

## Chapter Two

# *The Recognitions*: Myth, Magic, and Metaphor

The length of three or four average novels, *The Recognitions* is many novels in one: a social satire, a pilgrim's progress, an anatomy of forgery, both a bildungsroman and kunstlerroman—not to mention a roman à clef—a philosophical romance, even a mystery story. Similarly, it is narrated from not one but several points of view and in as many styles. Wyatt could be speaking for Gaddis when he boasts of his latest forgery, "There isn't any single perspective, like the camera eye, the one we all look through now and call it realism, there . . . I take five or six or ten . . . the Flemish painter took twenty perspectives if he wished, and even in a small painting you can't include it all in your single vision, your one miserable pair of eyes" (251). The first-time reader of *The Recognitions* faces a similar challenge. Ranging across three continents and three decades, evoking four thousand years of cultural history, speaking half a dozen languages, and drawing upon fields of reference as diverse as alchemy, witchcraft, art history, mummification, medical history, hagiography, mythology, anthropology, astronomy, and metaphysics, *The Recognitions* threatens to overwhelm the hapless reader, who may be tempted to cry out with Wyatt, "But the discipline, the detail, it's just . . . sometimes the accumulation is too much to bear" (114).

"How ambitious you are!" his wife Esther responds, and it was Gaddis's ambition in this first novel to do no less than to excavate the very foundations of Western civilization, to expose to the harsh light of satire the origins of its religions, social structures, epistemologies, sexual ideologies, and its art forms. To do so, he created a protagonist whose difficulty assimilating his cultural/religious heritage and achieving a state of psychic wholeness would parallel the rocky road civilization itself has traveled toward that illusory goal. Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, and in Wyatt Gwyon's indecisions and difficulties we have a microcosm of the macrocosmic conflicts throughout

history between patriarchy and matriarchy, God and Mammon, religion and the occult, the demands of the community and the imperatives of the self.

"The most sensitive individual, although not the most normal," Stephen Spender writes of Lowry's Consul, "may provide the most representative expression of a breakdown which affects other people on levels of which they may be scarcely conscious."<sup>1</sup> The breakdown in question, in *The Recognitions* as in *Under the Volcano*, is that of values, morals, standards. Gaddis's novel is primarily an account of personal integration amid this collective disintegration, of an individual finding himself in a society rapidly losing itself. In stark contrast to the dozens of other characters in *The Recognitions* who are indifferent to (when not the cause of) any breakdown in values, Wyatt is tortured by personal and ethical concerns that strike others as chimerical. "The boundaries between good and evil must be defined again," Esther taunts him, "they must be reestablished, that's what a man must do today, isn't it?" But Wyatt insists, "this moral action, it isn't just talk and . . . words, morality isn't just theory and ideas, that the only way to reality is this moral sense" (590–91).

Wyatt's pursuit of "reality" is conducted primarily on a metaphysical plane. All religions and occult traditions have at their base a belief in another, higher reality that transcends sensory reality, and Wyatt—like every true mystic, alchemist, and magician before him—searches for a window on that transcendent state where suddenly "everything [is] freed into one recognition, really freed into the reality that we never see" (92). Traditionally, this other reality (which "you can't see freely very often, hardly ever, maybe seven times in a life") has been literalized into such forms as a supercelestial heaven or a subterranean hell. But Wyatt is as convinced as Melville's Ahab that all visible objects are but as pasteboard masks, and the novel dramatizes his progress through institutionalized religion and the jejune theatricality of the occult, past the realms conquered and codified by overconfident scientists, to the timeless state beyond the reach of those who would make of God a science, or of science a god. This ineffable state resists description and accounts to some extent for the vagueness of Wyatt's final appearances and cryptic utterances; as Kafka told Max Brod, "You can't write salvation, only live it."<sup>2</sup>

This needs to be stated at the outset in order to make sense of the novel's complex matrix of allusions, references, iconography, and iterative imagery. For even though the novel addresses timely questions

regarding the artist's place in the modern world—the one aspect of *The Recognitions* that has attracted the most critical attention—at its widest perimeters the novel is an encyclopedic survey of the varieties of religious experience. In one sense, all of the novel's major characters can be grouped into those "having, or about to have, or at the very least valiantly fighting off, a religious experience" (900), with the majority falling into the third category. Religious and mythic parallels and parodies, from the sublime to the blasphemous, abound in the novel. Not only does *The Recognitions* make extensive use of the primary colors of mythology's palette—sun and moon imagery, the infernal descent, death and rebirth motifs—but Wyatt's symbolic voyage from spiritual darkness to enlightenment follows (by way of quotation and allusion) in the wakes of such metaphysical wanderers as Odysseus, the Flying Dutchman, Faust, and Peer Gynt. Some indication of the scope of Gaddis's preoccupation with religion in this novel is given by the range of sources he used in composition: from the third-century theological romance attributed to Saint Clement from which *The Recognitions* takes its name, to the *Apocryphal New Testament*, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, Lethaby's *Architecture, Mysticism and Myth*, Frazer's *Golden Bough*, Phythian-Adams's *Mithraism*, Lang's *Magic and Religion*, Kramer and Sprenger's *Malleus Maleficarum*, Conybeare's *Magic, Myth, and Morals*, Marsh's *Medieval and Modern Saints and Miracles*, the *Pilgrim Hymnal*, Summers's *Physical Phenomena of Mysticism*, Graves's *White Goddess*, and Edgar Saltus's survey of atheism, *The Anatomy of Negation*. In addition, there are more than a hundred citations from the Bible as well as references to almost every major religious and occult tradition, from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* and Druidic practices to the writings of the early Church fathers, the Koran, legends of Krishna and the Buddha, Gnostic speculations, Saint Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*, hermetic alchemy, a calendar's worth of saints' lives, witchcraft manuals, Mithraic worship, Fortean hypotheses, magic numbers, Zuñi prayer sticks, excommunication rites (both Catholic and Jewish), even a Satanic invocation.<sup>3</sup>

All this led some reviewers to complain that the novel was "shrouded in mysticism" and filled with "pagan mumbo-jumbo."<sup>4</sup> But Gaddis is not merely indulging in arcane name-dropping; like art, religion is subject to decay and counterfeit, and Wyatt's obsession with authentic art is inextricably bound up with his obsession with authentic religious experience. In both realms, the genuine must be distinguished from the fake. Institutional religion receives little serious consideration in

the novel, dismissed out of hand as an amateurish forgery or a poorly printed reproduction. Esme tells Otto that Wyatt once said "that saints were counterfeits of Christ, and that Christ was a counterfeit of God" (483), and most conventional forms of religion are ridiculed mercilessly in the novel. (Here, of course, Gaddis parts ways with Eliot, whose preoccupation with religion he otherwise shares.) Instead Wyatt finds in myth, magic, and mysticism a more authentic religious tradition, "religious that is in the sense of devotion, adoration, celebration of deity, before religion became confused with systems of ethics and morality, to become a sore affliction upon the very things it had once exalted" (311)—an attitude closer to the Pound of the later *Cantos* than to Eliot.

But the novel does not merely advocate a retreat from rational religion to irrational mysticism, or dropping the rosary to pick up a Buddhist prayer wheel. *The Recognitions* does have its supernatural moments, but its immense network of references to myth, religion, and the occult is deployed chiefly for psychological purposes. Carl Jung found in such spiritual traditions the validation needed for his theories of the process of individuation, and Gaddis's documented reliance on Jung's *Integration of the Personality*—a psychological commentary on alchemical symbolism—allows the reader to interpret Wyatt's "wild conflict" (247) in terms of the quest for psychic wholeness that Jung insists is at the heart of all mystical traditions. With Jung supplying the Ariadne's thread, readers can make their way through Gaddis's labyrinth of magic and myth with results that are as surprising as they are enlightening, perhaps even allowing *The Recognitions* itself to function as a heuristic, symbolic text in the tradition of alchemical tracts, and allowing Gaddis to succeed Melville as an "heir to the protestant tradition of New England, parodying with astonishing provincial vigour the old emblematic discourses of a Cotton Mather or Jonathan Edwards."<sup>5</sup>

Gaddis accomplishes this by narrating Wyatt's career on two parallel planes, the realistic and the mythic. The realistic concerns "a lonely little boy, getting upset over silly people" (118). Losing his mother at an early age, Wyatt is reared by a dour Calvinist aunt who discourages his talent for drawing in favor of a career in the ministry. Wyatt dutifully pursues the latter while secretly practicing the former, and after a year at divinity school sneaks off to Europe to study painting. Indifferent to the prevailing fashions in the art world of the 1930s, Wyatt works in the tradition of the Flemish painters of the late Middle Ages

and allows an unsettling encounter with a corrupt art critic to discourage him from continuing his art. Drifting into a sterile marriage and a dull draftsman's job, Wyatt lets his artistic talents go to waste until Reckfall Brown, discovering him in the depths of despair, tempts him away to forge Flemish paintings that his associate, Basil Valentine, will authenticate in the art journals—with all three enjoying the profits. Increasingly prey to guilt and thoughts of damnation, however, Wyatt later decides to forsake forgery and resume his studies for the ministry—a desperate act that fails when he returns home to find his father deranged. He extricates himself from his counterfeiting ring only after witnessing Brown's death and causing Valentine's (or so he thinks), after which he flees to Spain, where his mother is buried. Drifting through Spain and North Africa, he winds up at a monastery in Estremadura where he is finally able to free himself from the feelings of guilt, loneliness, and depression that had been accumulating since childhood. Whether he resumes his art or simply returns to his Spanish lover to raise their child are possibilities suggested but not confirmed as Wyatt, now called Stephen (as his mother first intended), resumes his journey, with the monastery bells ringing him on.

On the mythic plane, however, Wyatt's career adapts several models: he is an adept of hermetic alchemy, a Faust figure, a modern saint, the priest in the ancient cult-ritual of the White Goddess and her Son, the Wandering Jew/Flying Dutchman archetype, a near-victim in the sacrificial killing of the royal son, a Christ figure, Dante and Orpheus in the underworld, even the New Year Robin out to kill his father the Wren. In this respect, Gaddis does indeed resemble Joyce: by "manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity," Eliot felt Joyce had found "a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."<sup>6</sup> Gaddis pursues the same mythical method with equally intriguing results.

### Masks and Mirrors

"Even Camilla had enjoyed masquerades," *The Recognitions* begins, "of the safe sort where the mask may be dropped at that critical moment it presumes itself as reality." But Gaddis is chiefly concerned with masquerades of the dangerous sort, where the mask has presumed itself as reality for so long that "reality," as Nabokov remarked, requires apologetic quotes. "It's like a masquerade isn't it," Herschel

exclaims during the novel's first party scene; "I feel so naked, don't you? among all these frightfully masked people. Remember? de Maupassant, Guy de Maupassant of course, writing to that Russian girl, 'I mask myself among masked people'" (177). Herschel, however, is one of the few in the novel who can still recognize a mask when he sees one; the rest have grown so used to theirs that only an accidental glimpse in the mirror can recall them to themselves.

Masks and mirrors dominate the novel's iconography and carry the psychological values Jung assigned to them in *The Integration of the Personality*: "The man who looks into the mirror of the waters does, indeed, see his own face first of all. Whoever goes to himself risks a confrontation with himself. The mirror does not flatter, it faithfully shows whatever looks into it; namely, the face we never show to the world because we cover it with the *persona*, the mask of the actor. But the mirror lies behind the mask and shows the true face."<sup>7</sup> Wyatt, "that most dubious mirror-gazer of our acquaintance," is shown throughout the novel troubled by "the intimacies of catoptric communion" (673), avoiding the confrontation with himself Jung warns of. For others merely a confirmation of what they want to see, the mirror for Wyatt shows that authentic self he hasn't the strength to become, partially because of unresolved familial conflicts. "They are mirrors with terrible memories," Esme says of the ones in Wyatt's studio, "and they know, they *know*, and they tell him these terrible things and then they trap him" (221).

The most terrible things they tell him are that he has dishonored his mother and wants to kill his father. Wyatt is painfully aware of the first charge, and admits as much; speaking of Camilla's face in his forged *Stabat Mater*, Wyatt agrees with Valentine's interpretation: "Yes, the reproach! That's it, you understand?" (548). But the Oedipal conflict emerges only with close attention to the novel's avian symbolism, submerged in the text just as the conflict is submerged in Wyatt's unconscious. Gaddis learned from Robert Graves that "in British folklore, the Robin Red Breast as the Spirit of the New Year sets out with a birch-rod to kill his predecessor the Gold Crest Wren, the Spirit of the Old Year, whom he finds hiding in an ivy bush. [ . . . ] The robin is said to 'murder its father,' which accounts for its red breast."<sup>8</sup> Elsewhere, Graves identifies the Welsh Arianrhod (one of his White Goddesses) as "the mother of the usual Divine Fish-Child Dylan who, after killing the usual Wren (as the New Year Robin does on St. Stephen's Day) becomes Llew Llaw Gyffes," a Welsh hero with whom Wyatt

associates himself (545). "The child Llew Llaw's exact aim was praised by his mother Arianrhod because as the New Year Robin, *alias* Belin, he transfixed his father the Wren, *alias* Bran to whom the wren was sacred, 'between the sinew and the bone' of his leg" in the manner of the Roman ritual of crucifixion.<sup>9</sup>

Wyatt is associated with the robin both via Llew Llaw and by way of his first work of art, the crude drawing of a robin so severely criticized by his Aunt May. The young Wyatt had killed a wren not on Saint Stephen's Day—though his use of a stone recalls the stoning of the proto-martyr, after whom Wyatt was intended to be named—but, significantly, on his mother's birthday (32). Too guilty at the time to confess the "murder," he blurts it out during his illness a few years later, to which his befuddled father responds with anthropological data from Frazer's *Golden Bough* (47), indicating he is clearly aware of the symbolic implications of his son's patricidal act. When Wyatt returns to his father in II.3 a few days before Christmas, the sight of a wren reminds him of his earlier transgression:

—I'll go out like the early Christian missionaries did at Christmas, to hunt down the wren and kill him, yes, when the wren was king, do you remember, you told me . . . When the wren was king, he repeated, getting his breath again, —at Christmas.

The wren had flown, as he turned from the window and approached with burning green eyes fixed on Gwyon. —King, yes, he repeated —when the king was slain and eaten, there's sacrament. There's sacrament. (430)

Wyatt's eyes had burned green at his first confession of killing the wren as a child (47), and the repetition of this sign of anger during his return (his second coming, as the servant Janet interprets it) follows Wyatt's ominous quotation of Matthew 10:21: "'and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death'" (430). The anger directed at his father apparently springs from an unarticulated suspicion on Wyatt's part that his father was somehow responsible for his mother's death. All the young boy knew was that his father left with his mother but returned alone, and although the older Wyatt has learned the story of "the Spanish affair" (as his father calls it), the suspicion joins the other terrible things in the mirror.

Wyatt is also acting in self-defense. Rev. Gwyon broods over the chapter "The Sacrifice of the King's Son" in Frazer's *Golden Bough* (23), and Aunt May relentlessly indoctrinates Wyatt with a religion that

centers on a father's deliberate sacrifice of his only begotten son. (The father's threat is symbolized by the straight-edged razor Wyatt takes from his father when he leaves for Europe; Esther recognizes it as a castrating symbol [90], and Anselm will later steal it for that exact purpose.) Wyatt's unconscious fears of death and/or castration at his father's hands surface for the last time when the Reverend Gwyon threatens to initiate him into the priesthood of Mithras, to whom the deranged minister is now devoted: "—Yes, at my hands, Gwyon said looking at him steadily, —you must die at the hands of the Pater Patratus, like all initiates" (432). Wyatt flees, but not without incurring additional guilt. Telling Valentine afterward of his trip home, Wyatt says, "I fell in the snow, killing wrens" (545); and by abandoning his deranged father Wyatt can be held indirectly responsible for the Reverend Gwyon's confinement and eventual crucifixion in II.9, just as Llew Llaw the robin symbolically crucified his father the wren.

The recurring references to the robin/wren conflict, to the killing of the king ("My father was a king," Wyatt tells Ludy at the end of the novel [892]), to the various myths of "the god killed, eaten, and resurrected" (536), to Wyatt's use of his father's face in his early Memling imitation of *The Flaying of the Unjust Judge*, and to the significant juxtaposition of symbolically killing his father on his mother's birthday—all point to a classic case of the Oedipus complex. By finally "eating" his father in III.5—his father's ashes have been mistakenly baked into the monastery's bread—the sacrificial act is complete, and by allowing his father's painted face to drop on the ground unheeded (896), the conflict is resolved, the terrible voices from the mirror silenced at last.

Frazer follows his account of mirror superstitions (on which Gaddis drew) with similar superstitions surrounding portraits, which "are often believed to contain the soul of the person portrayed."<sup>10</sup> Most of the novel's major characters have their likenesses, if not their souls, captured on canvas. The Reverend Gwyon, as mentioned earlier, is flayed as the unjust judge in Wyatt's apprentice painting; Esther resembles "the portrait of a woman with large bones in her face but an unprominent nose" that her husband restores (88); Reck tall Brown's ludicrous portrait is subjected to repeated ridicule; Anselm and Stanley resemble Kollwitz's print of two prisoners listening to music (524); Esme not only "looks like she thinks she *is* a painting. Like an oil you're not supposed to get too close to" (147) but models as the Virgin Mary in Wyatt's forgeries, with Wyatt taking the role of Christ crucified, as the Son mourned over by the Mother.

"Such pictures seem to have, for the patient, a psychological magic," Jung writes of a patient who likewise used painting as a means of attaining individuation. "Because pictorial expression fixes certain unconscious contents and draws others around it, he can work magic by this means, but only upon himself."<sup>11</sup> Wyatt's conscious, aesthetic conflicts with art have been treated elsewhere in Gaddis criticism,<sup>12</sup> but to comprehend his unconscious conflicts further, and the importance of his mother's appearances in her son's paintings, another pattern of mythic imagery must be introduced.

### A Fluctuating Between Sun and Moon

In choosing to open the novel with Camilla's funeral, Gaddis draws attention to the character who makes the fewest appearances in the novel but nevertheless exerts the strongest influence on Wyatt: his mother. In fact, her only appearance in the temporal progression of the novel (thus excluding the flashbacks on pages 14 and 52) is as a wraith, appearing before three-year-old Wyatt at the moment of her death (20). The ability to see the ghost of one's mother, says Aniela Jaffé in her Jungian study *Apparitions and Precognition*, "indicate[s] an intensified unconscious, or a relatively easy and rapid lowering of the threshold of consciousness," and "points to a close relation with the unconscious, that is, a rootedness in the instinctual life," for "we must not forget that the 'mother' is a long established symbol for the unconscious."<sup>13</sup> Wyatt can see her, but Camilla vanishes upon Aunt May's entrance (just as the robin flees before her [40]), that is, before that which denies the unconscious, the instinctual, the emotional, and of course the irrational, thereby setting into motion a dichotomy active throughout the novel: the opposition between the unconscious and conscious, mother and father, instinct and intellect, emotion and rationality, night and day, paganism and Christianity, and so on. Warped by Aunt May's influence and only confused by Rev. Gwyon's, Wyatt will thereafter vacillate between two extremes represented by father and mother, like Stevens's Crispin voyaging "between two elements, / A fluctuating between sun and moon,"<sup>14</sup> until he learns that one extreme is not to be privileged over the other, but that the best qualities of each are to be integrated within.

This skeletal psychological program obviously needs fleshing out. The necessity of integrating the conscious and unconscious is not a

modern discovery but is rather of ancient provenance with a rich and exotic history. It is at the heart of such unusual disciplines as alchemy, witchcraft, Gnosticism, "true" poetry (as Robert Graves defines it in *The White Goddess*), and other assorted heresies, all of which can be found in the crowded first chapter of Gaddis's novel. Before the existence of the unconscious was posited by modern psychologists, its function was expressed in other terms by those who realized there is more to perception than what ordinary daylight consciousness allows. Most Platonic and oriental philosophies, all occult traditions, and the mystical branches of institutional religions speak of this alternative consciousness, and countless are the ways adepts have sought to tap its unique powers. The most universal symbols for these two modes of consciousness have been the sun and the moon; associated with the sun are the so-called masculine traits of rationality, intellectualism, order, separation, logic, etc.; the opposing "feminine" traits belong to the moon: intuition, emotions, tenderness, harmony, and so forth. It has become common, therefore, to speak of the opposition of solar consciousness to lunar consciousness: most intellectual activities and institutional religions employ solar consciousness, whereas most mystical and occult traditions, as well as artistic creation, pay homage to the moon. Recent discussions of this dichotomy have focused on the operations of the two hemispheres of the brain, the left half embodying the traditional masculine traits and the right the feminine; though this line of investigation may eventually give greater psychological precision to the question, it is still useful to speak of solar and lunar consciousness because of its rich symbolic heritage, and all the more so because the most consistent and obvious pattern of imagery in *The Recognitions* is the symbolic equation of Rev. Gwyon with the sun and Camilla with the moon. Making the equation early in the first chapter, Gaddis proceeds to draw upon the immense religious and mythological connotations of the sun and moon, effectively enlarging Wyatt's personal struggle for psychic wholeness to universal proportions by employing archetypal images that have influenced civilization, largely by way of religion, from the beginning of history. The ubiquity of solar and lunar imagery in the novel not only converts even atmospheric conditions into telling indications of Wyatt's psychological state, but also illuminates and justifies other patterns of imagery and sundry references that otherwise might seem superfluous.

The symbolic alignment of the sun with Rev. Gwyon is introduced and maintained chiefly by his involvement with Mithraism, a Persian

predecessor and rival of early Christianity, in which the godhead was represented by Sol Invictus, the Invincible Sun. As early as page 8 the reader is informed, with the ironic foreshadowing so common with Gaddis, that at his seminary Gwyon "started the course of mithridatism which was to serve him so well in his later years." We also learn that before he returned to New England after Camilla's funeral he visited the Mithraic temple beneath the basilica at Saint Clement's in Rome (which Gaddis himself finally visited in 1984). Gwyon had squared his shoulders upon "coming forth from the subterranean Mithraeum" (61), convinced Christianity was a forgery of Mithraism, and dedicated himself thereafter not to the Son, but to the Sun. (The pun was not beneath early Christian writers, and Gaddis often plays on the ambiguity.)

But before doing so he, too, receives a supernatural visit from Camilla, where she is symbolically equated with the moon for the first time. At the Real Monasterio de Nuestra Señora de la Otra Vez some two months after his wife's death, he falls ill and develops a delirium:

So he lay alone one evening, perspiring in spite of the cold, almost asleep to be wakened suddenly by the hand of his wife, on his shoulder as she used to wake him. He struggled up from the alcoved bed, across the room to the window where a cold light silently echoed passage. There was the moon, reaching a still arm behind him, to the bed where he had lain. He stood there unsteady in the cold, mumbling syllables which almost resolved into her name, as though he could recall, and summon back, a time before death entered the world, before accident, before magic, and before magic despaired, to become religion. (11-12)

Rev. Gwyon too, then, is offered "passage" to lunar consciousness, but squanders his opportunity. Upon recovering, he resolves to forsake the bleak Christianity of his puritanical community to search for "persistent pattern, and significant form" (15), which he hopes to find in the study of comparative religion. It is enough, he seems to think, to break from the Calvinist tradition of Aunt May and her Use-Me Ladies and to regale his congregation with pagan parallels to their Christianity. But as regards Camilla, he can only hope there will be time (a frequent Prufrockian refrain in the text), and postpones the recovery of what he has lost in her until its recovery is finally beyond reach.

What both he and his son lose in Camilla is the key to the feminine

component of the male psyche, what Jung calls the anima. Rev. Gwyon married late in life and only after his own father died (14), suggesting his own upbringing was as stringent as Wyatt's is under Aunt May—a paternal relative, be it noted. That Camilla was antithetical to the repressed life of that patriarchal environment is seen in the two flashbacks in which she appears. In both instances she is portrayed as vital, impulsive, daring, but most of all nourishing: when Camilla noticed her father had mounted the wallpaper upside down, “she threw her arms over his crooked shoulders and thanked him, and never told him” (52). Aunt May or Esther would have pointed out the error immediately. After Camilla's death, however, Rev. Gwyon seems powerless to recoup his losses; he does not consider remarrying—perhaps in obedience to the Mithraic injunction against marrying more than once—and instead buries himself in his studies, apparently feeling things can be set aright if only he can expose Christianity's imposture to his congregation. (Similarly, Wyatt will later assume he can redeem his misdeeds by exposing his forgeries at Brown's party; in both cases, the unenlightened prefer to remain so—a tendency McCandless rails against in *Carpenter's Gothic*.)

The reverend's studies at this time center on the discovery and exposure of antecedents and parallels to Christianity. But he remains impervious to the spiritual nourishment others have found in these same pre-Christian religious traditions. His preoccupation with the “accidents” of religion at the expense of its “substance” (to use, as Gaddis does, the terminology of the Mass) is the same fault, incidentally, that Wittgenstein found with Frazer, on whom Gwyon relies for much of his material. “What narrowness of spiritual life we find in Frazer!” the Austrian philosopher complained. “And as a result: how impossible for him to understand a different way of life from the English one of his time!”<sup>15</sup> An apposite example is Rev. Gwyon's references to the ancient ritual of “drawing down the moon”: his interest in the rite is confined to the lurid pagan light it sheds on Matthew 16:19, reducing Jesus to the level of a Thessalonian witch. But this rite, still in use by modern witches, is actually a meditative exercise to enlarge lunar consciousness, to gain access to the deep wellsprings of the unconscious. It is not the silly superstition Lucian, Aristophanes, and other ancients took it for, but rather, when properly executed, a spiritual exercise akin to Loyola's meditations or the alchemical opus. It may be only an antiquarian curiosity to his father, but Wyatt will eventually recognize the benefits of drawing down the moon.

A declining sun and rising moon are appropriately present at a key

event in the first chapter: Wyatt's cure by means of a ritual for the expulsion of evil in an animal scapegoat. Miriam Fuchs has suggested that Rev. Gwyon's sacrifice of his Barbary ape during this ritual masks a sacrifice of Camilla herself, insofar as “this monkey had replaced Camilla” (32), as Aunt May suspected.<sup>16</sup> The obvious parallels to Christ's passion suggest Gwyon sacrifices his wife that his son might live, as the Christian god sacrificed his that Christians might find eternal life.<sup>17</sup> Whether Camilla's spirit transmigrates first into Heracles the ape and later into Esme, as Fuchs argues, or more simply represents Wyatt's anima, it is clear that the sacrificial act is Rev. Gwyon's final break with Camilla. To sacrifice is to give up something dear, and he sacrifices his wife that their son might live. He had turned away from Camilla's photograph at the beginning of the ritual, and afterward never speaks of her death (61). Like Roderick Usher burying his anima in the vault of his unconscious, Rev. Gwyon thereby draws ruin on himself and his house.

What he loses in Camilla he hopes Wyatt may find. Shortly after his recovery, and now lodged in Camilla's sewing room—where “she had come at the moment of death” the narrator reminds us (52)—Wyatt undergoes an experience much like his father's in Spain. That which was offered his father and refused is now offered, indeed forced upon Wyatt. Significantly, Wyatt begins two paintings at this time, each capable of leading him either to salvation or damnation, to Ballima way or Oorooma way (268): a portrait of his mother, and a copy of Bosch's *Seven Deadly Sins*. The first is an attempt to redeem his mother's memory and her rich symbolic heritage, the second a grim emblem of the Calvinist worldview Aunt May tried to impose on him (and eventually the painting that will initiate him into the world of forgery). Both will haunt him throughout the novel.

The painting of Camilla is based on the photograph on the living room mantel (57), and it is important to remember that this photograph was made before Camilla was married (19). Much is made of Camilla's symbolic virginity in the first chapter: she is said to have “borne Gwyon a son and gone, virginal, to earth: virginal in the sight of man, at any rate” (14)—because Gwyon arranges to have her transported in a white funeral carriage “ordained for infants and maidens.” For Wyatt, Camilla remains “his virgin mother” (19) and thus is not the impulsive New England girl who married his father, but rather the idealized figure Graves calls the White Goddess—at once girl, mother, and hag, and patroness of the white magic of art.

At the end of the first chapter, then, Wyatt must choose between

the Christian myth of the Father and Son (embodied in Rev. Gwyon, "for somehow his father and the Lord were the same person" [20]) and the ancient cult of the White Goddess and her son, the artist-priest. Instead of finishing the portrait of his mother, however, he first finishes the Bosch forgery, which he sells to Recktall Brown to finance his trip to Europe to study art. Thereafter, the incomplete portrait of Camilla (until its destruction by fire sends him to Spain for the "original"), along with her Byzantine earrings that his father passes on to him, will be a reminder of his incomplete relationship with his mother/anima, which will in turn prevent him from having a complete relationship with any other woman ("Finish it," Esther will plead. "Then there might be room for me" [88]). There is no ruse Wyatt will disdain henceforth to avoid coming to terms with his mother and all she represents. Camilla will remain "in cold vigilance, waiting" like the moon (61) while her son squanders his inheritance and attempts to forge an existence in which she need not play a part, until he realizes only she can supply the missing part of him without which he has no real existence.

### The World of Night

Writing from Munich, Wyatt tells his father he cannot continue studying for the ministry because of guilt, and like a guilty criminal Wyatt goes underground. Much is made throughout the novel of the fact that Wyatt paints at night, evoking the traditional associations of night: death, sin, guilt, fear, crime, sex, and—not so traditional—artistic creation. In "the darkening room" of Wyatt's Paris studio, the art critic Crémer reminds Wyatt of Degas's remark "that the artist must approach his work in the same frame of mind in which the criminal commits his deed" (71). When Esther surprises Wyatt in his New York studio years later, he stands "as though stricken, in the midst of some criminal commission" (87) and she wonders if "the music of Handel [would] always recall sinful commission, the perpetration of some crime in illumined darkness, recognized as criminal only by him who committed it" (98). Esther maligns "this crazy Calvinistic secrecy, sin" (129), but when Valentine makes the same charge, Wyatt defends himself: "It isn't so simple. [ . . . ] It's the same sense . . . yes, this sense of a blue day in summer, do you understand? It's too much, such a day, it's too fully illuminated. It's defeating that way, it doesn't allow you to project this illumination yourself, this . . . selective illumination that's necessary to paint" (239–40).

The recurrence of the word "illumination" in some of these quotations is significant, for the word implies intellectual enlightenment along with its root meaning, and reminds us that the paradox out of darkness comes illumination is a major premise of mysticism, alchemy, and (Wyatt insists) artistic creation. However, Wyatt's defense has an air of rationalization about it, for he is prey to the very guilt and secrecy of which he is accused. Aunt May made it quite clear to him that artists are of the devil's party, and Wyatt never does completely free himself from her influence; two pages before his final disappearance he is still quoting her on "the prospect of sin" (898, from 33). Young Wyatt's earliest artistic efforts had to be carried out in secrecy—not only his drawings hidden in the midden heap but his first forgery as well—and the counterfeit nature of the older Wyatt's work of course necessitates both secrecy and guilt, despite his rationalizations. Aunt May was Wyatt's first and most severe critic, and he has apparently never forgotten her reaction to his first drawing: "—Don't you love our Lord Jesus, after all? He said he did. —Then why do you try to take His place? Our Lord is the only true creator, and only sinful people try to emulate Him. [ . . . ] That is why Satan is the Fallen Angel, for he rebelled when he tried to emulate Our Lord Jesus. And he won his own domain, didn't he. Didn't he! And his own light is the light of the fires of Hell! Is that what you want?" (34).<sup>18</sup> Here, illumination comes by the light of the fires of hell and reinforces in young Wyatt's mind the relationship between artistic creation and sin.

Yet night is also the domain of the female, ruled by Goethe's Mother Night, and associated in myth and psychology with the unconscious—an association the narrator spells out quite often (e.g., 12, 53, 69, 891, 955). Drawn to the night, Wyatt is also terrified of it, terrified of confronting the dark contents of his unconscious. The victim of nightmares, he often works at night to avoid dreaming, which entails entering "the world of night, [where] lost souls clutching guidebooks follow the sun through subterranean passage gloom, corridors dark and dangerous: so the king built his tomb deep in earth, and alone wanders the darkness of death there through twenty-four thousand square feet of passages and halls, stairs, chambers and pits. So Egypt" (388), and so the unconscious.

Confrontation with the dangerous unconscious usually takes the psychomythological forms of an infernal descent or a vigil through the dark night of the soul. The number of works mentioned or alluded to in *The Recognitions* that feature one or the other of these related themes is extensive: Goethe's *Faust* (opening with the Doctor's dark night of

the soul and later involving an infernal descent to the Mothers), Dante's *Inferno*, the *Dark Night of the Soul* of Saint John of the Cross, the apocryphal *Acts of Pilate* (the second part of which features the harrowing of hell), Homer's *Odyssey* (book 11), Vergil's *Aeneid* (book 6), Fichte's *Vocation of Man* (book 2), the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, Rimbaud's *A Season in Hell*, Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, Novalis's *Hymn to the Night*, the medieval passion play *The Harrow of Hell*, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, and many others. In addition, numerous references are made to myths dealing with the underworld, which brings in another important association—the equation of night with hell. As long as Wyatt's psychological conflicts remain unresolved, he remains in hell, so to speak. Wyatt had been dwelling in an "infernal kingdom" (98) ever since his arrival in New York City, and numerous indirect, even casual references reinforce this symbolic equation, building upon the poetic tradition linking the modern city with hell (Milton, Blake, Francis Thompson, Eliot, and later Allen Ginsberg). The city is called "Dis" (696), a "chilly hell" (467), and the discovery of Wyatt's two Bouts forgeries takes place, appropriately enough, in Hell's Kitchen (288). Wyatt moves from uptown to downtown when he begins his forgeries, and is rumored to be living "underground" (172). Even expletives contribute: "You look like hell," Brown tells Wyatt at one point, who responds, "That's because I'm . . . I've been working like hell" (238). Like Milton's Satan, he seems on the verge of lamenting, "Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell" (*Paradise Lost*, 4.75). Consequently, when he decides to return to New York from New England and expose his forgeries, he refers to it as "the harrowing of hell" (442).

Escaping from New York, Wyatt leaves both the underworld and the world of night for Spain, a purgatory where night gives way to a succession of overcast, "sunless" days as Wyatt works through his guilt. "The even unchanging gray of the sky" (806) in these Spanish chapters represents a provisional union of bright day and dark night, a conjunction of the two extremes between which Wyatt had been fluctuating throughout the novel. Only on the final day does dawn bring a clear sky; throughout the novel Wyatt had been waking at dusk and mistaking it for dawn, but finally he wakes at dawn, mistaking it for dusk at first, but learning quickly "the sky wasn't getting darker, it was getting light" (893–94). His long dark night of the soul over, the Pleiades signaling the beginning of a new sailing season (892), Wyatt/Stephen is ready for a new voyage: "Now at last, to live deliberately" (900).

### This Pelagian Atmosphere

In mythology, the movement of the moon across the sky was most often compared to a ship at sea, and illustrations of moon boats have survived from many early cultures. The sky has impressed many as an immense celestial sea, and even in our technological day space exploration employs traditional nautical terminology. A third large pattern of mythic imagery in *The Recognitions* is generated from the metaphoric identification of the sea with the sky, which in light of the relationship between the lunar and nocturnal symbolism examined so far, can perhaps be best understood as yet another facet of what slowly emerges as a huge, interrelated system of cosmological symbolism, again extending to universal proportions the inner struggles of an individual.

The night sea journey common to so many myths represents yet another confrontation with the unconscious, and more specifically with the anima (since the sea is a universally recognized feminine symbol). Gaddis builds on this archetypal symbolism, augmenting it with a wide and colorful array of background material, to establish one of the major themes of the novel, that of voyaging. A voyage implies a homecoming—"whoever started a journey, without the return in the front of his mind?" (898)—and Wyatt's ultimate destination is the resolution of the interior conflicts preventing him from leading a fulfilling life. Gaddis wrote in his notes for *The Recognitions*, "I think this book will have to be on voyaging, all the myth & metaphor of that in modern times."<sup>19</sup> A heavy cargo of "myth & metaphor" accompanies Wyatt on his voyage, largely through Gaddis's multiplying of the metaphoric possibilities of the sea until it floods the novel with a "pelagian atmosphere" (553).

The novel begins literally at sea, and the allure of voyaging and the conceit of a celestial sea are introduced as early as page 6 in a discussion of the constellation Argo and the Pleiades. (It is worth noting that the novel opens with the setting of the Pleiades and ends with their rising, symbolic of the general movement of the novel from death to rebirth, from the Day of the Dead to Easter Sunday.) Throughout the first chapter, there are many references to voyaging—especially from the Town Carpenter, Wyatt's maternal grandfather—but also several deliberate blurrings of sky, sea, and land: the harsh plain of Castile is compared to the sea (7; cf. 770); the sky at the time of Wyatt's departure for divinity school is described as "deep gray-blue, banded with the colors of rust seen under water" (60); in their awkwardness during this scene, both Rev. Gwyon and Wyatt are "caught, as a swimmer on the

surface is caught by that cold current whose suddenness snares him in cramps and sends him in dumb surprise to the bottom" (60); and there is the first of many references to Gervase of Tilbury's tale of "the sky being a sea, the celestial sea, and a man coming down a rope to undo an anchor that's gotten caught on a tombstone" (28). Even the Town Carpenter's interest in ballooning advances the conceit of a voyage in a celestial sea.

But this traditional conceit soon takes on a number of unexpected overtones. Young Wyatt associates the drowned sailor of Gervase's tale with the martyrdom of Saint Clement by way of the anchor common to both stories (44), to which the older Wyatt adds a third element, namely Charles Fort's wry speculation that perhaps we are all at the bottom of a celestial sea and are occasionally fished for by aliens, a speculation that Wyatt (and Esme after him) will voice often in the novel. These three references join in the general submarine imagery that accumulates (see 60, 79, 109, 115) until it is rumored that Wyatt "lives underground. Or underwater" (172). A number of similar references follow until, arguing with Valentine the night he decides to return home to his father, Wyatt brings these references into a Christian perspective:

—Now, remember? Who was it, "gettato a mare," remember? an anchor tied to his neck? and thrown, caught by kelpies and martyred, remember? in the celestial sea. Here, maybe we're fished for. [ . . . ] Have you read Averroes? What I mean is, do we believe in order to understand? Or in order to be . . . fished for. [ . . . ] Yes, yes, that's it. That's it! Flesh, remember? flesh, how thou art fishified. He jumped to his feet. —Listen, do you understand? We're fished for! On this rock, remember? and I shall make thee a fisher of men? (382)

Suddenly recalling Jesus' promise to Peter and Andrew to make them fishers of men—salvaged from this *mélange* of medieval tales, scholastic argument, even a line from *Romeo and Juliet* (2.4.37)—Wyatt decides to return home to resume his studies for the ministry. A number of nautical references in the chapter at home, however, indicate that Wyatt is not yet out of the sea, that is, no closer to salvation than he was before. Undersea imagery continues throughout part 2, especially at Brown's, fancifully identified as the undersea domain of Ibsen's Troll King.

In part 3, Esme associates Wyatt both with the drowned sailor re-

trieved from the ocean during her and Stanley's voyage (834) and with the drowned sailor of Gervase's tale (912, 914). The first association is of vital importance, for it represents Wyatt's symbolic death at sea, foreshadowed several times earlier in the novel. Wyatt's "drowning" takes place in the chapter strategically placed between his abandonment of Sinisterra and their "mummy" as Stephan Asche in III.3 and his reemergence in III.5 as simply Stephen, the name originally intended for him by Camilla. An obvious parallel is the "Death by Water" section that appears at about the same point structurally in Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the symbolic death prerequisite to rebirth. "I've been a voyage, I'll tell you," Wyatt/Stephen concludes at the end. "I've been a voyage starting at the bottom of the sea" (895).

In contrast to the lunar and nocturnal symbolism, both deployed in a fairly straightforward fashion, the marine imagery is developed through the novel in a variety of ingenious ways. An informative example is Gaddis's extended pun on Pelagianism / pelagic / pelagian / Pelagia. Pelagianism, it will be remembered, is one of the heresies Wyatt asks his father about after his return from a year's theological studies. One of the great heresiarchs, the British monk Pelagius (ca. 360–420) not only denied the doctrine of original sin but insisted that man is free to do good or evil—as opposed to the Augustinian doctrine that man, without spiritual guidance, is irresistibly drawn to evil. Rev. Gwyon minimizes Pelagius's achievement: "If it hadn't been Pelagius it would have been someone else. But by now we . . . too many of us may embrace original sin ourselves to explain our own guilt, and behave . . . treat everyone else as though they were full-fledged . . . umm . . . Pelagians doing just as they please" (58). Wyatt himself, as he confesses later, is a Pelagian (806), though that hardly means he simply does as he pleases. Rather, it means he takes personal responsibility for his own salvation, refusing to rely on Christ (or his ministers) to do it for him. Too confident a reliance on Christ, Pelagius argued, promotes "moral decline."<sup>20</sup>

The name "Pelagius" is a Latinized form of the heretic's Welsh name Morgan, meaning "the sea"; Gaddis may or may not be playing on the connection between Pelagius and the sea when Wyatt puns on "Pelagic miles distant" (392), but he surely is during Basil Valentine's harangue:

—And what was it you said? A man's damnation is his own damned business? It's not true, you know. It's not true. Why, good heavens, this suicide of

yours? [. . . ] Look! Look there, in the sky where it's still blue, that line? That white line the airplane's drawn, do you see it? how the wind's billowed it out like rope in a current of water? Yes, your man in the celestial sea, eh? coming down to undo it, down to the bottom, and they find him dead as though drowned. Why, this . . . pelagian atmosphere of yours, you know. Homicide, was it? (553)

"A man's damnation is his own damned business" might be construed as a clever if grim epigram summarizing the Pelagian heresy, but Valentine's use of "pelagian" in reference to Wyatt's celestial sea obsession suggests that Valentine plays Saint Augustine to Wyatt's Pelagius in the novel's theological debate. Wyatt undertakes his own salvation by taking the part of sacrificial priest: Valentine had accused him a few pages earlier of wanting to commit suicide by exposing his forgeries, but Wyatt had answered, "Suicide? this? Do you think there's only one self, then? that this isn't homicide? closer to homicide?" (546). As Valentine recognizes a few lines later, the self Wyatt wants to kill is "the old man," a New Testament locution (Eph. 4:22, Col. 3:9) that refers to the sinful self before baptism. (Otto and Sinisterra use this phrase as well.) Wyatt is both priest and sacrificial victim, pushing Pelagianism to a theological extreme that also includes his father and Our Father among the old men he needs to kill to attain salvation.

Pelagia is also the name of one of the courtesan saints Wyatt recalls during his interior monologue at the point when revulsion from the sins of the flesh is uppermost in mind (392, eight lines before "Pelagic miles distant"). This "*bienheureuse pécheresse*" (blessed sinner), as Gaddis's source calls her,<sup>21</sup> began her career as a different sort of fisher of men, a suitable figure in the woman-as-temptress theme of Wyatt's meditations—a theme that finds expression in the novel's mermaid motif, the most exotic element of its marine imagery. Ungallantly introduced with references to various "faked" mermaids (16, 65—anything can be faked in this novel), the mermaid next surfaces in a conversation between Wyatt and Fuller, Brown's West Indian servant and one of Gaddis's great comic inventions. Contrasting his easy belief in mermaids to the difficulty of faith, Fuller ingenuously concludes:

—It remain a challenge to believe, always. Not so simple to accept, like the mermaids.

—The mermaids . . . the mermaids . . .

—Yes, sar.

—And you can . . . accept the mermaids, without much difficulty?

—Yes, sar, though they remain the complication of the mermaid mahns.

—Yes, there does.

—But the mermaid womans . . .

—Yes, the women . . . you can believe in the women . . .

—Oh yes sar, Fuller said, and then after a pause, —Woman bring you into the world, you got to stick with her.

—Wasn't it woman brought evil into the world, then?

—Sar?

—Yes. When she picked the fruit from the forbidden tree; and gave it to the man to eat?

—So the evil already there provided, and quite naturally she discover it.

—Yes, yes, and she gave it to the man . . .

—She share it with him, sar, said Fuller. —Thaht the reason why we love her. (348–49)

The image of mermaids remains with Wyatt; after his fruitless discussion with Brown—in which he seems to identify his own difficulties with "the complication of the mermaid men" (361)—Wyatt tells Valentine he has been "consorting with mermaids in the bottom of a tank where the troll king lives" (375), conflating one legend with another (as we have seen him do before), this time Peer Gynt's visit to the mountain fortress of the Troll King with the Frog King who lives at the bottom of a well in the Grimm Brothers' tale Esme had read aloud to Wyatt earlier (273). I have already quoted Wyatt's reference to kelpies (382), the Scottish branch of the mermaid family. In one sense, all of the women Wyatt consorts with are mermaids, sisters to the sirens of classical mythology, representing the beautiful but dangerous aspect of the feminine, luring the male down into the watery unconscious and sensuality, away from solar consciousness and intellection.<sup>22</sup>

It is this misogynistic fear that causes Wyatt to flee the intimacy Esme offers to return to the patriarchal world of his fathers, only to discover that his father has gone mad. From two others on the border of madness, however, Wyatt receives valuable advice. "Something amiss," the Town Carpenter tells him, "we must simplify" (441);<sup>23</sup> and when Wyatt questions the stigmaticist serving girl, Janet, on the meaning of damnation, she defines it simply, "That is life without love" (442). With these words in mind, Wyatt boards the next train back to New York to expose his forgeries and to accept the love Esme had offered, hoping in both actions to escape damnation and find salvation.

Wyatt's evil angel, however, mocks him for thinking salvation can be found in a woman:

Basil Valentine turned and laughed in his face. —Really, really my dear fellow. No, he said, clutching the single gray glove before him. —The "somber glow" at the end of the second act, is it? the duet with Senta, is that it? . . . "the somber glow, no, it is salvation that I crave," eh! "Might such an angel come, my soul to save," your Flying Dutchman sings, eh? Good heavens! And up they go to heaven in a wave, or whatever it was? Really! And all that foolishness you were carrying on with the last time I saw you, that "I min Tro . . ." and the rest of it, that Where has he been all this time? and your Solveig answers In my faith? In my hope? In my, . . . good heavens! You are romantic, aren't you! If you do think you mean all this? And then what, They lived happily forever after? (551)

This important concept of woman as the means for salvation was introduced as early as the second chapter in the first description of Wyatt's wife, Esther: "Still, like other women in love, salvation was her original purpose, redemption her eventual privilege; and, like most women, she could not wait to see him thoroughly damned first, before she stepped in, believing, perhaps as they do, that if he were saved now he would never need to be redeemed" (78). The concept is maintained with the identification of both Camilla and Esme with the Virgin Mary, the archetype of salvation via the female; and as late as III.3, Wyatt is tempted to hang his hopes of salvation on Pastora and their possible daughter.

Although endorsing Pelagius's admonition against relying too heavily on Christ for personal salvation, Wyatt has slipped into the more romantic notion of relying on women for the same purpose—the danger of which is set out by Denis de Rougemont in his *Love in the Western World*, another of Gaddis's sources. But by the end of the novel Wyatt/Stephen seems to have realized that the female promise of redemption is as illusory as a mermaid's promise of love to homesick sailors: both lead to destruction and the loss of self—or at the very least to a loss of independence and self-reliance, advocated in the copy of Thoreau that Wyatt carries around. Both the Flying Dutchman and Peer Gynt perish as they find salvation in a woman's embrace. "Yes, the women," Wyatt had said earlier in that discussion with Fuller, "you can believe in the women" and apparently agrees that "Women bring you into the world, you got to stick with her" (348). But this cannot

be at the expense of one's individuality, one's autonomy, which the female—in her destructive/unconscious aspect symbolized here by the mermaid—often threatens. The sparse but psychologically precise use of mermaid imagery, then, strengthens the identification of the sea with the unconscious and further defines the role of the female in Wyatt's "voyage starting at the bottom of the sea."

As mentioned earlier, a "pelagian atmosphere" is maintained throughout the novel not only with marine imagery but with dozens of similes comparing the land to sea and actions on land to actions on/in/under the ocean. And not only is the sea often compared to the sky, as we have seen, but there are several deliberate confusions of sky and land (e.g., 205–6, 790, 899), so that a symbolic equation of ocean = land = sky = ocean is made. By deliberately confusing both the land and sky with the sea, Gaddis is able to give almost all of Wyatt's actions the trappings of a sea voyage. Appropriately enough, none of Wyatt's actual ocean voyages is dramatized; only those of the other characters are. Thus the symbolic nature of his voyage is emphasized over the merely literal. For even though he does indeed voyage in a literal sense, the novel is the story of his psychological voyage—like those of Peer Gynt, Odysseus, the Flying Dutchman, and the Wandering Jew across the world, Faust to the Mothers, and Dante, Christ, and Orpheus to hell—a voyage through the unconscious but dominant elements of his psyche.

Thus a vast, interlocking network of maternal symbolism pervades the novel, all generated from the psychic havoc that resulted from Wyatt's early separation from his mother (and paralleled historically in the conquest of matriarchal religion and sensibility by the patriarchal) and his subsequent guilt over dishonoring her with his forgeries. Sea, earth, moon, night, sky, hell—all are feminine symbols conspiring against him. Robert Graves, whose *White Goddess* greatly influenced Gaddis, argues that the male must exist in an essentially female universe, and thus should pay homage to the Eternal Feminine, not rebel with sterile masculine rationality. (And by "rationality" both Graves and Gaddis mean "thinking along prescribed lines without any thought for sensibility."<sup>24</sup>) Wyatt is immersed in a world of female symbols, yet spends most of his life denying that world.

"We must never forget," Jung reminds us, "in the case of the anima, that it is a question of psychic facts which have never before been in man's psychological possession; that hitherto were always to be found outside his consciousness in every possible form of projection."<sup>25</sup> Gad-

dis's matrix of feminine symbols represents every possible form of projection of those qualities Wyatt keeps at arm's length for so long: emotion, intuition, tenderness, even irrationality. Early in the novel, Esther often complains of Wyatt's lack of emotion and his overreliance on things of the intellect. "I wish you *would* lose your temper," she tells him at one point, "or *something* because this . . . this restraint, this pose, this control that you've cultivated, Wyatt, it becomes inhuman" (97). Complaining of Wyatt's coldly rational reaction to Bach's ebullient Suite No. 1 in C, she tells Otto, "Yes but it isn't human [ . . . ]. It isn't a way to live." Otto comforts her with "He can't just go on, like this" (126), nor does he. Wyatt himself realizes something is wrong, something is missing, symbolized by the missing mother. The unconscious presence of Camilla throughout the novel represents the lure of the irrational, of the need to balance the intellect with emotion, reason with intuition. In fact, it is significant that the only dramatic portrayal of Camilla in the book is in a flashback to the time when Rev. Gwyon's archaeologist friend offered her a pair of Byzantine earrings, "not knowing Camilla, not knowing she would run from the room clutching the gold hoops, and surprised (though Gwyon was not) when she burst in again with wild luster in her eyes, wearing the gold earrings, blood all over them" (14). Marrying Camilla had been Gwyon's attempt at tempering the intellect with emotion; he passes on this legacy to his son by giving him her earrings as keepsakes, which Wyatt simply keeps in a box, just as he keeps his emotions in a box. (The earrings represent the mother as the razor does the father; but as golden circles, they represent authenticity and wholeness, while the razor represents castration and conformity to Christian principles—see the Saint Wulstan anecdote [203].)

Esme discovers the earrings and dons them, but Wyatt has already spurned her by that point. Not until the last page on which he appears does he realize the importance of the earrings; by intending to pass them on to his daughter,<sup>26</sup> he demonstrates his recognition of the emotions and especially of the strongest, most liberating emotion of all, love. Not the sentimental love of romantics, nor the lust of sensualists: the kind of love Wyatt embraces is less *eros* than *agape*—charity, attentiveness, caring. "Charity's the challenge" Wyatt had admitted earlier (383), but not until the end of the novel is he psychologically prepared to commit himself to this challenge. It is important to note that the Augustinian motto Wyatt chooses reads "*Dilige et quod vis*

*fac*" ("Love, and do what you want to" [899]), not the more popular form "*Amo et fac quod vis*"—that is, Wyatt prefers the verb meaning "to esteem and care for" over that meaning "to love passionately."<sup>27</sup> This is the kind of love recommended in Eliot's *Four Quartets*; for Wyatt it represents a new beginning, not an end, for as Eliot argues, this form of love never ceases to be a challenge.