

From A Man without a Country to An American by Choice: John Dos Passos and Migration

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Bookinformation

Conventional Dos Passos's scholarship is generally based on a literary approach, which concentrates on aesthetics in his early novels. In recent years, studies were also made on the writer's social beliefs, his political shift from the left to the right, along with investigations on historical facts that Dos Passos interweaved in his work. Still missing is a comprehensive assessment on the writer's position towards the issues of migration. The main objective of this study is thus to scrutinize and inquire into John Dos Passos's entire fictional and non-fictional work—that will comprehend our *corpus* of analysis—in which Dos Passos captures several types of migrants with their hopes and disillusion. Furthermore, we illuminate how three Dos Passos generations (his grandfather, his father, and John Dos Passos himself) approached and responded to the migration subject. Manoel Joaquim dos Passos (the writer's grandfather) emigrated to evade military service and not, as so often claimed, because of some "stabbing incident." We clarify several aspects of his life in America as a poor shoemaker, explaining how one of his sons, John Randolph Dos Passos was able to ascend in the American *status quo*, becoming a self-made-man. Moreover, we explore John Randolph's ideas on migration and on assimilation. Finally, we analyze John Dos Passos as a migrant himself, including among other as a military and as an internal migrant, an expatriate, but also as a non-migrant (that is, as an international, domestic, cultural, health, congress, as a family heritage tourist, or as a freelance correspondent). In addition, we look into how John Dos Passos documents or describes migration during his lifetime and in previous periods of the history of the United States. We argue that until 1938 migration is mostly portrayed as an unsuccessful endeavor, the American dream being considered a mere utopian idea, whereas from 1939 onwards his viewpoint changes, i.e., he now faces migration to the U.S.A. more optimistically, considering that people can improve their lives in America. Our study is complemented by a definition of the various types of migration, a chronology that depicts the main facts on the life and work of John Dos Passos and his ascendants, and appendices which consist of archive documents that support our examination, as well as short descriptions of Dos Passos's work.

"Miguel Oliveira combines an international viewpoint with meticulous research to deliver the most comprehensive portrait yet rendered of John Dos Passos as an individual. We witness the subject's struggle to become an American—one of generations of immigrants painfully molded into one national body. Thanks to Oliveira, more will understand how his family's immigration experience informed Dos Passos's masterworks." **Lucy Hamlin Dos Passos Coggin**, John Dos Passos's daughter

Key Words

- Migration and Non-Migration
- Identity and Culture
- Naturalization and Citizenship
- Equality and Inequality
- American dream/nightmare
- Self-made-man

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