

## **“Dos Passos and/in the 1920s”**

### **Panel at American Literature Association 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**

**May 23-26, 2019: Boston, MA**

The 1920s was undoubtedly an important decade for John Dos Passos. For one, it saw his debut as a published novelist (*One Man's Initiation*), and as the decade unfolded, he won critical success with early career standouts (*Three Soldiers*, *Manhattan Transfer*). Over the course of the decade, he also moved from being inspired largely by French and American naturalism to quickly absorbing the various -isms emanating from Europe and incorporating them into his work. Experimentation was the order of the day, and Dos Passos found a variety of outlets for his creativity: not merely novels, but also poetry (*A Pushcart to the Curb*), travel writing (*Rosinante to the Road Again*, *Orient Express*), theater (*The Garbage Man*), and painting (as recently covered in *The Paintings and Drawings by John Dos Passos*, eds. Pizer, Nanney, and Layman). The expansive exploration and experimentation found in his work during the decade also had a parallel in his personal life, which saw the author living in multiple locations (New York, Paris) while traveling widely (Middle East, Soviet Union). Brought on by his involvement with the Sacco-Vanzetti case in 1927, the decade also marked the full formation of Dos Passos's political consciousness, which would go on to define his work in the following decade. Not surprisingly, then, Dos Passos would return to the eventful 1920s throughout his career, both in his fiction (*The Big Money*) and non-fiction (*The Best Times*).

This panel invites proposals for twenty-minute papers that explore any aspect of Dos Passos and/in the 1920s. Topics may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- his published work during the decade, both fiction and non-fiction
- his work dealing with the decade, both fiction and non-fiction
- his modernism
- his travels
- his developing political consciousness
- the Sacco-Vanzetti case
- his contemporaries in the 1920s
- the “Roaring Twenties”
- his relationship to “the other arts” (cinema, painting, theater)

For consideration, please submit a 300-word abstract and a brief bio in Word or PDF format to [jdpsociety@gmail.com](mailto:jdpsociety@gmail.com) by January 15, 2019. Be sure also to note any A/V requirements.

## **“Dos Passos Today”**

### **Roundtable at American Literature Association 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference**

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In a 1968 interview, John Dos Passos commented on what he saw as the growing marginalization of his work by recalling a conversation he once had with Ernest Hemingway. “He always used to bawl me out for including so much topical stuff,” Dos Passos remembered. “He always claimed that was a great mistake, that in fifty years nobody would understand. He may have been right; it’s getting to be true.”

Fifty-odd years later, this roundtable session seeks to examine the validity of Hemingway’s prediction by asking the question of where Dos Passos is today. Where can his influence be found among contemporary writers, both in fiction and non-fiction? What is his present status in the undergraduate classroom? What can be gained from reading Dos Passos in the current social, political, and economic climate?

We invite short presentations on any aspect of Dos Passos’s current standing, influence, and/or relevance. Topics may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Dos Passos’s influence today, in literature as well as across the arts
- Recent experiences of teaching Dos Passos
- Reading Dos Passos...
  - in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis
  - in the context of increasingly polarized domestic politics
  - in the age of social media and the 24-hour news cycle

The session will take the format of a roundtable discussion, where each participant will be given five to seven minutes for their individual presentations, after which there will be ample time for a longer discussion.

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