms—to condition subjects wishing to participate in a system of encoded words.

Lacan’s reinterpretation of Freud coincides with Dos Passos’ stylistic experimentation with narrative form. Linguistically speaking, “history” is an incorporation of repetitive narratives of spatial and temporal conditions set by language and its structure. Indoctrination into the tradition of society or culture “could well be reduced to language” (Lacan 1291). Such a premise may be seen playing out in Dos Passos’ narrative structure of the trilogy. In U.S.A. proper, the correlation is unmistakable in the collective portrait of a protagonist that Dos Passos attempts to paint with the concept of four frameworks, each framework having its own “speech” to inscribe a depiction of U.S.A. The four frameworks, according to John P. Diggins, “[are] a collective portrait of American society that spanned three decades of American social history. Together these four techniques achieve the desired effect” (333). These
apparatuses project a collective consciousness by a stylistic narrative form, reflective of four distinct utterances of méconnaissances (misrecognition).

To clarify further on the function of each framework, Lacan distinguishes two types of speeches—“empty speech” and “full speech”—in psychoanalytic experience. The two are distinguished in terms of the latter being “a more authentic voice to break through the ordinary constrictions of language” (Mitchell 199). Lacan’s use of the term “authentic” is not important, in the sense that neither one is preferred or privileged over the other. The significance is their role as intended content (“empty speech”) and symbolic structures (“full speech”). In Lacanian terms, full speech is unhinged from the strictures of ordinary experience with language and its structure through “free association” or stream of consciousness. Such an example of this can be seen in Dos Passos’ use of the Camera Eye as the utterance of a narrator in the form of an interior monologue. Opposed to full speech, empty speech is distinguished in line with the ordinary constrictions of language. Empty speech observes the strictures of language and its structure. Language and its structure dictate the construct of empty speech. The Newsreel framework is a reflection of such a construct, since it is the utterance of a standardized form of communication to (or of) the masses. Biographies compliment the construct of Newsreel, which depict contributing forces that condition the Newsreel. Together with the fictional narrative, in contiguous juxtaposition and in various sequences, the four frameworks utter a system of multiple experiences like “four kinds of ore […] being mined simultaneously” (Becker 58). These “speeches” in the narrative of the trilogy serve to articulate “the speech of the people” by chronicling a collective in the trilogy, in the sense that each framework “speaks” from a mode of experience (3). In
which case, the *U.S.A.* trilogy spans a gradient spectrum of narrative voicing by four narrative frameworks.

The utterances of speech are significant to the relation of narrative form as a construct of *U.S.A.*, which is in the same manner Lacan interprets the function of “speech” in language. “Most of the narratives,” as David L. Vanderwerken says, “are concerned with the relationship of the characters to the language they use or to the swirl of language around them” (196). Comparatively between the frameworks, the Biographies and Newsreel are an expression of “empty speech,” experiences subjugated to the particular strictures of language and its structure. In relation to full speech, empty speech is the illusion that encompasses, pervades, affects, and contrasts the singular stream-of-consciousness of the Camera Eye. The Camera Eye is then an expression of full speech, evident by its unstructured narrative of an interior monologue. The three auxiliary devices, much like the relation between the young man and *U.S.A.* mentioned earlier, establishes the textual discourse between the private and public languages of a subject. The juxtaposition between the intended content (“empty speech”) and symbolic structures (“full speech”)—as they are the juxtapositions of the four frameworks in the trilogy—is to uncover a deeper understanding of a subject within an ensemble that operates in language. According to Lacan, the psychoanalysis purpose is for “an exegesis of the unintended meanings (the governing signifiers) in the patient’s speech” (Mitchell 199). Furthermore, the relation illustrates the polarity Lacan interprets consciousness and unconsciousness. With the three auxiliary devices, the fictional narrative is the recognition of many and different levels of a populous or collective. The private and public languages manifest themselves to a body of characters in the fictional narrative, as
Alfred Kazin says, “four panels, four levels of American experience—the narrative proper, the “Camera Eye,” the “Biographies,” and the “Newsreel” (14). Lacan’s model of the psychoanalytic experience as a mirror-image is complete. The imaginary (“imaginary”) of an idealized version, or “Ideal-I,” is built around the ego of a subject, which “is as much of a social creation […] constructed out of reflections of the perspectives of others. […] fully embedded, in an unself-conscious fashion, in this alienated world of images and illusions, reflections of reflections” (Mitchell 197). These reflections are the utterances and speeches through four frameworks in U.S.A. All four frameworks portray the relations that culminate the collective consciousness of America as a protagonist.

The four frameworks are stylistic fragments that portray a subject in U.S.A. The “subject” is the collective consciousness, America as protagonist. The composition of each framework is embedded with the words that suggest relations throughout three substantial novels. All four frameworks comment and inform each other through juxtaposition as four relational strains of experience. According to Janet Galligani Casey, Meaning in U.S.A. is created by the complex interactions among these varied narrative modes […]—the ways in which the Newsreels, Biographies, and Camera Eye sections comment on each other as well as how they singly and collectively illuminate the larger body of the fictional narratives. (249)

These four frameworks may aptly be interpreted as four strains of a collective consciousness that are separate but cohesive apparatic perspectives to name/narrate a protagonist from layers of modal utterances. The interpretive frameworks are not in the conventional sense of a linear narrative given by a singular perspective. According to
Diggins, “With these stylistic devices Dos Passos found a framework to hold together a subject too vast for the traditional forms of the novel” (333). However fragmented, the episodic structure of the trilogy mirrors a protagonist’s experiences from the first three decades of the twentieth century. It is the uncovering of an “unintended meaning” derived from Lacan’s approach to language in translating or decoding the utterances of speech (i.e., empty and full) mentioned earlier. In the system of language, words are encoded with symbolic meaning and have particular relations that may be “underlying chains of signifiers, words grouped around common, intersecting nodal points, which link them to other word chains” (Mitchell 200). In general, Lacan’s theoretical understanding of language is that “meaning is found in the relationship of important key words to each other, rather than in the relationship between those words and what they signify” (200). For Dos Passos, these links and chains exist between the relations of his four frameworks. The frameworks are continually grouped and regrouped by various juxtapositions, intervals, and quantities. The different combinations not only alter the narrative structure but the meaning of the frameworks because of the relations derived from a complex woven discourse. Each framework is an experience from a distinct perspective: the “Camera Eye” as the private chronology of an American; the “Newsreel” as the social and cultural milieu shaping mass consciousness of an American populous; Biographies as portraits of iconic figures instrumental in shaping the consciousness of American history; and fictional narrative as the group-fusion (or “body”) of inscribed characters. All four frameworks reveal a degree of consciousness that participate in a larger discourse of a collective consciousness, illuminating America to be the vast subject of the trilogy.
The Camera Eye expresses the interior monologue of a narrator. It functions as the speech of a private individual. As the framework title suggests, Camera Eye are snapshots through a camera lens. It is an uninhibited interior monologue revealing the private experience of one individual. Although the young man is suggestive as the interior monologue of the Camera Eye, as mentioned previously, the two portrait sketches of “U.S.A.” and “Vag” establishes him to be the narrator of that framework. The young man’s memory of his mother’s telling, mentioned in “U.S.A.,” manifests themselves in the first moments of Camera Eye (1) as a recollection of the time he and his mother were trying to escape a crowd chasing them in a foreign country:

- easier if you hold Mother’s hand and hanging on it […] She’s walking fast
- and we’re running […] Quick darling quick in the postcard shop its quiet
- the angry people are outside and cant come in […] under the counter it’s dark and the lady the nice Dutch lady who loves Americans and has relations in Trenton show you postcards that shine in the dark pretty hotels and palaces [.] (13)

The continuity of such experiences continue throughout the trilogy until the last Camera Eye (51), where the young man recalls his experience of being jailed with other foreigners. It is a recollection filled with morbid pessimism and prejudice:

- in the jail it’s light too hot the steamheat hisses we talk through the green painted iron bars […] (in another continent I have seen the faces looking out through the barred basement windows […] I have seen the dead lying out in those distant deeper valleys) […] the law is a big man with eyes
angry in a big pumpkinface who sits and stares at us meddling foreigners through the door the deputies crane with their guns [.] (1208)

The experience is then alluded to again later in “Vag” through the description of the young man’s attire and disposition. The young man’s interior monologue may have ended but the experience is inscribed onto his mind, body, and spirit. The echo of death, jail, violence, and law officers are inscribed upon him:

he has skinned a heel through the torn sock […] the torn drawers have a crummy feel, the feel of having slept in your clothes; in the nostrils lingers the staleness of discouraged carcasses crowded into a transient camp, the carbolic stench of the jail, on the taut cheeks the shamed flush from the boring eyes of cops and deputies [.] (1239)

The young man is consistently the one single figure throughout the entire trilogy.

According to Blanche H. Gelfant, “This faceless and perturbed young man is the generic figure in Dos Passos’ fiction. He is defined most clearly in the fleeting impressions of the Camera Eye” (157). He is the generic figure of a protagonist-type, without being the protagonist. The Camera Eye unfolds an impression of an underlying unconscious “I” of a narrator for the collective consciousness of U.S.A. Although revealingly autobiographical of the author’s life, as James N. Westerhoven establishes in his “Autobiographical Elements in the Camera Eye,” the Camera Eye textually situates an expressive thread sewn throughout the trilogy (340). It establishes a binding narrative framework of an observer and narrator, an interior monologue portraying the personal and uninhibited reactions to exterior experiences. The young man recalls his entire life up
till the last portrait sketch in “Vag.” The Camera Eye is the chronology of personal experiences tied into a relation with three other frameworks.

The Camera Eye is a representational strain that constitutes the subjectivity of a collective consciousness. It is an expressive framework of a narrator’s experience—in the form of a private voice—progressing towards a collective, according to Ludington Townsend, “[in its] gradual assimilation into a world beyond the shelter of his self-conscious imagination” (444). However, the narrator’s assimilation is by the construct of his interior monologue, struggling to make sense of all the fragmentary images of his memory. “The Camera Eye character,” says Robert C. Rosen, “often sees his struggle to become an actor in history as a struggle with language” (87). The narrator has yet to conform to the strictures of language. He has not adopted the language of an illusion, unable to articulate himself into a social and cultural community. The unstructured clumping of words and sentences are the evident results: stream of consciousness.

Throughout the trilogy, Camera Eye traces three impressions or stages of development of the narrator: the young man since he was a child in The 42nd Parallel, the young man’s experiences overseas as an American in 1919, and the young man’s experiences at home as an American in The Big Money. The young man’s experiences are his assimilation into a visual world of language. His struggle is a textual negotiation in relation to the other frameworks that posits the private individual in relation to the public in the Newsreel, a parallel to iconic personas in the Biographies, and the body of characters in the fictional narrative. The relations are significant as Dos Passos “strives to show environment shaping character” (Rosen 86). The young man is trying to negotiate the experiences of his environment.
On the other end of the spectrum from the Camera Eye, the Newsreel is the public experience of popular consciousness. It is a narrative impression of the environment that pervades the backdrop of other frameworks. Composed of fragments or segments from newspaper headlines, song lyrics, advertisements, speeches, and various other social and cultural narratives, the Newsreel is the historical construct of language. It contains the utterances of the trilogy’s social and cultural dialogue. Rosen reveals that the innovation of early twentieth century is an expression composed of various mediums of public media to aid in reproducing the textual background characters negotiate throughout the trilogy (86). The Newsreel section situates historical context spanning three decades, from the celebration of a new century that begins in The 42nd Parallel to the economic hardship leading into the stock market crash of 1929 in The Big Money:

WALL STREET STUNNED

*This is not Thirty-eight but it’s old Ninety-seven
You must put her in Center on time*

MARKET SURE TO RECOVER FROM SLUMP

Decline in Contracts

POLICE TURN MACHINE GUNS ON COLORADO MINE STRIKERS
KILL 5 WOUND 40

sympathizers appeared on the scene just as thousands of office workers were pouring out of the buildings at the lunch hour. As they raised their placard high and started an indefinite march from one side to the other, they were jeered and hooted not only by the office workers but also by workmen on a building under construction [..] (1205)

The Newsreel emulates the condition mass information is processed in various levels of early twentieth century communication, and the misrecognition of empirical reality that such mediums influenced and conditioned opinions. The suggestion of propaganda is
embedded within the Newsreel framework. “Sixty-eight sections,” says Rosen, “chart the course of popular consciousness over the thirty-year period U.S.A. covers. They help re-recreate the world the major characters move in and they reproduce the chaos and superficiality of public opinion” (79). The Newsreel sections lend a transparency to the evident use of language as a tool to condition particular perceptions (i.e., create a depiction or image) while also giving light to the incomplete and general lack of depth of public acceptance.

As a backdrop to the other frameworks, Newsreel is the textual strain that portrays a public consciousness. It is a communal experience of language and its structure. It portrays the authority of language affecting experience of the masses, identifying themselves with the manufactured “spatial identification, succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality” (Lacan 1288). Embedded are the torrent social and cultural paradigms that contribute to the construct of America in the form of media information. According to Melvin Landsberg, the representation of such composite elements in the Newsreel “help to describe the mass media of information […] determine most Americans’ view of their civilization” (189). The populous community identifies itself with the social and cultural paradigms embedded in popular media and communication, which are constructs of language.

In relation to the Camera Eye and Newsreel, the Biographies further detail the historical background of the trilogy. They interface with the trilogy’s discourse of historical events. Each biography interjects and disrupts the narrative strains of the Camera Eye and Newsreel, adding another dimension to the interrelated narrative technique of a collective consciousness. In juxtaposition, the biographies connect
underlying forces associated with the subjective observation of the Camera Eye and the fragmentary collage of the Newsreel. The biographies relate influential figures that helped shape an American landscape. According to Dos Passos, “Portraits of a number of real people are interlarded in the pauses in the narrative because their lives seem to embody so well the quality of the soil in which Americans of these generations grew” (179). These portraits are emblematic in a system of contiguous frameworks. They are textual markers that are synonymous with the conditions in the trilogy’s historical context.

For example, in *The 42nd Parallel*, the biography section of Eugene Victor Debs in “Lover of Mankind” is about a man who was a locomotive fireman involved with labor unions, and died as a well-known union leader. According to his biography section, Debs fought for the rights and commonwealth of his fellow workers. In relation, Debs’ portrait follows “The Camera Eye (3)” to depict the underlying forces that are attached to the young man’s impression of a train ride with his mother and his mother’s tale of laborers being shot:

> Who works there all night? Workingmen and people like that laborers travail-leurs greasers [...] but now the dark was all black again the lamp in the train and the sky and everything had a blueblack shade on it and She was telling a story about [...] Beforeyouwereborn [...] Mother was so frightened on account of all the rifleshots but it was allright turned out to be nothing but a little shooting they’d been only shooting a greaser that was all [...] (30)
In “The Camera Eye (3),” the young man makes no connection between the laborers and the train. People like workingmen and laborers are merely working greasers, according to the mother’s seemingly derogative reference. The “Lover of Mankind” fills in a backstory to the narrator’s train ride with his mother. It alludes to the objectification of labor where laborers are insignificantly treated. The shooting of a laborer, also considered a greaser, is met with indifference by the riders in the train. The depiction is subtle but evident in the juxtaposition between frameworks referencing and commenting on each other. The portrait of Debs reveals the historical drama behind a locomotive system. The treatment of locomotive labor unions establishes an underlying historical background that links together the Biographies and Camera Eye by juxtaposition. Such commentaries and associations continue throughout other frameworks in various forms: the biography of a locomotive union leader, the narrator’s impression of laborers while on a train, the headline of “GENERAL STRIKE NOW THREATENS” in “Newsreel IV,” and the significance of trains in the fictional narrative of Mac (56). The frameworks establish each strain within a web of free associations for continuity.

In the fictional narrative of Mac, the juxtaposition amongst the other frameworks establish a continuity referencing and commenting on underlying forces that condition the character. Mac’s train ride from “the wintry russet Connecticut landscape” to Chicago parallels a depiction of the Camera Eye sections (19). Mac and the young man (i.e., Camera Eye) share a singular experience of being influenced by an adult talking about laborers. Such influences continue as Mac encounters one shady male role model after another throughout his youth. Unfortunately, Mac never finds any figure comparable to Eugene Victor Debs in the “Lover of Mankind” or Bill Haywood in “Big Bill.” Mac’s
Uncle Tim and Dr. Emmanuel Bingham are stark contrasts to the biographies of historical and typified figures. Yet, Mac’s education or indoctrination into his social and cultural community is not only from his personal relations, from the speeches of his Uncle Tim or Doc Bingham, but also his experience with language in print. The fragments of the Newsreel sections make their appearance in Mac’s fictional narratives. They are ubiquitous throughout the fictional narrative of Mac. They appear on the train, the walls, books, handbills, and uttered verses, all contributing to the impression of Mac as a character.

The fictional narrative reflects the impressions that indoctrinate characters into the various apparatuses of experience. The characters enter into language and its structure; they inscribe themselves with social and cultural paradigms by the auxiliary devices represented by three other frameworks. According to Landsberg, “The social, political, and economic history through which the fictional characters are living is recounted partly through three devices: ‘Newsreel,’ ‘Camera Eye,’ and the biographies of representative men of the eras” (189). These characters are subjects who identify—to varying degrees—with a particular spatial and temporal system, experiences essential to the dimension in the term “tradition” that inscribes the characters entering a community. In relation with the other frameworks, the drama that projects an individual into history (of language) is attributed to the experiences of tradition embedded in the narrative of each framework:

[Experience of the community] assumes its essential dimension in the tradition that this discourse itself establishes. This tradition […] lays down the elementary structures of culture. And these very structures reveal an ordering of possible exchanges which, even if unconscious, is
unconceivable outside the permutations authorized by language. (Lacan, “From The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious” 1291)

The relation between the Camera Eye, Newsreel, Biographies, and fictional narrative are all interconnected to culminate into a collective. The narrative apparatuses of the private individual, public figures, social and cultural milieu, and populous project an encompassing discourse of a nation’s collective consciousness. The interconnections are numerous, ubiquitous, and, at times, subtle in its minuteness but the relations between the frameworks construct a sense of time and space that seem fragmented and incoherent in one particular section reveal themselves—a denouement—to a narrative puzzle that slowly becomes unified, coherent, and connected with another section. Together, each framework shares a continuity of the currents and undercurrents to be perceived as a whole. It is a stylistic use of montage to project a collective consciousness.

To achieve his avant-garde narrative, Dos Passos’ modernist experimentation is a montage for a collective portrait. These four frameworks conceptually conceive varying interpretive experiences. The frameworks entail that the trilogy’s protagonist is embedded with history, as Stein points out that composition is bound to emulate history. Each framework is referent to a particular utility of modern innovation, or function of modernity—for example, reportage, cinema, or documentary. As Barbara Foley says, Collectivism entails an exercise in formal modernism; indeed, many collective novels give the impression of having been cinematically conceived. These devices direct attention to the process of textual construction and invite the reader consciously to consider the paradigm the author has chosen for describing and explaining the social totality. (401)
These four apparatuses are spectrums that project a collective consciousness of early twentieth century because of its respective experiences compose a temporal and spatial identification. The apparatuses constitute a narrative “body” (form) of a conscripted collective consciousness suggestive of *U.S.A.* The four frameworks manifest the social and cultural paradigms that engage in a discourse of existential consciousness, which transfix the symbolic (social laws) image of a collective in the narratives of a larger discourse to portray America.

Each framework is part of an interwoven discourse depicting a protagonist that is a construct of modern social and cultural paradigms, delineating an identification of a psychoanalytical “self” (figuratively speaking) that is anchored to the temporal and spatial condition of a particular period. As a whole, the fragmentary form combine to perpetuate a latent figure of a collective consciousness, in the sense of purporting a collective “I.” According to Kazin, “Dos Passos had written a ‘collective’ […] about the ‘march of history’ with mass society as his protagonist” (160). The spectrum of interpretation varies from the singular stream of consciousness to the social and cultural masses, a parallel which recalls the representation of the young man to U.S.A. in the first portrait sketch. Dos Passos negotiates the reciprocal interaction of four interpretive perspectives by juxtaposing each to function as layers of paradigmatic apparatuses. The layering of interior monologue, mass media, biographies, and stories overlap one another to inscribe a totality similar to Lacan’s mental development adapting an image of (mis)recognition for an identification of “self.” The four frameworks determine the narrative structure of *U.S.A.* as a unified and singular entity of a main subject or character, or, in a Lacanian perspective, American consciousness.
The stylistic narrative in *U.S.A.* is a psycho-social construct of a protagonist circumscribed by the fixtures emblematic of early twentieth century. These fixtures may be interpreted as the various apparatuses of speech. According to Kazin, “they speak with the formal and ironic voice of History. The ‘Newsreel’ sounds the time; the ‘Biographies’ stand above time, chanting the stories of American leaders; the ‘Camera Eye’ moralizes shyly in the lyric stammer upon them” (15). And of course, the fiction narrative delivers the utterances of people moving through that time. In *U.S.A.*, these apparatuses are the four frameworks that determine each novel’s focus or emphasis, which are differentiated by the degree of concentration of particular frameworks within a novel. In a manner of speaking, the framework or speech that is most frequent, substantial, and constant to impose an indelible impression amongst the group of frameworks. The framework(s) that determine the relevance of relations in the systematic construct is the consciousness of its collective.

To further elaborate, in a group-fusion (a body of characters), consciousness is a collective reflection which stems from the social and cultural paradigms that anchor the individuals. According to John D. Brantley, “The characters in *U.S.A.*, then, are individuals subjected to the pressures of their environment” (57). For the individual to take part in the visual world (human reality) it must function in praxis, making itself an object(ification) that engages in the process of other objects. This process of dialectical engagement of object-projection creates, as Lacan says, “the *imago*, which is to establish a relation between the organism and its reality. […] This development is experienced as a temporal dialectic that decisively projects the formation of the individual into history” (1287-88). History is then extensions of individuals that determine meaning through
consciousness of the objects (material) and/or event(s), in the sense that language gives meaning to their engagement with praxis/process. Through the function of language that creates the tradition of social and cultural paradigms, the narrative structure uses/presents four distinct modals or frameworks of a structural system that is similar to Lacan’s terminology of the “fragmented body” in the formation of a symbolized “I,” or America as the subject of U.S.A. (1288). The four frameworks are composite images that symbolize the “body” of a metaphorical protagonist, like an anatomy of the imago (i.e., likeness, statue) that can only be seen by the outline of daily experiences with language.

It is with this understanding of the frameworks that we can expostulate on three distinct sequences of development in U.S.A. The protagonist and its consciousness are deliberated in three divisions, each from a contiguous novel of the trilogy. Each novel is a particular contribution to the construct of America, which Dos Passos differentiates as a segment (i.e., novel) of a decade by its strategic narrative maintaining the continuity of a dominant impression through the frameworks’ relations: form equals content. Thebulk of involvement by the frameworks—whether they be notably consistent or absent—manipulates the impression or emphasis of the discourse of U.S.A. The consequent result is to give an account of the beginning of a modern American persona (The 42nd Parallel), the climatic deterioration of that persona because of World War I (1919), and the resulting subjugation after World War I (The Big Money).

For a literary interpretation, the notion of language and inscription is evident in the form of the trilogy’s interwoven frameworks and novels. The thematic relation of one to another framework is a testament to the impression in each contiguous novel, especially when interruptions or breaks by the juxtaposition of frameworks are
substantially less frequent; or the consistent (re)appearance of a framework that immediately continues a narrative strain gives emphasis on its role toward the construct of a collective consciousness. The balance of frameworks, derived by the thematic relation in the discourse, suggests a particular impression that pervades each novel. The impression is suggestive but evident in the amount of attention given by the extent of one or more framework, which directs a greater role of inscription. The thematic relation and consistency of a framework dictates the impression of a novel, as a particular framework may hold greater emphasis on the impression of a novel. The significance of this effect is that it changes from novel to novel, giving the sense of shifting forces and changes in time. Each novel is differentiated in this manner of narrative structure that elaborates on the portrait of a mass protagonist developing through three decades. The contiguous three-part structure elaborates further on the construct of a consciousness that is U.S.A.: a nation made up of its parts; three decades into three novels; the beginning, middle, and end of a period; adolescent, youth, and maturity. One novel is juxtaposed with another novel, like the frameworks within them. The relations between each novel reveal a larger montage of interconnection that is the formation of a developing collective consciousness, which evolves over three divisions of an American portrait.

Dos Passos’ trilogy is a discourse of constructs that are encoded with modernist themes in four frameworks that depict a similar psychoanalytic proposal of misrecognition in identification theorized by Lacan. The montage of frameworks, functioning in the tradition of modernist experimentation with text, history, and language, paints a portrait of a singular but expansive consciousness of a collective figure expressed in a three-part narrative set in the early twentieth century. *The 42nd Parallel* ties the
people with the movement of modernity. 1919 depicts the chaotic climax of World War I affecting the ever revolving characters. Then the first two novels are reconstituted in the last installment, The Big Money, to culminate a final impression deliberated by the juxtapositions of four frameworks. The structural relations between the fictional narratives, newsreels, biographies, and camera eyes establish the collective consciousness of America. The social and cultural paradigms encoded in the composition of the frameworks reveal the parallel between text and an interdisciplinary relationship already established by the modernist period of literary practices. The frameworks are true to modernist form, depicting a wandering observation of America that is the subject and main character of the trilogy. As a work of collective novels, the concept of four frameworks in a three-part narrative depicts a culminating portrait of the collective consciousness of America to be the protagonist in Dos Passos’ trilogy, U.S.A.
Chapter II: Portrait of a Collective Consciousness in The 42\textsuperscript{nd} Parallel

“Son of man, / You cannot say, or guess, for you know only / A heap of broken images”

~T.S. Eliot, The Waste Land

The 42\textsuperscript{nd} Parallel expands on a collective narrative introduced in the prologue (“U.S.A.”). The notion of “speech” (i.e., utterance) from the memories of a young man’s recollection prefigures a montage of utterances from four distinct frameworks that shape an impression of America. Utterances of a collective evolve out of the four frameworks, and those depictions are of a pervading consciousness. The collective consists of individuals (i.e., the characters) in the sense of being one thread woven together with other threads in a complex fabric, which the frameworks function to display in an intricate discourse. Juxtaposing frameworks illustrate relations in experiences that interconnect individual characters with their conditions, each other, and demonstrate a layering of constructs that are bound with the milieu. Each framework in the discourse is a reflection that narrates a fragmentary aspect of America, in the manner Jacques Lacan purports language to authorize a unified form of relations in psychoanalytic experience. The discourse is the American experience of the early twentieth century. The 42\textsuperscript{nd} Parallel establishes the first of three decades to U.S.A. proper, and introduces the early formation of various characters and moments by a composition of fictional narratives (20), Newsreels (19), biographies (9), and Camera Eyes (27). The frameworks compose a portrait of early American experience uttering the rise of a collective and its consciousness, a pre-war America wrought by the conditions of capital and labor in the twentieth century.
The discourse of a collective consciousness begins with the milieu. The first framework of U.S.A. proper is an account of a public utterance from clippings and headlines in a Newsreel. The frameworks of shifting utterances are immediately introduced with the boisterous clamor of a new century. “Newsreel I” establishes an entry into the twentieth century, and the milieu of America at the turn of a new period. It reveals the conditions beginning with the role communication or textual media contributes as a significant part in the construction of American perspective and experience. In conjunction, following the first Newsreel, Camera Eye (1) attaches a personal impression that not all is celebratory or business as usual. Another crowd somewhere else in a foreign land is chasing an American boy and his mother, and “throwing stones grownup people throwing stones” (13). The contrast is striking in the mixture of American experiences and emotions, suggesting that the body of Americans is segmented with contradictions from the first two frameworks in the The 42nd Parallel. By the time a fictional narrative (Mac) is introduced, the mood and atmosphere has already been declared, because the auxiliary frameworks of “Newsreel I” and Camera Eye (1) have situatued a general impression of the milieu. By presenting a Newsreel to open the novel, the framing establishes a panoramic display of temporal markers, utterances of a public consciousness derived by the medium of mass media of print. This draws forth a milieu or landscape to an equivalency of character(s), per se, as an indication that the conditions garner equal importance in contributing to the whole structural narrative of the trilogy. The four frameworks are partitioned and juxtaposed to include the movement of the early twentieth century, according to Robert James Butler, “The net effect of these images of motion is to define turn-of-the-century America as a wildly centrifugal world
going off in so many directions that it lacks any real continuity and coherence” (83). The treatment of setting becomes another facet of characterization. The auxiliary frameworks depict the atmosphere of shifting emotions at a temporal moment within the utterances of the landscape. As Alan Calmer says, “This method definitely places and embeds the narrative in a specific and actual period of history and gives it authenticity as a social chronicle rather than a mere piece of fiction” (348). The frameworks encompass from the very singular and private perspective of the Camera Eye to the very plural and public perspective of the Newsreel, which is significantly presented first as an introduction to a burgeoning period, according to Butler, “by capturing the mood of modern America through a brilliant collage of motion scenes” (83). Time and place is opaquely established to the foreground, and given equal weight to the characters that must negotiate with the conditions affecting them.

“Newsreel I” inaugurates the four contiguous frameworks with its own montage of segmented news clippings. The turn-of-the-century is a celebration mixed with the paradox of new beginnings and abrupt endings in domestic and foreign affairs. “Newsreel I” depicts, in large captions, the excitement at the arrival of a new century: “NOISE GREETS NEW CENTURY,” “LABOR GREETS NEW CENTURY,” “CHURCHES GREET NEW CENTURY,” and “NATION GREET CENTURY’S DAWN” (12). The headlines utter the currents of welcome and openness, echoing the force of a charging army and a parade for a General in the first few clippings. However, among the bold headlines are also the undercurrent of harshness and violence that equal the repetitious chants of celebration: “For there’s many a man been murdered in Luzon,” “For there’s many a man been murdered in Luzon / and Mindanao,” “For there’s many a man been
murdered in Luzon / and Mindanao / and in Samar” (12). America’s ongoing war in the Philippines resulted in many deaths overseas, which brought about a Filipino rebellion against America’s rule under the leadership of Emilio Aguinaldo (1261). The blend of hopeful prosperity is also not entirely isolated from the “BRITISH BEATEN AT MAFEKING” in the second Boers War of 1899 or “GAIETY GIRLS MOBBED IN NEW JERSEY” (11-12). The optimism may drown out other events but it does not erase the problems of murder, robbery, fighting, or indifference across a geographic perspective. While significant markers in time are unfolding, a person continues with business as usual: “Mr. McKinley is hard at work in his office when the new year begins” (12). The United States President William McKinley is preoccupied with work, letting another New Year pass and much of the public in celebration. President McKinley would later be assassinated in 1901, allowing Vice President Theodore Roosevelt to become President. “Newsreel I” illustrates a variety of sentiments going in different directions, revealing that underneath the loud roar of the early twentieth century is the noise of brewing cynicism. The dominant headlines of social and cultural expectations overshadow a history of violence and conflict. This dichotomy is emblematic of further things to follow in the novel, if not the entire trilogy.

The overall depiction is of a mentality that views the twentieth century within paradigmatic ideology. The significant first line of “Newsreel I” opens with, “It was that emancipated race,” that reinterprets—contextually speaking, in a modernist slant of “making it new”—a news clipping of American soldiers charging up a hill to signify a nation charging forward into a new future (11). The metaphorical notion is of Americans as a race of people who are unbound by the excitement of a new beginning that
distinguishes a massive shift in history; specifically, that “race” of Americans is no longer tethered to the limits of American soil. The framework sounds out the public utterance that is echoed in the words of a public figure, Senator Albert J. Beveridge, who responds to a toast of the new century with unbridled American optimism:

> The twentieth century will be American. American thought will dominate it. American progress will give it color and direction. American deeds will make it illustrious. […] The regeneration of the world, physical as well as moral, has begun, and revolutions never move backwards. (12)

American optimism of its dominance over the world is placed at the center of a national doctrine, a declaration reverberated to the consciousness of the masses. The last clipping of “Newsreel I” announces a public opinion by a public figure that America will conquer, dominate, and impose its will across the globe, and the world will be regenerated by the revolution of their “methods of modern man” (12). After the first framework, a construct of modernity enters with the narrative of American power that is to reflect a discourse of American consciousness. The spirit of revolution and brute force foreshadows that same construct of optimism leading into the world’s first great war. The 42nd Parallel chronicles a period prior to World War I, as Melvin Landsberg says, “a prewar America still possessed of a confidence and an independence that were the heritage of the frontier days” (187). The clippings and announcements in “Newsreel I” utter the ideological residue of the nineteenth century. The modern era of machines and mass communication is approached with the bravado of the previous century, which will be redefined when social and cultural constructs are challenged by the First World War. According to Butler, “In a larger sense, the First World War will dissolve what is left of an entire
world, demolishing its traditional values and institutions” (84). The experience of World War I will defy America’s nineteenth century imagination through warfare and transform its optimism into a precarious ideological illusion. The early twentieth century marks a disconnect from tradition or heritage of the past with modern conditions, distorting the autonomy of America in its self-image. It is an image where the methodology of frameworks uniquely reflects the disjunction and fragmentation representing a nation in the midst of experiencing the effects brought on by World War I and the early twentieth century.

The structural form of frameworks is reflective of a consciousness that depicts a portrait fused by four interpretations of sequential relations. “Newsreel I” is a preview of the stylistic form of frameworks. The 42nd Parallel continues the journey of the symbolic everyman represented by the “young man” in the prologue “U.S.A.,” where the last line of the prologue sets up the platform for U.S.A. proper to be “the speech of the people” and the frameworks are four separate but contiguous utterances (3). The frameworks collaborate in a relation of utterances that is the “speech of the people.” Although not literally speeches, the frameworks are the words and language that postulate composites of a discourse:

Much in the same way as sentences are often combined into sequences and thus may constitute a discourse or text, speech acts may come in sequences, both in monologues and in conversation. […] In general, then, connection criteria pertain to conditional relations between speech acts: one speech act may serve as a (possible, probable, or necessary) condition, component or consequence of another speech act. (Dijk 245)
The four frameworks are characterizations in four distinct voices that serve as apparatuses to an overall portrait of America. The narrative structure encompasses the public apparatuses of the Newsreel and biographies to the private apparatus of the Camera Eye that supplement the individual apparatus of fictional narratives, like a skeletal frame given depth and motion by layering three other strains of experience to incorporate a milieu in a kaleidoscope of vantage points. The frameworks are apparatuses woven like layers to a discourse, and “plot becomes a series of moments” (Matthews 14). These layers are segments to a collective consciousness. As mentioned earlier in the previous chapter on Lacan’s psychoanalytic experience, the concept of speech(es) is the structural framing of language that authorizes experiences already predetermined in the construction of a unified or whole image to be the reflection of a figurative subject. The four frameworks are, in a sense, an actualization of social and cultural paradigms interconnecting at points of juxtapositions for an aesthetic recognition; specifically, the structural mapping of a collective consciousness through a discourse of four utterances (or “speech acts”) that reflect the currents and undercurrents of a newly fashioned image a modern America.

The four frameworks reflect a fragmentary collective consciousness. Similar to a Lacanian mirror-stage, the characterization of a consciousness is by its combination of frameworks woven through a complex discourse that shapes the dimensions of an idealized image (“Ideal-I”) or form. The event or drama “socializes” the frameworks in participation to the “symbolic matrix” (i.e., discourse) of apparatuses uttered by the Camera Eye, Newsreel, biographies, and fictional narrative for the subject/protagonist of the trilogy (Lacan 1286). The frameworks constitute the “Imaginary” (or Image-inary)
that harbors an aesthetic recognition of ideal forms, which are reflections of other forms (i.e., other frameworks). The juxtapositions between frameworks establish the moments of the “ Symbolic,” or structure of relations that articulate the system of the Imaginary, which is the unified, whole image. In short, each framework embraces an impression, a piece of an autonomous image (“specular I”) that goes through deflection—in this case, by relations of juxtaposition—that transmit utterances within a system of language where interconnections frame a montage of encoded continuities for a “social I” or socially constructed subject; in which case, the collective consciousness is a socially constructed characterization (1289). These relations are thematic and function to outline the interconnections between the frameworks. The interjections or interruptions by juxtapositions coagulate frameworks in an intricate discourse of experiences, manifesting a subject as expansive as America.

Dos Passos’ stylistic composition characterizes the adolescence of a collective consciousness in The 42nd Parallel. The first novel begins a structure of the psychoanalytic experience of an adolescent entering or being subjected to socialization by the utterances of language. For Lacan, experience is linguistically encoded with “cultural fads (the ‘imaginary’)” and “social laws (the ‘symbolic’)” (Mitchell 199). The frameworks engage in a deflection from singular to plural images in the projection of a consciousness that stems on the bases of language. The deflection outline experiences within a discourse of opposing sides where, as Lacan stipulates, speech(es) function in accordance with or against strictures determined by the history of language, as pertaining to distinctions in “empty” or “full” speech, which Newsreel and the Camera Eye pose two opposite points among the four frameworks in various juxtapositions. In which case,
the four frameworks complement each other by filling in “gaps” and reconstituting encoded meaning through their relations based on a continuity of social and cultural paradigms. According to Lacan,

> It is this moment that decisively tips the whole of human knowledge into mediation through the desire of the other, [and] constitutes its objects in an abstract equivalence by the co-operation of others, and turns the I into that apparatus for which every instinctual thrust constitutes a danger […] the very normalization of this maturation being henceforth dependent, in man, on cultural mediation […]]. (1289)

The discourse of apparatuses links the “I” (singular) to the “I” (plural) by the continuity of social and cultural paradigms embedded within the frameworks, which are constantly shifting in juxtaposing order. The continuity between frameworks serves as mediations to normalize a collective experience and the consciousness of America at the early twentieth century. The social dialectic is the moment where, as Lacan says, “the dialectic that will henceforth link the I to socially elaborated situations” (1289). Through juxtaposing frameworks, Dos Passos’ characters experience in their skeletal frame of fictional narratives three other dimensions to posit conditions in reconstituting one autonomous experience as part of a larger consciousness or narrative. So, in terms of the characters, they are inseparable from the situations elaborated by the frameworks of the Newsreel, Camera Eye, and biographies. For instance, Mac, Janey, Eleanor, Moorehouse, and Charley all share adolescent experiences within the conditions of a new century. Relations—which may be reduced to thematic treatment—between the frameworks posit the continuity to outline the interconnections of a national persona, a montage of four
apparatuses to illustrate the expansive characterization and massive chronicle of America. The four frameworks function on the level of a stylistic narrative system in four contiguous utterances that layer and inscribe American experiences. Such a discourse of so large a subject is a stylistic endeavor in narrative exploration: frameworks encoded with thematic relations of experiences that reflect a national or collective consciousness derived from a particular period.

In contiguous frameworks, the thematic treatment of capital and labor unify a cogent form of a collective consciousness. The frameworks are interconnected by thematic relations. The frameworks spread out in every direction. There is no definitive order of sequence other than seemingly fragmented and obscure segments that emphasize encountering points—treatment of capital and labor—that string frameworks together, where juxtapositions aid to connect or associate predominant and recurring themes. The suggestion is implicit of the highly stylized narrative in fragmentary segments. For example, the conditions that appear within the fictional narratives—the relative presence of capital and labor—are experiences drawn to the fore of the narrative and amplified by the auxiliary frameworks of the Camera Eye, biographies, and Newsreel sections. The illustrations of the precarious and fractured conditions are then reconstituted in a more prominent characterization. As Landsberg says, “the auxiliary devices [are] supplementing the narrative. The social, political, and economic history through which the fictional characters are living is recounted partly through three devices: ‘Newsreel,’ ‘the Camera Eye,’ and the biographies of representative men of the era” (189). Each framework is an apparatus that imposes another impression for a type of communal narrative that encompasses spatial and temporal conditions otherwise overshadowed and
relegated as merely murmurs of empirical scenery for aesthetic representation. The continuity situates a distinct characterization of newfound adolescence, affected by a particular “symptom” at the turn of the new century: capital and labor. Almost every framework is populated with the beginning of a new century, a young man, a young girl, or introductions to influential figures—inventors, union founders, intellectuals, civil servants—that serve as catalysts in shaping the twentieth century, where the binding theme among them is the treatment of capital and labor between frameworks.

Capital and labor are mediations of social and cultural paradigms encoded within the frameworks. They appear in the fictional narratives, and are reiterated by the auxiliary frameworks of the Camera Eye, biographies, and Newsreel. Their significance is in the effects on characters. To be precise, the frameworks rhetorically “speak” the symptoms of the collective consciousness. These “symptoms” relay the relations on the basis of Lacan’s “symbolic matrix,” as it pertains to speeches within a discourse of experiences (1286). Capital and labor function as constructs, in the sense that they affect the history or language of social and cultural norms, which generate a distinct context of the early twentieth century. The frameworks share similar treatments of capital and labor in a predisposition of exchanges that are codified because utterances do not escape the authority of language. In terms of characterizing a collective consciousness, a tradition of historical (i.e., language) expectations within a social system is already established before the arrangement of frameworks are grouped or regrouped. The structure of relations (i.e., “Symbolic”) is bound within the articulation of frameworks. These relations of capital and labor function to string the continuity between segments that exist in their effects, or “possible exchanges” within the “permutations authorized by language” (Lacan 1291).
Theme is a determinant of such possible exchanges. Capital and labor are repetitiously embedded within the frameworks that underlie shifting exchanges through juxtapositions; or expressed in psychoanalytic terms, the repetitious grouping or regrouping reveals symptom(s) for the structural outline of a perceived form in psychoanalytic experience: “Words carry symbolic meanings that continually shift around, grouping and regrouping according to different principles of combination and selection” (Mitchell 200). These embedded clusters interconnect across the segments of frameworks, deflecting recognition of a whole image. The rhetorical treatment of relations between the frameworks—when juxtaposition occurs—furthers the effects of such grouping and regrouping in the symbolic matrix of the collective consciousness, which posits capital and labor as the survey of symptoms in the early twentieth century.

Capital and labor are underlying signifiers across the dissociative fissures separating contiguous frameworks. The recurring theme of capital and labor is initially introduced in the prologue (“U.S.A.”) as a suggestive underlying cause of a young man’s despondent feelings of America. Then after the interludes of a Newsreel to indicate the turn of a new century and the interior monologue of a boy and his mother by a Camera Eye in The 42nd Parallel, capital and labor in the prologue is manifested again as a driving force in the first fictional narrative of ”Mac” (Fenian O’Hara McCreary). The story of Mac is an example of the effects wrought on a young man and his family, which eventually carry over throughout the rest of his life. Mac is another young man who will become as despondent as the young man depicted in the prologue, and eventually be driven to obscurity south of the border into Mexico. The exclusive focus on Mac for the first seven fictional narratives sets a precedence of dealing with capital and labor that will
recur again and again, and be reiterated in the segments of the other major characters. Mac, Janey Williams, John Moorehouse, Eleanor Stoddard, and Charley Anderson are confronted with the symptoms of capital and labor that affects them all, especially from an early age.

Mac is an archetypal young man dealing with capital and labor. The first seven fictional narratives exclusively follow his journey on the American landscape, which spans from the east coast to west coast and as far north into Canada to the south of the border into Mexico. Mac is a working young man, a laborer by trade like his father. Similar to the young man in the prologue, Mac struggles to gain footing in achieving stability, a desire for a better life: “I wanta settle down an’ get a printin’ job; there’s good money in that. I’m goin’ to study to beat hell this winter. […] I want to get out of this limejuicy hole an’ get back to God’s country” (69). It is a sentiment that echoes the young man in the prologue “U.S.A.,” and is shared by the other characters in The 42\textsuperscript{nd} Parallel. However, with many attempts, Mac never achieves that goal. He goes through a series of jobs. For his Uncle Tim, he is an errand boy and learns to operate a linotype. Mac is then forced to seek another job after Uncle Tim’s printing shop is shut down. He becomes an unwilling participant to a shady con-man, where he is lured with the promise of payment that is never rendered, and is inadvertently educated on the mistreatment of a laborer his father and Uncle Tim have been complaining about since he was a child. He later meets another young man his age, George Hall (or “Ike”) and winds up in Canada working at a construction camp. He returns to America only to marry and then later abandon his wife and children because of debt, a result of low income unable to support a family for his labor as a skilled printer. In the end, Mac becomes a bookstore owner in
Mexico, who later finds himself avoiding a revolution by taking refuge at his sister-in-law’s house in Vera Cruz, with his second wife named Concha. Before his marriage to his first wife, Maisie Spencer, the early periods of Mac’s experiences are clustered with afflictions of capital and labor, which are accentuated by Mac’s juxtaposing frameworks to parallel the impressionable interior monologue of a young man in the Camera Eyes, the imposing noise of headline clippings in Newsreels, and the influential figures shaping the course of history in biographies.

With the juxtaposition of the auxiliary frameworks, Mac’s journey is also a montage of capital and labor related segments. For example, Mac worked as an errand boy for his uncle’s printing shop, where he learns a trade in operating a linotype machine that is to replace a German typesetter’s labor. The following “Newsreel II” utters clippings that are a mixture of celebratory songs and political foreboding. A retiring governor warns on the inequality of labor that “unless those in charge and in whose hands legislation is reposed do not change the present system of inequality, there will be a bloody revolution” (28). Then another clipping depicts a miniature railroad on a banquet table serving ice cream in the shape of railroad ties and bread in the shape of locomotives, which is followed with a Mr. Carnegie to conclude with a statement that promotes mindless labor: “Manual labor has been found to be the best foundation for the greatest work of the brain” (28). Although the meaning is unclear from the clippings, “The Camera Eye (3)” segue with the interior monologue of a young man on a train who is scared of the dark and of “Workingmen and people like that laborers travailleurs greasers,” whereby the mother attempts to calm her son with an account of herself being scared once on a train and it was only “a little shooting they’d been only shooting a
greaser that was all” (30). As “The Camera Eye (3)” reveals the inequality and devaluing of railroad laborers that began in Newsreel II, “Lover of Mankind” is a biography of an American union leader, Eugene Victor Debs, fighting against the inequality. The biography humanizes the “greasers” or laborers behind the shadows of building the trains the young man and his mother are using for travel. Debs’ biography is then followed by “The Camera Eye (4)” with the lines from Othello, a dark man valued for his abilities but never valued as an equal by the people who would hire him. The continuity of these frameworks—like many others in the novel—serve as an underlying current that contextually reveal relevant events, and seamlessly connects with a broader subtext when Mac’s fictional narrative returns: “Fainy stood near the door in the crowded elevated train” (33). The relationship of the train, railroad, laborers, Mac’s search for a job, and the inequality Mac must endure from his soon-to-be boss, Doc. Bingham, shows how Mac’s fictional narrative is layered with pre-conditions that fits into a discourse of America. The sequence of relation(s) is woven together between frameworks. According to Barry Maine, “Sometimes the experience described in one sequence is confirmed or validated, so to speak, by the experience described in the narrative sequence, or “shot,” which immediately follows it […]” (76). The sequence of juxtaposing frameworks reveals interconnections in response to the social, cultural, and historical moments that are relevant to the moments experienced by the character(s). Mac is part of that fabric woven into the collective consciousness of America that is affected by the symptoms of capital and labor. From orphan to vagabond, laborer to printer, and husband to obscure socialist, Mac is conditioned by the constructs of social and cultural determination relayed from capital and labor. He is so dejected in the end that he disappears almost
entirely from the strictures of civilization to a desolate location in Mexico, and his only line to the world he left behind is through the newspapers and magazines in his bookstore. For Mac, he has to escape the strictures of a social order (i.e., symbolic order) imposed by capital and labor. Mac’s experiences are reflective of semblances that appear in other frameworks. His fictional narrative is relevant as a mirror into the domestic, social, and cultural constructs that capital and labor resides. The fictional narrative of each major character overlay similar experiences within a milieu suggestive by the structural form.

Mac shares similar experiences with the fictional narratives of Janey Williams, John Moorehouse, Eleanor Stoddard, and Charley Anderson. Although different in minor aspects, they are from a low income family. This group of individuals originated from a family of labor with little capital, where working parents try to raise their children in uncertain conditions of security. Mac’s father loses his job because of a strike, which deteriorates into his mother having to work more, become ill, dies, and the entire family running off to Chicago because they are unable to pay for her funeral. Janey’s father, who used to be a towboat captain, works at a patent office and dies with the regret that he may not have properly provided for his daughter’s future. Moorehouse’s father is a station agent at a railroad depot who becomes injured and loses his job because of alcohol, which forces Moorehouse to drop out of school and a promising future. Eleanor Stoddard’s father works in an office at the stockyards but has little money to support his daughter. Although Charley’s father is absent, his mother works as the owner of a railroad boarding house and takes on the role of fatherly provider, and gives the motherly duties over Charley to an employee, Lizzie Green. The continuity among them is their collective
experience of capital and labor, or lack of both, due to conditions wrought on them from an early age. The new century that had been loudly celebrated in “Newsreel I” does not resonate in the collective experience of the characters. As a group in the context of *The 42nd Parallel*, these major characters represent the formation of a collective that have been shaped or influenced by the conditions of their childhood, where they share the similar experiences of growing up.

With the exception of Charley Anderson, their family structures generally follow the social and cultural construct of the fathers being breadwinners and the mothers being caregivers at home. The continuity of these relations to capital and labor poses a common association that is rooted in a familial experience of childhood, which greatly affects them when they strike out on their own. Many of them, like Moorehouse, Eleanor, and Janey, resent their position in a society where the culture does not favor laborers. Their desire is to distance themselves from the disappointments acquired from their childhood experiences. For them, they view the world based on monetary transactions, or the façade that is associated with wealth. The effects of capital and labor are constructs that permeate into their consciousness. In the end, all three successfully abandon their past and created alternate personas for themselves. It is no coincidence that these three become inseparable, supporting each other in their self-image of lies. Moorehouse becomes the head of Wilson’s Public Information Committee, who is eager to take advantage for himself the “new unexploited angle of the relations between capital and labor” (225). Eleanor becomes Moorehouse’s faux-socialite companion, who follows him to France by joining the Red Cross. And for Janey, like Eleanor, idolizes Moorehouse (or the illusion) and becomes his loyal assistant whose work “put[s] her right in the midst of
headlines” for “combating subversive tendencies among the miners who were mostly foreigners who had to be educated in the principles of Americanism” or “campaign to educate the small investors in the North in the […] Florida fruit industry” (289-90). For the likes of Mac and Charley, the conundrum of whether or not a person is “selling out to the sons of bitches” to gain some semblance of stability or security in such a social and cultural system is always uncertain (86). The two young men eventually run away to other countries, the former into Mexico while the latter enlists in the war and heads off to France. The insecurities of their youth have wrought on them the conditions of distorted maturation by the effects of capital and labor. Whether by choice or circumstance, all of them forfeited education for the urgency of work, income, or social status brought on by social and cultural paradigms of capital and labor. Individually, they are interconnected by how capital and labor emerges as binding undercurrents of the American landscape. Like Mac, all the major characters are inundated with the constructs encoded in the news, various prints, songs, or clippings uttering codes of conduct that are paradigmatically structuring contextual images for adaptation. The despondent result/effect is empirical but also textually conditioned by the influence of mass media and print.

The distribution of information through such vehicles as news and print is encoded with the constructs of capital and labor. The auxiliary frameworks that interrupt between segments of fictional narratives include another dimension to the discourse of conditions imposing on experience. For instance, a biography segment further elaborates on who Big Bill is to the socialist movement and the affect he has on Mac to ignore his pregnant and future wife: “Mac forgot about Maisie” (95). The clippings of headlines in Newsreels lend first-hand participation to Moorehouse’s explanation that capital and
labor are “two great forces of our national life neither of which can exist without the other are growing further and further apart; any cursory glance at the newspapers will tell you that” (236). In The 42nd Parallel, according to Arnold Goldman, “we may be as close as we ever get in U.S.A. to seeing the forces behind an actual shift in American life” (477). Context is provided in relation to the fictional narratives. These relations between frameworks establish experiences that are reflective of a chaotic period in newfound uncertainty and upheaval, which ironically concurs with the deterioration of the family structure for the major characters or the deterioration/manipulation of mass media, as Moorehouse ominously puts it, “[to] fairly present the situation to the public. The lack of properly distributed information is the cause of most of the misunderstandings in this world” (236). Moorehouse’s utterance foreshadows the significant role distribution of information, whether true of false, impose on the masses (or collective) as constructs of pervasive system(s). The continuity of capital and labor is an example of underlying forces within the narrative form. Capital and labor are unifying themes of a group (i.e., the people) that links the frameworks of a collective consciousness, a discourse focused and populated by early American experiences.

The distribution of mass media of print affects the representation of capital and labor. Each major character is tied to mass communication in one condition or another; even minor characters are driven by the stream of information that appears in every aspect of daily events that are propagated by the frameworks of Newsreels, biographies, and Camera Eye. In the novel, the stream of information appears in many varieties: postings on trains and streets, newspaper headlines, letters, songs, pamphlets, or books. The characters are inundated by massed produced information. Such presence between
frameworks tie into the relation the major and minor characters share with each other, which permeates the affects of capital and labor on the structure of societal and cultural paradigms for the parameters of a collective group. According to Maine, “Descriptions of similar individual and collective responses to historical events are mutually reinforcing. Or we may find montage operating in the text as a structuring device designed to contrast one response to the historical moment with another […].” (77). Character experience is set on the premise of group consciousness, a collective bound by constructs reflective of empirical conditions that impose relational interconnections. The conditions are part of the collective narrative. The group-fusion enters into a discourse of spatial and temporal moments that embody a milieu of American consciousness. The frameworks articulate through juxtaposition, from a Lacanian perspective, like “a drama whose interval thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation” to temper a collective consciousness with “the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject’s entire mental development” (1288). The fragmented frameworks are sutured from the insufficiency of one segment to the anticipation of the next segment to reflect a culminating formation of an image: a mental structure of a subject, a collective consciousness of America.

The collective consciousness is a discourse of a pre-war America, a subject at its adolescent stage borne from the conditions of early twentieth century. It traces the early experiences of a nation from childhood, a journey that ends with the beginning of World War I. The articulations of frameworks portray the conditions and set of characters to formulate an impression of youth that coincides with a transition into a new century. According to Alfred Kazin, “The 42nd Parallel is a study in youth, of the youth of the
new century, the ‘new America,’ and of all the human beings who figure in it” (15). The frameworks of a generation and the period they reside are mirrored in moments that are seemingly fragmentary. Its form is a montage of images blurred together in a portrait that transcribes the movements of a geographical milieu. According to Kazin,

[The study of youth] is in the world of Mac’s bookselling and life on freights, of Eleanor Stoddard’s rebellion against her father and Janey Williams’s picnic near the falls at Georgetown, of J. Ward Moorehouse’s Wilmington and the railroad boarding house Charley Anderson’s mother kept in North Dakota that we move. The narrator behind his ‘Camera Eye’ is a little boy holding to his mother’s hand, listening to his father’s boasts (at the end of the book he will be on his way to France); the ‘Newsreel’ sings out the headlines and popular songs of 1900-1916; the ‘Biographies’ are of the magnates (Minor C. Keith, Carnegie), the wonder men of the new century (Steinmetz, Edison, Burbank), the rebels (Bryan, Debs, Bob La Follette, Big Bill Haywood). (16)

Images are compiled together into the collective consciousness that is “new America” at the turn of the twentieth century. The collective consciousness is a meticulous concentration of its milieu. They are the miniscule thoughts of a boy traveling with his mother to the broad historical markers of iconic figures; the trivial relations among characters to characters representing trends and attitudes of shifting forces. The portrait is of a new and young America, a drama of constructs affecting the formation of a collective consciousness. Its discourse of frameworks is reflective of the burgeoning and
developing youth already dejected by the illusions of the symbolic order that dictate the strictures of its social and cultural conformity.

Although Jacque Lacan’s psychoanalytic experience is speaking in terms of one subject, a singular mental development, experiencing socialization of his or her idealized image, the same principle may be used to interpret the socializing affect language inscribes on character development in fiction, or fictional narration. And in broader respects, Lacan’s mirror-stage may serve as a template in describing the use of John Dos Passos’ four frameworks to characterize a protagonist as broad and encompassing as America by identifying its collective consciousness. The 42nd Parallel is the first portrait of America growing up in the milieu of the early twentieth century. It is a portrait that illuminates on a growing collective consciousness, and the frameworks that are encoded with the themes of capital and labor. The discourse of four frameworks accentuates character incorporation into the constructs of a milieu by the conditions that present themselves within the fictional narratives, where the auxiliary frameworks interject to emphasize or elaborate further on moments or events for context. These relations are woven together by juxtaposition to constitute and reconstitute relevance across dissociative gaps or fissures created by the fragmentation of alternating or shifting frameworks. Together, this culmination of processes is the formation of a collective consciousness. The collective consciousness is an embodiment of that giant figure of a nation, adopted through the illustrations of four contiguous utterances: Newsreel, Camera Eye, biographies, and fictional narratives. The culminating body-image is of an America wrought by the symptoms of capital and labor, roaring into the twentieth century with the optimism of the nineteenth century. And as the collective consciousness develops, that
faux optimism fades with the utilization of mass media of print and the distribution of information that does not resonate with character experiences, which illustrates the affects of socialization and manipulation of social and cultural paradigms. *The 42nd Parallel* foreshadows the ubiquitous role newspaper plays in *1919*, as America enters into World War I.
Chapter III: Reflections of a Collective Consciousness in 1919

What my laborious life imagined, even
The half-imagined, the half-written page;
O but we dreamed to mend
Whatever mischief seemed
To afflict mankind, but now
That winds of winter blow
Learn that we were crack-pated when we dreamed.

~W.B. Yeats, ‘Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen’

1919 continues the discourse of a collective consciousness to the U.S.A. trilogy. From the portrait of an adolescent America in The 42nd Parallel, the second installment transitions into America’s post-adolescent experience of the early twentieth century.

Composed of fictional narratives (16), Newsreel (24), biographies (9), Camera Eyes (15), the novel’s contiguous frameworks illustrate an America within the context of war that reflects a permeating ideology of its social and cultural milieu. These frameworks are sedimentary, or fragmentary, constructs that form a systematic relation of the collective consciousness. As the stylistic treatment depicts an image of a collective consciousness in line with modernist principles concerning language, the concept of representation in the relations of frameworks reveal mass media of print authorizing paradigms to the symbolic order of a nation’s identification with a historical event that perpetuates a misrecognition, or “méconnaissance.” It is a language of print that germinates ideological illustrations that impose a corrosive illusion on the central thematic relation of capital and labor underlying the four contiguous frameworks. The mass media of print is determinately oppressive in the economic exploitation of capital and labor, which reflects a period of alienation in American experience suggestive by the four contiguous
frameworks of a collective consciousness. *1919* is the climatic experience of America’s debilitating misrecognition manifested through the milieu of print.

The discourse of a collective consciousness for *1919* is in discursive segments of allotted frameworks relative to major characters. The method translates into developing “movements” of an American psyche, evident by the progressive relations fictional narratives juxtapose with auxiliary frameworks. In general, the “progression” cascades from Joe Williams’ desertion from the navy and the cultural aspirations of the young Richard Ellsworth Savage (“Dick”) and Eveline Hutchins to a somber decline of all the major characters that is ultimately surmounted by the tragic ending of Joe Williams, Anne Elizabeth Trent (“Daughter”), and Ben Compton. Each is an embodiment of the effects wrought by experiences in correlation with the world’s first global and industrial war, permeated by a social and cultural uprooting.

Much like *The 42nd Parallel*, *1919* begins with a milieu for the first framework. “Newsreel XX” reveals the public utterance of a nation gearing up for war. Historical events are unraveling overseas. Headlines announce that armies like the British and Turks are involved in battles. And beneath the large capitalized headlines are the smaller words that concern America’s interest: “but another question and a very important one is raised. The New York Stock Exchange […]” (363). “Newsreel XX” ushers in the conditions and concerns pervading a milieu after the celebration of a new century in *The 42nd Parallel*. It inaugurates an impression of time and space. A global war is underway, and multiple conundrums are simultaneously occurring as international and domestic events are being reported through the mass media of print. Soldiers are fighting as “ARMIES CLASH AT VERDUN IN GLOBE’S GREATEST BATTLE” while, somewhere else in the world,
people are celebrating with a “150,000 MEN AND WOMEN PARADE” (363). The correlation between fighting and celebration are given close association. Then underneath such noise is the utterance of caution in the latter half of “Newsreel XX,” which gives voice to a residing issue of war in the bravado of conflict:

[W]hen they [the soldiers] return home what will our war veterans think of the American who babbles about some vague new order, while dabbling in the sand of shoal water? From his weak folly they who have lived through the spectacle will recall the vast new No Man’s Land of Europe reeking with murder and the lust of rapine, aflame with the fires of revolution[.]

(363)

Two impressions are indicated by the paragraph clip. The individuals who have gone overseas to participate in war are different from those still living in America. They share different experiences of death and plunder that demystify the celebratory and glorification of battle. War is a “spectacle” against the social and cultural “babbles about some vague new order” that has taken over a nation. Participants are confronted with a language of domestic patriotism chanting optimistic illusions, and advocating an acceptance of a place soldiers consider as “No Man’s Land of Europe reeking with murder.” The montage of clippings reveals an underlying agenda. The consequences of war are subverted by the noise of sing-song chants—“The cavalree artilleree / And the goddamned engineers / Will never beat the infantree / In eleven thousand years […] And green grows the grass in North Amerikee”—that promises “bringing from abroad of vast quantities of money for the purposes of maintaining balances in this country” (363). Then a resounding satire ends the first Newsreel for a glimpse of an American consciousness
settling into the twentieth century with its sights on an international confrontation: the promotion of war for profit will be fought under the banner of justice and liberty.

An image of the American flag is described in terms of a justifiable aggression in “Newsreel XX.” According to the last excerpt, nations are built on predictions for rights of liberty and justice: “the rights of liberty and justice and strips of blood spilt to vindicate these rights, and then,--in the corner a prediction of the blue serene into which every nation may swim which stands for these things” (363-64). The justification of sacrifice is espoused as a duty of citizens to a nation. However, such “things” of “blue serene” are not certain by the sacrifices of spilt blood. And with that understanding, the framework ends with a reaffirmation of a glorious war borne in the psyche of a nation: “Oh we’ll nail Old Glory to the top of the pole / And we’ll all reenlist in the pig’s a—h—” (364). Under the guise of justice and liberty, according to the first Newsreel in 1919, the mind-set of a nation moves optimistically and blindly forward into war.

In juxtaposition, the account of a navy deserter following “Newsreel XX” is a striking contrast to the advocacy of war. The fictional narrative of Joe Williams is, to some extent, a personification of one of the individuals that have enlisted and gone overseas. However, he will not be reenlisting, fighting for liberty and justice, or bringing from abroad vast quantities of money home. In fact, the summation of his life is kept in a cigar box bought when drunk in Guantanamo, which only contain items of sentimental value. The last few dollars in his possession, sewn into his belt for safekeeping, is a down payment for an illegal transport back to America: “Twenty American dollars’s all I got” (367). Joe neither reflects nor shares the glossy proposition of patriotic duty uttered in the previous framework: “Petty officer. I knocked him cold, see…Navy’s no place for me
after that…I’m through” (365-66). The fictional narrative of Joe Williams is about an enlisted man going A.W.O.L. (absent without leave) and trying to hitch a ride back home. His framework is a rebuttal in contrast to the advocacy of news clippings from “Newsreel XX” about the rewards and pseudo-righteousness of America going to war. Joe’s desertion is unwittingly a rejection of the “some vague new order” he has not witnessed as an enlisted navy man.

The relational continuity centering on a major character espouses a visceral impression that extends a fictional narrative between contiguous frameworks. “Newsreel XX” depicts a public notice of pending participation in war that would be beneficial to the wealth of the nation. Even though there are minor concerns about the loss of lives, men and women will be celebrated and “vindicate[d]” because volunteers would be doing it for the red, white, and blue (363). However, the next framework following “Newsreel XX” is an account of Joe Williams going A.W.O.L., dumping his naval uniform into the ocean and forging fake papers to get back to America. Joe’s fictional narrative completely offsets the notion of eagerness to join a war in “Newsreel XX.” Then “The Camera Eye (28)” utters the fragments of a narrator, a young man, receiving a telegram about his dying mother and a cable about his dead father while he is away overseas. And like Joe Williams, the young man contemplates the notion of “A.W.O.L.” in hopes for a new beginning: “tomorrow I hoped would be the first day of the first month of the first year” (370). The progression of relational frameworks together culminates with a biography of “Playboy,” where Jack Reed becomes a war correspondent only later to be haunted by his experiences abroad: “The world’s no fun anymore, / only machinegunfire and arson / starvation lice bedbugs cholera typhus / no lint for bandages no chloroform or
ether thousands dead of gangrened wounds cordon sanitaire and everywhere spies” (374).

By the next fictional narrative of Joe Williams, the reason(s) for his desertion from the navy is contextualized in terms of avoiding or escaping the experiences that is entailed with enlistment, a far cry from the utterances in “Newsreel XX.” The sequence involving Joe Williams’ frameworks are compiled as layers of a building tension between a nation and its people.

While Joe Williams’ desertion indicates tension of America’s willing entry into war, the following sequences with Richard Ellsworth Savage (“Dick”) and Eveline Hutchins express a social and cultural degeneration in cementing America’s readiness. The fictional narratives of Dick and Eveline depict the artistic and moral abandonment of their youth, which slowly accumulates through juxtaposing frameworks from the first fictional narrative introducing Dick to “The Camera Eye (33).” The sequences remark on a national character, per se, in terms of deteriorating principles. The artistic or cultural endeavors—Dick as a writer/poet and Eveline’s desire to be a designer—slowly diverge after failed love affairs with unavailable individuals that led them later to enlist in the war. Their conversion is a commentary on the social and cultural collapse to nurture individuality. Their values are whittled away by the chaotic experiences of failed idealism in such things as love and religion, and the devaluing of autonomous identity. Like the bleak ending in the biographies of a leftist intellectual in “Randolph Bourne” and “Happy Warrior” of Theodore Roosevelt, the integrity of one’s convictions wavers in practice, especially given time. At the end of the lives of Randolph Bourne and Theodore Roosevelt, according to their respective biography frameworks, both died as shadows of themselves: Bourne, a ghost “crying out in a shrill soundless giggle” and Roosevelt,
quietly with “the obscurity, the sense of being forgotten” (449, 485). This sense of moral and spiritual failure mirrors the subverted pious background of Dick and Eveline, a choir boy and a minister’s daughter. Their destructive love affairs with married people goes against the strictures of religious practice: for instance, Dick was taught to believe that “he must avoid temptations and always serve God with a clean body and a clean mind, and keep himself pure for the lovely sweet girl he would some day marry, and that anything else led only to madness and disease” (426). The social mores grounded in religious doctrine fails Dick and Eveline, or vice versa. Their fictional narratives trace an overshadowing digression from the hopes and promises of the past. And from them, a glimpse of their surroundings is revealed because they are part of it. According to the fictional narrative of Eveline Hutchins, “Some days she felt that she must be losing her mind, people around her seemed so cracked” (472). The people around her seemed cracked as her friends and family—like Eleanor Stoddard, Don Stevens, her father—were either joining or supporting the war. Then Eveline is coaxed to enlist in the Red Cross as an assistant to Eleanor. Eveline is instantly an observer from the outside drawn into the madness around her. “Dos Passos’ man is a hybrid creature,” says Jean-Paul Sartre, “an interior-exterior being.[…] with his vacillating, individual consciousness, when suddenly it wavers, weakens, and is diluted in the collective consciousness” (79). As the war gears up, the effects of a historical event emerges from the sequences of frameworks following Dick, Eveline, Randolph Bourne, and Theodore Roosevelt to reveal the fragile underpinnings of a nation’s resolve. It is a spectacle Joe Williams encounters in his fictional narrative following “The Camera Eye (33).”
The return of Joe Williams’ fictional narrative signifies a major differentiation in the social and cultural constructs on the collective consciousness. World War I is in full swing and Joe arrives to an unrecognizable home: “Things sure were different in Norfolk. Everybody in new uniforms, twominute speakers at the corner of Main and Granby, liberty loan posters, bands playing. He hardly knew the town walking up from the ferry” (498). Civilians and soldiers are chaotically running around without any sense of individuality. Patriotism has taken over everyone’s minds. Dissenters or mavericks would be haphazardly accused as a traitor, a resonating narrative similar to the sing-song utterance in a previous framework, “Newsreel XXIII,” demanding conformity or be demonized as an enemy: “If you dont like the stars in Old Glory / Then go back to your land across the see / To the land from which you came / Whatever be its name […] If you dont like the red white and blue / Then dont act like the cur in the story / Dont bite the hand that’s feeding you” (450). Under the threat of persecution, words or accusations have consequences without the observance for the rights of liberty and justice that was first championed in “Newsreel XX.” Instead, as the biography of journalist Paxton Hibben later reveals (after Joe turns his back to “get out of all this s—t”), the precept of liberty and justice no longer exists (507). According to Hibben’s biography framework, “the European war had already taken people’s minds off social justice” (513). Support for the war has a dominating effect in terms of a pervading message, and that message is embedded into the social and cultural milieu of public opinion.

The manifestation of public opinion is an ideological construct that emphasizes an imposed narrative on the paradigms of a collective consciousness. The utterance of optimism for American dominance toward a new century is carried over from The 42nd
Parallel. 1919 is a transition from the celebratory chants for a new century to the patriotic mandate of the masses, ironically revealing itself in the headlines and bylines of news as a corrosive effect on a collective consciousness highlighted by World War I. Print is a language that participates in the conditioning of tradition, in terms of social and cultural constructs as a system of words. As noted in the previous chapter, the various forms of print—flyers, pamphlets, newspapers—are ubiquitous within the events of the social and cultural environment being portrayed in the trilogy. The mass media of print is not merely a historical indicator, as frameworks of Newsreels positing historical events, but also a subversive catalyst in its ideological illustrations. The narrative embedded within print significantly contributes to the formation of public opinion. As a narrative technique, the embedded connection is demonstrated through the frameworks where, according to Sartre, “[Dos Passos] adopts the point of view of the chorus, of public opinion” (77). News about a global war across the Atlantic overshadows the deteriorating domestic concerns of capital and labor, reflecting a post-adolescent period of chaotic and distorted messages agitated by war. This “misrecognition” is as a disconnection for the collective consciousness, a symptom of alienation by constructs, as news or public opinion permeates the masses of America.

1919 displays the transformation of media, in terms of language as an effect on social and cultural events, being progressively reflective of perceptions in relating ideological expectations. Print becomes an expression of language encoded with ideology in the headlines and clippings of news, especially about a historical event, World War I, taking place across a large geographical distance between America and Europe. The transference of information, globally and domestically, print is transformed as a driving
vehicle in deliberating institutional paradigms, becoming part of a complex dialogue subsequent to the discourse of a collective consciousness. As “Newsreel XXIX” reveals that the mass media of print can influence people to impact empirical conditions: “the arrival of the news caused the swamping of the city’s telephone” (562). Individuals (or the American collective) are progressively affected by such reportages in terms of social and cultural constructs. For example, Dick Savage is told that his opinions did not matter because the “American people is out to get the Kaiser. We are bending every nerve and every energy towards that end; anybody who gets in the way of the great machine […] will be mashed like a fly” (536-37). The lecture Dick receives from an official is principally identical to the message reported in a newspaper clipping in “Newsreel XXIX”: “‘We’ve been at war with the devil and it was worth all the suffering it entailed,’ said William Howard Taft at a victory celebration here last night” (562). The justification of such sentiments conditionally imposes upon the public from the position(s) of power or authority. The message of shared self-sacrifice for the patriotic duty against evil reverberates from the Commander in Chief, President Taft, to every serving soldier, which is plastered in every medium of print to elicit coercion of belonging to a group (i.e., Americans) confronting similar conditions. The influence of print is oppressive due to the pervasiveness of its presence and role in the early twentieth century to distribute messages of political agendas. It undermines the utterance of liberty and justice from the beginning of 1919, which is corrosively apparent when Joe William’s wife is caught cheating with an enlisted man but she accuses her husband of an immoral and unpatriotic act:
It began to hit Joe kinder funny but Del was sore as the devil and said she’d have him arrested for insult to the uniform and assault and battery and that he was nothing but a yellow sniveling slacker and what was he doing hanging around home when all the boys were at the front fighting the huns. Joe sobered up and pulled the guy up to his feet and told them both they could go straight to hell. (502)

For Joe, he cannot understand his wife’s reasoning. In fact, there is a sense of decay where there is no sense of right or wrong except for the mantras of patriotism. This is represented in the structure of frameworks where Newsreels are associated with public opinion as utterances juxtaposing with three other frameworks in a discourse. In the context of World War I, news serves as a medium in transforming information that is pervasive and reflective in the stylistic narrative structure of four frameworks. This form of discourse in the reflection of a collective consciousness reveals a disparity between the economic and political idealism subject to the early twentieth century.

The language of print is a vehicle that reconstructs social and cultural codes of conduct shifting between the clippings of historical events. Dos Passos’ use of American journalistic style to represent the imposing presence of mass print in the early twentieth century suggests its historical participation: “American journalistic technique in telling the story of a life, […] a life crystallizes into the Social” (Sartre 78). The journalistic technique is embedded with an ideological fervor of American dominance. As Lacan prefigures, the collective adopts the image/imago they see in the construct of language. Impressions are molded into the visual determination by language because, as Robert C. Rosen says, “The Newsreel overflow with the patriotic cant phrases of politicians and
others” (87). The public “mind,” per se, adopts the popular impression from a source that accrues a stature of the masses in the narrative for a nation, in relation to a historical event its populous can only textually mirror because they are geographically separated by the Atlantic Ocean. The premise is as Pierre Bourdieu describes, “In a sense, one can say that the capacity to see (voir) is a function of the knowledge (savoir), or concepts, that is, the words, that are available to name visible things, and which are, as it were, programmes for perception” (1810). The words or system of the media, through print, is for consumption to the masses. The ideological illustrations reflect constructs for negotiations by assimilating perceived conditions in the drama proposed by language. For example: Like most of the characters, Joe Williams gradually conforms to the utterances first introduced in “Newsreel XX.” Unable to find any prospects of a decent paying job, a recurring theme of capital and labor, Joe eventually begins to believe whatever is printed in the papers and by his sister Janey, a stenographer for a public relations firm that uses newspapers to sway the populous. Metaphorically speaking, he ultimately succumbs and “reenlists” to the codes authorized for him: “Anyway if you believed the papers the heinies were getting licked and it was a big opportunity for a young guy if you didn’t get in wrong by being taken for a proGerman or a Bolshevik or some goddam thing. After all as Janey kept writing civilization had to be saved and it was up to us to do it” (560). The utterances that appear—in the sense of civic, social, patriotic, or moral duty—as news print are manifested as direct experiences. In the discourse of a collective consciousness, print becomes a prominent contributor in the narrative of America. According to Melvin Landsberg, “Dos Passos’ trilogy stresses the insidious and debilitating influence of the mass media” (190). Such experiences contextualize the fictional narratives of Joe, Dick,
Eveline, Daughter, and Ben. The juxtapositions among such intermittent sequences with auxiliary frameworks recur throughout the novel, like a horizon to indicate a periodical development of a collective consciousness and draws attention to the constructs embedded in print that bears a pretext to the language that subvert underlying conditions of capital and labor amongst the frameworks relative to the major characters in 1919.

The repercussion of misrecognition denigrates a collective consciousness for its participation in an ideological illusion. The rhetorical sequences that connect the characters with American history give insight to the inseparable relation between a nation and its people, like the contiguous frameworks that display such an impression. For example, as Sartre would say, Joe Williams is not a particular type that “represents the exact average of thousands of existences” because he is a unique character that is a part—a piece of many pieces—to a whole, “since he is Society” (78). After the armistice, the major characters—Joe Williams, Richard Ellsworth Savage, Eveline Hutchins, Daughter, and Ben Compton—all indicate the corrosive effects of World War I, and some return home to a barren wasteland of political and economic disparity. Landsberg points out that “Nineteen Nineteen describes the disaster which, in Dos Passos’ view, World War I brought” (188). America and its people have been stripped of their hopes and dreams that lingered from the turn of the twentieth century: “History now is not merely a happening but a bloody farce, is unspeakably wrong, is a complete abandoning of all the hopes associated with the beginning of century” (Kazin xiv). In light of the divisiveness of the propagandistic messages, the discourse in 1919 portrays the disastrous results of a nation’s misguided political and economic alienation. In the end, each major character framework is a reflection of the conditions they must return to after serving their duty.
overseas. They all suffer debilitating consequences for abandoning themselves to the subjugation of political and economic ideology instilled in the fervor of seeking American dominance. Joe Williams is killed in a barroom fight on Armistice Day in America. Eveline escapes into marriage with the first man that would have her. Daughter kills herself in a plane crash after being rejected by Dick Savage, who is the father of her unborn child. Dick Savage loses himself and joins J.W. Moorehouse, the personification of everything that was wrong with the war. And lastly, although a radical against the dominant ideology, Ben Compton is a failed radical awaiting incarceration after being sentenced to jail for protesting a war that no longer exists. Together, they are the experiences, as Sartre describes, “For the abject consciousness of ‘everyman’” (77). And the failed “everyman” is no better signified than with the deaths of John Doe in the biography framework of “The Body of an American.”

In the discourse of a collective consciousness, the death of John Doe in “The Body of an American” is a biographical framework that resonate the debilitating effects of a war engineered from the ideological constructs embedded in the language of print. The unidentified body is a historical figure: the symbolic death of a marginalized individual. The biography draws parallels between the fighting of World War I and the political economic war at home. After the declaration of an armistice, there was still no peace, justice, or liberty won for America. America is still at war, and it is with itself. The death of John Doe is interchangeably similar to the labor activist-turned-martyr who was executed before a firing squad in “Joe Hill” or the ex-soldier lynched for trying to defend himself at a loggers’ union meeting in “Paul Bunyan,” two biography frameworks that closely precedes “The Body of an American.” Each figure was willing to fight and die for
their beliefs in liberty and justice. However, as the biography of Wesley Everest in “Paul Bunyan” reveals, a young man cannot go against the machines that can generate war or the institution of capital and labor: “To be a red in the summer of 1919 was worse than being a hun or a pacifist in the summer of 1917” (747). Whether an average foot-soldier or laborer, John Doe belongs to a group of like-minded individuals being swept up by the torrents of history. When America declared war, John Doe went to fight that war, “as a typical soldier of this representative democracy he fought and died believing in the indisputable justice of his country’s cause” (758). He believed that he was fighting for liberty and justice but died without such things he represented for his country.

The death of John Doe is an inglorious sacrifice, contrary to the slogans of liberty and justice. He represents the casualties of an ideological war, a body that exemplifies a vast relation to the “everyman.” His death is without purpose under false pretense. According to Kazin, writers like Dos Passos believed World War I was a disaster to benefit an underlying greed in American tradition, spearheaded by Woodrow Wilson: “‘Mr. Wilson’s War,’ from their point of view, was a moral cheat and a political catastrophe; as they saw it, it would soon give free rein to the speculators, financiers, and other ‘rugged individualists’ whose unbridled greed was a dangerous American tradition” (viii). Since the beginning of 1919, the advocacy of fighting in a war was suppose to garner riches and glory for America and its citizens willing to enlist. Then when war was declared, the notion of unquestionable patriotic loyalty was mandated for the purpose of winning a war that no longer represented its original reason. World War I became an afterthought to the economic and political ideology of powerful individuals. John Doe’s death is a senseless death that echoes other senseless deaths, like Joe Williams being
beaten over the head in a sleazy bar fight at home on Armistice Day or the suicide of Daughter and her unborn child. They died for nothing, reduced to mere ornaments of a lie. There is a sense of irony when Eveline “caught sight of a little gold star that Miss Williams wore on a brooch” that served as a remembrance of her brother’s service in the navy (629). Similarly ironic is Woodrow Wilson’s tribute to a fallen ex-soldier with a “bouquet of poppies” as the last image in “The Body of an American,” even though he was the president that took America into World War I and sacrificed the lives of many unidentified young men (761). A resounding hypocrisy is the closing impression of the last framework in 1919. The portrait of America traces the misrecognition of a collective consciousness littered with artificial constructs.

As the collective consciousness of America transitions from the turn of the twentieth century optimism in The 42nd Parallel, such optimism is diluted to an illusion by the mass medium of print and the distribution of constructs in 1919. The 42nd Parallel foreshadows the central role newspaper on a landscape engaged with a chaotic period in history, as America loses itself in World War I. 1919 is the second and post-adolescent portrait of America that illuminates on a collective consciousness affected by the conditions and utterances of political and economic ideology. Although capital and labor is still a recurring theme throughout the novel, the underlying cause of a young man’s despondence is rooted in paradigms embedded in mass media of print as extensions of a social and cultural system particular in time. As a nation participates in a war and its citizens go abroad to experience World War I, the geographical separation sheds light on the illusionary constructs created to mislead the conditions and effects of WWI. In turn, the collective consciousness is subjugated by its own fragmentary images encoded in the
fervor of misrecognition: the patriotism of American dominance and the disillusion of American sovereignty. The catalyst of the war posits a debilitating effect on the emergence of America’s own reflection as a drama of contiguous fragments.
Chapter IV: The Form of an American in *The Big Money*

The age demanded an image  
Of its accelerated grimace,  
Something for the modern stage […].

~Ezra Pound, ‘Hugh Selwyn Mauberley (Life and Contacts)’

From the previous chapters, I have so far covered the connection between *U.S.A.* and Modernism, the narrative functions of four frameworks, the formation of a collective consciousness, and the effects World War I imposed on that collective consciousness. Now I will focus on the effects of paradigmatic illusions on a nation. *The Big Money* is the final installment in a portrait of America. It concludes a development that retrospectively indicates three periods of transformation concurrent with pre-war, World War I, and post-war. These collective novels closely interconnect references to contextualize further relevance to the *U.S.A.* trilogy as a whole, and establish a narrative arc of a protagonist in relation to a historical progression. In the closure to a long discourse of America at the end of an epoch, *The Big Money* serves as a critique that touches on the destitute of a nation inflicted with the turmoil of historical events in the early twentieth century. After the disaster of World War I, America spirals into disillusion of its promise for liberty and justice that served as the condition of a national mantra earlier in the trilogy. In the composition of fictional narratives (17), Newsreel (25), biographies (10), and Camera Eyes (9), *The Big Money* explores the debilitating consequence on a collective consciousness from the corrosive effects of economic exploitation and the human toll from oppressive constructs of modernity.

Dos Passos’ literary technique draws attention to the function and influence of textual frameworks that are elements shaping a social and cultural milieu. A collective
consciousness is derived from the utterances of contiguous segments of linguistic moments compiled sequentially together in a discourse inclusive of multiple apparatuses to chronicle an America in history. In the novel, four frameworks constitute the form of America, a type of linguistic portrait. The employment is revealed in “The Camera Eye (47)”: “[…] to rebuild yesterday […] to clip out paper figures to simulate growth […] warp newsprint into faces smoothing and wrinkling in the various barelyfelt velocities of time)” (931). As mentioned in previous chapters, each framework is a stylistic representation of the modes of language consistent with that period. The distinguishing differences are in the treatment of subject matter. For instance, the biographies in The Big Money exclusively present individuals or iconic figures that are connected to economic commerce. They are the figures that contribute to the industrialization of America: mechanical engineers, automakers, promoters, entertainers, aviation designers, architects, business magnates, and investors. Absent are the politicians, radicals, scientists, philanthropists, journalists, soldiers, and leaders that dominated the last two novels. The new forces of influence are those reflective of production in industry. In concert, newsreels espouse headlines and editorials that can be summed up in one clipping of “Newsreel LV”: “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” (930). The twenty-five newsreels utter a social corruption where profiteering is widespread. And among the clatter of industrial institutions and profiteering, nine frameworks of the Camera Eye follow the interior monologue of an individual returning from a war to be left pining for the words that once challenged oppression for the sake of a nation: “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” (1157). The montage of frameworks point out in its scattered sequences of juxtapositions that a sense of misrecognition has developed in the twisting images of America divergent from its original conception. Another language has superseded previous paradigms that once existed. This illustrates the impact of language and its effect as a determinant. In a literary narrative sense, the auxiliary frameworks imbue constructs that represent the structure of relations. The private citizens of the fictional narratives situate the options of either adaptation or opposition to the textual determinants of shifting paradigms. Characters are ascribed by their particular predicaments within a social context, divulging a collective consciousness from such a discourse of frameworks.

*The Big Money* is a narratorial transition in the *U.S.A.* trilogy to center on character experiences indoctrinated by various apparatuses, exemplified by the contiguous frameworks. After the turn of a new century and the first global war, the subsequent depiction of a collective consciousness is the result of those affected in relation to historical conditions. Unlike the two previous installments, the concluding novel begins with a framework other than the Newsreel to inaugurate the public utterance indicative of a milieu or historical setting. Instead, the first framework is a fictional narrative. It is an introductory framework that alters a narrative pattern to suggest a focus on Americans adjusting to the aftermath of a new century and a global war, which draws perspectives on coping with America’s return to domestic civility. As Alfred Kazin says, “The philosophy behind *U.S.A.* is finally at variance with its natural interest, its subject matter, its greatest strength—the people and the people’s speech” (xvii). The first
framework of the novel returns to a character that had only one fictional narrative out of the previous thirty-six, a significant indication on revisiting—or a type of reunion with—the past to continue an underlying theme of capital and labor that was overshadowed by World War I. The roar of history subsides from the foreground in accordance with the recess of urgency for war and turns to the effects wrought on the people of a nation. The heightened urgency to protect America’s sovereignty transitions to the agency of ideologies. The war is over and the discourse of a collective consciousness announces with the first framework a fictional narrative to mark a nation’s return to dealing with its infrastructure, which is built on the backs of its citizens.

The first framework implicates a transformation of America after the celebration of a new century and World War I. The fictional narrative of Charley Anderson has not been seen since the end of The 42nd Parallel and before the climatic fervor of World War I in 1919. When Charley last appeared, he was a small town boy who had signed up for the ambulance corps because he could not find work and had dropped out of night school in hopes of being a civil engineer. Upon his reappearance in The Big Money, Charley returns as an embattled officer/soldier to an indifferent America. His return is an insignificant event. There is no parade, a welcome home, a hero’s reception, or any type of celebratory recognition. Charley’s only reception is the lonely feeling of being adrift, a sentiment he reveals to his friend Joe Askew that he “got a long ways to go yet before [going] home. …I don’t know what I’ll do when I get there” (771). He is stranded without the prospect of a job, home, or family in wait for him. On arrival, to make matters worse, returning home together with his companions seemed like saying goodbye to strangers:
First thing Charley knew, too soon, he was walking down the gangplank. The transport officer barely looked at his papers [...]. He got past the Y man and the two reporters and the member of the mayor’s committee; the few people and the scattered trunks looked lost and lonely in the huge yellow gloom of the wharfbuilding. Major Taylor and the Johnsons shook hands like strangers. (774)

Charley almost picks up exactly where he left off before enlisting in the ambulance service, which was alone, broke, and homeless. His circumstances had not changed since he first shipped out for France. A pervading sense of absence and alienation creeps up on Charley as every passenger slowly disappears into the quiet night. Charley is driven away in a taxi. He forces himself to agree with the driver that the streets are completely empty and quiet because it is Sunday, even though he had a hard time accepting it the first time his friend Joe Askew told him moments ago. Believing in that reason is a better alternative than admitting to the indifference of returning home, leaving the likes of Charley Anderson without recognition or purpose.

Similar to John Doe from “The Body of an American” at the end of 1919, Charley Anderson is another “average Joe” indicative of a segment of American society. Charley is subject to biographical parallels that mirror John Doe as a reference. Both are neither the talented, historical figures in the biographies nor the racially mistreated immigrants/foreigners occasionally spoken against throughout the trilogy. The biography of John Doe can easily be extracted to fit a loose descriptive narrative of Charley Anderson. Segue from “The Body of an American,” Charley Anderson is symbolic of the officer or soldier that made it back home alive. The juxtaposition is pertinent to the
relation of characters. Aside from making a connection from the end of 1919 to the beginning of \textit{The Big Money}, Dos Passos’ purposeful selection establishes a continuity of relationships to stipulate characteristics of membership or belonging to a group. Dos Passos’ characters are figures that reside somewhere impermanent between poverty and wealthy in a society, or what Lionel Trilling terms as “midway people” in his essay of “The America of John Dos Passos”:

They are a great fact in American life. It is they who show the symptoms of cultural change. Their movement from social group to social group—from class to class, if you will—makes for the uncertainty of their moral codes, their confusion, their indecision. Almost more than the people of fixed class, they are at the mercy of the social stream because their interests cannot be clear to them and give them direction. (39)

This segment of the populous conjures a group of an American tradition. Trilling’s description may very well be of a lost generation, a sense of ennui and alienation characteristic of modernity. For Dos Passos, these people are the premise for an American dream in the early twentieth century. They move with the currents of history, and may be representational of typical or stereotypical masses that change with the tides of time. As Iain Colley says, “[Dos Passos] has carefully selected characters of the lower-middle social strata, the ideal type of humbly-born American who is expected to ‘get on’ and for whom, in the sanctified tradition, America is the supreme land of opportunity” (81). In historical terms, they are an indeterminate group without permanence, alienated in consequence of being a product of industrialization. It is a group that reflects the social and cultural shifts in the transformation of America. In short, the “midway people” are
the pulse of America, a median conduit reflective of the constructs predicated on a "discourse [that] borrows from language" (Lacan 1291). As mentioned earlier in chapter one, the subject(s) identifies itself on prefabricated stipulations of an existing system of language that constitutes relational experiences. The "midway people" mirror the conditions (i.e., language). In The Big Money, they are circumscribed by traditions of a particular milieu, susceptible to influences outside of themselves. The socialization of each character—the likes of Charley, Eveline, Moorehouse, Margo, Mary—is inscribed with the paradigms of the period. These characters function within a social context authorized by language.

Dos Passos’ characters represent a social context. Much like the utterances of four frameworks, they share connections relative to one another in a context. They are socially bound within that tradition and are posited in a group (or “groupness”) in accordance with experiences of paradigms. This is elaborated through the textual representation of frameworks. Their identities or personal characteristics elaborated from the juxtaposition of sequential frameworks mimic the function of language that allows the processes of socialization, outlining continuities of shared group relation. Social psychologist John Edwards explains from the perspective of social science:

[...] one’s particular social context defines that part of the larger human pool of potential from which a personal identity can be constructed. Thus, individual identities will be both components and reflections of particular social (or cultural) ones, and the latter will always be, to some extent at least, stereotypic in nature because of their necessary generality across the individual components. (20)
In the same manner, Dos Passos characters generally display a descriptive reflection in terms of Lacan’s “symbolic order” (i.e., structure of relations). The distinction of individual to group formation is pertinent to suggest a collective consciousness constituted by various apparatuses serving as utterances (or “speech acts”) from the composition of a discourse, which adheres to the advocacy of modernists approaching language to conceptualize reality. The linguist Teun Adrianus Dijk ascribes that the psychological properties are a matter of communication in general, especially literary communication, and do not exist or function independently from external conditions (246-47). Elements of language are factors in the social and cultural system, if not determinants of them. Character(istics) are, in part, inscribed by the potential components of their context: “Our systems of knowledge, beliefs, wishes, norms, etc. are socially bound: they depend on the rules, conventions, norms, values and other properties of a culture or community” (247). The effect of socialization may then be reduced to the primary principle that systems are a product of language because they reside in its history, or that history is language. This has been addressed in chapter one where “history” is a narrative(s) that indoctrinates and authorizes from language. As Lacan says, “We follow the signs. Language speaks us” (1282). From a literary analysis, Dos Passos exaggerates such a premise of language processes. Although seemingly separate in their own sub-narrative within the novel, the fictional narratives of personal or individual tales are textual markers of general traditions ubiquitously transportation of language. Characters share a particular group identity because of experiences transmuted from juxtaposing frameworks reiterating a process of the structure of relations, which can be exhumed from the vantage point of like-minded experiences of a self-ascription.
For example, Charley Anderson exhibits characteristics relative to his social context. He eventually seeks to climb the social and economic ladder in America because social and economic paradigms dictate the preference for capital. His quest for the “American Dream” stems from those paradigms. He plans a partnership that requires him to test pilot a new engine for planes that will revolutionize aviation. However, while Charley is waiting for his partner Joe Askew to appear, the biography of “The American Plan” reveals, in comparison, that the rest of the nation is quickly evolving to standardize work and production in America, which includes aviation: “There’s the right way of doing a thing and the wrong way of doing it; the right way means increased production, lower costs, higher wages, bigger profits: the American plan” (785). The biographical juxtaposition of Frederick Winslow Taylor (or the Taylor System of Scientific Management) injects a sense of rapid change that relates to Charley’s predicament to make his fortune before his opportunity no longer exists. His quest is time sensitive to historical conditions. Charley’s desire is emblematic of the meaning behind the title of the last novel in the U.S.A. trilogy, “The Big Money,” which is about seizing opportunities for profit to secure large amounts of capital and personal gain. The phrase “the big money” is a reference first introduced in the fictional narrative of Joe Williams in 1919. It describes Joe’s boss, Cap’n Perry, and his intent to secure a large amount of capital for the sake of his daughter’s livelihood. In short, Cap’n Perry wanted to profit off the chaos before the end of the war: “Cap’n Perry was as fine an old seadog as you’d like to see, had been living ashore for a couple of years down at Atlantic Highlands but had come back on account of the big money to try to make a pile for his daughter” (410). Like Cap’n Perry and Joe Williams, Charley Anderson seeks to secure his own fortune
from the invention of his friend Joe Askew. After returning home from World War I, he is reinstiuted to a system that favors capital as a central denominator of livelihood, which resonates in Charley’s grimly smile of acknowledgement to Eveline Johnson’s (previously Eveline Hutchins) words of wishful thinking: “Oh, I wish we could all make a lot of money right way quick” (821). The advent of profiteering from war affects a societal understanding of the “American Dream” in terms of materialism. The goal to gain monetary rewards is a recurring theme or sentiment of all the major characters in The Big Money, which is representational of a group coping with shifting paradigms prevalent to industry in the early twentieth century.

Characters self-ascribe to the constructs conducive of modernity. Ideals are encoded in the ubiquitous language witnessed through the media of print proposing liberty, justice, sacrifice, and patriotism. However, as the conditions of the characters reflect, the fruition of those ideals is derived from such utterances emulating a corrosive tradition. According to Melvin Landsberg, “Continuing the portrayal of the United States, […] The Big Money depicts a spiritual bankruptcy among the great majority of Americans during the decade of material prosperity following the immediate aftermath of the war” (188). In The Big Money, America goes on a social and cultural binge for material prosperity. Capital and social mobility becomes a central goal, either out of willingness or desperation for the major characters in the novel: Charley Anderson, Margo Dowling, Richard Ellsworth Savage (“Dick”), and Mary French. Each character struggles with the conundrum of achieving or disparaging capital, but both sides of the fence cannot escape its effects on American systems to curtail the notion of liberty and justice that once dominated the construct of a nation. The misconception of its self-image
transitions to disillusion causing a human toll that is evident in the fictional narratives of *The Big Money*. In the case of Charley Anderson, all familial connections are severed with the death of his mother due to a dispute between brothers fighting over monetary inheritance. Monetary gain or the pursuit of capital becomes a central substitute of fulfillment. According to Charley, “I don’t know what it is, but I got a kind of feel for the big money” (1069). Although lucky with wealth, Charley slowly dies alone while people fight over his estate.

With similar preoccupations, Margo Dowling severs all emotional ties to pursue her career after being raped by her adopted father. She eventually ends up a famous but obsolete debutant movie star living a superficial life, unable to bear children. She finds herself attaching herself to men with wealth, at one point begging Charley Anderson for money on his deathbed. Richard Ellsworth Savage is an older version of Charley Anderson that has lived long enough to recognize his “life is a shambles” (1177). He reveals the reason for his festering indifference and loneliness: “But alas in my day the path was harder for a young man entering life with nothing but the excellent tradition of moral fervor and natural religion I absorbed […] with my mother’s milk” (1187). In general, the absence of connection to others or a past has a detrimental effect on the characters.

Without exception, Mary French is also in pursuit of capital. Although her reasoning is to support her cause(s), her pursuits are usually at the expense and well being of herself, family, and friends. She eventually becomes estranged from her mother, childhood friend Ada, and anyone else not able to meet her unwavering ideals. These characters are ideologues of the early twentieth century, personalities and characteristics
of constructs embedded through self-ascription. They function in terms of capital and the construct of an “American Dream” encoded with personal ideologies. The relations of characters behold different ideological constructs but are subjugated by illusions. The subversive impact of textual determinants is revealed through the four frameworks, as characters manifest the effects of a nation riddled with consequences of its negotiation with modernity. The effects illustrate particular conditions of a national experience that is reflective of disillusion and alienation.

*The Big Money* is a portrait of an America coping with disillusion and alienation, subjugated by the effects wrought from experiences of modernity in lieu of World War I. The transition from chaotic fervor for war to ideological complacency suggests a dark depiction of the proverbial “American Dream” at the close of an epoch. The novel chronicles a collective consciousness derived from a discourse that illuminates on diverging paradigms in advocacy of capital acquisition. As a result, America’s collective consciousness (or psyche: mental life) is imposed by illusions of sovereignty from subversive constructs in the linguistic context of industrialization. The effects abdicate a connection with tradition and personal autonomy during a heighten period of materialism, which is degenerative and corrosive to the constitution of a nation. For Dos Passos, the novel is a harsh critique on a nation’s adherence to paradigmatic constructs in the early twentieth century. It is suggestive of a somber reproach to a collective consciousness of America negotiating with the distorted reflections of méconnaissance (or misrecognition) in the trilogy of *U.S.A.*

It is fitting, therefore, that *The Big Money* concludes the *U.S.A.* trilogy, which is an expansive portrait of an unconventional protagonist. It is a trilogy that exhibits
narrative techniques experimental in form, suggestive of a figure or subject uniquely modernist in approach to literary representation. The seamless relevance between *U.S.A.* and Modernism posits contributing factors of a movement that borrows concepts from various systems of knowledge such as linguistics, psychoanalysis, and philosophy. John Dos Passos expands the scope of literacy by combining other artistic and scientific fields prevalent to the early twentieth century. Dos Passos’ literary representation of America through four frameworks—Newsreels, biographies, Camera Eye, and fictional narratives—is a stylistic endeavor that embraces the aesthetics of modernity. His trilogy is a formulation of historical and theoretical applications burgeoning out of a milieu. The encompassing work is not relegated to political discourse but a discourse of language, promoting a wide range of critical analyses. For this analysis, the trilogy consisting of *The 42nd Parallel*, 1919, and *The Big Money* illustrate three moments of transformation in the rise, deterioration, and subjugation of a collective consciousness. The social and cultural implication of such a discourse marks the crumbling of a national persona. For Dos Passos, the consequences of socially and culturally conscripted illusions are corrosive to a nation unable to negotiate with the advent of mass communication and industrialization. The trilogy of America is a fragmentary portrait of frameworks juxtaposing moments of the early twentieth century, presenting the pervasive characteristics of modernity. *U.S.A.* is an exemplary work of literature in American Modernism.
Works Cited


