

A New Historicist Reading of John Dos Passos' Novel *The Big Money*: Depiction of Children as a "Second Lost Generation"

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Abstract—This article examines the representation of children as a “second lost generation” in John Dos Passos’ novel *The Big Money*. It explains that the documentary and narrative sections that Dos Passos integrates into the novel explore how children’s position in the 1930s is caught between parents’ care and indifference. Dos Passos clarifies the impact of the American Dream and materialism upon the structuring of this conflicted position. In the novel’s Newsreels, Dos Passos presents a composite of popular songs and news headlines that present children seeking jobs and also departing from their family houses. Alongside the presentation of this phenomenon which resonates with children’s social situation in 1930s, in the narrative sections Dos Passos portrays Juvenile characters as living in families whose main concern is the making of money. To investigate this representation, the article considers the views of historians about the first “lost generation” (the post-World War I generation). It utilizes the “second lost generation” term to describe the juveniles who struggled during the 1930s age of Depression. The article historicizes the position of children in 1930s America. It refers to literary critics’ views about Dos Passos’ modernist and political inclination. The article concludes that Dos Passos’ *The Big Money* manifests in a modernist form fragmented historical realities about 1930s America’s materialistic thinking, within which children are seen as a second “lost generation”.

Index Terms—children, Dos Passos, lost generation, modernist form, 1930s

I. INTRODUCTION

John Dos Passos’ *The Big Money* (1936), the last volume of the trilogy *U.S.A.*, is composed of fragmentary sections: Biographies, Newsreels, Camera Eyes, and the narratives. Throughout these sections, the novel, published in a peak year during the 1930s proletarian literary movement, bears numerous messages to help Americans transgress the economic crisis of the 1930s. The novel investigates real issues taking place in 1910s-1930s from multiple perspectives. By incorporating and constructing fragmented narratives, the novel explores complexity within the early twentieth-century in America. Cooper (2020) points out, the literary techniques developed by Dos Passos “served at least to deconstruct the ideological underpinnings of monopoly capitalism” (p. 5). Jun Young Lee (2008), who regards Dos Passos as a political and modernist writer in *U.S.A.*, similarly argues that the trilogy’s four sections portray “the heterogeneous aspects of American capitalism from multiple points of view [...] Through the dialectical medication between these perspectives, American capitalism as a whole is presented as a dialectical unity” (Lee, 2008, p. 183). The current paper relates the Newsreels to the narratives, which present children’s lives in *The Big Money*, and it argues that the novel embodies a warning message that the juvenile generation of the 1930s is “lost” due to materialism and the lack of adequate familial care. Dos Passos sets the novel in the early 20th century, aiming to break down the turmoil of economic decline in 1930s, which was caused by America’s individualist and capitalist priorities.

Not unlike other American modern novels, *The Big Money* indicates certain messages without explicitly stating them. Modernist texts replicate and juxtapose various patterns and the reader is induced to understand the connectedness between the patterns to infer wider messages. These messages are scattered within the texts’ complex structure: “Part of the accessibility of the modernist text was that readers could enter it from a number of perspectives” (Wanger-Martin, 2020, p. 108). Claude-Edmonds Magny (1972) maintains that modern American literature shows its reader that “the most striking artistic effects are those born on the juxtaposition of two images, without any commentary” (Magny, 1972, p. 48). In his article “Literary Prophecy” (1894), the novelist Hamlin Garland anticipated the content and the purpose that modern American fiction was to adopt. Garland proposes that the modern novel “will teach, as all earnest literature has done, by effect; but it will not be by direct expression, but by placing before the reader the facts of life as they stand related to the artist. This relation will not be put into explanatory notes, but will address itself to the perception of the reader” (Garland, 1894, p. 51).¹ This implies that readers of modern texts need to relate the fragmented points presented by the writers to get coherent messages about serious issues relevant to their lives. In fact, American fiction of the 1930s indicates how to transgress the decade’s economic crisis. Writers with leftist affiliation want to revolt against social injustice, poverty, class discrimination, and the parents’ as well as children’s working for low payments.

¹ Anne-Elizabeth Murdy presents a substantial view that literature is to be read as “testaments to a particular political and historical project of claiming gender, race, and ultimately citizenship on the terrain that once held these authors [the African Americans] and their readers slaves” (8).

Communist and social commitments were, as suggested by this period's leftist fiction, to establish a unified American society. Langston Hughes and John Steinbeck, for example, symbolize these ideas in their novels *Not Without Laughter* (1930) and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). *The Big Money*, composed of juxtaposed documentary segments and narrative sections, portrays young persons and even children as lost due to materialistic ways of living.

II. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Previous literary critics examine Dos Passos' representation of women and men who were seen as victims of American ideologies, the American Dream and individualism. Nonetheless, the critics have not considered how Dos Passos' novels portray children as marginalized under social and materialistic pressure. Casey (1995) and Pizer (2012) read the Biographies, Newsreels, and Camera Eyes in Dos Passos' *U.S.A.* as integral parts which complement the themes in the trilogy's narratives. This "intricate, multifaceted" approach, argues Casey (1995) helps Dos Passos "deconstruct and reconstruct the story of women in American history" (p. 263). While Casey uses this approach to examine the representation of women, the current paper argues that the Newsreels and the narratives concerning children in *The Big Money* offer a complementary image to what is historically shown about children of the 1930s. Pizer (2012) suggests that Dos Passos' deployment of documentary and narrative elements in *U.S.A.* enacts "a complex way of perceiving reality" (p. 58). Reality is captured from multiple angles, and the reader is encouraged to relate these visions to get a unified message from the text. Casey suggests that "By incorporating historical elements into a work that is essentially fictional, he [Dos Passos] creates the illusion of historical truth even as he subjectively refashions history" (p. 251). Dos Passos' illusionary narratives concerning children's lives fill gaps in the Newsreels. This offers a way to conclude that children are caught between care and indifference. Near the end of the *U.S.A.* trilogy, Dos Passos (1936) declares that "[w]e have only words" against "Power Superpower" (pp. 524-25). The "Superpower" that *The Big Money* attempts to defy is capitalism, and Dos Passos indicates his interest in saving the juvenile generation from being lost when writing his trilogy about the social condition in America within the early-twentieth century. As Garland (1894) predicts, "If the child of the past was ignored, the future will cherish him. And [modern] fiction will embody these facts" (quoted in Barnard 2005, p. 45). The interest in the futures of these children is encoded in the narratives and the Newsreels of *The Big Money*.

Dos Passos uses fragmentation and multi-voiced sections to capture instability, confusion, and anxiety in the lives of children and their parents. He utilizes modernist devices to revolt against traditional politics and conventional styles of writings. For example, he weakens the plot in his novel with fragmented sentences and jumbled thoughts and expressions in different modes of narration. Stephen Kern (2011), in investigating how modernists use various strategies to raise serious themes without having unifying plots, observes that "Modernists who produced weak plots repeatedly assailed the institution of the family" (p. 231). Modernists react against any traditional stricture from society as the ones found in families, and their novels are not strongly plotted because modernist writers believe that life is full of uncertainties and it does not have clear sequence of events and closure (Kern, 2011, p. 214). In *The Big Money*, and in the *U.S.A.* trilogy as a whole, Dos Passos features no example of a unified family. He represents children as silenced, ignored, or as suffering from haunting memories and controlling parents. Furthermore, children are shown as running from their families looking for better life conditions.

III. METHODOLOGY

The current study adopts a new historicist approach. It historicizes the position of children in 1930s America, and the term "lost generation" will be applied to how Dos Passos represents juveniles in the novel under examination. Indeed, the novelist Gertrude Stein was the first to use the term; she coined it to describe writers from the 1920s who witnessed WWI and who were disillusioned by the war circumstances. In a conversation with Ernest Hemingway, who joined the army, Stein says that all "young people who served in the war [...] are a lost generation" (Hemingway, 1964, p. 61). John Dos Passos in *The Big Money*, E. Hemingway in *The Sun also Rises*, and S. Fitzgerald in *Tender is the Night* capture characters from the post-World War I generation. It is a "lost" generation in the sense that it experienced despondency and disillusionment within the war's context. The generation lost faith in politics and values, and its members used drinking alcohol as a means to escape from the futility of their lives. Michael Soto (2020) argues that generation of WWI became lost due to social forces and "economic turmoil" that followed the war (p. 141). Soto demonstrates, "To be a lost generation signaled not just the senseless forfeiture of human life, but also a spiritual bankruptcy and more broadly the decay of Western civilization" (Soto, 2020, p. 142). The post-World War I generation was devoid of morality, spirituality, and sentimentality.

Dos Passos, an ambulance driver in World War I (WWI), belonged to the lost generation, and, further, he extends its connotations and associated features by writing about people struggling as a result of capitalism. His portrayal of the modern generation resembles T. S. Elliot's view of the modern men as "hollow" and empty yet filled with despair and disappointment. In his poem "The Hollow Men", Elliot (1925) writes: "Shape without form/Paralysed force" (quoted in Hasan, 2019, p. 171). The circumstances of the war and its consequences cause the hollowness of these men and force them to "live for the sake of the 'self' rather than 'selves'" (Hasan, 2019, p. 171). They turn into paralyzed beings who lack the agency of taking actions. Similarly, the persons who struggled in capitalist societies are seen by Dos Passos as

a “lost generation.” Alfred Kazin (1995), examining writings from the thirties, proposes that for Dos Passos, “the lost generation becomes all the lost generations from the beginning of modern time in America—all who have known themselves to be lost in the fires of war or struggling up the icy slopes of modern capitalism” (Kazin, 1995, p. 321). As a modernist novelist, he regards the modern generations as filled with emptiness and as lost due to their passivity and lack of morality especially when they chase materialistic goals without focusing on their human relations.

The exact term, “the lost generation”, is used frequently in 1930s contexts. In her 1936 article “The Second Lost Generation,” Harlan Hatcher calls the youth who suffered from poverty and unemployment in the Depression era “the second lost generation” (p. 621). This “new lost generation,” Hatcher points out, drew the attention of writers such as Dos Passos (p. 622). In his novels, Dos Passos represents the juveniles as victims of economic decadence, poverty, and dysfunctional family relationships. Marginalized from their parents’ daily concerns, they became another “lost generation”. Eleanor Roosevelt (1933) admitted her worry about the juvenile generation’s future when declaring, “I have moments of real terror, when I think we may be losing this generation” (quoted in Uys, 1999, p. 23). Mrs. Roosevelt further projects this expected loss of a whole generation on the children’s parents. In her words, “it is not purely a question of the education of youth; it is a question of the education of parents, because so many have lost their holds on their children” (quoted in Uys, 1999, p. 23).

In the mid-1930s, particularly in 1936 when *The Big Money* was published, children’s departure from the family house became a noticeable phenomenon. In *Riding the Rails*, Errol Lincoln Uys (1999) maintains that a large number of children of the 1930s left their families to seek job opportunities wherein they experienced adventurous lives and, indeed, escape from poverty. Uys writes:

At the height of the Great Depression, 250,000 teenage hoboes were roaming America. Some left home because they felt they were a burden to their families; some fled homes shattered by the shame of unemployment and poverty. Some left because it seemed a great adventure. With the blessing of parents or runaways, they hit the road and went in search for a better life. (Uys, 1999, p. 11)

Uys, who received letters from people living at that time, concludes in his book that many children hit the road seeking adventures (p. 52). John Fawcett, a hobo from the 1930s, generalizes the view that, like many children in the 1930s, he left the family for “an adventure”. Fawcett declares: “Mom and Dad were good, loving parents, so I certainly didn’t run away because of my home life. Why do boys run away? For adventure, I guess, because it’s exciting and dangerous” (quoted in Uys, 1999, p. 68). Bill Hackett, another hobo, describes his departure of Flint with excitement. In his words, “My heart beat fast and the adrenaline flowed. With a great spurt of steam, the locomotive got under way. . . What an incredible adventure! I felt as if I were Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, and the Swiss Family Robinson combined” (quoted in Uys, p. 63). In *The Big Money*, in some Newsreels and in two main narratives, Dos Passos delineates the circumstances of the modern generations and indicates that children were not totally cared for; they do not have valid communications with their families, and they were not loved in the way they should have been due to their parents’ being busy with making money.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the novel, twelve of the twenty-five Newsreels contain something relevant to children, and previous critics have clarified the Newsreels’ function. Robert C. Rosen (1981) maintains that the Newsreels’ presence in *U.S.A.* “is not random” (p. 79). The chosen news headlines and popular songs offer a frame to read the novel’s narratives. Charles Marz (1979) argues that each headline in *U.S.A.* “is a verbal snapshot, a verbal recapitulation of some part of the world. Each snapshot is a short re-lived event . . . Persons and events are shot and the Newsreels preserve the remains” (quoted in Edwards, 1999, p. 249). In *The Big Money*, two contradictory views toward children’s lives are shown within the same Newsreel to indicate family dysfunction. Parents aspire for upward social mobility, and this typical American Dream leads to the children’s departure of the family house. Newsreel XLV, for instance, states that “Father wants economy, Mother craves opportunity for her children, daughter desires social prestige and son wants travel, speed, get-up- and- go” (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 14). While this Newsreel presents the mother’s interest in craving “opportunity for her children” and suggests that children are interested in traveling, a poem in the same Newsreel reads:

I hate to see de evenin sun go down
Hate to see de evenin sun go down
Cause my baby he done lef’ dis town. (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 14)

The persona in this poem hates her/his lover’s departure from the town. Yet, the juvenile in the previous headline departs the family house seeking a better life condition. This contradiction of a parent’s hatred of the beloved’s departure while being interested in finding opportunity for the child shows the extent to which the young generation is “lost” between conflicting states: hidden care and prominent carelessness. The child’s being in contradiction leads him/her to seek work to be away from family.

Due to children’s interest in escaping from the family’s hard life conditions, opportunities for young boys predominated newspapers, as the novel’s journalistic segments show. Newsreel XLVII presents the headline: “boy seeking future offered opportunity . . . good positions for bright. . . CHANCE FOR ADVANCEMENT. . . boy to learn. . . errand boy. . . office boy” (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 23). This fragmentary line indicates hollowness and absence in the lives of children as they seek to leave the family house. Within the children’s attempt to escape from the family

house, the working parents are seen as indifferent in developing their children's personalities. In Newsreel LIX, which introduces a chapter about Charlie Anderson's life, a lyric reads:

I want to see my pa
I want to see my ma
I want to go to dear old Omaha. (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 227)

The beginning of this stanza, "I want to see my pa," signifies the persona's need to his father's presence indicating the father's major role in developing his children's personality. In spite of this detail in the above Newsreel, children choose to seek better life conditions away from their families.

Even in the first Newsreels of Dos Passos' novel *1919*, Newsreels XLVI and XLVII, there is a large survey of boys' and young men's job opportunities in the advertisements in addition to a celebration of their hard work:

boy seeking future offered opportunity. . . good positions for bright. . . CHANCE FOR ADVANCEMENT . . .
boy to learn. . . errand boy. . . office boy. (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 790)
YOUNG MAN WANTED. (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 790)

. . .
young man not afraid of hard work. (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 791)

Within this context that encourages the juvenile's works, the generation of the 1930s as represented by Dos Passos pursues the fulfillment of the American Dream. It is the illusion of achieving wealth and better social life conditions.

While Dos Passos' characters try to reach a better social life condition by adopting the American Dream, the consequence of materialism and the seeking of upward social mobility lead to their personal downward mobility, especially in morality and spirituality. By achieving material success, they become self-indulged and rarely do they consider their families' emotional needs. As Stylianos Papadimitriou (2021) explains, Dos Passos and Faulkner, in their novels from the 1930s, criticize the American Dream's promises as it leads to moral degradation; it corrupts the individual as well as the society (p. 18). Walther R. Fisher (1973) accurately defines the American dream as a "materialistic myth [that] does not require a regeneration or sacrifice of self; rather, it promises that if one employs one's energies and talents to the fullest, one will reap the rewards of status, wealth, and power. The materialistic code assumes that one will pursue one's self-interest, not deny it for the betterment of someone else" (Fisher, 1973, p. 161). The selfishness resulted from this materialistic myth leads to parents' denying their responsibility of promoting healthy relationship with their children.

The Big Money's narratives about fictional characters portray how children's lives are in conflict and futility due to being born in families whose main concern is money. For the sake of money, parents and children lack familial contact. In the narratives concerning Charlie Anderson and Margo Dowling, similarly to what is shown in the Newsreels in *The Big Money*, Dos Passos represents money's influence on children's lives. Being busy in a capitalist world, the world of money, detaches parents from their sons and daughters. In the narrative about Charlie there is little reference to Wheatley and Marguerite, Charlie and Gladys' children. Meanwhile, Charlie indulges himself with business to breed his money. While he succeeds in business, Charlie does not behave as a loving parent or even as what Marx (1844) calls "a social being" (2000, p. 213). The night before Charlie marries Gladys, he asks her to have a drink just like she does in the country club; yet, she rejects his offer. Seemingly more of a parent than him, Gladys says: "Mother says that if the parents get drunk they have idiot children" (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 243). He responds to her, "Oh, you poor baby" (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 243), reflecting his indifference about his future children. Also after his wife gives birth to Wheatley and Marguerite, Charlie, not considering his wife's several small operations due to delivering the children, shows his interest in getting into bed with Gladys (Dos Passos, 1936, pp. 244, 245). Selfishly, without attention to his developed family, Charlie cares about satisfying his needs. His character as a parent, fragmented in different segments in the novel, illustrates the agony and emptiness of the modern family's life during the 1930s aftermath.

Paradoxically, Charlie, a businessman from the bourgeois class, is not unlike the working poor parents who are presented in the novel's last Newsreel, Newsreel LXVIII, as leaving their children in order to make money. The Newsreel presents Ella May Wiggins' protest song, "Mill Mother's Lament" (1929), which reads: "We leave our home in the morning/ We kiss our children goodbye" (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 418). Indeed, Wiggins' song is about another context which is the protest of the working mill mothers in 1929 due to their low wages which are not enough to provide their families' basic needs (Huber, 2009, p. 100). In the exact song, Wiggins poignantly clarifies that the working mothers leave their houses for their work while in their hearts they have love for their children. When earning their salaries, however, these mothers pay the bills without fulfilling the responsibility of childbearing (Huber, 2009, p. 100). This conflicted position emerges due to poverty and for money's sake. This view is apparent in "While we slave for the bosses/ Our children scream an' cry/ But when we draw our money/ Our grocery bills to pay" (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 418). The interest in paying the bills is what Charlie also assumes his family needs. Charlie justifies not coming to the house by saying that he is making money. Rhetorically he asks Gladys, "if I didn't make the money how I would pay the bills?" (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 245). Charlie's foremost priority is accumulating money. Even if the outcome is paying the bills his wife creates, Charlie is busy in this capitalist world. As a result, a breakdown of communication and a sense of alienation extends in Charlie's family.

Rarely does Charlie think in a foreshadowing perspective about his children's future. When in the hospital after having an accident at work, Charlie does not mind his son Whatley coming to see him. The narrator describes: "Gladys

and Charlie had a bitter row about letting Whatley come as she said she didn't want the child to remember his father in the hospital" (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 251). Here, due to a materialistic mentality being influenced by his business life, Charlie assumes that "plenty of time" is enough to make Whatley forget the experience of seeing him at hospital. In his business-like words, Charlie says, "But, Glad, he'll have plenty of time to get over it, get over it a damn sight sooner than I will" (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 252). Charlie's supposition is probably true. Nevertheless, Charlie neglects to think about his son's future recalling of the situation. This reflects a difficulty that a materialistic parent faces while interpreting and understanding their children's conditions.

The silence and the reductive representation of Charlie's children indicate how children at that time were marginalized from their parents' concerns due to materialistic reasons. This has a strong impact on children's recalling of awful memories, a thing which the novel does not show on the surface; yet, it is encoded. In her book *The Nature of Trauma in American Novels*, Michelle Balaev (2012) argues that fragmentation and complexity in narratives convey personal tensions in the lives of the protagonists. Balaev writes: "The lack of cohesion and the disturbance of previous formulations of self and reality are sometimes conveyed in the form of an interruptive or nonlinear narrative. In addition, a temporary disjointed narrative highlights the struggles of the protagonist to identify the meaning and purpose of an experience" (Balaev, 2012, p. xvi). Charlie tries to find a meaning to his life yet he does not consider what his children might recall in their futures. The centeredness of Charlie and the passivity of his children in the narratives of the novel demonstrate emotional loss and tension in such a family, a message which Dos Passos indicates in this representation.

Charlie's experience in the hospital and being away from his business for a while, however, causes a slight change in his role as a parent. When he is brought to his house from the hospital, Charlie spends some of his time playing with his children and talking with their governess (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 252). Without his business, Charlie develops his relationship with his children by showing his concern for what interests them. In response to this progress, his children are lost between Charlie's current attention and his past carelessness. Newsreel LIX carries a similar message by presenting the "radio song" (1924): "Mr. Radio Man won't you do what you can/ 'Cause I'm so lonely/ Tell my Mammy to come back home/ Mr. Radio Man" (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 228). The persona here is a child trying to appeal to the radio after his mother's death. It seems that Dos Passos chooses to present this song to capture the feeling of the children whose parent is absent. This feeling of loneliness resembles what children such as Whatley and Marguerite might feel, even if the narrative sections about Charlie do not say it explicitly. In fact, the physical or emotional absence of the parent in the modern context, as the one delineated by Dos Passos, illustrates that the modern children are as hollow as their parents; they are drowned in confusion and futility that they passively accept or subconsciously reject.

Margo Dowling, whose childhood is traced in the narrative sections, is another child who is victimized because of moral degradation and a profit-driven mentality. At the very beginning of the narrative about Margo, Margo's father Fred says nice words to Margo, such as "How's daddy good little girl?" (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 130). Margo also "would bounce up and down on his [Fred's] shoulder and feel the muscles of his arm hard like oars tighten against her" (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 130). In this particular example, the father's care is reflected; through feeling her father's hard hands, Margo is playing with him. Yet, heavy drinking shatters this tender fatherhood. As a consequence, her stepmother, Agnes, begins taking care of Margo while Fred is away from the family house (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 130). Agnes' care for Margo clashes with her continuous rows with Margo's father. When Fred comes back to the house and he is drunk, Agnes quarrels with him until Fred calls her "dirty names" (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 132). Although Fred used to play with Margo and Agnes used to tell stories showing a good image of Fred in the past, because of such rows, Margo "would run into her bedroom and slam the door and sometimes even pull the bureau across it and get into bed and lie there shaking" (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 132). The momentary physical "shaking" causes instability in Margo's life. "Margie's dreams", the narrator describes, "were [only and all] about running away" (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 132). The concern here is the subconscious of Margo. Her feelings are left unvoiced and the audience should relate the narrator's limited description of the character to how Margo is shown in the narrative. In modernist novels, even the character's silence elicits the readers to know the thoughts and feelings that the character represses due to personal or societal reasons. The narrator's description of Margo's inner thoughts and that Margo does not put her feelings into words demonstrate how society and family dysfunction make Margo considers leaving the family house.

Margo's dream of leaving her family results from the moral callousness of her family: her father is drunkard and her stepmother's main concern is the making of money. Margo realizes, while awake in the middle of the night, "how awful it was to be poor and have a father like that" (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 136). Margo here is caught between poverty and her father's drinking. Fred, a drunkard and a representative of the first lost generation, causes Margo to decide "to run away or kill herself as soon as she got home so that she wouldn't have to face the people. . . ever again" (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 134). Margo, to escape from poverty and the harsh reality of her life, is introduced by Agnes to the acting work wherein Margo reads *Smart Set*, which Frank, Agnes' second husband, describes as "that filthy magazine" (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 143). Margo, further, does not resist being sexually abused by Frank who works as an actor. "When it [the rape] was over," the narrator describes, "she [Margo] wasn't crying. She didn't care. . . She got up and straightened her dress" (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 144). The only thing that "she could think of was to run away" (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 145). At the moment, it is Agnes's responsibility to let Margo think of running away; Agnes leaves Margo in Frank's care. Agnes, further, devotes her life to paying the bills, a materialistic aim which eventually corrupts Margo's childhood. Margo, sexually abused, has the thought of running away to Cuba by marrying Tony, though she is only sixteen (Dos Passos,

1936, pp. 146, 192). Margo is victimized because of Agnes' plans of paying the bills that indirectly cause a deterioration in Margo's childhood.

Margo's realization of her own loss is further reflected when she does not care about the death of her blind infant. What Margo does when her baby dies is "hoping that she's died too" (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 197). As if she desires the blindness of her dead infant, Margo does not react to calming words. "No matter what anybody said to her," the narrator describes, "she wouldn't answer or open her eyes" (Dos Passos, 1936, p. 197). Margo's experiencing this momentary blindness when closing her eyes resonates with her unspoken realization that she is similar to her dead infant; she is lost in a "lost generation." In modernist novels, the characters struggle to put into words their thoughts and experience, and this explains Margo's situation when she remains silent after the loss of her baby. Similarly to her infant, who is born blind, Margo is figuratively blinded in a society which chases money by any means.

The conflicted situation of Margo can be clearly understood when comparing it to a real anecdote from the 1930s America. The reason behind relating a fictional representation of a character to a situation from the 1930s is Dos Passos' choice of writing about historical realities in a modernist form. Modernist art, as Peter Childs (2000) defines it, is "experimental, formally complex, elliptical, contains elements of decreation as well as creation, and tends to associate notions of the artist's freedom from realism, materialism, traditional genre and form, with notions of cultural apocalypse and disaster" (Childs, 2000, p. 2). *The Big Money* encodes the novelist's real and fictionalized reaction against capitalism and its consequences on children and their relationship with their parents. Not unlike Dos Passos' portrayal of Margo's hatred of life, in a letter sent to Eleanor Roosevelt in 1934, a fifteen years old girl shows her suffering as a child. The girl asserts to Mrs. Roosevelt that she is sick of her life. The letter reads:

I hate everything now because life seems blind I love my mother dearly my dad works 3 dys a wk he gets \$40 a mth. But he has lots of old bills to pay from before when he did not work I wish I had work I would help my dad although he is mean to me. As old as I am I still get beaten well you would say (why) because sometimes he gets drunk and starts to beat us for silly things I'm sick And tired Dad buy me something once in a great while. (qtd. in Cohen, 2002, p. 46)

The juvenile sender of this letter and the represented children (such as Margo) in *The Big Money* are lost because of their parents' preoccupation with money. They are "lost" as a consequence of being between contradictory concerns. Sometimes, love and passion support them, yet indifference is also there. Due to living with the carelessness of their parents, which results from a preoccupation with what is materialistic, children of this period become a second "lost generation".

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Dos Passos indicates in *The Big Money*'s Newsreels and narratives a warning societal message that some of the 1930s Juveniles in America are a second "lost generation" due to one of their parents' chasing money. Children presented in the novel's documentary segments are seeking jobs outside the sphere of their families. Charlie Anderson's children are ignored from their father's self-centered materialistic concerns. Even Margo Dowling stands frozen between the care and the materialistic thinking of her stepmother and the changed nature of her father. Ultimately, Margo, sexually abused and later married at a young age, gives birth to a blind child, symbolizing the status of these children's generation at that time in America. Within *The Big Money*'s sections, and in novels such as *The Big Money*, Dos Passos showcases and formulates historical realities about 1930s America's materialistic thinking, within which children are seen as a "lost generation".

Indeed, literary critics have considered Dos Passos a modernist who features humanitarian, political, and social issues in his writings. He repeats, juxtaposes, and complicates various viewpoints and representations in novels as *The Big Money*, aiming to demonstrate the complexity of realities within the modern period. Pizer (2013) suggests that Dos Passos deploys modernistic techniques to indicate naturalistic themes (p. viii). Heather A. Love (2016) argues that Dos Passos' writings present the complex nature of the 20th century communication culture (p. 128). Dos Passos sets up a relationship between historical and fictive information, and the reader is challenged to understand the message by relating the clustered facts (Love, 2016, p. 126). Love writes: "By interspersing fictional character studies with fact-based vignettes, Dos Passos' work illustrates the role that literature can play in modeling ways to engage the complicated and interconnected reality of twentieth- (and now twenty-first) century America" (p. 126). The current paper considers the function of Dos Passos' integrating documentary and narrative sections in *The Big Money* and examines Dos Passos' depiction of children in these sections within the 1930s context.

The Big Money, a modernist novel, carries messages in narrative and documentary sections that children of the 1930s, due to their parents being busy with materialistic affairs, are seen as a second lost generation. Indirectly, Dos Passos prompts his readers to relate the messages fragmented in public and personal sections so they would avoid the tragedies which he records fictionally and historically in novels as *The Big Money*. As Linda Wanger-Martain (2020) maintains, "American modern writing has the aim of showing rather than saying"; it gives its readers the opportunity to critically comment on the juxtaposed representations (p. 111). *The Big Money* and the *U.S.A.*'s other two volumes embody this point. Dos Passos indicates complicated messages about the position of children in 1930s America, and the reader face representations of children in different sections from a number of perspectives to reach a bigger understanding about how children struggled like a "second lost generation" within the context of 1930s in America.

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