

"Parallel, Not Series":
Thomas Pynchon and William Gaddis

Steven Moore

A name often linked with Pynchon's in many discussions of his work is that of William Gaddis, author of two encyclopedic novels of astonishing power and range: The Recognitions (1955) and J R (1975). Not only is Gaddis considered one of Pynchon's few peers, but similarities in style and content have led many to discern a pattern of literary influence. Usually, this has taken the form of the presumed influence of Gaddis's first novel on Pynchon's first; leading Pynchon critics such as Tony Tanner and Richard Poirier have insisted on V.'s debt to The Recognitions,¹ and on the publication of Gaddis's second novel, many reviewers repeated this presumption.² Recently, The Recognitions has been acknowledged as a harbinger not only of the Black Humor of the '50s and '60s (the genre in which V. was first placed), but also of the revival of the Menippean satire (the genre in which Pynchon's second and third novels have been placed), the form to which an increasing number of our most creative writers are turning for their masterworks.³ Commenting on Don DeLillo's use of Menippean satire in Ratner's Star (1976), for example, George Stade wrote: "He is close in subject matter to Thomas Pynchon, who seems to have learned how to use the form through a study of William Gaddis, a presiding genius, as it turns out, of post-war American fiction."⁴ The relation between Gaddis and Pynchon seems so close that once it was even rumored that Thomas Pynchon was merely a pseudonym for Gaddis!⁵ Lately the question of influence has come full circle, and the possibility that Pynchon influenced Gaddis's J R has been raised by at least one critic.⁶ For the most part such ascriptions of influence have been made only in passing and not traced in any detail,⁷ but the question of influence has been raised often enough that a detailed examination seems warranted at this time.

A caveat lector is necessary at the outset: for years most of Gaddis's critics assumed that The Recognitions plainly showed the influence of Ulysses, and in fact the first academic essay on the novel was later described by Gaddis himself as "a most ingenious piece in a Wisconsin quarterly some years ago in which The Recognitions' debt to Ulysses was established in such minute detail I was doubtful of my own firm recollection of never having read Ulysses."⁸ How ironic it would be, then, to turn around and detail The Recognitions' non-existent influence on any subsequent novel. Similarities between Joyce and Gaddis are the result of a common interest in certain cultural and artistic concerns, and any similarities between Gaddis and Pynchon may be no more than that.⁹ Also, The Recognitions attracted very little notice when first published, and the young Pynchon would have been very fortunate even to have heard of the novel, much less to have read it. Because of its negative and hostile reviews, The Recognitions was remaindered shortly after publication; until the 1962 Meridian reprint, copies were difficult to find. Granted, its very obscurity and "underground" reputation may have inspired Pynchon to search it out, but we move on shifting ground here, and for obvious reasons proceed only with caution.

In the absence of external evidence at this time, the logical place to begin the search for internal evidence of Gaddis's influence is in Pynchon's early stories; like most fledgling writers, Pynchon wears his literary influences on his sleeve more here than in his later, more mature works. (Gaddis would develop in the same way: The Recognitions is saturated with literary allusions, whereas J R uses such allusions sparingly--the majority of which, incidentally, can be traced to the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations.)¹⁰ Though Gaddis is neither named nor quoted, there are several interesting parallels to be found between these stories and Gaddis's first novel. Both "Mortality and Mercy in Vienna" and "Entropy" have as their setting a party, and recall the long party scenes in The Recognitions where, as in Pynchon, pseudo-intellectuals exchange sophomoric chit-chat that parodies the more serious concerns of the pro-

tagonists. Other similarities are apparent: "Mortality and Mercy," especially, indicates that Pynchon, like Gaddis, is fond of historical and literary allusions, the more obscure the better. (Both cite Albertus Magnus, for example.)¹¹ The story also contains the first instance of Pynchon's many uses of mirror imagery, and recalls Gaddis's extensive use of such imagery in The Recognitions.

But it is in "Entropy" that the most intriguing parallels to Gaddis's work can be found. The style itself is highly reminiscent of Gaddis's: formal, even elegiac prose alternates with party dialogue as the story shifts back and forth from Callisto to Mulligan, just as long, highly wrought prose passages in The Recognitions alternate with long stretches of uninterrupted dialogue. Callisto attempts to isolate himself from life much as Wyatt Gwyon does in The Recognitions, and both are led by two girls cut from the same cloth, Aubade and Esme, to the realization that life is to be engaged rather than avoided. In fact, Aubade is the first of Pynchon's many exotic but redeeming women: she and Nerissa in "Low-lands," Paola Maijstral in V., and Leni Pökler or Geli Tripping in Gravity's Rainbow all have their fictional ancestor in Gaddis's Esme, a heroin-addicted poet capable, as none of The Recognitions' dozens of other characters are, of selfless love. Additional and even more arcane literary references appear: the Marquis de Sade and Djuna Barnes's Nightwood are mentioned in both "Entropy" and The Recognitions, and if Pynchon did not learn of these authors from Gaddis, the citations do at least indicate a curious similarity in literary taste.¹² On the other hand, there can be found in "Entropy" what appear to be anticipations of characters and themes in Gaddis's J R: the same Josiah Willard Gibbs mentioned twice in Pynchon's story also gives his name to one of the protagonists of Gaddis's second novel, and both story and novel share a concern with entropy and its application in information theory, especially as explicated in Norbert Wiener's The Human Use of Human Beings. Pynchon and Gaddis apply this concept in almost identical fashion:

"Tell a girl: 'I love you.' No trouble with two-thirds of that, it's a closed circuit. Just you and she. But that nasty four-letter word in the middle, that's the one you have to look out for. Ambiguity. Redundance. Irrelevance, even. Leakage. All this is noise. Noise screws up your signal, makes for disorganization in the circuit."

Meatball shuffled around. "Well, now, Saul," he muttered, "you're sort of, I don't know, expecting a lot from people. I mean, you know. What it is is, most of the things we say, I guess, are mostly noise."

"Ha! Half of what you just said, for example."

"Well, you do it too."

"I know." Saul smiled grimly. "It's a bitch, ain't it."¹³

In J R, Jack Gibbs rewords it thus:

--Whole God damned problem tastes like apricots, whole God damned problem listen whole God damned problem read Wiener on communication, more complicated the message more God damned chance for errors, take a few years of marriage such a God damned complex of messages going both ways can't get a God damned thing across, God damned much entropy going on say good morning she's got a God damned headache thinks you don't give a God damn how she feels, ask her how she feels she thinks you just want to get laid, try that she says it's the only God damned thing you take seriously about her puts you out of business
 . . .¹⁴

Mulligan's shuffling rejoinder deliberately displays a higher ratio of noise to information than is usual in Pynchon's dialogue, while J R is written almost entirely in such dialogue, the noise seeming to drown out what little information is exchanged until the reader realizes only the characters themselves are involved. For the attentive reader every ambiguity, redundancy, irrelevancy, and leakage provides information on Gaddis's people and the noisy society in which they live--information of the sort that not a few of J R's reviewers missed.

"Low-lands," dating from the same year as "Entropy," offers further parallels. Some are superficial--the corpse trick recalls similar episodes in The Recognitions, and both gypsies and Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle are common to story and novel--but others are more substantial. Dennis Flange's mother-complex (or what his analyst diagnoses as a mother-complex) sets in motion a theme that will culminate in Gravity's Rainbow's Mother Conspiracy, and recalls Wyatt's own mother-complex and the psychological havoc that results. In The Recognitions, maternal imagery is implied in most of the references to the sea and the moon, and we find Pynchon making the same symbolic equation in his story. Both Dennis and Wyatt leave their rational, logical wives for animas more psychologically nourishing, but not before the traditional mythological descent to the underworld and symbolic death. Here Pynchon reveals a greater and certainly more demonstrable debt to Frazer's Golden Bough, Eliot's Waste Land, and perhaps Graves's White Goddess than to The Recognitions. These very titles, moreover, provide a key to the semblance of literary influence. Gaddis too draws upon Frazer, Eliot, Graves, Rilke, Shakespeare, and others; where two writers draw upon the same cultural materials, there is bound to be a certain amount of overlapping. Consequently, it is because Gaddis and Pynchon have read so many of the same authors, rather than each other, that so many similarities can be discerned.

This is certainly the case with Pynchon's first novel, which has been said to reveal Gaddis's influence most plainly. Of course, a number of surface similarities are obvious: structurally, both consist of dual narrative lines that intersect on occasion. In The Recognitions, Wyatt and his quest for integration disappear for great stretches as various incomplete, parodic versions of Wyatt rush headlong into disintegration, along with Western culture. Stencil and his search for V. likewise retreat off-stage for the yo-yoing activities of Benny Profane and The Whole Sick Crew. Pynchon's New York pseudo-intellectuals might mingle easily with Gaddis's Greenwich Villagers; in both cases "they produced nothing but talk and at that not very good talk" (V.,

297),¹⁵ though Gaddis lets his people talk at much greater length than Pynchon, mercifully, does. Even the names of some of the characters in V. are reminiscent of those in The Recognitions. Scott Simmon thinks it "possible to make a case that Benny and Esther in V. owe something to their namesakes in The Recognitions,"¹⁶ but Benny Profane bears no resemblance to Gaddis's Benny (besides, Pynchon used the name earlier in "The Small Rain") while Pynchon's Esther probably takes her name from Jules Siegel's girlfriend Esther Schreier.¹⁷ (On the other hand, Dudley Eigenvalue's surname anticipates Gaddis's autobiographical Thomas Eigen in J R: eigen = German "ownself"; Thomas is Gaddis's middle name.) But Simmon is correct in pointing out that Pynchon's penchant for giving his characters outrageous names is similar to Gaddis's: in The Recognitions, we have Agnes Deigh, Sr. Hermoso Hermoso, Victoria and Albert Hall, a poet named Arthur but called Saint Anselm, Recktall Brown, Basil Valentine, and even the Reverend Gilbert Sullivan. Unlike Pynchon, Gaddis has curbed such tendencies in his later work, but even in J R we have characters named Dan diCephalis (whom his students naturally call de Syph), Mr. Piscator (the angler in Walton's Compleat Angler [which a girl is reading on p. 298 of The Recognitions] as well as Saint Peter ["il pescator" in Dante's Paradiso]), Norman Angel (after British author and economist Sir Norman Angell [1872-1967]), and a garrulous salesman named Isadore Duncan.

Beneath these superficialities there are deeper affinities which, though they may not betray a direct influence, certainly indicate Gaddis and Pynchon have drawn the same conclusions about the decline of the West. Both diagnose the patriarchal nature of Western civilization, in which too often rationality is valued over instinct, intellect over emotion, mind over body, aggression over tenderness, order over spontaneity, Christianity over the occult, and ultimately, death over life. Both novelists recognized early the danger in such polarization, and in their first novels created motherless sons who subsequently must search for the unifying feminine principle that will, if not fertilize the modern Waste Land, at least restore an inner balance.

Not only was Herbert Stencil raised motherless (V., 52), but even his father Sidney was "[b]rought up by a pair of bleak Nonconformist aunts, [from whom] he had acquired the Anglo-Saxon tendency to group northern/Protestant/intellectual against Mediterranean/Roman Catholic/irrational" (V., 190). This background is remarkably similar to Wyatt's: losing his mother at the age of three, he is raised by a bleak Calvinist aunt and a father who finds it increasingly difficult to reconcile his own "northern/Protestant/intellectual" background with a growing attraction to "Mediterranean/Roman Catholic/irrational" modes of life. At first, Reverend Gwyon delights in dashing the "petrous visages" of his congregation "with waves from distinctly pagan tongues, voluptuous Italian, which flowed over their northern souls like sunlit water over rocks" (24), but eventually his inability to reconcile the two modes results in madness. In an effort to spare his son the same anguish, he leaves Wyatt his mother's Byzantine earrings, an emblem (as a flashback on p. 14 suggests) of her vibrancy and daring, and charges him to come to terms with her memory (61), lest he be mired in the same sterile state of indecision as his father.

For Herbert Stencil, V. too is "'a legacy from his father'" (V., 155). In both cases, personal mothers are elevated to impersonal feminine principles. Wyatt's mother Camilla is incarnate in many of the women in The Recognitions--from the Virgin Mary in Wyatt's paintings, to Esme, and finally to the saint canonized at the end of the novel--just as Victoria Wren becomes a feminine principle (explicitly on V., 209) associated with every woman in the novel from Queen Victoria, to Botticelli's Venus, to the rat Veronica. But both Stencil and Wyatt have trouble coming to terms with their lost mothers and the feminine principle they represent; not surprisingly, neither is able, as a result, to have a satisfying relationship with a woman. Both Stencil and Wyatt are incomplete, for they lack an anima, the feminine component in the male psyche, according to C. G. Jung, another author with whom Gaddis and Pynchon are both familiar. Stencil's incompleteness is betrayed in his references to himself in the third person, a "forcible

dislocation of personality" (V., 62), as he freely admits. Consequently, as Alvin Greenberg points out, "not being at one with himself--and, hence, with herself [V.] --he naturally misses her in the process of missing himself everywhere he goes."¹⁸ Wyatt's own "dislocation of personality" is indicated by the loss of his name, which is equivalent in primitive mythologies to the loss of his soul. He is called Wyatt for the last time on p. 118, and remains nameless for six hundred pages until he recovers himself--and the anima within--and is re-named Stephen, the name Camilla originally intended for him before Aunt May intervened.

The difficulty of incorporating the anima--which is what both protagonists' predicaments amount to--has been dramatized in myth and literature most often as a quest; the dangers met with during the quest are the dangers inherent in plumbing the unconscious and doing battle with the dark and destructive aspects of human nature in order to rescue the revitalizing anima. "Native guides will only go a short distance into these mountains," Godolphin says of Vheissu, Pynchon's symbol for the unconscious. "Soon they will turn back, pointing out the way" (V., 168). The quest is both private and dangerous, for it caters to the self's "dream of annihilation" (V., 206) as well as its urge toward unification. These dangers account for the reluctance displayed by both Wyatt and Stencil to claim their legacy:¹⁹ in Wyatt's case, it takes the forms of insulating solitude and bouts of insanity like his father's; and in Stencil's, a reluctance to follow his quest to Malta and risk losing V. as well as himself by learning of her death. What Carol Marshall Peirce says of Durrell's Alexandria Quartet and V. is equally true of The Recognitions and V.: "Both works project against the real/naturalistic world a romantic quest for the ideal woman (Justine, V., Aphrodite, Venus, or Virgin) that ends in each case in possible destruction, possible revival."²⁰ Like Durrell, both Pynchon and Gaddis undercut somewhat the high romantic quest with a more realistic dénouement, but all three are clearly devotees of Graves's White Goddess, and realize that the boons she is able to confer justify any and all risks.

But this goddess, like Janus, shows two faces. Victoria Wren represents the destructive, terrifying aspect of the Eternal Feminine, the Siren that leads men more often to their destruction than to their salvation.²¹ In the Profane sections of V., the maternal, nourishing side of the feminine principle is represented by Rachel Owlglass. Her progress is the reverse of Victoria Wren's: introduced under the sway of mechanization--and even once compared to a succubus (V., 30), as is Esme in The Recognitions (199-200, 766)--she moves toward humanity as V. moves away from humanization toward greater mechanization. (This dual movement can be found in The Recognitions as well, where Wyatt moves toward integration as Otto, his comic counterpart, moves toward disintegration.) After her brief fling with her car, Rachel begins to be associated quite consistently with motherhood, primarily through the recurring image of the umbilical cord which not only links daughter to mother--"A long unbroken chain of Jewish mothers going all the way back to Eve" (V., 47)²²--but also accounts for the vexatious control women have over men. Profane feels "the invisible, umbilical tug" (V., 29, cf. V., 34) every time he feels disconnected:

Any sovereign or broken yo-yo must feel like this after a short time of lying inert, rolling, falling: suddenly to have its own umbilical string reconnected, and know the other end is in hands it cannot escape. Hands it doesn't want to escape. Know that the simple clockwork of itself has no more need for symptoms of inutility, lonesomeness, directionlessness, because now it has a path marked out for it over which it has no control. (V., 217)

This is hardly the basis for a mature relationship, as even Profane seems to realize. It even takes a hazardous toll on Rachel's friendship with Esther, as Slab argues with another example of the umbilical cord metaphor (V., 49-50). Finally, in a chapter significantly entitled "In which the yo-yo string is revealed as a state of mind," Rachel herself cites the maternal connection after making love to a reluctant Profane:

"You have to grow up," she finally said.
 "That's all: my own unlucky boy, didn't you ever think maybe ours is an act too? We're older than you, we lived inside you once: the fifth rib, closest to the heart. We learned all about it then. After that it had to become our game to nourish a heart you all believe is hollow though we know different. Now you all live inside us, for nine months, and when ever you decide to come back after that." (V., 370)

--spoken like a true White Goddess. However, the umbilical string, despite the nourishment it provides, must be cut to attain mature selfhood. "You have to grow up" is what, in essence, Basil Valentine tells Wyatt when it becomes apparent to the art critic that many of Wyatt's difficulties with life and art can be traced back to his "sainted mother" and his subsequent idealization of romantic redemption (549-51). Such romanticism results in a loss of self, and adds its voice to "the single melody, banal and exasperating, of all Romanticism since the Middle Ages: 'the act of love and the act of death are one'" (V., 410).²³

The Recognitions is filled with male characters stunted psychologically by too great an attachment to their mothers, and it is not until Wyatt can come to terms with his mother's memory and abandon the Wagnerian equation of love with salvation (The Flying Dutchman appears throughout the novel) that he will be in a position to integrate the disparate elements of his personality and experience a more mature love with the Spanish girl Pastora, a love that does not necessitate a regression to maternal dependence and a loss of self, but rather a love that allows a completion of the self by bringing forth the anima within. It is perhaps for similar reasons that Benny Profane is last seen, not with Rachel, but with the free-spirited Brenda Wigglesworth, a girl capable of nourishing without suffocating (unlike Rachel), and an embodiment of the twentieth century without its destructive, perverse tendencies (unlike V.). Wyatt and Profane have found the anima that Stencil, off for Stockholm still in quest of V., will never find.

The quests these characters undertake lead them, not through the enchanted forests of Broceliande or

the windswept plateau of Leng, but rather through what Pynchon calls Baedeker Land, which brings us to another possible link between V. and The Recognitions. Both novels have international settings and feature protagonists whose inner quest is reflected outwardly in their extensive travels. Unfortunately, the modern world is no longer the place for the once noble quest; voyaging has been reduced to tourism, discovery to sight-seeing, as Eliot indicated in early poems such as "Burbank with a Baedeker" and "Lune de Miel." (Gaddis quotes the latter on p. 182 of The Recognitions.) William M. Plater's comprehensive essay, "Baedeker Land," explicates the importance of this theme in Pynchon,²⁴ but neither Plater nor anyone else has pointed out how thoroughly Gaddis anticipates this theme in his novel.

"I think this book will have to be on voyaging," Gaddis wrote in his notes for The Recognitions, "all the myth & metaphor of that in modern times."²⁵ But the difficulty of leading a voyage of discovery in a world crowded with, and even transformed by, tourists is insisted on throughout the novel. The Town Carpenter, Wyatt's maternal grandfather, first fills the young boy's head with tales of "great voyages" (31), and complains bitterly of the tourists that have degraded the hero's voyage:

--Traveling in their trains and their airplanes they try to intrude on the greatest career of the hero. Why, travel's become the great occupation of people with nothing to do, you find second-hand kings and all sorts of useless people at it. There now, it's always the heroic places you find them intruding, trying to have a share in the work of great men, looking at fine paintings and talking as though they knew more of the thing than the man who painted it, and the same thing listening to fine music (. . .) they all suspect that a man needs something to do . . .
(409)

Gaddis fills his novel with these insensitive tourists with their Baedekers, "doing" Europe without ever seeing through their misconceptions to the actual land and people before them. Several times Gaddis suggests

that the progenitors of these ridiculous tourists were those who made religious pilgrimages (496, 825, 901), and reinforces his tourism theme with similar references to the novels of Dostoevski and E. M. Forster.²⁶ That The Recognitions is itself a kind of tour guide to the modern Waste Land is indicated by the title of its fictional counterpart within the novel, Willie's work-in-progress, "Baedeker's Babel" (475). And although Wyatt travels as extensively as anyone in the novel, Gaddis was careful not to recount any of his actual trips, but only those of the other characters. In this way the symbolic nature of his voyage is emphasized over the merely literal, and distinguishes him from the tourists of Baedeker Land. His quest is not available at a group rate.

The lonely quest and its trepidations are also the theme of Pynchon's second novel, in which Oedipa Maas attempts to make the same "recognitions" Wyatt does in Gaddis's novel: the Pentecostal moment when "--everything [is] freed into one recognition, really freed into reality that we never see" (The Recognitions, 92). In fact, the word "recognition" is used in this sense in a passage at the end of The Crying of Lot 49 highly reminiscent of Gaddis's style:

[She remembered] the voices before and after the dead man's that had phoned at random during the darkest, slowest hours, searching ceaseless among the dial's ten million possibilities for that magical Other who would reveal herself out of the roar of relays, monotone litanies of insult, filth, fantasy, love whose brute repetition must someday call into being the trigger for the unnamable act, the recognition, the Word. (CL49, 180)

The dead man is, of course, Pierce Inverarity, who, like Camilla in The Recognitions, does not actually appear in the novel but nevertheless exerts a constant pressure on the protagonist. And just as Wyatt must come to terms with his mother's legacy, Oedipa must come to terms with the true nature of Inverarity's testament. Making true "recognitions" in a culture encrusted with counterfeits, false information, and trash is the challenge both Wyatt and Oedipa must meet.

In both novels there is a conflict between the sacred and the profane, with protagonists exploring the nature of the sacred in a decidedly profane world. There have been many excellent discussions of the religious dimension of The Crying of Lot 49;⁷ but again, none of the commentators seem to be aware that Pynchon's novel was anticipated (if not influenced) in this regard by Gaddis's The Recognitions, the most encyclopedic treatment of religion in American fiction.

The extent of Gaddis's preoccupation with religion in his novel is indicated by the range of source books he used in the process of composition: from the third-century theological romance attributed to Saint Clement from which The Recognitions takes its name, to The Apocryphal New Testament, Lethaby's Architecture, Mysticism and Myth, Foxe's Book of Martyrs, Frazer's Golden Bough, Phythian-Adams' Mithraism, Lang's Magic and Religion, Kramer and Sprenger's Malleus Malificarum, Conybeare's Magic, Myth and Morals, Marsh's Mediaeval and Modern Saints and Miracles, The Pilgrim Hymnal, Summers' The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism, and Graves's previously-mentioned White Goddess. In addition, there are over a hundred citations from the Bible and references to elements of almost every religion and occult tradition, from the Egyptian Book of the Dead to the writings of the Church Fathers, the Koran, legends of the Buddha and Krishna, Gnostic speculations, Saint Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises, hermetic alchemy, a calendar of saints' lives, witchcraft manuals, Fortean hypotheses, mystical numerology, ghosts, and even a Satanic invocation from A.E. Waite's Book of Black Magic and of Pacts. All this led early reviewers to complain that the novel was "shrouded in mysticism" and filled with "pagan mumbo-jumbo," charges that would later be leveled against Gravity's Rainbow by its comparatively fewer detractors. But Gaddis is not merely indulging in arcane name-dropping; all religions and occult traditions have at their base a belief in another, higher reality that transcends sensory reality. Too often this other reality has been literalized into such nonsense as the Kingdom of Heaven with its gold-paved streets and choirs of white-robed angels, or its counterpart in the geography of hell and especially the demonology that excited the prurient interests of many theologians. But Wyatt

works through institutionalized religion and the jejune theatricality of the occult, past the realms conquered and codified by over-confident scientists, to the timeless state beyond the reach of those who would make of God a science, and of science a god. This ineffable state resists description, and accounts to some extent for the vagueness of Wyatt's final appearances, a vagueness which has its counterpart in Gravity's Rainbow in the "scattering" of Slothrop towards the end.

The Crying of Lot 49 is not as overtly religious as The Recognitions, but there are enough hints to indicate Oedipa experiences a similar transformation. She too loses her self--dramatized by her inability to find her mirror reflection (CL49, 41)--and like Wyatt, seeks sustenance from feminine symbols such as the moon and sea.²⁸ She also undergoes a dark night of the soul during her eerie night in San Francisco (CL49, Chap. 5), paralleling the extensive night imagery in Gaddis's novel, and represents a modernization of the allegorical Book of the Dead, to which both refer (The Recognitions, 49 and 388; CL49, 31). Finally, as Anne Mangel puts it, Oedipa's "continual doubt and reevaluation of events differentiates her from the other characters in the novel who do, in fact, end in closed systems of inertness"²⁹--precisely the relationship between Wyatt and the other characters in The Recognitions. Pynchon takes subtle, quiet steps where Gaddis strides in seven-league boots, but they are united in their search for the sacred, a concern that distinguishes them from their more profane contemporaries.

If the idea of the holy in The Crying of Lot 49 looks backward to The Recognitions, its treatment of communication looks forward to J R. The thesis of Wiener's The Human Use of Human Beings is likewise the thesis of Gaddis's and Pynchon's second novels: "society can only be understood through a study of the messages and the communication facilities which belong to it. . . ." ³⁰ As with his treatment of religion, Gaddis's exhaustive treatment of communication in J R greatly exceeds Pynchon's more circumspect treatment, partly, of course, because J R is seven times longer than The Crying of Lot 49. The noise factor in infor-

mation theory is especially prevalent, and thus Gaddis has filled his novel with clichés, advertisements, radio voices, and every level of spoken discourse from legal terminology to street slang. The greatest frustration of the novel's protagonists, Bast and Gibbs, is in finding a noiseless place to create, while the greatest frustration, or rather challenge, for the reader is in translating all the noise in the novel into information. (There is no "pure" noise in the novel; it is a work of art, not a series of tape recordings,³¹ and consequently every word is informative, every cliché revelatory of the character who uses it, as I insisted earlier.) "The redundancy, irrelevance, ambiguity, and sheer waste involved in language glare from every page of The Crying of Lot 49,"³² but with nowhere near as much intensity as in J R, where the idea of waste especially is even more insistent.³³ Entropy is, of course, a central concern of both novels, and has been dealt with at length by both novelists' critics.³⁴

But at this point, further discussion of "influence" would be redundant and of decreasing value. It is indeed highly coincidental that two novelists would borrow the concept of entropy from the scientific world at the same time (though not published until 1975, J R was begun in 1957, set aside for a few years, then resumed in the '60s), and during this time Gaddis and Pynchon continued to read many of the same books (Weber's The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism can be added to the others already mentioned); but the similarities between their work begin to look more like a case of what Leni Pöckler would describe as "'Parallel, not series'" (GR, 159). By the time Gaddis and Pynchon came to write their masterpieces, each had developed his considerable talents to such an extent that any talk of one being influenced by the other is potentially degrading. There is hardly a theme in Gravity's Rainbow that does not have its counterpart in one or the other of Gaddis's novels, but this does not mean that Pynchon cribbed from Gaddis or vice versa. For example, that J R and Gravity's Rainbow both allude to Wagner's Ring tetralogy merely indicates a recognition on both writers' part of the immense relevance of the Ring

to the Nazi Reich in particular and to Western civilization in general.³⁵ If Pynchon is as fond of Rilke's poetry as Gaddis is, again this reveals a mutual recognition of a superior artist whose haunting poetry illuminates various modern dilemmas with which the two novelists are concerned. If Gravity's Rainbow shows the same preoccupation with the occult as does The Recognitions, that fact demonstrates only that Pynchon and Gaddis are reacting independently against Weber's complaint that "the fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the 'disenchantment of the world.'"³⁶ The occult represents a re-enchantment of the world, a restoration of the ancients' sublime (if paranoiac) conviction that everything is indeed connected. And finally, if both J R and Gravity's Rainbow hold Western economic policies chiefly responsible for the deteriorating quality of life, it is difficult to see how anyone as knowledgeable about the roots of modern civilization as Gaddis and Pynchon are could arrive at any other conclusion.

There is no irrefutable evidence that Pynchon has ever read Gaddis: Gaddis is not named in Pynchon's work; there are no direct borrowings or quotations, no tidbits of arcana that could have been found only in The Recognitions. Moreover, Gaddis does not really belong to "Pynchon's company," that group assembled by Thomas Schaub consisting of Farina, Beal, Robbins, Matthiessen, Reed, and Burroughs,³⁷ a group to which one might add Terry Southern, Ken Kesey (cf. Pynchon's ubiquitous "They" with Kesey's "Combine"), Robert Anton Wilson, Samuel Delany (especially Dhalgren [1975]), and--at a different level--Joseph McElroy and Don DeLillo. Only the last two could be considered of "Gaddis's company," both having expressed their admiration for his work.

Perhaps the final word should be left to the writers themselves. Pynchon, of course, is incommunicado; but Gaddis, asked if he had an opinion of Pynchon's work and if he thought it might have been influenced by his own, answered succinctly:

I haven't read Pynchon enough to have an opinion either of his work or whether it

might have been 'influenced' (perilous word) by mine, though I've understood he feels not & who's to know if he'd ever read mine before V? Always a dangerous course,

Gaddis³⁸

Denver, Colorado

Notes

¹ Tony Tanner, City of Words: American Fiction 1950-1970 (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 393, and his recent book Thomas Pynchon (London and New York: Methuen, 1982), 90; Richard Poirier, "The Importance of Thomas Pynchon," in Mindful Pleasures: Essays on Thomas Pynchon, ed. George Levine and David Leverenz (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976), 24.

² See, for example, John W. Aldridge, Saturday Review, 4 October 1975, 27, and R. Z. Sheppard, Time, 13 October 1975, 98. Most of the others mentioned Pynchon in one connection or another.

³ See Elliot Braha's "Menippean Form in Gravity's Rainbow and in Other Contemporary American Texts" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1979); chapter 2 discusses The Recognitions. (Braha is convinced of Pynchon's debt to Gaddis.) That this form is still going strong is evident from two recent novels: Gilbert Sorrentino's Mulligan Stew (1979) and Alexander Theroux's Darconville's Cat (1981).

⁴ New York Times Book Review, 20 June 1976, 7.

⁵ One reviewer speculated that Gravity's Rainbow might well be the long novel Gaddis had been rumored to be working on, and that Pynchon and he were the same person.

⁶ Scott Allan Simmon, "The Ulysses Tradition: Open and Closed Form in the Novels of James Joyce, William Gaddis, and Thomas Pynchon" (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Davis, 1979), 60.

⁷ When I was halfway into the writing of this essay, Clifford S. Mead drew my attention to a paper by Walter Isle (Rice University) delivered at the MLA convention in December 1976 entitled "The Large Loose

Baggy Monsters of William Gaddis and Thomas Pynchon" that examines some of the parallels between the writers' work. (Prof. Isle, like Simmon, suggests Pynchon's three novels may have influenced J R.) But as this interesting paper remains unpublished, I may perhaps be excused for repeating some of Prof. Isle's points in print.

⁸ Letter to Miss Howes dated 8 March 1972, quoted in Grace Eckley's "Exorcising the Demon Forgery, or The Forging of Pure Gold in Gaddis's Recognitions," in Literature and the Occult: Essays in Comparative Literature, ed. Luanne Frank (Arlington: University of Texas at Arlington, 1977), 125. Gaddis's disavowal of ever having read Ulysses has appeared several times in print, but to this day critics still refer to its alleged influence on The Recognitions.

⁹ One common concern--the relationship between the individual and his society--is the subject of J. Bakker's "The End of Individualism," Dutch Quarterly Review of Anglo-American Letters, 7 (1977), 286-304, a discussion of The Recognitions and Gravity's Rainbow. The last five pages tabulate a number of parallels between the two novels (though the question of influence is never raised), but Bakker's Marxist reading is too idiosyncratic (and, on The Recognitions, guilty of too many factual errors) to warrant further citation.

¹⁰ For example, on p. 396 of J R (New York: Knopf, 1975) Gibbs quotes from two of Southey's poems that happen to follow each other in the ODQ; the odds against Gaddis's reading Southey's poetic works and plucking from that morass exactly these same passages in the same order are too great to be considered. Similarly, Coach Vogel's hilarious medley of "cheek" quotations on pp. 463-64 was obviously worked up from the ODQ index, and there are too many other quotations in J R that can be found in the ODQ to doubt Gaddis's reliance on it. He used the ODQ for The Recognitions as well, but I realized this too late to document it in my source study A Reader's Guide to William Gaddis's The Recognitions (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), where many of my "source unknown"s can now be corrected to read ODQ.

¹¹ Epoch, 9, No. 4 (1959), 205; The Recognitions (1955; rpt. with corrections, Cleveland and New York: World, 1962), 131, 132.

¹² If Sade is not being simply name-dropped, there can be found in his outrageous novels a source for Pynchon's equation (especially in Gravity's Rainbow) of sexual perversion with what Joseph Slade calls "a mutual complicity in transgression in order to liberate one's self--if only by obliterating it" (Thomas Pynchon [New York: Warner, 1974], 232). Sade's libertines dissertate on this point at great length between debauches.

¹³ Kenyon Review, 22, No. 2 (1960), 285-86.

¹⁴ J R, 403. Lest anyone leap at this "evidence" of Pynchon's influence on Gaddis, it should be pointed out that J R was begun as early as 1957.

¹⁵ All references to Pynchon's novels are to the hardcover editions: V. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1963); The Crying of Lot 49 (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1966); Gravity's Rainbow (New York: Viking, 1973). These will be abbreviated in citations as V., CL49, and GR.

¹⁶ "The Ulysses Tradition," 58.

¹⁷ "Who is Thomas Pynchon . . . and Why Did He Take Off With My Wife?" Playboy, March 1977, 169.

¹⁸ "The Underground Woman: An Excursion into the V-ness of Thomas Pyncheon [sic]," Chelsea, 27 (1969), 60.

¹⁹ "Refusal of the Call" is the second stage in Joseph Campbell's paradigmatic adventure of the hero: see The Hero With a Thousand Faces (1949).

²⁰ "Pynchon's V. and Durrell's Alexandria Quartet: A Seminar in the Modern Tradition," Pynchon Notes, 8 (1982), 26, n. 8.

²¹ See Douglas A. Mackey's concise discussion of this theme in The Rainbow Quest of Thomas Pynchon (San Bernardino, CA: Borgo Press, 1980), 23-24; Joseph Fahy's "Thomas Pynchon's V. and Mythology," Critique, 18, No. 3 (1977), 5-18; and Alvin Greenberg's ingenious essay cited above.

²² Stephen Dedalus broods on this same conceit in Ulysses (New York: Random House, 1961), 38.

²³ This is precisely the theme of Denis de Rougemont's Love in the Western World (1939), a book Gaddis quotes often in The Recognitions. I would not be surprised to learn that Pynchon also read de Rougemont's influential study, especially by the time he wrote Gravity's Rainbow, where this theme prevails.

²⁴ The Grim Phoenix: Reconstructing Thomas Pynchon (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), chapter 2.

²⁵ Quoted in Peter W. Koenig's "'Splinters from the Yew Tree': A Critical Study of William Gaddis' The Recognitions" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1971), 33.

²⁶ On pp. 937-38 Gaddis quotes Lizaveta Prokofyevna's imprecation from the final page of The Idiot: "'We've had enough of following our whims; it's time to be reasonable. And all this, all this life abroad, and this Europe of yours is all a fantasy, and all of us abroad are only a fantasy . . . remember my words, you'll see it for yourself!'" Earlier in this same final chapter there are references to Forster's Where Angels Fear to Tread (906) and A Room with a View (910), both concerning Baedeker-toting English tourists in Italy. (For some reason David Cowart neglected this theme in his discussion of Forster's influence on Pynchon: Thomas Pynchon: The Art of Allusion [Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980], 115-19.)

²⁷ See, for example, Edward Mendelson's "The Sacred, the Profane, and The Crying of Lot 49" and James Nohrnberg's "Pynchon's Paraclete" printed back to back in Pynchon: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Edward Mendelson (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1978), 112-46, 147-61; Marion Brugière's "Quest Avatars in Thomas Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49," trans. Margaret S. Langford, Pynchon Notes, 9 (1982), 5-16; and the last half of Thomas H. Schaub's superb essay "The Crying of Lot 49: 'A Gentle Chill, an Ambiguity,'" in his Pynchon: The Voice of Ambiguity (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 21-42 (31-42).

²⁸ For a discussion of sea symbolism in The Recognitions and The Crying of Lot 49, see John Z. Guzlowski's "No More Sea Changes: Hawkes, Pynchon, Gaddis, and Barth," Critique, 23, No. 2 (1981), 48-60.

²⁹ "Maxwell's Demon, Entropy, Information: The Crying of Lot 49," in Mindful Pleasures, 93.

³⁰ (Rev. ed. 1954; rpt. New York: Avon, 1967), 25.

³¹ For an example of a "novel" thus created, see Andy Warhol's a (New York: Grove, 1968).

³² Mangel, 98.

³³ See Thomas LeClair's discussion of Gaddis's many-leveled use of the term "waste" in "William Gaddis, J R, & the Art of Excess," Modern Fiction Studies, 27, No. 4 (1981), 591-94. Cf. the pun on waste/W.A.S.T.E. in The Crying of Lot 49, especially 87-88.

³⁴ Pynchon criticism on this point is too extensive and too well known to warrant documentation, but for Gaddis, see LeClair's essay cited in the previous note; Johan Thielemans' "Gaddis and the Novel of Entropy," TREMA, No. 2 (1977), 97-107; and Susan Strehle Klemtner's "'For a Very Small Audience': The Fiction of William Gaddis," Critique, 19, No. 3 (1978), 61-73.

³⁵ See especially L. J. Rather's The Dream of Self-Destruction: Wagner's Ring and the Modern World (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), which incidentally includes Gravity's Rainbow ("Myths, rituals, and remembrances of the Götterdämmerung, 1939-1945") in its Thematic Bibliography (202).

³⁶ Quoted in Schaub, 57.

³⁷ Schaub, 139-40.

³⁸ Postcard to me postmarked 6 August 1982.