UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL
INSTITUTO DE LETRAS
PROGRAMA DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO EM LETRAS
ESTUDOS DA LITERATURA
LEM: LITERATURAS DE LÍNGUA INGLESA
LINHA DE PESQUISA: TEORIAS LITERÁRIAS E INTERDISCIPLINARIDADE

The Poetics of Noise

Author: Lauro Iglesias Quadrado
Advisor: Dr Rosalia Angelita Neumann Garcia

PORTO ALEGRE
March, 2018

CIP - Catalogação na Publicação

Iglesias Quadrado, Lauro
The Poetics of Noise / Lauro Iglesias Quadrado. -- 2018.
151 f.
Orientadora: Rosalia Angelita Neumann Garcia.

Tese (Doutorado) -- Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Instituto de Letras, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras, Porto Alegre, BR-RS, 2018.

1. John Dos Passos. 2. Manhattan Transfer. 3. Noise. 4. American Literature. I. Neumann Garcia, Rosalia Angelita, orient. II. Título.

Elaborada pelo Sistema de Geração Automática de Ficha Catalográfica da UFRGS com os dados fornecidos pelo(a) autor(a).

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK

the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES), for the financial support which allowed me to consider and reconsider many research choices.

UFRGS's Pró-Reitoria de Pós-Graduação for the travel grant which made it possible for me to know researchers and works that seemed to be so distant.

the Fulbright Commission, in Brazil and in the United States, for the most incredible academic and human experience.

all my classmates at UFRGS and UGA for our shared experiences and the warm reception. Athens, Georgia Fulbright Scholars Association: you are unbelievable.

my professors at UFRGS, for the immensity of their classes: Elaine Indrusiak, Gerson Neumann, Kathrin Rosenfield, Rosalia Garcia, Sandra Maggio. You are truly inspiring.

UGA faculty: Jed Rasula for the fascinating classes, welcoming my work and being the advisor I needed; Susan Rosenbaum for the continuous support and encouragement, the stimulating discussions in class and ModSquad.

the Unisinos folk: Fabricio Silveira, and Michael Goddard. Thank you for the help, conversations, and widening of possibilities. And Philipp Schweighauser, for being so kind and thoughtful for sending me your material when I did not have access to it.

the UVA libraries staff, for the energetic and coordinated work that facilitated a productive research week in Charlottesville.

the John Dos Passos Society members: it is wonderful to have someone to talk to.

the evaluating committee members, who have been collaborative throughout the development of this investigation.

my advisor, Rosalia Neumann Garcia, for being supportive in all moments and for fully embracing my work: that cannot be taken for granted, I will always be grateful.

my mother, my family, my friends. Life is worth living when you are around.

Polvö mates: our noise shall prevail.

Paula, there is no greater companion. I am glad we can share everything, all the time.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation revolves around the work of American writer, John Dos Passos (1896-1970), more specifically around his novel *Manhattan Transfer* (1925). This investigation is a critical reading of his fiction, especially concerning the intensity of aural experiences promoted by the author, mostly based on disruptive, noisy passages which are representative of metropolitan experience of the early twentieth century in New York. The critical and theoretical assumptions used vary from traditional literary schools of text analysis and public criticism to Sound Studies and intermediality approaches. With this support, the noise brought by Dos Passos can be listed under assorted categories: the use of songs and different styles of popular music of the time; the impossibility of silence; the annoyance of urban noise, produced by machines or people; the audiograph of characters, with the transliteration of characters' accents and foreign languages. Sonic provocation is contextualized as *Manhattan Transfer* was written following the invention and popularization of the phonograph as a domestic device, providing a newfound possibility of one being able to listen to music at home at any time, and giving access for new possibilities of relating with sound for people in general. This research follows Dos Passos's phonograph-like narratives, investigating the author's interest in sounds which were despised or should be eliminated from twentieth-century ever-growing mechanization of society. The idiosyncrasies of his fiction are analyzed combined with the representation of noise as a social nuisance, an unwanted element that makes human interaction more troublesome, yet key to apprehending characters' rapport in the novel. Disruptive acoustic impressions convey, in his literature, a state of fragmentation and excitement of humans of modernity. Finally, this dissertation aspires to recuperate John Dos Passos's oeuvre and bring it back to academic and general literary discussions, opposing tendencies in theory and critique that had, in the past decades, gradually relegated his work into obscurity. This text argues that the presence of Dos Passos's work has been relevant and applicable to aesthetic objects produced beyond modernist years, reaching contemporary pertinence.

KEYWORDS: John Dos Passos; *Manhattan Transfer*; Noise; American literature.

RESUMO

Esta tese gira em torno da obra do escritor estadunidense John Dos Passos (1896-1970), mais especificamente em torno de seu romance *Manhattan Transfer* (1925). Esta investigação é uma leitura crítica de sua ficção, especialmente no que toca à intensidade de experiências auditivas promovidas pelo autor, em sua maioria baseadas em passagens perturbadoras e ruidosas, representativas da experiência metropolitana do começo do século XX em Nova York. O arcabouço crítico e teórico utilizado varia desde as escolas literárias tradicionais de análise textual, crítica em âmbito público até os Estudos de Som e abordagens de intermidialidade. Com esse apoio, o ruído trazido por Dos Passos pode ser listado sob variadas categorias: o uso de canções e diferentes estilos de música popular da época; a impossibilidade de silêncio; o incômodo do ruído urbano, produzido por máquinas ou pessoas; a audiografia dos personagens, com a transliteração dos sotaques e línguas estrangeiras das personagens. A provocação sonora é contextualizada, visto que *Manhattan Transfer* foi escrito após a invenção e a popularização do fonógrafo como um aparelho doméstico, que fornecia uma possibilidade inaudita para que se pudesse escutar música em casa a qualquer hora, dando acesso a novas possibilidades de relacionar-se com som para as pessoas em geral. Esta pesquisa segue as narrativas-fonógrafo de Dos Passos, investigando o interesse do autor em sons que eram desprezados ou deveriam ser eliminados da constante mecanização da sociedade do século XX. As idiossincrasias de sua ficção são analisadas em conjunto com a representação do ruído como uma perturbação social, um elemento indesejado que torna a interação humana problemática, porém chave para apreender as relações entre personagens no romance. As perturbadoras impressões acústicas comunicam, em sua literatura, um estado de fragmentação e empolgação dos humanos da modernidade. Finalmente, esta tese aspira recuperar a obra de John Dos Passos, trazendo-a de volta às discussões literárias acadêmicas e generalizadas, opondo tendências em teoria e crítica que vinham, nas últimas décadas, gradualmente relegando sua obra à obscuridade. Este texto argumenta que a presença da obra de Dos Passos tem sido relevante e aplicável a objetos estéticos produzidos além dos anos modernistas, atingindo pertinência contemporânea.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: John Dos Passos; *Manhattan Transfer*; Ruído; Literatura estadunidense.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CAUTION: STEPS

Work on good prose has three steps:
a musical stage when it is composed,
an architectonic one when it is built,
and a textile one when it is woven.

WALTER BENJAMIN

OVERTURE

[M]y letters are horribly badly written,
half in pencil and half in pen, parts in English and parts in French.
Almost impossible to read. I must write my letters with more care.

John Dos Passos

Roaring Twenties. The Jazz Age. Pompous titles reflect how the 1920s in the United States have secured an idealized mythical position as an era of intense changes both in social life and in artistic efforts. In the mind of a twenty-first century individual, what happened a hundred years before is commonly associated with the growth and appearance of modern world's first megalopolises, as well as its social counterparts: parties, hedonistic behavior, and postwar euphoria and contradictions. Such distinctive traits would echo for many decades to come. For all that, one key feature that usually comes to the top of one's mind, when referring to that specific time, is the reference to a remarkable excess of sounds.

In the middle of this social turmoil, the literature of Chicago-born author, John Dos Passos (1896-1970), is a showcase of interests and concerns dealt with at that time, especially with the novel *Manhattan Transfer*, first released in 1925. The author had already been writing and circulating his works since the late 1910s through independent and local publishers, and his first two novels, *One Man's Initiation: 1917* (1920), and *Three Soldiers* (1921) had already received attention from critique and public alike. His first books touched mainly upon the horrors of war, closely related to the vivid World War I experience that was present in the American mind and life of early twentieth century. In the case of Dos Passos, it was a direct contact, given the author's experience as an ambulance driver on the front. The war had connections with diverse extracts of society, not only with active military folk themselves or war veterans, but also in the psyche of readers who did not go to battlefields themselves but who surely had a war-related story to tell or were involved in (or at least aware of) public political debates about it—then president Woodrow Wilson conducted a strong crusade to advocate for the participation of the United States in World War I, making it the dominant topic of the day.

Dos Passos's excitement to be a part in the world's most significant event earned him a line in the list of names under the Lost Generation label, which identified the batch of young expatriate American writers associated with wartime in the beginning of the century. Regardless of being a resolute pacifist, Dos Passos, as his words tell us in his memoir and personal letters, felt the need to have a first-hand experience in the battlefields, precisely—and ironically—because he did not want to miss out on what was going on in the world; he

could not accept being denied of primary access to major sociopolitical facts. It was already possible, with his early works, to insert Dos Passos as a strong representative of the decade of the first so-called global war, for his literature was generating fierce debates on the role of war in the United States, especially at a time when demonstrations against the American entry in the conflict were being severely repressed, and even made unlawful under the government of President Wilson—the same Wilson who had run and won an electoral campaign promising voters that the United States would not partake in the Great War in any way. Dos Passos came up as yet another artist in the anti-bellum portion of aesthetic works of early twentieth century. Mirroring activities of some fellow modernists in Europe, such as the Dadaists and their anti-war demonstrations, Dos Passos was a delegate of analogous efforts to minimize war propaganda in America, activities which were then closely related to pacifist, radical, or even Communist ideological agendas—labels eventually applied to Dos Passos, only to be revoked years later, but still under discussion.

The young author's experience amid the intensity of combat defined plenty of pivotal arguments of his literature—ones to be read throughout his whole career—and provided him with immeasurable, increased awareness as to how the warfare experience is appealing to human senses. Such motives aroused in him the enthusiasm for writing the way he did: exploring readers' sensorium, mostly the aural potentialities of the—audible—written word. In his memoir entitled *The Best Times* (1966), written when he was approaching his seventieth birthday, Dos Passos (1966, p. 54) offers us a hilarious, priceless recollection of his impressionistic writings during the war, vouching for the enthusiasm I have just mentioned some lines above: "I would stretch out on one of the bunks in the deep dugout, and fill my notebook with twentyone-year-old rhetoric: 'The guns roar, fart and spit their venom, & here I lie spitting my venom. . .'." These eschatological lines of questionable excellence, explicitly mocked at by their own creator, as flimsy as they are, already announce that this was a writer who aspired to communicate something memorable, as he would instantly follow, disclosing his writing ambitions: ". . . But gosh I want to be able to express later all of this all the tragedy and hideous excitement of it" (DOS PASSOS, 1966, p. 54).

I find Dos Passos's anecdote fascinating, especially considering the eventual strength of his own literature. As he would mature his style and calibrate his apprehension of events on the page, he developed his trademark: the documental register made into fiction; after all the spitting and farting and venoms, the young Dos Passos was already capable of presenting the seeds of what became to constitute his literary efforts. He claimed he wanted to reveal

> groans and joltings in the ambulances, the vast tomtom of the guns, the ripping tearing sound shells make when they explode, the song of shells outgoing like vast woodcocks, their contented whirr as they near their mark—the twang of fragments like a harp broken in the air & the rattle of stones and mud on your helmet . . . And through everything the vast despair of unavoidable death, of lives wrenched out of their channels—of all the ludicrous tomfoolery of governments . . . (DOS PASSOS, 1966, p. 54)

It is revealing to come across such a noisy paragraph after having read his later books (usually—as happened to me—the path of reading Dos Passos starts with *Manhattan Transfer* or the *U.S.A.* trilogy, not with his memoir). It feels like testing a piece of DNA, finding pictures of your ancestors, meeting relatives you did not know. It definitely resembles what eventually came ahead, along Dos Passos's oeuvre and career as a man of letters. One can find the raucous clamor, the pace and rhythm of writing, the banality of tragedy, the complexity of politics. Particularly relevant for this research, this passage announces the practices of the novel which is the focus of this dissertation, released almost a decade later.

Manhattan Transfer reflects the author's efforts to assemble narratives that would appeal to readers' senses, closely relating them to urban experiences. The novel is widely esteemed by critics as Dos Passos's first distinctive work of fiction: it is capable of presenting recognizable traits of his fiction that would endure until the end of his career; it is also a strong manifestation of his satiric approach to literature, which the author highly treasured as one of his stylistic goals. This novel was received as a brainchild of modernism, and established Dos Passos in a then recent tradition in art that was intense and complex in diverse fields of production. It is ultimately with this work that the author becomes read and understood within experimental modernist literary efforts, eventually to be widely recognized as staple practices throughout his oeuvre from this moment on. *Manhattan Transfer* features similar experiments to those that had been going as practicable artistic endeavors since the last years of the nineteenth century, then expanded in the beginning of the twentieth century, following the avant-garde movements of its first decades. These references are limited not only to literature, while it is possible to perceive a clear conversation between Dos Passos and *Ulysses*-era James Joyce with montage and language experimentation, or to the desolate social portrait of T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land*; references expand too, comparatively, to visual assemblages in artworks, photography, and to the editing tricks in innovative filmmaking, conducted by directors such as Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, or D. W. Griffith.

Additionally, John Dos Passos was an inveterate traveler, a personality trait that came to be crucial for his work. His constant displacements traced back to his very upbringing as a

child of unmarried parents, which was eventually referred to by him as a "hotel childhood," as he lived in countries like Belgium, France, England, and in different parts of the United States. He was always encouraged and able to travel around the world, and eventually came to take travel writings seriously as one of his main styles of narrative—and also as a way to make a living at times, since he published a significant amount of travel books and memoirs. The international, nomadic experience made him aware of different lifestyles, exposing him to different government and economic models, as well as sounds of different accents, languages and music. Such experiences have been conclusive in his career in the reiterated nomadic component of his characters, in conjunction with the written experiments in registering these fictional beings' forms of speech.

Manhattan Transfer was conceived under these circumstances: by the time the novel was released in 1925, the author, after having graduated from Harvard, had already served as an ambulance driver in World War I, traveled around Europe and the Soviet Union, and crossed the desert from Teheran to Damascus in a life-defining experience of immersion in then-unknown Arab cultures and languages. When it comes specifically to writing, the novel was mostly typed, according to his biographers, in New York, New Orleans, and the Soviet Union.

These three locations seem to be manifested in what Dos Passos achieves in *Manhattan Transfer*, indicating decidedly promising readings of his efforts in fiction—and certainly prized for a researcher who investigates sound and noise in Dos Passos's words. Apart from the obvious connection with New York—the heart of *Manhattan*'s world, obviously—New Orleans appears as a looming presence in the soundscapes of the city narrated in Dos Passos's pages, as they implicitly point to the relation of migration and music. In this case, African-Americans were traveling from Southern to Northern states, in search of work and greater equality, at the starting point in history for a phenomenon which eventually became known as The Great Migration. Although not clearly stated in the novel, this movement resonates well with recurrent international immigrants as characters in the book, key elements of the novel's discussion and fundamental points in my analysis of Dos Passos's fiction. The experience of revolution and mass involvement in the Soviet Union, shared by millions and collectively discussed and represented, also appears to have molded Dos Passos's perspective on masses and mass behavior in his text, at some extent linked to communist praxis, but not limited to it. His involvement and trips to post-revolution Soviet Union, along with his political texts that were published and followed in issues such as the *New Masses*, helped shape the way he would manage the treatment of his fiction as well. In a project and a

conception that would remain with him for the rest of his life, in both his fiction and nonfiction writings, Dos Passos opposes centrality and institutional power, and focuses on collectivity and, what may sound as a paradox at first, individual freedom; he was never convinced by a single political model, and that is apparent in *Manhattan Transfer*—even as the shallow "proletarian literature" label still insists to be placed around it.

Dos Passos brings to fictional life an array of characters immersed in the ever-changing New York of early twentieth century, in a historical diegetic time that spans from the turn of the century to the 1920s. The author later dubbed the "New York [of that time] a continent in itself" (DOS PASSOS, 1966, p. 132), showing visible awe at the immensity of the city in every way. This immense territory is reflected on the lack of possibility to pinpoint a single protagonist in the novel—most people disagree when they try to establish a name that could be seen as a more important character than the others (when teaching, it comes as a lively classroom experiment, a challenge). In addition to that, most of these central-peripheral characters hold a vital characteristic in common: these immigrants, or direct sons of immigrants, are not members of a social aristocracy neither are they heirs of New York's thrones of capitalism. These characters are working class people, facing the hard life of poverty and/or unemployment, or even when working, being submitted to terrible conditions under a small paycheck and the tyranny of bosses.

Interestingly, Dos Passos's special care for the masses is something that makes his approach to characters distinct from that of the historically traditional models of the novel, which focused on a certain individual in each book. The novel as the trajectory of the solitary, growing individual is certainly not the case of *Manhattan Transfer*. Even with all experimentations, other fellow modernists of the literary realm, including canons such as Ernest Hemingway and Virginia Woolf, still present an individualistic approach in their fiction, following bourgeois traditions of the novel.

However, what may be this dissertation's most valuable asset in researching this choice for a mass-oriented novel is precisely how popular culture is present and depicted in the mosaic of stories of *Manhattan Transfer*. Dos Passos's references are not limited to what was considered highbrow aesthetics or avant-garde orientations, as important as they truly are for the better understanding of the form of the novel, not to mention how it is composed and organized. Simustaneously to that, there is a transversal presence of high-budget mainstream American movies of the time, as well as of then-current Broadway plays, the precursors of entertainment industries, bringing along with them the mass imaginaries they are so competently capable of producing. They were incipient displays of massive phenomena such

as Hollywood and Broadway musicals as we know them nowadays. *Manhattan Transfer*'s strong concern with masses—of people—is also interestingly connected to one of the foundations of modernism, which is precisely working with intrinsic materials for the production of works of art (painting, music, collage, assemblage, sculpture) and making them apparent, that is, showing mass. Modernists often display the tricks of their trades, and make no intention in hiding or deceiving the public as to how they work or how they establish their oeuvres. This is surely more obvious when one sees a ready-made piece by Marcel Duchamp, as a case in point, or a three-dimensional picture with an assemblage by Georges Braque. These works are imposing their very mass, inscrutable as they are when they challenge the public's perception in relation to art. This may come as an accidental pun, but what happens is that Dos Passos truly brings crowds as cornerstones for the making of his literary texts, managing their characters in minor plots and scenes, and generating what becomes, as a final product, the author's material for his fiction; the material itself for the words printed in the book: the masses and mass-media elements, jointly with the individual's response to them.

As readers move through the pages, they cannot help but perceive that popular music is an ever-present element, going from Chapter One until the very end of *Manhattan Transfer*. The discussion of the role of music or sonic experiences in relation to paper-based literature has been going on for centuries; it has been a household theme in scholarly works and also in treaties of philosophy or literature criticism. What happens, though, is that most of it has been canonically centered in poetry and how it was initially conceived as an oral and aural-based performance. For Ancient Greeks, for instance, art could only be considered and conceived as art if it were read out loud. Thus the close relation between poetry and music and songs is accomplished and well established in a huge number of relevant literatures. Apart from the realm of literature theory and criticism, it is possible, for instance, for the general public today to attend literature festivals, poetry festivals in which poems are read out loud by its authors; poet after poet, as in a pop music festival. This is a remarkable medium for literature, one that favors its dialogue with music—it is not rare, in these poetry festivals, for the author to have a musician (or even more than one) by their side, providing background music or robust music scores in conjoint performances.

Yet the discussion I propose here focuses on fictional prose. How has this relation of prose with sound media and music evolved into it being a constant item of literature being produced these days without its obvious feature of collective out-loud reading? How can prose texts be loud, noisy? How is it that the metropolitan human experience simultaneously fragments and excites corporeal senses, and noise becomes intrusive?

Especially from the middle of the twentieth century on, novels produced in most countries present music, popular music, either as an engine for the construction of the text itself, or as a mass phenomenon that genuinely works as a literary tool. What is interesting for this investigation is seeing how John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* in 1925 worked as an early catalyst for sonic experimentation and also foresaw a good number of literary practices that would eventually be held as commonplace, focusing here on the relation of written words to their aural appeal. This is not to say that, before the twentieth century, music and sound media were not an important feature in novel writing. Nineteenth-century British writers such as Jane Austen or George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans)—naming a couple of obvious choices—had music or musical apparatuses as important presences in their novels. The first frequently bringing the latest innovations in musical instruments, compositions, and household gadgets; the latter being recognized as a most skilled writer when it comes to using classical music in her texts—apart from being an acknowledged music connoisseur, and having made significant contributions to music critique during her lifetime.

However, none of them had the opportunity to live under the very significant change in the way music was listened to, experienced, and even bought and sold, as it happened in the turn-of-the-century years. In order to better understand the differentiated importance of sound in works of literature from the twentieth century on, it is relevant to highlight that books such as *Manhattan Transfer* were written following the invention and popularization of the phonograph as a domestic device. The newfound possibility of one being able to listen to music at home came along with it; notes could be played at any time, without the need of going someplace else to listen to live music, be it a party or a dinner occasion. That was an ultimate life-changing experience. Dos Passos's text was written precisely when this aural excitement was being intensified and changed in an unheard-of way. *Manhattan Transfer*, by dealing directly with that, becomes an additional piece in acoustic experiences of the Machine Age at last.

It is possible—out of a panorama of remarkable sonic intensity—to trace a good number of categories of aural experience brought in by Dos Passos in his novel: the use of songs and different styles of popular music of the time (jazz, tango, waltz) in the composition of musical registers of the 1910s and 1920s New York; the impossibility of silence in the city, with the annoyance of elements such as the constant noise of fire engines and the ever-present sound of cars; the consistent sound of neighbors; the audiograph of characters, with frequent analytical mentions to the way characters speak, their tones, their pitches, their volume, as well as narration dealing with the transliteration of characters' accents and foreign languages;

the use of characters who are related to the entertainment industry, closely related to popular music.

Apart from registering such a rich variety of alternatives for a written-word representation of an unharmonious world of sound, what is most important for the full apprehension of *Manhattan Transfer*'s sonic power is its relation to unwanted resonances: that stands as this investigation's main stimulus. Dos Passos starts his phonograph towards sounds which should be eliminated, despised, fought; or, at least, hidden or muffled from general life in early twentieth-century mechanical society. This is how strong his poetics of noise steps in. This is how his literary project reveals a fractured and excited modern human.

The study of Dos Passos's noisy literature will be divided in thematic chapters, all related to representations of noise in *Manhattan Transfer* and its eventual aftereffects. The first chapter, "Scholarship on Dos Passos," is a concise exercise of gathering scholarship and public material that has been written and published about the author. It presents general lines about his oeuvre as a whole, about *Manhattan Transfer*, and arranges some critical and theoretical works that establish a closer connection with my investigation. Moreover, in Chapter 1 I intend to introduce my reader to the manifold reception that Dos Passos has been given, to the many pitfalls in analyzing his work, as I try to distance my research work from traditional manners of approaching his fiction. This chapter is, conclusively, an introductory movement for a deeper examination of Dos Passos's literary expression, about to happen in the next chapter.

In Chapter 2, "*Manhattan Transfer*: Montage of Mass Sensorium," the novelist's idiosyncratic way of writing is going to be scrutinized, having his register in the artistic traditions of modernism considered and debated. Once this is recognized, I will develop on how the author relies on the appeal to human senses to enrich the reading experience of his printed text, which will lead effortlessly to the core of this dissertation: the centrality of noise in *Manhattan Transfer*. Noise will be treated as a social phenomenon as well as a literary one. In Chapter 2, I am already indicating that Dos Passos's literary resources are noisy, and his literature can be read as noise in a variety of forms and experiences, not only in a prescriptive and punitive approach of it merely as an unpleasant sound. In order to achieve that, I will study scenes in *Manhattan Transfer* that have representations of sonic tension, miscommunication, and disharmony.

In the third chapter, "Recording Noise: Music, Immigration," I will analyze close relations established by music and immigration in the beginning of the twentieth century, the age of the peak of migratory movements. Dos Passos explores these connections intensely,

relying on frequent and detailed transliteration of characters' speech as a way to record the metropolitan panorama of the acoustics of the New York of the 1920s. These other forms of sonic representation are also recognized as noise, ultimately employed as such in Dos Passos's textual fabric. Sound Studies, cultural criticism, and literary criticism work as theoretical and critical background to support my investigation of how characters are built and developed according to their acoustic properties, acknowledging Dos Passos's pertinence in this approach to novel writing.

"Ellen's Ears: An Interlude" is a smaller chapter comprising an experiment in close reading, based on all the theoretical and conceptual background that will have been presented at this point. This section performs a reading of the whole diegetic trajectory of Ellen throughout the novel as a character whose scenes are always loaded with noisy, intense sonic descriptions.

Finally, in the last chapter, "A Century in Noise," Dos Passos's oeuvre will be considered in perspective with other artistic manifestations and cultural currents. His fiction will be analyzed in the ways that it could predate theoretical and critical tendencies, besides the authoritative impact that it has had in a number of aesthetic objects that are not limited to literature by any means. Examples of echoing of what I call the "Dos Passos timbre" will be scrutinized, along with final remarks and distinct observation about his role as a pivotal name for experimentation in the paradigm of artistic production and reception in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

At last, an invitation for my reader: access the Spotify playlist "*Manhattan Transfer* - The Poetics of Noise" while reading this text, and listen to the music while reading[1]. This playlist was created by me, containing recordings or approximate recordings, cover versions and reworks of songs in the universe of *Manhattan Transfer*. Besides providing the reader with actual audible material, the playlist adds to a proposal of a transmedial approach to literary analysis.

[1]Available at https://open.spotify.com/user/lauroiq/playlist/0FvKk2OfCfRsazMXz9jMH4?si=MP3nky3vTMqKt2K7cQ5MJQ

1 SCHOLARSHIP ON DOS PASSOS

Picture 1: *Opening the Box*
Investigating the archives of the John Dos Passos Collection at the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia. Picture taken by the author.

Initial literary criticism and theory written about John Dos Passos's work tended to bend a little too much on the political side. The strength of this at times univocal, reductionist argument is implicitly sponsored by the author's personal involvement with social movements and leftist organizations, which in the early 1900s would earn him debatable titles such as "communist," or "radical." In addition to that, the author was publishing his first novels right after World War I, amid intense political discussions that surrounded it, as the larger-than-life event it really was. Consolidation of capitalism in the Western world and the rise of communism stemming from the Russian revolutions helped to create a binary system of reading both fictional and non-fictional texts. Arguments concerning which sides of the political spectrum which country should head to as national projects dominated the written production of early twentieth century (this is not to say that scholarship on the author has ceased to be political, but it has expanded considerably, as we shall acknowledge).

The Critical Heritage, Barry Maine's compelling collection of critical texts on Dos Passos, corroborates that tendency. The book is part of a long series of literary theory and criticism: an editor is responsible for organizing a satisfying and representative amount of material published about a given author. In Maine's case, the editor focused on gathering critique that circulated around the same time of release of each of Dos Passos's books, pairing

his fictional work and critical reception chronologically. Maine's collection reveals that what was written about his works would usually nearly discredit his role as a fiction writer, assuming that his oeuvre was merely a service of partisan propaganda. Through an inquiring review published on *The Cambridge Quarterly* in 1989, scholar Simon Stevens reflects on the group of selected writings in the Dos Passos *Heritage*, questioning the balance of approach in the chosen pieces. Stevens (1989, p. 223) affirms that, throughout the series, there are two types of material under consideration, both able "to trace the development of a literary canon, as produced through 'serious scholarship,' and to illustrate an historical milieu with what has been called, perhaps euphemistically, 'contemporary comment.'" Stevens's choice of words can (and should) be challenged—what is "serious" or not and how serious can a "comment" be taken?—but his observation was on target when it comes to analyzing what surrounds the reception of Dos Passos.

In "The Novelist of Discomfort: A Reconsideration of John Dos Passos," published in 1958, scholar James Steel Smith was acknowledging these superficial responses that had been given to Dos Passos's books up to that point. The author's works or public persona were oftentimes dismissed as "'historically interesting, and that's about all' or 'Who? That wordy turncoat!'" (SMITH, 1958, p. 332), respectively. The frequency of these narratives—which implied that his craft was of lesser relevance and excellence, and his behavior that of a "sell-out"—provoked Smith into dismissing the discussions of Dos Passos's partisanship as a waste of time, "much needless confusion" (p. 335) that did not lead to any type of perceptiveness of his literary project. "Was he a Marxist during the early 1930's? Was he always a non-Communist liberal? Did he become one? Has he become anti-liberal? These questions, frequently asked, do not help us really understand Dos Passos" (p. 335). Stevens soon follows and says he is an "anarchist," an interesting word to be picked, as what is basically a way to affirm that Dos Passos did not speak for any of the labels above. Although Smith gives a historical label, his application of the term "anarchist" is idiosyncratic, for the essayist aims at characterizing Dos Passos as a free-thinking individual, floating between the major political tendencies.

I resort to Simon Stevens once more, as he provides a provoking line to read this type of literary reception that was dismissed by James Steel Smith as well. Citing Barry Maine in his Introduction for the *Critical Heritage*, who directs attention toward the materialistic aspect of literature, Stevens (1989, p.226) affirms that the exaggeration of focus in the extra-literary—or the extra-aesthetic, as he puts it—is "the gift of 'bad' criticism and much 'contemporary comment' to reveal this process more clearly.'" In the same direction, Smith's

essay becomes a token of the attempted recovery of Dos Passos amid the ongoing mid-twentieth century disappearance of Dos Passos as an esteemed author in privileged literary spaces of critique, only to be limited to "contemporary comment." Smith is performing an insightful effort into considering the author of *Manhattan Transfer* as a novelist, an overdue process which may have been generated by both literary and extra-literary discomfort.

However, in 1973, only three years after the writer's death, Thomas R. Edwards (1973) wrote for *The New York Review of Books* that

> [Dos Passos] was still dutifully listed with Hemingway, Faulkner, and Fitzgerald as one of our modern masters who arose in the Twenties to connect us with what was going on in literary Europe. But I doubt that the novels have been much read, outside Modern American Lit. classrooms, for twenty or thirty years. At best you read *U.S.A.*, as I did in the Fifties, because of its interesting and sometimes moving account of a political history you were born too late to take part in, not as a work of great literary distinction.

Edwards's comment exemplifies the lasting presence of the "contemporary comment" of Dos Passos which augmented the process of uncertainty of the writer's place in literary studies. Nevertheless, the materialistic tendencies in literary critique and theory of late twentieth century have in Dos Passos such an adequate instance for their analytical endeavors. "Post-theory era" studies that have been developed with postmodern readings of works of art shift the focus of criticism solely from the analysis of the work itself (and its singular author) to a broader reading of how an aesthetic object gets born amid social and historical circumstances; works of art are scrutinized for their social insertion, surroundings, and representativeness. However, what critics like Stevens are complaining about is the reduction of scholarship from New Materialism to pure literary gossip. The Cultural Studies approach would serve Dos Passos well, but attempts were rare, as the author was at the lowest point in popularity and general readership.

Contemporarily, though, there has been an amplification of how Dos Passos is being scrutinized by critics and public alike. From the last decades of the twentieth century on, more recent scholarship on the author has accomplished to rescue him from a symbolic level of obscurity. Conversations provoked by his works have been expanded and published, and these pieces have a wide-ranging reach. Major academic events concerning literature, modernism, or interdisciplinary studies have witnessed Dos Passos-related papers being presented regularly, as individual researchers address his works in a variety of issues—from partisan politics to climate change; from literary schools to gender studies.

From 1998 through 2002, Professor Melvin Landsberg edited the *John Dos Passos Newsletter* at the University of Kansas, in another movement of critical recovery of the author's legacy in academic environments. Landsberg, in his publication, promoted an "all-things-Dos Passos" policy: news, letters, indications of research material were shared; rare or long-forgotten Dos Passos works were printed; criticism and quality scholarship were prized; graduate students would have their dissertation abstracts published[2].

Despite Landsberg's efforts, in 2003 Douglas Brinkley, in an article for the *New York Times*, states that reading John Dos Passos was still an unlikely event, for even his classic novels were hard to be found: "Many of his books had been out of print for more than six decades, and even now his work is rarely taught in American literature courses" (BRINKLEY, 2013). A watershed moment for Brinkley (2013) is the publication, commemorating the centennial anniversary of the author, of a new volume in the Library of America series: "Yet after years of neglect, Dos Passos' reputation is once again on the rise, and next month, the Library of America is publishing a new two-volume collection of his writing." According to the publisher's website, the Library's selection provides access to "America's greatest writing in authoritative new editions," being "widely recognized as the definitive collection of American writing." Library of America (2018) claims to have "a unique undertaking: to celebrate the words that have shaped America." With all the pomp of such flattering traits, it was expected that the interest in the author should escalate to new heights.

In spite of the *Newsletter* having ended in 2002, the advent of the John Dos Passos Society in the following decade has maintained a space to be shared by scholars who investigate the author. The Society is recognized by the American Literature Association (ALA), and has secured an active panel in the association's latest events. The encounters at the ALA conferences favor, in a privileged space, discussions between experienced Dos Passos readers and the general public, newcomers to the works of the author. Furthermore, the John Dos Passos Society supports the realization of Biennial Conferences which are completely dedicated to the author[3]. The variety of scholars and researchers, their different places of origin and interests correlate with the abounding array of subjects touched by the writer.

---

[2] All editions of the *John Dos Passos Newsletter*, edited by Melvin Landsberg, are available at https://kuscholarworks.ku.edu/handle/1808/18125.

[3] The first John Dos Passos conference took place in Chattanooga, Tennessee in 2014. The second happened in Madrid, Spain in 2016; the third will be in Lisbon, Portugal in June 2018. More on the John Dos Passos Society can be found at www.johndospassossociety.org.

Considering the ALA conferences and the Biennial Conferences, there have been researchers from Brazil, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Japan, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United States; this is a display of a continuous international appeal provoked by Dos Passos, certainly not matched by other twentieth-century authors, as the ALA conference panels can attest (there were plenty of all-American groups of panelists on Faulkner, Vonnegut, etc.). Interestingly, it also points to his standing permanence as an esteemed writer at times more intensely outside of his native country.

Nevertheless, Dos Passos is still understudied, especially considering his relevance and reach during the 1920s and 30s, when he was usually listed next to modernist literary mammoths such as William Faulkner, Gertrude Stein, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Ernest Hemingway. While on the subject, the latter is a haunting name: Hemingway initiates many readers into knowing about Dos Passos, due to their well-known proximity, an always complex friendship, underscored by times of intense affinity and others of the meanest derision. The two "frenemies" have been subject matter for myriad books and essays alike, and curiosity about their quarrels and anecdotes never seems to run out. However, what at first may sound like gossip has produced engaging material, such as the recently released *The Ambulance Drivers* (2017), by James McGrath Morris. As both young authors return from their World War I experience as volunteer ambulance drivers (thus the title), their story is carefully knitted by Morris as an instance of how the Great War was decisive in American society and literature—and in how the horrors of war can lead to the destruction of a seemingly unshakable friendship, as the Spanish Civil War would place them apart for good a few years later.

Dos Passos and Hemingway falling in and out has recently been given major media space as well. On April 28, 2017, Gary Krist published "Hemingway and Dos Passos, Great Friends Destined to Be Great Enemies" in the *Washington Post*. Using Morris's book as a starting point, Krist backs up the former's point, which favored Dos Passos over Hemingway in many levels (even in personal matters). A curious consequence of this text being published online is that Frank Gado, who had interviewed Dos Passos decades ago (in material that is used as reference in this very dissertation), published a message in the comment section, going as far as saying that he "would rate Dos Passos as the greater writer" of the two. Competition still lives on between them. In 2005, George Packer had drafted some thoughts, published in *The New Yorker*, that went in the same direction as Gado's and Krist's, in what seems to be a tendency with Dos Passos readers—my research does not analyze any fandom studies at all, but it would certainly constitute inestimable material for students of that area.

As a last example, on January 14, 2015, Dan Piepenbring published "Good Hearted Naiveté" on *The Paris Review* website. The piece is a shortened version of the Dos Passos interview in the traditional "Art of Fiction" series, published originally in the spring of 1969. Dos Passos's words were limited to the excerpt about the two writers' rapport; along with the Hemingway-dedicated lines, a commentary by Piepenbring on the two writers' feud follows, holding the same tone as the others: Hemingway was still resentful, while Dos Passos seemed to be open to reminisce about their good times together[4].

Fortunately there is life after Hemingway for Dos Passos in the media. And much of the material published is spread through different countries, reassuring the author's international appeal once more. In France, Jean-François Serre has a blog on newspaper *Le Monde*'s website, in which he writes about what he calls "urban literature." *Manhattan Transfer* deserved a specific moment in his series, in a text called "XVI - Une Litterature de L'espace et de la Ville: «Manhattan Transfer» de John Dos Passos" ("XVI - A Literature of Space and City: John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*"). Serre presents an engaging contemporary reading of the 1925 novel, relating it to both questions of the day and twenty-first century issues faced by urban dwellers of big metropolises of the world. His account is exemplary of a fresh approach to the American writer's fiction, one which considers not only possible partisan political alignments, but most importantly the displacement of characters in urban scenarios, and the fragility of human relations amid the never-ending growth of metropolitan structures. In this sense, his presence in a highly-visited portal such as *Le Monde* pays overdue tribute to Dos Passos's legacy as a capable novelist, and helps introduce him to contemporary readers. Serre will be further quoted in this dissertation.

In another recent publication in a celebrated European newspaper website, United Kingdom's *The Guardian* has put out an article involving the name of John Dos Passos. The piece is authored by Philip Clark, and talks about the similarities in the reception of John Dos Passos, and composer Edgard Varèse in a text called "Sounds and the City: How Manhattan Made the Music of Edgard Varèse." Clark, a music columnist, recognizes the noisy aspect of

[4] The list of works cited in this paragraph, concerning the John Dos Passos-Ernest Hemingway association. Piepenbring, Dan. "Good Hearted Naiveté." In: *The Paris Review*. Published January 14, 2015. Available at https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2015/01/14/good-hearted-naivete/. Krist, Gary. "Hemingway and Dos Passos, great friends destined to be great enemies." In: *Washington Post*. Published April 28, 2017. Available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/hemingway-and-dos-passos-great-friends-destined-to-be-great-enemies/2017/04/28/414520b0-0b2d-11e7-b77c-0047d15a24e0_story.html?utm_term=.e900cabe6356. Packer, George. "The Spanish Prisoner." In: *The New Yorker*. Published October 31, 2005. Available at: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2005/10/31/the-spanish-prisoner. If you are looking for another book on the subject, see: Koch, Stephen. *The Breaking Point: Hemingway, Dos Passos, and the Murder of Jose Robles.* New York: Counterpoint, 2005.

Dos Passos's literature and the "sidewalk quality" of his prose, one that placed readers' ears into narrated scenes—and the *per se* auditory correspondence of Varèse's musical work, who brought the "sidewalk into the concert hall" (CLARK, 2017). This piece will also be further referenced in this dissertation, for its theme is of great relevance to my research. Nonetheless, at this point it is important to highlight once more that Clark is yet another critic who starts an essay still fighting—however implicitly—for a greater recognition in the literary canon for the American novelist: "Dos Passos's position on any list of must-read modernist novelists ranks him alongside marginal experimentalists Wyndham Lewis or Ann Quin rather than with Virginia Woolf, James Joyce or William Faulkner" (CLARK, 2017).

In 2016, Jay Nordlinger brought Dos Passos back to a publication of the *National Review*—America's "leading conservative magazine and website," according to their own website description—a treasured channel of the writer's latter years. Titled "Doses of Dos Passos," the piece centers around the columnist reading the book *The Theme Is Freedom* (1956), and its relevance in positioning Dos Passos as a reference for the twenty-first century political right. It is noticeable that the *National Review* essay is also trying to recover the legacy of the novelist; its beginning is written in an introductory tone, as a way of presenting a "once-famous writer" to a younger, fresh public. In Nordlinger's (2016) words: "his name is little known today — I can tell you that even the well-educated young don't know it. But it was one of the biggest in American letters from the 1920s until about midcentury." Nordlinger's tone embraces the ordinary when it comes to explaining who Dos Passos is, but there is a detail in his last line that reveals the political affiliation behind it, for he is considering the author's relevance beyond the usual critique of his oeuvre, which only encompasses the 1920s and 30s, his so-called "leftist years." It is an interesting particularity, however it is revealing, as Nordlinger's text continues, of how Dos Passos still is, for the *National Review*, basically a political writer, thus opposing recent scholarship on the author—and surely there is a brief mention to the Hemingway altercation, also inclining sympathy toward Dos Passos's side. "Doses of Dos Passos," a two-post thread of publications by Nordlinger, eventually came out in print, with minor changes, in the May 9, 2016 issue of *National Review* under the name of "Welcome Back, Dos."

In a Brazilian context, Jay Nordlinger's text has been translated by Alexandre Ramos for *Tradutores de Direita* ("Rightist Translators"), a website dedicated to sharing political material connected with the political right. Considering the scarce material on Dos Passos

being published in South America[5], the text is another chapter in the over politicization of the author. It also calls for a greater effort from scholars to expand such readings, and present the author as the multi-faceted scribe that he was. However, the Dos Passos army in Brazil is minute: from what I gathered, other than my dissertation, there have been only other three longer researches on the author published in Brazilian universities. They have something in common: the core of investigation lies on *Manhattan Transfer*, as is the case with my own dissertation too. In her thesis, Aline Shaaban Soler writes about metropolitan representations as filmic material in Dos Passos's brand of modernism; the second thesis, though listed in the national register of theses and dissertations, is not available for download. However, from its title we can assume that Gabriel dos Santos discusses the role of music and cinema in *Manhattan Transfer*; the third text is Gabriela Siqueira Bitencourt's dissertation, an investigation of the novelist's formal experimentation in association with montage and collage processes. She constitutes her argument by relating Dos Passos's practices with themes discussed in the book (urbanization, industrialization, peripheral cultures), and the relations that a modernist work from the United States can establish with Brazilian literary critique as well[6].

As I attempt to encounter books written entirely or partially about the work of Dos Passos, I notice a welcome variation of themes. The writer's overlooked passion for the visual arts is recovered by editors Donald Pizer, Lisa Nanney, and Richard Layman in *The Paintings and Drawings of John Dos Passos* (2017), a collection that catalogs his pictorial endeavors, critically placing them as elements of conversation with his writings. In this sense, the modernist aspect of his imagery is of particular importance: the same Donald Pizer had authored *Toward a Modernist Style: John Dos Passos* (2013), which explored the novelist's participation in literary modernism. The visual compendium provides a renewed critical procedure, enhancing previous analyses. Another usually unnoticed side of Dos Passos's career is his theatrical production. In *Staging Modern American Life: Popular Culture in the Experimental Theatre of Millay, Cummings, and Dos Passos*, Thomas Fahy (2011, p. 2)

[5] I resorted to main academic directories in Argentina, Chile, and Colombia to search for John Dos Passos-related material, and I could not find a single paper written specifically about him. The novelist is mentioned circumstantially in a few essays, but is never deeply scrutinized.

[6] The works' titles, in Portuguese: DOS SANTOS, Gabriel. *Na trilha de John Dos Passos: Literatura, Música e Cinema em* Manhattan Transfer. Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro: 2015. SOLER, Aline Shaaban. *A Metrópole e a Prosa Cinematográfica no Modernismo Estadunidense: Uma abordagem de* Manhattan Transfer *de John Dos Passos*. Universidade Estadual Paulista: 2015. Gabriela Siqueira Bitencourt's dissertation is soon to be published at the Universidade de São Paulo website, presenty it has the working title of *Modernização Urbana e Experimentação Formal em* Manhattan Transfer*, de John Dos Passos*.

recovers the "fantasies found in theatrical environment at the time." Fahy's book is also a reminder of the importance given by Dos Passos to drama, which became the center of his efforts during some years of his career, as a medium for what he saw as his most radical works.

In 2013, Miguel Oliveira focused on the latent theme of displacement in his life and work in *From a Man Without a Country to an American by Choice: John Dos Passos and Migration*. The ascension of bigotry and xenophobia globally in the years that followed Oliveira's book soon made Dos Passos's writings and life story referable sources, as they alluded to comparable events that had occurred nearly a hundred years before. A relatable book is Tom McGlamery's *Protest and the Body in Melville, Dos Passos, and Hurston* (2004). In a chapter dedicated to Dos Passos, McGlamery values the corporeal expressions of both life experiences and fictional characters as simultaneous emblems of strength and weakness. More importantly for the author, bodies of either healthy or deceased people are producers of remembrance, for experiences cannot be disassociated from their cultural, emotional, and physical anatomy.

As for additional academic scholarship on Dos Passos in the recent years, searches at the *Journal Storage* (JSTOR) website reveal that there has been a consistent pattern of publication. The author's name surely does not provide the highest number of results in the digital library, but the handful of articles and essays all supply a wider reading of Dos Passos's oeuvre, expanding from traditional critique usually associated with it and complimenting the books. Stephen Hock's 2005 article, "'Stories Told Sideways Out of the Big Mouth': Dos Passos's Bazinian Camera Eye" provides an additional observation to what has been a trend on Dos Passos studies during the last few years: that his literature resembles film montage intensely—the theses and dissertations mentioned earlier vouch for such a contention. Another recent essay published in a journal that provides out-of-the-ordinary insights is Gayle Rogers's "Restaging the Disaster: Dos Passos and the National Literatures after the Spanish-American War" (2013). In this text, Rogers retrieves Dos Passos's well-documented experiences in Spain, and his role in propagating anti-imperialist ideals when returning to the United States, challenging the American urge for expansion and domination in turn-of-the-century years. Rogers affirms that the novelist restages the war, however running the risk of thus providing an idealized version of Spain. "Restaging the Disaster" is of special interest and relevance, given that events in the Iberian country would eventually be

decisive for a shift in his attitude toward political ideologies and concepts of freedom—as it has been said before, the Spanish Civil War in the late 1930s was a turning point in his life[7].

In 2011, Alice Béja, in a text for a French journal, wrote about what she sees as the disappearance of narrative voices in *U.S.A.* as a strategy of criticism of American society. She focuses on the impersonality of narratives, which for her provide a way out from the dichotomies of sophistication versus naiveté, literature and politics, implicitly built in the opposition between modernism and radicalism. Her text, called "Artfulness and Artlessness, the Literary and Political Uses of Impersonality in John Dos Passos's *U.S.A.* Trilogy," has a mixed tone in relation to this strategy of impersonality, for it can be liberating but it can also be taken as propaganda—as the "contemporary comments" on the novels can attest.

All the collected material above is an attempt to represent how John Dos Passos has been received by readers and critics, above all in the new-millennium years. Some of those texts are not going to be mentioned again in my dissertation, while some others may appear briefly. As for this now, I would like to dedicate some words to works that were published a while ago that resonate in my own investigation of literary sonic dimensions in Dos Passos, acknowledging their role as precursors to my research.

At the John Dos Passos Special Collections at the University of Virginia, I found a facsimile copy of Marc Chenetier's thesis, which was presented to the University of Orleans, in France, in 1968. The manuscript is called *The Jazz Age: Its Spirit and Music as Illustrated by John Dos Passos's Four Main Novels:* Manhattan Transfer *and the* U.S.A. *Trilogy*. Chenetier provides an insightful reading, directing critical attention to what role popular music was playing in the novels, his argument being that there is a "definite 'jazzy' qualit[y to] Dos Passos's prose-verse style" (CHENETIER, 1968). The French scholar follows to acknowledge that "too many irregularities and exceptions keep us from going all the way in that comparison," but he recognizes the prologue to *U.S.A.* as "the example we should take to compare literature and music." Chenetier directs his musical analysis specifically to jazz, tentatively acquiescing to the notion of the Jazz Age, with that musical genre as dominant. About the prologue and its kinship with jazz, he says that "the extraordinary amount of sounds, [...] the life which infuses the whole passage, the easiness with which it proves possible to divide many a line, literally into 'bars' and measured spaces are too striking not to

[7] Full reference: Rogers, Gayle. "Restaging the Disaster: Dos Passos and the National Literatures after the Spanish-American War." In: *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 36, No. 2, Aesthetic Politics—Revolutionary and Counter-Revolutionary. Winter 2013, pp. 61-79. Indiana University Press.

dwell a little on it." Chenetier recognizes the liveliness that impregnates that excerpt of the trilogy, appealing to the acoustic provocations as the leading impulse behind the writing.

The French scholar relied exclusively on the "essential of John Dos Passos's oeuvre and on the jazz music from 1914 to 1930" (CHENETIER, 1968), molded by Jazz-Age imagery and reigning ideas of the time. Having that paradigm in mind, it becomes indeed tempting to venture into jazz as the musical sibling of *Manhattan Transfer* or *U.S.A.*, and a will to investigate this conceivable close affinity further was surely an initial motivation for me to start my research on Dos Passos. Nevertheless, some of my early findings led me to similar conclusions as those of Chenetier's, ones that impose limits to apprehending the ways through which Dos Passos assembles his fiction. In the same archives where his thesis is found, there are excerpts from letters that the novelist himself sent to the student, after having read the thesis and in reply to former correspondence. These are revealing passages:

> "a/. '... The popular songs in the Newsreel passages are not all jazz by a long shot, but they got in because I felt they carried the spirit of the time. I'm afraid there's nothing much I can tell you that you can't find in the books themselves. You have hit upon an interesting approach and if you could send me some specific questions I should be glad to answer them...'
>
> b/. '... as is fairly obvious in the text, at the period when I was writing *Manhattan Transfer* and the *U.S.A.* books popular songs seemed to me to be marvelous expressions of popular moods... It was before the time when jazz was taken up by the intellectuals...'" (CHENETIER, 1968)

As I read the replies given by the novelist, I took them as a form of counseling. As my initial research question—how does fiction rely on (jazz) music as a constitutional textual element in *Manhattan Transfer*?—was undeniably in close proximity with that of Chenetier's, a number of limitations were perceived. In this sense, Chenetier appears as an important contributor: his studies in the thesis were remarkable and relatable, surely contributing to an expansion of Dos Passos's critique, yet they point to an expansion of presented ideas; additionally, the correspondence established by the two men, gently shared and made public by both, was true academic advising.

Jazz could not be my parameter for musical analysis of narratives. Even if present as a genre whose tunes are in fact mentioned in the corpus of the fictional narratives under scrutiny, jazz was not as dominant a music in the novel so that it could have an all-encompassing power over the multiple stories of *Manhattan Transfer*. It was represented as much as other popular styles of the time, as Dos Passos makes clear that what he was after was the cultural, materialistic, side of music as the music of the people—opposed to what

would eventually be the jazz music that was eventually "taken up by the intellectuals." If such an approach, considering jazz as literature, is "interesting," as he says, they do leave margin for unanswered questions, even unformulated questions. What is "in the books themselves" is Dos Passos playing scenes of "popular moods," in a paradigm in which jazz and music are pieces of a bigger sonic puzzle in *Manhattan Transfer*.

John Trombold's standpoint on what music achieves in Dos Passos provides the much needed expansion on the subject, for it considers a wider cultural understanding. He published, in 1995, a thorough study concerning songs that appear in *U.S.A.* and *Three Soldiers* which were surely manifestations of the spirit of the time, as the novelist said, but also powerful weapons in political battlefields—literal and symbolic. "Popular Songs as Revolutionary Culture in John Dos Passos' *U.S.A.* and Other Early Works" recognizes the popular song as a representation of the author's mockery against institutions and traditional ranks of artistic production. Trombold claims that Dos Passos actually wanted to bring these mainstream compositions into his fictional universes, sanctioning that they did have value as art forms, pairing them with whatever highest consideration was given to literature or other musics. Moreover, Trombold highlights how these songs were central elements of the novelist's experience in World War I—military folk would never stop singing—and their subsequent fictional representation as narrative resources; and this singing was often challenging authority and the very reasons of battling, as soldiers would at time not behave expectedly; these songs usually defied higher-ranked officers, or praised a non-violence approach on the enemy.

Trombold's work is a particularly insightful reading—he presents an impressive, complete list of all the songs in the Newsreel sections of the three books of *U.S.A.*; a downright meticulous job performed by him, a real handbook. He develops on songs as information level and sociocultural impact—what song generated what reaction—theorizing about the presence of each composition in a determined scene, illustrating their relation as background references in the construction of a number of scenes and characters. The essay will be mentioned again throughout my text, but the acknowledgment of its stimulating importance for the development of my research should be mentioned at this point. "Popular Songs as Revolutionary Culture" represented an early point of contact at approximating Dos Passos to music and sound critically.

After having read and compared what Chenetier and Trombold had achieved connecting music and literature, and having juxtaposed their ideas with my experience as a reader of Dos Passos, I perceived there was something else to be explored: the general

provocation caused by the energetic intensity of sounds in the novels. These texts are vociferous. My investigation should revolve around noise.

Noise is an element of invaluable relevance in sociocultural affairs, a mediator of life. A literary practice, through written word, inaudible, can achieve clamorous effects and provoke what at first may appear to be unimaginable connections. Thus my determination in seeking the diverse representations of noise, which could easily extrapolate, as I soon perceived, the realm of acoustics. Two books of literary analyses come close to the main discussions of my dissertation: *The Noises of American Literature, 1890-1985: Toward a History of Literary Acoustics* (2006), by Philipp Schweighauser; and *The Great American Songbooks: Musical Texts, Modernism, and the Value of Popular Music* (2013), by Austin T. Graham. They are going to be referenced throughout my text, for they supply conceptual support in levels of theory, history, data, and critical practices.

This dissertation is an effort to expand on these discussions, contributing via the approximation of literary theory and critique to Sound Studies, to my knowledge still a barely-trod domain; additionally, there will be a necessary reclaim of the weight of modernist years in art as the noise-literature association is concerned; ultimately, this work proposes a contemporary reading of the work of John Dos Passos, an attempt to locate him in literary history and evaluate his cultural permanence altogether. This strenuous enterprise aims at reaching a notion of Dos Passos's fiction as a poetics brought together—and set apart—by noise.

2 *MANHATTAN TRANSFER*: MONTAGE OF MASS SENSORIUM


Picture 2: *From a NOLA Balcony*
510 Esplanade Avenue, where John Dos Passos had to live with New Orleans sounds. He wrote the majority of *Manhattan Transfer* there. Photo taken by the author.

Sensory stimulation in *Manhattan Transfer* aroused in me the will to dig out the many layers that consolidate this unique fictional universe. Dos Passos's writing proposes a mixture of genres and registers: it goes from seemingly wholesome naturalist to highly impressionist fiction; it embodies and feeds on kinds of speech linked to journalism and advertisement; it is documentary, absorbing song lyrics, featuring Bible excerpts. In addition to an already intricate approach to novel writing, readers are introduced to dozens of characters, many of them popping up only in short, apparently incomplete scenes. There is no single protagonist to be singled out, or even a main character around whom all fictional events evolve. What stands out is the city of New York, the actual epicenter of action. "'As soon as everything is sufficiently blotted out [...], I shall start knocking together a long dull and arduous novel about New York and go-getters and God knows what besides'" (LUDINGTON, 1998, p. 224), said Dos Passos ahead of drafting *Manhattan Transfer* in the 1920s.

At the time the author was working and publishing this book, he had significant contact with the magazine *The New Masses*, a release closely linked to leftist and Marxist ideals in the United States. Dos Passos, other than publishing on it and being an intermittent contributor, generated a following and attention from other critics and essayists alike with regard to his works of fiction. That is the case of Granville Hicks, one of the editors of *The New Masses*, a literary critic who perceived in *Manhattan Transfer*—and in *U.S.A.* as well—an instance of what he calls a complex novel. Opposing that notion to that of the collective novel, Hicks is fighting generalized conceptions applied to narrative works that contain many characters. According to him, they are at times depictions of an illusory solution of commitment to a particular group, a collective working in idealized wholeness. Hicks

recognizes that a group is built by individuals who come from different walks of life and hold different conceptions. If a novel is, according to him, a collective novel, it has a quality of reinforcing the independence of a certain group and its members, even if resorting to a single individual to capture that. Hicks provides a compelling approximation of this approach to that of the traditional novel: "the problem of creating credible individuals without destroying the sense of group unity is the great problem of the collective novel" (HICKS, 1934, p. 23).

It is evident that the way Dos Passos organizes and distributes his legions of characters in countless scenes and fragments may present a challenge for a more traditional, plot-oriented reader or critic. When the writer says, in the above-mentioned quote, that he will write a book that deals with New York, its people, and what lies intermediately in this gap as material for his stories, he is establishing a scenario for these individual stories to be developed. There is no moment in *Manhattan Transfer*, in all the narratives of specific characters, that a certain fictional body is depicted as having the "group mind"—a general representation unifying a single collective mindset. In the complex novel, "the various characters do not compose a collective entity; they may or may not have a factual relationship, but they do not have the psychological relationship that would entitle them to be called a group" (HICKS, 1934, p. 23). *Manhattan*'s seemingly untied characters struggle for readers' attention, and, when their stories do not overlap, their thematic unity is based on what Hicks (1934, p. 24) calls the "magnificent variety of New York," the ink ribbon that makes Dos Passos's typewriter work.

Characters' factual relationship lies in the sense of diversity presented in the modern metropolis. In an early point in the novel, a character reads the daily paper headlines: "MORTON SIGNS THE GREATER NEW YORK BILL — COMPLETES THE ACT MAKING NEW YORK WORLD'S SECOND METROPOLIS" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 12). There is no further explanation of that, though we know that the text montage is informing the reader of the importance of the 1898 act that expanded the boundaries of New York City, incorporating territories that presently we now as the five boroughs (Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island). The effect is felt on characters: the American city was now the second-most populous in the world, behind London; this is an ambitious megalopolis, in full expansion at the turn of the century. In the two decades that followed the act, "New York became America's commercial center [...], population and immigration boom[ed]. [...] The change manifested itself physically too: in the course of the 1920s the average height of New York's skyline increased by one hundred feet" (BEDDOW, 2010, p. 1). Transformations were so intense that scholar Alastair Beddow (2010, p. 1-2) refers to them as a "sense of the city as

a new visual spectacle [...], which arrests the viewer and destabilizes perception by drawing the eye in many directions simultaneously." Simultaneity and distortion are imperious in this then-inexperienced experience of city life, involving the whole of one's senses as the appeal of sounds, smells, textures, and sights is constant. The city is an intrusive element. Beddow quotes physician John Girdner's account of a new malaise of the twentieth century, the "newyorkitis," for him (qtd. In BEDDOW, 2010, p. 4) "the inhabitants of America's first city suffer from a unique condition, the symptoms of which are 'rapidity and nervousness and lack of deliberation in all movements.' [...] The city so influences its inhabitants that they adapt their own behavior to mimic its characteristics." The "newyorkitis" is manifested as a result of an amalgamation of stimuli for the senses, of the response of the individual to mass provocations.

In such a complex arrangement, John Dos Passos may be one of the few writers to create an actual polyphonic novel, as Mikhail Bakhtin elaborates it. In his well-known reading of Fyodor Dostoevsky's fiction in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, the Russian scholar consolidates this metaphor between musical and literary compositions. Bakhtin comments on the possibility of a novel that has the capacity to challenge monologic narratives, recurrent instances in the genre. Such approach to fiction writing expands the initial notion of authorial discourse, and provides characters with individual voices and different consciousnesses, that would invariably distant themselves from the author's language and manners. Polyphony is a way of assembling fiction that provides the writer with resources to develop narratives that find a way to escape the mold of traditional novels. A polyphonic text allows room to present readers to diversified characters and voices in many ways. The essence of polyphony, as Bakhtin (1984, p. 21) defines it, constitutes the core of *Manhattan Transfer*'s fictional nature:

> The essence of polyphony lies precisely in the fact that the voices remain independent and, as such, are combined in a unity of a higher order than in homophony. If one is to talk about individual will, then it is precisely in polyphony that a combination of several individual wills takes place, that the boundaries of the individual will can be in principle exceeded. One could put it this way: the artistic will of polyphony is a will to combine many wills, a will to the event.

According to John Dos Passos's personal diaries and letters, and to his biographies, there is evidence that the American writer estimated Dostoevsky's literature—besides the fact that the author had a major interest in Russian affairs in general. Mikhail Bakhtin's thorough study on Dostoevsky's fiction only came out, in the Soviet Union, in 1929, four years after

Manhattan Transfer had been published. In retrospective, Bakhtin's work could have helped improve the novel's critical reception at the time of its release. Displaying such a variety of literary techniques as it does, some of them innovative for his time, and not committing to any single ideological agenda, it is not surprising that the book, when released in 1925, faced critical acclaim and scorn simultaneously. On the one hand, it was being applauded for being a symbol of a modern approach to fiction, against the "older writers," in a manner that fought "that old-fashioned device—a plot," and gave the text "a mechanical impartiality [...], allow[ing] the senses their momentary function" (STUART, 1988, p. 65). Yet he was accused of being too pessimistic and of lacking a more sympathetic reading of the world, in an opposite reading of his machinelike narratives; an automated passionless text: "he has not yet found the faith of Walt Whitman in the American masses" (GOLD, 1988, p. 117). Once more, the collective aspect, the numerous amounts of characters and narratives, posed a question to some critics. To reply those, Bakhtin's (1984, p. 43) words sound adequate: "It seems that each person who enters the labyrinth of the polyphonic novel somehow loses his way in it and fails to hear the whole behind the individual voices."

Oddly enough, when a significant number of critics disdain Dos Passos for not being a skilled novelist—or not a novelist at all, some might say—they are playing unison with how the author himself perceived his own fiction. He would eventually claim, at a *Paris Review* interview in 1969, that he perceived himself as a chronicler: "I've been calling my novels contemporary chronicles, which seems to fit them better" (SANDERS, 1969). In his attempt to coin a kind of aesthetics of his own and set his writing apart from other fiction writers, his choice of words reveals an interesting conflict. Dos Passos acknowledges to some extent that his texts are somewhere in between novels and contemporary chronicles; after all, he still refers to his books as novels—"I call my *novels* contemporary chronicles." Nevertheless, the author's provocation is appealing; it creates room for further reflection on the way prose is organized. Walter Benjamin's "The Storyteller" suggests an interesting reading of both Dos Passos's words and fictional oeuvre, and helps those who want to store his books in a fusion, hyphenated shelf: novel-contemporary chronicle. Benjamin (2006, p. 364) argues that

> the earliest symptom of a process whose end is the decline of storytelling is the rise of the novel at the beginning of modern times. What distinguishes the novel from the story [...] is its essential dependence on the book. [...] What differentiates the novel from all other forms of prose literature - the fairy tale, the legend, even the novella - is that it neither comes from oral tradition nor goes into it. [...] The novelist has isolated himself. The birthplace of the novel is the solitary individual.

As Dos Passos typified the cosmopolitan character of most modernist artists, and showed with his fiction that he was more interested in individuals as part of a collective experience rather than single pinpointed heroes, the author's own intention of distancing himself from traditional novel writing gains strength from Benjamin's words.

Manhattan Transfer has a documentary style, flirting at the same time with journalism and journalism satire. Along with that, the book features substantial display of oral language, recorded in the transliteral registers of characters' spoken lines—"the speech of the people" on the page (DOS PASSOS, 1996, p. 3), as he would famously put it in the preface for the *U.S.A.* trilogy; "speech that clung to the ears" (p. 2). These are constant features in the book's narratives and, also according to Benjamin, not recognizable traits of the novel as a literary form. Retrieving Granville Hicks's concept of the complex novel—"complex" being another middle name annexed to the leading literary genre—Dos Passos is another line in the list of "authors [who] are intensely conscious of the instability and artificiality of formal social relationships, and they wish to do justice to more than one aspect of experience" (HICKS, 1934, p. 24). Thus a consistent deviation from traditional novel paths in the complex novel takes shape precisely in the way that "the complex novel permits a writer to make use of his knowledge of bourgeois life without restricting him to that life" (HICKS, 1934, p. 25).

These notions are particularly important when considering Dos Passos's fiction. His fictional work and *Paris Review* quote, along with Hicks's conceptions, match Benjamin's deliberations, even reaching a point where the writer can be considered, following the German thinker's terms, a "history-teller" instead of a storyteller. Benjamin connects that, history-telling, to chronicling, exercising quite a similar comparison as the one made by Dos Passos between the novelist and the chronicler: "in the broad spectrum of the chronicle the ways in which a story can be told are graduated like shadings of one and the same color. The chronicler is the history-teller" (BENJAMIN, 2006, p. 370).

Manhattan Transfer's innumerable characters share inarticulate and implicative spaces and circumstances with one another. According to Dos Passos they all bear the same "unspoken question [...]: what shall I do to become a whole man?" (DOS PASSOS, 1960). This motivation is, as we treasure the inconsistencies of labels, precisely what approximates the book once again to the realm of the novel, providing it with a thematic unity—the kind of unity searched by Hicks in complex novels. The impossibility or the constant failure at "becoming a whole man," as stated by Dos Passos, can be comfortably taken as a motif for

Existentialists[8], as a relevant instance; the impracticability of this incessant quest is one recurrent theme in novel writing, with its focus on how individuals can make their way into their fictional existence as an allegory for internal discovery, or in the representation of traditional, classical values such as mastery of crafts, knowledge, and/or truth, to name a few—notable kindred subgenres of novels are the *Bildungsroman* and the *Künstlerroman*. If Dos Passos considers himself a contemporary chronicler, refraining from establishing clear-cut limits between fiction and non-fiction, the following passage by Benjamin (2006, p. 370) is particularly relevant:

> The historian is bound to explain in one way or another the happenings with which he deals; under no circumstances can he content himself with displaying them as models of the course of the world. But this is precisely what the chronicler does, especially in his classical representatives, the chroniclers of the Middle Ages, the precursors of the historians of today. By basing their historical tales on a divine plan of salvation - an inscrutable one - they have from the very start lifted the burden of demonstrable explanation from their own shoulders. Its place is taken by interpretation, which is not concerned with an accurate concatenation of definite events, but with the way these are embedded in the great inscrutable course of the world.

In the passage quoted above, Benjamin takes qualities such as demonstration and interpretation as cardinal when establishing a differentiation between schools of narratives. Dos Passos's writing lies right in the middle of this gap, and becomes challenging to such notions since what is frequently referred to as storytelling and history-telling are intertwined under his pen. "A novelist with the instincts of a journalist, and a fictional reporter with the insight of a storyteller" is how he is felicitously described by English writer and editor, Robert McCrum (2014). Such definition of Dos Passos's oeuvre embodies one aspect of the uniqueness of his fiction. An avid traveler and observer, the American writer seemed to have no way of escaping his constitutional craving for the taxonomy of sociopolitical engineering, but still held a heart to sense human beings' behaviors, agonies, and passions:

> As the correspondent for a labor paper I wasn't much of a success. Though I was thoroughly interested in syndicalism and socialism and trade union matters, I was continually distracted by scenery and painting and architecture and the *canto hondo* and the grave rhythms of flamenco dancing. And the people, the people, the infinitely tragical, comical, pathetic and laughable varieties of people (DOS PASSOS, 1966, p. 81).

[8] No wonder Jean-Paul Sartre, twentieth-century Existentialism's poster author, regarded John Dos Passos as "the greatest writer of [their] time" (SARTRE, 1988, p. 175).

Benjamin concludes his text highlighting once more how storytellers—or novelists, following traditional literary critique nomenclature—deliver a search for human values and greater self comprehension as a common strife. He writes that "the storyteller [is] the man who could let the wick of his life be consumed completely by the gentle flame of his story. [...] The storyteller is the figure in which the righteous man encounters himself" (BENJAMIN, 2006, p. 378). This passage takes us back to *Manhattan Transfer*'s characters and their quests to become "whole men," "whole people." Economical and social misery play a vital role in fueling these fictional bodies' intensity and despair towards life. And those who can only see Dos Passos's creations as automatons and not as humanlike figures, as some of his most severe critics do, are missing the essence of the author's treatment of language, as he mixes demonstration and interpretation, satirizes the speeches of journalism, and makes the righteous man encounter himself through escape. If Dos Passos's fictional people are, allegedly, unlike humans and more like robots, it is because they are reflections of previously existing social assertions, ones that "came from afar," as Jean-Paul Sartre (1988, p. 172) put it, referring to the American writer's creations. They work as symbols for the reproductive side of human relations, strictly connected to social structures and established frames for affiliations. He does not seem to provide any novelty or revelation about everyday life with his character creations, much like the Middle Age chroniclers referred by Walter Benjamin.

Dos Passos frequently disputes the boundaries that separate fiction from nonfiction. His practice is openly demonstrative of how these limits can be confronted with the very element that forms them: narrative. Sartre claims to have had an epiphany when reading about comedian Charlie Chaplin's retirement on the news: the text, blunt and objective, reminded him of Dos Passos's language; the American writer's approach to literature acquired news language. "Dos Passos reports all his characters' utterances to us in the style of a statement to the Press. Their words are cut off from thought, and become pure utterances, simple reactions that must be registered as such, in the behaviorist style" (p. 172). Sartre's reflection acknowledges a current notion in the twentieth century, shared by preeminent names such as Ezra Pound, and the Dada artists—and probably Dos Passos himself—that journalism was "the holy church of [the] century" (POUND qtd. in RASULA, 2015, p. 301). It is an artistic enterprise to challenge the alleged impartiality and absurdity of news in print and the way they are made marketable, especially at a time of war, when skepticism and indifference were dominating the headlines.

In that direction, chronicles have assumed, in the twentieth century, a significant space in newspapers around the world, expanding from their Middle Ages initial concept, further

assuming an authorial side to reportorial verbalization. The relevance of journalistic speech, even in the shape of news stories or satire of news' particular kind of language, helps to round off the chronicler aspect in Dos Passos's novel writing. Complementing that, Dos Passos brings attention to newspapers as objects in the shape of diegetic elements, motifs throughout the whole novel with substantial recurrence in his prose. Papers are not only form, they work as content as well.

Writing about Dos Passos's critical reception, Simon Stevens draws attention to the confusing, praising the blurry lines of fictional and non-fictional register in the author's writings: "one hopes that The Critical Heritage will not unwittingly bury the 'chronicler' in its efforts to exhume the 'novelist'" (STEVENS, 1989, p. 226). The critical approach denounced by Stevens would not do justice to Dos Passos's oeuvre, surely, for the balance between the chronicler and the novelist makes a contemporary chronicler, invoking the title that the author cast upon his own self. In the same line, comparing his literature to cinema, Stephen Hock's (2005, p. 26) argument is on point: "Dos Passos [...] realizes the futility of arguing for a simple conception of the cinema solely defined by documentary realism or montage." The author's challenge is to put what is read and considered purely as a register of fictional or historical speech to the test.

The author, via his reporter-like narrators, perceived that a thematic unity could be held together by any fictional narrative by expanding from world facts onto the individual realm. Documentarian Sonia Tercero[9] affirmed that for Dos Passos, "what mattered was how big events in the history of the world affected individuals, the people. That was what he loved to scrutinize and experiment with, what he liked to write about" (CASTELLANO, 2015). Her impression comes very close to Hicks's idea of the complex novel, and to Hock's impression of cinematic montage; it recognizes Dos Passos's ability to deal with individuality amid a greater collective event, and the outcome of this conflict. Characters' fictional lives are being narrated as if they were stories on the daily newspaper, in a factual and cold language, on the edge of triviality. Dos Passos would eventually extrapolate that relation in the *U.S.A.* books, exposing the boundaries of Delmore Schwartz's (1988, p. 186) quote: "when literature concerns itself merely with what men are or have been, it is indistinguishable from history and journalism." In the shape of inversions—biography becomes fiction, fiction becomes

[9] Tercero is the movie director and producer who created a filmic documentary on the relation between John Dos Passos and his close friend José Robles—who was also the Spanish translator of his work. The documentary is called *Robles: Duelo al Sol* (2015), and registers one of the most traumatic and life-changing experiences for Dos Passos, determinant for his swing in political action and ideals: the American author went on to investigate the disappearance of his friend, only to find out that he was probably killed by their own allies, the Republican side.

biography—the author favors a deeper judgment on this issue, blurring those once clear-cut lines (*U.S.A.* sees the ultimate development, in a literary experiment that had started with *Manhattan* Transfer, of fictional characters as news material contrasting with historical characters outlined in the traditions of novel writing).

The amount of disparate "news chunks" and the apparently disassociated collage of stories would have British writer, D. H. Lawrence affirm that "*Manhattan Transfer* is still a greater ravel of flights from nowhere to nowhere. But, at least, the author knows it" (LAWRENCE, 1988, p. 75). Lawrence moves on to recognize how Dos Passos nullifies potential tragic significance by denying clear climaxes and remarkable plot twists. Such a reading of a surface-level lack of passionate zeal with the novel's plot would match what Michael Gold (1988, p. 74) wrote about it: "the result is not tragedy, which may be clean and great, but bewilderment, which is smaller." Frustration seems to be evidently connected to fictional events in the book, as varied forms of idealism are represented, to which Dos Passos seems to be resolutely convinced as dead-end streets: they make for good pavement for characters to drive on, only to find the edge and go back, undecided and relatively lost. As accomplished *nouveau roman* writer, Nathalie Sarraute confirms, relying on sensuous layers of literary perception rather than traditional plot-driven structures can prove to be a powerful engine for literature:

> I knew it seemed impossible to me to write in the traditional forms. They seemed to have no access to what we experienced. If we enclosed that in characters, personalities, a plot, we were overlooking everything that our senses were perceiving, which is what interested me (GUPPY; WEISS, 1990).[10]

That sort of anti-climax expressed by Sarraute is essentially what happens in the very last scene of *Manhattan Transfer*, when the character Jimmy Herf, right after having finally left New York behind him, is wandering about the streets of an unspecified place located at the very end of the ferry's route. Dos Passos finds no need in being specific about Herf's whereabouts, and finishes the book also pointing the man's fate towards another unknown direction. Narration is able to approximate the character's perception to the reader's, who can notice that no plot is needed to convey what matters for Herf at that diegetic point. It is a classic *Manhattan Transfer* moment: he is lost, does not know where he is heading to, but

[10] Sarraute uses the term tropism to relate to her writing, relating to the "interior movement that [she] wanted to show" (GUPPY; WEISS, 1990). Coming from biology, tropism usually refers to the response a plant presents to its environment, a physical reaction to its surroundings. It is a compelling way of approaching people's - in this case, characters' - psychological, inner responses as well.

inwardly hopeful; he is finally leaving The City. That is the general tone of the book. The final dialogue makes his moves explicit: "'Say will you give me a lift?' he asks the redhaired man at the wheel. 'How fur ye goin?' 'I dunno... Pretty far'" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 404).

Anticipating what he would eventually explore further in the notable *U.S.A.* books, Dos Passos denies, plotwise, a defined ending for *Manhattan Transfer*. Instead he relies once more on characters' sensations to communicate meaning and perceptions, exploring the expansion of tools that literature has to offer. That strategy is proven effective as we apprehend the novel's focus on the panoramic account of New York City, reflected on the ways that Dos Passos treats—mistreats?—his fictional children in narration. The author mixes different writing styles, playing with traditional plot resources in diegesis such as marriage and death, but intertwining them with a run-of-the-mill description, bereft of emotional drama as in a news story, of facts related to intense psychological activity of apparently inactive, misguided characters. Such a resolution performs as a reminiscence of Dostoevsky's poetics in polyphonic novels, according to Bakhtin (1984, p. 5), who claimed that a novelistic world could be held together without "lend[ing] itself to an ordinary pragmatic interpretation at the level of the plot."

American scholar Townsend Ludington (1998, p. 229), one of the writer's biographers, affirms in a polyphonic tone that

> the more he wrote, the more the work became a 'collective' novel about the city, where individuals were less the central concern than the city itself, which overwhelmed and sometimes killed them—as it did the vagabond Bud Korpenning and the playboy Stan Emery—sometimes turned them into stiff, porcelain figures like Ellen Thatcher, or sometimes drove them out, as Dos Passos had planned from the start it would Jimmy Herf.

It is interesting at this moment to consider the novel's title as well. Opportune for the book it covers, it helps to build bridges between major discussions induced by its reading. It makes a clear reference to the action of trains in the Big Apple and the way they connect with the stories collected in the book. "Manhattan Transfer" is the line uttered by officials, the name of a passenger transfer train station in Harrison, New Jersey[11]. The line is a motif warning passengers that they have reached a point where they have to leave their own train, only to hop on another one to get to/away from Manhattan, in a transfer-only station. It is a constant state of movement, a constant change of destinations. "They had to change at

[11] The Manhattan Transfer station operated from 1910 to 1937. According to its Wikipedia entry, it was only accessible by train, having no local admission.

Manhattan Transfer. [...] The wheels rumbled on [their] head, saying Man-hattan Trans-sfer. Man-hattan Tran-sfer" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 116-117). Stations—the ferry station, the train station, the bus station—have always metaphorically served as tangible representations for states of transition, transience. What makes Dos Passos successfully accomplish an extension of a well-known device in literature is the focus on the journey itself, made even more intense and fleeting inasmuch as it relates to a very specific state between two displacements, along with the echoing sound of the informative sentence. Such fusion of signifiers suits perfectly a few of the literary aspects which make *Manhattan Transfer* so peculiarly appealing: feeble characters, fractional plots, variable language.

The conceptualization behind the novel's title continues already in its first section. The initial chapter—the book is divided into three sections, bluntly named "First Section", "Second Section", and "Third Section"—is christened "Ferryslip"; besides it being the first display of Dos Passos's clear hate on apostrophes and love for made-up compound words, important features of the author's treatment of language, the name focuses on the very structure that receives the ferry, that makes it a functional mean of transportation. It is analogous to the idea of the general title of the book itself, since it references both the place for transit and the act of moving. The ferry slip is the threshold for the immigrant characters to enter New York, and also attracts attention to the fabric of the city, its skyline and natural landscape, and its first sensory contacts; it is a facility that is responsible for receiving both these fictional people and readers alike. "Ferryslip" sets the tone of the opening section of the book, with its downright focus on machinery and systems of industrial production: the other chapters are named "Metropolis", "Dollars", "Tracks", and "Steamroller."

The table of contents foresees familiar, collective stories in the life of international workers. "Ferry" and "metropolis" are both words that invoke images of masses. Before them, the book's epigraph paints a large picture: an urban snapshot containing images of spoiled food and jingling sounds along with a group of people, a crowd of undistinguishable faces, a swarm of immigrants squeezed their way into the ferry station. Following this epigraph scene, which could have easily been translated visually into an Eisenstein movie, the novel opens with a character being born. It is an unnamed baby: another recurrent symbol in fiction, especially in a novel that reaching a universal approach dealing with individuals. In typical Dos Passos fashion, narration takes allegory to a level of satire as the story of the toddler unfolds into uncertainty for her parents: "'How can you tell them apart nurse?' 'Sometimes we cant'" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 7). The agony of not knowing who your actual child is meets the conspicuous lack of interest of institutions in relation to so-called regular citizens, its

explicit mess and inoperativeness. As the author tends to mock formal coalitions in search of power and control, above all governmental institutions such as the army or parties that sustain the established partisan political system, it comes as another blow at civilization's alleged organization. Dos Passos would resort to similar kinds of structure and satirical scenes in his texts, which permeate other narrated scenes both in this book as well as throughout other pieces of his long literary career. He claimed for himself "the cultivated pose of sidewalk proletarian" (DOS PASSOS, 1966, p. 146), in a clear mockery of his own role as a writer in the twentieth century, and of his public persona. That attitude extended as a way of disputing diverse forms of institutional violence and displays of power that take place against the masses, cutting personal liberties. Dos Passos's kind of satirical attitude and language displayed the author's constant battle for individual freedom of thought and action.

His love for satire became manifested in his deep admiration of William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847-1848). It was Dos Passos's companion in many of his trips, who found in Thackeray's work a starting point for his project in *Manhattan Transfer*.

> That he thoroughly admired [*Vanity Fair*] is significant, because as he developed his own techniques and themes, like Thackeray he clung to satire and to a style that went at characters from the outside rather than treating them in depth, as Henry James did. It was not that Dos Passos characterized incompletely. Rather his intention was to define by actions and surfaces, not to present psychological studies. And, like Thackeray, he thought of people *en masse* or of that abstraction called society as the focus of his fiction. The subtitle of *Vanity Fair* is "A Novel without a Hero". When Dos Passos wrote his best novels - *Manhattan Transfer* and *U.S.A.* - they too lacked conventional heroes, because he portrayed the foibles of society and peopled his books with figures who seem 'puppets' - what Thackeray called his characters in preface to the novel - caught up in a swirl of social and economical forces beyond their control (LUDINGTON, 1998, p. 64).

Similarities between analyses of both narratives abound, and Ludington's exercise of comparing Thackeray and Dos Passos also matches aspects of *Manhattan Transfer* being scrutinized in this chapter, thus my quick digression here.

Now that readers are more familiar with such ways of treating fiction, full of puppets and satire, with masses of seemingly disoriented human figures and without heroes, we can proceed to a broader discussion of Dos Passos's work as a modernist writer—a remarkable differentiation from Thackeray, or other nineteenth-century authors. Most importantly, we can start the phonograph and begin listening to the sounds that come from those polyphonic pages.

2.1 SOUND RECORDING AND REPRODUCTION, AND WHAT LITERATURE HAS TO DO WITH IT

"Mary had a little lamb." The famous verse off the nursery rhyme of the same name was the first sentence reproduced from the cylinder of Thomas Edison's phonograph, his newest invention, in 1877. The precarious reproduction of the inventor's voice, faulty and inaccurate as it sounded, along with the apparent banality of the choice of the test-sentence, is now acknowledged as an incredibly momentous omen for the phonograph's potentialities. Sound researcher, Roland Gelatt (1977, p. 21) affirms that "this was hardly the most profound quotation to utter at the birth of a great invention, but it at least gave fair warning of Edison's future lack of discrimination in the quality of phonographic repertoire."

Although Edison was not the sole inventor of the phonograph, nor was he the only mind working on the invention of a similar device—other inventors and companies of the time were working on projects akin: the graphophone, the gramophone (the term has eventually become a synonym to the phonograph, especially in the United Kingdom; at first they were different apparatuses though)—but his list of predicted initial uses of the phonograph is nothing short of astonishing. He numbers ten possible uses, and I quote that list in its entirety:

> 1. Letter writing and all kinds of dictation without the aid of a stenographer.
> 2. Phonographic books, which will speak to blind people without effort on their part.
> 3. The teaching of elocution.
> 4. Reproduction of music.
> 5. The 'Family Record'—a registry of sayings, reminiscences, etc., by members of a family in their own voices, and of the last words of dying persons.
> 6. Music-boxes and toys.
> 7. Clocks that should announce in articulate speech the time for going home, going to meals, etc.
> 8. The preservation of languages by exact reproduction of the manner of pronouncing.
> 9. Educational purposes; such as preserving the explanations made by a teacher, so that the pupil can refer to them at any moment, and spelling or other lessons placed upon the phonograph for convenience in committing to memory.
> 10. Connection with the telephone, so as to make that instrument an auxiliary in the transmission of permanent and invaluable records, instead of being the recipient of momentary and fleeting communication. (EDISON qtd. in GELATT, 1977, p. 29)

It is clear that Edison already had in mind the multiple purposes and possibilities that a device that records and reproduces sounds was able to eventually achieve. What may be even

more surprising is that, at the time, the phonograph was barely the machine he had envisioned; it was an incipient device, unable to perform any of the tasks above at a satisfying level—the situation more dramatic if contemporary standards are minimally applied. However, Gelatt (1977, p. 29) recognizes Edison's ability in regarding his creation, affirming that it "was a remarkably prescient forecast: every application except the articulate clocks has come to pass, though several of them had to wait for fruition until the phonograph was developed far beyond anything Edison had envisaged."

The initial decades of the phonograph were not, of course, those that confirmed the inventor's ambitious expectations, for they were the infancy of a technology that had seen the world "prematurely" (GELATT, 1977, p. 30). The only trick it could perform was the reproduction of half-minute dodgy lines, and soon people grew tired of the novelty. The maturation of the phonograph then became subject to collective work that planned its enhancement as an actual, functioning sound recorder. The implications of these different fronts of work both in Europe and in North America yielded the consolidation of the phonograph either as a home device, or as a common presence in shared communal spaces such as bars or diners[12]. According to Gelatt (1977, p. 63-65), it was in 1894 that the first phonograph records were sold as general-market items, at a time when the concepts of home entertainment, duplication, and royalties were all remarkably recent for that industry, posing challenges for the trade.

As technologies are enhanced, acoustic history reaches a point that scholar Michael Denning (2015, p. 69) calls "the acoustic era," spanning from 1900 to 1925 (this said, it is relevant to consider that *Manhattan Transfer* was completely conceived and released within the acoustic era). The author divides audio recording into four distinct periods—the others being "the electric era (1925-48), the tape era (1948-80), and the digital era (1980 to the present)." Interestingly, Denning refers to each period explicitly talking about their technical component; the name of each era is the form through which sound was recorded. He affirms that "each 'technology' is a sound formation, a mix of economic forms, spatial relations, ideologies, and justifications that structure the social relations of music" (p. 69). The acoustic era is the embryonic stage of the music industry as we came to know it a few decades later (even years, since the electric era made the job of recording and duplicating music albums

[12] I will not, in this dissertation, plunge into details of technical and conceptual evolution of the nineteenth-century phonograph, for it is not the core of my investigation. If you would like to know more about stories and specifics behind such changes, see Roland Gelatt's *The Fabulous Phonograph 1877-1977* (1977).

much easier); it was a time when records were bought and sold, and home entertainment gained the addition of audio-playing devices, a completely unheard-of amenity at the time.

Specifically relating to literature, it is historically justified that works of fiction have intently followed machines and patent registers: life-changing imagination and creation in society life. New sonic possibilities, both in performance and in recordings, provide tools for other forms of literary representation, and surely of discussion and debate on the role assumed by the advent of fresh inventions and technologies in fictional narratives. For that matter, the different expressions of artistic modernism played an important part at opening the ears of fiction for the sounds of the new century—the twentieth century—and new genres and forms of music.

It was during the first decades of the 1900s that constantly-growing urban centers witnessed the conjunction of rural workers and metropolitan urbanites in shared areas, in a fusion that helped to originate sonic forms as varied as they are similar, such as the musics of jazz, hula, tango, samba, and so forth. The mixture of classically trained musicians with folk practices was soon to be recorded, placing "recorded music, hitherto a relatively minor aspect of the business of music, at the center of the music industry" (DENNING, 2015, p. 68). Denning calls the hybrid music produced and recorded at the time "vernacular," for the term suggests "forms of everyday common musicking, as opposed to the formal learned traditions of musicking, [...] reminding us not only that music is a kind of language but that there are recognizable idioms of musicking" (p. 106). Denning's choice points to a blend of sounds, and to a shift in the paradigm of music appreciation as recorded music dominates the industry. It is then consequential that vernacular musics gradually grow in representation and importance in people's musical repertoires.

These vernacular musics are an instinctive extension of Edison's "Mary Had a Little Lamb." Recorded genres encapsulate possibilities for art making in sound recordings via phonograph, exploring different forms of manifestation and stretching acoustic possibilities in diverse media. Artists' interest in the sound recording device echoes what scholar Jed Rasula (2015, p. 307) has observed as a propensity for amusement in the arts: "All the arts have an inherited vocabulary for minor diversions, like the bagatelle in music, the cartoon in visual art, the limerick in poetry. It's a way of saying, 'this isn't really art, but it's fun to goof around from time to time.'" The notion of what has become considered prestigious or not in art would soon be tackled by the avant-garde movements of early twentieth century, in discussions that would reach the 2000s and the postmodern era. Rasula (p. 307) claims that the Dada party celebrated what used to be taken at first as a recreational side of art—the fun, the goofing

around—treating "the minor as if it were the whole show, [...] not because the 'major' modes were demoted but because Dada celebrated the primordial spirit of *play*, as evident on an architect's drafting table as in a game of hopscotch chalked on the sidewalk." Dada is an exemplary case in the modern use of "minor diversions" as artistic ingredients, a symbol for the first decades of the twentieth century, which thus witnessed the profusion of little lambs in music, literature, audiovisual arts.

Recapitulating Edison's list, a considerable number of its items converge into the notion of a recorded vernacular which expanded from society's current sounds to their cultural manifestations both in speech and in music. In spite of the phonograph not being able to perform some of those duties, the recordings that came off it were delivering the account of modern years; "there the phonograph was, ready and willing to reproduce the popular airs of the day" (GELATT, 1977, P. 44). Finally returning to John Dos Passos: his "speech of the people" is an amalgam of the uses of the phonograph as Roland Gelatt perceived—on the page. Under Dos Passos's pen, there are registers of languages, family records, music-boxes, varied representations of different forms of communication: a vivid reproduction of the popular airs of the day.

2.2 "NOISE GREETS NEW CENTURY": URBAN NOISE IN EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY, DOS PASSOS'S FICTION AND THE MODERNIST AESTHETICS

Some sounds in one's everyday life are—originally—unnatural for a human ear. However, they have become such a part of daily auditory experience that they have eventually turned into keynotes of urban life apprehension. Sounds of the city come to mind spontaneously in the form of car honks, engines, air conditioners, sirens, as if they actually composed the innate voices of metropolitan melodies. In spite of the inborn quality it holds, *noise* is a word that exasperates many citizens, which has had the Machine Age as the peak of a long-lasting discussion (however important it was in nineteenth-century London too, for instance). Besides common concerns about noise pollution as a health hazard, noise emerges as a constantly marginalized feature of highly communicational societies, an unwanted element when it comes to spreading information—anathema to journalists, reporters, a curse word in newsrooms around the world. In a striking ambivalent relation, as new technologies and new devices grow in number, variety, and importance, noise also increases.

"Writers [...] used sound to ask big questions about their cultural moments and the crises and problems of their time" (STERNE, 2012, p. 3), says Sound-Studies scholar Jonathan Sterne, a general sentence that describes Dos Passos's practice perfectly. At the time

when *Manhattan Transfer* was being conceived and published, the current general behavior towards new sonic possibilities was of awe and incomprehension. "Chaotic" was a label instantly applied to them, a symbol of instability and certain lack of perception of what was happening. It was also an indication of a search for order and linearity, opposing the unfathomable aspect of metropolitan, industrial sound: noise. "In line with age-old connotations of noise, the public problem of noise was initially [...] often defined as a problem situated in the chaos of simultaneously perceived sounds and the absence of a univocal rhythm" (BIJSTERVELD, 2012, p. 154). Karin Bijsterveld's study of people's reaction to seemingly disoriented sounds, lacking an apparent purpose or possibility of management, sets the tone for a broad conception in noise, to be manifested in diversified ways as Dos Passos plays his literary tricks. Noise is a way of representing chaos as it distracts attention; as it accumulates layers of anti-information; as it adds simultaneity to what cannot welcome any synchronism. Correlations between machinery and sonic agitation have led to spirited experimentations in artistic creation, especially since the dawn of modernist days. "Some of the sounds that resulted from these mediations were objects of scientific scrutiny; others, like musical concerts, radio broadcasts, and motion picture sound tracks, were commodities consumed by an acoustically ravenous public" (THOMPSON, 2012, p. 118). Change could be felt in the artistic and technological fields, in a productive interplay that cannot be studied separately.

Art produced in the first decades of the twentieth century was intensely affected by the publishing of the *Futurist Manifesto* by Italian artist, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in 1909, first in Milan and then in Paris, reaching a significant number of readers and artists alike in the context of art in Europe. Marinetti worked as a spokesperson for the futurists, who sought to implement current technological discoveries of the turn of the century in their art, denying their past and artistic tradition—a particularly challenging attitude, as they were immersed in a traditional cradle for art of the Western world, Italy. The very foundation for Futurism was the relation to violence and war juxtaposed with a brand-new world, a mechanical and technical society mediated by machines, trains, fast automobiles. The first Futurist Manifesto tells that the group of young men was at home in Milan, when an electric tram passed outside, heavy in weight and loud in engine: they could perceive the building vibrating due to the passage of the tram, and Marinetti was then dominated by the excitement caused by all the trembling and the noise, and seized the opportunity to embrace that into his art, in an effort to represent the excitement of speed and sonic vibration that only a motorized vehicle could provide; it was a way to oppose what for them was a despised tedious state that a still,

uneventful night can provide (perhaps what others could traditionally contemplate as a *beautiful* starry evening). In his words:

> We had stayed up all night, my friends and I, under hanging mosque lamps with domes of filigreed brass, domes starred like our spirits, shining like them with the prisoned radiance of electric hearts. For hours we had trampled our atavistic ennui into rich oriental rugs, arguing up to the last confines of logic and blackening many reams of paper with our frenzied scribbling.
> An immense pride was buoying us up, because we felt ourselves alone at that hour, alone, awake, and on our feet, like proud beacons or forward sentries against an army of hostile stars glaring down at us from their celestial encampments. Alone with stokers feeding the hellish fires of great ships, alone with the black spectres who grope in the red-hot bellies of locomotives launched on their crazy courses, alone with drunkards reeling like wounded birds along the city walls.
> Suddenly we jumped, hearing the mighty noise of the huge double-decker trams that rumbled by outside, ablaze with colored lights, like villages on holiday suddenly struck and uprooted by the flooding Po and dragged over falls and through gourges to the sea.
> Then the silence deepened. But, as we listened to the old canal muttering its feeble prayers and the creaking bones of sickly palaces above their damp green beards, under the windows we suddenly heard the famished roar of automobiles (MARINETTI, 1973, p. 19-20).

In the passage above, it is possible to observe how enthusiastically Marinetti refers to the furor of machine-caused agitation, praising the intensity of noises and machine-like figures. Fighting Romantic nostalgia for an alleged loss of a natural world, they praise the industrialized world and its novelties; they are attracted to fresh possibilities and modern comforts provided by state-of-the-art machines, but they also take pleasure in disclosing the dynamics of violence and coercion behind them. These ideas appear as cornerstones for the futurist practice, and are further developed throughout the initial manifestos by Marinetti and other Futurists.

With regard to noise, it was Luigi Russolo, another artist from the movement, who expanded discussions on the subject. He released another manifesto related to Futurism, entitled *The Art of Noises* (1913). In it, Russolo relates to a kind of art that should be committed to working with modern, fresh metropolitan sonorities that were constantly being altered by new devices and new transportation means; it is a reflection strongly connected to his day. It takes form as a huge compliment to noise and to the capacity of innovation it brought along with it. If more oriented to musicians and composers, Russolo's text would witness its recipe for noisy artmaking find its way across the Atlantic, in the United States and, of all genres, in the shape of a novel, an art form that was never the Futurists' favorite.

I can positively assert then that *Manhattan Transfer* is an art-of-noises novel. If Russolo affirms that the human ear should become acquainted with the speed, and along with it the altered sonic perception that urban life demands, John Dos Passos's book could not fit more adequately. Swiss literature scholar, Phillip Schweighauser has conducted a thorough study on the role of noise in American literature, and attests that

> Dos Passos does not seek to contain the noise by way of representation. Instead, he meets the challenge of representing that which ultimately remains unrepresentable by accepting noise as a structural principle of his own literary practice. [...] Dos Passos's sudden shifts in and multiplication of points of view, his formal ruptures, and disintegrations of linear narrative reject the codes of what we might call instrumental communication. Dos Passos refuses to dream the dream of communicative transparency, makes noise a principle of literary form, and thus manages to retain something of the alterity and ineffability of the noise he represents (SCHWEIGHAUSER, 2008, p. 52).

Schweighauser focuses on the disruptive nature of noise, and links it to the organization of the novel, as the novelist counts on noise as a basic element in the making of his literary universe. The critic appears to be recognizing such approach as one of the novel's main assets. Dos Passos and Schweighauser seem to share a standpoint towards the impossibility in the idea of flawless communication, something proven both by the troublesome conversations between characters and also by a significant number of scenes involving unsettlement caused in fictional bodies due to the effect of news and journalism—I will recover those scenes later. Such approaches seem to match Russolo (1916, p. 10-11) once again, who favored the use and elaboration of new sonic technologies that would overcome not only the presence of what is commonly considered a pure, silent experience of sound, but also expand the possibilities of a traditional music symphony, and creating with it a "real," noisy, composition. Noise in communication was now something to be explored, and not only avoided, and it is analogous to originally undesired harmonies, which become the center of modernist compositions.

In *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (1977), R. Murray Schafer, a Canadian teacher, musicologist, and composer, publishes a comprehensive pioneer study about the influence of sounds in the perception of human communities and civilizations throughout time. His book is imperative for researchers in the recently baptized sound studies area, but at the same time it is its most controversial subject, the spark for

heated academic arguments[13]. Schafer coins the term soundscape, a portmanteau of the words "sound" and "landscape", as a concept he uses to refer to the (attempt of) apprehension of any given sonic environment and its specificities—a term that came to be highly popular, of trivial use. Spanning from what he calls the "first soundscapes" to "post-industrial soundscapes," Schafer suggests two terms to define some sonic particularities: hi-fi and lo-fi. They relate to transitions from rural to urban soundscapes, and can also be linked to varied ways of the auditory experience. "In the hi-fi soundscape, sounds overlap less frequently; there is perspective—foreground and background," whereas in "a lo-fi soundscape individual acoustic signals are obscured in an overdense population of sounds. [...] Perspective is lost" (SCHAFER, 1994, p. 43). The author, an educator concerned with ecological issues, touches on the problem of noise pollution and how the experience of urban sound can be aggressive to human ears—which may cause serious health problems; modern city life is a representation of a lo-fi experience of sound, that is, an experience of little or no recognition of particular sounds and infused with man-made machinery, bearing no relation to defined and attentive auditory perception.

Taking Schafer's conceptualization into consideration, it is clear that Russolo is fighting two kinds of very traditional hi-fi aural experiences: natural sounds, those made by animals, environment wonders or so-called silence, which are, all of them, not human-produced; and the more definite, elaborate, orchestral sound—profoundly typical of European tradition, also a symbol of what the Futurists were battling against, culturally. "It is necessary to break with this restricted circle of pure sounds and conquer the infinite variety of noise-sounds[14]" (RUSSOLO, 1916, p. 11). Russolo advocates for the inflation of possibilities with regard to hearing, one that should incorporate much more than what nature provides and what melodic, harmonic music had already given. As mentioned before, *The Art of Noises* is directed towards a goal in music composition. It does not come with any recipe for visual approaches to art such as painting, but it is remarkable that Schafer, six decades later, eventually characterized lo-fi sounds as those which lack perspective. Such a choice of words alludes to perspective as a dear practice to classical modes of painting, one that had been constantly challenged right before and during the modernist years. Perspective is a register of technique and mastery for a skilled figurative painter: it provides depth, directs the eye. The

[13] Discussion around the validity of *soundscape* as an adequate, general term for academic purposes can generate a whole dissertation on its own. That is not my intention with this research, and I will only touch upon it when I judge such argumentation convenient for this specific investigation, in certain moments of analysis.

[14] Original quote, in Italian: "Bisogna rompere questo cerchio ristretto di suoni puri e conquistare la varietà infinita dei suoni-rumori." All foreign-language quotes in this dissertation were translated by the author, except where otherwise noted.

same lack of perspective, the confusion and lack of organization that annoys Schafer is treasured as a virtue of the art-of-noises work.

The Art of Noises did not directly approach ways to write fiction either. Dos Passos, however, expanded on these notions. Townsend Ludington comments on the impact of Futurism in the relation developed by the Chicago-born author with regards to a modernist attitude to writing, and the social stand of a twentieth-century artist:

> he grew excited by the writings of the Italian Futurists. Reading these then was important, as it was a way to bring together his ideas about the war, the new technological age, satire, and the need to be active and protesting. Further, Dos Passos thought constantly about modern painting. [...] 'Futurism', wrote the art critic Harold Rosenberg, 'replaced the artist as bohemian - identified by his guitar, his wine bottle, and his harlequin mask - with the artist as adventurer and cultural agitator; more exactly, with the artist band united by social, philosophical, and aesthetic precepts intended to put them in the van of society as men of the world.' (LUDINGTON, 1998, p. 144-145)

Dos Passos came to embody this "man of the world" attitude altogether, it being present in diversified fronts, causes; he was always deeply involved in major social and political events of his time, traveling to witness things *in loco*, involved in protests and public discussions. He wanted to "get firsthand knowledge" (DOS PASSOS, 1966, p. 165) of things. He was never afraid of participating, reflecting, and writing about what was happening, and always emphasized that he was addressing topics that were contemporaneous to him - it is no wonder that Ludington named his biography of Dos Passos as "a twentieth-century odyssey": few authors were so observant of change from decade to decade, and were so itinerant in political spectrum. If the American writer could see the social role of a writer or an artist in a similar fashion as the futurists', they still held core disparities. The very foundation of Futurism was its relation with violence and praise for war, and destroying the idea of the Romantic artist, gifted in their individuality, was yet another tactic of crushing art's canonical institutions—being that defiant in Italy probably made everything even more fascinating for the young Dos Passos, who had an infatuation for the Old World, especially for the cultures of Southern Europe. Unlike the Futurists, Dos Passos never stated that he wanted to destroy the past, and his initial display of violence in his novels was directed, antagonistically, to an effort to stop the war. However, his literary efforts did indeed have a compelling connection to what the Italian group sought to implement in their art, since both the writer and the artists assimilated current technological discoveries of the turn of the century and worked on their direct relation on people. Marinetti's manifesto and Russolo's text alike celebrate the

commotion triggered by what could be initially taken as unpleasant, or undesirable. Their art holds a huge stock of sensation, and both motivate and are motivated by an altered perception of pleasure from what was at first loathsome. The trepidation of the body and/or the sonic discomfort are explicitly appealing to one's senses; they are dealing with human reasoning and bewilderment. As a novel counterpart, *Manhattan Transfer* and its nucleus of masses of characters could not possibly be conceived without a strong presence of human experience of collectivity. People, and the smells and noises they feel and produce, are the case here. It is a novel developed on human senses.

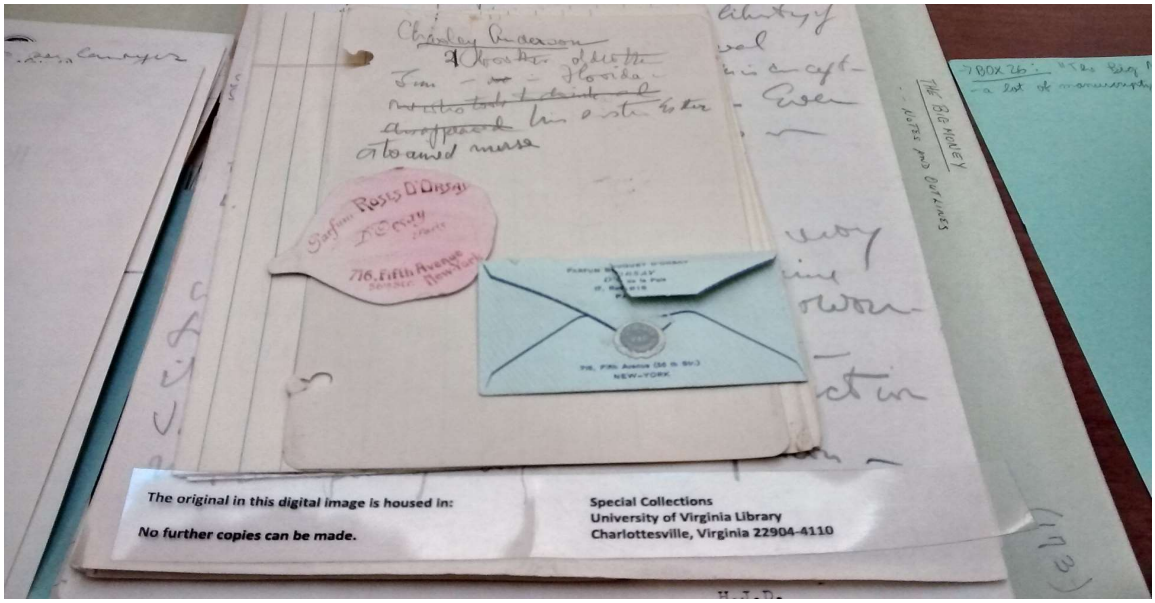
British sound artist and professor, David Toop reflects on how language deals with the possibility of translating impressions generated by and inside human bodies into another medium: "The senses do not operate in isolation; though language persistently fragments and disjoints the world, sense impressions cannot be separated and defined as self-contained properties" (TOOP, 2012, pos. 1102). In fiction, language used to describe impressions and memories often relies on senses, and subsequent sensations are the support found by modernist authors to communicate with the reader in different levels. Is it possible to dismiss taste in the rising of involuntary memory in Marcel Proust? Or listening, in the endless, patient waits in Virginia Woolf? Intense exploration of human reaction shaped in sensory experience is, though not a completely unheard-of resource, a staple of modernist craft in their art endeavors.

Returning to Dos Passos: apart from audition, olfaction and its sensorial potentials are heavily explored by the author—"I was like a dog about certain kinds of perfume" (DOS PASSOS, 1966, p. 128). Also, "[Dos Passos] was as much interested in sights as [he was] in sounds. [...] He was interested in rendering the staccato rhythms of the city and [...] conveying the visual images that were part of its chaotic life" (LUDINGTON, 1998, p. 202). Thus, acknowledging the interplay of senses is mandatory to better assimilate Dos Passos's fiction. With *Manhattan Transfer*, the writer brings about the ultimate painting of sounds, noises, and smells in fiction, as it was proposed by another Futurist artist, Carlo Carrà (2009, p. 156):

> It is indisputably true that (1) silence is static and sounds, noises, and smells are dynamic; (2) sounds, noises, and smells are none other than different forms and intensities of vibration; and (3) any continued series of sounds, noises and smells imprints on the mind an arabesque of form and color. We, therefore, have to measure these intensities and envisage their arabesques.

As Dos Passos expresses those key elements—though silence for him does not exactly come up as static, something that will be further discussed later—and as the narratives of

Manhattan Transfer unfold, he is acquiring further identification with modernist praxis. Once again I borrow from Carrà (2009, p. 159), and affirm that the novelist worked on "total painting, which demands the active cooperation of all the senses, a painting which is a plastic state of mind of the universal, one must paint, as drunkards sing and vomit, sounds, noises, and smells!" The noisy, eschatological fragment is an accurate representation of Dos Passos's fiction, the one he had envisioned for himself as a young adult a decade before—precisely during the futurist years. Sensory stimulation extends the level of enticement the author attempts to provide the reader, and through plenty of highly visual images of smell-loaded, pungent scenes assembled in *Manhattan*, the novel's noisy features are subsequently further underscored, proving Toop's point and adding to a mosaic of sensory stimulation[15].



Picture 3: *Les Roses D'Orsay*
An envelope with a French perfume sample in the middle of some early notes drafted by Dos Passos for the making of *The Big Money*. Photo taken by the author.[16]

[15] Kate McLean is a graphic designer who maps the olfactory landscape in urban areas. "Smellwalks", or walking tours around the city to get acquainted with some of its particular smells, have been the subject to a story in *The New Yorker* magazine. See http://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-smelly-pleasures-of-exploring-cities-nose-first, or http://sensorymaps.com/portfolio/nyc-thresholds-of-smell-greenwich-village/ for McLean's own website.

[16] This envelope provoked great curiosity in me. Why was it there? Did it belong to anyone? What special meaning did it hold for Dos Passos? I could not find, anywhere in the whole of the archive dedicated to the writer, any mention to Les Roses D'Orsay perfumes - or any other fragrance, for that matter. As a curious researcher though I could not resist and had to smell those pieces of paper, only to sample a fusion of not-so-pleasant smells of mold and moisture. Nevertheless, since smells hold a special place in Dos Passos's writings, I discovered that this specific Les Roses D'Orsay harmonizes "with aromas of the cigar" (HPRINTS, 2017), thus creating, I figure, an olfactory landscape akin to the ones in *Manhattan Transfer*.

2.3 NOISY UGLINESS AND SILENCE

Both Dos Passos's contemporaneous and twenty-first-century readerships alike are familiar with the din produced by crowds. In everyday life, urban citizens are expected to encounter, deliberately or not, extremely noisy situations in conventional actions and activities. Varied experiences range from clamorous daily transportation from home to work, in individual automobiles or collective means, to deafening decibel levels of big music shows or sports events. There is simply no way of escaping loudness or even audio pollution, and for Dos Passos's prospective audiences, individuals from the early decades of the 1900s on, this is a given fact.

In the first pages of the novel, the reader is introduced to some of the author's strategies on how characters behave toward metropolitan aural stimuli in the novel. An early scene features one of the many working-class characters that appear and do not return, apparently unimportant in their relevance for society, but key figures in the reading process and subsequent perception of Dos Passos's fictional universe. An unnamed man, he is depicted as a "small bearded bandylegged man in a derby" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 10), and walks around on the streets of New York, immersed in the typical urban scenery that is the tonal center of *Manhattan Transfer*. Such a person seems to match an unwanted type of person in late nineteenth century United States: a large number of municipalities in the country passed a set of laws that became known as "Ugly Laws." This legislation aimed at preventing people judged as objectionable from appearing in public, in the charges of offending the normalcy and well-functioning of the city—they were usually beggars, disabled or impoverished people[17]. His looks were unwanted; he had a noisy appearance, his savageness had to be abated. "He walked without hearing the yells of the children or the annihilating clatter of the L trains overhead or smelling the rancid sweet huddled smell of packed tenements" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 10). This member of the masses appears inside the turmoil, being both a producer and a receiver of human impact on the island of Manhattan. The description of his promenade is heavily attached to an ambivalent sense of belonging, one that foresees his somehow natural presence in what could be an oppressive environment for other people, above all the so-called genteel people. This character walks around the city being so used to its pernicious conditions that he does not perceive what is around him, also

[17] Although New York, the scenario of *Manhattan Transfer*, never passed these so-called Ugly Laws, many major cities in the United States had discriminatory articles against visibly disabled people appearing in public. The list includes alleged progressive places such as Portland, San Francisco, and Chicago. For more, see: http://www.stuffmomnevertoldyou.com/blogs/when-americas-ugly-laws-hid-the-disabled-poor-from-the-public-eye.htm.

becoming invisible himself, not perceived at all. The yells, the clattering, the stench. These city elements are all intrinsic to his experience of life; it is an unwholesome world, the only world he knows.

> The city reminded him of Nineveh and Babylon, of Ur of the Chaldees, of the immense cities which loom like basilisks behind the horizon in ancient Jewish tales, where the temples rose as high as mountains and people ran trembling through dirty little alleys to the constant noise of whips with hilts of gold. O for the sound of a brazen trumped which, like the voice of the Baptist in the desert, will sing again about the immensity of man in this nothingness of iron, steel, marble, and rock (LUDINGTON, 1998, p. 200-201).

Ludington's words refer to the relation of Dos Passos with New York City as he composed *Manhattan Transfer*, but it could also be applied to the "bandylegged" man's, or to most characters', as a matter of fact. The role and presence of urban setting in *Manhattan Transfer* could not be outlined more effectively. The repulsing man adds more nothing to the nothingness of his metropolis, and walks past it under the "siren-sound effect," tested by Steven Connor (see 1997): people eventually become immune to sonic signs and warnings, especially when they should be more aware than usual. "Strange, but also appropriate, perhaps, since ours is a world that is full of ignored unignorability" (CONNOR, 1997). Furthermore, the author's biographer brings the same references used as titles for sections and subsections in the novel which relate to the dominant monotheist religions, establishing a connection to canonical narratives to enrich his own text—such practice additionally links him to modernist practices, which usually relied on traditional literary allusions to generate different layers of understanding for the reader—examples abound, but James Joyce's *Ulysses* emerges as a major instance. These mythic, basilisk-like cities set the tone for the construction of menacing, disjointed environments where plenty of tension is generated by experiences with acoustic turmoil. Urban din appears as a character in its own right, mediating the relation between individuals and with the city itself. Presenting this background noise as barely inaudible as it is imperceptible, an elementary component of life in Manhattan, is another one of Dos Passos's resources of intense auditory exploration. The scene with the "ugly man" is not the only case of surrounding sonic stimuli being taken for granted by a character. Furthermore, so-called "silence," represented both in interior and exterior perceptions of characters, proves to be an invasive reminder of tensions and discordances in city life.

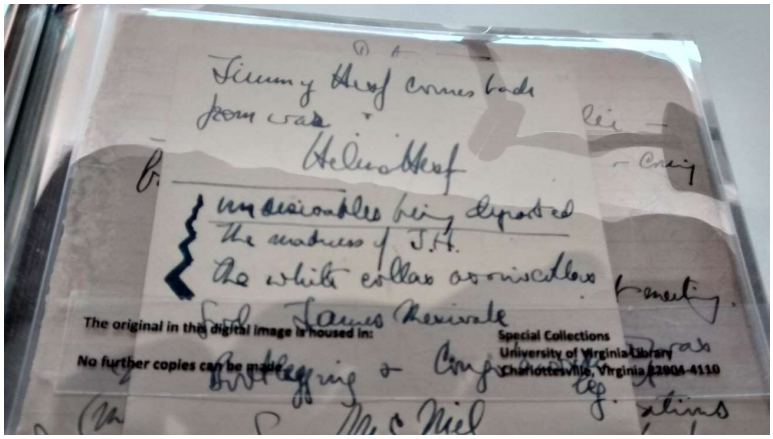
In 1952, audiences gathered in Woodstock, New York to watch David Tudor, an accomplished American pianist, perform. It was a part of a so-called experimental—or

contemporary—music recital, and people knew beforehand they could expect something different from that day's performers. And when Tudor got onstage, what followed was indeed unexpected: he shut the lid of the piano, instead of opening it. He sat there, looking at the music sheet. The score read "'4'33'" Composer: John Cage." The composition was divided in three sections, which could be performed by one or more musicians, and all of them had a single inscription: *tacet*. The word, from Latin, means "be silent," and in music notations it indicates that players or singers should not make any sound during a certain duration in a specific compositional time, which could even stand for an entire movement. But what Cage had composed for that specific presentation was somehow special: the music sheet was entirely *tacet*. The three movements consisted of no notes being played, and what pianist Tudor did was only close and open the keyboard lid three times, indicating the beginning and the end of each movement.

Notwithstanding the absence of chords or harmonies, the result of this performance was definitely resonant. Many sorts of different sounds could then be heard, either produced by the dismayed audience—coughing, sneezing, whispering, or even footsteps as some walked out—or by natural outside sounds when they met the physical structure of the venue—such as rain and wind. During those four minutes and thirty-three seconds, an intense sonic production, along with a deepening auditory experience took place. Simultaneously, those moments altered notions and roles that were previously and traditionally held by silence. Even though Cage might have created it as a musical composition, "4'33"" encompasses a wide range of discussions reaching multiple areas and not at all endure only in the realm of music; its concept is discussed far beyond the craft of composing.

The role of chance, intention, purpose, even embarrassment caused by the absence of an expected production of sound is then extended into further reflections. Moving back to literature, in the rather noisy fictional universe assembled by Dos Passos, alleged silent scenes require some special attention. They constitute a considerable feature permeating the book's dialogues, and, above all, they tend to be developed quite uncomfortably, meeting John Cage's reflections on contingencies of sound and impossibility of silence. There is an intense conversation with Cage here, and once again, with Murray Schafer; Dos Passos preceded, in form and content in his fiction, some of their ideas developed in theory and in music. If there is no such thing as silence, the reaction of characters to extended silent moments—or, at least, quieter instants—is not only based on awkwardness—which is not an unusual feature, be it in other works of fiction or in objective experiencing of reality—but it is also oftentimes the

omen for an explosive, aggressive response or larger-than-life events about to happen in diegetic level.



Picture 4: *The Madness of Jimmy Herf, Who Has Just Come back from War Inarticulate, Speechless; Mute*
Also seen is Dos Passos's organization of apparently dissimilar topics under the same umbrella, in a *Manhattan Transfer* manuscript: undesirables, mental health, power of corporations. Photo taken by the author.

At this moment, it is convenient to recall that *Manhattan Transfer* was a fictional representation of a society involved in the traumas of World War I—pre-war, war time, post-war—and that Dos Passos himself had a hands-on experience of living the battlefields of the Great War as an ambulance driver. World War I was an ultimate event of life in early twentieth-century life in the United States. The nation at the time was receiving immigrants from both sides of the conflict, and had to face many inner disagreements as well when it came to effectively act in the battlegrounds in Europe. The Great War unfolds in a number of motifs of Dos Passos's fiction—*1919* almost entirely revolves around the absurdity of societies and their indifference towards the horrors of war; his early works had a stronger inclination on the violent, destructive side of the conflict, made explicit in *One Man's Initiation: 1917* (1920), and *Three Soldiers* (1921).

The city of New York in the book is tinted with shades of both fear and amusement with news of the war breakdown in Europe. Nevertheless, the subsequent end of the war is also present in the outcome of the narratives in the novel, and has as much an impact as the news that would come during the years of active military fights away from home. The war and the post-war experience would shape interpersonal relations also domestically, in the United States, something represented in some characters in *Manhattan Transfer*. During the World War I years, it was common to say that physically and psychologically traumatized soldiers suffered from "shell shock". The new, generalizing term, however, dealt with an

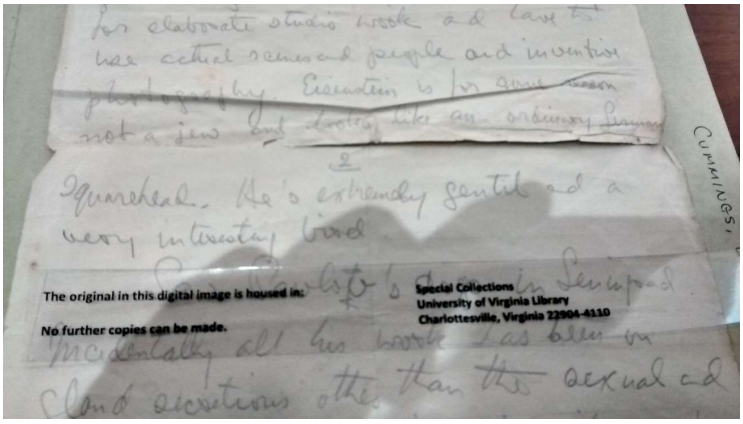
accurate perception of injured people who came back from front lines with an impairing condition in their social and societal skills.

Walter Benjamin (2006, p. 362) comments that "with the World War a process began to become apparent [...]. Was it not noticeable at the end of the war that men returned from the battlefield grown silent—not richer, but poorer in communicable experience?" The image of the silent warriors brought by Benjamin helps challenge the somewhat commonsensical notion of silence as a desirable, imperceptible, peaceful element. The dysfunctional quality of silent interactions in *Manhattan Transfer* reverberate some of Cage's results from his experiment in "4'33"", and add to the usual tense environment caused by the absence of so-called meaningful or informational sounds. Silence in Dos Passos is a literary device used by him to convey: obvious lack of words for determinate characters in specific diegetic scenes; impossibility of logical, fluid dialogue, meaning the absence of ideas and/or empathy among those fictional people; creation of opportune situations for overhearing and eavesdropping to take over, as well as other source sounds in diegesis. These are the instances of silence that match Benjamin's worries, connecting lack of communicability to silent incapability, a notion that has been traditionally attributed to noise—as we have already discussed in this text.

A noteworthy example of the looming presence of war is a rowdy scene in which George Baldwin, a lawyer in search of big money, one of the few recurrent figures in the novel, is having an argument with his wife, Cecily. It happens at the breakfast table. The newspaper—the *New York Times*—initially appears as the traditional stone-cold obstacle between the two parts of a couple, a habitual visual motif. Exploding along with their matrimonial crisis, Cecily destroys the insignificant piece of paper that stands in the way of their problems—or, at least, the discussion of their problems. Soon after the beginning of the quarrel, their maid comes with a tray of bacon and eggs, and they feel compelled to stop talking and pause their altercation. "They sat silent looking at each other" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 183). Their silence is back, and at full power, however it does not bring relief. Mrs. Baldwin begins to cry, as Mr. Baldwin "sat staring at the headlines in the paper. ASSASSINATION OF ARCHDUKE WILL HAVE GRAVE CONSEQUENCES. AUSTRIAN ARMY MOBILIZED" (p. 183). There is a speechless war going on between these characters, and the montage of narrative makes that explicit in clearly alluding to the assassination that gave World War I its kick-start, overtly publicized by newspapers of the time, a piece of information of easy access and easily shared by readers - still to this day, for contemporary twenty-first-century readers. Dos Passos brings attention to the papers throughout the whole novel, causing visual contrast always by the use of capital letter prints,

stating the importance and displaying the amplitude of space and reach that this kind of medium holds in the practical life of the citizens of modernity.

The feature of montage in *Manhattan Transfer* is a constant trick. Such a strategy as used in fiction is derivative from film collage technique, and indeed it is a noteworthy remark to be made here—even if not the main aim of this study. John Dos Passos is often connected to pioneer moviemakers such as D. W. Griffith, and Sergei Eisenstein and their editing innovations in silent film. The writer himself acknowledges this appropriation of cinematic techniques, which is eventually translated into his own particular style of literary montage. Eisenstein's innovative filmmaking generated distinct ways of producing visual metaphors, and the interest of Dos Passos in Soviet life in general—he often traveled to the Soviet Union and reported on the country's issues—paves the way for readers to establish some connections between *Manhattan Transfer* and *Battleship Potemkin*, for instance. However tempting that association might be, Dos Passos denies having been moved by Eisenstein's theme; in spite of assuming and mentioning the presence in his work of the Russian filmmaker as well as Griffith, his American counterparts in cutting-edge early film editing, the writer affirms that he remained attached merely to what he describes as "entirely technique. It had nothing whatever to do with content"[18] (GADO, 1969, p. 21).



Picture 5: *Eisenstein, an Interesting Bird*
In a letter to his friend, fellow writer ee cummings, Dos Passos comments on how interesting he finds Eisenstein. Photo taken by the author.

At a close analysis, there is certainly a strong presence of film-like montage, but what makes the scene mentioned above truly powerful is the way the characters' conversation is based on

[18] Dos Passos's statement sounds plausible, since Eisenstein and Griffith, both directors of immeasurable contribution in early motion-picture editing techniques, could not be further apart politically. While the Russian filmmaker was making movies praising revolutionary movements in the Soviet Union, Griffith was endorsing a Ku Klux Klan story in *The Birth of a Nation*.

cacophony, and/or lack of speech. As opposed to straightforward prose, both Dos Passos's novel and Eisenstein's filmmaking work in the construction of meaning at the expense of the reader (viewer): it is the public's task to assemble these diffuse images or information into place and make sense of them, or create meaning with it. British film director Peter Greenaway comments on the special quality of Eisenstein's cinema, and on how the possibilities of making art were then expanded by the use of his montage practices:

> They say that cinema created the glimpse, that is, the psychological association between people looking at each other. But painting had already done that. The truth is that cinema has created very little. A real invention was the montage theory, only that most films we see work as prose. They should be poetic associations of images, based on lyrical perceptions of time and space. Essentially, I am talking about visual metaphors. I believe Eisenstein was a master in that (RISTOW, 2016)[19].

Referring once again to the scene at the Baldwins' apartment, we can perceive clearer how the experience of reading the novel is developed. The reader, after having been presented to the current situation in diegesis organization, i.e. the couple's argument and the exodiegetic historical reference in the papers, is then able to juxtapose imagery: Dos Passos counts on readers' own references so they can relate in a way that literature can achieve its potential as an affecting experience. Considering what Greenaway said, narration in *Manhattan Transfer* is deceiving traditional literary storytelling—or even Benjaminian history-telling—by inserting movie techniques with collage mixed with historical material taken from newspapers, thus expanding the discussion to a level that challenges boundaries of fiction itself. Modernism in literature has taken good lessons from their cinematic counterparts, and the scene above proves it. Once again Dos Passos deals with perception, in this case resorting to both poetic and readership sensibility, in an association of feelings and impressions.

Apart from film-like (silent film) montage sequences, silence is explored in its complexity in other styles of narrative and narration in *Manhattan Transfer* as a leitmotif. Narrated events appear amidst the turmoil of din of the city, and directly meet notions of people's relation with aural comfort, or discomfort. David Toop reflects on the modern phenomenon of ambivalence in the perception of sonic signals in metropolises, and the oscillation between quiet and loud:

---

[19] Original quote, in Portuguese: "Dizem que o cinema inventou o vislumbre, isto é, a associação psicológica entre uma pessoa olhando para outra. Mas a pintura já tinha feito isso. A verdade é que o cinema inventou muito pouco. Uma invenção real foi a teoria da montagem, só que a maioria dos filmes que vemos funciona como prosa. Deveriam ser associações poéticas de imagens, baseadas em percepções líricas do tempo e espaço. Essencialmente, falo de metáforas visuais. Acho que Eisenstein foi mestre nisso".

> A disturbing silence, which ends, only to be replaced by maddening noise. This paradox is increasingly familiar in the contemporary world. Quiet is felt as disquiet, silence as unnatural, a seal to be broken, yet noise levels are rising inexorably across the globe, so sound is an irritant, a headache, inescapable, a physical assault on the senses, a threat to well-being, health and longevity (TOOP, 2012, pos. 616).

Toop is talking about an early twenty-first-century life experience, but he could be outlining much of *Manhattan*'s characters' response to urban acoustic stimuli. Nevertheless, some aspects still pose a limited approach to the undesirability of noise: Toop is following the same steps of Murray Schafer when favoring a defined, spacious definition of sonic aural perception, a hi-fi soundscape, in the latter's words. Although the relation of silence and maddening noise suits what Dos Passos puts on the page—"quiet as disquiet"—or much of metropolitan people's experience as well, Toop and Schafer still see noise as a threat to human condition, and an extra challenge for society as a whole, since sonic assault could be deteriorating people's health. Such approaches can be prescriptive in the sense that they ignore how city dwellers relate to metropolitan auditory stimulation, and how they are literate in recognizing most sonic alarms, or so-called noises, as significant components of their movements in the city. However, Toop's words are precise when they express the notion of perpetual unease with a lack of dominant sounds, since citizens' acquired skills in dealing with loudness can discourage the quiet.

Levels of sound and noise, and the absence (or substantial lessening) of sound and noise are represented in Dos Passos's treatment of noise-silence-noise as an initial perception of the penetration of twentieth century's technical horizon in art practices, and how far it would eventually reach. A resonance of that can be perceived in what I here call noise-silence-noise scenes in *Manhattan Transfer*. They establish a liaison with the very dynamics of verse-chorus-verse—mellow/explosion/mellow; or yet theme/refrain/theme—in popular music, in a formula for songs that has kept its popularity from Dos Passos's days until the present, in a plethora of genres and subgenres in music industry—swing, jazz, blues, ragtime, tango all used this recipe already in the 1910s and 1920s[20]; furthermore, verse-chorus-verse is

[20] Is "literary" a music genre? As a curiosity in the marketplace, music from the 1920s is currently being sold as the "Ultimate Great Gatsby Party". The fact that publishers borrow the name of a novel as a reference for music of an era is meaningful for many points I am trying to defend in this dissertation. Another example is a retromania (as in REYNOLDS, 2011) band named Great Gatsby Swing Band. See, respectively: www.amazon.com/Ultimate-Great-Gatsby-1920s-Party/dp/B00M021YV0, and https://play.spotify.com/artist/3sjIHR1p1AXQLLqEl84Ocq?play=true&utm_source=open.spotify.com&utm_medium=open. One final fun fact is the existence of a vocal group named The Manhattan Transfer. Unlike the

a congenital reference in late twentieth and twenty-first century pop music, and extends into a practice of relationship with sonic moods in novel writing.

The narration of a scene at a dinner party is an interesting piece to connect the ideas just presented above. Some of the more frequently recurrent characters of the novel are present in this act: Ellen Thatcher, decidedly a strong female symbol in *Manhattan Transfer* and probably the most detailed individual in the book, is presented here in a conversation with George Baldwin, the lawyer. The whole situation is dramatically tense as they are having an affair at the time, she being divorced and he still married. During that night they have been having misunderstandings and cannot communicate with each other any longer for a long time. "His eyes were on the glint of copper along her eyelashes" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 225). But Baldwin tries to break the disturbing silence. "Suddenly he snapped the silence that was tightening between them. 'Anyway let's dance'" (p. 225). The perception of silence is important here, given the fact that the environment they are in has loud music in its background, and yet "tightening silence" is a strong force, clearly perceived. Narration states that silence is indeed a construction. However, the next line instantly breaks, or "snaps" this so-called silence, skillfully managed by the author, who is playing with readers' auditory perception of the scene in an oxymoron: silence and music are being experienced simultaneously; but for the characters first there was silence, then there was music. And music to dance to. The narrative then becomes verse-chorus-verse; Roaring Twenties' music becomes literature.

Although the scene above ends in playful and joyful dance moves, Ellen seems to be haunted by effects of silence, for she appears later in the novel in other perplexing speechless episodes. At this moment in diegetic time, she is married to Jimmy Herf—her male counterpart in the narrative, closer to what might be loosely (very loosely) called a protagonist in the book—and their marriage is in shambles. The narrator says: "They sat looking at each other without speaking. Their eyes burned from looking at each other" (p. 346). Dos Passos explores communion of senses, since the eyes, directly responsible for sight, are clearly being damaged by the characters' absence of competence to deliver any sort of reasonable and affective conversation. As in many other scenes narrated throughout the book, in which smells meet noises, and visions are juxtaposed to tactile experiences. If this is truly a novel that challenges conventions of oculocentrism, it is very effective that a scene develops dramatically through sight itself being troubled by hearing. The burning of their eyes responds

---

namesake novel, their ensemble focuses on harmonious vocalization of pop music standards, not exactly on disruptive noisy compositions.

to their bodily stimulus to a tense moment, often straightforwardly connected to silent environments, as described by Toop (2012, pos. 861):

> Think of the times when your stomach has rumbled and groaned at inappropriate moments: in that dreadful silence during a funeral, or the quietly frantic concentration of an exam room. Why am I hungry now? But this is not hunger; the body is registering the tension of the situation, emitting sound as a message to a mind still lost in the enormity of significance. Just to dwell in unfamiliar silence reveals all those sounds that are obscured in normal circumstances by the noise of life. Sounds such as clicking, grating, popping and ringing, not so much 'in the head' but from within the bones, can be generated by a wide range of problems.

This "dwelling in unfamiliar silence," as the representation of marital crisis that at last touches Ellen and Jimmy, has factual and direct results in their diegetic fate. This is a defining scene. The burning silence, or the noise of life has, in the divorce of these characters, their ultimate outcome. Jimmy is then portrayed jobless, wandering about New York, left with "deep breaths" and "repressed giggles" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 351) as his "sounds from within the bones"; for Jimmy, "the words are so loud inside him he glances to one side and the other to see if anyone heard him say them" (p. 120).

In contrast, what follows for Ellen is a scene in a diner where she is chatting with a friend, Ruth Prynne. They talk about their anguishes, and surely she comments about the imminence of her divorce. Not surprisingly, the subject leads to more unfamiliar, agonizing silence, outlined by the narrator through vigorous audiovisual presence: "They sat a long while without saying anything, scraps of lowvoiced conversation came to them from other corners of the dim tearoom" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 338). The narrator's text highlights the sluggish perception of time in this quiet tense situation, juxtaposing it to the poorly lit environment. Once more, Dos Passos gathers two senses to promote sensation in his readers: his use of punctuation is revealing as he changes a semicolon for a comma for more simultaneity; the image of them sitting is side by side to the audible conversation that comes from other tables. Yet what stands out in this excerpt is again the impossibility of comfort in silence; furthermore, the impossibility of silence itself. Other people's conversations dominate both sonic background and foreground in a scene that was seemingly constructed in order to present readers with eloquent or well-formulated dialogues. Unplanned sounds, mumbles and overheard phrases take over. This strategy is periodic throughout the novel, and it relates closely to the utter experience of city life; uninvited, intrusive sounds are a steady presence in metropolitan soundscapes. The aforementioned scene relates to an event in a tearoom.

Narration indicates this tearoom as an alleged quiet place, where both ladies could have a conversation without being disturbed by anyone else, or street noise. However, this is a public place in overcrowded Manhattan, allowing no escape from other patrons' chats; overhearing—eavesdropping?—bits of conversation are a constituent element of going out with a friend for some tea or coffee. In this specific scene, the text describes how disturbing this may be, and how unwanted words may muffle silence. They become the sound of embarrassment, and again, the sounds from within the bones that Toop advertises.

From the dim tearoom and its unpleasant discomfort, we take a step outside and hear the surrounding din. Oftentimes in the novel, readers face conversational moments challenged or disrupted by dominating city noises in outdoor scenes. Such events envelop fictional individuals in dense aural experiences, ones that could peak into limit situations. Kendall Wrightson (1999, p. 11) comments that on episodes when "the effect is so pronounced that an individual can no longer hear the reflected sounds of his/her own movement or speech, aural space has effectively shrunk to enclose the individual, isolating the listener from the environment." In *Manhattan Transfer*, this is painted in an oxymoronic fashion: the representation of urban space is intimately linked to its sound events and its consequences in characters' destiny, thus the incapability of hearing one's own footsteps is precisely what places them in a metropolitan setting, instead of dissociating them from that environment.

In Dos Passos's universe, the modern city, characters have trouble hearing each other in loud streets of New York, and engage in seemingly incomplete, unsatisfactory conversations. Murray Schafer's widespread concept of sound wall may sound tempting to describe such scenes, but at a closer look it reveals to be somewhat incongruent to the larger impression in Dos Passos's narratives. Schafer reveals once more his prejudices against the urban, as well as against modern approaches to the use of sound in the city, since for him "sound walls exist to isolate" (SCHAFER, 1994, p. 96), as they are used to separate collectivity and yield individualism. "For modern man, the sound wall has become as much a fact as the wall in space" (p. 96), says the musicologist with a disapproving tone, however paradoxically acknowledging that, precisely due to this intimate knowledge of sound walls, modern men are capable of dealing with that in everyday life[21]. Schafer's lack of empathy

[21] "Wall of sound" eventually became a concept for overproduced pop/rock music records, in which the experience of multi-layered recordings would provide the listener with an allegedly enriching auditory sensation. It became very popular, even topping charts with Beatles records in the 1960s, produced by Phil Spector. The wall of sound involves heavy sound effects, sometimes leading to full saturation levels and unwanted distortion. It establishes a strong parallel to lo-fi soundcapes in the city, since one cannot really tell the difference between one instrument and another, making it an undistinguishable compost of sound. It resonates in lo-fi rock, a

with metropolitan sounds has led scholar Sophie Arkette to call it the "prejudice against the urban" (2004, p. 161). For her, Schafer closed his ears for the potentialities of sound in the comprehension of relations in cities, claiming that it is possible to deal with them without rejecting proper characteristics of those places—a gap in time and perception from Schafer to Arkette might have been the cure for his "newyorkitis."

Sound walls, starting from Schafer but headed to a broader approach, stand for another model in the rich relations of noise and writing novels. Barry Truax (1984, p. 20) asserts that in these cases "one's aural space is reduced to less than that of human proportions," yet the humanity of *Manhattan*'s characters is evident, as I follow Arkette's lines and consider each place's idiosyncrasies when studying it, when fictional beings in the novel are "groping continually through a tangle of gritty saw-edged brittle noise" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 136). There is a return to noise, once more proving it to be the motor behind Dos Passos's narratives. Wrightson's words are precise if read alongside the novel's lines: "under such extreme conditions, sound is either smothered (in the sense that particular sounds are not heard) or sounds merge and sonic information mutates into anti-information: 'noise'" (WRIGHTSON, 1999, p. 11).

One episode with characters Ruth Prynne and Jimmy Herf is a good example of how narrative moves both diegetically and acoustically as it varies from an indoor to an outdoor environment. Jimmy comes to the pension where Ruth lives and invites her out. After knowing a bit more about her pension mates and hearing stories about the place, amidst plenty of interference from other characters, they decide to go on a date somewhere else. They went outside, started a faulty conversation as "an Elevated train shattered the barred sunlight overhead. He could see Ruth's mouth forming words. 'Look', he shouted above the diminishing clatter. 'Let's go have brunch at the Campus and then go for a walk on the Palisades'" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 134). Jimmy can see that Ruth is trying to say something, but only by her presence next to him he cannot apprehend anything due to the dominating acoustic presence of the train in this situation, thus matching the senses in a display of incommunicability. The characters kept walking, attempting to establish a meaningful and logical conversation, only to be disrupted repeatedly by the sound of trains, then seeking for refuge in a place with different acoustics: "'Jimmy you shock me.... She keeps losing her false teeth,' began Ruth; an L train drowned out the rest. The restaurant door closing behind them choked off the roar of wheels on rails" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 135).

---

subgenre in itself, proud of its poor quality of equipment and clarity of sound; for lo-fi bands, acoustic feedback is welcome and a well-tuned singer is not always mandatory.

The moment they walk in and escape the street noise they are welcomed by "an orchestra playing *When It's Appleblossom Time in Normandee*" (p. 135), a well-known song of early twentieth century composed by Mellor Giffore, and Trevor (see GIFFORE; TREVOR, 1912). Narration sets the soundtrack for the scene and values the presence of popular music as an urban element, along with surrounding metropolitan sounds, achieving a potential uniqueness as a literary motif.

As the journey around the city continues, it is time to reach workplace offices. Their representation is also permeated by characteristic sonorities. Workplaces are acoustically modeled by what happens not only indoors, but also by the constant production of auditory (anti-)information in the city right through the doors and windows. "Shush you can hear everything through the partition" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 131), says Ruth, expressing a clear concern about eavesdropping gossips. A particular scene of the novel meets the discussion on troublesome silence that has been ongoing in this chapter. In another scene involving George Baldwin, the lawyer, and one of his out-of-marriage lovers, this time Nellie McNeill. Nellie is married too, to Gus, a working-class man injured and made disabled after being run over by a buggy, who happened to have access to good money through Baldwin's legal assistance. It is a tense scene, since there is plenty of tension both in emotional and deeper social levels; the self-proclaimed powerful lawyer has Nellie in his place, and is then challenged by what he sees as a sinking topic for conversation: Gus. Mr. McNeill is then finally involved with union politics and aims at higher positions in his political endeavors, and this subject might be represented morally daring for Baldwin's standards, since the latter is usually as an opportunist, a freeloader; a leech. Gus and Baldwin instantly become rivals - age-old, prehistoric male rivalry - and in this scene Dos Passos finds a way to tie up a plethora of discussions which take place in *Manhattan Transfer*. The union leader's wife goes there secretly to ask her lover to exert influence on her husband's campaign, which he promptly declines, saying he disagrees with Gus's political approaches. Baldwin then tries to exercise a lawyer's charm on Nellie, which only helps to increase tension in the scene, making it evident that there is a big contrast of personalities in the construction of these characters. This is how the episode is narrated:

> [Nellie]"'You're a fine talker George Baldwin and you always were'. Baldwin flushed. They stood stiff side by side at the office door. His hand lay still on the doorknob as if paralyzed. From the outer offices came the sound of typewriters and voices. From outside came the long continuous tapping of riveters at work on a new building (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 333).

Baldwin's archetype of a lawyer is highlighted once again. "A fine talker" he is, but he has no skills in dealing with needs which are considered real, or, at least, which aspire to more than just plain moneymaking. And the outcome is quite similar to the collection of other moments previously presented in this dissertation: the fine talker is lost for words. His becoming speechless at that point in no way shows that his silence can be healing; and, most importantly, there is simply no escaping from unwanted noise. The turn of events is embarrassing for Baldwin, and humiliation comes inside his own territory; it comes from his own sonic apparatuses. The repertoire performed by the narrator is clearly showing and attached to George's experience. Dos Passos plays with free indirect speech in a subtle and ingenious way: the lawyer cannot accept his standing still, motionless, silent, in front of an attractive woman over whom he judges to have leverage; his fragility is shown by the focus on the doorknob—a cinematic zoom, one might say, closely framing his immobile hand. Narration opens possibilities in this threshold; his hand, "as if paralyzed," is the actual shock Nellie implies on Baldwin. Readers are connected to the lawyer's experimentation of sensations, and this paralysis mobilizes an array of sounds around him, suddenly made present and heavily intense at the time, even though being part of his everyday life. Mr. Baldwin had never really listened to them and now they are there. Along with this unheard-of auditory perception, there comes the group of invisible—inaudible—people who work around him, and their work tools are noisy, present; they fill the sonic void left by lacking attitude.

The tapping of the riveters outside is inviting, so now we follow Nellie McNeill back to the streets of Manhattan, on the way to Anna's place. The sound of working folks accompanies us in our travel. In another sonic representation of a workplace, this time in an outdoor scene, the damp deck has "a rattle of chains and a clatter from the donkey-engine" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 66), and soundmarks that define workers' routine, from beginning to end: "Three bells. [...] Dishes tinkle. [...] A thud and rattle of anchorchains and gradually quiet" (p. 67). According to Barry Truax (1999), a soundmark "refer[s] to a community sound which is unique, [...] specially regarded or noticed by the people in that community. Soundmarks, therefore, are of cultural and historical significance and merit preservation and protection." [22] Dos Passos explicitly demonstrates how deck workers relate to sonic warnings in a day of work, exploring their response to them as a way to measure time in diegesis.

We finally arrive at Anna's. Anna is not a frequent character in the novel, but she is one of the women in the chorus, and is friends with Ellie. Despite being a minor presence in

[22] For examples of soundmarks in diversified uses, from entertainment industries to public announcements, see https://www.uspto.gov/trademark/soundmarks/trademark-sound-mark-examples.

the book, there is a highly resonating scene involving her and her mother, Mrs. Cohen. This is yet another family of immigrants, a Jewish household now adapting to life in the New World. The new land brings along unfamiliar habits and practices, which come as particularly striking for the elderly lady. Narration depicts mother and daughter having an argument about money and about Mrs. Cohen's children's fate. Anna is finally expelled from the house, for she talked back to her mother "like a goy." In a few lines, Dos Passos brings an immense manifestation of how Jewish family life is experienced, and focuses on the amount of importance usually attributed to the mother figure. There is an uncontrollable clash of generations here, as well as a clash of cultures. Anna complains that her mother cannot admit a girl working independently, making her own money, and not being dependent on a man's pocket. What follows is a desolate runaway and again impossible silence, impossible reasoning, impossible thinking: "Anna ran through the narrow trunk-obstructed hallway to the bedroom and threw herself on her bed. Her cheeks were burning. She lay quiet trying to think. From the kitchen came the old woman's fierce monotonous sobbing" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 356). In the scene above we reach the final experience of urban overhearing, in this journey through different spatial sonic experiences. Even though Mrs. Cohen's sobbing could be overheard in any similar episode composed anywhere else—and obviously not only in a metropolitan scenario—Anna's silence and withdrawal is strictly connected to urban life, and the new ways by her acquired in America. It is the disruption of tradition caused by the capital of modernity that causes the reluctant cry of the Jewish mother, revealed by the traveling sequence involving the audiovisual representation of what happens in the kitchen in juxtaposition to what happens in the bedroom. The trunk that obstructs the hallway—the baggage, the history that lies between these two women and their heritage, both cultural and familial—becomes present when it is mightily open with goy sounds and weeping.

The scene above is another instance of a carefully built montage-like scene in *Manhattan Transfer*. Working with a seemingly ordinary and common domestic argument, Dos Passos generates a modernist experience through this mixture of his camera-eye style of narration and acute hearing, a technique that gives away much about different layers of construction of characters. The recurrence of this strategy throughout the novel, in examples of uneasy scenes and weary, upset characters in settings as varied as domesticity, workplaces, and urban dérives. They all assemble a chaotic symphony of situations, all of them composed of misguided, lost fictional constructions, always mediated by troublesome acoustics. Pessimism and lack of effective understanding and communication set the tone of *Manhattan Transfer*, and they perform compelling instances of John Dos Passos's poetics of noise. His

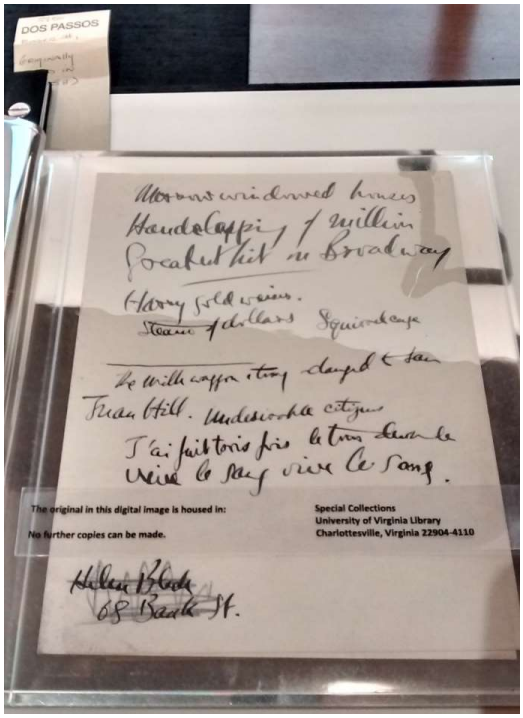
approach is not one of noise abatement; instead he deliberately develops on noisy notions and extensions, and presents it as a powerful tool for literature.

3 RECORDING NOISE: MUSIC, IMMIGRATION

Music is the least unpleasant of all noises
João Cabral de Melo Neto

As I plunge into the heaps of files of handwritten drafts of *Manhattan Transfer* at the John Dos Passos Collection at the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia, it comes as no surprise that some scratched lines from song lyrics make an early appearance. They are present in the very first set of pages of the novel's manuscript, along with scattered notes about the construction of main characters, and the development of general concepts that will span the whole novel, resulting in major insights for narrative scenes in the book. It is compelling to see how Dos Passos actually places references to popular tunes alongside more traditional features of novel writing, general lines for the composition of characters and narrative sequences. Songs in the novel mediate social encounters in the innumerable situations represented fictionally, overflowing in their imagined acoustic presence as characters attempt to establish meaningful dialogues. As I move on through his files I witness how the author's creative process and connections of ideas are further developed; how fictional bodies are then indicated to convey particular social messages.

I also see how they become instantly and purposely connected to particular songs or music genres. Another medium, another expression of narrative comes to mind as a correlate: a Latin American reader could easily identify a direct analogy to what *telenovelas* do with theme songs for characters. They are a remarkable and recognizable sonic feature of character development and audience handling, and they accompany actors' performances and each role they are playing—David Lynch and Angelo Badalamenti use their compositions as sound warnings in *Twin Peaks* in cynical, but relevant references in this matter. With musicality, *Manhattan Transfer*'s fictional world gains a brighter and more intense light, since it performs as a far-reaching element of intertextual play, through literary maneuvers conducted by the author's skilled agency. Music and certain theme songs also define how some of the characters depicted in the novel are expected to behave and communicate; they come as indications of what is about to happen in the novel's fictional world.



Picture 6: *J'ai Fait Trois Fois le Tour du Monde*
One of the initial pages of an original manuscript of *Manhattan Transfer*. Photo taken by the author.

Following the broader notion of a noisy literature, scholar Shuhei Hosokawa's *musica mobilis* provides guidance for a reading of Dos Passos's work. Hosokawa (2012, p. 104) defines it "as music whose source voluntarily or involuntarily moves from one point to another, coordinated by the corporal transportation of the source owner(s)." Constant movements in the city narrated in indoor and outdoor scenes in *Manhattan Tramsfer* are applied examples of sound mobility, which is revealed in Hosokawa's text as noise, since for him (p. 105) "in a city, there is no clear frontier between music and noise. Music becomes noise; [...] noise becomes music." As more scenes are being analyzed in this dissertation, Dos Passos's use of music in the text, related to his choice in genres and compositions, reveals an extra layer of noise in his literature.

According to *John Dos Passos: a Twentieth-century Odyssey*, Townsend Ludington's biography of the writer, attending concerts and buying records played a major role in Dos Passos's life, especially around the time he was working on his first writings and maturing his literary techniques. His work schedule consisted of morning and afternoon literary activities, with plenty of reading and writing, and, if he was in what for him was an interesting place for music—Madrid and New Orleans were particularly treasured—he would attend musical performances in the evening. His personal diaries, available at the University of Virginia, along with biographers' collected material prove that Dos Passos was definitely passionate

about music, and was impressed by the novelty presented by modern twentieth-century composers in a profusion of genres and subgenres. Symphonies and dodecaphonic pieces were not the only innovative material to musical panoramas. *Manhattan Transfer* was conceived and published in a time when popular music was beginning to see its first waves of mass consumption, connected with recent market possibilities generated by phonographs and recorded material. Music could now be bought and sold, and reproduced as recorded material in people's homes, bars, and other sorts of social occasions. The rise of genres such as jazz, samba, tango, or son, particularly in the years from 1920 to 1930, had American Studies author Michael Denning (2015, p. 3), in his book *Noise Uprising*, claim that "those years changed the sound and the space of the world's music; they stand as the central musical revolution of the twentieth century."

These different musics, commonly regarded as quintessential elements of a certain culture, sometimes even being used politically as symbols for the motivation of nativism. However, the appearance of these unheard-of genres is a modern phenomenon as much as modernist canons which are commonly applied to this era in film, literature, and visual arts. Denning (2015, p. 35) elaborates on the subject, mentioning that musics that became well-known in recordings of the 1920s

> were a product of 'modern times,' of the generations that lived between the 1890s and World War I. Though they came to be heard as 'roots' musics in the century to come, they were as much 'modern' musics as those of the Parisian and Viennese avant-gardes. The gramophone amplified a musical revolution that was already taking place in urban streets and dance halls around the world.

Picture 7: *The Record Collection*
A photocopied piece of John Dos Passos's considerably large record catalogue. His collection displays a particular interest in Spanish music and European symphonies. Photo taken by the author.

These were the initial years of music as one of the big entertainment industries—cinema, radio, and television would soon follow. At first these forms of entertainment were considered inferior, judged as deprived of any artistic value. Their early production and consumption were also somehow restricted to immigrant communities or outcast citizens—groups such as the Italians and the Jewish in New York, then considered minorities, controlled the entertainment industries in their infancy. The presence of new entertainment mass media were not privileged artistic themes at the time. It is no surprise then that the recording work of phonographs was acknowledged by Theodor Adorno as working-class artistry. As the Frankfurt scholar famously put it, "the downtrodden gramophone horns reassert themselves as proletarian loudspeakers" (1990, p. 52). Thus it is a logical consequence that "the vernacular music revolution emerged from the soundscape of working-class daily life in an archipelago of colonial ports" (DENNING, 2015, p. 6). Those colonial ports gathered all the elements of the sound of modernity: exchange of technology and people, presence of multiple nationalities personnel and equipment, encouragement for music and entertainment.

Literature soon encapsulated that and directed its attentions to the rich possibilities that references shared by millions of people could perform in fiction writing and reading experience. There was a significant extension of repertoire in the collective mind of listeners as the phonographic industry grew in size and reach, expanding to virtually all segments of society, gradually breaking ethnic and religious barriers. Quoting literary scholar T. Austin Graham, in his book *The Great American Songbooks* (2013, p. 2):

> Authors of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries sometimes took music up as subject matter, whether in discussing its effects on listeners, in using musicians as characters, or in demonstrating the social function of [this] art in their world and time. On other occasions they used music as a formal model for literature, attempting something like singing, record-playing, and soundtracking in their pages.

Graham, in his thorough study of what he calls "musical texts," indicates different roads to be taken by literature in modern (eventually post-modern) practices. They are all representative methods, assembled by writers who see fiction as a medium that is open for dialogue with other arts and technology, and not as a self-sufficient way of representing the world. Denning (2015, p. 4) confirms that many novelists "'represented' the modern 'masses', [whereas] discs circulated the voices of these masses," and his remark provokes the analysis of intermedial relations of music with fiction. Philipp Schweighauser expands the discussion,

bringing back some well-known reflections by scholar and media theorist, Friedrich Kittler. Kittler's foundational studies on modernism and avant-garde practices of the twentieth century take in consideration new technological panoramas in the initial decades of the 1900s. Commenting on differences between naturalist and modern writers, Schweighauser—blending in with Kittler—claims that it was a choice for novelists to "become producers of song lyrics and thus turn from 'the imaginary voices' of literature 'to the real' voices of records'" (SCHWEIGHAUSER, 2006, p. 27).

Dos Passos is an early representative of a writer who asserts the presence of these voices and records. Following Graham's, Denning's, Schweighauser's, and Kittler's lead and broadening a little the discussion in order to encompass more fiction writers in American modernist literary system, it is inevitable to refer to Francis Scott Fitzgerald as another far-reaching name when it concerns the relation of literature with music in the early decades of the twentieth century. In his 1931 text, *Echoes of the Jazz Age*, Fitzgerald reflects on the era between the end of World War I and the start of the Great Depression in 1929. According to him (see 1931), the moral indignation which was so characteristic of the time was triggered by the loss of faith in what he calls the Great Causes: the trouble of believing in real reasons behind a war that summed up a huge amount of casualties, the challenge of accepting religious dogmas for social behaviors. He accepts the term Jazz Age as a recognizable epithet in relation to this specific historical time, which fits perfectly as the characteristics of this music and what it meant back then are considered. The highlight of jazz—actually a metonymy for what was then popular music, since jazz was not the sole dominant style of the epoch—in relation to extended recording and auditory experiences provided by the innovations of the time is, remarkably, a significant element for cultural changes in the whole of a decade in history. The very word "jazz" gathered around itself a complete package of discussions, as its natural evolution and fluctuating meanings in the English language can prove. Fitzgerald (1931, p. 461) guarantees that "the word jazz in its progress toward respectability has meant first sex, then dancing, then music. It is associated with a state of nervous stimulation, not unlike that of big cities behind the lines of a war."

This richness of relations helps to consolidate the relation held by literature with sound media. Changes derived from the expansion of popular music in its consumption and recording not only were symptomatically represented, but also triggered new expectations of post-war America. Fitzgerald's novels and short stories are amongst the pioneers in depicting the state of excitement of the American people of the Jazz Age, the author deliberately including the ambiance of spectacles and behavioral changes lived at that time. Writing met

the public's expectations regarding portraits of intense modifications in society, and Fitzgerald became a household name for readers in the United States, his literature a staple of pre-depression extravaganza narratives. As Graham (2013, p. 80) can confirm,

> Fitzgerald could presume his audiences to be as musically up-to-date as he was, their minds so suffused with the lyrics and voices and ditties of their age that the briefest of suggestions could set them playing in the imagination. The nation's culture of entertainment had expanded to the point that his novels could easily summon the unique feelings of ecstasy, humor, and pathos that he found in song, thereby yoking the associative powers of what so many nineteenth-century thinkers had argued was the highest of the arts. [23]

Fitzgerald's appropriation of American "culture of entertainment" reverberates with that of other fellow modernist writers of their time, and surely with Dos Passos. Both dealt literarily with popular music of the time as an expansion of the acoustics of their era, exploring the incipience of what eventually became recognized, in the middle of the twentieth century, as pop music.

However embryonic popular music markets were in the early 1920s (especially in comparison to the leviathan they became by the end of the decade, and again only a few decades later as new recording technologies evolved), by then they were already representative of a number of phenomena related to listeners' experiences with songs. Cultural critic Mark Greif elaborates on the intense relations the public establishes with pop, highlighting the reduced gap between cultures of knowledge and feelings. He calls for a Philosophy of Pop, one to be developed on potentialities and capacities of popular music and their impressions on different audiences. "Pop music always tells its listeners that their feelings are real" (GREIF, 2009, p. 31) is a founding line to start relating to the complexity of popular songs; in a historical moment of musical effervescence as the beginning of the twentieth century, songs are everywhere. While Fitzgerald adopted the celebratory tone of music in Gatsby's distinguished parties, for instance, Dos Passos expanded this simmering relation, adopting Greif's "reality of feelings," and conducting it to multiple directions. Dos

[23] However approximate in their interest to assimilate songs into fiction, John Dos Passos and F. Scott Fitzgerald if anything had different relations to the music that was around them, even as *Gatsby* and *Manhattan* were first released in the same year, 1925. The author of *U.S.A.* believed that "[Fitzgerald] didn't look at landscape, had no taste for food or wine or painting, little ear for music except for the most rudimentary popular songs" (DOS PASSOS, 1966, p. 129). Dos Passos's judgmental opinion of his peer is revealing of his tastes and prejudices—even if he esteemed Fitzgerald's "writing as [that of] a born professional. Everything he said was worth listening to" (p. 129). *The Great Gatsby*'s narrator, Nick Carraway, describes the urban scenario in New York as full of "foreign clamour on the sidewalk or the tumult of the elevated [trains] overhead" (FITZGERALD, p. 87, 2001), a familiar scenario in *Manhattan Transfer*. Such a similarity might explain Dos Passos's admiration of Fitzgerald's writing, in spite of everything else.

Passos acutely perceives how both domestic and city sounds are altered by new human relations, both mediated by then unheard-of levels in the presence of immigration and music in American everyday life. The author captures current registers of sound of the early decades of the twentieth century, what surrounds intense and swiftly-changing experiences, into the cylinders of his recording novel.

Jacques Attali argues in *Noise*, one of the founding texts in Sound Studies, that "music runs parallel to human society, is structured like it, and changes when it does" (ATTALI, 2009, p. 10). Attali (p. 11) continues from this connection and assertively claims that music has the power to foretell humankind's future. If dated, Attali's assumptions can be considered in the music field and markets as a prophecy of the medium itself—in this case, recorded music for mass consumption. Exploring possibilities of what is retrospectively seen as pop music, it associates with Mark Greif's elaboration about it. Greif expands his Philosophy of Pop, and sustains theoretical readings of some characters in *Manhattan Transfer* and their musical representation, widening Attali's apprehension:

> Pop does allow you to retain certain things you've already thought, without your necessarily having been able to articulate them, and to preserve certain feelings you have only intermittent access to, in a different form, music with lyrics, in which the cognitive and emotional are less divided. (GREIF, 2009, p. 28)

Congo is a character that epitomizes such reality. In the making of this particular character, Dos Passos's files show that the song mentioned in the first page of the *Manhattan Transfer* manuscript is a decisive motor. It provides the genesis of Congo's conception, and only then the author moves into a deeper study and development of the character at issue. The excerpt reads "j'ai fais trois fois le tour du monde," pointing to a song that used to be performed in *Les Cloches de Corneville* (*The Bells of Corneville*), a French piece of *opéra comique* from the nineteenth century. As it has been mentioned before, each character conceptualized by Dos Passos is intrinsically connected to a series of values and social extracts it is expected to represent. At linking Congo to this song, to *Les Cloches de Corneville*, the writer is adding extra layers of meaning. This is a character from France, who received that nickname due to his appearance which, according to his peers in the migratory ship, resembles that of a person from Congo, the country. This man carries a heavy load of foreignness, manifested in his appearance, his nationality, his moniker, and also in his speech. After all, and after going through a lot of misery in personal and professional relationships, he eventually succeeds financially with the traffic of alcoholic drinks, whose commerce was

illegal during the Prohibition Years in the United States from 1920 to 1933; bootlegging remains a defining social experience of the era, frequently associated with the music of the time.

Congo is frequently portrayed in scenes where he sings—or at least hums—diverse songs, and what they all have in common is their relation to his life as a globe-trotter. "J'ai fait trois fois le tour du monde / dans mes voyages" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 227); "I have traveled around the world three times," a chant glorified by the Frenchman in his own mother tongue. Narration in this scene presents Congo in a moment of excitement in a party; he seems to be having an enjoyable time with his friends, fellow working-class people at the bar, drinking from the same illegal tap, when "he started in his growling baritone" (p. 227) to enunciate his favorite song. What Congo brings as soundtrack for this moment is a recollection of his native France, with lyrics explicitly mentioning how adventurous he is, in a diegetic moment that happens right after he had shared his life story on how he had arrived in the United States in the first place. Examining the song, the lines that originally follow, and not sung by Congo—or at least not explicitly in transcript in the narrative montage of this scene—refer explicitly to the love of danger and praise for ephemeral romantic relations along the way of ship journeys ("*les dangers font mon bonheur*"). What is achieved here is a display of power interweaved with popular memory. *Les Cloches de Corneville* dates from 1877, a late representation of *opéra comique* in the moment of transition as it was becoming what was eventually known as operetta, the nineteenth-century closest to consumption of pop music as we know it. There is a strong connection of worlds here, very typical to modernist artistic efforts, closely related to key topics being discussed in this novel, specifically. Congo, by succeeding at an outlaw trade in the so-called New World in America, relates to the popular art of Old Europe, in a montage of soundtracks. "J'ai fait trois fois le tour du monde," coming straight from the European nineteenth-century songbook into the Jazz Age, builds a transatlantic bridge between places and eras. "God invented music so the poor could be happy"[24] (AGUALUSA, 2012, p. 149), says a character in a novel by Angolan writer, José Eduardo Agualusa: no statement could be more suitable to Congo's singing—or to some other characters in *Manhattan*.

Diegetic results of singing moments, which are always firmly highlighted by the novel's narrator, are then revealed in the shape of a leitmotif, the recurrence that supports a theme in a rich intermedial game in which literature meets its resonance precisely in the

[24] Original quote, in Portuguese: "Deus inventou a música para que os pobres pudessem ser felizes".

musical realm, the very realm in which the practice of leitmotif was created—as well as the term itself (see BALDICK, 2001, p. 138-9). Transnational migration and song go hand in hand in Dos Passos's novel, in a dual representation developed by the author through the use of two potent motifs; "America is said to be the 'melting pot,' but the 'melting' process does not make the newcomer to our shores forget his home melodies and folk songs" (SEBOK qtd. in DENNING, 2015, p. 112). The immigration song is the sign that, intimately connected to characters' outlines in *Manhattan Transfer*, refers to feelings, thus reassuring Agualusa's aphorism: momentary and temporary happiness.

Still *Les Cloches de Corneville* establishes even deeper relations with John Dos Passos, reaching a personal level. Mechanical reproduction of music played an important role in his life, especially in his upbringing, when the operetta held an important presence in his personal repertoire. His wealthy father, corporate lawyer John Randolph Dos Passos, was enthusiastic about music. He had means and interest in the acquisition of state-of-the-art music players, much to "young Jack's" pleasure. "Dos Passos played the record machine equipped with the characteristic large horn of the period" (LUDINGTON, 1998, p. 37), while, also according to his biographer, lying back in a chair and watching his father render "a quick tap dance to the music" (p. 37). The connection to this enjoyable childhood memory expands as further description of his father's relation to music is straightforwardly connected to him being in a good mood, in a cheerful state of mind. John Randolph "loved to sing, breaking at a moment's notice into a song" (LUDINGTON, 1998, p. 13). Among other compositions, Dos Passos's father liked "Offenbach's light operas *La Belle Helène* and *Les Cloches de Corneville*" (p. 13). Not surprisingly, there is a direct line to connect the author's own recollection of a most pleasant childhood memory and the construction of a character that seems to be nothing short of thrilled with his new life, precisely when he is singing the tune at the party. Congo's feelings are real.

As it is customary in Dos Passos's fiction, he did not focus on a bourgeois figure like his own father, preferring instead to align with Agualusa in the exploration of working class people's relations to music. However relevant this biographic note may sound, no reader depends on that background story to actually grasp the significance of music in the scene—it is, in fact, a research discovery which came up only halfway through the process of investigation, only to prove initial suspicions raised by a formative first reading. Dos Passos uses music so competently in narration that it becomes an obvious feature to listen to.

Fascination with joy and bliss provoked by music remains a constant feature of both his fiction and his non-fiction work. In *Manhattan Transfer*, musical pieces are often the peak

of ecstatic or relaxing moments in bars, in Burlesque shows, in theaters. "O would the Atlantic were all champagne / Bright billows of champagne" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 29), is the unison singing of working-class patrons and immigrants in a lively speakeasy in New York. The lines celebrate the journeys which many of those characters went, and the clandestine liquor they are having at that moment of partying. They sound adequate for the construction of the great majority of fictional people in the novel, conceivable as they are being chanted wholeheartedly by any one of these men. Still what is striking is that the verses from "O would the Atlantic were all champagne..." do not refer to a historical song, according to my research; they cannot be found recorded anywhere, either in a sound recording or in written music—or, at least, there is no official register of these verses ever being performed before *Manhattan Transfer* was published. Dos Passos plays with readers' imagination and knowledge as he creates here a fictional song which, through initial contact, may sound unequivocally historical due to its content and verse form. Decidedly unlike the author's trademark documental register, the champagne song arises as an additional literary strategy, multiplying the text's potentialities as it challenges readers' perceptions and beliefs. A strategy is developed as a way of forging a repertoire that could sound absolutely plausible to any reader. The role of music is so significant that the author embodies the persona of a composer, blurring the lines that separate music and literature.

In another powerful scene involving the use and the significance of popular songs, we experience Madame Rigaud, a French character proudly uttering to her lover and eventual husband, fellow countryman Émile: "I've learned a new American song... C'est chic vous savez" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 59). Rigaud's sentences are permeated with meaning, above all when they are taken in relation to her condition as an immigrant. *Chanson française*, so widely spread in the beginning of the twentieth century, even being one of the first commercial phenomena in the phonographic industry (see GRONOW; SAUNIO, 1999, ps. 26-7), was not enough for these two characters. Even with the audience's general acceptance and its ensuing incorporation of French songs into North America's musical repertoire, Rigaud and Émile present motivation and eagerness for prestige when they see themselves capable of singing, comprehending, and genuinely enjoy the music that is being produced now in America, the *chic* music of their new land. It is not a coincidence that Rigaud's performance of an American song is what ultimately ties her to Émile, making these two French people which had felt so far lost in New York able to finally start a new life, one which is so idealized and talked about by the émigrés. There is a representative expansion of

repertoire, a widening of horizons; and there is a symbolic trade: from *chanson française* to jazz; from cabarets to speakeasies; from France to the United States.

Madame Rigaud and Émile embody one of pop music's strongest facets, the ability to communicate symbolically. Mark Greif's Philosophy of Pop helps explain that attitude, and provides an insightful applied reading for the scene above:

> Things that are inarticulable in social speech because they are too delicate or ideologically out of step, and things that should not be articulated because they are selfish, thoughtless, destructive, and stupid. That helps explain how these claims for 'what I learned from pop' can go so quickly from the sublime to the ridiculous and back to the sublime. (GREIF, 2009, p. 29)

As they use the American song to convey their implicit, inarticulate, desire to belong, these characters become emblematic. The music they learn is a strategy used by narration to enhance the construction of characters, adding depth to their personality and to the human experience of these fictional people in *Manhattan*.

A similar case is a scene with first-generation immigrant Jewish character Anna Cohen, vibrantly punctuated by music and the character's response to it. She arrives at home after a night of partying and romance, in a great mood for upbeat music. Narration presents her singing non-stop: "*Somebody loves me, I wonder who*" is spread throughout the page, in the whole verse or fragmented; "the tune is all through her body, in the throb of her feet, in the tingling place on her back where he held her tight dancing with her" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 275). The song is confronted against the domestic, trivial sounds, "dishes on the tables set for breakfast jingle tingle hideously when she bumps against it" (p. 275). The sounds of her mother arranging the breakfast table sound as unpleasant as the constant groaning of disapproval from the previous Jewish generation, embodied in Mrs. Cohen. The moment after Anna is finally by herself and over the presence of her mother, the vividness of song dominates narration. Anna's exhilarating mood is conveyed by the music, the earworm—an insistent song—that never leaves her.

> *Somebody loves me, I wonder who.* She slips off her party dress and gets into her nightgown. Then she tiptoes to the closet to hang up the dress and at last slides between the covers little by little so the slats wont creak. *I wonder who*. Shuffle shuffle, bright lights, pink blobbing faces, grabbing arms, tense thighs, bouncing feet. *I wonder who*. Shuffle, droning saxophone tease, shuffle in time to the drum, trombone, clarinet. Feet, thighs, cheek to cheek, *Somebody loves me*. . . . Shuffle shuffle. *I wonder who*. (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 275)

Once more, a pop tune conveys the implicit, the inarticulate, the visceral. The sound of music in her head is permanent, so intense that her body shuffles, she can hear the tease of the saxophone, the rhythm of the drum; it is so intense that Anna has to watch out so that the slats will not make any unwanted noise, and disturb her overbearing mother. In the end, the whole scene is physical, sensory-appealing without any interpersonal touch or music in the room. It is pop music at its prime.

Nevertheless the reflection on immigration and its rich relation with music in *Manhattan Transfer* is not always celebratory. The difficult and complex act of migrating can adopt a pessimistic tone and have a less integrating outcome. The following episode is demonstrative of eventual entanglements caused and potentially maximized in a situation that involves a foreign group of strong representation overseas. The excerpt begins with some of the novel's recurrent characters going for an apparent common walk around New York City. Narration follows a casual, everyday rhythm—the characters go on talking about subjects as dangerous as the weather or the menu for lunch—up until the point when the group of men is interrupted by significant sonorous agitation. Ellis Island lies at the background, the famous island that, at the time, worked as the main entrance gate for immigrants who crossed the Atlantic and reached the United States; the island a synonym for the arrival of outlanders[25]. Dos Passos creates the trap: it is through sonorous turmoil, of overhead babbles—"the deported, the deported"—that we finally get to know, through the characters' imagined ears, that the nearby ferry is not bringing more people in, it is actually directed towards the opposing vector, taking people away.

"They are sending the Reds back to Russia... Deportees... Agitators... Undesirables" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 289). The reader finally discovers what the scene is about: it is a procedure of deportation of people who are politically undesirable; explicit foreign enemies. The Statue of Liberty, standing tall on neighboring Liberty Island, watches everything, not capable of any action. The immigrants' freedom is then expressed in its conditions, in its imposing restrictions to assimilation to the established system. Explicitly, there is no room for communists. The scene follows with a collage of lines uttered amidst the perplexed crowd that watches everything: "take a look at the deportees... Take a look at the undesirable aliens" (p. 290). Labels are instant, and words are loaded with derogatory meaning. The montage of narratives follow with the image of the members of the deported group waving red

[25] A valuable reference to the treatment given to the huge batch of immigrants of late 19th century and early 20th century may be found in the film *Ellis Island* (1982). The short-length feature, directed by multifaceted and experimental artist Meredith Monk, reverberates John Dos Passos's novel intensely, and establishes a profitable transtextual dialogue with it.

handkerchiefs towards the people who stand on land; some of them respond with discouragement, some others are corrective, and others remain loyal and favorable to the deported. Melodrama threatens, on the surface, to fully take over the narrative description of fictional events. However, Dos Passos generates an intense discussion translated and brought forward with only a small number of words. Amidst the noisy scene, the deportees' reaction could not be different, considering the behavior of the remaining foreign characters in *Manhattan*: they sing. And the song they sing springs up naturally, "The Internationale."

The use of a musical composition as a symbol for a political movement that sees itself as universal—or universalist—is a direct reminiscence to the very way that communist ideals have been spread throughout the world. "The Internationale," adopted as communist hymn, is an instant recognizable sign attributed to that group of people depicted in the novel. It is stimulating to verify how the ill-fated scene at the ferry that carries the miserable folks is constructed within a logic that, precisely in that set-up, meets its clearest representation. "A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism" (ENGELS; MARX, 1970, p. 29), says the first sentence in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Marx and Engels's utterance invokes readers to play with phantasmagoria, which makes them assume a dubious existence of a then not widely spoken—and not widely recognized—specter that was communism. A "spectral causality" takes shape, as defined by cultural theorist Mark Fisher (2014, p. 18), developed through a "virtuality whose threatened coming was already playing a part in undermining the present state of things" (FISHER, 2014, p. 19). The communist specter now haunts people on the other side of the Atlantic, thus confirming its inherent global character—one that had already been predicted in the final lines of the *Manifesto* itself (see ENGELS; MARX, 1970, p. 75). As they are being deported, there is nothing left for the undesirable but their music and their sound in order to modulate their permanence in the imaginary of those who witnessed that episode. "Sound is energy unleashed, yet also the perpetual emerging and vanishing, growth and decay of life and death—the perfect metaphor for a ghost" (TOOP, 2011, pos. 168). And this is how spectral causality is reproduced: in the sound heard by those who stay.

The description of the outcome of the deportation and its spectral consequences is conducted skillfully by Dos Passos's narrator, in a powerful sonic scene:

> The singing trailed away across the water. At the end of a marble wake the ferryboat was shrinking into haze. *International... shall be the human race.* The singing died. From up the river came the longdrawn rattling throb of a steamer leaving dock. Gulls wheeled above the dark dingydressed crowd that stood silently looking down the bay (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 290).

The haunting, the communist immigrants, slowly dissipates in the haze along with their music, and the soundscape gradually alters. The irony of this situation reaches its maximum potential when it is juxtaposed to the song's chorus, stressed by montage built in narration. The refrain claims for unity and unification of human race: one, international. Such verse is highlighted, brought forward exactly at the moment in which the impossibility of a complete internationalization is made present in practical terms in fictional construction.

The following reaction of those who remain in North American soil, be them immigrants or not, is a reminder of dissonance in migratory condition. Painted as a mass of tattered people, they are the notes of a troublesome chord: simultaneously, they had been able to adapt to what was imposed and expected by the society which received them, but they are also jointly represented as the ones who keep quiet and still, motionless, before the deportation of other fellow immigrants, in another representation of passivity of quietness. The sound of the steamer is then substituted by the wingbeats of gulls, heard alongside the silence produced by the crowd's gaze. The new land swallows the new inhabitants.

Picture 8: *The Red Deportees*
Picture displays a documentary exhibition at the Ellis Island National Museum of Immigration, in New York. Photo taken by the author.

3.1 SOUND: LANGUAGE AND POWER

Estaba pensando sobreviviendo
Con mi sister en New Jersey
Ella me dijo que es una vida buena allá
Bien rica bien chévere.¡Y voy!
If we get bored, we'll move to California.
Pixies, "Vamos"

Picture 9: *Ferryslip*
Crowd arriving on Ellis Island. Photo taken by the author.

Most music excerpts present in the book have something in common: their strong rooting in the condition of migratory movements, the journeys themselves. Their focus is on the tour around the world, the trip, the ocean. The song about the Atlantic, for instance, emphasizes the dullness of intercontinental trips; the relation with displacing journeys is wittily seen as acts of sacrifice that could only be improved via consumption of alcoholic beverages or the enunciation of hearty chants (in these passages, rich musical traditions such as bar songs, sailor songs, and travel songs are juxtaposed). Music has always remained central to national cultures, and surely followed migratory movements and journeys as a close companion. Traditional popular songs, characteristic of various nationalities, associated to determined ethnic groups, origins, and occupations, are often present in *Manhattan Transfer*'s

narratives. The novel's diegetic time, which varies from the historical 1900s until the 1920s, is marked by those who were labeled by Julia Kristeva (see 1994) essentially as those who work, the immigrants. "A workingman has no country" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 227), confirms Congo. The author presents his tools, using them through temporary characters, thus making for archetypes in the presentation of ideas and ideals which are discussed in the novel.

General lines of modernist practices extend from the very concern with technological innovation in contrast to the force of human work. Some cultural references for the artistic production of modernism are universal, expanding from obvious calls to Italian Futurism in art, technological British machinery, or architecture in the form of skyscrapers in the United States. That is the case, for instance, of Rio de Janeiro, a Brazilian metropolis described in the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth century in very similar terms as to those applied to Dos Passos's New York. According to scholar Flora Süssekind (1987, p. 15), there was a "growing presence of an international work force"[26] in major Brazilian cities. "And, in what concerns the constitution of proper grounds for Modernism, this growing presence of immigrant workers, this industrial proletariat to-be, should have been decisive" [27] (SÜSSEKIND, 1987, p. 15). Dos Passos ties both ends as a way to consistently build a text with his social concerns in relation to the proletariat, and also to explore immigrant labor in its full acoustic potential.

John Dos Passos himself comments on excruciating times of xenophobia and intolerance in the 1920s in the United States, at the peak of the immigration era:

> In college and out I had personally felt the frustrations that came from being considered a wop or a guinea or a greaser. It is hard to explain to people who never lived through the early twenties the violence of the revulsion against foreigners and radicals that went through the United States after the first world war. [...] The spring of 1920 saw the height of the delirium of arrests and deportations of alleged radicals instigated by Woodrow Wilson's Attorney General. (DOS PASSOS, 1966, p. 166, 167)

There is an intrinsic connection of immigrant proletariat (both foreigners and Americans) with New York's metropolitan sounds, evoking Adorno's "proletarian loudspeakers."

In the early recording years, the very possibility of registering different ways of speaking, singing, and playing is representative of an opening in social prospects. Musician

[26] Original quote, in Portuguese: "presença crescente de uma força de trabalho internacional."
[27] Original quote, in Portuguese: "E, no que diz respeito à constituição de um solo próprio ao Modernismo, essa presença crescente dos trabalhadores imigrados, desse proletariado industrial em formação, teria sido decisiva."

and producer Jack White, researching the impact of the phonograph in everyday life in the early-twentieth-century United States, has affirmed that

> when phonograph records were invented, for the first time ever, women, minorities, poor rural men and even children were given the opportunity to say whatever they wanted in song, for the whole world to hear, shockingly without much censorship. What they were allowed to say on phonograph recordings, they were not allowed to speak in public or in person (WICKS, 2017).

Such potential was perceived by people in general, and it did not take long for executives who found marketability in these recordings to perceive an opportunity for profit. The recording industry is a convincing representation, in one market segment, of general work relations, especially meaningful in Dos Passos's universe. Character Phineas P. Blackhead appears in an early moment in *Manhattan Transfer*, and his story is an exemplary case for the complex relations between the owners of power, the working class, and the immigrants—these relations soon result into vibrant sonic representation. Represented as a typical WASP[28], Blackhead establishes complicated relations with his employees, those whom he considers the "reformists." He intends to use his power to destroy a strike of railway workers, as well as avoid the incoming of new foreign immigrants to New York. However, all the scenes in which he appears have him lying down motionless, bedridden, opposing his political strength to his physical weakness. Even if he dictates authoritarian orders, he is soon poisoned and dies. Blackhead is another character that does not get extended attention, and his death is a symbolic defeat. Dos Passos's narrator imposes loss to the oppressing boss and values proletarian groups, impersonated by railway workers intimately connected to the immigrant labor power.

No further discussion or investigation concerning Blackhead's death is mentioned, and as the novel moves on his presence is completely overshadowed. Immigrants' speech then starts to acquire importance in the book, as an evident and substantial layer for the development both of form and diegetic facts. The transliteration of the most varied accents and ways of speaking English is an unavoidable factor for the auditory experience of reading proposed by the author. As narration unfolds, it is suggested to readers that they apply the label of "outsiders" to immigrants and their stories. Philipp Schweighauser refers to this

[28] *White Anglo-Saxon Protestant*. The acronym is usually employed to refer to an individual, usually of British stock, who traditionally owns power and economic privileges in the United States. Its usage was more common until mid-twentieth century, but still applies in some contemporary contexts.

strategy of characterization of literary characters through their sonic representation as the audiograph:

> I define an audiograph as a characterization technique that endows fictional bodies with a set of distinctive acoustic properties designed to position characters with regard to the ensemble of social facts and practices that constitute the fictional world they inhabit (SCHWEIGHAUSER, 2002, p. 94).

Right after this brief conceptualization, Schweighauser (p. 94-95) expands his reflections to the importance of thoroughly describing sounds produced by characters in novels' fictional spaces, going from the noise they make when they walk, their snores and their laughs up to their accents and the way they speak. In *Manhattan Transfer*, the audiograph of all characters is painted in an expressive manner, always placed in the foreground; there are no possibilities for the reader to ignore it, for the production of each protagonist's sound in the many and various scenes of Dos Passos's novel is intrinsically and unavoidably tied to the very construction of each character as one of its essential conditions. The author clearly aims at developing an oral register, exploring certain particularities found in the urban scenario of New York City. Connecting different sounds also gave Dos Passos the chance to explore written word in its connection to spoken language, providing him with material to manipulate language as he pleased. Townsend Ludington (1998, p. 206) affirms that "he did not want foreign words to be overemphasized. Also, he wanted to omit apostrophes in words like 'dont' [...], his point being that he was trying to create a less formal, perhaps reportorial, style."

In the first chapter of the book, in its second scene, the third-person narrator—who, during the book, is conducted by Dos Passos's firm hand altering between traditional omniscience and highly skilled maneuvers with free indirect speech—presents the character Bud Korpenning. The reader is led to become closer to the story of a man who gets off the ferry to New York, and right away is looking for Broadway which is, according to him, the center for everyone and everything. The boy, who came from the village of Cooperstown, New York, a young man of twenty-five years of age, seems capable only of groaning at everyone, incessantly as if it were a refrain: "I kin work all right. I'm a good worker, (...) I'm telling yez, that's all" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 5). Korpenning embodies Kristeva's characterization par excellence, for he demonstrates from the start that his work force and ethics are his only alternatives of communication with New Yorkers. His never-ending search for a job that can provide him with a chance and an opportunity to enjoy what the center of

the world has at its best is depicted in a desolate way, through scenes in which Bud is constantly rejected for his manners, his outfit, and above all, for his language. The character's lines, heavily marked by his Upstate New York accent—the unknown side of the most well-known state in the United States; the countryside—are placed straightforwardly in contrast to official press registers which are attached to the novel's diegesis. It is an additional applied instance in *Manhattan Transfer* of Schweighauser's reflections on audiograph:

> The positioning accomplished via audiographs may involve value judgments on the part of other characters, narrators and implied authors as well as implied and empirical readers. [...] While audiographs may be used as part of the narrative technique of telling (for instance when a narrator censures a character's snoring), their principal mode of operation is clearly showing (SCHWEIGHAUSER, 2002, p. 94).

Expanding the expository property of sonorous description of characters, Dos Passos's collage proves to be explicit—pedagogical—as it contrasts Korpenning's voice to the official text, written in the prestigious language of newspapers. The young countryman finds, by chance, in the corner of the barber's salon—the salon which would perform the task of fulfilling the process of transformation for him to finally appear as what is considered appropriate, decent, fit so he could finally find a job—a copy of that day's *New York Times*: "'D'yous mind if I set here a minute an read that paper?' he hears his voice drawling in his pounding ears" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 17). The voice and the sentence that come out of Korpenning, yet again transliterating his grammatically uneducated and discredited accent, sound external, dragged and aggressive, this time even to his own ears, violently reinforcing the aural dimension of his discomfort. It is immediately contrasted to the formal register of the paper, of capital letters that exhibit headlines related to unintelligible economic facts, crime and homicides. "ADMITS KILLING CRIPPLED MOTHER" (p. 17) is the story read by the character; it is a formal, in-depth narrative of a murder and the subsequent confession of the murderer. New York's opulence, along with the language's formality, is displayed through the immigrant's immediate spontaneous contraposition, in a famous sentence, here put into words in his own way of speaking: "No more'n a needle in a haystack" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 17).

The example above brings displacement into the limelight, the strangeness felt by an outsider in relation to Manhattan's urban effervescence and complexity. It is interesting to reiterate that Bud Korpenning is an American citizen, therefore still somehow belonging to ideas of society and nation held as current in the novel. Even so, Dos Passos skillfully

manages to insert the country workingman who arrives at the headquarters of modern metropolises alongside other exemplary cases of immigrant characters, which will be scrutinized in detail from now on, all of them representative of international departures.

"Vat's a matter? Dontye like it?" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 11), says the unnamed immigrant man to his wife after he had recently bought and used the freshest invention by businessman King Camp Gillette: the disposable razorblade. This scene could be considered only as an addition to the numerous references to the intense activity of patent registration offices at the time *Manhattan Transfer*'s short narratives take place; however, the analysis of the aforementioned Germanized sentence, loaded with foreign tones, can be used as the source of a symbolic declaration of a locus of speech. It is a rather strong statement. The character's challenge question reveals a struggle between the place of departure and the place of arrival, reflected in the man's imposing attitude and in the woman's questioning of his adoption of recently-acquired patterns and practices. John Dos Passos richly highlights what lies between the lines through the way he provides such an individual with such a voice; it is precisely in his sonority when he speaks that the reader can finally fathom the complex dimension in the situation of this immigrant couple.

By reading—by listening to—the sentence, it is possible to visualize the face of a person uttering it, challengingly facing his hearer. The hearer here is not only the reader; otherwise it is extended as a statement of immigrant force, a provocation. The English that is registered full of inverted sounds, ungrammatical, in slow motion, is revealed as a powerful feature in "Vat's a matter? Dontye like it?". The posed provocation is simultaneously a strategy of defense and attack against the ones who insist on harassing those who come from afar. The power of the unnamed character's sentence is extended throughout the book and echoes in other foreigners in the biggest metropolis of North America.

In a scene in the second chapter, three characters, two Frenchmen and one Italian man, sit at a bar counter and comment on their new lives in their new city. There was only one subject they could talk about: work. Their conversation proceeds in a mixture of languages and hybrid languages, which vary from plain French or Italian up to interventions of these languages in a mixed English. Their talk continues up to the point when the waiter reacts, aggressively pouring them coffee: "say why de hell doan you guys loin English?" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 36). Marco, the Italian, promptly replies: "if we talk Engleesh, [...] maybe you no lika what we say" (p. 36). This is a rather interesting episode: the server, probably a foreign immigrant—or the son of one—as well, according to what the transliteration of his speech indicates, is demanding full linguistic assimilation from the others. Marco's brash

answer is yet again a way of confronting expectations. There is no problem in speaking English; nevertheless, it is a language that is established as a necessity, and not as an imposition. At the same time, the foreigners' daring sentences also reveal their discomfort with their new environment, as well as the incapability of complete belonging. Another one of Marco's thoughts can be used to summarize the discussion of sonic profiling of characters' language in *Manhattan Transfer*: "Then I began to learn Angleesh... Go awright to 'ell, I says" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 37).

The analysis of where *Manhattan Transfer* stands in the history of displacement in American literature is provoked by certain reflections in the "go-to-hell" imbued in the foreign attitude displayed by Marco. American expatriate literary figures of early twentieth century (Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Sylvia Beach, and so forth) were enlisted by critics as the Lost Generation, a stamp applied on John Dos Passos as well. The label relates to the fact that these authors had left America to develop a significant part of their literary projects in Europe, what would allegedly distance them from their home country. Dos Passos, being part of the batch of foreign writers polarized around the modern excitement of urban Parisian life and combat experiences of WWI, sensed how the lives of the émigrés could be exhausting and despairing, as cities and working opportunities changed swiftly.

In order to better apprehend Dos Passos's representation of the traveling urban immigrant in the 1920s, it is worth to jump a few decades ahead and read it alongside Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957), a release of major impact in American literature. According to scholar Jean-François Serre (2013), Dos Passos has the capacity to elaborate on urban nomadism, characteristic of the time between the two world wars. Serre (2013) comments that *Manhattan Transfer* is always showing characters "*in* the street[29]," highlighting the immersion in city life: "in Dos Passos characters are frequently accusing their fatigue with the difficulties of the migrant life[30]." Being *in* the street is different from being *on* the road: "it is a paradox, the beatnik's *expectation* lies at the end of the road, the urban man's *hope* is lost in the clouds of the city"[31] (SERRE, 2013).

Traveling in Dos Passos is an act of disruption and displacement, a constant movement in search of a better place to settle, of improving conditions. A contrasting phenomenon to the cherished and alleged freedom of the road trip in Kerouac, filled with postwar *esprit* and will

[29] From the original, in French: "*dans* la rue."
[30] From the original, in French: "chez Dos Passos dont les personnages accusent plutôt de la fatigue devant les difficultés de la vie de migrant."
[31] From the original, in French: "C'est un paradoxe, l'*espérance* du beatnik est au bout de la route, l'*espoir* de l'homme urbain se perd dans les nuées de la ville."

to live. What we see and hear in Dos Passos is based on a conflict between hope and expectation, and how these two similar yet opposing concepts play a role in their literature. Serre (2013): "we are left with the fundamental question of *hope*. Clung on a kind of hope, of finding a job, settling down, not leaving shortly, there is a lack of *expectation* in Dos Passos's migrants.[32]"

"Then I began to learn Angleesh... Go awright to 'ell, I says" (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 37).

[32] From the original, in French: "Reste la question, fondamentale, de *l'espoir*. Accrochés à un espoir, celui, de trouver un « boulot », de s'installer, bref de s'en sortir, l'*espérance* fait défaut aux migrants de Dos Passos."

4 ELLEN'S EARS: AN INTERLUDE

Ellen Thatcher's story throughout *Manhattan Transfer* is told acoustically. She is a vital figure in the novel, connecting some of the dozens of characters' stories, and her defining diegetic moments are activated in representations of sound and noise. Her trajectory is connected to key sonic signals, indicative of recurrent topics in her formation as a character.

This section will explore how much of theory examined in the preceding chapters of this dissertation is intuitively applied in the close reading of Ellen's scenes in the novel. Notions of soundscape, noise-to-ratio signals, noise abatement, audiograph, spectral causality are all present in expressive urban scenarios and situations. They are all part of John Dos Passos's authorial procedures.

Recognizing Ellen's story as it is told in vivid sonic descriptions and events is a way to access the process of development of this sort of literary approach. The selected passages below will relate to Ellen's formation based on sound motifs explored by both the narrator and general characters. Moreover, they are a lush source of material for a reading exercise of *Manhattan Transfer*'s poetics of noise[33].

Picture 10: "La Strada Entra nella Casa" painting by Futurist artist, Umberto Boccioni (1912).

[33] All references in this section are to Dos Passos, 1925. In order to keep the text cleaner, due to the constant quotation of the same book, only the designated pages will be accredited.

In English, "The Street Enters the House." Digital reproduction.

4.1 BIRTH, CHILDHOOD, MOTHERHOOD

Ellen's birth was filled with miscommunication and seeming intended lack of clear information being provided by the hospital. Ed Thatcher, her father, faced a low signal-to-noise ratio in the wards.

> The nurse, holding the basket at arm's length as if it were a bedpan, opened the door to a big dry hot room with greenish distempered walls where in the air tinctured with smells of alcohol and iodoform hung writhing a faint sourish squalling from other baskets along the wall (p. 3).

"Ed Thatcher [...] tried to steady his voice" (p. 5), when he went to the hospital to see Ellie and Mrs. Thatcher. When he finally thought he would be given information on his wife and newborn kid, he only heard "the closing of a door[, which] cut off a strangled shriek" (p. 5). The high-pitched scream was Mrs Thatcher's: "Susie shrieked [...] 'It's not mine. Take it away. [...] Take it away,' she yelled and fell back in hysterics, letting out continuous frail moaning shrieks. [...] 'She'll quiet down, once you've gone. . . ." (p. 7), said the nurse to Mr. Thatcher.

Ellen's childhood accounts are immersed in metropolitan soundscapes. The following scene takes place at an early moment in the novel, when she was still a baby. Mr. Thatcher

> pushed up the window and leaned out. An L train was rumbling past the end of the street. [...] The world's second metropolis. In the brick houses and the dingy lamplight and the voices of a group of boys kidding and quarreling on the steps of a house opposite, in the regular firm tread of a policeman, he felt a marching like soldiers. [...] Metropolis. [...] Somebody out of breath let out the word Fire. [...] He heard the splattering hoofbeats and the frenzied bell of a fire engine (p. 13).

As Ellen grew up, domestic sonorities—music, outside sounds, insects—interfered in her relationship with her parents. Early characterizations in the novel demonstrate Ellen's taste in music and her passion for dancing from an early age, which eventually led to her becoming a chorus girl and an entertainer. The next scene is illustrative of the presence of music and the excitement of Ed and Ellen while playing music and dancing:

> Ed Thatcher sat hunched over the pianokeys picking out the Mosquito Parade. Between [Ed and Susie Thatcher], stepping carefully among the roses on the sunny field of the carpet, little Ellen danced. 'Mummy watch my expression.' 'Just look at the child,' said Thatcher, still playing. 'She's a

> regular little balletdancer.' Then he went on with the Barcarole and Ellen went on dancing. (p. 18)

Noisy outcomes from the Thatcher home transmitted Susie's misery, who was visibly detached from traditional roles of motherhood. Her misery is evident in a number of narratives such as this one:

> Susie Thatcher stirred in bed moaning fretfully. Those people never give me a moment's peace. From below came the jingle of a pianola playing the Merry Widow Waltz. [...] Then she lay quiet again, staring at the ceiling watching the flies buzz teasingly round the electriclight fixture. A wagon clattered by down the street. She could hear children's voices screeching. A boy passed yelling extra. [...] She woke with a start. Ellen was jumping round the room. [...] 'Quieter dear. Mother's not feeling a bit well.' [...] Crying quietly she dropped her head on [Ed Thatcher's] shoulder. Ellen stood staring at them out of round gray eyes (p.23).

Another scene: Ellen was being tucked in by her mother. The child was in despair, expressed by the uncomfortable sounds around her as she attempted to fall asleep and yelled for the presence of her father. This is yet another sonic representation of a troublesome motherhood—to be manifested in Ellen herself later in the novel. There is no significant evolution or encounters with Susie Thatcher after the following episode:

> "Good night Ellen." The streak of light of the door narrowed behind mummy, slowly narrowed to a thread up and along the top. The knob clicked; the steps went away down the hall; the front door slammed. A clock ticked somewhere in the silent room; outside the apartment, outside the house, wheels and gallumping of hoofs, trailing voices; the roar grew. [...] If she closed her eyes the light would go out. Black spiraling roar outside was melting through the walls making the cuddled shadows throb. Her tongue clicked against her teeth like the ticking of the clock. Her arms and legs were stiff; her neck was stiff; she was going to yell. Yell above the roaring and the rattat outside, yell to make daddy hear, daddy come home. (p. 44)

The unstable relationship Ellen had with her mother was contrasted with the more affectionate one she had with her father: Ellen and Ed Thatcher were sitting on a bench at the Battery, the park at the southern tip of Manhattan, having a delightful conversation about dances on big liners. After a while a man came beside them, talking about one of the ships they could see from the riverbank. "'That there's the *Harabic*,' croaked a cockney voice." The man behind that voice was a "frayed creakyvoiced man," with a "faded smell of whiskey" (p. 63). The girl reacted to such a repulsing sonic—and smelly—characterization: "'Daddy let's go away. I dont like this man,' whispered Ellen tremulously in her father's ear" (p. 63). What

is explored here is the character's audiograph, so that he sounds like a villain, a threatening figure to the child, who recurrently comments on her fear of being kidnapped or abused by a homeless man on the streets of Manhattan. His way of talking, foreign to Ellen, intimidates as much as the whiskey on his breath, and materializes her fears. Years later in the narrative, there is a recollection of this episode: adult Ellen was taking a walk around the city, when "two sailors were sprawling on a bench in the sun; one of them popped his lips as she passed" (p. 136). The sound alone made her "feel their seagreedy eyes cling stickily to her neck, her thighs, her ankles." Her history of being afraid of male violence was reflected on her reaction, as "she tried to keep her hips from swaying so much as she walked" (p. 136).

However, the father and daughter's rapport did not always stay in tune. Ellen, after having lived by herself in her own apartment for a while, paid her father a visit. From his window, Ed sat "looking out over the blistering asphalt at the endless stream of automobiles that whirred in either direction past the yellowbrick row of stores" (p. 197), hearing the phonographs playing music in other apartments. Ed himself was not producing any sound remarkable enough to be included in narration; he was only reading the gossip paper. Ellen interrupted him as she rang the bell three times, in what seemed to be a sonic alarm between father and daughter, an internal code—he knew it was her. Tension is generated between them as the daughter finds out that her father is reading about Stan, her current boyfriend at a time when she was amid the process of ending her marriage to another man, John Oglethorpe. Seeing that, she ceded and revealed she was filing for divorce. "They were silent" (p. 198), and Ed could do nothing more than "clear his throat," and look out the window. All that could be heard were the outside "tires [making] a swish" (p. 199). Father and daughter could not converse and avoided each other's eyes, when finally the doorbell was heard again. "The bell rang," it was a visitor for Mr. Thatcher. His unimportant visitor left, and Ed then kept "tapping with two fingers on the arm of his morrischair" (p. 200), in a repetitive beat. In a change of setting, they soon left the apartment to eat out. The conclusion of the scene was strictly connected to acoustics, as the explicitly uncomfortable Ellen wishes for destruction once more: "'Wouldnt it be fine if we had a riproaring thunderstorm?'" (p. 201); a storm so loud that would eventually dominate the room and prevent them from having an audible conversation. Ellen's wish did not come true, but they did not need to rely on any force of nature to "[sit] down at a table near the door under a droning electric fan" (p. 201); human-made white noise served perfectly.

It did not take long for Ellen to become a parent herself. Her child was conceived in a meaningful connection with Stan. However, when she discovered she was pregnant, she

would soon hear the news that Stan had died, in a common move of creation and destruction that permeates plenty of *Manhattan Transfer*'s narratives. She shares her drama with her friend, Jimmy Herf: she is acoustically described as talking "in a little trailing voice like a cry heard at night from far away along a beach" (p. 265). Devastated by misery, and by a repulse to motherhood that equaled her mother's, Ellen promptly decided to see a doctor to remove the baby. In the doctor's office, narration reveals that "she hates the quaver in her voice" (p. 267), while "the doctor purrs softly as if to himself. He heaves a hissing sigh" (p. 268). These are sounds that reveal uncertainty. She quickly renounces the operation and leaves the room, in an exercise of narration that equals her inner state to the sounds of the city outside: "the roar of the streets breaks like surf about a shell of throbbing agony. [...] A fire engine roars past, [...] all the feeling in her fades with the dizzy fade of the siren" (p. 268).

When Martin, Ellen's son, eventually got born, she was in a relationship with Jimmy Herf, who formally adopted the kid as a parent. The baby's early description is surely aural, for he "yell[ed] like a tugboat" (p. 276). During a conversation with her friend Ruth, Ellen expressed her maternal insecurities, which would be represented in the figure of a silent child. For her luck, Martin was not the quiet type anymore, despite initial fears: "Martin's picking up, [...] he was so quiet and fat for a long while we were terribly afraid we'd produced an imbecile" (p. 339). Eventually, though, the same baby became the protagonist of one of the noisiest reports in the novel. Having been left by Ellen with a babysitter for one evening, the motherless child is terrified in an unbearably loud world:

> Little Martin lies tossing within the iron bars of his crib. Outside dark, and beyond walls and outside again the horrible great dark of grownup people, rumbling, jiggling, creeping in chunks through the windows, putting fingers through the crack in the door. From outside above the roar of wheels comes a strangling wail clutching his throat. Pyramids of dark piled above him fall crumpling on top of him. He yells, gagging between yells. Nounou walks towards the crib along a saving gangplank of light 'Dont you be scared. . . . that aint nothin.' Her black face grins at him, her black hand straightens the covers. 'Just a fire engine passin. . . . You wouldn't be sceered of a fire engine.'"

4.2 ROMANCE, MARRIAGE

Ellen married John Oglethorpe, both at a young age. Following her wedding, they both decided to go on honeymoon to Atlantic City. Visibly unhappy, yet attempting to display some excitement, she hints at an ideal will, which consisted of "feel[ing] very gay and listen[ing] to his purring whisper in her ears" (p. 116), but instead all she heard was the sound of the incessant rain, as "John made a little clucking sound in his mouth at the raindrops,"

seemingly annoying to her. In a passage filled with biblical references, mostly to the passage of Noah's ark, the aural quality of the scene matches the pairing of destruction and creation: "beyond the rain she could hear the intermittent rumble of the surf along the beach between the illuminated piers"; John was not whispering anything charming in her ears, he was "asleep breathing quietly like a child" (p. 117) instead, a loud anti-climax. The scene continued, ending with an insistent song that remained inside Ellen's head—an earworm—that happened to be a fictional song, created for this narrative, perhaps by Ellen herself, which related once more to the floods in the Bible. Ellen's mood went up and down; she vomited, only to become healthy again via white noise, "the parlorcar rumbled cozily in her head; she fell asleep" (p. 117). Then "wind rattling the windowframes wakened her," and along with it the internal song increased its volume: "*Oh it rained forty days*. . . . Through a crack in the cold stiffness the little tune trickled warm as blood. . . . *And it rained forty nights*"; as she watched her nineteen-year-old husband sleep and "whine" like a "littleboy's voice," she started to giggle "desperately." Final montage of the sequence highlights the crescendo of the inner music of Ellen's head, demonstrative of her state of mind: "and the rain lashed through the window and the song grew louder until it was a brass band in her ears: oh it rained forty days and it rained forty nights and it didn't stop till Christmas" (p. 118).

It did not take long before Ellen decided to go away from her husband, in a scene which started and ended with acoustic descriptions and sound alarms. She wanted to escape from their home as quietly as possible. When calling the taxi garage, in the day she ran away, she "talked very low into the receiver" and "tiptoed springily back into the room and closed the door" (p. 165). She closed the door, not slammed it—quite a frequent motif in the novel; doors are slammed all the time. Replying to her call, "the gruff man's voice at the garage growled pleasantly in her ears," the pleasant sound of her freedom from a miserable matrimony. Avoiding a big scene, she said she was "going to run downstairs so that the taximan wont ring the bell" (p. 166). She was successful in keeping her movements inconspicuous, as she found the driver still looking for her name above the pushbuttons at the building's entrance. Ellen then went to a hotel, and when she entered the room sounds indicated that she felt excited by her new situation, for she "ran about the room like a small child kicking her heels and clapping her hands" (p. 168). She ordered some chocolates and then lay in bed, laughing happily. Soon after, "from the street she could hear the occasional rumble of a truck. In the kitchens below her room a sound of clattering had begun. From all around came a growing rumble of traffic beginning" (p. 168). The unbearable sound of being alone was heard by her, now the sole person in that fashionable Brevoort room.

Character Stanwood Emery, when first meeting Ellen, outlines her audiograph: "'With rings on her finger and bells on her toes, And she shall make mischief wherever she goes,'" to which she replies with "'Music, isnt it? I always say mischief." (p. 140). He associates her to a noisy presence; her sounds are a complex mix of playfulness and misconduct, representative of her provocative role as a female entertainer. At the same time, his aural observation is showing of Stan's infatuation with her, proven in the next page where he could be seen waiting for her outside the theater she worked, offering her a ride home in his "Ford round the corner." She accepted and soon "the motor sputtered, started with a roar" (p. 140). The disruptive sound of the car's engine is the energetic tension between the two characters, about to engage in adultery. "'We'll probably get arrested; my muffler's loose and liable to drop off'" (p. 142). Soon everyone will hear of them together; their silencer is coming off.

The following scene that features Stan and Ellen takes place at his apartment, where readers find out that their affair is being consummated at last. The literary strategy used to narrate the scene is carried out by the intrusion of a burglar in the home, who serves as an eye and earwitness of their relation. Narration takes a causal and direct instance, detailing every step of the burglar, who went unnoticed as a criminal up to the moment when "something fluffly shot with a yell from under his feet. The little dog was yapping loud in a corner" (p. 149). The alarm sounded. Soon "the room swung into light," and Stan and Ellie found out there was someone else inside in the apartment. This other person had made a long way up there by ringing other people's apartment bells in the building, pretending to be a messenger, a mailman; the only reason he was eventually unmasked as a burglar was through an unpredictable sound, the yapping of the pet dog inside the household. Ellie earns another chance to act as if she were in a play, threatening him with a stage gun, only to give the noisy burglar some disheartening stage money, and expel the burglar out of the apartment.

As Stan and Ellen's involvement intensifies, it receives more attention in narration. Readers are given more information on his background as well, and are told that Stan is an alcoholic. In a long scene where Stan and Ellen's ascending romance was scrutinized, a drunken Stan was being helped by Ellen, who was trying to tackle his problems with alcohol. As he sobered up, in a hilarious sequence where he is seen dressed up in her theater clothes, they decided to go to her place. On the taxi on the way home, Stan declared his love for her, with a "broken tremor in his very low voice that stunned her with happiness" (p. 216). The vibrancy of her reaction to his "I love you" sentence was reflected on the city sounds around them, full of energy and pulse: "Ellen paid the taxi. Siren throbbing in an upward shriek that burst and trailed in a dull wail down the street, a fire engine went by red and gleaming, then a

hookandladder with bell clanging" (p. 216). In contrast to her excitement, there was Stan's insecurity and vulnerability, as "he followed her silent into the house and up the stairs." Their physical connection was matched with a common sonority when they entered the apartment. She started the phonograph, providing soundtrack for their moment together. The song was "He's a Devil in His Own Home Town", by Grant Clarke and Irving Berlin; "when it comes to women, oh! oh! oh! / He's a devil, he's a devil" (CLARKE; BERLIN, 1914). They danced to the suggestive tune, and the room's acoustic description that followed indicated what happened next: "The phonograph came to the end of the tune and the record went on rasping round and round" (p. 216).

In another diegetic moment, Ellen and her agent, Harry Goldweiser went out for dinner along with his sister, Rachel. They were at a top floor at the Astor, "the orchestra was playing *In My Harem*" (p. 244), again by Irving Berlin, and she got the invitation to dance. Quite sharply, Ellen pays special attention to Goldweiser's ears, highlighted by free indirect speech narration: "his big ear with solemn lonely hairs on it was on the level of her eyes" (p. 244). On his part, "he was breathing into her ear" (p. 244). As the ear description can prove quite explicitly, Ellen did not feel attracted to engage in a physical relationship with Harry, who came insistently talking about his desire for her—as it did happen with other characters, such as George Baldwin before. As awkwardness took full control of the scene, soundtrack conveyed it all: "the music stopped. They stood apart under a palm" (p. 245). She soon thought of Stan, her true affection at the time, only to accidentally find him at the party, genuinely committed to his drinking habit. However pleasing the sight of Stan was, it came to her knowledge that he had impulsively married Pearline, a young lady he had met during a recent trip to Canada. Her reaction again relied on the sounds inside her head, composing the full sonic discomfort that represented her feelings of displacement in that social occasion, next to who was possibly the only character with whom she established a satisfying connection. After she heard the news, the aural takes over the visual: "Ellen couldnt see his face. The orchestra, the jangle of voices, the clatter of plates spouted spiraling louder and louder about her. . . ." (p. 245). One could almost feel the fainting. Her response was blunt in its audiograph: "'Good night Stan'. Her voice was gritty in her mouth, she heard the words very clearly when she spoke them" (p. 246). She moved away from Stan, and as she went back to dancing with Harry against her will, "the noise ebbed sickeningly" (p. 246), and she had to leave.

In a scene where readers discover about Jimmy Herf's affection for Ellen, a quirky sonic description to his state of mixed emotions is given. She had just refused his offer to

keep her company, when "Jimmy Herf stood stockstill at the foot of the brownstone steps. His temples throbbed. He wanted to break the door down after her. [...] Then the trumpet feeling ebbed and he was falling through a black manhole" (p. 266). Herf became an instrument to be played by Ellen, his feelings were controlled by her intonations.

After a series of facts, Jimmy and Ellen end up living together as a couple, for he adopted her newborn baby as a legal parent. Their domestic life was soon disturbed by their living in a small apartment. A modest space for three people and their sound emissions, which were always conflicting, invading each other's. "If we only had more space, he was muttering; we live cramped in our squirrelcage. [...] Space space cleanness quiet" (p. 329). More space meant a cleaner environment, which for him was a quieter one. Jimmy and Ellen were working in different shifts, so they had different sleeping and waking times. Finally she decided to say that she judged important for him to find a room to sleep someplace else, so nobody got disturbed by each other's noise. By the time she finished her proposition, "Martin's crying came in a gust from the other room" (p. 330). It worked as a sonic alarm, the translator of Jimmy's inner feelings at that time; the baby's crying was the acoustic symbol of a failed marriage, it was the adults' crying as well. As Jimmy's impulse for fighting and yelling was controlled, he then went to the bathroom to remain distant from them and keep quiet, and soon "the baby had stopped crying" (p. 330).

Jimmy and Ellen's final split is narrated in a scene where he shows up at the apartment after drinking. It was cold outside, "six milkwagons in a row passed jingling, [...] two black cats were chasing each other. Everywhere was full of their crazy yowling" (p. 345). He finally made it to the place where Ellen and Martin slept. "He stood shivering in the dark passage, ringing the bell marked Herf again and again. Then he knocked as loud as he could" (p. 345). Loud narration indicated his attitude in the episode, which was naturally shocking to Ellen. As he came in, she asked him not to "talk too loud on account of Martin" (p. 345): a reminder of the old acoustic problems, the rationale expressed by her which caused him to ultimately leave that apartment. They had a brief conversation about their divorce, permeated by the lack of words. "They sat looking at each other without speaking. Their eyes burned from looking at each other" (p. 346). Their sonic story was once more the representation of their failure as a functional couple.

Ellen's story wraps up in a final commitment, this time to George Baldwin, the lawyer. They decided on getting married in a funny-sounding conversation at a dinner occasion. He talked to her during the meal with a "crackling voice" (p. 374), "shakily" (p. 375). He considered himself to have been "like a tin mechanical toy, all hollow inside", something

quickly dismissed by Ellen: "'let's not talk about mechanical toys,' she said in a strangled voice" (p. 375). Her restrained tone conveyed, however, a liberating message for Baldwin, who finally relieved his tension in intensity and volume, "'no let's talk about our happiness,' he shouted" (p. 375). The audiograph of their conversation reveals their involvement in a bittersweet way, representative of their always rowdy interactions.

4.3 VIOLENCE, GRIEF

Long before readers find out that Ellen and George Baldwin get married, there was a tumultuous scene between the two. They went together to a fancy dinner part, in a cab "that whirred smoothly under them" (p. 217). On their way, "the taxi made a half turn and stopped in front of a roadhouse that oozed pink light and ragtime through every chink" (p. 218). The liveliness of the "big crowd tonight" was matched by the street clamor, for "the cars behind were honking and rasping their klaxons." When they arrived and found themselves a seat, a party song could be heard, "Everybody's Doing It Now", by Irving Berlin. Baldwin could not resist, and "hummed it as he hung over her a second" (p. 218). The general excitement was directly juxtaposed to the invisible presence of World War I, which now had the presence of the American army. The warlike overtone matched George Baldwin's behavior. He became abusive and violent towards Ellen, an attitude she did not accept. She then asked for her friend Jimmy Herf's help, who was at the same dinner party, to help her get out of that unpleasant situation. Baldwin, at Ellen's constant refusals to be involved with him sexually, finally called her a prostitute and pulled a gun on her. Right before he did that, his voice had assumed a machinelike character, it "croaked tartly like a klaxon" (p. 229). Gus McNiel, the man who prevented an even bigger disaster to happen by disarming the lawyer, also reacted with acoustic intensity: "'No harm done, just a little nervous attack, see? No cause for alarm,' McNiel was shouting in the voice of a man speaking from a soapbox" (p. 229). After a while, "McNiel brought his voice down to a reassuring purr. 'You just forget it'" (p. 229), whitewashing the incident in Baldwin's favor, in his condoning attempt to keep the party going.

Ellen was able to escape the aggressor at last. Her acoustic reaction after having entered a taxi with Jimmy, safe from the lawyer's gun, was also relevant. She "suddenly said [something] in a little child's voice" (p. 230). She went outside after a while, the city nocturnal soundscape was full of "toads in the ditches [that] sounded like sleighbells" (p. 230). Her attempt to find stress relief was soon invaded sonically by "an electric train [that] whistled far to the right, rattled nearer and faded into whining distance," and the tango coming from a near

roadhouse, vibrant signals she wanted to avoid. Her childlike voice recovered the noisy scenes in her childhood, bringing them back into her adulthood as she felt vulnerable and insecure. She responded to another will to be completely unaccompanied, asking Jimmy to leave her alone. "He stood on the steps reluctant to go back into the noise and fume" (p. 231).

In the morning after, she woke up to a terrible night's sleep. Exterior sounds of the city invade her morning; "a truck jangles shatteringly along the street, [...] from far away through streets and housewalls the long moan of a steamboat whistle penetrates to her" (p. 240). She feels uncomfortable, and her mindset is described as a noisy, dominating "droning pang, unaccountable, something left over from last night's bitter thoughts" (p. 240). She decides to go out and look for Stan, someone who could offer her some peace of mind. "After crossing Lafayette Street roaring with trucks and delivery wagons, [...] further east she passes pushcarts; a grindorgan fills the street with shiny jostling coils of the *Blue Danube*. In Tompkin Square yelling children mill about" (p. 241). The sounds are intensely urban and lively, overlapping one another. Emblematically, she cannot find Stand at home.

At a later moment, in a scene following Stan's tragic death in a domestic fire induced by himself, Ellen is shown at her place reminiscing her moments with him. Her aural experience, a reminder of the nuisances of the outside world, contrasts visual beauty. "No time to get tight like the twilight, Stan said. The telephone reached out shivering beady tentacles of sound. She slams the window down. O hell cant they give you any peace?" (p. 259). Her agent is calling, asking her out again. "She no sooner puts the receiver down than the bell clutches at her again," announcing a mechanical conversation to which she gives a "tinkling telephone laugh" (p. 259). After all the phone calls she decides to look out the window again. "She hears the burring boom of a big steamer from the river," while "the telephone is shiveringly beadily ringing, ringing" (p. 260), a sonic nuisance she tries to ignore. She has no rest though: "the buzzer burrs at the same time" (p. 260). A visitor, Ruth enters. She came to see Ellen to compliment her on her beautiful apartment and on the success achieved in the theater world. Ellen, in turn, is talking at the same time and not listening, lamenting Stan's tragic death. As "Ruth's rubberclad foot is tapping the floor," "Ellen's ears ring sickeningly" (p. 260). The sounds inside her head are dominating again. "Ellen runs into the bathroom and slams the door" (p. 260).

4.4 OVERARCHING SOUNDS: VOICES IN ELLEN'S HEAD

There are instances of Ellen's reaction to constant sounds and voices throughout the novel, as it has been mentioned briefly earlier. Thus the choice to present them as the ultimate

acoustic manifestation in the outline of Ellen as a character is to recognize its importance in the accomplishment of her creation as a fictional entity as a whole. Some final instances will help to illustrate that scheme.

In one of their social occasions, Stan and Ellen went out for a drink. As they sat down, "an orchestra throbbed. [...] In a square place in the middle of the floor four couples were dancing the tango." (p. 153) As they refused to tango, they decided to go outside, facing the street on Broadway, where "an occasional taxi whizzed by her. From the river on the warm wind came the long moan of a steamboat whistle" (p. 153). On the way home, when she was going back from a pleasing evening, she heard men talk about Irene Castle and her show being the biggest hit on Broadway—the show that Ellen was on. The mention of her name as a hit on Broadway by complete strangers started the sounds in her head, orchestrating her fantasies of fame through acting, forming a composition of the acoustic elements that had been around her during that night: "Greatest hit on Broadway. The words were an elevator carrying her up dizzily, [...] the slow throb of a tango, [...] while handclapping of millions beat in gusts like a hailstorm about them. Greatest hit on Broadway" (p. 154).

The sentence—"greatest hit on Broadway"—becomes a centerpiece in Ellen's trajectory, a forceful notion that pushes her career as an entertainer. Being a successful Broadway star also brings many of her usual concerns throughout the novel. At a moment, she hears someone saying that "'nothing succeeds like success,' [...] in a deep droning voice," (p. 267) a motto that is simultaneously prized but also fought against and refuted by Ellen. This droning line has a spectral sphere to it, dominating the voices in her head every time she considers her career and life choices, working as a way to counterbalance the dazzling feeling caused by stardom. "Nothing succeeds like success" is a reminder of how success itself can lead her to failure in her social life.

In Ellen's final scene, she can overhear Anna Cohen's usual intense musicality in the back room of Madame Soubrine's Robes, a shop she goes to buy clothes. The sound attracts her, and she can see perceive that "the room's full of smoke and screaming" (p. 398). She is told by Soubrine that the smoke was nothing serious, but as she goes outside, she can hear the fire engines arriving, sound alarms directly contradictory to the owner of the shop's words. Ellen paralyzes; she cannot leave the place, the sounds of fire trucks provoke in her the memories of what had happened to Stan, who had died in a fire. "As the fireengines go clanging away, the ambulance drives up" (p. 399). She can hardly breathe. "The moaning turmoil and the clanging of the fireengines wont seem to fade away inside her" (p. 399). Her feelings of tension and unease are acoustic: "Ridiculous to go round always keyed up so that

everything is like chalk shrieking on a blackboard" (p. 400). She finally mentions the noises in her head again, and her machine-like self, "It's like a busted mechanical toy the way my mind goes brrr all the time" (p. 400).

Manhattan Transfer's last words in the Ellen narratives are remarkable in aural experience. The sentences channel all her suffering with work, men, and institutions: "As she goes through the shining **soundless** revolving doors, [...] she is advancing smiling towards two gray men, [...] smiling, holding out their hands" (p. 400).

5 A CENTURY IN NOISE

As it has been considered before, John Dos Passos's representativeness as an archetypical twentieth-century individual is reasonable. His works and public appearances in the initial decades of the 1900s have helped to define historical moments of debate and formation of art and societal life for decades to come, advancing all the way into the twenty-first century. Above all, keeping the focus of this dissertation, it is compelling to observe how much of Dos Passos's delineation of the modern aural experience remains central in public disputes, and in routes taken by artistic production and reception. The central topics in *Manhattan Transfer*, all of them connected with the omnipresent interference of disruptive noises or sonic annoyance, are heralds of world events intensely explored in literature and in the arts, in general.

Notably, this quality of his work reaches such potentials not only with the issues contained in the general topics of Dos Passos's fiction, but also in how he conveys a richness of meanings within his literary schemes in the form of his narratives. The aural provocations in characters and readers triggered by the words in his 1925 novel evoke arguments on bigotry, on xenophobia, and musical and class prejudices; on the mechanization of everyday life, on the role of machines and human-made artifacts that transform natural environments; on the production and commodification of cultural objects, on the tortuous relations of contemporary societies with their artworks; on the diffusion of news—breaking news, hard news, fake news—and their intrusion in commonality routine through journalism.

The modernist years in the arts, as previously discussed in this text, are a token of the start of representation of a good number of the topics above. Even if a significant body of artworks, in diverse forms of representation and media, had already incorporated the issues brought to the scene by John Dos Passos before 1925, what is the significance that *Manhattan Transfer* needs to be given, and that was lost to it during the latter years of the twentieth century? And at this moment, expanding the discussion a little, what is the relevance of Dos Passos as a writer and his permanence for contemporary readers?

The turn from the twentieth to the twenty-first century, however, has prepared fertile soil for the author's presence. Dos Passos's intermedial approach to literature is no longer a matter of estrangement, after many decades of experimentation in this direction—that the author's very oeuvre helped pave the way. The explosion of new technologies and digital media, along with the abrupt increase of innovative machine-mediated experiences in everyday life, resemble those of the daily experience of the first half of the 1900s, so impressionistically narrated in all of the *U.S.A.* sections, as a case in point. The author's

display of human characters who can only achieve contact with nature through machines and human-made inventions foresaw, in fiction, many aspects of what eventually came to be studied and affirmed in ecocriticism. If it is sufficient to roughly attest that traditional ecocritics attempt to identify experiences, both in life and in art, that are not mediated by the hand of men or man-made creations, they are fueling a discussion with postmodern scholars who claim that everything, including nature, is mediated by culture. Helena Feder (2014, p. 2), in what she calls an "ecocultural materialist approach," contributes with an "expansive notion of culture": "while our experience of the world is culturally mediated and constructed, culture is itself a product of nature, and human culture is only one of many types of culture in the material world" (p. 1-2). The comprehensiveness of these complicated relations by a twenty-first century scholar echoes the early reactions of modernists of the early 1900s.

Some twentieth-century avant-gardes, starting with Futurism, seemed to embrace instead the notion of a world which had its only valid big bang with the Anthropocene. Praising the violent impact of humans in the globe, and especially the machines created by people, the futurists formed just one piece of modernity and modernism's crave for innovation. The beginning of the twentieth century in European art contrasted the futurists and other progress-oriented, metropolitan avant-garde groups, with those artists who had inherited the impressionistic awe for nature, "a plaything, a kaleidoscope, an enchanted box of light and colors" [34] (PEDROSA, 2015, p. 185). If avant-garde artists could sense the excitement from intense movements both of human and industrial character, the ones that stemmed from impressionistic traditions were apparently still a little displaced:

> The world, be it of living beings, or of physical or inorganic, continues to enchant them, and it is with a somewhat foolish admiration that they watch the march of progress: the growth of large boulevards and brand-new avenues, the novelties of growing urbanism, the train, the stations, the steamboats, the electric illumination, all the inventions of a still flourishing capitalism[35] (PEDROSA, 2015, p. 185).

It is amid this remarkable blend of industrial and natural environments as nucleuses for aesthetic creation, which suits Feder's notion of an "ecocultural materialist" setting, that European artists initiate a process of looking at the arts being produced in other corners of the world. They were directing their attention towards representations of difference—or better

[34] From the original, in Portuguese: "brinquedo, caleidoscópio, caixa encantada de luz e de cores."
[35] From the original, in Portuguese: "O mundo, quer dos seres vivos, quer do físico ou inorgânico, continua a encantá-los, e é com admiração algo bocó que assistem à marcha do progresso: o crescimento dos largos *boulevards* e novíssimas avenidas, as novidades do urbanismo crescente, o trem, as estações, os barcos a vapor, a iluminação elétrica, todas as invenções de um capitalismo ainda florescente."

said, a longing for the so-called exotic, the new—yet another type of capitalist innovation. The modernist chapter is one that begins with ambiguous internationalization, in diverse fronts. According to prominent art critic, Mário Pedrosa (2015, see p. 190), it was between 1907 and 1910 that the cultural elites of Paris became acquainted with African works of art. The artists in the French capital were the first to know these pieces in the European context, as they went to ethnographic museums driven by curiosity. Narratives concerning multiple artists of varied media in the early modernist years include as turning points their encounters with objects and people in events such as the world's fairs that took place in Europe and North America, with their vast display of international crafts—and colonial aberrations such as the human zoos, which exhibited "savage" people from around the globe.

The increasing internationalization in the global scenario poses some questions: on the one hand, it highlights the peak of modern imperialism, a historical time that saw the expansion of colonial powers centering decisions and choices in the most influential Western nations in Europe and North America—Joseph Conrad's novella, *Heart of Darkness* (1899) is an incontrovertible lesson of that in literature—and imperialistic views that sponsor biological determinism and industrial powers' dominance and exceptionalism; on the other hand, this expansion also facilitated the contact between different peoples and practices in the new colonies, as cultural and archaeological missions reached the dominated territories, but also sponsored traveling in the opposite vector, towards the metropolises, establishing some sort of cultural exchange—it is well known now that Sub-Saharan imagery would turn out to be decisive in the work of cubist giant, Pablo Picasso, only to cite a foundational example of acknowledged European artistic modernity. "And thus almost every people of primitive cultures showed the European man, proud of his supposed artistic superiority, that they were also gifted with the highest inventive aptitudes"[36] (PEDROSA, 2015, p. 189).

Modernist years have been widely assumed as decades in which the arts and technologies have attempted an initial big move towards a greater internationalization—in repercussions to be felt eventually in notions such as "global village" and "globalization" in the decades to come. It is interesting, however, to approach this multinational quality of Modernism not only as an idealized all-embracing, global effort of the arts, for it might as well be an artistic tendency that lacks a specific foundational place, a manifestation that reveals social upheaval and political instability—which would see its most serious outcome in World War I. In modernist artworks, the frequent motifs of vehicles, cars, trains, ships are

[36] From the original, in Portuguese: "E, assim, quase todos os povos de culturas primitivas mostraram ao europeu orgulhoso de sua pretensa superioridade artística que eram também dotados das mais altas aptidões criadoras."

representative of movement, of displacement; unprecedented waves of intercontinental migration of workers underscore a character of "placelessness." The pace of changes in the world and in the modern living experience generates restlessness with the unknown. Helena Feder acutely perceives, in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928), an intense series of transformations in regard to fluidity of gender, position, and stigmatization in Western history, parodying language itself, but also profiting from its power of representation. Orlando, the character, through the changeability of her-his biological body, embraces the uneasy flexibility of modern life.

> The supposed 'placelessness' of Modernism is itself a placeholder for anxiety about modernity, in all its fast-paced fragmentation and concentrated urban confusion. [...] [It] expresses modernity's negation of place as a locus of meaning and its broader anxiety about the agency of the more-than-human world. (FEDER, 2014, p. 24)

Such a paradigm in the realm of art yielded the production and trade of cultural goods that began to be recognized not only as international, but also as intermedial. The jazz music that emerged from cultural and technological exchanges of what Michael Denning (see 2015) calls "the Black Atlantic" is recognized as another precursor of Cubism, according to Sergei Eisenstein (1957, p. 98), in his idea for the synchronization of the senses: "we have only to glance at a group of cubist paintings to convince ourselves that what takes place in these paintings has already been heard in jazz music." The Soviet filmmaker is quick at evoking notions expanded by René Guilleré, who argues that jazz presents no perspective, following an aesthetics of disunion of elements, which are all contending for a place at the foreground (see EISENSTEIN, 1957, p. 95)—the reader surely remembers: perspective is one of the key notions of desirable hi-fi soundscapes in Murray Schafer's studies, however simultaneously, lack of perspective is one of the sought-after aspects of Luigi Russolo art-of-noises in music, a pillar of modernist sounds and response to noise. The same Eisenstein (1957, p. 98) would claim that "the modern urban scene, especially that of a large city at night, is clearly the plastic equivalent of jazz."

The entanglement of references above straightforwardly relates to John Dos Passos. His nomadic childhood, his European-American education, his constant traveling to different continents featured in him the embodiment of global modernity. Furthermore, his youth years as a Harvard student provided him with access to what was currently being circulated worldwide in terms of art. In his memoir, the writer comments on how he and his friends from

school were introduced to "modern artworks," as usual relying on references to a mosaic of media and different forms of production:

> [Edward] Nagel introduced us to the world of 'the modern'. He got me reading the Russian novelists in yellowbacked French editions. Dostoevski combined with D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* set me to panting for 'real life'. [...] It was in Nagel's room I saw my first copies of BLAST, with Eliot's early poems. Diaghilev's Ballet and the novelties at the Boston opera and the Armory Show did the rest. (DOS PASSOS, 1966, p. 23)

The all-round referencing by Dos Passos encompasses the modernist zeitgeist. It is international and intermedial—like the author himself, like his oeuvre would substantiate. His remarks are symptomatic of the discussions in this dissertation, since what is being referred to in this passage are key texts which reveal world events that help understood both how Dos Passos's fiction was molded and how it would endure as a valuable identification of modernist works; plus, to understand this context as we are about to do now, is to anticipate the distinguishable presence of the author of *Manhattan Transfer* as a herald of postmodern issues. I will focus on three of his quoted sources: *Blast*, the Armory Show, and Fyodor Dostoevsky.

Blast stands as a prominent example of modernist little magazines. It was first released in England in 1914, as an effort organized by Wyndham Lewis to publish the avant-garde artworks that were being produced under the name of Vorticism. *Blast* is another number in the spring of modernist publications in the form of manifestos and magazines, which was partially published to respond to Marinetti's manifestos of Futurism, which had anteceded the vorticists in five years. However, *Blast* was not only a manifesto, it was a collection of works that, included in the same edition, attempted to assemble, in different artistic languages and codes, the possibilities of modernist creativity. Thus it highlighted the inescapable dialogue between written text and visual potentials. According to Mark Morrison (2017), fiction and drama published in *Blast* "strove, with some success, to provide a literary analogue to the Vorticist visual art Lewis contributed to the magazine." The little magazine had in its roster the canonical names of Ezra Pound, and T.S. Eliot, who were surely to make an impression on the young Dos Passos, who was writing poetry at the time of his undergraduation years. He would soon grow tired of what he considered traditional, stiff methods of literature in Massachusetts, and would venture on twentieth-century defiant taste. "Dos Passos sensed that excitement and spent far more time sampling 'the modern' than he did the pallid atmosphere

surrounding a group of students who came to be known as the Harvard Aesthetes" (LUDINGTON, 1998, p. 56).

The significance of intense publication of little magazines cannot be taken for granted when considering the circulation of modernist literature in the early 1900s. Little magazines were thus named as they were opposed to more traditional, mass-produced, commercial magazines—the "big" ones. The creation of such a medium elucidated and even amplified the tensions between writers and market, writers and public, and writers and other fellow writers. Ezra Pound's attitude, by becoming forthrightly involved in *The Little Review*, symbolizes the general—if idealized—spirit of modernist little magazines: he was persuasive enough with the editors to change the publication's motto from the plural, far-reaching, "Literature-Drama-Music-Art" to the blunt, quasi-repellent, "Making No Compromise with the Public Taste." Pound's statement, as much as it was assertive, was revealing of a literary system that struggled against limitations imposed by editors, authorities, and common taste of readers.

The "no compromise" motto is an initial example of how little magazines wanted to present themselves as a market alternative to "larger" magazines. Robert Scholes (2007, p. 218), in his thorough study of little magazines, affirms that

> Pound was right, no doubt, that what we now recognize as little magazines emerged from this combination of elements: the rise of mass magazines with their emphasis on advertising and their consequent need for marketable writers, artists, and texts—and the contrary pressure felt by many writers and artists to find new forms in which to represent this new world.

However, the notion of a free, limitless space in these publications would soon be proven wrong, as in the case of *The Little Review* itself: the magazine, pioneer in publishing James Joyce's *Ulysses*, which initially came out in a serial way, had to retreat in face of lawsuits and risk of full suppression, in a case that was eventually sent to court on the basis of obscenity against the Irish writer and the publisher. Pound himself had to compromise, as his letter to Joyce demonstrates: "at any rate the thing is risk enough [...] AND I cant have our august editress jailed, NOT at any rate for a passage which I do not think written with utter maestria" (PIEPENBRING, 2015). After the magazine lost the judicial battle, they dropped the "no compromise" motto.

Apart from the idealization and subsequent loss of hope in the freedom of little magazines, it is important to observe and recognize other possibilities reflected in literature published in mass magazines. As it happened with modern society in general, diversity was to

be valued; following the recurrence of the modernist years, it was once again a dual movement of internationalization and expansion of the literary domain:

> The variety of periodical culture allows us to track a writer like Amy Lowell, for example, as she moves between *Poetry* and *Scribner's*, publishing serious poems in both, and because the co-presence of advertising and fiction in the larger magazines allows us to see the world that inspired and informed the work of writers like Edith Wharton and F. Scott Fitzgerald (SCHOLES, 2007, p. 217).

Scholes mentions Wharton and Fitzgerald, however it is conceivable to include Dos Passos in this team: his perceivable use of advertising language, or material that reads like as if it were taken directly from a mass magazine or a newspaper—as it has been discussed in previous chapters—proves that literary children were born out of such miscegenetic registers. Modernist literature is not the extreme only child of independent, do-it-yourself little magazines run by avant-gardists who react against mass-produced writing. Poetry and fiction written in the early 1900s—in fact, as they had since the final decades of nineteenth century—benefited from the dialogue with wide-ranging popular stories and advertisement discourses that were being consumed alongside authors who came to be recognized as prestigious names in the literary agenda of modernism. Their forms of writing, distribution, and marketability ranged from more traditional vehicles to the world of small presses and art galleries.

Returning once more to the relation between Dos Passos and modernist little magazines: it was on *The Seven Arts* that the then inexperienced, twenty-one-year-old writer had one of his entrance texts in print. The piece was named "Young Spain," an essay that presented the author's impressions of a lengthy sojourn in the European country, if somewhat idealized. The young American scribe displayed his manifold levels of affection for all things Spanish. In his text, Dos Passos establishes a mild intertextual connection with another piece that had been published on *The Seven Arts* a few months earlier, Van Wyck Brooks's "Young America," conveying his implicit comparison of topics related to the two countries. Most remarkably, it is noticeable that the recurrent themes of his later fiction works were already present in his reports: he talked extensively about music, migration, displacements, and the Spaniards' characters—an attentive reader can notice the embryonic *U.S.A.* connections in the making of "Young Spain."

As we return to the items pointed by John Dos Passos himself, the second defining moment for the author relates specifically to the Armory Show. The Armory Show is still considered the first major exhibition of modern art, mainly European, in the United States.

The show is now internationally referred to by what had originally been a nickname, a popular way to cite the International Exhibition of Modern Art, for it opened in the facilities of National Guard armories in New York City. After New York, it soon moved on to Chicago, and Boston. According to biographic texts about Dos Passos, there is no certainty to which show he actually went—although evidence points to him visiting the Boston chapter, where he lived at the time—but all of them were showing what matters the most in his formation: works by experimental avant-garde groups from different places of Europe. Modernist art provided Dos Passos with innovative material, ammunition to fight the Harvard Aesthetes and what for him was considered an old-fashioned brand of literature being produced in Massachusetts.

Picture 11: *The Harvard Aesthetes*
Picture of one of Harvard's entrance gates to campus. Photo taken by the author in Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2017.

Boston's reaction to the Armory Show proved Dos Passos right. According to news which date back to 1913, when the exhibition arrived in New England, the audience attendance was sparse, and the reception lukewarm at its best. Based on that, art curator Kim Orcutt (2013) affirms that the Armory Show "land[ed] with a thud in Boston," passing barely unannounced by that city. According to scholar Carol Troyen (qtd. in ORCUTT, 2013),

> in the early twentieth century, Boston tastes leaned toward conservative, inoffensive artists. The city had not been exposed to much that was new in art, and the version of the exhibition at the Copley Society didn't include American works or historical European paintings to leaven and contextualize the radical paintings and sculpture.

Troyen's observation has dual relevance: it once more highlights the artistic environment that surrounded Dos Passos at the time of the Show; but it is also revealing of how the author was particularly touched by the celebration of modern art in the exhibit, much more than other Bostonians—his European upbringing and vast knowledge of European artistic tradition might have played a part on his warm reception? Modernism relied heavily on the relations and connections that the public itself could establish with art history. For a modernist work to achieve a more engaging conversation or effect, the art that had come before it should be at least of general acquaintance to the observer, reader, or listener. Plenty of the avant-garde of the early 1900s had a visible enemy to defeat, and the best way to beat your enemy is to know it well.

Picture 12: *Dances at the Spring*

Photograph of Francis Picabia's painting, "Dances at the Spring".
This work was originally on display at the Armory Show in 1913. Photo taken by the author, at the Picabia individual show, *Our Heads Are Round so Our Thoughts Can Change Direction*, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, 2016.

The form and content of Dos Passos's early works such as *Three Soldiers*, and *Manhattan Transfer* are instances of the author's commitment both to modernist practices and to a leftist political agenda. He presents his enemies in the shape of war and capitalist corporations, bankers and predatory institutions, or in a biased judicial system. These are all elements of crisis for the implementation of a whole, wholesome democracy, basis for a society of personal freedom as idealized by Dos Passos. "'Our heads are round so our thoughts can change direction' is an aphorism [Francis] Picabia coined in 1922. It encapsulates the non-linear character of his five-decade career" (HUG; UMLAND, 2016). The avant-garde artist's axiom fits adequately to the American writer; the curatorial text about Picabia could be immediately transferred to Dos Passos. A growing change in his political stands in the final part of *U.S.A.* is intensified in his midcentury narratives, both fictional and nonfictional. His oeuvre vouches for an affiliative reading of his place as an artist: his trajectory as a twentieth-century author involved the same path of changing highlighted in artists of movements such as Cubism, Surrealism, and Dadaism (and other -isms); Dos Passos's "twentieth-century odyssey" (LUDINGTON, 1998) is Dada's "unmaking of the twentieth century" (RASULA, 2015). According to scholar Jed Rasula (2015, p. xi), such a practice can be apprehended as it is illustrated by a Dada skit: "André Breton would reveal a blackboard with an insult composed by [...] Francis Picabia; then, as soon as the audience got it, he'd erase the text. This performance captures the Dada strategy of giving and revoking in a single gesture." Such a swinging message is Dos Passos-esque.

At last, Dos Passos's allusion to Fyodor Dostoevsky: not only does it present a valuable archaeological find for the American writer's literary craft in form and content, but it also leads to the reassessment of frequent relations established between literature and music, in theory and critique. For this investigation's interest, what initiated this discussion was Mikhail Bakhtin's resourceful reading of Dostoevsky's works as polyphonic. As it has been said before, in previous chapters, polyphony is a musical term borrowed by Bakhtin, applied in literary analyses—his foundational text made the term popular, recurrent in the most varied, if at times unsuitable, reviews of literature and authors. The nucleus of what literary polyphony communicates is to attempt in fiction what Picabia's aphorism tells: a variety of

wills, of consciousness, of ways of experiencing the world and what is being narrated; it is an ingenious tool for "round-headed" writers and readers alike.

Bakhtin (1984, p. 27) perceives this plural, multi-leveled soil in fiction as an objective fact of the social world: "In this social world, planes were not stages but *opposing camps*, and the contradictory relationships among them were not the rising or descending course of an individual personality, but the *condition of society*." The Russian scholar is praising the fight against monologism, an analogous condition for the isolated personality of the traditional bourgeois novel: the condition of society is that one which makes ideas and contradictions circulate among people; the interpersonal experience is what values diverse individual consciousness, since its societal response is what brings it to life. Thus polyphony, in fiction, is a way to challenge simple duality and reactionary approaches, favoring multi-leveledness over monologism.

Dos Passos's enthusiasm for character creation is an initial symptom of an attempt into writing polyphonic fiction. However what is more important in the reading of *Manhattan Transfer* or *U.S.A.* is that these fictional bodies are coexisting in a shared world. His documental style, journalistically approaching the representation of life paths in New York and the United States is remarkably connected with American foundational myths. If the country was, in the groundwork for the structures of society after slavery was revoked, to be based on merit and equal opportunity of success for all before the law, the tales and portrayals of corporate America are ambivalent formulations of Dos Passos. *Manhattan Transfer*'s fragmentation—in many senses—is the outcome of Edith Wharton's New York in *The Age of Innocence* (1920), to remain in the literary realm. Dos Passos collects narratives that span New-Yorkers' life from what had been labeled the Gilded Age until later, into the Machine Age, or the Jazz Age, or the Roaring Twenties. Wharton, by contouring the prewar privileged classes in New York, was able to register the period of transition in the fabric of American societies. The ongoing loss of innocence in Wharton is consummated in Dos Passos's work, who wrote bluntly about the seeming lack of perspective and direction in the mechanical, machine-dominated modern world.

Journalist George Packer (2005) observes that "Dos Passos never managed or even tried to depict a fully realized inner life, and his experimentalism, his technique of narrating characters externally in the vernacular of their own voices prevented him from achieving tragic effects." The externality of scenes stands for the condition of society; individuals are analyzed in his work for what they are socially, which means they are subject to varied scrutiny by particular circles with their interests and expectations. Dos Passos's reportorial

register is yet another layer in the effort of assembling a text that allows little room for characters' thoughts and plenty to the narration of their actions and transliteration of fractured dialogues. These are all elements of a polyphonic novel: they amount for the simultaneity of their presence in the narrative; they lack perspective; they expect no sympathy from readers to a certain hero, or antihero.

As we return to polyphony, its musical particularities demand attention. If *Manhattan Transfer* brings music as an element to be explored and treated as form into fiction writing, it is also a reminder of both limitations and possibilities of intermediality differences. The novel incites the polyphonic proposed by Bakhtin (1984, p. 22), although the Russian critic himself admits to the limits of treating literature as a musical composition—such a tempting reading:

> The image of polyphony and counterpoint only points out those new problems which arise when a novel is constructed beyond the boundaries of ordinary monologic unity, just as in music new problems arose when the boundaries of a single voice were exceeded. But the material of music and of the novel are too dissimilar for there to be anything more between them than a graphic analogy, a simple metaphor.

In similar lines, scholar Steven Paul Scher provides a complementary reading. Scher mentions music in literature as a provocation, expanding what Bakhtin says about literary polyphonic practices. Both authors talk about musical practices in fiction, to which I relate as different manifestations of noise—returning to the notion of music as noise, presented in previous chapters. I quote Scher (2004, p. 205), sharing and relying on his enthusiasm in promoting this exercise of intermedial proximity, recognizing its limits and potentials:

> Literature lacks the unique acoustic quality of music; only through ingenious linguistic means or special literary techniques can it imply, evoke, imitate, or otherwise indirectly approximate actual music and thus create what amounts at best to a verbal semblance of music. Firmly anchored in the literary realm, manifestations of music in literature promise to be most rewarding for literary study.

5.1 THE POETICS OF NOISE REVERBERATED

Enter thru song title after song title to new windows on the world...

Lee Ranaldo

It is with Bakhtin and Scher's down-to-earthness in mind—nothing more than a graphic analogy, a metaphor, a semblance—that I call John Dos Passos's literary project the Poetics of Noise.

French poet Paul Valéry's conception of poetic states, or poetics, sponsors the choice for my designation of Dos Passos's brand of literature. According to Valéry (1944, p. 3), it is an ordinary exchange of life and thoughts that creates literary works; it may be a chance encounter that happens without any clear specific reason. Literary creation is achieved as the writer supports these creative events, and the outcome of that is what Valéry calls poetics. Springing from such exchanges, he comments on the sonic basis of any poetics (p. 6, 12): the human world of the twentieth-century individual is impregnated with different kinds of noise. He hence states that literature cannot separate the words in writing from the way they sound to the reader, as they connect with the ordinary exchange of life and thoughts of fiction and/or poetry.

Thus *poetics of noise* **sounds** appropriate as a term for literary investigation and criticism.

Due to myriad reasons and practices collected formerly in this research, the combination of dissimilar materials of sound emission or reproduction with the written word in the making and reception of Dos Passos's fiction are worth a concept of its own. This is not an attempt to prove any sort of "Dos Passos exceptionalism"; on the exact contrary, it is a way to approach a scheme of writing that resembles that of a method. The poetics of noise has eventually found correspondents in other aesthetic objects. Such ways have been heard, read, and felt in the arts produced in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. There are traceable periodic releases in a significant number of countries that communicate intensely with the noise in the works of John Dos Passos.

As frequently affirmed, Dos Passos and his poetics of noise are productions of an author who aspires to be recognized in its own time of production and release—document, not monument. Mikhail Bakhtin had already considered that any writer who ventures into a polyphonic way of narrating should be deeply versed in social conventions and structures in order to be able to express its different tones. The only way for a novel to represent disparate voices is to actually present disparate voices. Those relate with a nature of social experience that can knit together the fabric of a novel—without necessarily being committed to the traditions of realism, for certain. The Russian scholar precisely points out that "to investigate this process of artistic preparation for the polyphonic novel is the task of an historical poetics. A poetics cannot, of course, be divorced from social and historical analyses, but neither can it be dissolved in them" (BAKHTIN, 1984, p. 36). Dos Passos's acquired "man-of-the-world" attitude corroborates that in his fiction.

Following this thread, and expanding the sonic prowess of Dos Passos's books, I regard the presence of his techniques in his literary successors as a form of timbre. Timbre is the particularity, the uniqueness of an emitted sound emitted by its source; more interestingly for this investigation, it is a particular quality of sounds produced by people and machines. Michael Denning (2015, p. 174) acknowledges close associations of timbre with noise, relating to various genres of vernacular music of early twentieth century, which "were first distinguished by the timbres of their characteristic ensembles, their instruments and voices. It is not surprising that these were heard as noise, because timbre is the product of the specific noise of an instrument."

I relate what I mention here as a literary timbre to a more general comment, however very precise, made by Steven Paul Scher about noise. It is applicable to what I recognize as the Dos Passos timbre in many symbolic ways: "Much of the noise (literal as well as musical) generated by Italian Futurism began to lose its shock value and quirky intellectual appeal after World War I, though it continued to be echoed for some time by subsequent avant-garde movements" (SCHER, 2004, p. 441). Noise moves beyond the initial conception of literal acoustic nuisance, or representation and reception of frowned-upon genres of music, or anti-informational trouble in communication to be echoed in a group of unwanted manifestations of social life in disturbing, unharmonious, or disparaging aesthetics.

Before I plunge into the analysis of other works of different authorship and media, at this point a mention to the *U.S.A.* trilogy as an extension of the *Manhattan Transfer* craft is made necessary. Dos Passos expands the techniques and forms of narrating he had himself explored in his 1925 novel, in a process of continuation, further exhibiting literary connections with music and film even more explicit. The narratives of the *U.S.A.* books are divided into sections: the most dominant shall be named here the "character section," a flow of prose, titled after the name of a character, which follows the reportorial register of *Manhattan Transfer* in the development of these fictional people's diegetic trajectory; the Newsreel section, named after the early practice of cinema of projecting hard news or breaking news before the exhibition of a feature film in theater rooms. The Newsreels under Dos Passos's typewriter were composed of paper headlines and an incredibly high amount of popular and military songs of the time, a socially and musically historical document interposed between fictional segments; the Camera Eye is another section, constituted by poetic prose bordering on free verse. In these passages, Dos Passos also deals with historical events, but the reader is presented with a highly subjective and impressionistic insight of what is happening around the narrative voice, which remains implicit throughout the three books of

the trilogy. Camera Eye, with its self-referential name, points to the intermedial quality of his fiction, as it approaches a filmic apparatus; at last, there are the Biography sections. They are named after the subjects being narrated, who are historical and well-known people involved in the activities that shaped the United States as a country, investors, business owners, bankers, presidents, dancers.

Probably the most resourceful use of disparate conduction of fictional and historical subjects is present in biography and character sections in *U.S.A.* Fictional characters created by the author are depicted straightforwardly, their deeds chained one into the other, leaving no room for longer annotations on thoughts and feelings in narration *per se*, which are only conveyed through dialogues between these fictional people. On the other hand, the stories of the biography section hold much more in common with the traditional craft of fiction writing, as they focus on characters' motivations and attitudes, and personal struggles. Their life choices, which had already made public in big part precisely by journalism coverage and nonfictional literature, gain under Dos Passos a dramatic layer that is usually denied from them in usual registers in the press. The author keeps a cathartic effect, a surprise or unexpected element for these tales about key figures in the constitution of the United States. Working-class leaders, business people, politicians, journalists and their reality as official histories and big narratives are further challenged.

That being said, *The 42nd Parallel* opened the trilogy as it was published in 1930, also being the first book of fiction published by the author after *Manhattan Transfer*. Permanent in *U.S.A.*, in its more than one thousand pages, is the dissonant composition that readers had been familiarized with in his previous novels. The noisy poetics of Dos Passos has remained.

The clamorous resonance of *Manhattan Transfer* and *U.S.A.* in aesthetic goods that came after them is remarkable: visual artists, documentary and fiction filmmakers, television producers and screenwriters, novelists, they all fused some of Dos Passos's elements into their distinct crafts, whether directly citing him or not. These representations are contoured by a recurrent question in art, posed succinctly and clearly by Rasula (2015, p. 305): "legacy (something in the air) or influence (transmission by contact)?"

There are a few instances of echoes of the "Dos Passos timbre"—the legacy, the influence, one of them or both at the same time—that I would like to address as I judge them deserving of investigation for this argument.

A proper instance to initiate this effort is the fiction of Scottish writer Irvine Welsh (b. 1958), who has followed a similar tone to that of Dos Passos's when language experimentation is concerned. In the novel *Trainspotting* (1993), for instance, Welsh sketches

a group of characters, young adults who cannot find much to do in their homeland Scotland. Their lack of opportunity in the impoverished, post-industrial neighborhood of Leith, Edinburgh is reflected on their unemployment, heavy drug abuse, and lack of strong social bonds inside and outside of their vicious circle. Welsh organizes *Trainspotting* in a similar way to Dos Passos's novels, spreading stories throughout the book, depicting different episodes in fragments of characters' fictional lives. Even if a group of clear protagonists is outlined, these characters do not undergo any significant transformation; they live overwhelmed by their existentialist trajectory, akin to those of *Manhattan Transfer*. In terms of language, Irvine Welsh also transliterates the "speech of the people." The narrators of *Trainspotting* are, in their near totality, registering the Scottish way of speaking English in writing—a blend of age-old Scots spelling with end-of-twentieth-century slang and colloquialism. In many scenes, the Scottish accent is heavily contrasted against so-called "posh" English, associated to Southern England—London, the Royal Family, central media powers—and political tensions that compose the history of the United Kingdom. Welsh's characters all adopt the "Vat's a matter? Dontye like it?" attitude, in an intentionally noisy register of language for those outside of that universe. In an overwhelming example of "accent as noise," Miramax, the distributor of the filmic translation of *Trainspotting* in the United States, decided to dub some alleged "unintelligible" parts of Scottish intonation for American audiences, in a display of linguistic prejudice. Language is as outrageous as the work's content itself, "Welsh's depiction of Scotland's junkie subculture may come as an unwelcome shock, regardless of how the characters speak" (JENKINS, 1996).

The approximation of Dos Passos and Welsh's brands of fiction has a bearing on the "pop literary discourse." This expression has been used, according to scholar Antonio Laranjeira (2017, p. 47), to relate to novels that embrace intense intermediality in their dialogue with movies, music, and other works of fiction. This intermedial constitution of novels is not restricted only to technical procedures, or literary soundtracks—when music and songs can be "name-dropped," with variable deeper or shallower effects—it is also extensive to the development of characters' subjectivities, and in definitive plot moments. Laranjeira (2017, p. 48) goes further and attests that "the one who regards the pop literary discourse is required to be able to navigate through different fields of knowledge, and question hierarchical relations between literature and other media.[37]" Pop literary discourses carry some of Dos Passos's timbres with them, as we shall recognize.

[37] From the original, in Portuguese: "o discurso literário *pop* contemporâneo demanda um olhar que transite por diferentes campos do saber e problematize as relações hierarquizantes entre literatura e outras mídias".

In *Trainspotting*, pop culture—namely the innumerable music and movie analogies and direct references—interferes directly in the formation of characters. They spend a significant amount of diegetic time discussing such references, which occupy long excerpts of what is narrated, and permeate many of their factual acts. The novel's pop literary discourse is frequently filled with songs which can communicate characters' mood shifts, or their changes in actions and behaviors. The lack of strong separation of the emotional and the intellectual proposed by Mark Greif's Philosophy of Pop—"pop music always tells its listeners that their feelings are real"—matches the description of situations lived by characters. An exemplary case: in a scene where a group of heroin addicts is deciding on which song they want to listen to while they are taking drugs, they claim that listening to the Velvet Underground is not an option, for the sound of the band is too disturbing (WELSH, 1999, ps. 17 and 75)—even if being one of the main characters' favorite band, at other times. It is likely they are referring to the song "Heroin," with its troubling addict saga in the lyrics—"Heroin, be the death of me/Heroin, it's my wife and it's my life, ha-ha" (VELVET UNDERGROUND, 1967, tr. 7)—along with the dissonant musical composition: guitars and drums emulate a racing heart pump, all permeated by a droning, piercing electric viola sound. They want to avoid the disruptive noise, the uneasiness in the shape of sound that could derange their only motivation for living. At this point in diegesis, their behavior is consonant with those who promote noise abatement: the Velvet Underground's timbre is sheer noise. At other times, their noise is welcome, a source for musical enjoyment when not drug induced, when not directly addressing their own social troubles.

Irvine Welsh is acknowledging, through his characters, what John Dos Passos had detected as the potentialities of incorporating popular music into fiction writing. The distinctly early stage of the experiences of music recording and mechanical reproduction in the 1910s and 1920s is reflected in the 1980s-1990s mindset.

The way music is brought into fiction by Dos Passos and Welsh respond to the narrow sense developed by Irina Rajewsky's authoritative study on intermediality. As we follow her categorization, pop literary discourses would be occurrences of a subcategory of intermediality which she calls "intermedial references." They are "thus to be understood as meaning-constitutional strategies that contribute to the media product's overall signification" (RAJEWSKY, 2016, p. 52). These works evoke or emulate other media's practices, however "through the use of [their] own media-specific means" (RAJEWSKY, 2016, p. 53).

The richness of these meaning-constitutional strategies is negotiated in different expressions of the music-literature relation in contemporary fiction. That is the case of the

book *Noise: Fiction Inspired by Sonic Youth*. The editor, Peter Wild, gathered twenty-one writers to write short stories having the songs by New York-based band, Sonic Youth as starting points. "It doesn't ultimately matter how directly (or not) these twenty-one stories reference Sonic Youth. Somehow the spirit of the band has been inspiring enough to these scribes that they've agreed to participate in this project," says Lee Ranaldo (2008, p. 2), a member of the group, in the preface to the book. Ranaldo's words are precise in their relation with what Rajewsky had referred to as intermedial references. All the short stories in the book borrow their titles from names of songs in the band's catalog, them being the only explicit reference to Sonic Youth, however filled with the "spirit of the band" they might be, as Ranaldo put it; "you can get a lot of information out of a song title. A good title says it all, sometimes" (RANALDO, 2008, p. 1).

The example above is particularly interesting for the investigation conducted in this dissertation, for it aligns many items that have been touched at some point. *Noise,* the title of the book, is the first direct connection, an obvious affiliation with the potential of noise as the sociocultural element of disruption in communication and sonic prowess it is, as it has been reiterated with this research's findings. Peter Wild's baptismal choice expresses the motivation and the stimuli that noise provokes in creative work, expressly connecting literature with music. Sonic Youth's compositions are distinguishable precisely because of the band's mindful use of what once had been considered unwanted sounds in pop music. Their songs take shape in guitar and microphone feedback, drastic dissonance, and walls of noisy, misshapen, non-harmonious sound, simultaneously following experimental composers and bands—a good example of predecessors in their lineage is the Velvet Underground (the dissonant nuisance for *Trainspotting* characters). At the same time though they maintain a vivid dialog with traditional features of a song, a pop song (repetition of verses, sing-along choruses), and their cultural and musical significance as a record-deal band, starting from the mid 1980s, has helped to provide unsuspected listeners with the opportunity of listening to extended noisy sections in music. The book is thus a realization of noisy literature: it is born out of the provocation caused by the fierce dissonance of the band's songs; literary motifs are found in feedback passages that build and destroy structures of songs at a few seconds' notice; noise is within the literary craft itself, developing plot, motivating diegetic movements, destroying characters, outlining soundscapes, defying soundscapes.

The existence of such publication is reminiscent of events such as Edison's ludic little lamb, and/or of Dos Passos's roaring New York: reproduction of noise and music manifested through printed pages of fictional literature. Considering all elements, the Dos Passos timbre

is heard in the band, imprinted in the book. Whether in legacy or influence, his "spirit," his poetics, came to meet the artistic practices of band and scribes.

To remain in this realm, the music-literature relations around Dos Passos, some evident and discernible examples for this section can be found in the oeuvre of Canadian progressive-rock band, Rush and their songs titled and composed after the *U.S.A.* trilogy. The group's main composer, the drummer Neil Peart, frequently names John Dos Passos as one of his main references for writing—considering Peart's composing history and its affiliation with literature, the musician's statement needs to be appreciated: the band has songs with transtextual dialogs with works by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Mark Twain, or J. R. R. Tolkien, to name a few. The band went on to record three songs explicitly borrowed from Dos Passos: "Camera Eye," and "The Big Money," off *U.S.A.*; and "Grand Designs," surprisingly paying tribute to one of the Chicago-born writer least remembered works, *The Grand Design* (1949). The band's interest on the author is manifested in the lyrical themes, which usually touch on subject matters that were very dear to Dos Passos. The quest for individual freedom along with a level of subjective discontentment put jointly to not-always decipherable mechanization in new technologies for information and work are recurrent in Rush's lyrics, and, as it has been affirmed up to this point, foundational aspects in Dos Passos's oeuvre.

What happens here is an interesting movement: the writer who used music as literature is now facilitating the use of literature made into music. Peart goes as far as using some of Dos Passos's writing trademarks, such as the unusual use of ellipsis dots and unpredictable dashes; the composer is demanding that songs be heard and read[38].

As we keep navigating around literature, another illustrious work that signifies the work of Dos Passos is the television series *Mad Men*. The show, created by writer, producer, and director Matthew Weiner (b. 1965), ran in American television from 2007 to 2015, and in its seven seasons it presents throughout elements that are indirectly related to akin stories in novels such as *Manhattan Transfer*, *U.S.A.*, or *Midcentury*: the serial drama depicts the arrival, growth, and permanence of the advertising industry in the New York of the 1960s and 70s as yet another representation of "the big money" and influence of corporations in creative industries; the business expansion is matched, in paired parallel with social and behavioral changes, especially as standards of gender roles, music, and advertising itself gain new contours. Female characters in the series, for instance, are continuations of figures like Ellen

[38] An additional note: the Canadians' popularity helped to cultivate a new public to become acquainted and direct interest to the work of Dos Passos, from the 1980s up to the early 2000s. Rush has an active community in online forums, and it is not unusual to find narratives of fans who have read the work of the American writer for the first time because of their encounter with the songs. Please check the annexes for the lyrics.

or Anna Cohen, as they suffer from constant sexism and male condescendence against their work in corporate environments.

The themes are Dos Passos-esque, surely, discernible at surface-level for those acquainted with his work of fiction. But what has really remained with me as the closest resemblance to Dos Passos in my audiovisual experience with *Mad Men* was the sound design of the office scenes. Once inside the Sterling Cooper advertising agency, what one hears is "the chirrup of typewriters," (DOS PASSOS, 1925, p. 344) a noisy force that remains in one's ears, as much as in those scenes narrated in *Manhattan Transfer* with Jimmy Herf (p. 344), Ellen (p. 372), and George Baldwin (p. 333). The television show is edited in a way which these "chirruping" typewriters assume the forefront of what is heard by the public, in an acoustic representation of the enforcement of the professional, the surrounding workplace.

It is in season seven, the last of the series, that John Dos Passos is finally referred to by name, in a revealing scene that takes place in a diner where the owners of the agency, Don Draper and Roger Sterling, are customers off on lunch break with some models they took along with them. I will leave the description of the encounter with Dos Passos in charge of Jeff Jensen (2015), who reviewed the episode for the *Entertainment Weekly* magazine:

> Privileged, fuzzy-headed Don meets a poor, beaten-down waitress, Diana (Elizabeth Reaser), whom he thinks he knows but can't quite place, who taps his haunt and hunger. Recklessly chasing enlightenment threatens to further degrade them both. Weiner has her reading the *U.S.A.* trilogy, John Dos Passos' epic critique of capitalist society. Interesting: The John Dos Passos Prize is given to authors who demonstrate 'an exploration of American themes, an experimental approach to form, and an interest in a wide array of human experiences.' *Mad Men* has excelled at those values by presenting people lacking in them. Which is to say, cultural awareness, courage to break form, respect for diversity.

Picture 13: Frame 1, the waitress was reading Dos Passos when she was called by Sterling, the customer

The waitress is shown standing, no musical soundtrack, reading *The 42nd Parallel* while not actively delivering any orders to the kitchen or to a table (Frame 1); she has to put the book away into her apron pocket as she is called by Roger Sterling, in his usual bossy and haughty way. Both the author and the waitress are demeaned by Sterling (Frames 2, 3, and 4), a character who similarly performs, in this sequence, what Phineas P. Blackhead plays in *Manhattan Transfer*: the authoritarian business owner who sees no point in unionized workers or workers' rights, here symbolized by the act of reading Dos Passos at the workplace.

Picture 14: Frame 2, the waitress approaches the table

Picture 15: Frame 3, Sterling mistreats the unprivileged waitress, much for her interest in an author like Dos Passos

Picture 16: Frame 4, Sterling's mockery results in humiliating laughter

The whole sequence ends as Sterling gives her a one-hundred-dollar tip, saying he owes "someone an apology" (SEVERANCE, 2015, ep. 8). His money power is not encouraging to her, though, who is framed at distance, ignoring the group (and the tip), absorbed back into *The 42nd Parallel*.

Billy Parrott, a librarian at the New York Public Library system, has worked on a *Mad Men* reading list, relating literary references and connections with the series. About the sequence analyzed above, Parrott (qtd. in MARINE, 2015) says that such scenes are revealing that "it's that time period where things change. It was the end of innocence [for] that particular generation."

Reminding the reader: going back a few pages in this dissertation, literary representations of the "loss of innocence" had been mentioned by me when relating *Manhattan Transfer* and Wharton's *The Age of Innocence*. I was referring to a change in attitude, from the gentile aristocracy toward metropolitan and industrialized experiences of life in an increasingly urban society, which was embodied by the representation of the moods of the 1920s as they looked back on the early 1900s. This dynamic process felt and narrated by Wharton is the urbane outcome of *Manhattan*. The *U.S.A.* trilogy, by documenting and fictionalizing different walks of American life in the first half of the century, from pre-WWI years to the Depression era, is performing a similar transitional role for Diana, the waitress: reading the book in the 1970s (the historical time in diegesis at this point in the series), she is slightly older than average to wait tables—"she is a little old for NYU," says one of the models (SEVERANCE, 2015, ep. 8)—and displays no clear impulse or motivation to work in that place (defying the archetype of American waiters, usually hyperactive, restless professionals), there is an underlying narrative to that Edward-Hopper-like character. She is likely someone who has lived through the noisy counterculture events of the sixties (they had been intensely explored in previous *Mad Men* episodes, in this scene they are represented by Sterling's dandy-decadent outfit and facial hair), and now has to face back the life of hard-working jobs, regular activities in basic, traditional conditions.

Picture 17: Frame 5, end of sequence. Waitress reads *U.S.A.*

* * *

The works previously mentioned in this chapter have been selected for their forms of continuing the work of John Dos Passos, as varied in media and narrative forms as they take shape—they represent a short list, a few names of special interest for this text. Thus "A Century in Noise" as a chapter is an endeavor to place Dos Passos in perspective of artistic production and reception spanning a timeline of works that sound like reverberations of his oeuvre: before, during, and after his lifetime and productive career. Conclusively, a contemporary reader/viewer/listener can relate, in the works of Fyodor Dostoevsky, Irvine Welsh, Rush, or *Mad Men*, to a type of art that is designed out of the change of experiences, highlighted by fast-paced technological transformations, together with a wider discussion in cultural panoramas of issues regarding gender roles, sexuality, workers' rights and demands, immigration, and power of corporations. It happened in the 1920s, it happened in the 1960s, it happened in the 1990s, it is happening in the 2010s.

Brazilian poet, Haroldo de Campos (2006, p. 31-47) came to identify the process behind the act of translating or reworking previous works of art as "transcreation[39]": a term that relates to the creative process itself, one that should not be mistaken as a single theory or theoretical guidelines for approaching a former object. Campos was talking about interlingual translation, but his creative process would soon be adopted in Comparative Literature and literary studies more broadly, as I am doing here, also echoing Roland Barthes (1977, p. 148): "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author." The aesthetic objects mentioned in this chapter, authored by other creators, have been appreciated individually and collectively as providers of critical readings of Dos Passos. They are read as expansions of theme and techniques, no matter how they were composed, whether specifically about Dos Passos or not. It is particularly conspicuous—and satisfying as research data for this investigation—that his literary work has reverberated so intensely in other media, given the strong intermedial quality of his fiction, constantly remarked by me in this text. Much in account of that, they embody the pop literary discourse, surely in vitro in Dos Passos's work. Furthermore, in writing or audiovisual recordings, the clamorous registers of language and faults of communication have been manifested as a common presence in the art that has been produced since the midcentury years.

[39] From his creation in Portuguese, "transcriação."

In the first two chapters of this dissertation, I gathered a considerable amount of critique on Dos Passos that focuses merely on the partisanship of his fiction, usually in detriment of what other tools his literature has to offer. Most of these comments were drafted in the early decades of his career, when his public persona was indeed attributed to macropolitical struggles in civic debates. As we know now, his fiction is not limited to those large-scale events only, for it presents a number of layers of micropolitics, which took a longer time and a different generation of critics before it received varied, more diverse, judgment.

I favor an idea of postmodern scholarship when analyzing Dos Passos, in the sense of going beyond a modernist reactive appeal: the indispensable when dealing with his work is to perform a critical reading of a literary project that is not clearly opposing anything—especially in *Manhattan Transfer*—but recording an audiovisual panorama. Alice Béja (2011, p. 44) urges for critique's "turning modernism and radicalism into a 'usable past' rather than an impossible inheritance," when talking about Dos Passos, a challenge to which I stand by her side. In order to achieve that, the figure of the author's complex narrator as a news reporter (Sartre's discovery) is precise: no one doubts there are underlying reasons, interests, and concerns lurking what is being reported, but the illusion of objectivity needs to stand out.

"Fiction as foundation"[40] (CAMPOS, 2006, p. 280). Fiction as pretense.

[40] From the original, in Portuguese: "Ficção como fundação".

CLOSURE

I had to hurry. There would never be time to satisfy such multifarious curiosity.
John Dos Passos

Reading John Dos Passos's voluminous oeuvre is an enduring task, a never-ending effort through vast and diversified registers that encompass fiction, non-fiction, memoir, travel writing, political commentary, and journalistic reportage. As a researcher at the end of a stage of investigation, I look in retrospect at the expectations I had when writing the first few lines about him: I cannot help but feel a little bit identified with the author whose work I dedicated more than four years of my life. Dos Passos's literary project is an appreciation of change, expressed in the accusations he suffered and the challenges he faced by being called a conspirator, a turncoat, a whistle-blower, a counterrevolutionary. As I plunged deeper into his words and into further investigation, my own writing has undergone sizable transformations synchronously.

I soon found out that it is still a bit of a challenge, a minor quest, to find readers and students of Dos Passos contemporarily. The research and writing processes of this dissertation happened in three different countries: Brazil, my native country; a short period in the United Kingdom, sponsored by a two-week grant; the United States, Dos Passos's place of birth. When it comes to the author's reception, there is a peculiarity that unites these three different national states: Dos Passos is still a somewhat obscure writer, not in the mind of the "general public," or the "common reader." That is especially remarkable when considering that all countries establish some type of meaningful relation with the author and his legacy: Dos Passos had a special interest in Brazil, its people and history, and in the Portuguese language, as it can be read in *Brazil on the Move* (1963), a travel book written as the author and his wife came to South America's largest country and traveled extensively across all of its regions; besides the fact that Dos Passos lived in the United Kingdom for a certain time, another facilitating element for his reception is the obvious feature of the shared language. Even so, to my knowledge and experience he is an understudied author even in academic specialized circles; in the United States, the work of Dos Passos, after decades of near oblivion in academia and market, has been gradually brought back to literary discussions, as the country faces social and political issues that are reminders of those of the author's prime time as a writer. The closeness of his novels, or contemporary chronicles, to issues of the day being discussed in the 2010s in varied strata of American society has even helped to place him back in some syllabuses of undergraduation courses across the country.

I assumed then that it was my duty as a researcher and a professional of literary education to present forms of retrieving a once high-profile figure of literature to everyday debates and arguments of general and specialized public. I have attempted to fathom some reasons why he was being this neglected, and was able to come up with some theories, but also understood that literary trends can be as variable as music trends.

Dos Passos's unmistakable modernist accent in his most popular books, along with his continual present-day attitude throughout his literary career, no matter when he wrote, have endured as key elements of his fluctuating presence in the public's mind. If anything, the writer had a life that symbolized the turmoil of changes of early and mid twentieth century, and both his fictional and nonfictional works remain as icons of such decades. The author employs a number of facts and references that communicate in a straightforward manner to the reader of its time. This may come as a challenge, for it is suggestively tempting apathetic critique into labeling Dos Passos's existence in literary history as an obsolete writer. Fortunately, there has been literary theory and criticism qualified enough to dispute that notion, such as the applied notions of contemporary chronicles and complex novels, adaptable concepts in the exercise of reading the Chicago-born author's books under a renovated light, surely not restricted to specific historical time.

Many studies have been developed in diversified areas of knowledge and artistic production that have been following some concerns of modernist aesthetes in relation to urban sonic perceptions. If that makes Dos Passos one of the literary pioneers, in early twentieth century, of intense exploration of crucial and complicated relations between humans and unprecedented human-made metropolitan surroundings, it is also something that made his literary struggle with traditional critics at the time of release. Such a strong bond to Machine-Age representations may have led readers and critics to instantly relate Dos Passos only with the 1920s and 1930s, the decades that his most well-known books were written. His continuous documentary style even earned him a dated, and equivocal, assumption that he was somehow part of the state-funded New Deal era accounts of early twentieth-century in the United States (I heard that from a couple of Americans who were vaguely acquainted with Dos Passos). Moreover, he was definitely not limited to an only-American experience of the world. As he traveled around the globe and published a significant number of insightful travel books, he also took a journey around political spectrums, publishing works that could have sounded uninteresting for midcentury readers' mindset, his older public probably expected some of his old beliefs to return to the pages, in like manner, he could not attract a younger audience. Different macropolitics and general struggles took place in a postmodern scheme,

dominant at the ebb of his career and after his death, shadowing the author's presence in different communities of readers. Editorial choices and trends, literary compendia and university reading lists favored other modernist names and excluded that of Dos Passos.

Nevertheless, it was the first contact with *Manhattan Transfer* that triggered in me a similar sensation to the one I had when listening to loud music, hearing street clamor, being breathless in a crowd, getting an earful of faulty bus brakes. My visceral reaction was that of recognizing, in fiction, a dialog between pop and dissonant, unharmonious music, the kind that I had been involved as public and assembler; the Jazz Age on the page; sound as a mediator of urban life.

After all, the element I stumbled on throughout the narratives of *Manhattan Transfer* is **noise**, represented in the steps trodden in this investigation: first with written acoustic description of the clamor of machines and loud human activity in the expanding New York of the initial decades of the twentieth century; the second moment was provoked by the innumerable mentions to popular songs, in a historical time when the recording and reproduction of music was in its embryonic state, and unheard-of genres and subgenres of popular music were being discovered routinely, all of them mistreated as pointless noise; then with the language of migrants, both foreigners and American rural workers who came to the Big Apple manifesting their variant forms of English and native tongues, disregarded by upper-class and gentile natives as a noisy register of expression; finally, with the notion of noise as a social nuisance, an unwanted element that breaks communication and makes human interaction more difficult, key to the apprehension of the fragile bonds (not) established by characters in the novel.

These factors support the acknowledgement of noise as more than simply an acoustic phenomenon, but a wider sociocultural one, in the structures of interpersonal relations in business and personal life. The impact that stems from literary representations of noisy and disruptive sonic and urban environments of *Manhattan Transfer*'s Manhattan is revealing of what might have been concealed beneath the surface of an expanding metropolis, in a time of excitement with technological and industrial progress. Instigating and instigated by cacophony, there is a manifold story unraveling intolerance, ecological problems, social inadequacy, crises of representation, inefficacy of narration, failure of fiction, political tension, unharmonious melodies, displacement, and so forth.

Then I perceive that John Dos Passos's brand of poetics is not based on sound merely, for it moves toward noise.

The focus on noise is a research discovery that has taken shape as a resource in my intent to broaden the discussion around Dos Passos's oeuvre. During my process of investigation, I find that the noisy path is one that had been barely trodden by other researchers in literary studies. Pleasantly, it is a road that stimulates diversified possibilities of reading works of fiction and analyzing narratives, all appealing to an intermedial approach that has given literature unheard-of inquiries and prospects. The more I read Dos Passos with his loudness in mind, the more I felt it was an interesting point to be added to the scholarship about his work, as I try to contribute in the efforts of recuperating and expanding the awareness of his literary achievements.

However, acknowledging Dos Passos's legacy, influence, timbre or spirit in fiction written in languages other than English and in cultural objects other than literature is not a difficult task. His permanence has survived him, mainly in revisited forms of his pioneering role at introducing popular music into fictional narratives, of his use of straightforward employment of intense acoustic representations in novels, of his intermedial montage as an approach to fiction (one that can be modified in feature films, documentaries, visual artworks). As this dissertation has attempted to simultaneously scrutinize and introduce a notion of a poetics of noise, it performs an effort to contribute to likewise researches and researchers who may be looking for references in the field, not to mention the possibility of introducing the work of John Dos Passos and concepts of Sound Studies to eventual outsiders. *Manhattan Transfer* should be read and considered as an enduring historic event for sound students and literary critics alike. If anything, the novel continues to appeal and charm those interested in noise and sound, or in the history of recording and reproduction technologies.

Concluding, an extra mention about John Dos Passos and politics. His own political variation is representative of unstable movements as polarized segments push to dominate interests of social and economic scene in numerous countries, not only his native United States. In project and conception that remained with him for the rest of his life, in both his fictional and nonfictional writings, Dos Passos presents in *Manhattan Transfer* an attitude of opposition against central and institutional powers. The author prefers to focus on collectivity and, as a result that may sound paradoxical at first, individual freedom. His swinging movements between what is recognized as left to right have been frowned upon by each doctrine at a time, only for the author to claim that he did not belong to either form of traditional organization of the political spectrum. Despite some quasi-delusional beliefs of personal independence (highly treasured by Dos Passos), few authors of the twentieth century were so observant of civic change from decade to decade, and were so itinerant in political

spectrum, courageous enough to abandon previously-held dogmas. Dos Passos was always adapting to what, according to him, was considered the most adequate path in order to achieve the highest level of liberty and personal rights.

Dos Passos's apparent lack of belief in a single doctrine, or his lack of affiliation with a political, religious, or business specific line is clearly showing in the way the characters of his fiction move about life—he was called "an independent radical" by journalist George Packer (2005), an illustration that says it all. Were he the radical communist that some blurted out, would not his books at least have as aspiring message a somehow utopistic, optimistic line, one that pointed to a way out from the power of corporations? That is clearly not what happens in *Manhattan Transfer*—Jimmy Herf has no clue to which direction he is bound to. Or, say, by the time he was about to finish *The Big Money*, were he as conservative as "the left" accused him of being, would not he have saved the adventurous, free-spirited Charley Anderson? Might not he have survived the car crash, saving the American Dream along with him? That is not what happens, and the answer is just as cynical as it had been in *Manhattan Transfer*.

Dos Passos moves further by not idealizing nor idolizing his novels' characters utopically. People, these working class people of *Manhattan Transfer*, are not be taken as saints or heroes, but as ones who, like almost any other individuals under certain circumstances, would deceive one another if they had the chance, just like the wealthier folk would, would go someplace else in search for better conditions, would shift their political views if they sensed any improvement or personal benefit.

As major world events unfold into the twenty-first century's lifestyles and mindsets, in consequences resembling those of early twentieth century, John Dos Passos's portrayals of fictional and nonfictional characters reappear as remarkable past reflections of technical, social, and political panoramas of the 2010s. His novels from the 1920s and 1930s may be contemporary chronicles of a present twenty-first century day in the challenges faced by an increasingly urban world, in constant technological transformation, against the confluence of political and economical moguls, and the looming presence of global-scaled war conflicts. At an individual level, one may find in *Manhattan Transfer* characters who denote a likewise twenty-first century fear of loss, personal isolation, and social fragmentation. Dos Passos is a timely author for those looking back in history to seek for alternatives and attempts to overcome a time of violence and bigotry, in hopes of not repeating a wave of intolerance.

Unlike Dos Passos and his skepticism though, I believe that his own literature can provide lessons by its acknowledgment of an urban space that is gradually being understood,

in its noisy characteristics. As said in this text, the very notion of noise floating from the unwanted to the cherished, from the cacophonous to the functional, from pollution to art, is a potent signifier of change and transformation. It works conjointly with substantial material being published in literary critique and theory which tackle pre-conceived notions and recipes of univocal models of success, power, and achievement in social life.

The poetics of noise persists.

WORKS CITED

ADORNO, Theodor W. The Curves of the Needle. Translated by Thomas Y. Levin. In: *October*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, Vol. 55, 1990. P. 48-55.

AGUALUSA, José Eduardo. *Teoria Geral do Esquecimento*. Rio de Janeiro: Foz, 2012.

ATTALI, Jacques. *Noise*: the political economy of music. Translated by Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.

BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

BALDICK, Chris. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

BARTHES, Roland. *Image Music Text*. Translated by Stephen Heath. London: Fontana Press, 1977.

BATTLESHIP Potemkin. Director: Sergei Eisenstein. [*S.l.*]: Goskino, 1925. 1 DVD (75 min).

BEDDOW, Alastair. Manhattan Nightmares: John Dos Passos, Charles Sheeler and the Distortion of Urban Space. In: *Moveable Type*. Vol. 6, 2010. Available at: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/moveable-type/pdfs/2009-10/ArticleBeddow-ManhattanNightmares.pdf. Accessed 14 Dec. 2016.

BÉJA, Alice. Artfulness and Artlessness, the Literary and Political Uses of Impersonality in John Dos Passos's *U.S.A.* Trilogy. In: *Revue Française d'Études Americaines*. Vol. 1, No. 127. 2011, pp. 34-46. Éditeur Belin.

BENJAMIN, Walter. The Storyteller: reflections on the works of Nikolai Leskov. Translated by Harry Zohn. In: HALE, Dorothy J. (editor). *The Novel*: an anthology of criticism and theory 1900-2000. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

BIJSTERVELD, Karin. Listening to Machines: industrial noise, hearing loss and the cultural meaning of sound. In: STERNE, Jonathan (editor). *The Sound Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 2012.

BOCCIONI, Umberto. La Strada Entra nella Casa. 1912, Oil on canvas, 39.4 in x 39.6 in. Sprenghel Museum, Hanover, Germany.

BRINKLEY, Douglas. A Second Act for Dos Passos And His Panoramic Writings. In: *The New York Times*. August 30, 2003 issue. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2003/08/30/books/a-second-act-for-dos-passos-and-his-panoramic-writings.html. Accessed 22 Jan. 2018.

CABRAL, Inez. O Mapa da Poesia de João Cabral de Melo Neto. In: *O Globo*. Published 05 Oct. 2013. Available at: http://blogs.oglobo.globo.com/prosa/post/o-mapa-da-poesia-de-joao-cabral-de-melo-neto-511200.html. Accessed 23 Oct. 2017.

CAMPOS, Haroldo de. *Metalinguagem & Outras Metas*: Ensaios de Teoria e Crítica Literária. São Paulo: Perspectiva: 2006.

CARRÀ, Carlo. The Painting of Sounds, Noises, and Smells. In: RAINEY, Lawrence; POGGI, Christine; WITTMAN, Laura (editors). *Futurism*: an anthology. Translated by Lawrence Rainey. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009.

CASTELLANO, Gema (interviewer). Entrevista a Sonia Tercero, Directora y Productora del Documental *Robles. Duelo al Sol*. In: *Youtube*. Uploaded by Informativos, 17 Nov. 2015. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47-5Jta0Ncs. Accessed 4 Aug. 2017.

CHENETIER, Marc. The Jazz Age [as reflected in John Dos Passos' writings]. In: SPECIAL Collections, University of Virginia Library. *Papers of John Dos Passos 1865-1998*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 1968.

CLARK, Philip. Sounds and the City: How Manhattan Made the Music of Edgard Varèse. In: *The Guardian*. Published May 6, 2017. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/music/2017/may/06/sounds-and-the-city-how-manhattan-made-the-music-of-edgard-varese. Accessed 10 June 2017.

CLARKE, Grant; BERLIN, Irving. "He's a Devil in His Own Home Town". Composed 1914. In: *WIKISOURCE*. "He's a Devil in His Own Home Town". Available at: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/He%27s_A_Devil_in_His_Own_Home_Town. Accessed 9 Oct. 2017.

CONNOR, Steven. *Noise (3)*: Siren Sounds. Transmitted BBC Radio 3, 26 February, 1997. Transcript available at http://stevenconnor.com/noise-3.html. Accessed 10 July 2017.

DENNING, Michael. *Noise Uprising*: The Audiopolitics of a World Musical Revolution. London and New York: Verso, 2015.

DOS PASSOS, John. *Manhattan Transfer*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1925.

_____. Manhattan Transfer - Manuscript Draft of 'Introduction' Text to Portuguese Translation. In: SPECIAL Collections, University of Virginia Library. *Papers of John Dos Passos 1865-1998*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 1960.

_____. *The Best Times*: An Informal Memoir. New York: The New American Library, 1966.

_____. *U.S.A.* New York: The Library of America, 1996.

EDWARDS, Thomas R. Dos Passos Divided. In: *The New York Review of Books*. Published at the November 29, 1973 issue. Available at: http://www.nybooks.com/articles/1973/11/29/dos-passos-divided/. Accessed 22 Jan. 2018.

EISENSTEIN, Sergei. *The Film Sense*. Edited and translated by Jay Leyda. New York: Meridian Books, 1957.

ENGELS, Friedrich; MARX, Karl. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Translated by Samuel Moore. Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1970.

FAHY, Thomas. *Staging American Life:* Popular Culture in the Experimental Theatre of Millay, Cummings, and Dos Passos. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

FEDER, Helena. *Ecocriticism and the Idea of Culture*: Biology and the Bildungsroman. Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014.

FISHER, Mark. *Ghosts of My Life*: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures. Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2014.

FITZGERALD, F. Scott. Echoes of the Jazz Age. In: DASHIELL, Alfred (editor). *Scribner's Magazine*. Volume XC, Number 5. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931. Available at: http://www.unz.org/Pub/Scribners-1931nov-00459. Accessed 20 Oct. 2013.

_____. *The Great Gatsby*. London: Wordsworth Classics, 2001.

GADO, Frank. *An Interview with John Dos Passos*. In: SPECIAL Collections, University of Virginia Library. *Papers of John Dos Passos 1865-1998*. Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia, 1960.

GIFFORE, Mellor; TREVOR. *When It's Apple Blossom Time in Normandy*. New York: Jerome H. Remick & Co., 1912. Notated Music. Retrieved from the Library of Congress. Available at: https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.100006224/. Accessed 14 July 2017.

GOLD, Michael. Review. In: MAINE, Barry (editor). *Dos Passos: The Critical Heritage*. London and New York: Routledge, 1988.

GRAHAM, T. Austin. *The Great American Songbooks*: Musical Texts, Modernism, and the Value of Popular Music. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

GREIF, Mark. Radiohead, or the Philosophy of Pop. In: FORBES, B; REISCH, G. (editors). *Radiohead and Philosophy*: fitter happier more deductive. Chicago and La Salle, IL: Open Court, 2009.

GRIMES, William. Bar? What Bar? In: *The New York Times*. Published 02 June 2009. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/03/dining/03speak.html?_r=0. Accessed 29 Apr. 2016.

GRONOW, Pekka; SAUNIO, Ilpo. *An International History of the Recording Industry*. Translated by Christopher Moseley. London and New York: Cassell, 1999.

GUPPY, Shusha; WEISS, Jason. Nathalie Sarraute, The Art of Fiction No. 115. In: *The Paris Review*. Issue 114, Spring 1990.

HICKS, Granville. Revolution and the Novel. In: *The New Masses*. Issued 10 Apr. 1934.

HOCK, Stephen. "'Stories Told Sideways Out of the Big Mouth': Dos Passos's Bazinian Camera Eye." In: *Literature/Film Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 1. 2005, pp. 20-27. Salisbury, MD: Salisbury University.

HOSOKAWA, Shuhei. The Walkman Effect. In: STERNE, Jonathan (editor). *The Sound Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 2012.

HPRINTS. *D'Orsay (Perfumes) 1913 Les Roses*. Available at: http://hprints.com/DOrsay_Perfumes_1913_Les_Roses-29105.html. Accessed 12 Apr. 2017.

HUG, Cathérine; UMLAND, Anne (curators). *Francis Picabia: Our Heads Are Round so Our Thoughts Can Change Direction*. Curatorial text. Exhibition organized by The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Kunsthaus Zürich. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2016-2017.

JENKINS, Milly. 'Trainspotting' Made Easy—for Americans. In: *Independent*. Published 25 May 1996. Available at: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/trainspotting-made-easy-for-americans-1349197.html. Accessed 23 Nov. 2017.

JENSEN, Jeff. 'Mad Men': EW review. In: *Entertainment Weekly*. Published 24 Mar. 2015. Available at: http://ew.com/article/2015/03/24/mad-men-ew-review/. Accessed 12 Dez. 2017.

KRISTEVA, Julia. *Estrangeiros para Nós Mesmos*. Translated by Maria Carlota Carvalho Gomes. Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1994.

LARANJEIRA, Antonio. "Rock Books: Intermidialidade no Discurso Literário Pop". In: *Aletria*. V. 27, n. 2. Belo Horizonte: 2017, p. 25-38.

LAWRENCE, D. H. Review. In: MAINE, Barry (editor). *Dos Passos: The Critical Heritage*. London and New York: Routledge, 1988.

LIBRARY of America. About. Available at: https://www.loa.org/about. Accessed 25 Jan. 2018.

LUDINGTON, Townsend. *John Dos Passos*: a twentieth-century odyssey. New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 1998.

MARINE, Brooke. The Best Literary References on *Mad Men*, According to a NYPL Librarian. In: *Vulture*. Published 6 Apr. 2015. Available at: http://www.vulture.com/2015/03/mad-men-books-literary-references.html. Accessed 12 Dec. 2017.

MARINETTI, Filippo Tommaso. The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism. Translated by J. C. Higgitt. In: APOLLONIO, Umbro (editor). *Documents of 20th Century Art:* Futurist Manifestos. New York: Viking Press, 1973. P 19-24.

MCCRUM, Robert. The 100 Best Novels: No 58 - Nineteen Nineteen by John Dos Passos (1932). In: *The Guardian*. Published 27 Oct. 2014. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/oct/27/100-best-novels-john-dos-passos-nineteen-nineteen-1919-usa-trilogy. Accessed 12 Apr. 2017.

MORRISON, Mark. BLAST: An Introduction. In: *The Modernist Journals Project*: "modernism began in the magazines". Available at: http://www.modjourn.org/render.php?id=mjp.2005.00.097&view=mjp_object. Accessed 06 Nov. 2017.

NORDLINGER, Jay. Doses of Dos Passos, Part I. In: *National Review*. Published May 2, 2016. Available at: http://www.nationalreview.com/article/434792/re-encountering-john-dos-passos-part-i. Accessed 5 May, 2016.

_____. Welcome Back, Dos. In: *National Review*. May 9, 2016 issue.

ORCUTT, Kim. The Armory Show Lands with a Thud in Boston. Published 30 Apr. 2013. In: *The Armory Show at 100*. Available at: http://armory.nyhistory.org/the-armory-show-lands-with-a-thud-in-boston/. Accessed 01 Oct. 2017.

PACKER, George. The Spanish Prisoner. In: *The New Yorker*. Published 31 Oct. 2005. Available at: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2005/10/31/the-spanish-prisoner. Accessed 16 Nov. 2017.

PEDROSA, Mário. *Arte. Ensaios:* Mário Pedrosa. Edited by Lorenzo Mammi. São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2015.

PICABIA, Francis. Dances at the Spring. 1912, Oil on Canvas, 120.5 cm x 120.6 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, United States.

PIEPENBRING, Dan. Down Where the Asparagus Grows. In: *The Paris Review*. Published 16 Jun. 2015. Available at:

https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2015/06/16/down-where-the-asparagus-grows/. Accessed 06 Nov. 2017.

RAJEWSKY, Irina. Intermediality, Intertextuality, and Remediation: A Literary Perspective on Intermediality. In: *Intermédialités*. No 6, *Remédier*. Montreal: Spring 2016. Available at: http://cri.histart.umontreal.ca/cri/fr/intermedialites/p6/pdfs/p6_rajewsky_text.pdf. Accessed 15 Apr. 2017.

RANALDO, Lee. Cornfield Webs: an Introduction. In: WILD, Peter (editor). *Noise:* Fiction Inspired by Sonic Youth. London: Harper Perennial, 2008.

RASULA, Jed. *Destruction Was My Beatrice:* Dada and the Unmaking of the Twentieth Century. New York: Basic Books, 2015.

REYNOLDS, Simon. *Retromania*: Pop Culture's Addiction to Its Own Past. New York: Faber and Faber, 2011.

RISTOW, Fabiano. Peter Greenaway Retrata em Filme Suposta Experiência Gay de Eisenstein. In: *O Globo*. Published 23 Dec. 2016. Available at: http://oglobo.globo.com/cultura/filmes/peter-greenaway-retrata-em-filme-suposta-experiencia-gay-de-eisenstein-18351977#ixzz41HpqVXVx. Accessed 26 Feb. 2016.

RUSSOLO, Luigi. *L'Arte dei Rumori*. Milan: Edizioni futuriste di poesia, 1916.

SANDERS, David. John Dos Passos, The Art of Fiction No. 44. In: *The Paris Review*. Issue 46, Spring 1969. Available at: https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/4202/john-dos-passos-the-art-of-fiction-no-44-john-dos-passos. Accessed 2 Sep. 2016.

SCHAFER, R. Murray. *The Soundscape*: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World. Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1994.

SCHER, Steven Paul. Acoustic Experiment as Ephemeral Spectacle?: Musical Futurism, Dada, Cage, and the Talking Heads (1994). In: _____. *Word and Music Studies*: Essays on Literature and Music (1967 - 2004). Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2004.

_____. Literature and Music (1982). In: _____. *Word and Music Studies*: Essays on Literature and Music (1967 - 2004). Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2004.

SCHOLES, Robert. Afterword: Small Magazines, Large Ones, and Those Inbetween. In: CHURCHILL, Suzanne; McKIBLE, Adam (editors). *Little Magazines and Modernism*: new approaches. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.

SCHWARTZ, Delmore. John Dos Passos and the Whole Truth. In: MAINE, Barry (editor). *Dos Passos: The Critical Heritage*. New York: Routledge, 1988.

SCHWEIGHAUSER, Philipp. *The Noises of American Literature, 1890-1985*: Toward a History of Literary Acoustics. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2006.

_____. The Noises of Modernist Form: John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*, Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and the Soundscapes of Modernity. In: KELLETER, Frank; STEIN, Daniel (editors). *American Studies as Media Studies*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2008.

_____. "You must make less noise in here, Mister Schouler": Acoustic Profiling in American Realism. In: *Studies in American Fiction*. Boston: Northeastern University, 2002. Volume 30, Number 1.

SERRE, Jean-François. XVI – Une Litterature de L'espace et de la Ville: «Manhattan Transfer» de John Dos Passos. In: *Le Monde*. Published December 1, 2013. Available at: http://urbainserre.blog.lemonde.fr/2013/12/01/xvi-une-litterature-de-lespace-et-de-la-ville-manhattan-transfer-de-john-dos-passos/. Accessed 17 Jan. 2018.

SEVERANCE. Director: Scott Hornbacher. In: *Mad Men*. Producer: Matthew Weiner. Season 7, episode 8. Weiner Bros., 2015. HDTV 720p.

SMITH, James Steel. The Novelist of Discomfort: A Reconsideration of John Dos Passos. In: *College English*, Vol. 19, No. 8 (May, 1958), pp. 332-338. Available at http://www.jstor.org/stable/372024. Accessed 16 Jan. 2018.

STERNE, Jonathan. Sonic Imaginations. In: STERNE, Jonathan (editor). *The Sound Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 2012.

STEVENS, Simon. Review: Recovering Dos Passos?. In: *The Cambridge Quarterly*. Oxford University Press. Vol. 18, No. 2, 1989, pp. 223-226.

STUART, Henry Longan. Review. In: MAINE, Barry (editor). *Dos Passos*: the Critical Heritage. London and New York: Routledge, 1988.

SÜSSEKIND, Flora. *Cinematógrafo de Letras*: literatura, técnica e modernização no Brasil. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1987.

THOMPSON, Emily. Sound, Modernity, and History. In: STERNE, Jonathan (editor). *The Sound Studies Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 2012.

TOOP, David. *Sinister Resonance*. London: Bloomsbury, 2012. E-book.

TRUAX, Barry. *Acoustic Communication*. New Jersey: Ablex Publishing, 1984.

_____ (editor). *Handbook for Acoustic Ecology*. Burnaby, BC: Simon Fraser University, 1999. Available at: https://www.sfu.ca/sonic-studio/handbook. Accessed 16 July 2017.

VELVET UNDERGROUND, the. *The Velvet Underground & Nico*. Santa Monica, CA: Verve Records, 1967.

WICKS, Amanda. Jack White's *American Epic* Documentary Series to Air on PBS, BBC: Watch Trailer. In: *Pitchfork*. Published 19 Apr. 2017. Available at: https://pitchfork.com/news/72989-jack-whites-american-epic-documentary-series-to-air-on-pbs-bbc-watch-trailer/. Accessed 19 Apr. 2017.

WILD, Peter (editor). *Noise:* Fiction Inspired by Sonic Youth. London: Harper Perennial, 2008.

WRIGHTSON, Kendall. An Introduction to Acoustic Ecology. In: *Journal of Electroacoustic Music*. Volume 12, March 1999.

ANNEX

Song Lyrics

Song 1:

"J'ai Fait Trois Fois le Tour du Monde", from the operetta *Les Cloches de Corneville*

Music: Robert Planquette Lyrics: Clairville et Charles Gabet

J'ai fait trois fois le tour du monde
Et les dangers font mon bonheur
J'aime le ciel quand le ciel gronde
La mer quand elle est en fureur
J'ai fait trois fois le tour du monde
Et les dangers font mon bonheur
J'ai fait trois fois le tour du monde

Dans mes voyages
Combien d'orages
Que de naufrages!
Mais en retour
Au sein des fêtes
Que de conquêtes
Que d'amourettes
Sans amour
Italiennes
Circassiennes
Algériennes
Chaque pays
Ou blonde, ou brune
M'en devait une
Et de chacune
J'étais épris.
Toujours de même
Le croyant, même,
J'ai dit: Je t'aime

À des vertus
Dont la victoire
Faisait ma gloire
Et ma mémoire
Ne les voit plus
C'est qu'une belle
Me rend fidèle

Je me rappelle
Toujours, hélas!
La bienvenue
Cette inconnue
Que j'ai tenue
Entre mes bras
Je l'ai tenue
Entre mes bras
Entre mes bras
Oui
Ville chérie
Ô ma patrie
Fais, je t'en prie,
Parler les flots
Mais qu'on me rende
Cette Normande
Que je demande
À tes échos
Pour la connaître
La voir renaître
Et m'apparaître
Sortant des flots
Tout m'est facile
Fût-il utile
De braver mille
Dangers nouveaux!

Song 2:

"The Camera Eye," available on *Moving Pictures* (1981), by Rush

Music: Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson Lyrics: Neil Peart

I

Grim-faced and forbidding

Their faces closed tight

An angular mass of New Yorkers

Pacing in rhythm

Race the oncoming night

They chase through the streets of Manhattan

Head-first humanity

Pause at a light

Then flow through the streets of the city

They seem oblivious

To a soft spring rain

Like an English rain

So light, yet endless

From a leaden sky, yeah

The buildings are lost

In their limitless rise

My feet catch the pulse

And the purposeful stride

I feel the sense of possibilities

I feel the wrench of hard realities

The focus is sharp in the city

II

Wide-angle watcher

On life's ancient tales

Steeped in the history of London
Green and Grey washes
In a wispy white veil
Mist in the streets of Westminster
Wistful and weathered
The pride still prevails
Alive in the streets of the city

Are they oblivious
To this quality?
A quality
Of light unique to every city's streets

Pavements may teem
With intense energy
But the city is calm
In this violent sea

Song 3:
"The Big Money," available on *Power Windows* (1985), by Rush
Music: Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson Lyrics: Neil Peart

Big money goes around the world
Big money underground
Big money got a mighty voice
Big money make no sound
Big money pull a million strings
Big money hold the prize
Big money weave a mighty web
Big money draw the flies

Sometimes pushing people around
Sometimes pulling out the rug

Sometimes pushing all the buttons
Sometimes pulling out the plug
It's the power and the glory
It's a war in paradise
It's a cinderella story
On a tumble of the dice

Big money goes around the world
Big money take a cruise
Big money leave a mighty wake
Big money leave a bruise
Big money make a million dreams
Big money spin big deals
Big money make a mighty head
Big money spin big wheels

Sometimes building ivory towers
Sometimes knocking castles down
Sometimes building you a stairway -
Lock you underground
It's that old-time religion
It's the kingdom they would rule
It's the fool on television
Getting paid to play the fool

It's the power and the glory
It's a war in paradise
It's a cinderella story
On a tumble of the dice

Big money goes around the world
Big money give and take
Big money done a power of good
Big money make mistakes

Big money got a heavy hand
Big money take control
Big money got a mean streak
Big money got no soul...

Song 4:
"Grand Designs," available on *Power Windows* (1985), by Rush
Music: Geddy Lee and Alex Lifeson Lyrics: Neil Peart

A to B—
Different degrees . . .

So much style without substance
So much stuff without style
It's hard to recognize the real thing
It comes along once in a while

Like a rare and precious metal
Beneath a ton of rock
It takes some time and trouble
To separate from the stock
You sometimes have to listen to
A lot of useless talk

Shapes and forms
Against the norms
Against the run of the mill
Swimming against the stream
Life in two dimensions
Is a mass production scheme

So much poison in power
The principles get left out

So much mind on the matter
The spirit gets forgotten about

Like a righteous inspiration
Overlooked in haste
Like a teardrop in the Ocean
A diamond in the waste
Some world-views are spacious—
And some are merely spaced

Against the run of the mill
Static as it seems
We break the surface tension
With our wild kinetic dreams
Curves and lines—
Of grand designs . . .

Song 5:
"Somebody Loves Me"
Music: George Gershwin Lyrics: Ballard MacDonald and Buddy DeSylva

It seems there's none for me although
My aching heart discovers
In a story play or picture show,
A host of perfect lovers
The first of all was Romeo
That passion isn't cool yet
This world would have a rosy glow
If I had been his Juliet
For Antony, I'd learn to care
Ah, he was strong and graceful
If other lovers held two pair
That fellow held an aceful

Somebody loves me
I wonder who
I wonder who he can be
Somebody loves me
I wish I knew
Who can he be worries me
For ev'ry boy who passes me,
I shout, "Hey! Maybe
You were meant to be my loving baby"
Somebody loves me
I wonder who
Maybe it's you
At one time, Harold Lloyd, I thought,
Was grand in every flashback
To see him, oh, the seats I bought
I wish I had the cash back
'Twas big Bill Hart who took his place
He's Western and he's classy
He had an open space's face
And oh, girls, what a chassy!
Then, Jackie Coogan came along
He had the other shown-up
And to him, I will sing my song
As soon as he is grown up
Somebody loves me
I wonder who
I wonder who he can be
Somebody loves me
I wish I knew
Who can he be worries me
For every boy who passes me,
I shout, "Hey! Maybe
You were meant to be my loving baby"

Somebody loves me
I wonder who
Maybe it's you

Song 6:
"When it's Apple Blossom Time in Normandie"
Music and Lyrics: Mellor, Gifford, and Trevor

On a farm in Normandy,
There resided Rose Marie.
She was the pride of the country side,
Fair as a maid could be.
Came a lover bold one day,
With a most persuasive lay,
Tho' she was grieving, when he was leaving,
He consol'd her in this way.

"When it's apple blossom time in Normandy!
I want to be in Normandy,
By that dear old wishing well,
With you, Marie!
When it's apple blossom time in Normandy,
I'm coming back to woo,
And the spring will bring a wedding ring,
Little sweetheart, to you!"
When it's you!

Said Marie "It's clear to me,
Tho' sincere you seem to be,
I am afraid of the promise made:
You may not come back to me.
By the wishing well to day,
I shall wish that you will stay."

Said he despairing,
“Love, I’m declaring,
I’m earnest, when I say.

Apple blossom time soon came,
Rose Marie then chang’d her name,
For with the spring he had brought the ring,His loving bride to claim.
By the wishing well they stray,
Happiness is theirs today,
‘Mid blossoms falling, he is recalling,
What he fondly used to say.