UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL

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WILLIAM GADDIS'S AESTHETICS OF *RECOGNITIONS*

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Bad Poets imitate. Real poets steal.

T.S. Eliot

Bad artists copy. Great Artists steal.

Picasso

RESUMO

O romance *The Recognitions* (*Os Reconhecimentos*) do escritor norte-americano William Gaddis é um texto auto—reflexivo que retrata a trajetória de Wyatt Gwyon da infância à maturidade, na medida em que ele rejeita e busca a originalidade.

O presente trabalho analisa *The Recognitions* enfocando a problematização dos conceitos de originalidade e autoria propostos pelo romance através de debates sobre a falsificação e o plágio, que remetem a duas noções maiores e mais importantes: autoria e originalidade. O romance questiona a presente demanda por originalidade e discute a possibilidade de ser original. Ele formula uma estética baseada em reconhecimentos que é defendida no romance e usada pelo autor na tessitura do texto.

A fim de atingir seus objetivos, este trabalho apresenta os diferentes conceitos associados aos termos originalidade e original, assim como alguns das principais violações relacionadas a eles na sociedade contemporânea. Também oferece um histórico do desenvolvimento dos conceitos de originalidade e autoria na sociedade ocidental, mostrando a crescente importância da figura do autor e o desenvolvimento paralelo dos conceitos de plágio e direito autoral. Os capítulos seguintes dedicam-se a tentar fornecer um relato do romance enfocando os principais personagens, todos artistas, e também uma análise do romance à luz do background histórico e teórico apresentado nos dois primeiros capítulos. O primeiro desses capítulos de análise enfoca a trajetória de Wyatt e suas concepções artísticas. O segundo os reflexos de Wyatt na narrativa, que reforçam a estrutura auto-reflexiva do romance. E o terceiro exemplifica e analisa a estética de Wyatt baseada na noção de reconhecimento, que nada mais é do que a própria estética usada por Gaddis na composição de sua ficção.

Palavras-chave: romance - originalidade – autoria – falsificação – plágio

ABSTRACT

William Gaddis's *The Recognitions* (1955) is a self-reflexive novel that portrays Wyatt Gwyon's trajectory from childhood to maturity, as he rejects and searches for originality.

The present work bestows an analysis of William Gaddis's *The Recognitions* focusing on the problematization of originality and authorship proposed by the novel by means of the central issues of forgery and plagiarism, which bring with them two larger and more important sister-notions: authorship and originality. The novel questions the prevailing demand for originality and discusses the possibility of being original. It formulates an aesthetics of recognitions defended in the novel and used by the author in the making of this text.

In order to do that, this work provides a view on the different concepts associated with the terms originality and original, as well as some of the main infringements related to them in contemporary society. It also offers an account of the development of the concepts of originality and authorship in Western society, showing the growing importance of the figure of the author and the parallel development of the concepts of plagiarism and copyright. The next three chapters are dedicated to attempt to provide an account of William Gaddis's *The Recognitions* focusing on the main artist characters and an analysis of the novel in the light of the theoretical and historical background provided. The first of these chapters focuses on Wyatt's trajectory and his visions of art. The second identifies and analyses Wyatt's mirrors in the narrative, which reinforce the self-reflective structure of the novel. And the third chapter exemplifies and analyses Wyatt's aesthetics of recognitions, which turns out to be Gaddis's own aesthetics in the making of his fiction.

Key-words: novel – originality – authorship - forgery - plagiarism

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Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos.

Mary Shelley

INTRODUCTION

William Gaddis is one of the most highly regarded novelists of North American literature, even though he only published four novels when he was alive and a sole posthumous one came out. His fifth novel was to be published when he passed away in 1998 and was published, even incomplete, in 2002.

As surprising as the fact that he wrote only five novels over a 50-year career is the publication interval between them. *The Recognitions* was published in 1955, *JR* was to come 20 years later in 1975*, Carpenter's Gothic* in 1984*, A Frolic of his Own* in 1994, and the unfinished *Agape Agapé* in 2002.

These novels share many characteristics, but, indubitably, the most striking one is the fact that in all of them the major characters are artists or want-to-be artists, and most minor characters are somewhat related to art. This clearly demonstrates Gaddis's interest in the role the artist plays in

contemporary society. His artists do not seem to be successful, for they have to come to terms with accusations of plagiarism, forgery and counterfeiting, and are often threatened with the impossibility of creating their works. Nevertheless, Gaddis's characters do not repeat their preoccupations from novel to novel, for as the twentieth century advances, his artist characters change their concerns, reflecting transformations later dealt with by literary and art criticism. However, it is already in his first novel, *The Recognitions*, that Gaddis explores issues related to the status of art and artistic creation in contemporary society that were just starting to be thought of in the mid-fifties, when the novel was published.

One of the movements Gaddis engages into is the use of self-conscious or self-reflexive elements, for *The Recognitions* is a self-conscious novel, that is, it is an extended prose narrative that draws attention to its status as fiction (STONEHILL, 1988, p. 3). According to Stonehill, the self-conscious text dramatizes and encapsulates its own context (1988, p. 5), that is, it mirrors itself. As Ruland and Bradbury call it, Gaddis is part of a movement toward a "fictionality of fiction" (1991, p. 383), or metafiction, generating a self-reflexiveness in the novel, which is another name for self-consciousness. There is evidence that Gaddis accompanied all

these questionings concerning the nature and limits of the novel in contemporary society.

The self-conscious nature of his fiction, along with the complexity of *The Recognitions*, seem to account for the poor reception the novel obtained in the first 20 years after its publication. Nowadays, however, it is considered a landmark in American literature.

The Recognitions is an encyclopedic novel, for it has over 950 pages, its plot is labyrinthine, and over fifty characters populate its pages. Despite the fact that most of them are marginalized figures such as forgers, counterfeiters, plagiarists, bigots, and drug addicts, Gaddis depicts them sympathetically, seeming to partake of some of their woes. In addition to that, the novel bears intertextual relations to a great number of major texts of American and world literature. It faces the reader with a combination of certain formal and thematic characteristics that made it known as postmodern literature and, for many important critics, it can legitimately lay claim to being the first American postmodern novel (JOHNSTON, 1990, p. 193). But at the same time, Gaddis uses the traditional form of the Bildungsroman, or better, a Künstlerroman, for it

shows the development of an artist character from childhood to maturity.

He is a painter named Wyatt Gwyon, who is led to reject originality, and ends up painting in the style of the Flemish old masters[1] he greatly admires and identifies with. Wyatt is unable to obtain any recognition of his talent or sell his paintings in the 1940's, since he does not seem to fit into the artistic scenario of the time, for his paintings are not original[2] and he refuses to pay art critics to get good reviews of his work. In fact, Wyatt does more than just paint in a style resembling that of these masters; he uses their own techniques and believes, as Renaissance men thought, that God is watching him and he is painting for Him. Also, Wyatt never even signed his name under his paintings for he seemed to believe he had not created them. In a way, Wyatt's painting practices simulate an impossible return to the time of the old masters.

Unable to expose paintings of his own and obtain recognition for his achievement, Wyatt winds up becoming a successful forger, a unique forger of the Flemish old masters. He

[1] The Flemish old masters were a group of painters of the 15th, 16th, and early 17th centuries in Flanders. They were the first masters of the oil and the most famous names are: Jan and Hubert van Eyck, Hans Memling, Rogier van der Weyden, Hugo van der Goes, Joachim Patinir, and Hyeronymus Bosch.

[2] First, they are not original for they are in the style of the old masters and then they will not be original because they will be forgeries.

does not give any importance to money; what he really wants is to see his paintings hanging and being admired, and forgery provides him with that.

Wyatt does not become a forger intentionally. He is seduced into forgery by a Mephistophelean character named Recktall Brown, who is interested in the material gains to be obtained with Wyatt's talent, and helps Wyatt achieve immense success as a forger. However, as a talented artist, Wyatt does not copy actual paintings of these masters, but, instead, he continues producing paintings of his own that could have been painted by these painters, but, as far as we know, were not. Therefore, Wyatt imitates the style and the technique of these painters to perfection in new and unique paintings and either does not sign them or signs a master's name underneath them. What he really counterfeits are the signatures he puts on them, not the paintings themselves, an act he repeats until he starts to have growing doubts about his activity and considers following the ministry, as it is a tradition in his family, to redeem himself. Summing it up, Wyatt rejects his ministry in favor of the call of the artist, but cannot completely leave his ministry aside.

Wyatt wanders back and forth from North America to Europe in a quest for recognition and is himself faked, for the second most important character in the novel is a counterfeit of Wyatt. Otto is a playwright, who is also in search of recognition, but a different kind of recognition, for he wants to be a famous writer, but is accused of plagiarism. Otto is, in many ways, a reproduction of Wyatt, for he imitates Wyatt in his writing and in his personal life, even marrying Wyatt's first wife.

But Wyatt and Otto are not alone in their quests. Numerous other characters, facing their own artistic predicaments and mirroring Wyatt's quest, surround them. As Otto and Wyatt really want to be recognized as artists, although they do not share the same concept of recognition, they and their friends and acquaintances, at the same time, attempt to make sense of contemporary American society and its antinomies.

Thus, Gaddis makes us think about the process of artistic creation introducing us to characters that are considered a forger and a plagiary, exploring and questioning two of the most controversial and pivotal issues related to it: forgery and plagiarism.

These notions are opposites and, at the same time, complimentary issues, for in plagiarism the plagiary takes someone else's text and signs his own name on it, whereas in forgery the forger writes someone else's name under his own work. However, as Stearns reminds us, both of them question the notion of what is one's own work of art and if it is possible to own a work of art such as a painting or a book (1999, p. 7). Thus, they bring with them two larger and more important sister-notions: authorship and originality. These issues are related to the discussion of the role of the artist and art itself in contemporary society that Gaddis seems to offer us in *The Recognitions*.

Gaddis questions the prevailing demand for originality and discusses the possibility, or perhaps growing impossibility, of being original. He problematizes authorship and originality by means of plagiarism and forgery, as well as fakery and counterfeiting, showing that they are constructs, and, therefore, cannot stand by themselves as absolutes, depending on other variables such as time. In this panorama, the concept of originality, as well as the concept of authorship, becomes essential to an understanding of this movement in Gaddis's fiction which heralds postmodern American fiction.

Although postmodernism is not a homogeneous term, designating a range of features difficult to agree on, there is no doubt it certainly announces a rupture with the notions of originality and authorship, and the 1950’s is often considered the period in which postmodern fiction arrived on the scene.

Nevertheless, it would be naïve to say that Gaddis uses the problematization of originality and authorship without any other end. Although the main plot deals with forgery and plagiarism, it would be a mistake to say that *The Recognitions* is a novel that simply deals with art forgery and plagiarism. According to critic John Beer, *The Recognitions* is not a novel solely about forgery, just like *Moby Dick* is not a novel about whaling (2001, p. 82). Gaddis takes the themes of forgery and authorship to explore other issues he also considered significant, for *The Recognitions* can be said to be a critique of American society in the mid-fifties and a reflection on the nature of art. As the novel advances, it is clear that forgeries are in the novel not only in art, but also in people’s lives. Gaddis provides us with a virulent satire of American culture in the 1040’s and 1950’s, depicting its growing consumerism and commodification, which change the relation between works of art and their creators and works of art and their public.

But despite this, *The Recognitions* is not a bleak novel, for it is a vituperative satire, and it has extremely funny passages, mainly if one is able to follow the humorous dialogues and is fond of black humor. The most amusing incidents in the novel are related to recognitions, or misrecognitions, for Gaddis's characters seem unable to recognize what is going on around them. Thus, Gaddis plays with situations involving recognitions and failures of recognition, but the name of the novel refers to other recognitions that go much deeper.

The title *The Recognitions* evokes the name of a canonical, and at the same time controversial, Christian text attributed to Clement of Rome, who is often said to be the first literary forger. Clement's *The Recognitions* dates from third-century Greece and can be said to be an extended sermon. It is a narrative that presents Clement's quest and adventures as a young adult as he sets out to Egypt and then Palestine in order to find truth, or redemption. During his journey towards Christian conversion, Clement meets Saint Peter and Simon Magus, who tempts him by offering him magical powers and he has to decide to follow either Christianity or magic. For Johnston, "it is a theological romance centered on the quest of a young man named Clement for

the true religion and salvation of his soul" (1990, p. 8), which greatly resembles Wyatt's mission.

The analysis of *The Clementine Recognitions* seems to add much to that of Gaddis's text, and also shows us a little about Gaddis's compositional procedures and beliefs about writing, for "Reading *The Recognitions* is an exercise of recognition" (STONEHILL, 1988, p. 119). The words "recognitions" and "recognize" appear at least 81 times in the novel, which makes critic Steve Moore refer to the verb "to recognize" as a "talismanic" verb in the narrative (1989, p. 43).

But the word "recognition", besides referring to Clement's text, has other important connotations. It is at the same time what most novelists seek after publishing their novels, and also what Gaddis demands from his readers, for his whole fiction is grounded on the reader's ability to make recognitions. As he once stated,

> What writing is all about is what happens on the page between the reader and the page... What I want is a collaboration really, with the reader on the page where the reader is also making an effort, is putting something of himself into it in the way of helping to construct the fiction that I am giving him[3].

[3] Quoted from a Gaddis reading at the New York State Writer's Institute, State University of New York at Albany, April 4, 1990. A copy of the partial transcripts was graciously provided by fellow Gaddis scholar Gregory Comnes in 2001.

This intricacy of *The Recognitions* led to three very important initiatives without which this work would be almost impossible. The first one is *The Reader's Guide to the Recognitions* written by Steve Moore, which was first published in 1982 and which has been extremely helpful in tracing references and helping readers find their ways through the novel. The second one is the Gaddis-I list, which has been active since 1996, and is currently hosted by Yahoo. It has been conducting guided readings of the novels and been the site for discussions of Gaddis' work. Finally, the list led to the creation of The Gaddis Annotations Site, which currently houses on-line reader's guides, including an updated edition of Steve Moore's guide, for all of Gaddis's novels supplied with information obtained from members of the list.

Considering the information provided so far, this research will bestow an analysis of William Gaddis's *The Recognitions* concentrating on the problematization of originality and authorship proposed by the novel itself by means of the central issues of forgery and plagiarism presented in it. I will attempt to relate the preoccupations of Gaddis's characters and their art to changes in American society in the twentieth century and the consequent development in literary and art theory, as notions as originality and authorship start to occupy headlines

after the 1950’s, showing how Gaddis anticipates these discussions formulating his aesthetics or recognitions.

To do that, I first provide a view on the different concepts associated with the terms originality and original, as well as some of the main infringements often related to them in contemporary society. I also offer an account of the development of the concept of originality in Western society, discussing its changes as they occur along the centuries. In this chapter, issues of interest raised by elemental texts such as Walter Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” and Edward Said’s “On Originality” will be presented and discussed, along with texts by contemporary theoreticians on the matter, to be later used in the analysis.

In the following chapter, a historical background of the concept of authorship is offered, showing the growing importance of the figure of the author in the last centuries and the parallel development of the concept of plagiarism as well as of copyright in the last 300 years. This background is used with the aid of renowned authors who have dealt with the issue of authorship, such as Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Seán Burke, and other contemporary scholars.

The scope and complexity of *The Recognitions* make any attempt to condense it deemed to failure; for this reason, no linear summary of the novel is provided. The next three chapters are dedicated to attempt to provide an account of William Gaddis's *The Recognitions* focusing on the main artist characters and their relationship with their works, and an analysis of the novel in the light of the theoretical and historical background provided in the two previous chapters. The first of these chapters focuses on Wyatt's trajectory and his visions of art. The second chapter focuses on mirrors of Wyatt in the narrative, which reinforce the self-reflective structure of the novel. And the third chapter exemplifies and analyses Wyatt's aesthetics of recognitions that turns out to be Gaddis's own aesthetics in the making of his fiction.

It should be noted that regarding its structure, the novel is divided into three distinct parts: the first one comprises 277 pages distributed in 7 chapters, the second one 439 pages and 9 chapters, and the last one 233 pages, 5 chapters and one unnumbered epilogue. Each chapter starts with an epigraph. This division is also a thematic one and in order to make my account of the novel easier to understand I will follow it, dividing my first chapter of analysis into three parts corresponding to Gaddis's division.

Finally, I will make some final remarks regarding what is here understood by Gaddis's aesthetics of recognitions. Nevertheless, it is important to make it clear that Gaddis does not provide us with many answers. Rather, he asks us many questions and challenges us to take a path attempting to find some possible answers and this is what this work is about. It is an attempt to follow his calling.

1 THE RISE AND FALL OF ORIGINALITY

Originality is not invention, but a sense of recall, recognition, patterns already there. You can’t invent the shape of a stone.

Wyatt Gwyon

The words *originality* and *original* have been widely used to refer to works of art for many centuries. Nevertheless, the meaning and status attributed to them has changed greatly throughout history. Nowadays, the words originality and original are still commonly employed to refer to works of art, but they are becoming increasingly difficult to define as new forms and modes of artistic production have arisen.

Edward Said identifies the importance ascribed to originality in literature and invites us to think about it. Said states that, “originality is something worth examining” (1983, p. 126) and ponders that,

> Not only does one speak of a book as original, of a writer as possessing greater or lesser originality than another, but also of original uses of such and such a form, type, character, structure; moreover, specialized versions of originality are found in all thinking about

> literary origins, novelty, radicalism, innovation, influence, tradition, conventions, and periods (1983, p. 126).

Therefore, originality has been used as a key criterion to judge and attribute value to works of art in literary and art criticism. This chapter is dedicated to the study of originality and its implications in Art, mainly painting and literature. Firstly, the two senses in which the term originality is used are put forward and consequently its adjective original. Secondly, a brief history of originality and its concept is provided.

1.1 The two concepts of originality and their implications

The word originality comes from the Latin word *origo*, which means rise, beginning, or source. However, there are two basic senses in which the term originality is used and, although they are different, they are not easily separated. These two different concepts of originality are central in William Gaddis's fiction.

The first meaning of originality is related to a work of art that is not copied from another, being, thus, authentic, that is, having an aura as Walter Benjamin (1993) puts it. The main characteristic of such work can be said to be authenticity, for it is "produced directly by an artist" (LINDLEY, 1952, p. 17). As

a typical example of that we would have a Van Gogh hanging at a museum as an original in opposition to the poster reproductions of it sold at the museum shop, which would be mechanical reproductions. These poster reproductions or copies obtained from this original would not be as valuable as the original both in the commercial and in the artistic sense because they would be deprived of the aura of the unique moment in which the original was created by the hands of Van Gogh. They would be deprived of authenticity, which is located on the body of the artist (GROOM, 2002, p. 13) and is represented by his single signature. Another example would be a book printed at a printing press, being the original, and a Xerox copy taken from the book, a copy. In the examples above, there is a close relation between the copy and the original, a relation of origin, for the original would be the origin for the copy, or the originator of the copy, but the copy would lack something, that is, authenticity, for the copy would have been obtained by mechanical means. Another example would be a painting painted by a painter such as Van Gogh, the original, and a copy of it produced by another artist, which would also be a reproduction, but a hand-made one, and depending on its use, a fake.

In our contemporary society, there have been a growing number of copies as means of mechanical reproduction have made it

easier for man to reproduce these original works of art. As the number of reproductions of a certain original increases, so does the value of the original and the status of the producer of this original. Therefore, copying an original increases the value of the original. And to ensure the value of the original and income for the creator of this original, copyright was instituted. But copyright is related to property and for one to have copyright over a certain work of art, one has to own it. Therefore, copyright relies on a certain concept of work of art and its relation with its producer. The questions to be posed are: Who owns a work of art? Is it the painter or the owner of the painting? To what extend is it possible to own a work of art? Does the artist make the work or does the work make the artist?

These questions are discussed in detail by William Gaddis in his fourth novel, *A Frolic of his Own* (1994). In this novel, a dog named Spot gets trapped into a statue called *Cyclone Seven* and people demand that the statue be put down so that the dog is removed, since the statue is on a public avenue and is, therefore, public property. The sculptor, on the other hand, claims that he is the owner of the work of art for he has created it and tries to save the statue. A legal battle starts and the whole society is involved, as the dog trapped in the statue becomes a CNN attraction and the whole battle a legal spectacle.

These issues are widely discussed nowadays, but were first identified and dealt with by German philosopher Walter Benjamin in the 1930's. In his influential 1936 essay "The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction" (1993), Benjamin attempts to analyze the influence of the then modern techniques of mechanical reproduction and diffusion of the work of art for the first time.

Benjamin explores the changes in technical capacity that made it possible to reproduce, and therefore, disseminate works of art and how they "radically changed the material conditions of the artists' existence, and hence their social and political role" (HARVEY, 1990, p. 23). In short, Benjamin asks if the fact that works of art are reproduced to be presented simultaneously to a mob of spectators affects or does not affect the original. Benjamin was concerned about the effects of these changes in society, in the works of art in the 1930's, but the issues raised by him gained increased importance as the end of the twentieth century provided us with a new array of modes of reproduction, mainly those capable of virtualizing works of art.

The title of Benjamin's essay implies the existence of a new age, which Benjamin calls "the age of mechanical

reproduction” and which would be modernity for him. However, the changes noticed by Benjamin became widespread and indicated that modernity was starting to be replaced, in many instances, by postmodernity, although the term postmodernity had not been coined yet.

In the very first lines of his essay, Benjamin states his purpose. He affirms that the theses contained in his text aim at putting aside numerous traditional concepts, such as creativity and genius, which had been long prevailing and were closely connected to the issue of originality (1993, p. 166). Therefore, it is not surprising that his work was largely either overlooked or denied for decades. Moreover, Benjamin starts the text by making clear references to the first volume of Marx’s *Das Kapital*, where Marx deals with the trade of goods, and hints that he sees works of art as goods. Nevertheless, Benjamin does not seem to see this as negative, as he does not see mechanical reproduction as negative; it is a sign of the times.

The first issue Benjamin addresses is that of reproducibility. Benjamin reminds us that works of art were always reproducible, but these modes changed significantly from manual to mechanical affecting the work of art. If the mode of reproduction changed, it was because the sole objective of the

reproduction was also altered, as the status of the work of art developed from object of cult to object of consumption (1993, p. 169).

One of the most important concepts for us in this essay is the concept of aura. For Benjamin, the difference between a perfect reproduction and an original lies in the here and now of the work, its history, its unique existence (1993, p. 167). The aura would be, then, the content of authenticity, which would escape technical reproduction (1993, p. 167).

However, one of the most relevant thoughts presented by Benjamin regards the relationship between the reproductions and the original. Benjamin asserts that the authentic work of art preserves authority compared to manual reproductions, which are usually considered forgeries.

Nevertheless, it does not preserve its authority compared to mechanical reproductions for two reasons: First, mechanical reproductions have more autonomy than manual reproductions, and can, in a way, change the original, highlighting some aspects or blurring others; second, mechanical reproductions enable the work of art to be in places and situations never thought about before, placing the copy closer to

the audience than the original ever was. Consequently, Benjamin concludes, even though these circumstances do not alter the content of the work of art, they decrease its here and now, atrophying its aura (1993, p. 168).

Therefore, authenticity is related to the origin, the history of the work of art and this is what disappears when a work of art is reproduced. The work of art, as an object, loses the status of original, its place in tradition, to become a serial object. Consequently, there is a clear opposition between the uniqueness and the durability of the original and the transience and the repetitiveness of the reproduction, which are evidently related to the changes human perception has suffered due to changes in people's way of living.

Benjamin also reminds us that the insertion of the work of art in tradition was as an object of cult, acting in the service of a ritual. For him, an authentic work of art is never completely deprived from its ritual function for "the unique value of the 'authentic' work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value" (1994, p. 529). However, with mechanical reproduction, the work of art emancipates from ritual (1993, p. 169). Benjamin states that the difference between technique and magic is merely a historical variable in an earlier

text, “A History of Photography” (1993, p. 95), where he suggests the concept of the aura for the first time in his work.

However, Benjamin does not see this change in modern art as necessarily negative, as many have seen. Benjamin prophesizes that contemporary art would be more effective if it focused on the capability of reproducibility of works of art and not on their originals (1993, p. 180). Benjamin argues that auriatic art was, in itself, elitist; however, the new art forms that make use of technical reproduction in their making are not elitist in themselves for they are mass-produced and are for the masses that make their existence possible.

Along with the spreading of reproductions of all kinds in contemporary society, a number of new issues regarding the relationship between works of art and their makers emerge, among them those referring to the relationship between original works of art and their reproductions, as Benjamin had foreseen. This led to the coinage of new terms and the change in meaning of other terms used to refer to these changes, which are often considered violations or infringements and which are often confused. The way to go further with these distinctions is by giving examples and attempting to define these violations. However, it is necessary to have in mind that nowadays many of

these terms are also used as legal terms, but their primary meaning does not often equate the legal one.

Nowadays the distribution of Xeroxed copies of a book or of reproductions of a painting may be considered an infringement if the copies were not authorized. In these two examples, the reproductions of the originals were mechanical reproductions and a possible violation involving these reproductions and their originals would be called **piracy**[4]. The distribution of the Xeroxed copies or the reproductions of the painting without the payment of copyright to the owner of the rights to them is considered piracy, as these copies would not be used in an authorized way, and would be, therefore, illegal. The violation would be considered a kind of copyright infringement and the violation can be said to relate to the copying of the original and not to the original itself. The producers of these copies, often called pirates, are usually more interested in the monetary gains obtained from the illegal transaction involving the copies than in spreading them. To most consumers, it does not seem to matter if the copy is authorized or not, but if it is "good", that is, similar to the original and, therefore, it carries a little of its aura and can be used in the absence of

[4] The concepts of **piracy, forgery, fakery**, **counterfeiting**, and **plagiarism** were developed based on the definitions of these terms provided by the *Longman Contemporary Dictionary of English* (1999) and the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of English* (1990).

the original. Thus, piracy is the sale of unauthorized but attributed copies of any work, and thus, the author of this work is not deprived from it, but solely of profit. The name of the artist is not involved, but the fruits obtained from the original work are. It is a form of reproduction that is, above all, an infringement and is more related to the status of the work of art as an object of consumption, a product, than to its status as a work of art. It denounces a new position of the work of art in contemporary society and is intimately related to copyright.

Another kind of infringement would be **forgery**, and to understand the nature of forgery it is necessary to have in mind that forgery involves fabrication, since the origin of the verb to forge is to fabricate and therefore the forger was the one who made or formed an object (GROOM, 2003, p. 48). Thus, although nowadays the prevailing meaning of forgery is negative, it has not always been like that. After Romanticism, with the advent of the concept of genius and copyright, the word forgery gained its implication of fakeness and criminality; before that to forge was to make not to fake (HERRON, 2005).

Forgery is not related to any mechanical reproduction of an original. Forgers forge an original; they create an original work of art, document, or even literary text that never

existed, but might have existed, or as Nick Groom explains, a forgery “conjures the illusion of a source” (2003, p. 16). As an example of that we would have a painting recently painted resembling a Monet and sold as a recently found Monet. Forgers forge an aura to a painting or a book, making it seem genuine and claim its authenticity. Forgery does not involve copying from an original, but from pre-established models of a period or artist, resembling someone’s style. Nevertheless, forgers are also usually interested in the profit obtained from the commercialization of these works. In a way, forgers create an original but an original dislocated in time, and therefore, not authentic. Forgery is a crime against the reader or public, but it is undeniable that the forger is a skilled artist.

Forgery has always been considered more treacherous than counterfeit, which is exemplified by the fact that forgers have received more punishment that counterfeiters. This is exemplified by the punishments received by forgers and counterfeiters in Dante’s *Inferno*. This is usually associated with the supposition that forgery might represent a threat to aristocracy.

A **counterfeit** is an exact copy of something in order to deceive people and is, therefore, more associated with money

bills, signatures, and documents. It evidently involves great technical expertise. However, it is implied that a counterfeiter needs an original to copy from. For Nick Groom, a counterfeit is a fraudulent facsimile copy of an original", that is, "an exact copy of a pre-existing work" (2003, p. 16). It can be assumed that the counterfeiter's real purpose is to efface himself, for the counterfeiter's central strategy is to suppress traces of origin (KENNER, 1968, p. 160). Kenner explains that, "It is difficult to discover any objection to a forged Vermeer, except that Vermeer did not paint it"; to a forged banknote, except that the bank did not issue it" (KENNER, 1968, p. 30). What Kenner is saying is that the work of the counterfeiter is a work of craftsmanship. Kenner goes even further and claims that, "What the counterfeiter is imitating is not the bill, but the moment when that bill was issued by the Treasury of the United States" (1968, p. 83).

Another possible fraud, which might involve paintings, documents, or literary texts, would be **fakery**. A faker makes an imitation, an illegal copy, of an existing work in order to deceive others. The faker masters the technique and therefore is able to copy in detail the original. There is great resemblance between the copy and the original, but just one of the paintings has the aura that makes it authentic.

A second meaning of originality is related to a work of art being innovative, displaying something new or creative, supposedly different from all the previous ones and uniqueness could be said to be its main characteristic. Following this perspective, Van Gogh would be considered original for having painted in a style different from all the others who came before him. A book would be original for displaying unique characteristics, introducing innovations to the literary establishment. The reproductions of these original works of art would serve to spread the recognition of these qualities and give more value to the original.

One common fraud related to literary works and the absence of uniqueness is **plagiarism**. Plagiarism is usually defined as appropriating someone else's words or ideas without acknowledgement and using it as one's own, posing as the originator of those words. Plagiarists supposedly steal the work of others and, consequently, the credit and, according to copyright regulations, the ownership and the profit obtained form this work. Thus, stealing literary works or ideas is of a more complex definition than stealing a picture from a museum. Dutton distinguishes plagiarism and literary forgery. For him, "plagiarism is the theft of the content of a work, whereas

forgery involves the theft of an author's name, placing authorship in question" (DUTTON, 1998). Plagiarism gains importance as originality becomes the characteristic that defines authorship. The cult of originality fueled the opposition between the true author and the plagiary, which was nonexistent at Shakespeare and Pope's time, for both mimetic and originary writers were valued and copyright did not exist. Differently from Shakespeare and his contemporaries, when writers sit down to write nowadays, they know there is copyright.

Alexander Lindley's *Plagiarism and Originality*, which is claimed to be the first book to cover plagiarism, makes an important distinction. Lindley reminds us that although plagiarism and infringement are often associated, they are not the same thing (1952, p. 2). What makes the difference between them is copyright, since copyright is not necessary for the existence of plagiarism but is essential in the case of infringement.

Although the distinction between these two concepts of originality seems clear after a brief explanation, it is difficult to separate these two uses of the term originality, mainly because they are used indiscriminately and often mingle.

In both meanings, however, what makes a work of art original is the moment and the process of its creation and not merely its existence as an object. Therefore, there is an originary scene associated to this originality, that is, the existence of originality and an original presupposes the existence of an original moment, just like Freud's originary scene, which would reduce the rest to a mere repetition of the same scene (EAGLETON, 1998, p. 73).

Literary works are doubtlessly works of art, but it would not be surprising to say that the development of written works of art has taken a route parallel to that taken by other forms of art, such as painting and sculpture. However, due to their diverse natures, their histories have often diverged to meet at later crossroads.

1.2 Originality in the History of Art

Although originality is still often referred to as an important quality of a masterpiece, being considered an ideal to be achieved by the artist, its relevance and concept have started to be questioned by theoreticians. Even though it had its heyday from Romanticism to Modernism, it has not always been as important as that. This emphasis given to originality is a

product and symptom of modernity, and, as modernity starts to be replaced by postmodernity, it deserves to be challenged, for it relies on a series of assumptions now questioned.

Lindley makes an interesting association between originality and chemistry. For him, “Originality resembles a one-way chemical equation: something original may be ingenious and startling, but something ingenious and startling may not be original in the true sense” (1952, p. 17). This association is important because it relates alchemy, the precursor of chemistry, to artistic creation.

1.2.1 The Rise of Originality

The concept of originality relies on two different nuances: what is new and what is not a copy, but these two nuances rely on the existence of an original piece. Thus, the difference between originality and copy emerged when the first attempts to represent were undertaken, and those where still in pre-historic times. However, originality was only thought of many centuries later.

It is in Pre-historic time that we have the first artistic manifestations, but pre-historic time is usually divided into two distinct periods: the Paleolithic and the Neolithic, which have distinct characteristics and relevance to this study.

Painting has always been one of the most highly regarded forms of art and that is not accidental. It is widely known that the first type of art we have proof of is said to be a form that has originated painting as we have it today. The first paintings date from the end of the Paleolithic between 40,000 and 10,000 BC and they were paintings on cave walls produced by cave men. These works had a naturalistic nature, for they aimed at representing a certain reality and nothing more than that. It is assumed that the painter of the Paleolithic painted nothing more that what his eyes could see.

The questions that have interested critics are related to the reason why pre-historic men painted and the content of their paintings. According to most historians, pre-historic men painted for pragmatic and magical reasons and not for any other reason (HAUSER, 2000, p. 4). Pre-historic men painted dead animals; animals crossed by arrows most of the time. It is agreed that they painted the realization of a wish for they were concerned about the magical effect of their drawings and not

about the drawings themselves. Many of the drawings found by archeologists are located in hidden places; therefore, it is obvious that there was no intention that these works be seen or appreciated. The sites where these paintings were made seem to have served as sites of cult where hunters would go to throw arrows at the paintings to make their hunt more efficient (BAUMGART, 1999, p. 6). According to Baumgart, these representations were attempts to dominate a world in which evil was personified in animals (1999, p. 6). Therefore, artistic production starts from images working in the service of magic, as Walter Benjamin has pointed out (1993, p. 173).

Centuries later, in the Neolithic, there were already a few signs of stylization, and these can be said to be the first signs towards originality, for they were the first attempts of pre-historic men to do more than represent reality as accurately as possible. According to Baumgart, this move from Naturalism to stylization reflected a possibility of abstraction and suggested that man was evolving (1999, p. 7).

There is evidence that the drawing and the thing it represented were the same for those men; therefore, art was in service of life (HAUSER, 2000, p. 6). As what we nowadays call work of art was produced with the intent of having an effect on

reality, it was, thus, a part of reality as a transforming object. It can be said that the work of art at that time was a part of reality itself. This way, it can be assumed that there was no world of fiction and imitation separated from empirical reality and thus there was no separation between empirical reality and its representation. When pre-historic men painted animals on cave walls, they believed to be producing an animal such as the ones they wanted to hunt (HAUSER, 2000, p. 5). This is totally different from the perspective developed centuries later of an art-for-art's sake.

It is not known how or why these hunters started painting in the magic period, but there must have been a pre-magical moment before the Paleolithic in which there might have been the discovery of a relationship between the copy (drawing) and the original (animal). This attitude of representing the animal presupposes a moment when there was the realization that representing the animal is copying it and in a way, possessing it. These preconditions for art might have been developed in what Hauser calls a pre-magical period (2000, p. 8). These preconditions, in short, can be said to be: the concepts of imitation and similarity and the question whether it is possible to produce something from nothing or not.

In the Neolithic, however, there was a change and the style was geometric as concrete forms were abandoned being replaced by abstractions. This drastic change occurred because there was an enormous change in the way of life of pre-historic man. According to Arnold Hauser, it was in this period that artists started to open their eyes to the richness of the empirical reality and, as a consequence of that, they wanted to suggest objects more than to reproduce them (2000, p. 9). Moreover, there is an enormous change in man's life as religious rites and cults start to replace magic and witchcraft. Animism, that is, the cult to the spirits, the belief in the survival of the soul, and the cult of the dead starts to predominate. It can be assumed that the fragmentation of the world into two started here, as the body is separated from the soul and life on Earth is separated from life in the other world, which means that our world is no longer seen as the only one. This leads to an extremely important fact: the separation between sacred and profane art. The function of art has changed greatly. After the division of art into sacred and profane, the artistic activity was divided into two different groups and the artist-magician lost his status.

Concerning the status of the one that painted, there were also great changes from the Neolithic to the Paleolithic.

The first painters of the Paleolithic were hunters who also painted, and painting and hunting seemed to be related activities. It is believed that not all men had this power of representation and consequently, the hunters/painters, having a special gift, were supposed to have magical powers giving rise to the artist/wizard figure. If the man painting was not an artist as we see it today, he was certainly not equal to the other members of his group, for he was the possessor of magic powers and it might be said that they were professionals. Furthermore, critics agree that this artist-wizard might have been the first representative of specialization and division of work (HAUSER, 2000, p. 19).

It is only many centuries later, in the Middle Ages, that originality became really an issue to man. As the era considered the Middle Ages comprises a very long period of time, there were many changes regarding the status of the work of art and its producer along the period.

It is in the Middle Ages that the picture as a form of painting, as we know it today, is created and spreads. As Walter Benjamin reminds us, the existence of a picture is totally different from that of architecture, for it has no practical use; it is created to be admired and for no other reason (1993, p.

193). However, much of the art produced in the Middle Ages shared one characteristic with the paintings produced by cave men, as it was not produced to be seen by human eyes. It was art for the glory of God, for men believed God was always watching them and had to be constantly honored. Therefore, much of the art produced in the Middle Ages had a theological function. And as man in the Middle Ages was very concerned about his role and position in the universe and relationship with divinity, it is natural that it was in this period that incipient questionings regarding the origin and role of works of art arose, mainly those referring to the possibility of originality.

Marc Jimenez (1999, p. 33) reminds us that in 1230, Albert, the Great, who had been Saint Thomas Aquinas's master, stated that, "Creating is producing something out of nothing"[5], which suggests that philosophers and theologists in the thirteenth century were commencing to reflect on the notion of origin or beginning (JIMENEZ, 1999, p. 34). However, it would be impossible for them to endow man with the capacity of creating a work of art, for the sole creator was God. For them, when one created a work of art, one was revealing the power of the Almighty. This is clearly expressed in Saint Augustine's *Confessions* which, although written much before, still exerted a

[5] Note: translated by the author. The 'original' reads: "Criar é produzir algo a partir do nada"

strong influence. In his *Confessions*, Saint Augustine states that God created the artist's body, soul and genius (JIMENEZ, 1999, p. 34). This statement seems extremely relevant for it indicates that thought was given to the issue of artistic creation and the role of the artist and the origin of the artist's talent. Saint Augustine's argument is that man could not create in fact, for God would be behind any work of man. Therefore, the idea of an autonomous creation reaches the sphere of art in the fifteenth century before it was admitted by theology and thought by philosophy. But according to Jimenez, only in the Renaissance will the concept of artistic creation be conceived and accepted (1999, p. 35). However, what must be noticed is that Saint Augustine used the word genius, which will gain great importance in the Renaissance and centuries later with Edward Young and Immanuel Kant.

It is in the Renaissance that there is a marked change in the role of the artist and art in society as humanism spreads and the concept of genius emerges and brings together the notion of an autonomous creation. Petrarch exemplifies this change from medieval to Renaissance minds considering the relation between artist and nature, and the original and its copy. Petrarch writes that,

> He who imitates must have a care that what he writes be similar, not identical… and that the similarity should not be the kind that obtains between a portrait and a sitter, where the artist earns more praise the greater the likeness, but rather of the kind that obtains between a son and his father…(we) too should take care that… what is like should be hidden as to be grasped only by the mind's silent inquiry, intelligible rather than describable. We should therefore make use of another man's inner quality and tone, but avoid his words. For the one kind the similarity is hidden and the other protrudes; the one creates poets, the other apes (PETRARCH apud ALFREY, 2000)[6].

In this quotation it is possible to see that Petrarch defends imitation, but not copy. As a man of his time, a humanist, he suggests the use of what has already been produced, that is, tradition, but encourages his fellow artists to go further than their predecessors. This reflects the discovery mentality of Renaissance men.

But Renaissance men such as Petrarch do not create out of nothing, as Albert, the Great had suggested. On the contrary, Renaissance artists studied sciences such as mathematics and geometry and used them in the making of their works of art. The development of the laws of perspective, widely studied and used by painters and sculptors of the time, reflect this, as they elevate painting and sculpture above mere practices that depend upon the skill of the artisan; they become intellectual activities that enable the artist to go beyond the status of

[6] The quote is from Petrarch's Le familiari XXIII, which I was not able to obtain.

simple artisan and promote artists to the role of humanists (JIMENEZ, 1999, p. 37). Leonardo da Vinci and Titian are always referred to as examples that signal this change. They were not seen as mere artisans, but geniuses whose capacities extended beyond those of the time. They had the power to create, but the force that moved them was still God (JIMENEZ, 1999, p. 37).

From the beginning of the fifteenth century on artists start to produce works that are not for collective use and become producers of objects upon request, that is, customized objects. This change is obviously related to capitalism, for artists become well-known and stop charging for the materials used in the making of the work and start charging random prices depending upon their name, fame, that is, the skill attributed to them. Therefore, there is a change affecting the status of the artistic work, but also the role of the artist as a producer of this object, as artistic production becomes significantly more autonomous.

In fact, it is important to point out that, differently from what had happened in previous periods, it is in the fifteenth century that painters and sculptors start to sign their works of art, even their self-portraits exposing themselves as the producers of the works. This unveils a shift from the work of

art to the personality of the one who made it (JIMENEZ, 1999, p. 38). This marks a move from authorship to author, from the work of art to the artist, which will also happen in literature. Nevertheless, the subjectivity of the artist does not become object of philosophical investigation yet.

As a consequence of that, in the sixteenth century, artists start to be more recognized and receive privileges, such as living in palaces. In short, there is a marked change in the role of the artist from an artisan to a real artist, which implies the recognition that artists do more than just handcraft work. However, the status of the objects they produce changes drastically, just like texts do, as they are not instrumental anymore. The artisan establishes a bond between his work and its utility, that is, he is aware of its value of use.

Valls remarks that there is another important shift in this period, since the number of artists that start to commercialize their work increases (2002, p. 24). Contracts start to be produced and signed between artists and buyers and the issue of the price of a work of art starts to be raised. It is in this context that the figure of the critic emerges and gains importance. The critic would be the one with a great knowledge of art, more knowledge than the public, and would be able to

attribute value to a work of art, which would be later converted into currency.

In the sixteenth century, there is an emphasis on the talent or genius attributed to the artist and the signature on the works becomes increasingly important as a constituent part of the work of art. Thus, it seems obvious that the artist is the one who creates and this ability to create has a price, and he, as the owner of this power, can sell it. Therefore, there is a clear idea of ownership of a work of art.

But those who signed the works were not its single painters, for renaissance masters had plenty of apprentices in their studios. These apprentices often painted large portions of their paintings and some masters even had a scale of prices depending on the amount of the work that had been painted by the master himself or his apprentices (LINDLEY, 1952, p. 224). This certainly complicated the issue of authorship.

Concerning this, Vattimo (1994, p. 10) is very clear when he states that there is a change of attitude at the end of the Quattocento, when modern age is officially inaugurated. It is in this period that little by little the artist will start to be considered a genius gifted with creative powers; the new, and the

original, consequently, will start to be more valued. Vattimo goes as far as to say that this is concomitant with a perspective that starts to see human history as a progressive process, and therefore, the new is better than the old.

Even though Michelangelo produces his work only a generation after da Vinci, it is usually affirmed that Michelangelo creates freely, differently from da Vinci, but the fact that Michelangelo is called ‘the divine’ implies that he did not paint with his hands, but with his soul. In the Renaissance, writers are still seen as a vehicle or an instrument, mouthpieces. However, the question of the artist’s subjectivity is not analyzed yet, for it will be dealt only later by Immanuel Kant.

Nonetheless, as Jimenez reminds us, imitation is still the prevailing aesthetic principle; artists should imitate, copy, or reproduce exterior reality, making the artist dependent upon nature. The purpose of every artist was rendering homage to God by imitating His creation. Thus, aesthetic conceptions of the Renaissance involved: imitating nature, celebrating God and still respecting the laws of perspective (VALLS, 2002, p. 27). Being able to achieve that was certainly not little.

It is important to point out that it is exactly in this period of change that the Flemish Old masters produce their main works in Flanders. Therefore, they belong to a period of transition in which painters, besides painting their religious scenes, also attempted to depict the new reality of the prosperous merchant cities and their citizens by painting families inside the comfort of their houses cramped with objects. They tried to conciliate earthly and celestial realities painting both realities and suggesting that both were worthy of painting.

Despite the fact that the artist is said to have creative power, in the Renaissance, it is not believed that the artist has a subjectivity. Although Descartes does not provide us with a Cartesian aesthetics, he was extremely important for the advent of aesthetics. Aesthetics could not have appeared had it not been for Descartes' considering man as the owner and creator of his own representations (JIMENEZ, 1999, p. 70). This conception of the autonomous subject led to that of an autonomous art.

Woodmansee defends that this prevailing modern conception of autonomous art began to gain shape in the eighteenth century, a century that witnessed enormous changes in the production, distribution and consumption of art, with the

growth of a book and art market for the middle classes. Woodmansee claims the importance of the work of Karl Philip Moritz, who argued that works of art had an existence “for their own sake” (1994, p. 11), that is, they had an intrinsic value and were autonomous. Also, Woodmansee identifies the origin for this shift from instrumental to autonomous works of art in the works of Charles Batteux and Moses Mendelssohn. Batteux “brings the arts together under the concept of imitation” (WOODMANSEE, 1994, p. 13) and Mendelssohn believes that the unity of the arts is grounded in their ability to move us (1994, p. 15). This ability to provoke emotions is explored in Romanticism when originality will reach its apex.

1.2.2 The apex of originality

It is in Romanticism that the notion of genius becomes widespread, although it had been described before, and it arises closely connected to the notion of originality.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the concept of genius emerges and it seems to surface along with the concept of a unified Art (JIMENEZ, 1999, p. 88). For most historians, the work of Jean-Baptiste du Bos (1670-1742), *Réflexions crítiques sur la poésie et la peinture*, is elemental in discussing the

notion of genius. For du Bos, genius is a fire that moves artists and is not related to education, as it was thought to be during the Renaissance. He believed that genius was a gift (JIMENEZ, 1999, p. 92). After him, many others touched upon the notion of genius and started connecting it to the promotion of novelty. A genius would be the artist who could take off-the-beaten track roads. For Diderot, the genius would be different from mediocre artists who would merely attempt to respect the existing rules (JIMENEZ, 1999, p. 93).

Up to the beginning of Romanticism geniality remains as a gift to some chosen ones, but it is along Romanticism that geniality moves from the outside of the artist to its inside. Martha Woodmansee (1994, p. 16) reminds us that one of the most important texts to depict this change was Edward Young’s “Conjectures on Original Composition”, which was first published in 1759 and had a great influence on the Romantic movement. The issues discussed in this text are not totally innovative, as it claims, for it is not the first text in the period to discuss the issue of imitation, but it is the first to sketch out the notion that great writers break with tradition to create something new, unique, original and, therefore, defies the Classicism that prevails at the time.

In this text, Edward Young presents a view on artistic creation different from the prevailing one in the middle of the eighteenth century and prefigures notions that will be present in Romanticism. The title of the text itself evokes originality, as he dares to mention the word original, a word that had been banished from the vocabulary of the time, as neo-Classicism was the prevalent mode at the time and it relied on imitation.

Young defends originality and claims his own originality attempting to make his text into a performative text, for he advocates originality and attempts to be original at the same time. He pretends to be original and by doing so he rejects an entire tradition of writers on the theme of imitation.

Besides using the word original several times along his text, Young also employs the word genius and relates genius to originality. Young describes the mind of a genius as a “fertile ground” enjoying a “perpetual spring” that can produce flowers of different values and provides a system of valorization to these flowers (1995, p. 37). He uses nature metaphors all along the text and compares originals and imitations by saying that,

> Of that spring, originals are the fairest flowers: imitations are of quicker growth, but fainter bloom. Imitations are of two kinds: one of nature, one of

> authors. The first we call originals, and confine the term imitation to the second (1995, p. 37).

Nevertheless, in the lines following the passage quoted above, he states that he will not discuss the criteria used to establish what is original and what is not original and declares that some compositions are more original than others and should, therefore, be more highly regarded. This way, he is valuing what he considers original compositions and recognizing, at the same time, that even originals are, at a certain level, imitations. According to him, “originals are, and ought to be, great favorites” because they provide us with something new, while imitations are merely duplicates of what we have (YOUNG, 1995, p. 37).

Thus, Young’s text seems to already reflect a change from Neoclassicism towards Romanticism, as originality and individuality gain importance. In fact, his text seems to reflect the inauguration of a preoccupation with originality and uniqueness that will be dominant in Romanticism.

Young recognizes, though, that there are excellent imitators, but believes that since they are built on another’s foundation, their debt is, at least, equal to their glory and, therefore, the work of imitators does not compare to the

production of an original, despite the quality of the original (1995, p. 37). He goes on to reinforce this point by saying that, “an imitator shares his crown, if he has one, with the chosen object of his imitation; an original enjoys an undivided applause” (1995, p. 38). Thus, it seems that, according to these views, those who produce any artistic or literary work based on existing works are imitators to him and must share the glory obtained from this work with the work used as a reference. That is not problematic, what appears to be problematic for Young seems to be sharing the honor, as the artist/writer would lose his individuality and autonomy.

Young defends that original texts or works of art are much more attractive to us just like “perfect strangers” (1995, p. 38). Therefore, he seems to recognize that texts might be based on other texts, but believes there are some texts that are not based on other texts and thus it is possible to produce a text or work of art without referring to what has been done before. Still, Young states that most writers of classics wrote “accidental originals” as the works they were supposedly based on have been lost. This way, he seems to admit that originality depends on not being able to recognize sources and that ignorance might prevent the recognition of imitation (YOUNG, 1995, p. 38).

Young considers the moderns inferior but states that they do not have to be inferior to the writers of the classics and provides a recipe for that. He explains why he thinks there are such few original works by saying that the first writers had no alternative but to be original since they could not be imitators, for they had nothing to base themselves upon (YOUNG, 1995, p. 39).

He proceeds by providing a surprising recipe for modern writers to become greater than the ancient and he suggests they should imitate the ancient, but in a certain way. He suggests,

> Imitate them by all means, but imitate aright. He that imitates the divine Iliad does not imitate Homer; but he that imitates the same method, which Homer took, for arriving at a capacity of accomplishing a work so great. Tread in his steps to the sole fountain of immortality; drink where he drank, at the true Helicon, that is, at the breast of Nature: imitate; but imitate not the composition, but the man. For may not this paradox pass into a maxim? Viz. ‘The less we copy the renowned ancients, we shall resemble them the more.’ (1995, p. 40).

Young still explains how to outdo one’s predecessors. According to him, “It is by a sort of noble contagion, from a general familiarity with their writings, and not by any particular sordid theft, that we can be better for those who went before us” (YOUNG, 1995, p. 41). Therefore, one should not steal from the previous writers, but resemble them, for “Ancient authors are our powerful allies” (YOUNG, 1995, p. 41).

Thus, even for Young, when defending the production of original works of art, he admits the use of the ancient, but only to a certain extent. Young then compares the producer of these original works to magicians, for they would not show their magic, but they would “raise their structure by means invisible” (YOUNG, 1995, p. 42). Thus, Young’s theory emphasized inspiration over labor.

Woodmansee contextualizes Young’s article and defends that the article is a move related to the need of German writers to establish ownership of their work, which was in the form of copyright law (1994, p. 39). Thus, the most important step is that he relates ownership over a work of art to the text’s originality.

After Young, the most influential text touching upon the issue of genius and originality is doubtlessly Immanuel Kant’s “Critique of Judgment”, which is greatly indebted to Young. This text presents a view of genius that was deeply consequential in Romanticism and establishes the importance of originality in art. Kant asserts that, “Beautiful art is art of genius” and provides a definition of genius as “the talent (or natural gift) which gives the rule to art” (1994, p. 128). Later

in the text, Kant completes this by saying that, “Genius is the innate mental disposition (*ingenium*) through which nature gives the rule to art” (1994, p. 128). Therefore, Kant considers genius as an innate attribute given by nature to man and thus something that cannot be learned. Kant enumerates the properties of genius and states that, “originality must be its first property”, for works of genius “ought not to spring from imitation”(1994, p. 128). This connection between genius and originality set forth by Kant is usually thought to be the central argument of his text.

Nevertheless, Kant does not recognize man as the sole creator of works of Art. Rather, genius would produce them and,

> Hence the author of a product for which he is indebted to his genius does not know himself how he has come by his ideas; and he has not the power to devise the like at pleasure or in accordance with a plan (1994, p. 128).

Thus, the power for artistic originality or “original ideas” (1994, p. 128) would lie in one’s genius and would, in a way, be external and unknown to the proprietor of genius. Later in the text, Kant elaborates this idea stating that,

> Artistic skill cannot be communicated; it is imparted to every artist immediately by the hand of nature; and so that it dies with him, until nature endows another in the same way, so that he only needs an example in order to out into operation in a similar fashion the talent of which he is conscious (1994, p. 129).

Kant’s text is extremely important in raising the association between genius, talent, and originality, which will predominate from Romanticism onwards, but it fails to provide a concept of originality.

There was a growing valuation of creativity and originality in art after the 1750’s, as it has been pointed out. Before that, the skill at executing the art forms was the most important feature, but texts such as these by Young and Kant place the ability of the writer, as a craftsman, in a secondary position and bring the ability to produce original works to the limelight.

In his 1815 “Essay Supplementary to the Preface”, Wordsworth reinforces these arguments, for he combines the words author, great, and original. It is clear that the valorization of originality brought together a valorization of the author, the genius endowed with originality. Moreover, the Romantics did not emphasize the work of the writer, for they “celebrated the inspired, spontaneous creations of original genius rather than the hard-won products of original work” (SAINT-AMOUR, 2003, p. 30), for poets were geniuses and did not need to work hard to receive their inspiration.

Wordsworth defended that it would take a long time for the work of genius to be understood and related this to the poor sale of romantic poets and great sales of other kinds of literature. This created the myth of the misunderstood genius, whose work would only be understood after a generation or two, which was one of the main reasons for Wordsworth to engage in the movement for copyright establishment and expansion in Britain.

Penelope Alfrey adds that there was a dramatic change in the nineteenth century as critical interest in originality increased. According to Alfrey, “the development of the cult of individualism elevates the value of originality and, at the same time, blurs its definition” (2000). Originality is then often praised, but rarely defined; nonetheless, there is a growing interest in how to attain originality, which led to the birth of new literary genres and styles of painting. Also, although originality was highly regarded and praised, it does not mean that it was practiced by everyone, for imitation continued to be the most widespread practice. Forgery, fakery, and plagiarism flourished at this time, as in all times, but they started to be envisioned from a different perspective. And the conclusion is that from the eighteenth century on, originality was established as a tenet to measure the quality, or value, of a work of art.

Concerning modernist art, David Harvey states that it has always been what Benjamin calls “auriatic art”, in the sense that the artist had to assume an aura of creativity, of dedication to art for art’s sake in order to produce a cultural object that would be “original, unique, and hence eminently marketable at a monopoly price” (HARVEY, 1989, p. 22). That is, the artist had to fulfill the demands of the market he was inserted in.

One of the most influential moves in thinking about artistic creation was made by Sigmund Freud. In 1900, Sigmund Freud published *The Interpretation of Dreams* and changed the way man looked at his inner universe. This text questioned man’s autonomy and, consequently the artist’s autonomy; it is a difficult moment for man, for Freud shows that man is not as autonomous as he though he was. Freud shows that although man tried to build a new world rationally, much of what was used came from one’s unconscious, one’s phantasms. Freud’s theory led to the development of Lacan’s theory of the unconscious, which had great importance in the fall of originality.

In modernism, there were many changes affecting the issue of originality, as its importance was led to extremes. Along the twentieth century, there were marked changes regarding

the relationship between artists and their works. During modernism, the artist was often viewed as more important than the art produced by his or her hands. There was a growing interest in seeing and interviewing the producer of a work of art and investigating the mechanisms of the process that led to the creation of a determined work of art. The focus often shifted from the work of art to the producer or originator of the work of art. Nevertheless, after 1950, this behavior started to be rejected by a growing number of writers and painters that wanted to be regarded for their works and not their personal lives. Among these was William Gaddis defending that a work of art must speak for itself and, consequently, did not need its maker after it was delivered to the public.

1.2.3 The Fall of Originality

Along the twentieth century, many philosophers and critics dedicated themselves to discussions related to the theme of originality and more precisely origin. None of them seems to have gone as deep as Walter Benjamin, but most of them addressed issues relevant to this study. One of these influential thinkers was Martin Heidegger.

Martin Heidegger wrote an influential article on the issue of the origin of a work of art. His “The Origin of a Work of Art” poses questions that are difficult to be answered, for this essay casts doubts upon the apparently unquestionable notion of the artist as the origin of a work of art.

In the opening lines of this essay, Heidegger provides us with the concept of origin he will be using. He clarifies that “Origin here means that from and by which something is what it is and as it is” and “What something is, as it is, we call its nature or essence” (1994, p. 254). With this regard, it is relevant to point out that Heidegger uses the German word *(der) Ursprung* for origin. Thus, the origin of a work of art would be that from which the work springs, which implies a movement. He proceeds to explain that, “the question concerning the origin of a work of art asks about the source of its nature” (1994, p. 254). Heidegger then points out the view he calls traditional, which considers that the work of art arises out of and by means of the activity of the artist to later question this view. He claims that this view considers the artist as a pre-existing condition for the work of art and rejects this view. For Heidegger,

> The artist is the origin of the work. The work is the origin of the artist. Neither is without the other.

> Nevertheless, neither is the sole support of the other. In themselves and in their interrelations artist and work are each of them by virtue of a third thing prior to both, namely that which also gives artist and work of art their names—art (1994, p. 154).

Thus, for him, “art is the origin of both artist and work” (1994, p. 154), and here lies the problem, for art is abstract and does not correspond to anything real or easy to point to in our world. Therefore, “the question of the origin of a work of art becomes a question about the nature of art” (1994, p. 255). For Heidegger, all works of art are things, but are more than mere things, for they have something else that makes them works of art, and that is what art does, transform objects into something other than mere objects. Heidegger does not make any reference to literary texts as works of art, but he rather makes references to paintings and sculptures that show objects. It can be concluded that under this perspective artists do not copy objects, but, rather, art is at work and captures the essence of the objects at a given time.

Therefore, stretching Heidegger’s ideas, it can be inferred that a painting would not be a copy of an object, but a manifestation of its nature or essence and the artist does not copy anything when he paints a scene from reality, for art is at work attempting to reveal the essence of the object in order to transform it from a mere artifact into a work of art.

For Stubblefield, in Heidegger the originality of a work of art will not be universal, but relative to the culture in which a particular being-in-the-world, ‘Dasein’, finds itself (2001). Also, the mineness of ‘Dasein’ is crucial to an understanding of the importance given to originality in the arts. Stubblefield poses that artists find satisfaction in producing works of art, and not merely in the products, but in the process involved. Therefore, they are not satisfied to recreate or imitate a masterpiece, for the masterpiece itself, but for the process involved, the making of one’s own original. For Stubblefield, “uniqueness is not to be found in the physical work of art, but in the unique, personal process in which he arrives at the end” (2001), as suggested by Borges in his “Pierre Menard. Author of the Quixote”. Stubblefield states, “One cannot exactly copy the process of someone else for, unlike the product, the process is not public” (2001). This relates to the mineness of ‘Dasein’. One cannot copy someone else’s process. Each process is unique, since beings are unique. Therefore, for Stubblefield, “it is impossible to copy the creative process of someone else” (2001). Stubblefield uses this argument to justify why using someone else’s artwork may be satisfying. He explains that,

> To try just to copy an old theme is not satisfying, because one is not adding anything of one’s self to the process. But to take someone else’s artwork and

> to use one's own unique skills and situation to produce a new creation based upon an old idea can be satisfying. One is still going through one's own creative process, but one is just using an art 'thing' of another as raw material with which to work (2001).

Later in his text, he further completes this thought by saying that,

> Originality is authentic existence seen in the mirror of artistic expression. The authentic artist is not satisfied with reproducing overplayed, ready-made, common thought for the masses, as the inauthentic artist is. The inauthentic artist is lost in the anonymity of the 'they', and is not concerned with what is profoundly 'his' (2001).

Despite the interesting analysis of Heidegger's text, Stubblefield does not go beyond the dichotomies authentic/inauthentic and original/copy.

Critic Edward Said dealt with the question of originality in the 1980's in his well-known essay "On Originality". In this essay, Said establishes originality as an important category to be studied and dedicates himself to the study of the importance of originality in fiction. Said appears to be concerned with what Lindley long before had named "a fetish of originality" in the history of literature (1952, p. 170), but which few had paid attention to.

Said rejects originality as an absolute and prefers to analyze it in relation to other categories, quoting Barthes when

he says that “originality as a kind of absolute term becomes an impossibility” (1993, p. 134), for he sees it as “a variation within a larger, dominating pattern” (1983, p. 134). Said’s claim that originality should be considered within a larger set of patterns seems to be in accordance with the point defended by Gaddis’s protagonist Wyatt Gwyon and repeated by his supporting characters Otto and Stanley. For them, “originality is not invention, but a sense of recall, recognition, patterns already there (1955, p. 123).

Pease also rejects originality as an absolute by asking, “Can any writer claim absolute originality?” (1995, p. 263), but even Lindley, in the book he claims to be the first one dedicated to plagiarism and originality, affirms that “there is no such thing as absolute, quintessential originality” (1952, p. 14).

Said states that “the originality of contemporary literature in its broad outlines resides in the refusal of originality, of primacy, to its forebearers (1983, p. 135). Said goes even further and affirms that “the best way to consider originality is to look not for first instances of a phenomenon, but rather to see duplication, parallelism, symmetry, parody, repetition—echoes of it”(1983, p. 135). This theoretical view is

completely opposed to the Romantic one, which encouraged authors to seek inspiration in order to avoid repetition.

Said goes even further and states that, “the writer thinks less of writing and more of rewriting” (1983, p. 135), supposing there is possibility of original writing. He states that, “Thus the fabric of the novel, as well as its theme, is made of rewriting, one original *cantus firmus* being imitated so many times as to lose its primacy” (1983, p. 136). If the writer always rewrites, it is because originality, if it exists, may be only because “Originality is individuality” (1952, p. 20), as Lindley once defended. Nevertheless, it is unquestionable that there is a “a fetish of originality”, as Saint-Amour calls it. For him,

> The originality effect, a hyperamnesia that fetichizes a pantheon of “originals”, can only occur alongside an amnesia about the precursors and contemporaries of those same originals: the great individuals loom largely because others are blotted out, forgotten (2003, p. 10).

Thus, originality would imply an exercise of forgetting and at the same time remembering.

Said concludes that, “Originality does not reside either in language or in the elements, since both make virtually impossible any attempt to determine the true from the copy”

(1983, p. 138). This indicates that if originality exists, it is only possible by repetition and not singularity. This might seem to contradict Lindley's claim, but it does not. It suggests that originality is only found in the subject's individual repetition.

In contemporary writing, Said reminds us, there is often "a desire to *tell* a story much more than one for telling a *story*" (1983, p. 132). This way, the focus is not on the story itself, but on the way the story is told, that is, on the subjective details and marks added to it, which would account for the need to tell a story.

Further, Said compares the novel to the tragedy and states that, "Both novel and tragedy are dated back to a pure origin, either spiritual or material, that cannot be immediately or fully grasped" (1983, p. 135). Also, both tragedy and the novel belong to a period forever lost (1983, p. 135) and, therefore, "Originality in one primal sense, then, has to be loss, or else it would be repetition" (1983, p. 135) and "originality is the difference between primordial vacancy and temporal, sustained repetition" (1983, p. 134), which is in agreement with Saint-Amours notion of forgetting to remember.

Alfrey also questions the existence of originality itself and states that,

> Originality, if it exists at all, is not an absolute; its identification is subject to a scale of relative values and knowledge, it is conditional to time and place (2001).

Similarly to Alfrey and Said, some of the most famous postmodern critics challenge the notion of originality, although they use different arguments and refer to distinct implications of this conclusion.

Linda Hutcheon affirms that postmodernist art contests such concepts as aesthetic originality and textual closure (1988, p. 23) and later that it contests authenticity. With this statement, not only is she problematizing originality, but also the concept of authorship.

Terry Eagleton, who is one of the most influential critics of postmodernism, states that, “postmodernism awards high marks for non-originality” and “for postmodernism it is impossible to open your mouth without quoting” (2003). Although he seems to be criticizing postmodernism, his affirmations are accurate.

Françoise Meltzer goes further and states that there have been two governing principles uniting literary criticism and originality. She states that the first assumption is that great literature is original and the second is that only literary criticism itself is in a position to judge what is and what is not original and therefore, good (1994, p. 2). This way, originality may be said to be the founding principle of literary criticism and a refusal of originality as a founding principle for quality literature would change the role of literary criticism. This statement is particularly strong, principally because Meltzer defends the fact that originality is a construct, a notion, that developed through time and has been valued and viewed differently through different ages and, therefore, it can be deconstructed, which she does. In her conclusion, she defends that the biggest of all frauds would be the myth of originality itself, which seems to be a position shared by William Gaddis, too. Gaddis seems to believe, similarly to British critic Nick Groom, who also questions this existence of originality, that originality is a chimaera.

The assumption that claiming originality might be a chimaera poses uncountable threats to some concepts and distinctions that have been deeply rooted in our contemporary western culture. When the house of originality is pulled down, it

brings along the remains of literary and artistic authorship and the figures of the forger and the plagiarist emerge. For, according to Dominick LaCapra, “The origin is in itself a fiction or a forgery” (1989, p. 181).

It seems there is no doubt that originality as an absolute does not exist, but if originality is a fetish, a myth, or a fraud, and is therefore unattainable, why is it still a primordial criterion for literary criticism?

2 THE CHANGING ROLE OF AUTHORSHIP: FROM AUCTOR TO FORGER

Every book is a quotation; and every house is a quotation out of all forests, and mines, and stone quarries; and every man is a quotation from all his ancestors.

Emerson

Authorship is not new, for it has been conceived since the Greek, for Homer, Plato, and Aristotle, among others, reflected on it. However, the way in which authorship is viewed has changed drastically along the centuries. The transformations introduced by technology in our forms of writing and our relation to texts have led many to rethink the issue of authorship and the concept of author. In Romanticism, there was a marked move from preoccupations with authorship to preoccupations with the figure of the author. But in the last thirty years, there has seemingly been a return from author to authorship, as the author is becoming one more time overshadowed by his work as new forms of interaction with texts emerge.

Roland Barthes perceived these changes and reminded us that,

> The author is a modern figure, a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English Empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation, it discovered the prestige of the individual, of, as it is more nobly put, the ‘human person’ (1995, p. 125-126).

Therefore, for Barthes, the Author is a product of modernity and as modernity disintegrates, it tends to disappear as such, giving rise to a different figure. This emerging figure is the main point here, as there is clear evidence that the term modern is no longer able to account for our contemporary way of living.

Postmodernism suggests that words or ideas cannot be anyone’s property. All that can be done, according to Buranen and Roy, is

> honor and recompense the encoding of those ideas, the use of those words, in the certainty that such honor and compensation are negotiated in contexts of time and place, class and power, within social and economic considerations(1999, p. xviii).

Although some contemporary scholars such as Mallon have a modern and still Romanticism-based view of authorship, a different and postmodern perspective is shared nowadays by most

critics devoted to the study of authorship, such as Peter Jazsi, Martha Woodmansee, Donald Pease, Sean Burke, and Françoise Meltzer. Nevertheless, it is important to say that this postmodern view shared by most critics is not the mainstream one, because if it were there would not be so many copyright infringement suits nowadays. Also, this perspective currently defended by most scholars was not prevalent when William Gaddis wrote *The Recognitions,* in 1955.

2.1 Concept of Authorship and its status in contemporary society

In contemporary society, literature is considered a form of labor and writers are seen as workers. Therefore, the fruits of this labor become the writers' personal property, which they can negotiate freely. Copyright laws in force nowadays are based on this conception, for they aim to protect the rights of writers over their texts. Nevertheless, it has not always been like that.

The notion that authors precede and own their works is still prevailent, although it has been questioned, and is present in most books and dictionaries. Abrams, in his best selling *A*

Glossary of Literary Terms, defines authors as “individuals who, by their intellectual and imaginative powers, purposefully create from the materials of their experience and reading a literary work which is distinctively their own” (1999, p. 14). A few lines later Abrams states that the work is accredited to the author because the author is its originator and concludes by saying that if “the literary work turns out to be great and original, the author who has composed that work is deservedly accorded with high cultural status and achieves enduring fame” (1999, p. 14-15). Another definition of author is provided by Saint-Amour, for whom author is:

> A person who wins an intangible, temporary, and predominantly alienable property through a highly specific kind of creation, one that society deems sufficiently valuable to warrant the incentive and reward of exclusive rights (2003, p. 3).

These definitions illustrate that the predominant conception of authorship nowadays is still basically connected to the notions of ownership and originality, and if these two notions as absolutes are questioned, the concept of authorship itself is put into question.

According to this dominant point of view, an author’s text is like a piece of land, and the author has first rights to its harvest, as Françoise Meltzer reminds us (1994, p. 55).

However, this is a Lockean conception and is not the only conception regarding the relationship between an author and his work. Locke's conception relied on the assumption that any labor belongs to the hands that produce it (MELTZER, 1994, p. 66), and, therefore, in this view a book is a property that stems from its creator. In *The Second Treatise of Government* (1690), John Locke postulates that,

> Though the earth and all inferior creatures be common to all men, yet every man has a "property" in his own person. This nobody has any right to but himself. The "labour" of his body and the "work" of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever, then, he removes out of the state that Nature hath provided and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with it, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property. It being by him removed from the common state Nature placed it in, hath it by this labour something annexed to it that excludes the common right of other men. For this "labor" being the unquestionable property of the labourer, no man but he can have a right to what is once joined to, at least where there is enough and as good left in common for others (2005).

Thus, for Locke man has right over what he has produced from resources Nature has provided him with, that is, from having transformed Nature into something different from what it once was. This is a notion clearly grounded on the autonomy of the individual and capitalism, and it turns the product of a writer's labor into a materiality and a commodity such as a piece of furniture or a garment. Nevertheless, this assumption is problematic and there is another view that postulates that a book cannot be a property. Françoise Meltzer herself poses this

question: “Can the product of writing be owned by the laborer?” (1994, p. 6). Meltzer’s argument brings out the three distinct shares of property in the book proposed by Fichte in 1793. Fichte divides the book into: the physical object that we buy at a bookstore, the material (thoughts) used in the composition of the book, and the form, which would be the only one the writer could own. This distinction is extremely relevant for it will be appropriated by copyright law, which will divide texts into form and the content, ignoring that they might be complementary.

Besides the question of whether the author might own the text or not, a further complicating factor might be a discussion concerning the elements from Nature the writer might have used in the composition of his work and whether he or she can own words. It seems clear that words cannot belong to someone. This way, there is no author without the concept of personal property and, hence, of person.

Although this conception of author as the originator and proprietor of a work is still prevalent, it began to be questioned in the 1960’s, mainly by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, who were both, although in different ways, able to perceive it as construct. The trajectory of the concepts of

authorship and author resembles a circle, or the Ouroboros[7] on the presentation page of the first edition of William Gaddis's *The Recognitions.*

2.2 History of the Author: from auctor to author

Literature and other forms of artistic creation have been viewed differently throughout time. Therefore, it seems evident that changes in the concept of authorship and author are related to changes in the way literature is envisioned in different times.

Before Romanticism, texts could circulate more freely, because collaborative forms of writing were still prevailing, and therefore, no one cared much about issues such as plagiarism (WOODMANSEE, 1994, p. 3). However, after Romanticism as originality and genius gained force, plagiarism and forgery also came to the limelight and discussions regarding the nature of a writer's work abounded. Groom concludes this by saying that, "Romanticism asserted the cultural rights of the individual artist and original creative genius over the impostor or forger" (GROOM, 2003, p. 15). However, it is interesting to point out

[7] The Ouroboros is a symbol depicting a snake or dragon swallowing its tail, forming a circle. It is usually associated with alchemy and represents the cyclical nature of things. It may be taken as an example of self-reference. It is a recurrent symbol in Gaddis fiction, as well as it is in alchemy.

that instances involving accusations of plagiarism and literary forgery led to a deeper discussion of authorship and the role of the author, for the stigma over plagiarism was attached to the idea that authors could own.

Seán Burke reminds us that it is agreed that, “The oldest conceptions of authorship viewed literature as either an imitative or an inspirational discourse” (1995, p. 5). These inspirational conceptions had their origins in Homer and Plato. Plato saw the poet as inspired by the muse, whereas Aristotle saw the poet as an artifice, a craftsman, for “art was acquired by practice” and inaugurated a line of thinkers, including Longinus, Cicero, and Quintillian, who recommended imitation, for it was a means of assimilating techniques.

It is evident that the tradition based on inspiration elevated the poet or author to the status of an elected figure, but deprived the author of the role of originating force. The poet was merely a means for the transmission of discourse. In this tradition, inspiration usually came from someone’s outside and not from someone’s inside. Françoise Meltzer explains that inspiration often came from visits from gods, demons, prophetic dreams, and, of course, genies, which would be all external to the human mind (1994, p. 12). Meltzer also reminds us that there

is a move from the outside to the inside towards Romanticism that is mirrored in language. One clear example of that would be the fact that in German, French and English, people start to “be” a genius rather than to “have” genius (1994, p. 12). Thus, this change represented in language in Romanticism endows the creator of literary works with the powers that had been attributed to the external figures that had been considered as inspirational. Thus, in Romanticism there was an internalization of inspiration.

This change reflects a clear break with tradition, for there are then two different forms of authorship: there is authorship based on transmission and authorship based on original production (TEMPLE, 2003), and Romanticism would be the landmark separating both.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries this notion of alterity and otherness persisted, but in a different way. Twentieth century theory, influenced by psychoanalysis, relocated the source of otherness in the unconscious or language itself. Therefore, alterity has always been considered as the originator or literary texts, what changed was the alterity focused. This is exemplified by a typical Lacanian interrogation proposed my Michael Schneider, “Who writes: is it the author or the other?”(1990, p. 37). Perhaps that is the reason why when we read

texts we are always looking for traces of the others behind what is written. We seek for traces of the text's origin.

2.2.1 – The Platonic conception of Authorship

One of the most influential of these conceptions of authorship is certainly the conception presented in the Platonic dialogues. Nevertheless, Plato presents several different views on the matter and his views often seem antithetical. However, they might not be so antithetical if a closer look at them is taken.

In *Ion*, one of his early dialogues, Plato claims that the poet is moved by divinity as he produces his poems and has mystic vision. He tells Ion that, "this gift you have of speaking well of Homer is not an art; it is a power divine" (1995, p. 15).

In this dialogue, Plato defends that poets are irrational when they produce their poems. Plato states that "lyric poets are not in their senses when they make these lovely lyric poems"(1995, p. 15), and that "a poet is a light and winged thing, and holy, and never able to compose until he has become

inspired, and is beside himself, and reason is no longer in him” (1995, p. 15). If poets are out of their senses and reason is not with them anymore, it can be assumed they are irrational. According to Burke, “he seems to bestow upon poetic discourse a semi-divine power” (1995, p. 6) claiming that “a divine power stripes the poet of any conscious or rational faculty” (1995, p. 6).

Moreover, for Plato “poets are nothing but interpreters of the gods, each one possessed by the divinity to whom he is in bondage”. Therefore, it can be assumed that in this text the poet is not depicted as the creator, or originator of a text, but merely a mouthpiece that repeats what the gods tell him.

Therefore, for Plato, poets are moved by “a lot divine”, for the Muse impels and possesses them, giving them inspiration. Although Plato recognizes that poetry has a “spell”, as he calls it, on us, he banished poets from his utopic land in his later text *The Republic*. He defended the republic based on rational grounds, and this way, there was no place for poets in its construction since they did not achieve true knowledge. He stated that,

> We can admit no poetry into our city save only hymns to the gods and praises of good men. For if you grant admission to the honeyed Muse in lyric or epic, pleasure

> and pain will be lords of your city instead of law and that which shall from time to time have approved itself to be the general reason as the best (1995, p. 20-21).

The question seems to be related to the kind of interpretation given to these words for, as it can be perceived, the views presented in *Ion* and in T*he Republic* are not exactly the same. According to Burke, there are two possible readings for Plato's statements in *Ion*: the literal and the ironic. And the literal one has prevailed, contradicting Plato's later arguments in *The Republic*. Stephen Ross in his introduction to the works of Plato also states that Plato "used a great many literary devices, the most prominent of which is Platonic irony, a form unique in the history of writing in affirming and negating truth at many different levels simultaneously" (1994, p. 7). However, it cannot be denied that the entire discussion contained in *The Republic* supposes the view of Art as *techne*, which is the employment of the best means to produce desirable ends (ROSS, 1994, p. 7).

In *Phaidros*, however, Plato goes even further in the discussion of authorship. He claims that,

> Once it is written, any utterance circulates everywhere, equally among those who understand it and among those for whom it was not intended, and it does not know whom to talk to and whom not to talk to. And if it is insulted or meets with undeserved criticism, it always needs the help of its father; for of itself it is neither able to protect nor to help itself in its own right (275e).

Therefore, Plato uses, paradoxically, the medium of writing to, according to Berensmeyer, voice his complaint about the ‘masterlessness’ of the written word (2001). Plato states that texts, after written, circulate everywhere by themselves, but they frequently need the support of their authors to defend or protect them. By saying so, Plato is, in fact, dealing with a most touchy topic, for he seems to be suggesting that all texts have a mind behind them and although they may appear autonomous, they are not. According to this view, the author is the one who seems to authorize the spreading of his or her words, providing a legitimation of their origins. Following this view, the author will later begin to be seen as the origin for words, and his name and signature will become increasingly important.

Berensmeyer justifies Plato’s claim by saying that communication demands a marked origin, an addressable author, a sanctioned signature and Plato was already aware of that (2003).

What is also relevant in the same passage above is Plato’s idea that utterances “talk to” readers whether they understand them or not, which makes us suppose Plato saw texts as active and not merely passive. Therefore, it can be concluded that Plato thought about authorship and the power of written texts, which is often denied or overlooked.

But for Berensmeyer what is more relevant is that this passage already prefigures a recurrent situation all through literary history: most of us seem not to be able to contend ourselves with texts alone and need persons behind them, mainly when these texts are literary and seem to be written from one subject to another. Berensmeyer states that, “readers cannot bear the insecure referentiality of texts, specially those texts perceived as “literary”(2003).

This would explain the difficulty the reading audiences have to understand positionings from writers like J. D. Salinger, Thomas Pynchon, and William Gaddis who refuse to speak to the public about their fiction, claiming that their texts should speak for themselves.

2.2.2 Medieval Theories of Authorship

In Medieval society, the concept and status of authorship and authors changed greatly. From the Middle Ages to the Renaissance any new writing only had value and authority if it was related to preceding texts. According to Woodmansee, what counted was “its derivation, and not its deviation from prior

texts” (1994, p. 17). Still concerning this matter, Thomas Mallon explains that,

> In the modern world an author typically hungers for recognition, but in the Medieval one anonymity was prized, leading him to suppress his identity, or to claim his stories were things we dreamt rather than consciously invented (1991, p. 204).

In the passage above, it can be supposed that the medieval author was different from the modern author, that is, the word author was then used to refer to something other than the author we are used to picturing in our minds. Concerning this, Donald Pease reminds us that the word ‘author’ has its origins in the medieval term *auctor*, which denoted a writer whose words implied respect and belief (1995, p. 264). Pease also points out that the word *auctor*, in its turn, derived from four etymological sources: the Latin verbs *agere*, ‘to act or perform’, *auieo*, ‘to tie’, *augere*, ‘to grow’, and from the Greek noun *autentim*, ‘authority’. Regarding the use of the words ‘auctor’ and ‘author’, Pease still explains that,

> At the time of its inception, for example, the word ‘author’ was used interchangeably with its predecessor term ‘auctor’, which did not entail verbal inventiveness, as ‘author” did, but the reverse—adherence to the authority of cultural antecedent (1995, p. 263-264).

It is important to point out that medieval men thought about authorship and one of the most relevant studies regarding

this subject is A. J. Minnis's *Medieval Theory of Authorship*. However, this text contradicts much of what had been said about this theme. Minnis provides evidence against the commonly held notion that the author is a relatively modern category and that the men of the Middle Ages did not preoccupy themselves with the issue of authorship.

Minnis defines his medieval theory of authorship as the literary theory that centered on the concept of *auctor* or *auctoritas* (1995, p. 23), which is very relevant since, as it has been mentioned, the figure of the *auctor* is the origin of our modern author. Minnis considered *auctores* the authoritative Latin writers studied in the late Middle Ages. He stated that this theory was not completely homogeneous or monolithic, but that many of the scholars of the time treated the subject similarly, seeming to share most ideas and, therefore, it can be considered one and not many theories (1995, p. 24).

Minnis considers the shift from humanism in the twelfth century to scholasticism in the thirteenth century as crucial for the emergence of a theory of authorship, as logic and dialectic gained greater importance.

In the thirteenth century, literary theory almost died, and went underground, according to Minnis (1995, p. 25). This took place because man was more concerned about religion than any other issue in this period. This led to a marked change in the headings in commentaries to *auctores* from the twelfth to the thirteenth century. Commentaries in the thirteenth century followed the model of the Aristotelian Prologue, which was significantly different from the previous model. According to Minnis, in these commentaries,

> The *auctor* would be discussed as the efficient cause or motivating agent of the texts, his materials would be discussed as the material cause, his literary style and structure would be considered as twin aspects of the formal cause, while the ultimate end or objective in writing would be considered the final cause (1995, p. 26-27).

Therefore, it can be noticed that there has been a significant personification of *auctors* from the divine *auctors* to the human *auctors*, for “the *auctor* remained an authority, someone to be believed and imitated, but his human qualities began to receive more attention” (MINNIS, 1995, p. 27). Whereas twelfth century exegetes were more concerned with the *auctor* as a source of authority, thirteenth century exegetes saw the author as a human *auctor*. This led to a growing interest in authorial role or function and literary form. Commentators became gradually interested in the author’s individuality, by means of the study

of an author’s literary activity and moral activity (MINNIS, 1995, p. 27).

It should not be overlooked that in Medieval Society the artist, and the writer, were often seen as copyists working within long-established conventions. Therefore, the emphasis was placed on his knowledge and skill and not on his own ability to produce a text for himself and this only started to change gradually in the thirteenth century.

Burke reminds us that Christian culture appropriated the notion of inspiration through the notion of *auctoritas* or authority obtained through God (1995, p. 7). The scriptural *auctore*s were bearers of “divinely-revealed truth, which at the same time prescribed against any sense of individual originality” (BURKE, 1995, p. 7).

From the later Middle Ages towards the Renaissance there was a growing necessity to authorize communication, as Berensmeyer explains (2003). This development is certainly connected to the invention and spreading of the printing press, which alters the possibilities of communication. Berensmeyer concludes that,

> Communication is now increasingly in need of authorization; it becomes individualized or ‘authorable’. Because of its prolific spread, and because rhetoric is no longer a universally understood and universally applicable cultural technique, communication needs a legitimation of its origin. It finds this legitimation in the guarantee figure of the author, whose work, as a closed-off totality, is secured by his individuality (2003).

It cannot be denied that in the Renaissance there was a (con)fusion of writer and reader, as Mallon has shown us, since one of the most important figures in the Renaissance was the figure of the compiler, who was a reader and writer. For Woodmansee,

> a compiler usually composed, transcribed, commented on, and reworked the texts of others -- all in apparent indifference to the identity of their originators and without regard for ownership(1994, p. 27).

Analyzing Woodmansee’s statement, it can be concluded that the name of the writer of the text was not a major source of interest yet, for it was one piece of information about the text and the name of the compiler was often more important than the writer.

Pease states that, “from the fifteenth century through the first half of the twentieth century, the term ‘author’ enjoyed a more or less constant rise in social prestige” (1995, p. 266). Pease correlates this rise with the fall of the term

auctor and the rise of another emergent modern figure: the figure of the autonomous subject (1995, p. 264).

The turn of the century, with the end of Elisabeth's reign, is usually considered as a period in which there was a growing preoccupation with succession and legitimacy. This advances along the seventeenth century, as writers become increasingly concerned about plagiarism. Renowned writers such as Robert Burton and Dryden were involved in controversial issues related to accusations of plagiarism. Mallon deals with this topic and concludes that, "the word was getting around that words could be owned by their first writers" (1991, p. 8), introducing the idea of ownership which will be the basis for the regime of copyright to be soon established.

2.2.3 The emergence and apotheosis of the author

As the figure of the author emerged, the figure of the *auctor* did not leave the stage completely. Pease compares the Romantic figure of the genius with the figure of the medieval *auctor*. For him, both identified the basis of their work with the laws of their Creator (1995, p. 267).

According to Martha Woodmansee, the current regime of authorship can be considered a recent phenomenon and it is the result of a radical reconceptualization of the creative process that culminated 200 years ago “in the heroic self-representation of Romantic poets” (1994, p. 3). In Romanticism, there was a mystification of the author in detriment of authorship “with the ascent of the originary genius-proprietor” (WOODMANSEE, 1994, p. 3). Woodmansee reminds us that for the Romantics, “genuine authorship is originary in the sense that it results not in a variation, an imitation, or an adaptation, and certainly not in a mere re-production” but in a “new, unique—in a word, original’—work that may be said to be the property of its creator”(1994, p. 3). It is important to point out that Woodmansee’s assertion encompasses both dimensions of originality, for she refers to what is new and what is unique.

Not surprisingly, it is in this period, when writers begin to be seen as proprietors of their work, that there is the advent of copyright law. It is often overlooked but copyright is nothing else than the right to make copies, that is, it regulates the making of copies. The difference between literature and other artistic manifestations is that literature is bounded to the idea of copies, for it relies on the possibility of distributing copies obtained from an original. An author of literary texts

expects copies to be made from his original so that he is recognized as an author. It is usually said that in painting there is only one original, whereas in literature there are always copies involved, for even when a writer submits “an original” to an editor, he keeps a copy. However, these copies have something in common that is not material. When we go to a bookstore and buy a book, we buy a licensed copy. According to copyright, the author is also the owner of the copies to some extent.

The beginning of copyright legislation is usually related to the invention of the printing press, but it really gained importance in Romanticism for the development of copyright and the Romantic notion of genius are interrelated and copyright and genius are related to the idea of durability. The concept of Genius mystifies the origin of a work of art.

Copyright dates from early eighteenth century England and the first copyright statute, the Statute of Anne (1710), was created before Romanticism. The greatest change promoted by this statute was that it transferred to the writer the right to print his books. In other words, it recognized that the author is the owner of the work and he can choose what to do with it. Although it may seem it was aimed at protecting the author’s rights, it

aimed at protecting the booksellers who had bought the rights to a writer's work. According to Howard, the creation of these rights was "for the state to ascertain that who might be held legally responsible should the text prove seditious" (1999, p. 78).

It is commonly held that before the emergence of copyright laws, piracy, plagiarism, and misprints abounded in London. At that time, readers regarded printers and not writers as the authority behind a book, which is very surprising to us all who are used to associating work and author, and not even asking about publishers (RASMUSSEN, 2003, p. 10). Copyright changed the scene for it set authors above other literary workers (editors, book-binders, printers, illustrators) by granting them literary property rights instead of wages (SAINT-AMOUR, 2003, p. 33). Also, it should not be forgotten that wages are usually paid to manual workers and not paying wages to writers implies not considering them laborers. A clear example of this change is provided by Lajolo and Zilberman, as they call attention to the amount and type of information contained on book covers before and after copyright. Before copyright, the name of the author of a book was difficult to find among so much information related to the publisher and publishing taxes (LAJOLO, ZILBERMAN, 2001, p. 18). Also, before copyright, printers and booksellers were the

ones who made more profit from the sale of books (LAJOLO, ZILBERMAN, 2001, p. 35). Therefore, the modern concept of the author was constructed along the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and was the product of complex political and institutional negotiations that varied according to time and locale (RASMUSSEN, 2003, p. 10).

Wordsworth was one of the writers that thought the Statute of Anne offered little protection to the work of a genius, and asked for the extension of the time covered by copyright till it surpassed the time of the life of a writer. He based himself on the argument that was becoming important at the period, and which Howard calls proprietorship, that is, “writing is a labor of the body; and a writer therefore has the right of property in what he writes” (1999, p. 78). This argument is evidently based on John Locke’s notion that an author has rights over what he or she has produced, since this work derives from one’s labor.

In the USA, in 1779, the framers of the Constitution did not separate copyright and patent law and they were addressed in the same clause of the constitution. In this clause, Congress secured, for limited times, to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their writings and discoveries (Article I,

Section 8, Clause 8 of the U. S. Constitution). However, in 1790, the First Congress separated patent and copyright laws. After many discussions, what became clear was that,

> Authors should not have to research every piece of art or writing before putting pen to paper. Inventors, however, should be aware of 'prior art', since the nature of science is to promote technological progress, not to protect original works of art (ASHTON, 1993).

This means that copyright does not demand that original works be different from the existing ones, only that they not copied (SAINT-AMOUR, 2003, p. 7). That is to say that if the process of creation does not involve the existing work, the result does not matter for copyright purposes.

The growing importance of copyright reflected a crescent preoccupation with plagiarism and the protection of one's work and name and although the eighteenth century was a period obsessed with authenticity, it was also the period that witnessed the growth of literary forgery. Mallon also attributes the beginning of the preoccupation with plagiarism and literary forgery to the invention of printing press and the transformation of writers into professionals. Mallon defends that, "Plagiarism did not become a truly sore point with writers until they thought of writing as their trade" (1991, p. 4). And still,

> It was printing, of course, that changed everything, putting troubadours out of business and numbering the days when one might circulate a few private, prettily calligraphed copies of one's sonnets or epic. The Writer, a new professional, was invented by a machine. Suddenly his capital and identity were at stake (MALLON, 1991, p. 4).

Under this perspective, writers began to be more concerned about plagiarism cases when they affected their gains, and not merely their reputation. This way "the valorization of originality was economically motivated" (HOWARD, 1999, p. 83). Jaszi follows Mallon and explains that,

> The cultural figuration of the Author, as the inspired creator of unique words of art, has interacted with the legal notion of the Author as the bearer of portable rights in literary and artistic property (1994, p. 30).

Thus, the eighteenth century brought a new institution: the professional writer, who would make his living writing, that is, depending on his public. It is in this period that the writer will be transformed into "a unique individual uniquely responsible for a unique product" (WOODMANSEE, 1994, p. 38). Despite this transformation and the advent of copyright law, writers such as Goethe and even Gaddis never made a living out of writing, only best-selling authors. However, writers still fight for copyright and recognition.

This was not without consequences, for as it has been pointed out, the term plagiarism belongs to both the artistic and the legal universe nowadays, but plagiarism is an ethical problem, whereas copyright is a legal one. Also concerning this matter, Howard states that, “originary composition is, moreover, entwined with the proprietorship and autonomy that are attributed to an author in the modern era” (1999, p. 82). That is, the increased importance attributed to an author is closely related to a capitalist environment.

Therefore, it can be said that the shift from an oral to a literate culture generated a growing interest for the individual responsible for the production of the work. Centuries later, as there was a second shift from a manuscript culture to a print culture, there was a multiplication of the number of producers of literary works, and as writing became a profession, it became important to establish the identity of the writer of texts, as the author could not sign each of his books marketed anymore. However, autographing remains a common practice.

According to Mallon, printing increases the opportunities for misinterpretation (1991, p. 4) and inaugurates a new market: the market for what he calls writerly goods. Again,

there is a relation between capitalism and the growth in importance attributed to authors.

With this, in the eighteenth century, the number of plagiarism accusations involving writers became increasingly common, but they were not taken to court yet, for copyright law was still incipient. The common procedure would be the publication of a letter or article denouncing the plagiarist. Thus, plagiarism was still an art term and not a legal one. At this time, any small resemblance was considered plagiarism, and, therefore, nobody escaped accusations of plagiarism. If somebody else's text was used, it was plagiarism. Not surprisingly, it is at this moment that the word plagiarism enters the dictionaries, as *Johnson's Dictionary of the English Language,* as a synonym for theft (MALLON, 1991, p. 11). What is even more surprising is that the term plagiarism is defined in this dictionary as "literary adoption of the thoughts and works of another" (MALLON, 1991, p. 11). This way, plagiarism would not only be related to the expression of an idea, but also to the idea itself.

Therefore, it is not a coincidence that "it was during the same century, when the cry against plagiarism became quite loud, that the first English copyright statutes were enacted" (MALLON, 1991, p. 39). This means to say that the idea that

plagiarism is a crime and should be punished was born at the same time that copyright was enacted.

Mallon goes even further and defends that, “The history of copyright actually has more to do with piracy than plagiarism” (1991, p. 38). Mallon states that based on the assumption that copyright legislation is more useful in protecting authors from publishers than from other authors (1991, p. 38-39). Martha Woodmansee refers to an apotheosis of authorship in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which started in Romanticism, as discussed before.

Howard (1999) proposes that changes in writing practices and their acceptability along the centuries have been grounded on two binaries: mimesis/originality and collaboration/autonomy. In her point of view, “We have not ‘invented’ a new sort of author in the modern period; rather, the balance of those binaries shifted toward the originality and autonomy poles” (1999, p. 75). According to her, this shift emphasized the dichotomy writer/plagiary and turned practices that were acceptable, imitation and collaboration, unacceptable, and their practitioners criminals and not authors (1999, p. 75).

2.2.4 – Contemporary Theories of Authorship: The Dead Author

Although many theoreticians associated to post-structuralism and postmodernism have rejected the notion of the Author and new forms of communication have made the predominant regime of authorship far-fetched from current writing practices, ours is a still a litigation happy society and plagiarism suits abound. In some instances, such as the legal sphere, we are still living in an apotheosis of unquestioned authorship, but in others, the figure of the Author seems to be really dead.

It is often affirmed that Roland Barthes proclaimed this death in his well-known essay “The Death of the Author”, which was first published in 1968. However, it has to be noted that Barthes does not mean an eschewal or disappearance of authorship, as Berensmeyer has pointed out, but rather, of insufficient epistemological or other conceptions of authorship (BERENSMEYER, 2003). Barthes’s text was followed by Michel Foucault’s “What’s an Author?”, which is usually considered to have buried the author after Barthes assassinated it. These two texts are elemental in the discussion of authorship and remained almost unquestioned until the publication of Burke’s book *The Death and Return of the Author*. Burke argues that these two authors promoted a return of the authorial subject as they

proclaimed its death, for “the concept of the author is never more alive than when pronounced dead” (1992, p. 7). These texts, even arguing that the author was dead, brought the author to the limelight. Thus, there is an apparent contradiction: an author, Barthes, is necessary, to announce that the Author is dead. If the author resurrects, when pronounced dead, it is relevant to ask how and why the author returns, for it might be as a shadow or a ghost of an author, or in Wyatt Gwyon’s words: “the dregs of one’s work” (1955, p. 95).

In this essay Barthes evokes a story by Balzac entitled “Sarrasine” and quotes a sentence from it. After quoting from the story, Barthes asks the reader to identify who is really speaking in this sentence. He questions if it is the hero of the story, Balzac the individual, Balzac the author, universal wisdom, or romantic psychology (1995, p. 125). Barthes then rushes to answer that “We shall never know, for writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin” (1995, p. 125). With this statement, Barthes questions the validity of one of the most common forms of literary analysis of the time, which consisted in identifying voices and attributing them. Barthes goes even further and affirms that, “Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body

writing” (1995, p. 125). Barthes proceeds to explain that when a fact is narrated, this disconnection between voice and origin takes place and “the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, and writing begins” (1995, p. 125). It is important to notice that, for Barthes, the subject that slips away is the autonomous subject, and not the subject of the unconscious proposed by psychoanalysis. Lacan went beyond Freud’s conception and defended that the subject is a product of language and discourse, has no fixed identity, and is in a perpetual process of becoming (RASMUSSEN, 2003, p. 5). It is the linguistic unconscious that speaks and consequently writes.

Barthes defends that the author is a modern figure, the fruit of a series of moves provoked by empiricism, rationalism that raised the importance of the individual and the ‘human person’ which attached greater importance to the ‘person’ of the writer(1995, p. 125-126). Therefore, it is not surprising that the first modes of literary criticism focused on the relations between an author and his work, trying to explain the work through the writer’s life. Further, Barthes states that although this emphasis on the person of the author is still strong in his days, certain writers have attempted to loosen it (1995, p. 126). He considers Mallarmé as the precursor of this trend, for he was “the first to see and to foresee in its full extent the necessity

to substitute language itself for the person who until then had been supposed to be its owner" (1995, p. 126). For Barthes, Mallarmé believed, like himself, that "it is language which speaks, not the author; to write is, through a prerequisite impersonality, to reach that point where only language acts, 'performs' and not 'me'"(1995, p. 126), implying a precedence of language over us.

Barthes does not make any open reference to "Crisis in Verse", but he is obviously making a reference to this text. In this text, Mallarmé states that, "the pure work implies the disappearance of the poet-speaker", inaugurating the Death of the Author Barthes tells us about. Mallarmé affirms that, "The structure of a book of verse must arise throughout from internal necessity — in this way both chance and the author will be excluded" (1995, p. 51).

This removal of the author proposed by Barthes and Mallarmé is not without consequences, for it transforms the text, as it transforms temporality. Barthes asserts that,

> The Author, when believed in, is always conceived of as the past of his own book: book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into a *before* and an *after*. The Author is thought to *nourish* the book, which us to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child (1995, p. 127).

Barthes questions this relation between Author and text and rejects this precedence of the Author over the text in the same way that Heidegger (1994) rejected the precedence of the artist over the work of art. He defends that the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text, for there is no being preceding or exceeding the writing (1995, p. 127). Again, this view coincides with that of Heidegger, who asserted that the work of art and the artist were born simultaneously (1994). Therefore, as there is no such thing as an Author preceding and thus originating a text, the term Author is buried by Barthes in detriment of the term *modern scriptor*. The term adopted by Barthes certainly evokes the scribes of the Middle Ages, who hold more resemblance to this notion of writer Barthes is trying to defend, however, the word modern does not seem to go well with it, since, in its turn, it evokes modernity and the notion of Author associated with it that Barthes is trying to destroy.

As we advance with our reading of the text, Barthes provides us with more explanations and examples of what he believes to be the way of writing of the *modern scriptor*. He asserts that the hand of the *modern scriptor* “traces a field without origin – or which, at least, has no other origin than

language itself, language which ceaselessly calls into question all origins” (1995, p. 128).

Further, Barthes dismisses the conception that “a text is a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning” and defends the conception that it is “a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash” and “a tissue of quotations” (1995, p. 128). He then compares the writer to a copyist saying that, “he can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original” (1995, p. 128). These statements echo Ralph Waldo Emerson’s:

> Every book is a quotation; and every house is a quotation out of all forests, and mines, and stone quarries; and every man is a quotation from all his ancestors (EMERSON, apud MELTZER, 1994, p. 45).

For both of them bring out the issue of quotation. It is at this point one must ask what is the power of the writer then. Barthes explicates that, “His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them” (1995, p. 128). If the writer should never rest upon a single text, but on several, it is because resting on only one text would not be advisable, and although he does not mentions the words copy or plagiarist he implies it.

Barthes then reminds us that, “Once the Author is removed, the claim to decipher a text becomes futile” and; therefore, the Critic, as the interpreter and evaluator of texts, loses ground. For Barthes, the concepts of Author and Critic are closely connected, for the reign of the Author has also been the reign of the Critic as the one able to explain texts produced by Authors (1995, p. 129). A reconceptualization of the Author, after its death and resurrection as author, demands a reconceptualization of the figure and role of the Critic. William Gaddis also proposes a problematization of the figure of the Critic in *The Recognitions*, for he does not seem to be unaware of this relation between Author and Critic. When the novel was published, critics were not indifferent to it, for it received virulent criticism in book reviews. Only many years later when a book entitled *Fire the Bastards!* by an American critic writing under the penname Jack Green was published did critics look at the novel with different eyes. This book compiled all the reviews the novel received and analyzed them showing that most reviewers had not even attempted to read the novel.

Another relevant point is the conception that authors have also worked as limits to the text. Barthes questions this and defends that, “To give a text an Author is to impose a limit

on that text, to furnish it with a final signified; to close the writing” (1995, p. 129). It is undeniable that Barthes is right, for as we attribute a text to a certain author that figure is thereon linked to the text. However, it should not be overlooked that Barthes is always referring to an Author constructed before the text. The solution does not seem to be removing this subject by killing it, but rather, seeing it as constructed along with the text, seeing this subject differently, as well as the subject that reads the text.

For Barthes,

> A text is made up of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination (1995, p. 129).

Therefore, the focus has to be moved from author to reader, for in Barthes’s point of view, “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author” (1995, p. 130). The Author that dies is not the author that is constructed as a subject as the text is written, but the Author that precedes and closes the text, which is, in its turn, interpreted in the light of this Author’s life or previous works.

In short, Barthes's text suggests that not only the author, in this modern sense, which is often taken for granted, is a relatively recent invention, but also that it does not reflect our contemporary writing practices (WOODMANSEE, 1994, p. 3). For Barthes, "we must abandon the notion that the author is the originator and final arbitrer of a text's meaning" (RASMUSSEN, 2003, p. 3). Thus, the author that dies is the "Author-God", who was the sole originator and master of a text, and who preceded, directed, and exceeded the writing that bore his name (BURKE, 1992, p. 24). But for Burke this author never existed, except as a fiction, it was also a myth, because "the author has always been absent" (BURKE, 1992, p. 16). I dare say that this fiction was also created by criticism itself, for criticism needed a God-like Author, producer of masterworks who deserved to be interpreted and have their keys revealed to the public. Under Burke's perspective, the author who owns and fathers texts is dead, but that does not mean that authors are dead. Michel Scheneider, a pshychonalyst dedicated to the study of authorship, also defends that, "the author is a fiction" (1990, p. 28).

Barthes's "Death of the Author" is usually related to Michel Foucault's "What is an Author?". These two texts share a preoccupation with the figure of the author, but they are very

different from each other. The mere analysis of the titles of the texts suggests that the two authors have different positionings. Whereas the author is dead for Barthes, Foucault's title suggests that the author is not dead, otherwise the title of the text would be "What was an Author?", as the title of a text written by Molly Nesbit years later.

Michel Foucault's "What's an Author?", was first published in 1969, a year after Barthes's "The Death of the Author", and was dedicated to the study of the emergence of the author and what he called "the author function" in the history of ideas. Although this essay is often compared to Roland Barthes's "Death of the Author", Foucault goes further than Barthes as he analyses the *function(s) auteur*. For Foucault, there is a reconfiguration of authorship in a different historical constellation. His theory is undoubtedly more sophisticated than that of Barthes, as it shall be seen.

Foucault states that his purpose in this text is to deal with the relationship between text and author and with the manner in which apparently a text points to a "figure" that seems to be outside it and antecede it (1984, p. 101). Thus, he claims from the beginning that the author may not be outside a text and may not antecede it, for an author is constructed along with the

text and the birth of an author is the death of the subject writing. In fact, it can be said that Foucault is inquiring about the need we have to search for the origins of a text, trying to trace words back to specific authors or individuals. For Foucault,

> In writing, the point is not to manifest or exalt the act of writing, nor it is to pin a subject within language; it is, rather, a question of creating a space into which the writing subject constantly disappears (1984, p. 102).

Still regarding the relationship between one author and his text, Foucault states that,

> The writing subject cancels out the signs of his particular individuality. As a result, the mark of the writer is reduced to nothing more than the singularity of his absence; he must assume the role of the dead man in the game of writing (1984, p. 102-103).

Therefore, the man has to die for the author to emerge and the Author may be dead, but not the author himself. The author that is dead is the author belonging to the humanist tradition, an autonomous subject originator of original texts. This way, the author is the product of the text, what is left after the text, and not the text the product of an author. This reinforces the idea defended by Heidegger regarding works of art, as well as Wyatt Gwyon’s.

Foucault poses another question of the same nature of the query “What’s an author?” later in the text. He dares to inquire, “What is a work?” attempting to question the limits of a writer’s work (1984, p. 103). This question seems specially relevant for it relates the work of a writer to the demands of the market, and the twentieth century was prodigal in publishing and marketing letters, interviews, and annotations as part of the work of a writer. Similarly, galleries and museums exhibit any napkin or newspaper that has been touched by any painter or writer, who could have served as a sketch for a masterpiece. Thus, the question Foucault asks is, “Even when an individual has been accepted as an author, we must still ask whether everything that he wrote, said, or left behind is part of his work” (1984, p. 103). After problematizing the notion of the unified author, with this question Foucault is problematizing the notion of work and the unity it designates. Rasmussen grasps Foucault’s point very well by saying that, “Foucault challenges our ability to establish the fixed boundaries of an author’s oeuvre” (2003, p. 6). In short, Foucault historicizes the concept of authorship and demonstrates that the term ‘author’ does more than simply describe a writer’s role in creating a text.

Barthes proclaimed the death of the author, but Foucault states that it is not enough to proclaim the

disappearance of the author, one needs to move further and “locate the space left empty by the author’s disappearance, follow the distribution of gaps and breaches, and watch for the openings that this disappearance uncovers” (FOUCAULT, 1984, p. 105). By saying this, Foucault incites us to contemplate the problems originating from the use of the author’s name. He reminds us of an author’s name is before anything else a proper name, but at the same time it is much more than a proper name like the rest, for it describes and designates more than an individual (1984, p. 106). Foucault explicates that the author’s name has a certain classificatory function, as it marks the edges of the text, keeping a relationship of affiliation with a text, implying certain homogeneity (1984, p. 107). This argument reinforces a similar argument raised by Barthes.

Foucault then proceeds to describe the process by which texts began to have authors. According to him, texts began to have authors as authors became subject to punishment and there was the need to establish the source of a text. He reveals that this change is related to the establishment of a system of ownership related to author’s rights, author-publisher relations, and rights of reproduction (1984, p. 108), which are the basis of a copyright system.

Nevertheless, Foucault argues that the author function affects discourses differently throughout time. For him, one clear example of that is the fact that literary texts did not require the attribution of an author in the Middle Ages, for the identity of their authors was not questioned, while scientific texts did. But Foucault identifies a reversal of that in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries as scientific discourses began to be accepted by themselves and literary discourses, in their turn, were only received when accompanied by the author function (1984, p. 109).

As it can be perceived after the analyses of “Death of the Author” and “What’s an Author?”, Barthes is more concerned about the interaction between the author and society, whereas Foucault is more interested in the analysis of the relationship between the name of the author and the text it is related to, for Foucault is interested in the function of the author’s name. Pease explains the importance of Foucault’s argument and states that, “The name of the author turns discourse into legal property” (1995, p. 272).

However, both theoreticians undoubtedly question the assumptions about the autonomy of the subject, which had been prevalent in the first half of the twentieth century despite

Freudian theory, in which Freud destroys one of the pillars of authorship, the autonomous subject and, consequently, questions authorship.

One of the points of convergence between Barthes and Foucault is that both related the modern figure and function of the author to the emerging capitalist economy of modernity, assuming it is a recent formation, and therefore, it may cease to exist as it has come into being.

2. 3 The writer as a forger

As it has been pointed out, it was in Romanticism that plagiarism had its heyday. In Romanticism the enactment of copyright laws served as fertile ground for it. However, if the number of copyright infringement suits filed nowadays is taken into account, it is not absurd to say that plagiarism is having its second coming. The number of accusations is growing, mainly regarding new instances created by technological advances, such as on-line publications and music sampling, which are instances which challenge the essence of plagiarism as they question artistic proprietorship. Copyright legislation seems not to be prepared for these new instances, and as a result of that many of the studies devoted to plagiarism or copyright-related issues

have been carried out by lawyers. Also, there has been the publication of several studies on plagiarism, Thomas Mallon's *Stolen Words* being its most famous example.

Although Mallon's study is extremely comprehensive and he has compiled important facts, Mallon doubtlessly has a modern view of what he calls the act of stealing words. For Howard, Mallon's book proclaims that plagiarists should be exposed and punished (1999, p. 8). But what has to be noted is that at the same time plagiarism suits abound, authorship is questioned. Also, at the same time art critics and dealers are preoccupied with detecting forgeries by submitting works of art to sophisticated tests, the concept of forgery is challenged. At the same time pirate CDs are burned for infringing copyright, the essence of copyright is questioned. At the same time scientists write journal articles collaboratively, writers of fiction are charged with plagiarism, and it is hard for most people to admit that a novel might be written by four or forty hands, as it is a landmark of individualism and autonomy. Copyright has not evolved to encompass these changes, for copyright laws consider writing as a solitary, individual activity and although electronic copyright, e-mail, and e-lists have been showing us that writing is not as solitary and originary as it was supposed, this view is still prevalent.

Ours seems to be a time warped between two distinct moments and it is needless to say that history has been a succession of contradictory periods, with one period being born at the heyday of the preceding one. It was this tension that writers such as William Gaddis perceived and made use of.

Contemporary collaborative writing resembles Renaissance forms of writing, and it can be said that “this quintessentially Renaissance form of writing and writing is rapidly being revived by our electronic technology” (MELTZER, 1994, p. 27). The term collaborative writing is usually used to refer by texts written by more than one scholar and it is usually forgotten that all writing is also collaborative to some extent.

Mallon (1991) reminds us that in most of literary history the use of the works of others was not seen as plagiarism or something to demerit the work of a writer. He provides us with the examples of Greek and Roman literature, the New and the Old New Testament, Bocaccio and Chaucer, and even Shakespeare. For Mallon, “the great critical cry of classical literature was not an Emersonian call to “trust thyself” but a Horatian exaltation to follow others” (MALLON, 1991, p. 3). But for Schneider, “The history of literature is undeniably the history of repetitions,

of the already-written”[8] (1990, p. 20). According to him, one is never the first and one must get used to this, although our culture is a culture that values those who are first and punishes late-comers.

Mallon reminds us that,

> There was a time when the guiding spirits of the literary dead were deliberately conjured, a time before ancestor worship gave way to that form of youth-enthrallment known as originality. It was not a short period of time either; it amounts to most of literary history (1991, p. 3).

With the advent of copyright this picture changed, for a quick read of judicial opinions on cases of copyright infringement makes it clear that there is a tendency to discourage writers and other artists to rework or reuse existing works in detriment of ‘original’ materials, which would qualify them as authors in the Romantic sense (JASZI, 1994, p. 48). Thus, originality is a cardinal requirement in copyright law.

Many well-known writers and producers of masterpieces have been accused of being plagiarists, among them Coleridge and Stendhal. Mallon defends the theory that most plagiarists, such as Coleridge, did not need to steal. He states that, “Yet another

[8] Translated by the author, since the book has not been translated into English. “A história da literatura é a história do já escrito”.

common characteristic of the plagiarist is the lack of any real need to steal” (1991, p. 33). Mallon goes even further bringing the “desire to be caught” that most plagiarists would have (1991, p. 34). The intriguing question, as Meltzer points out, is why such writers really stole in the first place (1994, p. 3). The following question is usually “Why should one bother to plagiarize if one has talent?”. The fact is that many were the writers considered great who could not help plagiarizing. The most important question, in fact, should be if the concept and use of plagiarism is suitable and when are writers really stealing. In fact, it seems they started to “steal” when they were considered owners of the texts they wrote, for, “Plagiarism denotes ownership firmly tied to the original author of an original and unique idea or work” (SWEARIGEN, 1999, p. 25). This way, copyright stimulates the establishment of paternity over a text, making texts not only children of their author, but also their property (HALBERT, 1999, p. 113).

Mallon compares the plagiarist and the forger by saying that,

> The plagiarist is more likely to suffer hell’s permanence than the forger. Given the greater creative dash involved in his brand of wrongdoing, the forger may just pass through a purgatorial probation before emerging into posterity’s regard and renown (MALLON, 1991, p. 136).

Moreover, it should be pointed out that plagiarism relies on the inability to recognize sources, to disguise origins, whereas forgery relies on the ability to recognize something as part of a work (GROOM, 2002, p. 17).

There are two kinds of appropriation “one that re-invents and rearranges and indeed often depends on the audience’s recognition of the earlier material that has been transmuted” and another “that hopes, beyond all else, for the original material to remain unrecognized as such” (MALLON, 1991, p. 242). Therefore, under this perspective appropriation might be plagiarism or not. It is plagiarism when there is a transgression of the authorship of others (WOODMANSEE, 1994, p. 1).

Howard, Woodmansee, and Meltzer do not share Mallon’s opinion. They defend that building new texts from other texts, using existing compositions and combining them into new forms is not plagiarism, but creativity. But it is impossible to go back in search for the origin of the texts, because one text always refers to another text.

Howard comments on Meltzer’s argument and states that,

> Meltzer’s argument seems to be that if there is no originality, there is no basis for literary property. If

> there is no originality and no literary property, there is no basis for the notion of plagiarism (1999, p. 84)

Psychoanalyst Michel Schneider also defends that writers always write influenced by other texts or writers. That means to say that texts are more or less influenced by other texts in a way or another. For Schneider, “every writer always has his masters and is haunted by plagiarism”[9] (1990, p. 14). Meltzer seems to agree with Schneider for she states that any study on originality will prove that “the fear of plagiarism, frequently well-founded anxiety and a symptom of originality, does not suddenly appear in the eighteenth century” (1994, p. 4). In other words, this fear has always existed and haunted writers; however, the excessive emphasis posed on originality by Romanticism stimulated this fear as writers were placed in the limelight.

Meltzer also seems to agree with Schneider when she declaims that the “fear of being robbed masks a more basic anxiety that originality may be impossible and illusory; and paranoia in the scaffolding that arises and supports itself by (means of) those creators—criticism (or theory) itself” (1994, p. 6). And also, “The anxiety about having an original idea stolen hides the larger fear that there is no such thing as originality—

[9] Translated by the author. “Cada escritor tem seus mestres e é assombrado pelo plágio”.

but merely the appearance of it" (MELTZER, 1994, p. 41). Howard also shares Meltzer's view that there is no originality by saying, "The fear of plagiarism is only compounded by the widespread suspicion that there is no such thing as originality – that all 'originality' is actually 'influenced'" (1999, p. 26). She also defends that if originality does not exist, and its opposite being plagiarism, all writers might be, to some extent, plagiarists (1999, p. 26). However, the problem with Howard's assertion is that plagiarism might not be the counterpart of originality. Lindley defends that, "plagiarism and originality are not polar opposites, but the obverse and reverse of the same medal" (LINDLEY, 1952, p. 14).

Alfrey also discusses this distinction. For her,

> At the right of copyright law lies the elusive ideal of originality – and its corollary plagiarism. Originality and plagiarism are not opposites, but are closely related and both are linked to the idea of genius and imagination (2001, p.1).

Meltzer goes even further saying that "The Greeks, the Romans, the writers of the Renaissance, seventeenth-century Europeans – all worried about having their ideas stolen" (1994, p.4). Meltzer supports this defending that "the pursuit of originality, the fear of being robbed of a "new" idea, the drive to be first, even the work ethic itself are symptoms of a

gendered theology of origin (1994, p. 7) because our culture is a culture grounded on being first, unique, in short, original.

It is often overlooked, but Meltzer reminds us, that plagiarism has two sides: the one who plagiarizes and the one who is plagiarized. Both sides are subjected to violations in the case of an accusation of plagiarism. For her, “the one who does the thieving is just as entangled in the originality and identity game as the one who is robbed” (1994, p. 42). For her, “Originality puts identity at stake” (1994, p. 42) and we are at a time when identity is itself being questioned as an autonomous notion.

Copyright law does not protect ideas, themes, or subject matter; but it does protect craftsmanship, which is usually defined as ‘effort and judgment’ (ALFREY, 2001). Therefore, “two works can claim protection, even if identical, provided the effort behind the work is demonstrably independent” (ALFREY, 2001), which emphasizes the process and not the result of the process.

Alfrey gets to the point when she dares say that, “The problem is that plagiarism permeates everyday life. It is not only accepted but it is encouraged and integral to creative life”

(2001, p. 3). Alfrey is obviously making a reference to the academic practices in which students are encouraged to copy the great masters in order to learn from. Any paper that is not filled with quotations and references is not considered academic enough. On the other hand, if the same happens to a short story written by a writing student, it is plagiarism.

For Alfrey, the Romantics promote a reversion of classical ideas, since for them, “Nature is the classical source of ideas and the only way to attain originality is to look to Nature and ignore culture” (2001, p. 4). Mallon, although writing at the end of the twentieth century, seems to share this Romantic view, for he surprisingly states that, “What novelists are really supposed to plagiarize, of course is reality” (1991, p. 21), where he transpires his view that writers must not use other people’s works, as if it were possible. He goes even further when he defends “the making of something really and truly new”, in the passage quoted bellow,

> Originality — not just innocence of plagiarism but the making of something really and truly new—set itself down as a cardinal literary virtue sometime in the middle of the eighteenth century and has never since gotten up (1991, p. 24).

It is clear that, according to Mallon’s perspective, using pre-existing works is always stealing, which implies

proprietorship. Regarding this, it is important to have in mind that this notion that words can be owned, and consequently stolen, is not only modern, but also Western (SWEARIGEN, 1999, p. 21). Mallon states that, “The writer need not blush about stealing if he makes what he takes completely his, if he alchemizes it into something that is, finally, thoroughly new” (MALLON, 1991, p. 25). In this quotation, it is easy to notice that Mallon does defend the notion that it is possible to do something “thoroughly new”, and consequently, original. But at the same time he admits, “To some extent every writer’s desk is like a Ouija board[10], his pen pushed across it by whatever ghost he has just entertained” (MALLON, 1991, p. 3) and “One of the writer’s occupational fears is that he will plagiarize unwittingly” (MALLON, 1991, p. 125).

In “Pierre Menard, Writer of Don Quixote”, Borges makes it clear there is only one method for two people to write the same text: they have to go through the same experiences, and yet, this might not work out. Pierre Menard realizes there is only one way of writing the same text Cervantes had written, being the same subject, that is, Cervantes. Therefore, texts are unique

[10] An Ouija board is a board that usually consists of the letters of the alphabet, 0-9 in numbers, and the words “yes” and “no”. It can have several shapes and can be made of various materials. It is usually identified as a “talking board”, for it is used to make spirits talk. The user touches a pointer and the pointer moves and spells the answers to the questions asked to the Ouija. Some people believe spirits provide the answers to the questions; others believe answers come form the unconscious of the people asking the questions.

because the process is different, even though the result may look similar. This is another point that complicates the relationship between plagiarism and copyright infringement because what is at stake in copyright is the result of one's work, which might be similar or even apparently identical. However, the process might have been totally different. Concerning this matter, Nick Groom states that, "Authenticity is located in the body of the artist" (2003, p. 13).

Regarding this, it is necessary to point out that "plagiarism is a failure of the creative process, not a flaw in its result" (STEARNS, 1999, p. 7) and plagiarism is not a legal term, whereas copyright is. Therefore, one cannot be sued for plagiarism, but for copyright infringement. An act of plagiarism might not infringe copyright and an act of copyright infringement might not be a case of plagiarism. Stearns argues in plagiarism what is at stake is the creative process, whereas in copyright infringement it is the result of one's work (STEARNS, 1999, p. 9).

Writing and painting practices have changed from one era to another. What was once considered acceptable may not be acceptable anymore. Collaborative writing and painting were acceptable in the Middle Ages, but nowadays they might be

considered crimes and named plagiarism and forgery, if they infringe our current regime of authorship.

The modern notion of plagiarism is based upon a series of premises that are not sustainable anymore in postmodernity, among them that the writer is autonomous, that absolute originality exists, and that artists can own works of art. Swearigen points out that, “Plagiarism relies on the notion of exclusionary ownership” (LUNSFORD apud SWEARIGEN, 1999, p. 21).

From the Renaissance towards modernity, painters were classified as either master painters or forgers, as well as writers were classified as either original or plagiary. Authorship and originality are two closely connected issues and, thus, it is impossible to refer to one of them without referring to the other one. Postmodernism tries to explode these dichotomies showing that this modern notion of authorship is a construct just like originality. Once we deconstruct the notion of originality, we are also challenging the notions of plagiarism and forgery. Forgeries, plagiarisms, and counterfeits blur the distinction between original and copy, the real and its imitation, which postmodernism deplores and which William Gaddis explored in 1955, when art and literary criticism had barely started to notice.

The Recognitions, as a self-reflexive novel, challenges these notions heralding discussion to come in literary and art criticism. Stonehill defends that, “Of prime importance for all self-conscious fiction is the issue of originality” (1988, p. 46), taking Gaddis’s novel as his main example. He goes further and states that, “Contemporary self-conscious novels regularly confront the perception that there is nothing so unoriginal as the quest for originality” (1988, p. 46), which Wyatt, and Gaddis, invites us to take with him.

3 FROM WYATT TO STEPHEN

The man of genius does not steal, he conquers, and what he conquers, he annexes to his empire.

Alexandre Dumas

In the first chapter of *The Recognitions* Gaddis makes unmistakable references to other literary texts and tests the reader's ability to make recognitions of his own. Every act of recognition implies a repetition, for we can only "recognize" what we have seen or experienced before (JOHNSTON, 1990, p. 7).

The chapter is entitled "The First Turn of the Screw", which echoes Henry James's text and begins with a two-line epigraph from Goethe's *Faust*. In this epigraph, Mephistopheles asks Wagner, whispering, "Was gibt es denn?" and Wagner answers, "Es wird ein Mensh gemacht"[11]. This epigraph is obviously related to the themes of originality and religion that permeate both

[11] "What is it then? A man is being made". Translated by the author.

Faust and *The Recognitions*. The epigraph is in German, for Gaddis does not bother to translate it, and relies on the reader's ability to understand and recognize it or at least to be puzzled by it. It is relevant to point out that this procedure will be used by Gaddis most of the time, bringing into play quotations in several other languages. Thus, it is important to point out that the intertextual and referential nature of the novel is clear from its beginning. As John Johnston has observed, for Gaddis, "intertextuality is a compositional procedure from the outset"(1990, p. 5), for Gaddis's readings are reworked into new art.

Nevertheless, he does not use quotation as most modernists do; on the contrary, he uses them to depart from modernism, to mark a difference with it. As Kevin Dettmar reminds us, modernist fiction relies on the maintenance of clear boundaries between quotation, allusion, plagiarism, and piracy (1999, p. 101), whereas postmodernist authors such as William Gaddis attempt to cross these boundaries, which is done recurrently in a novel where the main subjects are forgery and plagiarism and the main characters are a forger and a plagiarist.

3.1 The Making of a Forger

The protagonist of *The Recognitions* is a painter called Wyatt Gwyon. Although he is absent from most of the novel, he hangs over the entire narrative appearing and disappearing several times. Even when he disappears he is talked about or imitated, even without any mention to his name.

When we are first introduced to Wyatt, at the beginning of the novel, he is a boy raised by his strict aunt and his father. This relates to the epigraph of the first chapter, since he is becoming a man, that is, “a man is being made” and Wyatt’s early years are of extreme importance as his conceptions toward art and religion will be shaped in this period.

Wyatt struggles to escape his fate of becoming a minister like his father, who is an eccentric and has left Wyatt under the care of his Calvinist aunt after his mother died violently in Catholic Spain. This fact was a tragedy never to be overcome by a Protestant New England family, mainly due to its obscure nature. This incident connects Wyatt’s life to counterfeiting from his very early years, even before he is

introduced to the readers, for his mother was killed by a doctor after an attack of appendicitis. This doctor, Mr. Sinisterra, was not a doctor; he was a counterfeiter passing as the ship's doctor.

In his early years, Wyatt is a solitary boy and the only moments in which he seems to be happy and comforted are those when he draws or paints. He feels a strong necessity to paint, but his aunt does not appreciate that and does not let him paint. When he brings her his first drawing for her approval, she looks at the E-shaped robin and says,

> Don't you love our Lord Jesus after all? ... Then why did you take His place? Our Lord is the only true creator, and only sinful people try to emulate Him... Do you remember Lucifer? Who Lucifer is? (p. 34).

Aunt May's statement voices her belief that creating something is the work of the Lord and not the role of the artist. It is important to notice that she uses the verb "emulate", and not the verb "imitate", which is considerably different. According to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, to emulate means "to try to be like someone else because you admire them"(1995, p. 450), and, therefore, by painting Wyatt would be trying to be like God; whereas to imitate means "to copy something because you think it is good"(1995, p.710), which is

not what she thinks Wyatt is doing. This distinction between emulate and imitate is defended by Edward Young in his “Conjectures on Original Composition”, for he states that “Imitation is inferiority confessed; emulation is superiority contested, or denied; Imitation is servile, emulation generous”(1995, p. 40).

The problem in May’s claim is that she rejects artistic creation, for it imitates God. Her claim is apparently similar to that of American photographer and painter Man Ray, one of the icons of Dadaism and Surrealism, who defended that “To create is divine, to reproduce is human”.

Aunt May goes even further and states her Calvinistic posture more clearly,

> To sin is to falsify something in the Divine Order, and that is what Lucifer did... He tried to steal the power of Our Lord and to bring light to man. He tried to become … original, to steal Our Lord’s authority, to command his own destiny, to bear his own light (p. 34).

Thus, from his early childhood Wyatt learns that he should never attempt at doing something original because creation “is not man’s right or privilege – originality is a usurpation of God’s work. It is a falsification of something in the divine order, and is therefore a sin”(LEVERENCE, 1984, p. 42). This will

account for Wyatt's difficulty in finishing any supposedly original work, as the portrait of his mother, which he starts as a young man and only finishes many years later. However, his aunt never explains to him what originality is or what she means by it. Unsure about what she means, he makes drawings in secrecy and looks at his productions terrified. He starts burying them behind the house in order to hide the results of his sins. Eventually, Aunt May permits him to copy, or imitate, illustrations from her religious books. Wyatt gets acquainted with Hyeronymus Bosch[12] and Breughel[13] and elaborates a domain to produce copies of the illustrations. Even the supposedly original *Table of the Seven Deadly Sins*[14] that his father had brought from Europe is later

[12] Hyeronymus Bosch was a Flemish master who probably lived from 1450 to 1516 and produced several triptychs. His works depicted fantastic images showing a very careful execution of tiny figures and details and for this reason he is considered as an inspiration to surrealism. His paintings satirized medieval culture and showed alchemical concepts. Bosch's work was extremely popular in the 16th century and, for this reason, it was widely copied, imitated, and forged. Therefore, there are many qualified paintings in the style of Bosch in Europe. Critics have had difficulty identifying his paintings for he never dated any of them and rarely signed them.

[13] Pieter Breughel was a Flemish old master that lived between 1568 and 1625.

[14] *The Seven Deadly Sins* is one of Bosch's masterpieces and is currently at the Prado Museum. The authenticity of this tabletop has been questioned many times, although it is now considered genuine by most experts, as it holds his signature, although some critics defend it is too crude and too large (ZEIDLER, 2004). The Prado provides the following description of the table: The composition of the panel is structured around five circles. The central one is divided into three concentric rings and symbolically represents the eye of God. In the centre is the image of Christ on the holy sepulchre showing his wounds. In the next area is an inscription warning that God is watching: "Cave, Cave Dominus Videt" (Take care, take care, God is watching). The centre is separated by another circle with gilded rays which provides the composition with a neutral space in order to highlight the outer ring in which Bosch has painted representations of the Seven Deadly Sins, each one identified by Latin inscriptions: Anger, Pride, Lust, Sloth, Gluttony, Avarice and Envy. The four corners of the panel are occupied by four smaller circles in which Bosch has painted the Four Last Things: Death, Judgement, Hell and Glory. At the top and bottom of the composition are two scrolls in which appear Latin texts reproducing Chapter 32 of Deuteronomy, warning of the dangers of sin. The one above reads: " For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them./ O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end". The inscription below reads: I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be". The artist has represented the Seven Deadly Sins as small scenes based on his observation of daily life in the Netherlands but one which contains a critique of the vices of his own age. Each of these views can be compared to a small work of genre painting. This wheel of sins is united by the shared sky and by views of the Dutch countryside. The interior scenes are filled with details of everyday objects. The Four Last Things are conventional images: the most complex is that of Hell in which we again find the Seven Deadly

copied to perfection. This way, his own aunt stimulates him to make copies of religious illustrations and he is made to believe that copying is not a sin, as creating is. It is clear that from aunt May's Calvinistic position originality exists and is a sin, falsification; this way, all artists are sinners because the dare to create. This perspective will haunt Wyatt for most of his life, as exemplified in the quote below:

> Every week or so he would begin something original. It would last for few days, but before any lines of completion had been drawn, he abandoned it. Still the copies continued to perfection, that perfection that only counterfeit could attain, reproducing every aspect of inadequacy, every blemish on Perfection, in the original (p. 55).

The Hyeronymus Bosch table is also important for the inscription it contains, "Cave, Cave, Dominus videt", meaning "Beware, beware, God is watching", which Wyatt was forced to contemplate at every meal, since he had his meals at this table facing the eye of God (p. 30). This inscription and the eye of God in the center of the table fits very well into aunt May's

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Sins with their accompanying punishments. The origins of this panel are unknown. It was probably produced as a commission from a monastic order. In 1574 it belonged to Philip II who kept it in the monastery of El Escorial. In the inventories of the king's possessions it is described as a table-top rather than a panel for hanging on the wall. During the Spanish Civil War it was brought to the Museo del Prado on deposit from Patrimonio Nacional. The panel is signed beneath the lower scroll: Hieronimus Bosch. See a reproduction of the painting attached. For more information, go to: http://museoprado.mcu.es/icuadro_mayo_2003.html.

idea that God is always watching us, a notion which will also accompany Wyatt for most of his life.

Concerning the origin of the Bosch table, Gwyon takes it for the original, but it is interesting to point out that in order to leave Italy with the table, Gwyon had to affirm it was a fake, because of the law regarding antiques (p. 25). Wyatt questions the authenticity of *The Table of the Seven Deadly Sins* and asks his father, “How were you certain it was the original?” (p. 39), but his father is unable to answer this question and Wyatt is puzzled by his father’s silence, which makes him think about the difference between original/authentic works and copies/forgeries. Therefore, for Wyatt, the first shades of a concept of originality are related to what is different, new; which his aunt abhors and considers a sin. Now he is introduced to the second side of originality, that is, something that is not a copy of anything, that is, something that is an origin for something else. Thus, both shades of the concept of originality are problematized.

The choice of this painting for such an important role in the narrative is not accidental for the origin of the “original” painting hanging at the Prado Museum is as obscure as Gwyon’s painting in the narrative. Its authenticity is still

questioned, and although it is considered a Flemish original, after having been authenticated by experts and marketed for millions, there is no proof it was painted by Bosch himself. It may be one of the many copies produced in the same period by one of Bosch's apprentices or even the work of a forger; which does not diminish it.

The origin of the painting is as problematic as the origin of *The Clementine Recognitions*, which provides the framework for the novel. There are uncountable manuscripts of this text, which makes us suppose it was a popular text in the Middle Ages. The version of the *Recognitions* we have today reveals that it is composed of many texts interpolated, of several voices layered over the others, making its structure similar to that of a palimpsest. This is considered normal for texts from this period, since texts were handwritten and those making the copies, the already mentioned *auctores,* often altered them.

The text is known as Clementine *Recognitions* because it has been attributed to Clement of Rome, who was a pope and martyr in the first century. However, the suspicious that the original author is not Clement has been growing stronger and the authorship of the text, the date in which it was written, and its

textual authenticity have been subject of innumerable discussions along the last centuries. Thus, although *The Clementine Recognitions* is included in the *Early Church Father's Canon*, being this way a canonized text, it is basically an inauthentic text and it can be considered the first Christian novel and forgery. There are many elements in the text, such references to alchemy, which suggest that a Christian might not have written it.

Johnston (1990) and Comnes (1994) remind us that the name Conte di Brescia mentioned by Gwyon evokes Dante's counterfeiter Adano de Brescia who resides in the eighth circle of hell, where reside people who have committed four types of fraud: alchemy, false witness, counterfeiting, and evil impersonation. This brings a connection between the alchemist and the counterfeiter. Alchemy was a practice that combined elements of chemistry, physics, astrology, metallurgy, and religion and its main objective was to get the philosopher's stone in order to transmute common metals into gold, or as stated in *The Recognitions* "to redeem the matter" (p. 129). Thus, it did not aim at creating something out of nothing, but at transforming substances. The counterfeiter attempts to imitate an object with the intent of deceiving, but he must also transform substances. The old masters shared characteristics with both the alchemist

and the counterfeiter. The discovery of oil paint was similar to an alchemical discovery, for the transparency and brightness of oil paint enabled the painter to paint lifelike portraits, differently from the mixture of glue and egg tempera used by medieval artists (JONES, 2002). Thus, Renaissance painters were alchemists to a certain extent.

The epigraph to the second chapter of the novel is also taken from Paul Eudel's *Fake and Fakers* and establishes a clear connection between the Flemish old masters and forgery. It reads "Trés curieux, vos maîtres anciens. Seulement les plus beaux ce sont le faux"[15](p. 63), which suggests that the most beautiful paintings of the Northern Renaissance might be forgeries.

Wyatt's father never recovers after Camilla, Wyatt's mother, dies and spends most of the rest of his life locked in a room, reading. He is a reclusive, but he tells biblical and pagan stories to a curious Wyatt. Reverend Gwyon is distancing himself from Christianity and studying Mithraism[16], alchemy, and Pelagianism[17]. He can be said to be a fake Christian minister, for he never talks about Christian doctrine in his sermons.

[15] "A funny thing about your Old Masters: only the most beautiful are forged"
[16] Mithraism is an ancient religion that worshiped the solar deity Mithra. The alchemical figure of the Ouroboros has its origins in Mithraism.
[17] Pelagianism was a heresy in the fifth century that denied original sin.

According to the narrator, Reverend Gwyon sees Wyatt from a "wondering distance" and his behavior as "a fantasy of perfect logic demonstrating those parts of himself which had had to grow in public" (p. 27). They would sit and share confidences regarding Ossian[18], Theophrastus[19], Clement of Rome, and others when Gwyon "found himself forced to conversation by the abrupt and even more shy presence of this fragment of himself he kept encountering" (p. 27). Therefore, Gwyon is disturbed by the similarity between himself and his son, or rather, the reproduction of his qualities in Wyatt, making of Wyatt, to some extent, a copy of himself.

Nevertheless, it is not Wyatt's similarities with himself that annoy Gwyon. He often speaks of his son's name unfamiliarly and there is a relevant reason for that. Gwyon and his wife had decided the boy would be named Stephen months before the baby was born, but after the birth, Aunt May supplied the name Wyatt from the family genealogy of ministers and they forgot about Stephen. Only later Camilla remembered the previous choice of name, but they did not mention that because he had already been baptized as Wyatt (p. 27). This is extremely significant

[18] Here we have another connection with forgery. Scottish poet James Macpherson (1736-1796) published *The Works of Ossian* in 1765 as translations from ancient Gaelic poetry. However, the poems were soon proved to be by Macpherson himself, who had forged them. Nevertheless, the poems greatly influenced the Romantic Movement and raised interest for Gaelic literature. Nowadays, the poems themselves raise little interest, whereas the forgery is among the most famous in literary history.

[19] Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim is better known as Paracelsus and was a famous alchemist.

because, later in the novel, Wyatt disappears from the narrative for many chapters, and when he returns, he is referred to as Stephan, and then Stephen. Therefore, Wyatt is the name supplied by his aunt that links him to his family history, and to get over that it is necessary that his name be changed.

Wyatt attempts to fulfill his fate and attends divinity school, but he stays there for only a year, for he believes he is not fit for the ministry. Stonehill argues that he listens to “the call of the artist” and not to “the call of religion” (1988, p. 16); nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that he rejects the ministry, but devotes himself to religious art. At this age, these two calls seem incompatible to him, and he decides to commit to painting. The conflict within him seems to be that, “The priest is the guardian of mysteries. The artist is driven to expose them” (p. 261). This shows clearly a difference from artist nowadays to the first artists, since the first artists were shamans (JANSON, 1996, p. 6).

Wyatt’s life starts to change when he finishes the Hyeronymus Bosch copy and replaces his father’s original with it. Wyatt leaves home taking his father’s Bosch painting and the unfinished portrait of Camilla. Thus, the Bosch copy performs a very important role in Wyatt’s life enabling him to sell the

original in order to run away to dedicate himself to painting and Camilla's portrait will enable him to meet Esme, his true love.

In Europe, Wyatt attempts to be a successful painter and fails for not adapting to the modernist art scene he is immersed in. Regarding this moment, Knight states that, "originality is the disease of the age" as "Traditional paths of direction are eschewed in favor of fads and reactions" (1984, p. 60). As an example of that, at a café table, a group of people discusses art and the positive comment Wyatt overhears is "très très original" (p. 65), reinforcing the cult of originality that prevailed. Therefore, it is not surprising that someone like Wyatt, who had learned of the perils of originality, would fall short of success.

Wyatt finally manages to get some of his finished pieces into an exhibition. The reader is not informed whether he is finally painting original works or attempting to exhibit copies. An art critic named Crémer offers to write a positive review of his exhibit if he is granted a percentage on the paintings sold, but Wyatt refuses the offer and the exhibit is a failure. It is the first time in the narrative Wyatt is tempted by a devilish figure. Wyatt's conversation with the critic is illuminating. The art critic does not ask Wyatt to see his

paintings, but asks Wyatt if his style is German impressionism, since he has studied in Germany. Wyatt's reply that he paints in the style of the early Flemish masters does not seem to surprise the critic and he questions Wyatt about the similarity between his painting and that of van Eyck[20] or van der Weyden[21], but Wyatt says his painting is more similar to Memling's[22]. At this point it is interesting to comment on the style of these masters as Jan van Eyck's and Rogier van der Weyden's paintings share some similarities that are of interest to this particular work. Both painters depicted either rooms full of people or heavily populated scenes and also exaggerated in the use of minute detailing and symbols in order to fill any visible space (BAUMGART, 1999, p. 207-209). The principle behind this seems to have been a religious one: no one should be granted space for imagination and, therefore, all spaces should be filled. Regarding Hans Memling, he is known for his "lack of originality". He was the most famous pupil of Rogier van der Weyden and basically imitated the other Flemish painters of the period. Therefore, Wyatt's reply will turn out to be telltale of

[20] The van Eycks were a family of painters, but the critic is probably referring to Jan van Eyck, the most famous. They were among the first to popularize oil paint and to share the secret of the oil medium they used. As this secret was kept for decades, and many painters attempted to obtain the formula of their oil medium, they were considered alchemists. Jan's older brother and tutor, Hubert, whose existence is still questioned (JANSON, 1996, p. 173), is also mentioned in the novel. Nowadays, the importance of their discovery of oil paint has been minimized, as there is evidence suggesting other painters had already been using it (JONES, 2002, p. 1).

[21] Rogier van der Weyden lived from 1400 to 1464. He was a Flemish painter also known as Roger de la Pasture. His principal painting is a *Descent from the Cross*, which will be referred to in the novel.

[22] Hans Memling was a Flemish painter who lived from 1430 to 1494. He was the most famous pupil of Rogier van der Weyden.

his painting practices, for he praised the painter who did not aim at originality. However, in the novel, through Wyatt's voice or readings, Memling will always be presented as the one

> who had brought the weak beginnings of Flemish Art to the peak of their perfection, and crystallized the minor talents of the Van Eycks, Bouts, Van der Weyden, in the masterpieces of his own German genius (p. 75).

Even though, Wyatt's painting is completely different from the modernist painting of the period and he does not fit into any vanguard movement of the time, the critic is interested in making a deal with him, which hints to the power the critic exerts over the artistic scene. Despite the fact that Wyatt's art is more similar to Klee's *Angelus Novus,* for his eyes are turned to the past at a moment nobody seems to care about it, the critic affirms he an make people interested in Wyatt's work. According to Frederick Karl, "Wyatt finds that he can express himself only through a relationship with the past and, in particular, with the Flemish Masters of the fifteenth and sixteenth century"(1983, p. 180). He is nostalgic for the situation of the Flemish painters, who, in his opinion, did not have to worry about market considerations, so he pretends to be one of them, but Crémer impersonates the market by knocking at his door and offering the possibility of success.

Christopher Knight poses an interesting question regarding Wyatt's preference for the Flemish masters: "Why should Wyatt in mid-twentieth century, wish not only to paint in the style of the Flemish masters, but also think it viable?"(1997, p. 47). There must be more to it than the fact he dislikes modernist art and its negation of the past, which he certainly does. For Knight, this has to do with the different roles in society of medieval and contemporary art and artists. Wyatt has been raised to be a minister and even his name was taken from a genealogy of ministers, but he abandons divinity school to be a painter. However, he never abandons his ministry completely and in contemporary society, in Knight's words, "the roles of priest and artist are no longer so companionable"(1997, p. 47) and Wyatt is definitely fully married to his art. Perhaps, "working in the Flemish style allows Wyatt to combine the ambitions of both the priest and the artist"(1997, p. 49), as if he were returning to a time when those who painted were also religious men and joining his two vocations, for Wyatt clearly rejects the role of priest, but not religion itself.

This might also justify his interest for alchemy, since alchemy seems to connect art and religion and was also of interest for master painters, who wanted to reach perfection. Moreover, it has been suggested that art has, mainly in

modernism, in many ways, replaced religion, with its cults to artists and paintings, demonstrated by the increase in the number of places where works of art are worshiped and commercialized, such as art galleries and museums. In Medieval life people looked at paintings, such as those by the Flemish masters, as manifestations of the All-mighty and not achievements of any individual genius that should be worshiped.

The failure of Wyatt's exhibit contrasts with the discovery that an original painting by Hans Memling. This is actually a painting in the style of Memling painted by Wyatt when he was an art student in Germany. It was never aimed at being sold as a genuine Memling and it had not even been signed either with Wyatt's or with Memling's name. The painting is, as all of his forgeries will be, a simulacrum of a Memling, for it is not based on a Memling and it was not painted by him; although it passes for a Memling. This is an instance that links the failure of Wyatt's paintings to the possibility of success that forgery will later offer him, by the hands of the same Recktall Brown who tells Basil Valentine, "I just got hold of a Memling. An original"(p. 231), referring to Wyatt's painting.

But the narrative and Wyatt's life change greatly when Wyatt meets the unscrupulous art dealer Recktall Brown, who

introduces himself to Wyatt as “a business man”. His business in the narrative is to try to buy Wyatt’s soul taking advantage of Wyatt’s despair. Wyatt humbly identifies himself as a draftsman, but Brown calls him an artist and praises the restoring work Wyatt has done, stirring Wyatt’s vanity. Wyatt is seduced by the compliments and admits, “That painting could hang in any museum”, and Brown replies, “It does”(p. 141), suggesting that the painting in question has been marketed. Brown’s aim is to seduce Wyatt into his scheme by praising him,

> -- Oh, this restoring, this … patching up the past I do.
> -- You don’t paint? You don’t paint pictures of yourself?
> -- I ... No.
> -- Why not?
> -- I just don’t paint (p. 142).

And then inquiring Wyatt about his aims as a painter,

> -- All this work, all these books, you go to all this trouble just to patch up other’s people work? How come you’ve never painted anything yourself?
> -- Well, I have, I have (p. 142).

Wyatt confesses he did not succeed as a painter of original works and decided to do some restoring work in order to continue painting the kind of painting he likes. Brown talks to Wyatt as someone who gives a lot of importance to what Wyatt does, but he is in fact interested in making use of Wyatt’s talent. Recktall Brown can be considered a devilish figure, who

commits all the seven deadly sins along the narrative and whose own name echoes the taint of sin. For this reason, Johnston equates Recktall Brown with Simon Magus, for whereas Simon Magus lures Clement, in his quest for salvation, Brown tempts Wyatt and Wyatt will succumb to his calling. Wyatt rejects the ministry, differently from Clementine, who follows Peter, and decides to be a painter and the painting of the Flemish masters Wyatt embraces is alchemical, for it blends science and religion.

Wyatt reveals to Brown why he paints and why he thinks artists make works of art. He says, “every work of art is a work of perfect necessity” (p. 145), meaning that he does not paint for any logical reason, but for necessity. Woodmansee reminds us that Moritz advocates that artists should not create for any other reason than their own necessity (1994, p. 21). This is relevant because most of the characters in the novel embrace what seems to be an art-for-art’s-sake aesthetic (KNIGHT, 1997, p. 26). This is exemplified by Anselm’s statement that all is *Arse gratia artis*, and not *Ars gratis artis* (p. 633). Only Wyatt, Stanley, and Esme seem to be different.

Brown expresses the widespread lack of interest for copies by declaring,

> Nobody wants copies… The ones who can pay want originals. They can pay for originals. They expect to pay… As long as an artist is alive, he can paint more pictures. When they're dead, they're through. Take the old Dutch painters. Not even the best ones (p. 145).

This demand for original works identified by Brown can also be extended to the literary field and the demand for originality falling upon writers. As Wyatt also agrees that no one wants copies, Brown convinces Wyatt to become a forger using Wyatt's own arguments and without using the word forgery. He proposes that Wyatt paint original paintings in the style of the old masters to be sold as recently discovered masterpieces. This way, Brown convinces Wyatt to paint works that are neither copies nor originals and what he really wants is to paint in his favorite style, which he has done since he was an art student. In fact, all Wyatt has to do for his works to be considered forgeries is not sign them or sign them with a name other than his own.

According to Brown, if new paintings by old masters appeared, even damaged or restored, everyone would want to buy them, because "The critics! There's nothing they want more than to discover old masters" (p. 146). Nick Groom confirms this statement when he defends that "Forgeries are finds — and paramount to the act of discovery is the recognition of discovery" (2001, p. 17). For forgeries to circulate, they need

to be authenticated by critics who invent a provenance for the object. It is possible to establish an analogy to the work of literary critics in discovering literary works and, in a way, authenticating them, making them worthy of attention.

It is assumed that Wyatt's career was based on Han Van Meegeren's life. He was a forger whose forgeries of Vermeer were discovered in the 1940's when Gaddis was working on the novel. It is certainly not a coincidence that Van Meegeren also forged a Flemish master. Van Meegeren also turned to forgery after he did not succeed as a painter. He wanted the critics to recognize his talent by saying he was as good as Vermeer so he decided to forge Vermeers. After the forgeries were hanging at museums, he revealed he was the author of the paintings. He was discredited and had to forge a new Vermeer for the critics to admit he had painted the Vermeers. As soon as the critics perceived he was telling the truth, his paintings, which had been considered masterpieces, were forgotten. Aesthetic criteria were laid aside and the author's name, authorship, took its place.

In Wyatt's case, after Wyatt becomes a successful forger, his name is never mentioned again in the novel. The name Wyatt appears for the last time on page 118 when he has not

started producing forgeries yet. This, evidently, is not a coincidence.

3.2 The Vanity of Time

Thus, Wyatt apparently succumbs to the Faustian pact with Recktall Brown, although he has no intention of deceiving people and obtaining monetary gains. Even though Wyatt and Brown enter into an agreement, it is clear they do not share the same perspective. Recktall Brown's perspective is a purely materialistic one, for he is only interested in the material profits he will obtain from Wyatt, whereas Wyatt does accept to share the profits, but what he really wants is to paint. Brown is talking about business and Wyatt about art and what Gaddis discusses is the possibility and difficulty of this alliance between commercialism and art, referring to what Wyatt calls, "corruption" (p. 92).

Recktall Brown does not work by himself and his partner Basil Valentine[23] is the critic that supports his scheme. Valentine is a corrupt art critic, similarly to Crémer, who doubts Brown's commissioned forgeries in his reviews and then

[23] Basil Valentine is doubtlessly named after alchemist Basil Valentine, since there are many references to alchemy in the novel. It is important to point out that Basil Valentine's identity has never been established. Although many alchemical writings have been attributed to him, their authorship is contested for there is no proof a single man has penned them.

authenticates them[24]. The forgery system begins to collapse when Brown and Valentine get greedy and want more forgeries: Brown wants more money and Valentine more difficult forgeries.

On the occasions they talk to Wyatt, Brown is more interested in the business, as he has defined himself as a businessman, whereas Valentine seems to be more sensitive to Wyatt's work, since he is also a counterfeiter. Valentine praises Wyatt's forgeries because

> most forgeries last only a few generations, because they're so carefully done in the taste of the period, a forged Rembrandt, for instance, confirms everything that the period sees in Rembrandt. Taste and style change, and the forgery is painfully obvious, dated, because the new period has discovered Rembrandt all over again, and of course discovered him to be quite different. That is the curse that any genuine article must endure (p. 230).

Therefore, for Valentine, Wyatt's work is better than others because Wyatt can detach himself from the period he is in and look at the work with the eyes of the period in which the work was supposedly produced. Many of the forgeries can be identified as forgeries after some time. Dutton shares Valentine's point of view and affirms that, "Today it seems surprising that many of the van Meegeren forgeries were once thought to be Vermeers" (1998). The same critics that considered

[24] Although this system of work may seem far-fetched, Gaddis has probably taken the figures of Valentine and Brown from actual forgery schemes of the time, since there have been many similar cases.

the paintings masterpieces by Vermeer, took their words back after a few years. However, the forgeries had already had a strong influence on the work of Vermeer, as they had distorted the view of the whole work of Vermeer, for as Borges has stated, we can create our own precursors. In other words, Wyatt can detach the work from the vanity of time, which relates to what Wyatt says many times along the novel: “A work of art redeems time” (p. 144). It might suggest a nostalgic feeling for the past, as Wyatt’s copying is homage to the old masters, but for Beer, “*The Recognitions* does reflect a nostalgia for the situation of the Flemish painter” but there is at the same time an awareness that we are living at a different moment and it is not possible to turn back.

More sensitive to Wyatt’s preoccupations, Valentine has doubts about Wyatt’s adherence to their scheme, but Brown blinded by money, replies, “He has enough money to fly to the moon if he wants to” (p. 236). Concerned, Valentine inquires Wyatt, “Tell me, does Brown pay you well?” and Wyatt responds, “Pay me? I suppose. The money piles up there” (p. 261), showing his lack of interest for money and confirming that he is forging the paintings for other reasons. The problem is that his paintings were made forgeries by greed. His paintings were not forgeries to him, but he could not be successful for his achievements if his

paintings were not detached from his time. With this regard, Dutton reminds us that unintentional forgery is impossible, whereas unintentional plagiarism is (1998). Even if Wyatt did not aim at producing forgeries when he painted, Recktall Brown's practices turned them into forgeries.

When Wyatt's forgeries enter the market, Wyatt is faced with new problems. He is unprepared for the repercussion of his work. He forged *The Descent from the Cross* and it was deemed to be an authentic Hugo van der Goes[25]. Wyatt feels excited about the recognition of the perfection of his work and has a relevant conversation with Valentine, who admits,

> -- Yes, I wrote it, said Basil Valentine, looking him in the eyes.
> -- You wrote it? He repeated.
> -- I meant it, too. I congratulate you.
> -- Then you know it's mine? That this is mine? He flattened his hand against the page on the table.
> -- My dear fellow, "If the public believes a picture is by Raphael, and will pay the price of a Raphael," Valentine said, offering a cigarette, -- "then it is a Raphael."
> -- The cigarette was offered heedlessly. – Yes, I … but the reproductions they don't … I haven't seen this one, but they are a bad thing all around, they … here, you can see, this space right here, it loses almost all its value, because the blue, it doesn't quite … it isn't …
> -- Not bad for a reproduction, Valentine said, watching him pour Brandy into his glass. – But I've looked at the thing itself, and it is magnificent. It is, almost perfect. Perfect van der Goes.
> -- Yes, but I … it isn't that simple, you know. I mean, the thing itself, van der Goes, he repeated, his hand covering the sky behind the Cross, -- this is … mine (p. 239).

[25] Hugo van der Goes was also a Flemish master, but his life does not resemble that of the other masters. Even being a successful painter, he suffered from depression and decided to quit painting and be a monk. Still depressive, he killed himself in the monastery (JANSON, 1996, p. 179). The choice of van der Goes is significant, for it is at this point in the narrative that Wyatt starts to question of the followed the right call or should have been a minister.

Apparently, Wyatt is more preoccupied with the magazine reproduction of “his” painting. He opposes the mechanical reproductions of “his” work, which is, in a way, a manual reproduction. He feels as if he owned the paintings and bursts out, “But listen, they have no right to do this” (p. 249) and explains,

> This… these reproductions, they have no right to try to spread one painting out like this. There’s only one of them, you know, only one. This… my painting … there is only one, and these reproductions, these cheap fakes is what they are, being scattered everywhere, and they have no right to do that. It cheapens the whole … it’s a calumny, that’s what it is, on my work (p. 249).

Wyatt is in an obvious predicament. He paints masterpieces, but receives no recognition for that, for he cannot say he is the author of such works. The only thing he is receiving in return is money, which is not important to him. Now he finds Valentine who is apparently able to see the magnificence of his work, but who, at the same time, reminds him the moment his works are in the market, for the public, he loses them and they are not his anymore, for forgers impart their works at the moment they are attributed to another artist. Wyatt starts to question his practice and to see its implications at this point.

Valentine claims that, “Forgery is calumny. Every piece you do is calumny on the artist you forge” and Wyatt replies, “It’s not. It’s not, damn it, I … when I am working, I … Do you think I do these the way all the forging has been done?”(p. 249). Wyatt really does more than pulling fragments of ten paintings together and making one, which was considered to be the way in which most forgers worked. For him, he deals with recognitions that “go much deeper, much further back”, because the experts “look with memories that … go beyond themselves, that go back to … where mine goes” (p. 249). In fact, he fails to see that the moment his works enter the market, his works become forgeries. He does not see them as more than mere copies of pieces of other paintings imitating the style of the period, for they are unique creations in the style of previous works.

In order to do what he does, Wyatt feels like a Flemish master himself, who did not have to work for the critics and experts, but for God:

> And … any knock at the door may be the gold inspectors, come to see if I’m using the bad materials down there, I … I’m a master painter in the Guild, in Flanders, do you see? And if they come in and find that I’m not using the … gold, they destroy the bad materials I’m using and fine me, and I … they demand that … and this exquisite color of ultramarine, Venice ultramarine I have to take to them for approval, and the red pigment, this brick-red Flanders pigment … because I’ve taken the Guild oath, not for critics, the experts, the … you, you have no more to do with me than if you are my descendants, nothing to do with

> me, and you … the Guild oath to use pure materials, to work in the sight of God…" (p. 250).

Wyatt opens the magazine with the Flemish reproduction and begins to talk about the essence of Flemish painting, saying that,

> There was nothing God did not watch over, nothing, and so this … and so in the painting every detail reflects … God's concern with the most insignificant objects in life, with everything then, because God did not relax for an instant then, and neither could the painter then (p. 251).

Here, Wyatt returns to the idea that God is watching us all the time, learned from *The Table of the Seven Deadly Sins.* Valentine returns to the issue of authorship, "And when you are working, it's your own work... and when you attach the signature?" and Wyatt answers, "Yes, when I attach the signature, that changes everything, when I attach the signature and ... lose it". The moment he signs the forgeries he makes them commercially valuable, but he destroys them as his paintings. Valentine says, "Then corruption enters, is that it, my dear fellow? (p. 251). Valentine then reassures Wyatt, as if he were worried about problems with the law,

> That is the only thing they can prosecute you for in court, you know, if you are caught. Forging the signature. The law does not care a damn for the painting. God isn't watching them(p. 251).

Valentine goes straight to the point, for when Wyatt is painting, he is not forging anything; forgery enters the scene when he counterfeits the signature, the name under the painting and that is his crime, for it seems he tries to deceive others. Nick Groom agrees with literary forgers such as Eric Hebborn and van Meegeren that defend that there is nothing wrong or illegal with manufacturing imitations of paintings by the Great Masters. The only criminal procedure would be attaching the master's signature to be painting and making it a forgery. At this moment the painter would not be an artist anymore and would be a forger. In fact, medieval and Renaissance artists never signed their work for they believed they had been created by God, just like Wyatt never signed his name underneath his work for he believed he had not made them.

Dutton (1998) reminds us that paintings are material objects in our society and their value derives from the aesthetic qualities they embody and their authorship, that is, who made them and when. Philips also defends that "what matters more than the content, properties, technical mastery and aesthetic appeal of a given artwork is authorship" (2005). This explains why Wyatt's paintings ended in a warehouse in Jersey and his

forgeries at museums, which has also happened to Hebborn's and van Meegeren's works, after they were discovered to be forgeries.

Returning to Benjamin, he defends that original works of art, that is, those produced manually, have an aura that grants them with authenticity. Wyatt simulates the aura of these paintings, by attempting to use the materials and details a Flemish old master would have had access to and used. What Wyatt does is to remove the work of art from its own time and insert it into a new one, establishing a new chronology of art, distorting time, freeing it from "the vanity of time". Concerning authenticity, if Wyatt's paintings are considered originals, they are not originals by the great Flemish masters; they are originals by Wyatt. We cannot dispose of authorship and authenticity completely, for they are solidly grounded values in our society, but we can reevaluate them and consider them as dependent on variables. A painting may not be original, but merely "an original by Wyatt".

Wyatt counterfeited, forged 'original' paintings in all details. He tried to produce perfect forgeries, even in their imperfections, and unable to be 'original', he rejected originality. He seemed to share that which seems to be Gaddis view, that artists forge originality since it is impossible as an

absolute and may be searched, but not reached. Van Meegeren, as Wyatt, forged the masters' originality. They do not forge the painting; they forge the originality of the painter. Wyatt counterfeited originality, forged it and the question Gaddis seems to be asking us is "Isn't it what the artist is all about?", forging originality?

Valentine conveniently shares Aunt May and Herr Koppel's view that originality should be avoided.

> -- You are mightily concerned about your own originality, aren't you, he said, standing behind the chair, turned toward them.
> -- Originality! No, I'm not, I…
> -- Come on, my dear fellow, you are. But you really ought to forget it, or give in to it and enjoy it. Everyone else does that today. Brown is busy with suits of plagiarism all the time, aren't you Brown? You see? He takes it as a matter of course. He's surrounded by untalented people, as we all are. Originality is a device untalented people use to impress other untalented people, and protect themselves from talented people…
> -- Valentine, this is the last time… most original people are forced to devote all their time to plagiarizing. Their only difficulty is that if they have a spark of with or wisdom themselves, they're given no credit (p. 252).

Wyatt rejects the prevailing notion of the period that one should do something completely new, vanguardist, and that anything different from that is not valid. More than once he voices the fact he is against reproductions, but he expresses his opinions on mechanical reproductions. Benjamin compares mechanical and manual reproductions and their insertion in

contemporary society and Wyatt's world is a world in which manual reproductions are considered fakes and mechanical reproductions are acceptable, as pointed out by Benjamin. Therefore, the problem is not in the reproductions themselves, but in the process of their making and the use made of them. It seems Wyatt is like Benjamin. He is against reproductions, not against repetition, which would be something else. As Eagleton reminds us, in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", Benjamin opposes reproductions and repetition (1998, p. 56). Mechanical reproductions seem to imply exact copies, whereas manual reproductions seem to imply repetition with a difference, for there is one's subjectivity.

Valentine asks Wyatt to make a copy of the inexistent Patinir[26] Brown insured. He justifies his request by saying that,

> It does not even have to be a perfect copy, you know, since the original does not exist. You didn't know? Brown had the painting heavily insured, and it was destroyed in a fire. At least he had the evidence that it was when the insurance company's experts came. He'd sawed off one end of it and he showed them that, pretty badly charred but not so much that it couldn't be identified as all that was left of the original, which he is waiting now to dispose again, "in secret", of course (p. 336).

However, it also plays with the dichotomy original/copy, for once again there is a copy of a non-existent

[26] Joachin Patinir was a Flemish master of the oil.

original. This conversation leads Wyatt to naively confess to Valentine that he has also sawed fragments from the forgeries he has been painting to keep them as “proof” of his achievement. The unfinished portrait of Camilla, which Valentine will name as *Stabat Mater*, calls Valentine’s attention and he inquires, “Who is she? These old Byzantine-looking hoops, what is it? Who is she? This? A study for a van Eyck?” and Wyatt bursts out, “No, but for what I want” (p. 336), suggesting that he intends to finish the portrait and quit forgery. Wyatt explains,

> -- Listen, this, if I wanted to go on with this work, myself? And to clear up the other things I’ve done? The Bouts, the van der Goes? If I want to tell them, and I have the proof, off every one of them, a canvas or a panel, I cut a strip of the end when it was done and I have them.
> -- Where? Valentine asked quickly.
> -- Yes, they are safe (p. 336-337).

Despite the fact Wyatt is collapsing, Brown and Valentine, personifying the unscrupulous art dealer and critic, push him further and further asking him for more forgeries. Brown gets crazy and asks him, “You want the credit for it, do you? Is that it?” but Wyatt replies, “But not from you, and not from them, from the thing itself”. Brown does not understand Wyatt’s words and comments “You know God dawn well if you tried to sell these things as your own it’s worth about forty dollars” and threatens him, “you knew when you started you couldn’t stop” (p. 362). Brown is suggesting that without the discovery of Wyatt’s

work by a respected, although not respectable, critic such as Valentine, his works are worth nothing. This reinforces the role of the critic in recognizing the value of works of art and making them commercially valuable.

Working for Brown and Valentine does not interest Wyatt anymore. What he has been doing all these months is copying works which did not exist, that is, producing forgeries, or, in a way, restoring empty canvases. Despite this, Wyatt bursts out, “Why are you doing this to me?… When you know it does not exist? to ask me to copy it? Like he… restoring an empty canvas, yes” (p. 381). This statement hints at what will happen later in the narrative, when Wyatt will peel the paint off some paintings in order to take back to empty canvases.

Wyatt realizes what he has been doing and curses, “God! That damned table” (p. 381). At this point the word God is nothing to him other than a curse and he even asks, “God’s watching? Invidia, I was brought up eating my meals off envy, until today. And it was false all the time” (p. 381). This passage is particularly significant for Wyatt starts speaking about the table when asked about a new forgery, associating the beginning of his activity as a forger with the copy of the table he produced as a teenager and which now he considers a “damn”

table. Also, his certainty that God was watching him, as God watched Flemish masters, vanished and now he questions that.

Wyatt's change is illustrated by his losing the name given him by aunt May, which is related to his family's genealogy of ministers. He remains nameless for most of the novel and is renamed Stephen by Sinisterra. His denied identity is recovered. He could not paint under the name of Wyatt, and to be able to become a painter he had to abandon it. Also, Wyatt becomes unable to distinguish a copy from an original. He sees a copy of the table and takes it for the one considered the original. Something seems to have really changed his opinion and he wonders,

> Copying a copy? Is that where I started? All my life I've sworn it was real, year after year, that damned table top floating in the bottom of the tank, I've sworn it was it was real, and today? A child could tell it's a copy (p. 381).

Questioning the authenticity of the table itself, led Wyatt to question the authenticity of the values he thought it represented. He starts to realize that perhaps he was nostalgic for an idealized era. He asks, "Now, if there was no gold?" and "And if what I've been forging, does not exist?" (p. 381). Wyatt realizes there might be no original to forge and he decides to stop the forgeries. It seems to be the point in the narrative in

which the difference between original and copy ceases to be relevant for Wyatt for he cannot tell one from the other anymore.

At this point in the narrative, it is clear that Wyatt sees himself as a faker and that is why he decides to quit. He has realized his project of being a master of the guild was impracticable to be sustained in contemporary America. Wyatt begins a series of procedures to give up forgery, but his first attitude is to announce his intention. He tells Esther, “tonight I’ve done what I have to do” and “Because this… one thing I have to do is … crucial” (p. 592).

Wyatt goes back home, destroys the copy of the table that was in his father’s house, burns his apartment and everything inside it (including the portrait of Camilla), rushes to Brown’s Christmas party in order to expose his forgeries, destroys the original table at Brown’s, and then finally starts erasing the paintings at the monastery. Destroying all the tables is crucial. As the table is the eye of god, destroying the table is destroying the eye of god and the entire “God is watching us” perspective that it represents. He believed that all of his works were made in the sight of God, but he realizes that God is not watching him and may have never been watching him as he supposed. Thus, there was no purpose for them anymore. A proof of that is

that he erases the paintings at the monastery, God's dwelling place, without any second thoughts. Safer defends that,

> *The Recognitions* is a book about counterfeiters who parody God's creation. It is a book about the ironic desire to soar in atonement in a world in which god is not watching, a world in which God may never have been watching (1988, p. 136-137).

The table is emblematic, for the trajectory of the table exemplifies Wyatt's quest. It is a religious work, as most Flemish and Renaissance works of art were, and it is a reason for disagreement. It is as if religion in itself is the cause of all problems. This is in contrast with the idea defended by Christianity that 'Religion saves', just like it saved Clement and made him encounter his long lost family. But in *The Recognitions* religion drives people crazy or apart. It is presented as completely negative and characters that follow it end up dead or mad, such as aunt May, Stanley, Anselm, and reverend Gwyon. The intertextual focus also emphasizes this contradiction between the early Christian treatises, handling the story of a saint, and that of a man who cannot not stand divinity school and drops out to become a forger of religious paintings, but expresses at the same time a strong religiosity.

With this regard, Koenig defends that Gaddis took from *The Golden Bough* the notion that Christianity is a copy or a

counterfeit (1984, p. 22) and this is related to his use of *the Clementine Recognitions* again.

Valentine scratches the table and Brown says, “it’s the genuine original” and a voice from across the table doubts that by saying “I can see, it is not,” and then “Christ! to have copied a copy? and that was how it began!”, which was stated by Valentine referring to his first copying of the table and its obscure origin (p. 360). Valentine’s eyes settle on the table of the Seven Deadly Sins, which he called, “Intricate, cunning forgeries like this” (p. 245), but he is doing this to tease Wyatt, who gets infuriated and says, “it’s not a forgery” and repeats that several times. Then they go on talking about the table, which apparently was the original for it had been brought by Gwyon from Europe to be later copied and replaced by a copy by Wyatt, who had sold the original to Brown. Later in the novel, the purpose of this dialogue will be disclosed, and we will find out it is still the original table, but it will be soon replaced by another one by Valentine, who is preparing the ground for the replacement. The fact that Brown should own the table is remarkable, as he is the one who commits all the sins God should be watching us for and does not get frightened by the eye of God on the table.

Valentine changes the topic and starts talking about the Table of the Seven Deadly Sins with Wyatt,

> -- And you were the boy! Valentine said in a tone gone almost childish with recrimination.—the boy in our story? Whose father owned the original? The boy who copied it, and stole the original, and sold it for “almost nothing” to … him.
> -- to him! How did I know, I did not know who bought it, I just sold it. The original! I thought… do you know what it was like, coming in here years later with him, and seeing it here? Waiting, seeing it here waiting for me? Waiting to burn this brand of final commitment, as though, all those years, as though it was what I thought, instead of… a child could tell, even in this light…
> -- Perhaps you were right all the time, Valentine said quietly, coming closer.
> -- But this is a copy!
> -- Of course it is. When the old count sold his collection in secret, this was one of the copies he had made.
> -- And the original? all this time…?
> -- All this time, the original has been right where this one is now. Valentine stood very near him by the table. –- Of course it was the original here for so long, the one you sold him. And this, I picked this one up in Rome myself scarcely a year ago. Do you recall when we first met? Right here, across the table? Of course, that was the original. I said it was a copy simply to hear you defend it. I knew Brown would trust your judgment. And I knew Brown would be troubled enough to have it gone over again, by “experts”. I bought the idea into his mind simply to let him kill it himself, so that once I’d exchanged the two, no matter who called this a copy, he’d simply laugh at them. He’d just made absolutely certain, hadn’t her? And the original? It’s on its way back to Europe where it belongs. I exchanged them quite recently. Do you think he knew the difference? And Valentine laughed, a sound of disdain severed by a gasp of pain at the shock in his lip.
> -- Yes, thank God! The figure across the table stood illumined at its edges with the steady glow of the fire.—Thank god there was the gold to forge! (p. 688-689).

In the long quotation above, Valentine and Wyatt are attempting to set things straight and the mystery of the table is apparently solved with the revelation that Valentine has exchanged the tables. This is crucial to Wyatt, for he is once

more led to believe that there is an original and, therefore, there is one original to forge. Also, his statement shows to what extend he also views himself as an alchemist, and, thus, a redeemer of the matter. Gold is a symbol of authenticity and it was what alchemists used to try to redeem the matter. Nonetheless, it is important to notice, as Brigitte Félix has pointed out, that Wyatt thanks God for the existence of gold to forge, obviously playing with the words gold and God (p. 32).

Finally, Wyatt bursts out, “That’s why we are here, an alchemist and a priest, without blemishes, you and I” (p. 382), but he does not say who is the alchemist and who is the priest. In fact, both are to a certain extent alchemists and priests, for Valentine is named after an alchemist and has been a minister and Wyatt attended a seminar and became an alchemist mixing colors, for the way in which he mixes his materials resembles an alchemist mixing his oil colors and believes the artist, like the alchemist, has to work in secret and not become a professional commercializing his work. Valentine tries to convince Wyatt that artists have always worked on commission.

> Do you think any painter did anything but hire himself out? These fine altarpieces, do you think they glorified anyone but the vulgar men who commissioned them? Do you think van Eyck didn’t curse having to whore away his genius, to waste his talent on all sorts of vulgar celebrations, at the mercy of people he hated? (p. 690).

And also that,

> I remember your little talk, your insane upside-down apology for these pictures, every figure and every object with its own presence, its own consciousness because it was being looked by God! … Because maybe God isn't watching. Maybe he does not see. Oh, this pious cult of the Middle Ages! Being looked at by God! (p. 690).

Wyatt loses control and stabs Valentine. Fuller is sympathetic to him and Wyatt feels free and thinks of starting a new life, just like Fuller. They are both free "after all the years of bondage" (p. 692) in Fuller's words. But there is still one thing Wyatt has to do to finish his act and feel completely free. He has to destroy the copy of the *Table of the Seven Deadly Sins*. He screams, "Cave, Caveat emptor, Dominus videt[27], Christ! The original! … yes, thank God there was the gold to forge!" (p. 693) and smashes the table. This way, Wyatt is rejecting the "God is watching perspective", and changes his life from now on. If his words are analyzed, it becomes clear that the problem for Wyatt is not merely forgery, but the use made of forgery or forged works. When these works are commercialized, and made into a commodity, Wyatt cannot see them as before. This corruption of his work is what annoys him, for he sees his painting as the only possibility of authentic artistic creation at his time.

[27] These Latin words can be translated as "Beware, let the buyer beware, God is watching", according to T*he Reader's Guide* (2004).

3.3 Stephen’s redemption: the matter and the soul

Wyatt disappears again from the novel for several chapters. He is hiding from the police and from the reader for having stabbed Valentine. He reappears as Stephen on page 783, as he attempts to redeem himself not only through the redemption of his soul, through a religious conversion, but also through a redemption of the matter, like an alchemist. This seems to enable him to restart painting by himself, without anyone telling him what to paint and what name to sign under the paintings.

Wyatt goes on a pilgrimage to Spain to visit the tomb of his mother and be renamed Stephen. He meets Sinisterra there, who is also escaping, and will eventually develop a father and son relationship with him. When Sinisterra comments, “You haven’t even told me your name, your first name”, he replies, “My Christian name”, but does not tell Sinisterra his name. Sinisterra asks him if he has committed a crime and is wanted and Wyatt tells him he murdered a man (p. 783), which suggests he thinks he killed Valentine, since Brown’s death was an accident. Sinisterra gives Wyatt a forged passport, which is in the name of a “Stephan Asche”. It should be remembered that Stephen was the

name Camilla had chosen for Wyatt before his aunt called him Wyatt. It can be considered, in a way, Wyatt's Christian name. From this moment on, Wyatt, who has been referred to simply as "the boy" or "the man" starts to be called Stephen in the narrative. This is, in a way, a return and emancipation, for Wyatt is freed from the name that belonged to a long genealogy of ministers, and has the name intended for him by his mother and father, reconciling, in a way, with them. Also, it is not a coincidence the family name provided to him is "Asche", after he has swallowed his father's ashes or, in a way, incorporated his father.

Wyatt gives up painting, but goes to "The Prado" (p. 806). The original *Table of the Seven Deadly Sins* has been at the Prado for over 50 years, and, therefore, was already there at the time *The Recognitions* was written. We assume Wyatt visits the museum to see the Flemish Masters, but his view of them has changed and the Flemish painters do not impress him so much anymore. Wyatt surprisingly compares El Greco with the Flemish old masters. Wyatt is concerned with the way in which the works are displayed at the museum. Whereas the Flemish painters are all in one room without disturbing each other, there are too many El Grecos in one room, which deeply annoys him, for El Greco's "plasticity" (p. 807), that is, for the exuberance of life in his

paintings. Therefore, his focus of attention has moved from the Flemish masters onward.

The pilgrimage proceeds and his next stop is The Real Monasterio of Nuestra Señora de Otra Vez, which is the same monastery in Spain where his father had been. He resumes his activities as a restorer, returning to the life he had before Brown and Valentine, to his origins as craftsman. As Wyatt voices later, referring to the monastery, “It’s a place here to rest, to rest here, finally a place here to rest, and the work, to start it all over again, alone…” (p. 879). He had always worked with and for others, and they, Sinisterra, Brown, Valentine, were all either counterfeiters or forgers. In fact, at this point in the novel, Wyatt seems devastated by all the disasters that have taken place in his life. Besides having lost his father and having seen his attempt to return to ministry fail, he has also lost his paintings and is separated from Esme, who he finally seems to recognize as his true love, after she has been modeling for him for a long time.

Wyatt’s reclusion at the monastery is noticed, and a novelist called Ludy suspects Wyatt is a thief. Wyatt does not care about being called a thief and justifies that, “I’m lived as a thief. Don’t you know? All my life is lived as a thief” (p.

868). However, Ludy says, “you’re working. You’re an artist?” and Wyatt replies, “Yes, and lived like a thief” (p. 868), but Ludy fails to understand what Wyatt means by saying that. The reader does not.

In this novel, all artists are thieves, to some extent, if we believe in absolute originality and purity. Wyatt’s words are extremely important for at the same time Wyatt admits his work as a forger and the fact he is also an artist, separating both activities: the making of the paintings and the act of signing them for commercialization, which would turn them into forgery.

Wyatt restores the work of a Juan Fernandez Navarrete[28], who “studied with Titian” (p. 869), just like El Greco[29]. This is important for Wyatt, for he says, “He learned from Titian. That’s the way we learn, you understand” (p. 869) and later “We all study with Titian” (p. 872). What he seems to be saying is that painters and artists always learn from other artists, from seeing, studying, and even using their works. This is also important from it reveals a change in Wyatt’s preferences, since Titian is not a Flemish master, although his religious works show

[28] Navarette was a Spanish master painter.
[29] El Greco was a mannerist Cretan painter. His painting was not related to any other painter of the Renaissance. His work was rediscovered in the 19th century and he was considered an expressionist.

deep religious feelings, he also mastered pagan themes, such as bacchanals (MARTÍN GONZÁLES, 1970, p. 170).

Besides being important for his unparalleled mastery of the colors, Titian is usually considered the last master to honor his position of master painter (BATTISTI, 1984, p. 132). Pressed my market demands, masters were producing their paintings mechanically. Instead of counting on the collaboration of the apprentices, masters were merely signing paintings and selling them. Their names had become a trademark.

Wyatt’s restoration procedures involve removing large parts of the works so that he can repaint them. Wyatt confesses he will “restore” the supposedly original El Greco they have at the monastery next, but Ludy affirms, “there’s nothing wrong with it at all, it’s …, it’s in fine condition, that painting” (p. 872). Ludy fails to understand the reasons why the paintings need to be restored. Wyatt removes the paint from the canvas because he is looking for something underneath the existing layers of paint, as if there were “an original” Navarette underneath the blank canvas waiting for him to discover it. It seems that for him art is finding the painting or text underneath layers of other paints, just like in the Titian episode (p. 451).

For Safer, Wyatt's attempt to scrape the paint off the paintings is an attempt to free the paintings from the accumulations of time, doing a real restoring, that is, restoring them to their original emptiness, or purity (1988, p. 127). If this perspective is followed, Wyatt would be doing the opposite of what he has always done: he would not be forging paintings, but destroying them.

We are not informed whether these paintings are forged or original, because this distinction ceased to matter for Wyatt.

Wyatt decides to leave and is joined by someone referred to in the narrative as "the old man", who is bleeding and he tells this man,

> I told you there was a moment in travel when love and necessity become the same thing. And now, if the gods themselves cannot recall their gifts, we must live them through, and redeem them" (p. 898).

Wyatt is traveling with the old man, but he is certainly also referring to the travel of art, or even to art itself. As a kid, painting for him was a "work of necessity" and later in the narrative Wyatt tells Brown the same thing, which is a view shared by Esme and Stanley, but it does not seem to be enough. Stanley, in a discussion with Max quoted in the preceding

chapter, tells Max art is “the work of love” (p. 465). This way, Wyatt seems to be finally able to put love and necessity together in order to paint. Under this perspective, it can be said that, “Painting, for Wyatt, is a religious act of devotion, an act of purification” (SAFER, 1988, p. 126),

In his last appearance, Wyatt says,

> -- Now, at last to live deliberately.
> -- But…
> -- You and I …
> -- No, there’s no more you and I, Stephen said withdrawing uphill slowly, empty-handed.
> -- But we… all the things you’ve said, we… the work, the work you were, working on…?
> -- The work will know its own reason, Stephen said farther away, and farther,-- Hear…? Yes, we’ll simplify. Hear?… (p. 900).

The expression “to live deliberately” appears in all of Gaddis’s novels and is from Thoreau. When Wyatt utters these words he is leaving and that is the last we see or hear of him in the novel. Apparently, he is finally able to leave to do what he has to do, his work of love and necessity, to paint, free from pacts or exigencies. He can even sign his own name under the paintings. Furthermore, it seems Wyatt is finally free from the belief that God is watching everything and can try to fulfill himself, artistically or professionally, which he has been unable to do within the scope of the book (WOLFE, 1997, p. 81). Also, for critic John Beer,

> Wyatt succumbs to temptation, experiences various trials and setbacks culminating in the climax of Brown's death, and eventually finds a kind of redemption in his Thoreauvian resolve (2001, p. 86).

Wyatt disappears from the book many times to reappear different from what he was before and at the end of the novel he is nothing but literally ashes. His personal life ended tragically, for he lost his family, his wife, and the woman he loved, Esme. It is questionable whether he will be able to find balance in his personal life to restart or not.

4. MIRRORS OF WYATT

Art is really art only when it is worth forging.

Salvador Dali

After Wyatt becomes a forger and his name is dropped from the narrative (p. 118), he remains a shadow, with occasional appearances and characters that had been secondary in the narrative gain more importance. Although Wyatt himself hardly ever appears, he is often talked about, quoted, or copied and; therefore, he hangs over the narrative and can still be considered the main character, since all the action surrounds him. In fact, it can be affirmed that each one of these other characters is related to Wyatt, for they seem to represent different nuances, shades, of Wyatt's personality. Gaddis stated in one of his rare interviews that his initial intention was to make them seem reflections of Wyatt; an idea which he later abandoned as the novel gained shape, but which has still left

some traces, since “facets all about him are carrying out his persona” (1987, p. 65). Concerning Wyatt’s disappearance and the emergence of the other characters, Gaddis declares,

> Otto is a kind of two-dimensional imitation of Wyatt; he wants to be Wyatt but has none of the equipment. Stanley has the belief and so forth. Anselm has the despair. So they’re all reflections of him. They carry the activity — you don’t say action, you say “activity” of the novel - where he is nowhere in sight (1987, p. 65).

These reflections of Wyatt are reinforced by the widespread use of and references to mirrors in the narrative either by Wyatt or by characters such as Esme and Otto. Wyatt himself does use mirrors to correct drawing, as it has been proven that Renaissance painters did, but the mirrors he uses reflect more than his paintings[30]. Wyatt’s use of mirrors is so intense that Esme is impressed by it, and dreams about Wyatt, “He was in a mirror, caught there” (p. 220). She believes that “they are evil” (p. 221) and pities Wyatt:

> To be trapped in one, and they are evil. If you knew what they know. There are evil mirrors where he works, and they work with him, because they are mirrors with terrible memories, and they know, they know, and they tell him these terrible things and they trap him… (p. 221).

[30] Regarding this issue, there was turmoil in 2001 as painter David Hockney defended the thesis that old masters used optical devices in order to paint and much of what is considered nowadays as their greatest achievement, precision, was achieved with the assistance of these devices. The acceptance of Hockney’s thesis would imply that paintings by Vermeer and van Eyck considered master works were actually copies, for they were painted over a reflection of the object or person portrayed.

Esme starts to believe “mirrors dominate the people” (p. 221) and gets rid of her own mirrors. She has no interest in looking at her own image, differently from Otto, who looks at himself in any mirror he finds. Mirrors are symbols of self-referentiality, for they the subject and object they reflect. Our identity is formed from the reflections of others and there can be no self without others.

Wyatt has different roles in the narrative. He is a minister to be, a son, an indifferent husband, a troubled artist, a forger, a counterfeiter, and a lover, among other minor roles. His provisional identities are revealed by the others who talk about him or mimic him, as he never talks about anything but his work in the entire novel. This discloses his failure in fulfilling any role in the narrative except that of the artist, which leads other characters to take up Wyatt’s other roles: Otto will play Esther’s husband, Dick, the Reverend’s son, and so forth.

Johnston points out that Wyatt is the most “original character”(1990, p. 136), for he is not copying the other characters in words or actions, whereas he is copied. He does not care much about the others and just struggles to be recognized as a painter. Also, he is a full character, who changes and matures

along the novel, whereas most of the other characters seem to be fragmented characters since just a part of them is shown to us. They are not shown as people, but as characteristics, with a dominant trait. Concerning this, Johnston states that all the other characters in the novel “appear to be fragmented personalities or partial selves who echo earlier cultural figures only parodically” (1990, p. 115). It means to say that they are parodies of traces, of sins, such as the sins portrayed in Bosch’s painting. Despite the fact that all of these characters struggle to obtain some kind of recognition, most of them are either deranged or dead at the end of the novel, without having fulfilled their aims. Nevertheless, both Wyatt and his intent survive.

But if Gaddis’s characters face nervous breakdowns, commit suicide, or even castrate themselves, it is because the demands imposed on them are immense. Wyatt is the clearest example, for as he is not in agreement with the aesthetics of his time and the demands imposed on him, he is taken to the underground and to be a forger of the Flemish masters. The main artists in the novel are in a way or another taken for plagiarists, fakers, or forgers and their practices are considered infringements. Gaddis presents “as extreme the plight

of the artist (an by extension the reader) who seeks to establish meaning in a world without absolutes” (COMNES, 2000).

4.1 Otto Pivner

Mirrors show reproductions, but it must not be forgotten that mirrors always show inverted reflections. Also, although plane mirrors prevail, mirrors do not necessarily reflect the object as it is. There are also parabolic concave or convex mirrors, highlighting characteristics of the object reflected and making it look distorted. Otto is a distorted and faint copy of Wyatt.

Otto is the second most important character in the novel. He is one of Wyatt’s acquaintances and is endeavoring to succeed as a playwright. The narrator often refers to him as “Gordon’s creator” and often compares him to Gordon, who is the main character in the play he is writing. Gordon is the only thing Otto creates in the narrative, for all his actions, beliefs, and opinions are second-hand.

He greatly admires and envies Wyatt and tries to be as similar to him as possible. He is puzzled by the fact that both

Esther and Esme seem to love Wyatt despite his indifference, and attempts to mimic him to get their attention. Despite his efforts, Otto seems to be a blurred copy of Wyatt. Whereas Wyatt seems to be a sincere artist, Otto is apparently a plagiarist, who will even get involved with Wyatt's wife and later with the girl who loves Wyatt, Esme. Otto cannot cease plagiarizing Wyatt's words or even gestures, for he does not seem to have a personality of his own. When Wyatt vanishes from the novel, he repeats Wyatt and when Wyatt is present he listens to Wyatt and takes notes of what Wyatt says or does to imitate him later.

In one of these occasions, Otto finds a text about "the whole creation working to be delivered from the vanity of time, about nature working for this great redemption", which "sounds like a sermon"(p. 148), and attributes it to Wyatt. He appreciates the idea that artistic creation and religion are intertwined and art should be detached from its time, although he does not seem to understand it very well. Even so, he changes the name of the play he is writing to *The Vanity of Time*. However, Otto does not fail to make one important recognition. These lines sound like a sermon because they are from a sermon. They were uttered by Gwyon at aunt May's funeral in his "last religious sermon" (p. 41). Gwyon states that "all nature is continually at work to bring forth the great redemption; the whole creation is

travailing in pain and laborious working to be delivered from the vanity of time" (p. 41). Even though the idea is the same, the wording is a little different, so it is an example of repetition with a difference. This way, Otto thinks he is quoting Wyatt, but he is really quoting Gwyon's sermon, which in its turn echoes *Ecclesiastes*.

This reference to *Ecclesiastes* is extremely clear, but there are several other indirect references to this text. In effect, the central ideas of this text are related to the theme of the quest that underlies the whole novel, as well as *The Clementine Recognitions*. The prevailing idea underlying *Ecclesiastes* is that of "The Vanity of Life", as its first chapter announces (1982, p. 435), for underneath its 12 chapters the preacher defends that nothing on earth satisfies human beings if they are distant from God. Wisdom, pleasure, work, money, and power are in vain if men are not in contact with God. And as men are marked by their temporality and time is the main source of vanity, the vanity of time is what marks our existence. Vanity is then associated with the ephemeral character of our lives and death. Most artists, and mainly those in the novel, want to escape death and enter posterity by obtaining recognition of their work and having their names transformed into authors' names.

It is also in the first chapter of *Ecclesiastes* that the preacher affirms, “there is nothing new under the sun” (1:9) and asks, “Is there anything of which it may be said, ‘See, this is new’? It has already been in ancient times before us (1:10). Thus, this reference to *Ecclesiastes* is closely related to the novel’s theme as the idea that “There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come by those that will come after” (1:11). Creating a work of art is an exercise of forgetting and remembrance, recalling the shapes and voices, for recognition is recollection.

Thus, despite his attempts to succeed as a playwright, Otto has no opinion of himself about art. He simply parrots Wyatt’s views and for this reason people often take him for a painter, as Stanley does,

> -- Are you a painter? Stanley asked Otto.
> -- Me? Oh no, I just, I’m a writer, a playwright, I just finished a play.
> -- I thought from the way you talked maybe you were.
> -- A playwright?
> -- A painter (p. 186-187).

In many situations, he utters views that he clearly does not grasp. Once he speaks of

> that passage in Cicero's *Paradoxa*, where Cicero gives no credit for anything of his own in his work, but just for removing the excess marble until he reached the real form that was there all the time. Yes, the um … masters who didn't have to try to invent, who knew what … ah … forms looked like, the um … The disciple is not above the master, but everyone that is perfect shall be as his master (p. 124).

Although this sounds very erudite, it is obvious that Otto merely repeats what he heard from Wyatt without understanding it. Besides voicing Wyatt's beliefs, Otto also places Wyatt's statements into Gordon's mouth. He even makes Gordon state that, "Originality is not invention, but a sense of recall, recognition, patterns already there. You can't invent the shape of a stone" (p. 123), which refers to Wyatt's idea that artistic creation is recognition. When Otto says these lines, we are also invited to recognize them, as he sounds exactly like Wyatt. The difference is that he does not seem to have any idea about what he is saying, being a parody of Wyatt. Otto represents an individual who has great difficulty in making recognitions of his own, for he even mistakes his father for a counterfeiter and receives counterfeit bank notes. He is focused on himself and Otto's name is said to be a pun on the Latin prefix auto (self) and to be a partial self-portrait of Gaddis[31]. Therefore, it is not surprising that vanity and lust are the "sins" he commits all along the novel, despite the fact he struggles to beat the vanity of time and to achieve recognition. The self-conscious nature of

[31] *A Reader's Guide to* ***The Recognitions*** (2004).

the novel suggests that Gaddis is satirizing himself by means of this self-representation in the novel.

Otto’s identity problem leads him to perform an act he repeats incessantly in the narrative: he gets up to look in the mirror and watch his reflection, to later pick up a pen and take notes of what he has heard, usually followed by a “wht mean?” (p. 131), attesting his impossibility to capture Wyatt’s words uttered either by Wyatt himself or quoted by someone else. He seems to be always behind and failing to catch up with what is going on around him.

Otto’s high expectations are frustrated by literary agent Agnes Deigh. In her unsympathetic tone, she rejects his play by saying, “All of us had the feeling that parts of it were familiar, I hardly know how to say…” and “No, I did not mean you’ve stolen it, not at all, but there was the feeling… some of the lines were familiar…” (p. 296). Otto’s play provoked recognitions on readers and these were not acceptable, for the play should have been more original. Nevertheless, the reader knows that Agnes Deigh has never read the manuscript and is uttering her opinion on it based on her judgment of Otto himself and what she has heard about the play. What Agnes does is exactly what Wyatt often complains about: She is personifying the work of

art and placing the artist above and before the work. Agnes suggests Otto is a plagiarist, but is unable to accuse him of plagiarism, for she is unable to trace the sources he supposedly plagiarized, which really annoys Otto. Max also provides Otto with his appreciation of *The Vanity of Time* and says it is good, but “It was funny sometimes, reading it. Like I had read it before. There were lines in it …”. Otto rushes to ask, “You mean you think it’s plagiarized?”. Max avoids Otto’s question, also unable to answer it, and proceeds, “George felt he almost could go right on with one of the … one of the lines. And Agnes…” Otto is surprised, since Agnes has been the one who rejected it sometime before. Otto asks, “But what did you think it was plagiarized from, if you’re all so sure I stole it” and Max replied, “Nobody said you had stolen it, Otto. It was just that some of the lines were a little… familiar” (p. 307). Otto insists for he is not satisfied with the answers he obtains, but no one is able to declare it is a case of plagiarism; it is just “familiar”. This way, the situation he faces when his play is rejected is repeated over and over again. His work supposedly echoes other works and, therefore, it is no good because good work at that time was the work that purportedly did not reverberate any other work. Needless to say that none of those criticizing and rejecting his work have read the entire play.

They are judging Otto's play based on fragments of it they have identified.

As readers, we know that whole lines of the play were uttered by Wyatt and written by Otto to be rearranged and used in the play, which does not qualify as plagiarism. Gaddis seemed to be anticipating problems he might face at the publication of *The Recognitions* for his use of passages from T.S. Elliot, Henry James, and even Goethe. However, he did not face any plagiarism accusation when the novel was published. The critics thought it was too massive and pretentious and did not bother to read it, writing negative reviews based on hearsay[32].

This is exactly what Max admits to having done. He says he "heard" someone say Otto had lifted parts of the play from *The Sound and the Fury* (p. 308). Otto denies having read it and Max asks one of the most important questions in the novel: "What's the difference?" (p. 463). He means that the passages that evoke Faulkner's novel are there whether Otto used them intentionally or not. Max goes on listing other passages whose sources he could identify and Otto justifies himself by saying that he did not know the source of these passages because he had heard them from a friend of his: Wyatt. This incident greatly resembles one

[32] More detailed information is available in Jack Green's *Fire the Bastards!*

involving Gaddis's use of Thomas Wolfe's phrase "the unswerving punctuality of chance" in all of his novels[33]. Asked about the origin of this phrase, Gaddis once stated that he had overheard the phrase from a colleague in Harvard and decided to use it; however, some time ago a critic discovered it is in one of the last paragraphs of Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel* and posted his finding in the Gaddis-I list. Some members accused Gaddis of plagiarism and others defended his writing procedures.

Stanley attempts to defend Otto by saying, "if it's his work, if it's his own work, and he wants…" to which Max replies, "his own!" questioning Otto's authorship (p. 463). Max clearly links plagiarism to the ability the reader has of making the connections to other works and not to the writer's intention, which is a principle underlying copyright legislation. Also, Max rejects the notion of "one's own" work, once there are references to other works and it is not one's own work.

Otto is not satisfied and decides to ask the other editor, Brown, about his impressions on the play. Otto does not know Recktall Brown, but the reader recognizes him as the same

[33] When I was revising this work, one member of the Gaddis-I list, sent a message entitled "plagiarism" and stirred the issue. He asked again if Gaddis's use of the phrase could be considered a case of plagiarism. As Gaddis once stated he had overheard the phrase from a colleague in Harvard and had no idea it was taken from a novel by Thomas Wolfe.

corrupt art dealer behind the forgery scheme. Otto justifies his decision, “Some people have said, or I mean they’ve intimated, that they think I’ve … well that it really isn’t mine, that I’d used some other … that I’d … plagiarized it” (p. 350). The word “plagiarized” aroused Brown and he asked, “Plagiarized?” to soon answer,

> This is lifted. The whole God-damned novel is lifted. One of our readers spotted it the first thing. A lawyer went over it, and it’s safe. A couple of things changed around, it’s safe and it’s good, and it will sell (p. 350).

However, Brown is not referring to Otto’s play, but to *Wild Gousse Chase* by Max, to Otto’s astonishment. It is interesting to analyze Brown’s opinion on the matter, since at the same time he admits the novel is “lifted” from preceding novels, he does not give any importance to this fact as it does not seem to infringe copyright and it is good, that is, it has market potential. Brown’s posture clearly reflects the notion that plagiarism is not a legal issue, whereas copyright infringement is. Brown is more interested in the legal and commercial aspects surrounding the novel than the novel itself. Brown proceeds,

> So you picked up a few things here and there for yours, what the hell? What hasn’t been written before? You take something good, change it around a little and it’s still good” (p. 350)

Brown explains how to do it, “You just take the words and string them around a little different” (p. 350). Therefore, for Brown writing a novel involves using what has been written before, repetition, and at the same time marking a difference with the former works. But whereas Max’s *Wild Gousse Chase* is safe plagiarism and accepted for publication, Otto’s play is considered bad plagiarism and rejected. This makes us think about what might be different between these two texts and also about Gaddis’s use of other texts, such as *Faustus* and *The Clementine Recognitions.* The difference is the way in which texts are reworked and knitted into the fabric of the new text.

Using his expertise in forgery and fraud, Brown gives Otto some advice,

> Don’t worry about that. It’s right when the idea is missing, the word pops up. You can do anything with the same words. You just follow the books, don’t try to get a lot of smart ideas of your own. It’s all right there, you just take it out and write it down as though Jesus Christ had dictated it (p. 350).

Therefore, Brown suggests that Otto should not worry about plagiarism and, in order to play safe, he should attribute his creations to God, which would dismiss any further charges. But all this discussion becomes secondary due to the fact that

Otto cannot find the original of his play, which has been lost in the publishing company, and he cannot recover. As this was the only copy left, the original play in question is lost and this suggests that it is impossible to have an original play. It may appear original for sometime, but its originality is soon lost in the vanity of time.

This whole scene is particularly significant because Max's play, *Wild Gausse Chase*, echoes a novel entitled *The Wild Goose Chase*[34] published in 1937 (JOHNSTON, 1990, p. 163), which might have been familiar to many readers of the time. Thus, a play by Max, who does not claim originality and is not ashamed of his compositional procedures, is to be published, despite being practically lifted from other works, whereas Otto's supposedly original play is not accepted for publication and its original is lost in the narrative, leaving Otto without any original. We know that Otto's play is not completely original, but the other characters do not. It is a matter of recognition.

The title of the play, *The Vanity of Time,* hints at Gaddis's own work being poorly received. It appears that Gaddis is anticipating comments to be made on his own novel, as there are many references to other texts that might trigger a feeling

[34] Additional information on the play is available at the on-line dictionary of English Literature at: http://www.bloomsbury.com/ARC/detail.asp?entryid+109639&bid+9. Accessed on: 15 Jun 2004.

of familiarity on readers just like the one Otto's play caused on Agnes and her colleagues. The historical context in which a work is created influences its reception and value. *The Recognitions* is a clear example of that. The novel was rejected in the 1950's but it is acclaimed nowadays and it is considered one of the novels that inaugurated postmodernism in the USA (TABBI, 2005).

Otto's accusation of plagiarism and his compositional procedure make us think about the concept and nature of plagiarism and ask ourselves, "to what extend is Otto a plagiary?". Also, we are led to question to what extent Wyatt is a forger, as opposed to a master painter, since he never aimed at deceiving other people and profiting from that. Stonehill offers a solution, for he believes that Gaddis's novel "distinguished between good and bad plagiarism" (1988, p. 135). Thus, writing a novel always involves some sort of plagiarism and art is bound with forgery and counterfeit, what corrupts it is the market, which in Gaddis's fiction is operated by fraudulent art dealers, critics, and publishers.

Being called a plagiarist is devastating for Otto, who does not have the weapons to defend himself. Losing sight of Wyatt is also destructive for him; as he has no one to be inspired by, he leaves. Because of his supposedly plagiarized

work and his mimicry, Max accuses Otto of being “part of a series of an original that never existed”, which greatly annoys Otto, because for him “the series did not exist but the original existed. The original did” (p. 534). Wyatt’s and Max’s attitudes can be compared to the different reception *Wild Gousse Chase* and *The Vanity of Time* met. Otto cannot stand by himself, just like his text. Without Wyatt’s presence and help, he desintegrates, for he is a reflection of Wyatt.

In his last appearance in the novel, Otto seems to have stopped writing and refers to himself as Gordon, just like the character in his play. He is ill and the doctor cannot identify his health problem, because it is “maybe something entirely original” (p. 731), and if it is so, the doctor will have to name it after him. This time Otto is not copying, counterfeiting Wyatt anymore, for now he is copying Gordon, his fictitious character. He becomes an assistant to a Dr. Fell and does not talk about his plays anymore. Apparently, he quit writing to live a life far from New York and the universe of artists where he belonged and in doing so he might end up on the pages of a book, if “gordonitis” is identified as an original disease. It is suggested that Otto could not handle both the plagiarism accusations he suffered and having lost his play and had a nervous breakdown, which led to his change of identity.

Otto failed to be recognized as a playwright or a man, for he was rejected by both Esme and Esther, but Gaddis saves him in the end. By the end of the novel Wyatt is Stephen and Otto is Gordon and the final appearance of both of them is accompanied by the ringing of church bells (MOORE, 1989, p. 42). Both of dead died and were reborn as someone different in the narrative and church bells are usually used to announce the beginning of a religious service or to call the congregation to the church in case of death, which seems to the suggestion here. They must die to be born again differently from whom they were.

4.2 Stanley

Among all these artist-characters, the one that resembles Wyatt the most is Stanley; nevertheless, they never meet in the narrative. They cannot meet, for they seem to be the same person. Stanley is a shadow of Wyatt in the narrative and defends his aesthetics of recognitions when he is not in the sight of the reader. Stanley demonstrates this referring to modern painters,

> Some of them have set out to kill art… And some of them are so excited about discovering new mediums and new forms… that they never have time to work in one that's already established (p. 186).

Therefore, Stanley also believes in paying some kind of homage to the old masters, that is, he believes artists must recognize what has been done in order to make their own work. Stanley gives some thought to the process of artistic creation revealing the similarities between his aesthetics and Wyatt's, but as he is a musician, he thinks about great composers of the past. He ponders,

> How could Bach[35] have accomplished all that he did? And Palestrina? the Gabrielis? and what of the organ concert of Corelli? Those were the men whose work he admired beyond all else in this life, for they had touched the origins of design with recognition. And how? With music written for the Church. Not written with obsessions of copyright foremost; not written to be played by men in worn dinner jackets, sung by girls in sequins, involved in wage disputes and radio rights, recording rights, union rights; not written to be issued through a skull-sized plastic box plunged into the wall as background for seductions and the funny papers, for arguments over automobiles, personalities, shirt sizes, cocktails, the flub-a-dub of a lonely girl washing her girdle; not written to be punctuated by recommendations for headache remedies, stomach appeasers, detergents, hair oil… (p. 322).

It is clear in the quotation that Stanley is contrasting the role and the activity of composers in mid-twentieth century and in the Renaissance. Stanley also has his

[35] J. S. Bach was a German baroque composer of the 17th century. Giovanni Pierluiggi da Palestrina was a 16th century organist and composer in Italy who composed mostly sacred works. He is usually associated with the use of polyphony in music. The Gabrielis were the Venetians Andrea and his nephew Giovanni, who composed ceremonial music. It is worthy of note that Giovanni was involved in a discussion regarding the practice of imitation among composers in the Counter-Reformation, and was highly appreciated for his ability to "recover the art of the ancients". For more information on this issue, see http://www.ptloma.edu/music/MUH/composers/Gabrieli/Gabrieli.htm. Arcangelo Corelli was a 17th century Italian baroque composer and violinist.

eyes turned to the past as he admires composers that have written for the Church, for God’s ears, as much as Wyatt admired painters who had supposedly painted for God’s eyes. He doubts these composers would have accomplished what they did amidst copyright legislation and mechanical reproduction, which in his eyes have corrupted art. The question to be raised here is how these two instances might complicate artistic creation. He hints that these composers might have problems submitting to copyright legislations, since it is known that improving existing compositions was a widespread compositional procedure. Also, music at his time is mostly composed to be mechanically reproduced, and listened to with the aid of vinyl records and speakers, without any direct contact with the player and evidently without access to nuances of the performance. And even when it is played live or reproduced, it loses its central importance having to compete with conversations and advertisements.

Stanley goes on, “it’s this fallacy of originality, of self-sufficiency. And in Art, even art…” (p. 632), which sounds very much like Wyatt’s statements earlier in the novel. Stanley proceeds with his talking and again, we can listen to Wyatt’s voice behind him, for he says,

> When art tries to be a religion in itself – a religion of perfect form and beauty, but then there it is all alone, not uniting people, not… like the Church does, but look at the gulf between people and modern art… (p. 632).

Therefore, it is clear that Stanley is nostalgic of the past and the working conditions of the time. The notions of origin and recognition are also mentioned in this passage, for Stanley believes in the supremacy of origin over originality and the relation between origin and recognition as well, which is a notion that seems to unite him with the composers listed. But differently from Otto, Stanley thinks for himself and does not merely parrot Wyatt.

Besides sharing many of Wyatt's views concerning art, Stanley is also unable to finish his own works. He appears to be Wyatt's soul mate in the novel, for he also dwells in the past and seems to wish to reach God through his artistic creation. His work is compared to

> the commission from a prince in the Middle Ages, the prince who ordered his tomb, and then busied the artist continuously with a succession of fireplaces and doorways, the litter of his life, while the tomb remained unfinished (p. 323).

This happens because for Stanley, "every piece of created work is the tomb of its creator" (p. 323), which is similar to Wyatt's view that the artist is the dregs of his work.

This is extremely evident in the novel, for producing a work of art of any kinds exhausts Gaddis's characters, and as they are taken to extremes. In addition, it gives an inkling of what is to happen to Stanley in the last page of the novel, when he will be entombed with his work. It is also worthy of notice that this notion is similar to that defended by Michel Foucault and presented earlier, although it is clear Foucault is not referring to the corporal death of the author.

If the quotations above are taken into account, there is even more similarity between Wyatt's and Stanley's conceptions. But besides those, Stanley could not finish his work because "it must be finished to a thorough perfection" just like the old masters wished their works to be and it must be

> prepared against time as old masters prepared their canvases and their pigments, so that when they were called to appear the work would still hold the perfection they had embraced there (p. 323).

Stanley identifies with the painters mentioned and the idea of the Guild, just like Wyatt does. Max, who defends originality, mocks Stanley; whereas Stanley defends that originality is a fallacy (p. 632) along the whole novel. Stanley is only nostalgic and fails to realize things have changed. Wyatt changes in the course of the narrative, whereas Stanley does not

and dies. Stanley's death represents the death of a part of Wyatt so that he can move on.

Gaddis reserves an important role for Stanley at the end of the novel. After Wyatt's final scene, the novel presents an epilogue, in which there is no sign of Wyatt, but Stanley appears as a counterpart of Wyatt. Stanley is in northern Italy to play his composition, a requiem for organ, in an old church. However, when he gets to the church he fails to understand the caretaker's advice; he is unable to recognize the Italian words, and plays dissonant sounds. The church collapses and he dies tragically.

The final lines of the novel refer to Stanley. They read, "most of his work was recovered too, and it is still spoken of, when it is noted, with high regard, though seldom played" (p. 956), which is another clear self-reference, reinforcing Gaddis's feelings towards the poor recognition of his novel. It also relates to Gaddis's questioning of the traditional figure of the main character.

4.3 Esme

It is not clear when Wyatt and Esme meet for the first time, but she is the model he uses first to paint his forgeries, and then Camilla's portrait. From their first silent meetings, they come to be friends and lovers.

Esme contrasts with the other women in the narrative, and mainly Esther for her views on art. She is a poet struggling to write her poems who, short of resources, starts modeling. Although other characters describe her unsympathetically as a promiscuous drug addict, she fascinates Wyatt, Stanley, and obviously Otto as well.

She is a projection of Wyatt's mother and Wyatt later uses her to finish painting the portrait of his mother and she is even given the earrings that once belonged to Camilla.

For Esme, writing involves a ritual. When she wants to write a poem, she takes a fresh piece of paper and tries to write. But more than once the words that come to her mind are not hers, for they have been written before; she recognizes these other poets' voices and quits writing to retry later. This suggests that avoiding the influence of other texts or authors is impossible, for "all writing is dependent on others" (HOWARD,

1999, p. 84) and no page is completely white, as Esme senses as she attempts to pick a fresher one.

At the same time Esme tries to write her own poem, she shares Wyatt's belief that, "to paint is to intensify, to remember" (p. 472), which makes Wyatt's relationship with her more plausible. For her, when writing a poem, the only way

> to use words with meaning, would be to choose words for themselves, and invest them with their own meaning: not her own, perhaps, but meaning which was implicit in their shape, too frequently nothing to do with their dictionary definition (p. 299).

This quotation suggests that Esme advocates the notion that words have the value we attribute them or even that things have the value we give them. This issue had appeared earlier in the novel when Esme has a conversation with Otto, and her compositional procedure is unveiled. She shows him a poem she has written for Recktall Brown entitled "Effluvium". Otto asks her, "What does Effluvium mean?" and she replies, "That's the title". Otto insists, "I see. But what does it mean?" and Esme replies, "Why should it mean anything? It's the title" and completes "It's just a word" (p. 218), refusing to talk about her choice of words and minimizing the importance of the original meaning of the word "Effluvium". What seems to matter is her use of the word. Also, refusing to talk about it, she is refusing to talk about her

work, as much as Wyatt does, which does not mean they do not think about their work. Both of them just reject the notion that works of art ought to be explained or justified logically, for as stated before, they are works of necessity, and, therefore, escape logic. Still, when Otto demonstrates that he does not understand the poem and asks Esme to explain its meaning to him, she answers, “What does it mean. It just is” (p. 218). She hints that works of art ought not to be explained, but exist and should be admired as such.

Esme’s struggle to write continues to be depicted as she goes on with her attempt to write, “calling her memory, screaming for it” (p. 300). The narrator states that, “words for Esme were in chaos” and, therefore,

> It was through this imposed accumulation of chaos that she struggled to move on: beyond it lay simplicity, unmeasurable residence of perfection, where nothing was created, where originality did not exist: because it was origin; where once she was there work and thought in casual and stumbling sequence did not exist, but only transcription: where the poem she knew but could not write existed, ready-formed, awaiting recovery in that moment when the writing down of it was impossible: because she was the poem (p. 299-300).

Analyzing the segment above, it can be noticed that Esme is also concerned about originality. For her, originality as an absolute does not exist, for writing is an exercise of transcription. This echoes Mary Shelley’s statement that

“Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos”, for there is no absolute originality, that is, chaos. This notion that the poem is already formed, waiting to be discovered and that the artist is a mere discoverer of such forms amidst chaos is similar to the notion presented earlier and voiced by Wyatt, Stanley, and even Otto, copying Wyatt, and placing the words into Gordon’s mouth, the main character of *The Vanity of Time*, in different sections of the novel. Otto had written down that “Orignlty not inventn, bt snse of recall, recgntion, pttrns alrdy thr, q. You cannt invnt t shpe of a stone” with a reminder “mke Grdn pntr? sclptr? (p. 123). This statement evidently echoes Plato’s theory of the arts and artists. In Plato’s texts, more specifically is the *Cratile*, the painter is considered an imitator of objects, of what he has seen.

Furthermore, still on Esme, when the narrator states that, “she was the poem”, it does not mean that the poem is personified; on the contrary, the meaning seems to be that writing is also an exercise of necessity for her, and she is also, in a way, the shambles of her poem, for writing exhausts Esme and she wastes away and dies (p. 953).

4.4 Smaller Mirrors: Esther, Anselm, Max, Sinisterra, Brown and Valentine

Esme and Esther share the initials, the love for Wyatt, and the despair after Wyatt rejects them. They also attend the same parties and share friends, but despite these similarities, one is the opposite of the other. This difference is exemplified by the fact that Esme writes poetry whereas Esther writes prose.

Esther is an aspiring young novelist whose lack of talent contrasts with Wyatt's endowment, despite the fact he is unsuccessful as a painter. Esther is not portrayed sympathetically by Gaddis, for she is depicted as someone doing her very best and not being able to achieve what she wants, whereas there is the feeling that Wyatt, and even Esme, could do much more than they are doing. Esther is good at making recognitions of her own, though. When Wyatt is working as a draftsman, she perceives that he could do more than that and encourages him to paint (p. 84, p. 96). On one occasion, he asks, "You are not waiting to discover something, are you. Waiting to be discovered, aren't you?" (p. 85).

She also recognizes Otto's repetition of Wyatt and tells him, "You don't have to repeat all those things to impress

me, Otto. I've heard them all, from him" (p. 130), that is from the original, but as much as she is attracted by what he has of Wyatt, she is attracted by what is different in him; the mixing of Wyatt with other ingredients. She concludes that, "With his ability and your ambition… I'd have quite a remarkable man" (p. 136); thus, for her, Otto and Wyatt are halves of the complete artist. That seems to be the reason why she becomes Otto's lover; he is the closest to Wyatt she will ever get. She eventually moves from him to a more successful man.

Sinisterra switches identities all the time in the novel. He first appears as a fugitive traveling with false papers he had printed himself, acting as a doctor, and killing Wyatt's mother. He also appears as himself in the novel and as Mr. Yák. He is a counterfeiter and in the course of the novel he counterfeits bank notes, coins, passports, and even a mummy, showing to be skillful in dealing with "the matter", in transforming materials, just like an alchemist.

The narrator humorously refers to this urge to fake or counterfeit as "a chronic profession" (p.5) and refers to Sinisterra as a "sensitive artist" (p.5). For him, counterfeiting is an art and he is an artist. Nevertheless, there is a problem with this statement, for Sinisterra considers a craftsman and an

artist to be the same; that is, he is till attached to medieval conceptions of artistry. He fails to recognize that the arts have emancipated from the crafts in the Renaissance. This introduces a relevant question: Are counterfeiters really artists? In this novel, Gaddis seems to treat counterfeiters and forgers as real artists as they make their works. He reminds us of the original meaning of the verb to forge. The problem with forgery would be the corruption of dealers and critics.

At the end of the novel, when Sinisterra meets Wyatt, he is Mr. Yák. We learn he has exiled in Europe “to erase the indignity of his recent defeat” (p. 773), which means he has been finally caught as a counterfeiter.

Sinisterra meets Wyatt at the cemetery, where he is looking for a corpse. When Sinisterra realizes Wyatt is the son of the woman he had accidentally killed thirty years before, he decides to protect him. Sinisterra’s guilt is voiced a few pages later, when he and Wyatt are talking about sin, and he says, “if you’ve sinned against one person then you make it up to another” (p. 814). This justifies his decision to care for Wyatt, even without Wyatt’s collaboration in order to atone for what he dad done to Wyatt’s mother. Thus, Sinisterra also becomes interested in the redemption of the soul and he comes to love Wyatt as if he

were his son, which might save them both. Frank Sinisterra also shows his disappointment towards his own son, who had never taken interest in his teachings on counterfeiting, although he had tried to teach him “like an old master” would.

Recktall Brown is associated with the devil and he is the most negative character in the novel. At no time in the novel does he show any sympathy or love for the other characters. As his name suggests, he is marked by dirt. Gaddis seems to use him to show hatred for art dealers and critics, for in the novel a figure such as Brown is in charge of dealing in the art market and also selecting works for publication. Because of his vices, Brown is compared to Simon Magus, which leads us to inquire on Brown’s magic powers. His power resides in his ability to “create originals”, as he transforms an original into a forgery and makes it commercially valuable. Thus, his magic power is to make gold.

Although greed is his worst flaw or sin, he commits all of the seven deadly sins in the narrative. Brown shows no respect for the activity of artists. He asks himself, “Do human beings write poetry?”, to later answer, Poets do”. That is, they are not human (p. 356). Recktall Brown can de described as an “art dealer and purchaser of souls” (KNIGHT, 1997, p. 26), for his business

in the narrative is to attempt to corrupt Wyatt and those surrounding him.

Valentine is the figure of the art critic and is paid to doubt Brown's commissioned forgeries in his reviews and then authenticate them. He seems to be more sensitive to Wyatt's work, since he is also a counterfeiter and was a religious man, but envy destroys him.

Valentine and Brown also write, like most characters in the novel, suggesting that anyone may write a book and be an author. They are both concerned about plagiarism, and once Valentine hears it he inquires, "Did I hear the word plagiary?". Brown replies, "You heard it. You can hear it again" hinting at the conversation to come. Valentine is intrigued by the "again" uttered by Brown as Brown proceeds by explaining that he had seen an advance copy of Valentine's art book and an art critic had said Valentine had "plagiarized just about the whole thing" and even condemns Valentine by saying, "if you think you can lift whole parts out of somebody else's…", a posture apparently completely different from a few moments before, when he had advised Otto not to worry about plagiarism.

In order to defend himself and his writing procedures and annoy Brown, Valentine picks up the book of poems supposedly written by Brown, and dedicated to Esme, which is a mere collection of poems. Brown immediately says, “there’s no plagiary in that. Everybody who wrote something’s got his name on it” (p. 354). This conversation compares the role of a compiler to that of a writer and suggests that the difference is the credit given to authors.

4.5 The parties

There are several parties in the novel, which provide opportunity for a great number of characters to meet and talk, making the reader know them better, since Gaddis does not provide us with many descriptions of the characters.

These parties mirror one another and the reader has the feeling that it is one endless party. Characters repeat themselves or other characters from party to party and this fictional strategy serves to reinforce Gaddis’s criticism on the contemporary American literary and art scene.

Among these character-artists that attend these parties are: Anselm, whose original name Arthur was dropped in favor of

Saint Anselm's; Herschel, a ghost writer for politicians; literary agents; Village artists; poets. With all these characters related to the artistic world at the party, it is obvious that the main theme of their conversations is art and they show the superficiality of their conceptions of art and of their own lifestyles. One of the most active characters in these parties is Otto, and he is especially related to the vanity of these conversations, despite having written a play called *The Vanity of Time.* The name of the play is inspired on one of Wyatt's statements about art, but it could also refer to the vanity of their time in which everyone in their relations is struggling to be recognized as an artist and failing to produce their original works. For Christopher Knight, "the artist manqué is the prime subject of Gaddis's satire and rebuke" (1997, p. 24). Even Wyatt's "forgeries" of past art are more interesting and authentic than works produced by any other character in the novel claiming to be an artist. Therefore, Gaddis goes further than his characters in his novel. As Knight has observed, "it would be a mistake not to note the difference between the frequent failings of the novels' artists and the extraordinary success of Gaddis's own accomplishment" (1997, p. 5).

Stanley dies while doing his work of love, Brown is dead, Sinisterra has disappeared, maybe he was caught as a

counterfeiter, and Anselm is in a monastery. This seems to indicate that breakdown threatens Gaddis's artists. Gaddis seems to believe that "As an artist's vision refines, it weakens the artist's tie to the everyday; the artist becomes disoriented, even deranged" (WOLFE, 1997, p. 36). For Franzen, at the end of the novel, after "having surmounted the American protestant suspicion of art and survived the dangerous attractions of the American protestant market place, he seems finally on his way to being a real painter (FRANZEN, 2002, p. 4). This proposes a question to us, "Wasn't he a real painter so far?" I believe he was a real painter, for the only painting he copied was the Bosch, but he faced the difficulties every artist has, principally one at the start of his career, finding a balance between influence and personal expression.

At Christmas, Esther throws a Christmas party. This party is contrasted with a party given by Brown at the same time. Most of the artist characters in the novel attend Esther's party and it extends over several pages. Similarly to the preceding parties, guests gather in groups and talk about art. At Brown's party, the guests circulate and talk about art, just like at Esther's party, but most guests here are not artists or want-to-be artists, they are critics and dealers and it can be said that Brown's is a business party. At Esther's, artists are fighting

for recognitions, to be discovered; at Brown, critics and dealers are waiting to discover new pieces shown by Brown.

For Beer, the party, as well as the novel itself, is peopled by “artists, frauds, would-be-artists, would-be-frauds, and critics” (2001, p. 85). Besides the main characters, there are other relevant characters related to the main themes of the novel: a woman talking about the fact she supports her husband who is into writing (p. 568), someone who has just bought a Renault (p. 569), someone who prefers books to people (p. 571), someone discussing painting (p. 577), someone talking about player pianos (p. 579), a writer whose work has never been published but who has translated his own work into 19 languages (p. 582), and others.

In fact, most characters are interested in something Brown will show them, which is the *Death of a Virgin,* supposedly painted by Hugo van der Goes, which is the last forgery Wyatt gave Brown. Some of the guests look at the Memling hanging in Brown’s living room and discuss it and its obvious authenticity, without knowing that Wyatt is the one who painted it. As there is much tension in the air, Valentine tries to convince Brown not to show the guests the van der Goes, for it is too soon for that, but Brown does not care and even drunk shows some of his guests

the painting, but as Valentine had predicted, it does not cause a good impression. To correct the missing face left by Wyatt to simulate damage, a new face has been painted, apparently by Valentine, and it does not fit into the painting. The critics recognize it as “most obviously the work of some restorer” and think it “rather serves to show up the excellence of the rest of the thing” (p. 665), which annoys Valentine and makes him burst out again to Brown,

> What’s come over you? Why you… and that picture you just showed, in the back room, they know something is wrong. They won’t even say anything to each other, but they know something is wrong. You couldn’t have chosen a more stupid moment. What are you trying to do, see how far you can push them? (p. 671).

This is a clear example of how the other characters are used to highlight Wyatt’s achievements as an artist, for his skillfulness is used to compare him to Valentine.

It is clear that, as a whole, *The Recognitions* repudiates the superficiality of art-for-art’s sake (STONEHILL, 1988, p. 137), for Gaddis satirizes most characters that try to do meaningless art and sides with those who try to do meaningful art, mainly Wyatt, Esme and Stanley. Books and book publishing are also subject to satire, since books are put to every possible use, for besides being written, published, and read, they are “discussed, reviewed, quoted, memorized, psychoanalyzed,

autographed, used to disguise other books” (JOHNSTON, 1990, p. 164).

As it has been pointed out, Esme, Stanley, and Wyatt’s aesthetics are similar, but the point is: how similar is it to Gaddis’s? Evidently, the choice of Flemish painting for Wyatt’s inspiration and for being the link between them is not accidental. In Certain Flemish paintings the convex mirror seen on the back wall reflects the miniature of the composition as a whole, in a kind of conscious mise-en-abyme (STONEHILL, 1988, p. 9). Therefore, it is not by chance that Gaddis uses Flemish painting, since it is, in a way, self-conscious painting, used in a novel that questions originality and authorship through forgery and plagiarism. It is also not by chance that Gaddis uses *The Clementine Recognitions* in the making of his *The Recognitions,* for the original of *The Clementine Recognitions* has never been found. I suggest it has never existed just like the paintings Wyatt painted.

5. WYATT'S AESTHETICS OF RECOGNITIONS

There is nothing new under the sun

Ecclesiastes (1:9)

The Flemish masters Wyatt admires are famous for their widespread use of mirrors in their paintings, but the mirrors they used at the time were slightly convex and presented a distorted image. It is assumes that this was used as a device to highlight the faithfulness of the painter's craft. In Jan van Eyck's masterpiece *The Arnolfini Couple,* the mirror in the back of the painting shows a distorted reflection of the couple and the mark of the painter's hand. Above the mirror we read, "Jan van Eyck was here" (JANSON, 1996, p. 177), which is the mark of authorship and at the same time points to the self-reflexive nature of the painting.

Gaddis also makes use of several mirrors in his narrative. Besides the mirrors insistently used by Wyatt in the

making of his paintings and the mirrors used by characters to see their reflections, there are several characters functioning as mirrors of Wyatt. These mirrors are used to provoke recognitions on characters and readers as well and reinforce the aesthetics of recognitions Wyatt's painting practices are grounded on. According to Stonehill, the self-conscious text dramatizes and encapsulates its own context (1988, p. 5), that is, it mirrors itself. Gaddis's novel turns mirrors to itself questioning originality and "Of prime importance for all self-conscious fiction is the issue of originality" (STONEHILL, 1988, p. 46).

Wyatt's difficulty in finishing Camilla's portrait intrigues those around him. When Gwyon sees Camilla's unfinished painting, he asks, "Why won't you finish it?". Wyatt's justification is:

> There is something about a … an unfinished piece of work, a … thing like this were … do you see? Where perfection is still possible? Because it's there, it's there all the time, all the time you work trying to uncover it (p. 57).

Wyatt's statement reveals that he believes perfection is impossible after a work is finished, but while a work of art is unfinished, there is the feeling that perfection is expecting to be "uncovered" behind the canvas, just like a secret, as the artist works. This is the first reference in the novel to what I

call Wyatt's aesthetics of recognitions, which is defended by him at different points in the narrative and is also embraced by Stanley, Esme, and even Otto, in his own manner.

As an adult, in order to justify his rejection of originality, Wyatt repeats his old German professor's words, which seem to illustrate his beliefs perfectly,

> That romantic disease, originality, all around we see originality of incompetent idiots, they could draw nothing, paint nothing, just so the mess they make is original... Even two hundred years ago who wanted to be original, to be original was to admit that you could not do a thing the right way, so you could only do it your own way. When you paint, you do try to be original, only you think about your work, how to make it better, so you copy masters, only masters, for with each copy of a copy the form degenerates... you do not invent shapes, you know them, auswendig wissen Sie, by heart... (p. 89).

Once again Wyatt is defending that the painter knows the patterns or the shapes he will paint before hand by heart, for they are inside or behind the screen. Thus, the artist's work involves identifying, or, recognizing these shapes. It is interesting to notice that whereas the expression *auswendig wissen* can be translated as "knowing by heart", the word *auswendig* by itself means "from/on the outside", that is, it is possible to recognize the shapes from the outside of the screen. It is ironic, though, that Wyatt went to Germany to study painting, although Germany is the place of birth of Romanticism

and the cult of originality, and brought these anti-romantic conceptions from there.

Wyatt calls originality “a disease”, but a few lines later he states that when he paints he tries to be original. This seems a paradox, but may not be so. He is suggesting that one may search for originality, for what matters is the process, but absolute originality does not exist and tradition should not be put completely aside, for if originality exists, it “extends beyond novelty” (LINDLEY, 1952, p. 17).[36]

Herr Koppel’s beliefs voiced by Wyatt match Aunt May’s perfectly, for both his professor and his aunt see originality as a disease, although they have different reasons for their positions. Aunt May’s reason is merely religious, whereas Herr Koppel’s is aesthetic. The religious and the artistic sphere are together and seem to justify Wyatt’s paradoxical attitudes, for he is surrounded by those who do not accept originality and they lead him to reject it. Nevertheless, this rejection of originality implies that they believe that originality is possible, that is, that it exists. Wyatt, quoting Herr Koppel, states that you “do try to be original”, but acknowledges that

[36] I found evidence that Lindley’s book was an important source for Gaddis to write this novel. Although it is a rare book nowadays, since it had just one edition, it was easy to be obtained at the time Gaddis was writing the novel.

they way to do that is by copying and improving the work of the old masters just like apprentices used to do in the Renaissance.

When attempting to succeed as a painter, Wyatt walks in Montmartre and observes the painters that paint following Henner's principle[37]. They painted:

> The same picture from different angles, the same painting varying from easel to easel as different versions of a misunderstood truth, but the progeny of each single easel identical reproduction, following a precept of Henner who called this the only way of being original(p. 67-68).

Thus, the only way to be original is by repeating. Later Wyatt writes down that, "Originality is not invention, but a sense of recall, recognition, patterns already there. You can't invent the shape of a stone" (p. 123), which suggests that the stone already has a shape inside it, waiting to be discovered. This statement is adopted by Otto Pivner, who tells Esther that he heard from a friend that:

> that passage in Cicero's *Paradoxa*, where Cicero gives no credit for anything of his own in his work, but just for removing the excess marble until he reached the real form that was there all the time. Yes, the um … masters who didn't have to try to invent, who knew what … ah … forms looked like, the um … The disciple is not above the master,

[37] According to *The Reader's Guide to the Recognitions*, this is a clear reference to French painter Jean-Jacques Henner (1829-1905). This reference is found in Paul Eudel's *Fakes and Fakers*, a treaty on forgery, where Henner's ideas on originality are exposed. The complete reference is: *Trucs et truqueurs: Alterations, Frauds et Contrefacons devoilees*. Paris: Librairie Moliere, 1907.

> but everyone that is perfect shall be as his master (p. 124).

Once again Wyatt's conception appears and when this conception surfaces in the narrative, we are also invited to recognize it, for it sounds familiar, as it is also a recurring pattern in the novel. Otto places this statement into Gordon's mouth, but the origin of these words is apparently Wyatt.

There is another example of that a few pages later, when Esther meets Wyatt at a Picasso exhibit, but he does not see her. He looks through her and she complains about it. He defends himself saying he was looking at the painting. He claims,

> When I saw it, it was one of those moments of reality, of near-recognition of reality. I had been … I had been worn out on this piece of work, and when I finished it, I was free, free all of a sudden out in the world. In the street everything was unfamiliar, everything and everyone I saw was unreal (p. 91-92).

Therefore, reality for him is something different from what it is for Esther. It is something inaccessible and the closer we get to it is a "near-recognition". Wyatt goes even further comparing his feelings and the feelings of others towards painting,

> When I saw it all of a sudden everything freed into one recognition, really freed into reality that we

> never see, you never see it. You don’t see it in paintings because most of the time you can’t see beyond a painting. Most paintings, the instant you see them, they become familiar, and then it’s too late (p. 92).

Appreciating a work of art would be recognizing what it is, becoming familiarized with it, as if you already knew it. It would be looking “beyond” a painting. Later on, Wyatt comments on this moment of near-recognition again,

> There is always the sense, he went on --the sense of recalling something, of almost reaching it, and holding it...—And then it’s... it’s escaped again, and there’s only a sense of disappointment, of something irretrievably lost… Reality (p. 119).

Therefore, for Wyatt, “art remains a crucial effort to recall shapes and forms rather than to invent them” (KNIGHT, 1997, p. 37), that is, to look into the past, which bothers Esther. It is pivotal to highlight that in the two moments when Wyatt talks about the experience painting provides him, he uses the word recognition, which is more related to recollection than to creation, which he still seems to associate with sin.

Wyatt really does more than pulling fragments of ten paintings together and making one out of them, which was considered to be the way in which most forgers worked. He imitates the style of the masters and counterfeits the materials to attempt to achieve an authentic result. In order to do this,

he deals with recognitions that “go much deeper, much further back”, because the experts “look with memories that … go beyond themselves, that go back to … where mine goes” (p. 249).

Thus, Wyatt’s art is based on the recognition of the technique and the craft involved in the making of the paintings and on the work of the masters that have served as a basis for his creations. Nevertheless, Wyatt knows that it is not enough, because the experts, critics, look at and judge these works; so, he knows that he is not working in the sight of God, but in the sight of the critics, just like Gaddis, and the elements of the work have to be well mixed.

Most Renaissance painters, and mainly Flemish masters such as Van Eyck, had close relations with alchemy, and painting and alchemy are related in Wyatt’s point of view. Although the most famous alchemists were monks or doctors, alchemy was never a business or career in itself. True alchemy was work to be done in peace and quiet and not to be commercialized. Thus, for Moore, “the attitude alchemists took toward their work parallels that which the true artist, as Gaddis sees it, takes toward art” (1982, p. 18). The artist in Gaddis is like the alchemist, for he has to transform the matter.

It is often believed that the alchemists were interested in discovering the chemical key to transmuting base metals into gold; nevertheless, nowadays it is known that most alchemists were religious men that believed that Christ redeemed man, but left nature unredeemed and, therefore, they aimed at redeeming the matter in order to complete Christ's work. Therefore, it is closely related to creation and even to the epigraph from *Faust* used by Gaddis at the beginning of the novel. In fact, Moore defends that Wyatt's pact with the devil starts when Wyatt begins to mix the materials in order to find the right components for his paintings and resembles an alchemist. Despite Moore's opinion, the existence of the pact is questionable. Later in the narrative, Max is stirred and he wonders what the devil would give him if he sold Stanley's or Otto's soul to him. Stanley says he could not do that and Max invokes *Faust*, "Faust sold his soul to the devil", but Stanley believes that "that's a fallacy" because "It was not his to dispose of. We belong to our souls, not our souls to us" (p. 465). Therefore, if we consider that Faust could not sell his soul, neither could Wyatt; thus, there was not a pact with Brown.

Alchemy also connects Wyatt to Gwyon as it is among Gwyon's favorite subjects of study and Wyatt is raised hearing stories about alchemists and their attempts. Wyatt is engrossed

by alchemy because it can be said to be between religion and magic and this link interests him. But alchemy and painting do have something in common that attracts Wyatt, for “the alchemist and the artist both seek to free the hidden form, to recognize that which is already there but exists in corruption only as a potential” (LEVERENCE, 1984, p. 40), which is in accordance with Wyatt’s view of the process of artistic creation set forth so far. Alchemy is closely related to recognition, because for the alchemists, “imitation of God’s work was but an act of recognition” (LEVERENCE, 1984, p. 41).

Stanley also has his eyes turned to the past as he admires composers that have written for the Church, for God’s ears, as much as Wyatt admires painters who have supposedly painted for God’s eyes and had “touched the origins of design with recognition” (p. 322). He defends that, “it isn’t making it up, inventing music, it’s like... remembering” (p.461), once more agreeing with Wyatt.

Esme also shares this view because for her, “to paint is to intensify, to remember” (p. 472) and words carry their meaning “implicit in their shape” (p. 299). Thus, writing is an exercise of discovering the meaning that is implicit in the shape of words, which is difficult, because it means looking inside and

behind words. Esme makes a great effort to write “calling her memory, screaming for it” (p. 299), searching for the poem because “the poem she knew but could not write existed, ready-formed, awaiting recovery” (p. 299).

The ideas defended by Wyatt, Stanley, and Esme become one when Otto tells Esme a story he had once heard from Wyatt about a forged Titian[38]. He tells her,

> It was a forged Titian that someone had painted over another old painting, when they scraped the forged Titian away they found some worthless old painting underneath it, the forger had used it because it was an old canvas. But then there was something under that worthless painting, and they scraped it off and underneath that they found a Titian, a real Titian that had been there all the time. It was though when the forger was working and he did not know the original was underneath, I mean he did not know he knew it, but it knew, I mean something knew (p. 451).

The meaning of this story is similar to the story of the rock that already contained the sculpture in it. However, it is important to mention it is not completely fictive, for there have been findings such as these in the history of art. As the price of materials has always been very high, even masters adopted the practice of reusing canvases and it is known that forgers such as Hans van Meegeren and Eric Hebborn cleaned old canvases to use them and produce their forgeries. Nowadays, with

[38] Titian was a Renaissance master painter who painted religious themes and portraits. His paintings express life, for they are full of vitality.

the aid of technology with advanced techniques of X-ray, paintings painted by masters underneath or over other paintings have been frequently found[39]. The most famous example involving Titian, which might have served as an inspiration for Gaddis, is that of a painting called *Venus with a mirror*[40], underneath which lies another entirely different painting also by Titian. In this case, the overpainting has not been removed and only with the aid of X-ray the underpainting was discovered. This is not the same as the Titian incident in the novel. In the case of *Venus with a mirror*, the painting on the surface masks another different painting and for one to see the underlying painting, one has to give a closer look at the painting. One has to search for what is already there, waiting to be discovered, recalled. Recognizing the underlying painting does not necessarily involve scraping it off physically and destroying the layers, but understanding that both the over and the under painting form one painting.

This painting is particularly significant for it is another self-reflexive painting. Venus is holding a mirror and we can see her face in the mirror as she looks at herself. The story about the Titian in Gaddis is also greatly self-reflexive, for it points to the other forged paintings in the narrative, for all of

[39] Cases such as this one are still fairly common. In 2003, a self-portrait of Rembrandt was found underneath an expressionist painting, but it is not considered a forgery, for there was no intention to deceive (JEFFRIES, 2003).
[40] This painting hangs at the Louvre nowadays. See Appendix B for a reproduction.

them, including *The Table of the Seven Deadly Sins* and the Memling, were considered to be originals and forgeries at different moments of the text depending on the context in which they were found. This suggests that originality is dependent on time, that is, historical; that is to say that, “originality is constrained by the contextual uses of tradition, and not by a fixed definition” (ELKINS, 2004).

This story also refers to one of Wyatt’s last scenes in the novel, when he is scraping the paintings at the monastery. I believe he wants to uncover what lies beneath the layers of paint, for he believes there is always something beneath the paint. Even beneath an apparently white page, there are inscriptions, for no page is completely white and no canvas is completely pure. I disagree with critics such as Wolfe, who defend that Wyatt is searching for simplicity or emptiness (1997, p. 19) when he is scraping the painting because this is in disagreement with the rest of the novel. He is not erasing the paintings to make a fresh start. He is cleaning the paintings to find inspiration for his own work, to find his own style by getting inspiration from what is lying under the layers of paint.

In this regard, I also disagree with David Koenig when he defends that “underneath layers of counterfeits and fakes the

genuine or original lies hidden" (1984, p. 22), for at no point in the narrative there seems to be any suggestion of the supremacy of that which lies hidden over what lies on he surface. This argument seems clearly modernist and elitist and does not fit into Gaddis's conceptions. As Johnston reminds us, "the logic of intertextuality disallows the privileging of any single text as the origin of a more authentic version" (1990, p. 167). Similarly, Félix defends that the aesthetics of recognitions abolishes the difference between the original and the copy to render visible a unique reality (FELIX, 1997, p. 33). Although Félix does make this reference to an aesthetics of recognitions, she does not provide any explanation on what she considers to be this aesthetics.

Koenig seems to share some of his opinions with the author of an earlier work. Frederick Karl provides us with an insightful analysis of the novel, but also misses the point. He states that,

> Gaddis draws on extensive reading in and knowledge of religious literature, church fathers and historians, Latin works, theologians, all sufficiently assimilated so that they can be regurgitated for parodic purposes" (1983, p. 180).

Thus, he reduces everything to parody. Karl compares Gaddis's fiction to Wyatt's paintings,

> What Gaddis has done is to locate his narrative under layers of disguise and deception, by doing so finding the equivalent in plot line of counterfeiting; like that Titian itself which lies under layers of paint, Gaddis's narrative awaits someone willing to peel away coats which falsify and corrupt (1983, p. 183).

For Karl, Gaddis's narrative is like the Titian itself, which has to be peeled away and underneath Gaddis lie other authors and underneath them lies the real Gaddis (p. 183). Karl's conclusions are emblematic, for they exemplify the way in which Gaddis's novel has been analyzed by critics. The preoccupation in peeling off the painting to find the original underneath "disguise and deception" resembles the attempt to find other author's works and voices, origins, behind Gaddis without examining the use he makes of them, and denying the self-referentiality of his fiction. Therefore, similarly to Koenig, Karl misses the point, for Gaddis's text does not defend the removal of coats that "falsify and corrupt" the original Titian. On the contrary, it emphasizes the process that led to the construction of this particular work of art, the Titian, which is composed of several layers, all of which being a part of it. The same process is that of the construction of Gaddis's novel.

There are several instances resembling the structure of the Titian in the narrative, but one of them is worthy of notice

as it also involves Clement. Aunt May finds a pamphlet from the Basilica di San Clemente and is shocked that it is “a little underground cave” and exclaims “god? And it looks like a bull!” (p. 38). It happens that this basilica was built right over a pagan temple, a temple of mithra, and an excavation showed that (p. 38, p. 44). Thus, on the surface, the basilica is a Christian temple, but under this façade lies a pagan temple.

As Wyatt scrapes the Navarette painting, he affirms that, “we all studied with Titian” (p. 869). The question to be posed it, if we (painters, artists) all studied with Titian, we must have learned something from him and from this painting in particular. We learn from Titian that art does not have to be produced only for the sight of God, as Titian also painted pagan themes. We learn that paintings cannot portray life, but express it by means of color and movement. From this story, we learn that a painting may be original and forged at the same time, as a text may be original or plagiarized depending on the outlook and context. If we read any literary text very closely, as I am reading this novel, we find traces of other texts reworked into the text consciously and unconsciously. It is virtually impossible to write a text without using other texts. The more you scrape the text, the more you find, not merely underneath the text, but composing the fabric of the text, just like the coats

of oil that mix to form new colors. Gaddis, for instance, provides us with an interplay between literal and disguised quotation, appropriating of other writer's voices for his purposes. The difference between plagiarism and what Gaddis does is in the manner in which these quotations are knitted into the text. This might have accounted for the rejection of Otto's play and the acceptance of Max's novel. Both provoked a feeling of "familiarity", but only one of them was accepted. *The Recognitions* is also made up of many "familiar lines", but it was accepted for publication. However, it was overlooked by critics and readers. They failed to see that Gaddis not only pays homage to his old masters of literature, not writing in their style, for he has his own, but by means of the appropriation of their voices. It is not literary allusion, for he makes something else out of them; he makes them his own. He makes use of lines from these other works to problematize originality and authorship, providing a discussion on forgery, plagiarism, and counterfeiting. It is a performative text.

At the end of the novel, it is possible to overhear several fragments of conversations and one of them is: "I've practically finished this novel, all I have to do now is put in the motivation, said a young man at the next table…--I've been reading Dante trying to get some ideas (p. 960). This clearly

evokes the use of familiar lines and works in the making of new works, which is one of the procedures used by Gaddis. Also, it is a reference to Dante, which has been mentioned in the novel before.

Despite Gaddis's widespread use of familiar voices, the copyright page of *The Recognitions* only brings the standard copyright announcement. Gaddis returns to all of these questions 50 years later in *Agapé Agape*, but the times have definitely changed. The copyright page of Gaddis's last novel has several copyright acknowledgments to the texts he quotes. This brings an interesting question, what if *The Recognitions* was published nowadays? Besides the long copyright acknowledgment page, would it be accepted as Max's text or rejected as Otto's was?

The structure of the Titian resembles that of a palimpsest. Stanley, who also has difficulty finishing his organ concerto, explains to Agnes Deigh, "You get used to living among palimpsests. Somehow that is what happens, double and triple palimpsests pile up and you keep erasing, and altering, and adding…" (p. 599). Despite the fact that Agnes is an editor, she is unable to understand that and asks, "I don't know what a

palimsest[41] is, but couldn't you just finish off this thing you're working on now, and then go and write another?" (p. 599). An editor should know what a palimpsest is and her reply shows her ignorance. It also shows she has no idea of what is involved in the process of writing and does not understand Stanley's difficulty in accomplishing his work and moving on. Once again, as en editor, she is described mercilessly by Gaddis. Agnes fails to understand that, for Stanley, it is not easy to finish a work, since "it's as though this one thing must contain it all, all in one piece of work, because, well it's as though finishing it strikes it dead, do you understand?" (p. 599). Thus, Stanley has difficulty finishing his organ pieces because it is hard to kill "something you … love" because you kill the possibility of finding perfection (p. 599). His statement about his struggle to finish his works as well as the statement that a piece of work "must contain it all" seem to refer to Gaddis's novel, exemplifying its self-reflexive nature.

The most important statements in the novel come from Wyatt's mouth. In one of these statements, in a conversation with Esther, he connects the issues of authorship and originality for the first time.

[41] I believe Gaddis misspells the word palimpsests to suggest Agnes's ignorance. Unfortunately, a revised edition of *The Recognitions* is to be published by Penguin soon to commemorate 50 years of the first edition and the editors are working on the text in order to "correct" it. "Misspellings", such as this one, might be corrected. I have sent an e-mail to the list objecting to the some of the corrections, but my appeal was not heard.

> -- But it can't really be that simple… ("a discussion: did the coming of the printing press corrupt? putting a price on authorship, originality). --Look at it this way, look at it as liberation, the first time in history that a writer was independent of patrons, the first time he could but a price on his work, make it a thing of material value, a vested interest in himself for the first time in history…
> --And painters, and artists? Lithography and color reproductions…
> --Yes, I don't know, if one corrupts the artist and the other corrupts… that damned Mona Lisa, no one sees it, you can't see it with a thousand off-center reproductions between you and it"(p. 92).

This passage poses relevant questions. Authorship and originality appear related to the coming of the printing press and to lithography and photography, that is, forms of mechanical reproduction mentioned by Benjamin and whose importance to the establishment of the professional writer has been discussed earlier. In a way, the questions raised here are similar to those posed by Benjamin, for he called our attention to the fact that after the advent of mechanical reproductions our perception of the originals and our relations with them will never be the same[42].

For Beer, this discussion between Wyatt and Esther exemplifies the interplay of tradition and innovation that is "considered thematically through the omnipresence of technology

[42] It is relevant to notice that Benjamin had not been translated into English by the time the novel was written; therefore, Gaddis could not have read him, although there seem to be many preoccupations shared by both authors. Much later in his life Gaddis declared that he was happy he had not read Benjamin and this way could not be accused of copying him. Steve Moore, one of the most well-known of Gaddis's scholars referred to that at a conference presented at the Reading William Gaddis Coloque in Orléans in 2000, which I attended.

and its effect upon art" (2001, p. 75) in several passages in the novel. More than once the commodification of works of art is denounced, as when a character states, "No, the point was sublimation, see? This is the whoring of the arts, and we're the pimps, see" (p. 736). Another character goes even further and considers this commodification and its use of advertising generalized by saying, "We've had the goddam Ages of Faith, we've had the goddam Age of Reason. This is the Age of Publicity" (p. 736). Still, an advertisement in the newspaper reads. "THE GHOST ARTISTS. We paint it. You sign it. Why not give an exhibition?" (p. 741), which obviously questions the functions of art and artists in this age of publicity. It is not surprising though that Gaddis decided to use this advertising, as it was issued by the American University in Washington to promote a course in ghost writing in the late 1940's (LINDLEY, 1952, p. 222).

Despite the fact that Esther is annoyed by Wyatt's incapacity of finishing any original work, and keeps telling him, "If you could finish something original" (p. 99), she cannot help telling everyone Wyatt is original, for he is different from the others who are struggling to be original. She tells her friends about Wyatt and his paintings and he gets infuriated and imitates her friend's words: "Esther tells us you are so original, you must tell us more about your work, you must know all the

tricks... The tricks!“ (p. 106). This comment seems to infuriate him for two reasons: First, it associates him with originality, which he has said to consider a “romantic disease”, but was really the disease of his time. Second, he, as an artist, would be able to teach “the tricks” of his work, as if one could and should talk about his work, which he believes to be impossible, and justifies that by saying, “It’s your work, and something like writing is very private, isn’t it?” (p. 113).

Esther is interested in writers’ lives and bodies and this is related to a trend to emphasize biographies of writers, interviews with writers, and even diaries and memoirs of writers, which has been detected by Barthes (1995, p. 126). Wyatt’s denial to speak about his work mirrors Gaddis’s beliefs, for he refuted this interest, refused to give oral interviews, did not appear at public places, and did not give autographs. Both Gaddis’s and Barthes’s negative views seem to be based on the same conception: there is no need for explanations of artistic or literary works.

Wyatt, echoing Gaddis once again, criticizes most writing done at the time and says that,

> They write for people who read with the surface of their minds, people with reading habits that make the smallest demands on them, people brought up reading for

> facts, who know what is going to come next and want to know what is coming next, and get angry at surprises (p. 113).

With these lines, Gaddis is obviously criticizing the readers and critics of his time, anticipating the negative reviews his novel would have and defending it. *The Recognitions* makes tough demands on the reader. As an example of that Stonehill reminds us that Gaddis never identifies Otto's borrowings from Wyatt; he makes us recognize them (1988, p. 119), which exercises our ability to make recognitions of our own, and authorship is bound to recognition.

Otto makes a reference to an article about "the first authorized Sherlock Holmes story to appear since Conan Doyle died" (p. 463-464) from *The Collector's Quarterly*. According to this article, this story was written "after the exhaustive study of Conan Doyle's literary method" in order to "reproduce certain Doylean literary tricks" (p. 464). Once again there is a reference to "the tricks" of the artist and the issue of authorization. Max is annoyed by the article and poses a question relating this text, an authorized literary forgery, to painting, or authorized literary forgeries, "Authorized painting by Dierick Bouts? van der Goes? Who authorizes them? (p. 464), questioning the difference between an authentic Dürer, a forgery of Dürer, and an authorized Dürer, which in fact, could not have been

authorized by the painter himself, who would be the only one in condition to authorize it, but by the owner of the rights over Dürer's work, transforming copyright into the central issue and transforming the painting into an authorized forgery.

Max poses another relevant question, "What's the difference? You fake a Dürer by taking the face from one and turning it around, the beard from another, the hat from another, you've got a Dürer, haven't you?" (p. 464). Stanley replies, "But only on the surface" and Max continues, "On the surface! How much deeper do people go? The people who buy them?" and here what he says has to with the behavior of art dealers and critics such as Valentine and Brown, who are not really interested in such questions, but merely in the profit of such discoveries. Otto interrupts by saying, "But this, this isn't a forgery… It's no secret, they tell you right here…" and Max complements "That's just what I mean… What's the difference now? In our times?… As long as it's "authorized". Isn't that right Stanley?", but of course Stanley does not think that it is right and concludes, "the devil is the father of false art" (p. 464), which once again makes Recktall Brown into a devilish figure. Apparently, Wyatt was able to move away from the dichotomy copy or original, but Stanley has not been able to take the same path and this will account for his death.

The ethical, aesthetic, and monetary dimensions involved in the making and circulation of a work of art meet in this discussion. Max clearly states what seems to be one of the points Gaddis wishes to criticize, the commercialization of the arts and the market. In fact, no one seems to care about the precedence or authenticity of works of art, but solely about their marketability.

The procedure referred to in the *Collector's Quarterly* and discussed by Max, Otto, and Stanley, is similar to the procedure employed by Wyatt in the making of the forgeries; however, the only differences are the signature attached to his paintings, which is not his, and the question of authorization, raised by Max. In the discussion, Max and Otto raise very important questions inquiring about the difference between an authentic painting and an authorized one, just for the sake of a signature. This discussion evokes the one between Wyatt and Valentine, when he is told if he signed his paintings they would be worth "200 bucks" and nothing else, no matter their quality. Therefore, Gaddis is proposing the same discussion again through different characters. Nevertheless, whereas Max, Otto and Stanley seem to have their own opinions on the matter, as well as Valentine.

Thus, an author, to some extent, is always like a forger, for he inevitably writes his name under what someone else has written, even though he may not be aware of it. This makes Groom conclude that, “the artist is, in one sense, an endorsed counterfeiter” (2002, p. 178), for “all literature is, in some sense, spurious” (HERRON, 2005), as Ruthven (2001) defends.

Nick Groom contrasts forgery and plagiarism and defends that “forgeries are finds” for they depend upon the recognition of the discovery, whereas plagiarism relies on “he inability of a reader or viewer to recognize any source” (2003, p. 17). Plagiarism relies on the inability to recognize sources, to disguise origins, whereas forgery relies on the ability to recognize something as part of a work (GROOM, 2003, p. 17). Both plagiarism and originality rely on recognitions. What changes is the gaze. There is always the repetition of some element, but the work is always unique, for the process is always original.

Esther and Wyatt discuss the role of the writer and the relation between writer and work and writer and reader. There is a moment when Esther shows Wyatt a copy of Rilke’s *Collected Poems* and comments on Rilke’s sexuality, which does not interest Wyatt. Esther confesses, “I had wanted to meet him” (p. 92) and

Wyatt, infuriated, bursts out, “Analyzing, dissecting, finding answers and now… What did you want from him that you did not get from his work?” (p. 93).

This posture is repeated, and reinforced, by Otto,

> I used to … wanting to meet the poet, or the painter, or the writer, the tight-rope walker of the minute, as though you could sop up something from them in a handshake… (p. 613).

Wyatt explores this,

> … this passion for wanting to meet the latest poet, shake hands with the latest novelist, get hold of the latest painter, devour… what is it? What is it they want from a man they didn’t get from his work? What do they expect? What is there left of him when he’s done his work? What’s any artist, but the dregs of his work? The human shambles that follows it around. What’s left of the man when the work’s done but a shambles of apology.
> -- Wyatt, these romantic…
> --Yes, romantic, listen… Romantics! (p. 95-96).

Esther seems to share the predominant view of the period that authors are celebrities and Wyatt finds two problems in that. First, it is clear that for him a work of art must stand by itself, not be personalized in the figure of the one who made it. He knows that the author is not an inspired genius. The work must, for him, always be more important than the man or woman who made it. Second, he rejects the notion that the maker of a work, an artist, precedes the work. He defends that author and work are

created together, for there is no notion of precedence. On the contrary, the artist is the dregs of his or her work, that is, what is left after the work is completed.

This conception of the artist as the dregs of his work is defended by Wyatt on other occasions. Valentine is aroused by Wyatt's ideas and repeats them,

> What was it you said, the shambles of your work? What pitifully selfish career! Being lived, as you said? By something that uses you and then sheds you like a husk when its own ends are accomplished? (p. 335).

Thus, Wyatt sees the artist not as an end, but as a means for the work, which Valentine finds pitiable. Earlier in the narrative Valentine states, "You are an artist, and nothing can happen to you. An artist does not exist, except as a vehicle for his work" (p. 262). The artist was described as "the dregs of one's work" and now is described as "husk", which is a superfluous and insignificant thing with a very short existence. Wyatt attempts to diminish Valentine's pity by saying, "Yes, but if the gods themselves…" (p. 335), suggesting that the fact that an artist is consumed by his work is unimportant if the gods are watching, but Valentine doubts it and asks one of the most important questions in the novel "Is it worth?"(p. 335).

Stanley also makes a reference to this. For Stanley, “every piece of created work is the tomb of its creator” (p. 323). Stanley is once again repeating himself, for this statement echoes Foucault once again, mainly Foucault’s statement about the death of the author, which had not been published when the novel was released, but shows that Gaddis shares preoccupations with Foucault and even anticipates him, as he anticipates other theoretical issues that will be discussed later. Foucault states that, “the concept of the author is never more alive than when pronounced dead” (1992, p. 7). These texts, even arguing that the author was dead, brought the author to the limelight. Thus, there is an apparent contradiction: an author, Barthes, is necessary, to announce that the Author is dead. If the author resurrects, when pronounced dead, it is relevant to ask how and why the author returns, for it seems to be the dregs of the work, the most unimportant part of the work. In *The Recognitions*, Wyatt becomes Stephen Asche, ash.

Thus, every piece of created work is the birth and tomb of his creator. Wyatt once states that, “in a sense an artist is always born yesterday“ (p. 143). This is because the author forgets, as mentioned in *Ecclesiastes.*

The title of the novel points to a return, a new beginning at the same time it points towards a text whose original is lost or does not exist, for it is a collection of texts, but at the same time is considered the first Christian novel. Gaddis's *The Recognitions* reads *The re-cogni-tions* in the cover of the first edition[43], which relates to the idea of re-doing something, and talismanic words in the narrative such as re-petition, re-collection, re-writing, etc. It also relates to failures of cognition.

As *The Recognitions* is a self-reflexive novel, Wyatt's aesthetics of recognitions is Gaddis's aesthetics of recognitions and for Gaddis the author is the ashes of his work.

[43] See Appendix D.

6 FINAL REMARKS

I have rather made up my mind that I am a mere apparition.

Coleridge

The Recognitions is a first novel and Gaddis is obviously faced with the difficulties first novelists have. Most characters in the novel are artists or wish-to-be artists attempting to publish or exhibit their works in search of recognition of their talent; however, writing a novel about artists does not make it necessarily self-reflexive. More important than the fact that all the main characters in the narrative are artists is the fact that they talk about art and their activity as artists, which makes the text self-reflexive or self-conscious. This self-conscious mode establishes a closer connection between the novel's author and the artist characters as they function as mirrors of their master forger, reflecting some of his preoccupations.

Gaddis declared more than once that he had an immense difficulty in finishing this novel, which haunted his life, just like Camilla's portrait hanged over Wyatt's life. He also declared it was not easy to find a publisher for it. This difficulty is certainly the main setback for writers and is exemplified by several characters in the novel. Otto, Esme, Max, and Esther struggle to transpose the bridge from writer-to-be to author and receive recognition, but finding a publisher for their texts is not an easy task. They are faced with the prevailing high demand for originality and the promise of the premium of recognition to those who are "pioneers", as Phillips (2004) declares. They work within a print culture that "developed and naturalized a copyright law that privileges origins, authorship, and authenticity" (RUTHVEN, 2001, p. 196), despite the fact that originality and authorship are constructs. As originality is the main criterion of value in this culture, they struggle to be original and fear unoriginality.

Stonehill agrees that *The Recognitions* is a self-conscious novel and identifies that, "Contemporary self-conscious novels regularly confront the perception that there is nothing so unoriginal as the quest for originality" (1988, p. 46). Thus, *The Recognitions* exposes what Johnston calls "the fiction of the

origin” (JOHNSTON, 1990, p. 174) and makes of it its central theme.

Gaddis’s way of facing these demands for originality and for a reading audience is by playing with them and using them in the making of his novel, transforming these demands into his themes. The novel shows Otto, a writer apparently lacking originality, as a reflection, a satire of Gaddis himself. He is accused of plagiarism, but if Otto’s compositional procedures are looked closely, they are similar to Gaddis’s. Otto uses phrases he overhears or reads in the making of his play, which is exactly what Gaddis does, as confirmed by Gaddis’s use of the phrase “unswerving punctuality of chance”. The difference between Otto and Gaddis seems to be that Otto does not have a clue about what he is doing and does not know how to do it. He is an exaggerated portrait as most satirical portraits are. When his model, Wyatt, leaves New York and the narrative, Otto has to depart from New York, too. As he has no one to copy from, he does not hold together and quits being an artist. This suggests that writers do need models, and their absence makes artistic creation impossible.

Otto was accused of being a plagiarist by several characters in the novel and his play, *The Vanity of Time,* was

rejected for publication by both Recktall Brown and Agnes Deigh. Max's novel, *Wild Gousse Chase,* was accepted for publication although it was also considered to be clearly a plagiarism. This poses the most important question brought about by the novel: Why is not William Gaddis a plagiarist, despite his widespread use of other literary texts? This question brings along other relevant inquires: Would Gaddis be accused of plagiarism if he published *The Recognitions* now? I believe a great number of writers would definitely sue him for copyright infringement if he did not pay for the use of copyrighted material. This, however, did not happen when the novel was first published.

This critique of originality is not new. Both modernism and postmodernism problematize originality although they do that in different ways. In 1955, when *The Recognitions* was released, postmodernism was commencing and the term postmodernism was not in use yet. Gaddis is on the threshold between modernism and postmodernism. This seems to account for the fact that some critics have considered *The Recognitions* a modernist novel, even though it signals a departure from modernism since it plays with modernist techniques. It seems to employ the modernist technique of allusion, but it does not.

According to Ruthven, the modernists critiqued originality by means of their use of literary allusiveness and the postmodernists by means of their practice of text appropriation (2001, p. 125). The modernists, such as Eliot, who Gaddis greatly admired and used, alluded to other literary works without questioning their authorship and proprietorship, as Eliot did. Eliot's comments to "The Waste Land" are the most famous example of this procedure, as Eliot makes a point of identifying his sources and naming the authors of the passages he used in the making of the poem. The postmodernists, such as Gaddis, appropriate lines and make these lines their own incorporating them. They do not feel the obligation to identify their sources, for they believe they are their own now that they are woven into their texts. Modernism relies upon the assumption that you have to keep a distance from the supposedly original so that it is an allusion and not plagiarism; postmodernism shortens this difference assimilating the original. To copyright law, however, both allusion and appropriation are usually considered infringements that deserve to be punished. The use of any of them is difficult to defend in court and only in cases in which the distance between the source and the text is clearly established, such as in "The Waste Land", is plagiarism disregarded.

For this resemblance with a modernist novel, Félix considers *The Recognitions* “a false modernist novel” (1997, p. 43), as it bears a resemblance to a modernist novel on the surface, but reveals not to be so if all of its layers are studied. Johnston also shares this idea, but for him, *The Recognitions* is “a forgery of a modernist classic that calls into question the notion of a literary original” (1990, p. 177). Both authors recognize that the novel appropriates modernist techniques, but goes beyond modernism and identify that it is somehow false and a forged.

Gaddis also plays with the demand for a reading audience. The negative reception Wyatt’s paintings and Otto’s play meet seems to suggest the negative reception his novel would have. He prefigures the fact this novel might not meet a reading audience willing to leaf through its 950 pages, which would question his status as an author, as it is commonly believed that an author needs to be published and read to be finally called an author. “The vanity of his time” depicted so well in the novel seemed to prevent critics and readers from recognizing his achievement in detriment of easier texts. In the final paragraph of the novel, after the church in Fenestrula collapsed and Stanley is dead, the narrator comments,

> He was the only person caught in the collapse, and afterward, most of his work was recovered too, and it is still spoken of, when it is noted, with high regard, though seldom played (p. 956).

Thus, now that Stanley is dead, his work is played, that is, he has to die for his work to gain life. This also echoes the fear that haunts most artists: that their work may not be recognized while they are still alive or that it may be "noted" and "spoken of" only after their death. But that does not seem to be what Wyatt wants for himself. Stanley does not change any of his beliefs and attitudes in the narrative and ends up dying in a fatal embrace with his works. He maintains his unconditional rejection of originality and dies, just like Esme. As Stanley and Wyatt never meet in the narrative, because Stanley is a projection of Wyatt, it can be inferred that Stanley is a part of Wyatt that dies in the collapse. After Stanley's death, Wyatt is free to scrape the paintings and seek for his own recognitions. In his journey, Wyatt perceives that his practices as a forger are not very different from those of supposedly original painters. He realizes that when he paints, he counterfeits originality, fakes it, and seems to question himself, "Isn't it what the artist is all about, creating the illusion of originality, that you are doing something that has never been done?". This seems to be one of the most important

questions Gaddis proposes and, in his own manner, answers in the narrative. The novel's composition responds to that.

It is after Wyatt ceases to be concerned about originality that he is ready to paint. Otto, on the other hand, abandons his art completely, for he thinks it is impossible to write. He becomes the character of his fiction, as Gaddis is in his own novel through Otto, since Otto is a self-portrait of Gaddis. As Otto is accused of being a plagiarist, that is, putting his name underneath someone else's text; Gaddis himself is accused of plagiarism. And as Wyatt is accused of being a forger, that is, putting someone else's name under his work to increase the value of his name, Gaddis may also be the forger. Gaddis is both a plagiarist and a forger. It seems to be Gaddis's view that artists always forge, counterfeit originality since it is impossible as an absolute.

Gaddis asks if the author is the origin of a text or another text the origin of a text because for Gaddis authors do not precede works; authors are forged as they forge their works and as forgers of works of fiction, Schneider defends that "The author is a fiction" (1990, p. 28). Gaddis believes that the artist is the dregs of his work. Nothing but the human shambles

that follows it around. According to this perspective, the writer is, in a way, always a forger, creating his precursors as Borges claimed. Knight postulates that when artists work “it is not simply a past shaping the present; it is also a present shaping—or re-shaping--the past” (1997, p. 46).

Gaddis’s decision that Wyatt should forge old masters, whose working practices make it very difficult for one to attribute the name of a single painter to a work, is in accordance with his theoretical preoccupations. At the beginning of the narrative, Wyatt believes, as these masters did, that God is watching him as he paints and he is actually painting for Him. Wyatt is even unable to sign his name underneath his paintings, for he has difficulty conceiving that he has created them and this makes one of his paintings be marketed as a forgery. He affirms, “I did one picture in the manner of Memling, but I lost it”(p. 70). As the narrative advances, Wyatt realizes he is phantasizing an impossible return to the time of the old masters and his forgeries are not rescuing him from the vanity of his time, for he is not painting for the eyes of God, but for critics, buyers, and art galleries.

This dissertation is about a work of art; it is a work of criticism, and the role of criticism, and especially that of

critics, is crucial in this novel. A minor character, Benny, taking up Wyatt's positions, declares, "When you criticize a book, that's the way you work, isn't it. How would you have done it, because you didn't do it, because you are still afraid to admit that you can't do it yourself" (p. 603). For Benny, critics are frustrated artists and this is the predominant trait of critics in the narrative. Both Crémer and Valentine attempted to be artists, but failed and decided to be art critics. It is important to add that at this time critics played a much more important role than they do nowadays.

One of the first characters to show interest for Wyatt's paintings and see some potential in them was the critic who asked for money to write good reviews of the work. It can be said that, in a way, he ruined Wyatt's career, for he wrote negative reviews of his paintings and the exhibit was a failure. This instance shows the critic as extremely powerful, for he is the one who is able to make the public look or not look at a work of art. But at the same time it shows the critic acting in a chain of market relations, and the artist as the mere producer of an object of consumption. In addition, Basil Valentine, as the critic who authenticates forgeries, is also extremely influential, for his word is taken, since there is market for forgeries, as defended by him.

Therefore, critics make or destroy an artist's career in *The Recognitions* attesting what has and what does not have value. Critics in *The Recognitions* are unable to recognize anything other than what seems to be worthy of money, that is, valuable. They supposedly make use of their greater knowledge of art, but they fail to recognize what is original and what is forgery, what is good art or bad art. This brings about the question: How capable is the critic of telling that? This also suggests that perhaps this distinction between originals and forgeries is not clear or relevant. That seems to be one of the main things Gaddis wants to tell us: Does this distinction between original and forgery really exist and if it does, does it matter?

The Clementine Recognitions is a source text for Gaddis, but at the same time it is originary and not original. There are uncountable manuscripts of the text, which makes us suppose it was a popular text in the Middle Ages. Although it is traditionally accredited to Clement of Rome, the suspicious that the "original" author of this "romance" is not Clement has been growing stronger. It is believed that the author of the text will remain forever unknown. What is of interest is that it is a text of unidentified origin and author, but it is a canonized text,

even though it is basically an inauthentic text. It is a forgery and Saint Clement can be said to be a forger; it can be said to be the first Christian novel and the first forgery at the same time. There are many elements in the text that suggest that it might not have even been written by a Christian. It is a text that seems to be Christian, just like Reverend Gwyon, but is not. It is a text that problematizes the father and son relationship and also the father and son relationship between texts. Thus, the father text, or the origin, seems to be Christian, but it is not, just like Wyatt's father seems to be Christian but he is not.

The Clementine Recognitions is considered a Christian novel, despite these questions, but Gaddis's *The Recognitions* cannot be considered so. In fact, it seems religions is at the origin of most of the woes of the contemporary civilization depicted by Gaddis. Wyatt can only paint and move on when he realizes he is not painting for God anymore and there is no room for art with religious inspiration in the western world anymore. Several other minor characters, such as Anselm, who castrates himself and flees to a monastery, are destroyed by their faiths. They seem to be confounded by the promises their faiths offer them and end up touching evil.

The relationship between *The Clementine Recognitions* and Goethe's *Faust* has been analyzed, and it is suggested that Clement's text is an Ur-Faust[44]. For David Koenig, *Faust* is a counterfeit of Clement (1984, p. 23) and Gaddis's *The Recognitions* may be considered a parody of *The Clementine Recognitions* and by extension a parody of *Faust* (1984, p. 21), since the core of the novel is, in a way, "a parodic retelling of *Faust*" and at the same time a parodic retelling of *The Clementine Recognitions*. For Beer, it retains "at its core Wyatt's temptation by the Mephistophelean Recktall Brown, his ensuing mental and spiritual deterioration and his eventual redemption" (2001, p. 86). Thus, for many, *The Recognitions* is in itself a retelling of *The Clementine Recognitions*, which in its turn is considered an Ur-Faust. What both Koenig and Beer failed to identify is the reason why Gaddis used this text as a frame for his first novel. It is clear that *The Clementine Recognitions* is a text whose origin is problematic and, therefore, Gaddis uses it to problematize the issues of originality and authorship he explores in the novel. As the real identity of the author/s of *The Clementine Recognitions* is unknown, there is an effacement of

[44] It is often said that Clement's initial assumption that the magicians of Egypt, rather than God, can lead him to salvation anticipates Faust's pact with Mephistopheles and thus originates the Faust legend, as this error resembles Faust and his pact with Mephistopheles. However, Clement's father was called Faustinianus and his two twin brothers are named Faustus and Faustinus. But it was Clement's wrong assumption that anticipated Faust's pact with Mephistopheles and wrongly originated the legend. Therefore, the whole legend stems from a mistake or misunderstanding.

the writer and the text exists and stands for itself. However, it is still known as *The Clementine Recognitions* and the name Clement does not seem to refer to a subject anymore, being a mere name attached to the text for identification.

With regard to this, there is a clear reference to *Faust* that needs to be remarked. At one of the parties, we overhear, “We’re shooting *Faust* now, a sort of bop version, we’ve changed him to this refugee artist, and now Mephistopheles is …” (p. 661). It is a clear reference to the novel Gaddis himself is writing in which Wyatt is the refugee artist and Brown Mephistopheles. Therefore, the structure of *The Recognitions* resembles that of the *Venus with a Mirror* and for this reason Johnston identifies the Titian motif as a *mise en abyme* for *The Recognitions* as a whole, for it indicates the novel’s overall compositional principle. The Titian is a miniature of the thematic of the novel as well as the novel’s structure, where layers of original and forged paint mingle. Nevertheless, the novel’s compositional structure is also similar to *Wild Gousse Chase* and *The Vanity of Time,* for any reader is able to recognize familiar lines, names, and incidents, having difficulty pointing out where they are from.

It is a textual counterfeit of *The Clementine Recognitions.* The novel is a Gaddis forgery of the Flemish masters in a genre that did not exist then: the novel. Despite the fact that *The Recognitions* is considered a parody of Goethe's *Faust* or *the Clementine Recognitions*, it is much more than that. The novel is written in a style similar to that of the Flemish old masters. What is relevant is the reason why Gaddis chooses to use these texts and the way in which he does it.

At the beginning of the novel, the protagonist is called Wyatt, but he is unable to become a painter bearing this name, for it is a name associated with his family's long history of ministers. He is educated in an environment in which originality is abhorred and considered a sin and more than once he voices his rejection of originality. Under the name Wyatt all that he can paint are reproductions of religious works, such as Hyeronymus Bosch's *Seven Deadly Sins*. He finds his own way to move beyond reproductions and become a painter. He loses his name and remains nameless for a long period of the narrative. Meanwhile, he starts producing paintings in the style of the old masters for Brown and not signing them with his name, for he does not have one anymore, but with the name of renowned old masters, making the paintings forgeries. Thus, the protagonist of the novel remains nameless for the whole second part of the novel and

only recovers his original name in the last part of it after he goes to Spain to reunite with his mother. He is renamed with the name his mother originally intended to give him: Stephen. In Europe, he finally recognizes there is no such thing as absolute originality and not having to bear the weight of risking to be original; he is able to perhaps resume his activities as a painter. He seems to understand that every painter or writer is always a forger, since absolute originality does not exist. When Wyatt regains his name, he is returning to his real identity and place in his family three, leaving the genealogy of ministers to become, perhaps, an artist, and not a minister. Thus, the novel simulates a return to its initial point and Wyatt is ready to move from guardian of mysteries to revealer of mysteries. This refers to the Euroboros on the presentation page of the first edition of the novel, which has been identified as a self-reflexive symbol.

Perspective is really an issue for Wyatt, as it was for the Flemish masters. He talks about the vanishing point and vanishes from the narrative. By doing this, Gaddis seems to question many of the tenets of the novel as a genre: one of them is the role of the protagonist. Gaddis’s protagonist disappears from the narrative, but his centrality remains. His presence is felt and his words remain. His paintings and books circulate.

When he finally returns, it is with a different name and, in a way, he is a different character, for he is not the same as he was before. Besides, the novel does not end with Wyatt, the protagonist, who leaves the novel many pages before its end. The last scene shows Stanley's death and the last paragraph an authorial comment on the recognition of Stanley's work.

Wyatt, as most characters in the novel, fails to achieve recognition; however, most of them were seeking for the wrong recognitions, for they wanted to achieve an original recognition, to be precursors. Nowadays, recognition in literature is greatly measured by copyright, but is this the recognition a writer wants?

Gaddis's novel resembles the style of van Eyck, Memling, and van der Weyden. Gaddis borrows from the Flemish masters for his novel and *The Recognitions* is a novel that plagiarizes/forges paintings. Gaddis writes in the style of the great masters, who did not leave any blank space on their canvases. If Flemish paintings seem to contain more elements that the canvases are able to contain, as scenes and figures overcrowd the canvas, so does *The Recognitions*. Spaces are filled and pages seem too small for the amount of characters and incidents they contain. Every single detail has a meaning. If the novel is

massive, it is because Gaddis needed a large canvas just like Titian did.

The epigraphs at the beginning of this work defend that originality is not invention, but a sense of recall or recognitions. The epigraph attributed to T. S. Eliot, “Bad poets imitate. Real poets steal” is very similar to that attributed to Picasso, “Bad artists copy. Great artists steal”. In both of them, the real artists are those who steal, that is, the ones who use what others have done. The novel throws into doubt the dichotomy copy/original and shows that there is no absolute original, just copies, and this dichotomy is problematic.

Gaddis knows, as well as Wyatt and Stanley did, that there is no such thing as absolute originality. Despite that, he kept trying to uncover it. He knew that the quest is worth it and there is nothing but the dream of an original. Originality is forgetting to then recall and have the feeling of novelty and uniqueness. This is the same feeling one has when one reads *The Recognitions* despite its widespread use of quotations and appropriations.

Similarly to the title of the novel, which evokes Melville’s “shock of recognition”, Clement’s *The Recognitions*,

and finally Aristotle’s recognitions, the recognitions always go further back, as Wyatt defends it. For Wyatt, “art remains a crucial effort to recall shapes and forms rather than to invent them” (KNIGHT, 1997, p. 37); for Gaddis it is the same. He is aware of the fact that literature plagiarizes itself and Gaddis’s *The Recognitions* relies heavily on pre-existing texts that Gaddis incorporates into his writing. Originality in *The Recognitions* is recall, repetition, and recognition, but Gaddis repeats with a difference. He knows that originality is not an absolute, but a variable dependent upon time and tradition. Rejecting originality as an absolute is what enabled Gaddis to write such an insightful novel. What would be of his novel, or any other novel, without repetition, recall, recognition?

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A - Hyeronymus Bosch’s *The Table of the Seven Deadly Sins*

APPENDIX B – Titian’s *Venus with a Mirror*

APPENDIX C – A Census of *The Recognitions*

APPENDIX D – The Cover of the first edition of *The Recognitions*

A Census of *The Recognitions*

Originally compiled by Anja Zeidler,
with additions from the annotations group
and readers everywhere: please send suggestions.
Numbers without brackets indicate that the character appears in person.
Numbers in [ ] indicate that the character is only spoken of.
Numbers in ( ) indicate that the person is present but does not (or cannot) talk.

Main Characters in *The Recognitions*

Quoting from Steven Moore's *William Gaddis*, Boston: Twayne, 1989.

CAMILLA
"For Wyatt [she is] the idealized figure Graves calls the White Goddess – at once girl, mother, and hag, and patroness of the white magic of art." (27)

ESME
"One of the strangest yet memorable heroines in contemporary literature, Esme betrays the absurdities of the role of romantic redemptress forced upon so many female characters by males who prefer virgins and whores to any more complex woman in between." (49)

ESTHER
"Esther is rational, big-boned, ambitious, and writes prose." (46)

AGNES DEIGH
"Agnes and her flock skip over friendship and its perils and simply exchange the 'flowers' of friendship – […] empty civilities that counterfeit sincere friendship." (62)

WYATT
"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" (*R*, 92)." (16)

REVEREND GWYON
"Reverend Gwyon abandons his son first for the Son, then for the Sun." (57)

OTTO
"a comic double, a funhouse mirror reflection of the 'refugee artist,' […] a ludicrous counterpart to Wyatt." (41).

RECKTALL BROWN
"Gaddis arrays Brown in all the trappings of the twentieth-century devil, a Mammon of the modern world." (49)

BASIL VALENTINE
"Graced with taste, intelligence, and 'the best education money can buy' (R, 364), Valentine uses these gifts to place as much distance as possible between himself and others." (52)

ANSELM
"Anselm is an enemy not of the religious but of the religiose. [He] veers violently between fierce blasphemy and a grudging respect for Christ's teachings." (55)

STANLEY
"Reminiscent of Dostoyevski's Prince Myshkin or Alyosha Karamazov, Stanley is the holy fool of *The Recognitions*, moving through its sordid scenes with unassailable purity and goodwill." (53)

FRANK SINISTERRA
"A comic voice in the novel's aesthetic debate, Sinisterra exemplifies the danger of overreliance on heartless virtuosity." (58)

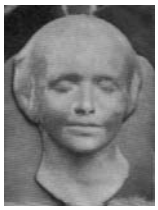
MR. PIVNER
"At the quiet center of the novel, Mr. Pivner is Gaddis's Willy Loman, and his failure is a similar tragedy for the common man." (60)

Character	Description and Appearance	First mention
A		
Accordion player	Man from the Secret Service, playing in front of Mr. Pivner's apartment house (741, 743-744)	(741)
Adeline	A nurse Herschel knew and bit (171) same as the woman Fuller knows, who has a daughter named Elsie? (343-344)	(171)
Alabama man	Alabama Rammer-Jammer man, in advertisement, the third man with Ellery and Morgie, a real "character" (733-738, 751-752)	(733)
Anatole	Bartender at hotel, where Otto doesn't meet his father (509-510, 513)	(509)
Anselm  Saint Anselm of Canterbury	Poet, changed his given name Arthur into Anselm after Saint Anselm of Canterbury, looking after Bildow's daughter, "that awfull boy" (177) badly shaved boy (182), thin face, bad case of acne, "excellent poet" (309) "thin broken face" (632), castrating himself (645), (766), publicity agent for a monastery (936) (103-104, 177, 182-185, 194-197, 199, 200, 206 (newly shaven face), 208, 210, (217), 309, 310, 323, 328, 356, 452-458, 476-478, 523-537, 584, 600, 604, 610, 616, 617-618, 620, 622-623, 624-625-625, 628-637, 642-643, 645, [746], [747], [766], [845], [917], [[930]], [932], [936], 936.)	(103)
Anselm's mother	"sweet little Boston woman," "awfully interested in dogs, awfully anti-vivisection" (309), "she's a nut" ([309], [532], [642-643], [645])	(309)
archeologist	Friend of Rev. Gwyon, who had given a pair of ear-rings (heavy Byzantine hoops of gold) to Camilla and whom Gwyon had never seen again since. (14)	(14)
Miss Ardythe	The organist who "dropped stone dead at the keyboard with her sharp chin on a high D" (14) during Gwyon and Camilla's wedding.	(14)
Argentinean	Argentine trade commissioner at the wrong party, at Esther's party, shark-skinned, greasy-looking guy with shiny hair, "short shiny figure" (615) (581, 596, 597, 604, 609, 615, 631, [639], [640], [641], 659, 673, 680)	(581)
Aunt May	Sister of the older Rev. Gwyon (Rev. Gwyon's nameless father), "barren steadfast woman" (3), Calvinist, Wyatt's Christian mentor (19), flesh-and-bloodless woman (20), dies when sixty-three (40) (3, 4, 14 18-21, 24-40, [41] 61, 88, [401], [434], [706])	(3)
B		
Baby	At Esther's party, child of the woman with bandaged wrists, a year old, taken away by Maude (578, 583, 596, 604, 631, 638, 756	(578)
Barney	Barkeeper in a Lexington Avenue bar (100-101, 103, 645-646)	(100)
Beard, the	Man with black beard, friend of Esme (176?, 308, 309)	(308)

Benny	Ben somebody (Esther), works in Wyatt‘s office, later works in advertising with Ellery, anxious man, commits suicide (738) (96, 147, 149, 572-573, 578, 579, 581, 582-583, 593, 594-596, 599, 600-, 604, 605-607, 609-610, 627, 638, 640, [736], [738])	(96)
Bernie	Fat man in yellow and brown necktie, at the zoo, reappears in Spain, husband of woman with ring, expensive camera (542, 879-887)	(542)
B.F.	Working in advertising with Ellery (738)	(738)
Bildow, Don	Editor of little magazine (The Magazine) (94, 106, 179, 183, 196, 309, 526, 569, 572, 574, 575-577, 580, 601, 604, 608, 612, 613, 617, 618, 622, 623, 628, 629, 636-638, [640], 745-746, [747], 765, 836-837, 910, 917-918, 924-925, [940], 953-954)	(94)
Bildow, Mrs	Don Bildow‘s wife (103, 179, 309, 765, [924])	(103)
Bildow, daughter	six years old, Anselm is her baby sitter, left by Anselm at a show, pregnant by Anselm (745) ([103-104], [309], [452-458], [618], [636 and earlier], [745], [837], [924])	(103)
Boston girl	Tall light-haired girl, “pleasing Boston-bred voice” (477), at Esther’s party, laughs a lot, “Somerset Maugham my ahss” (262), “Freud my ahss” (477) (262, 308-309, 310, 477, 581, 607, 631, 639)	(262)
Blond boy	At Viareggio’s, at Otto’s side (476)	(476)
blonde	See under Jean	
Haggard boy	At Viareggio‘s, “haggard face” (536) (476-478, 529, 536)	(476)
Boy with red cap	At Viareggio‘s (309-310)	(309)
Little boy	At the zoo, infront of the polar bear cage (542)	(542)
boy	Boy in something like a Boy Scout uniform, in the lion house at the zoo, talking to the lion (550)	(550)
Conte di Brescia	Collector, who sold Bosch’s Seven Sins painting to Reverend Gwyon, “the old Italian grandee” (25, 59, 246, 918, 956) associated with Basil Valentine by Stanley [who remembers a painting of him ? 918]; namesake of Adamo da Brescia mentioned on 5.30 as a pioneer in counterfeiting “even now [suffering] in Malebolge” (5.28), part of Dante’s inferno that is (cp. note 5.28, http://www.williamgaddis.org/recognitions/I1anno1.shtml). Adamo da Brescia was burnt alive in 1281, because he had forged florins for the count Guidi da Romena.	(59)
Seraphina di Brescia	Tall dark woman, Big Anna looks for her at costume party, the timid Italian boy is her cousin (310), called Jimmy (315) (310, 314, 315), see note 59.36 (http://www.williamgaddis.org/recognitions/I1anno4.shtml)	(310)
British, R.A.	Tall white-haired man in gray on Brown’s party, identified with a London gallery of some prominence, R.A. (Royal Academician), called “the member of the Royal Academy (677), (657-661, 665, 666, 670-671-672, 674-678, 679-680, 681-682, 844)	(657)
Bronzino	At costume party (311), see SM 311.22	(311)

	(http://www.williamgaddis.org/recognitions/21anno2.shtml)	
Brown, Buster	A writer, 23 or 28 years old (194, 295, 581, 582, 925) (see SM 194.38: Obnoxious little boy in R.F. Outcault‘s comic strip),	(194)
Brown, Recktall  Mephistopheles (with whom Recktal Brown is associated, cp. R, 135)	A businessman (141), publisher, collector, dealer, terribly fat man (210), there is a likeness between his portrait and the head of a wart hog (227), “shuffling sound of metal on metal” (677), "the devil wearing false calves (676), “broken weight” (death, 677), Chancellor Rolin in van Eyk's *Virgin and Child and Donor* (689) (140-146, 209, 210, 223, 225-242, 244-260, 328, 343, 345, 346, 349-356, 357-365, 375, 380, 381, [543], [547], [551], [553], [654], 655-656, [661], 662-665, 666, (667), 668-670-671, (672), [673], [674], (676), (677-678), (681), [687], (689)). {Picture:	(140)
Byron, Sonny	Young black man at Max‘s party, in company with Buster Brown (194, 581, 594, 604, 627, 641, 925, [941])	
C		
Cab driver	Driving Valentine and Wyatt (263)	(263)
Captain	The captain of the *Purdue Victory* (4, 5)	(4)
Child eating rose	18 month old, hatless, wet-nosed, seen by Wyatt and Valentine at the zoo in front of the seal pool (544, 548)	(544)
Christiane	Blond model sitting for Wyatt in Paris (67, 69)	(67)
Cleaning women	(162-163)	(162)
Crémer	art critic, knows Recktall Brown from the army, at his party (231), “offensive little Frenchman,” he resembles Valentine in a dismally obvious badly dressed way, critic in *La Macule* (664) (70-72, 653, 655-656, 659-660-661, 663, 664-666, 670-671, 678, 679, 680-681, (687), [940]	(70)
Critic  Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	Tall man in green wool shirt, first appears on Max’s party, “some half-ass critic” Anselm says, gaunt man, tall, “used to do book on *Old Masses* (570), open-collar shirt, looks like "A rather unfortunate print of Mozart (it was in profile, the frontispiece in a bound score of the Jupiter Symphony printed in Vienna)" (574), always looks offended, his wife presumably shot herself (576, “Deedee Jaqueson [604?]) (575), has myopia, Agnes claims to have been nursing him for a year, brown eyes, plastic surgeonry on his nose, is said to have a nice name, Stanley claims he looks like an Inquisitor (600) (ca. 200, 453, 476, 569, 574-575, 576-577, [580], 581, [584?], 595, 596, 599, [600], 601-608, 609, 622, 626, 627, 630, 635, 636, 641, 642, 935-937)	Ca. 200
Cross-eyed girl 	Little cross-eyed girl in long white stockings (7), raped and killed when eleven years old (16, see also porter), "our Little Girl" (17), next to Camilla on the church yard of San Zwingli, Senor Hermoso believes she would make a perfect patron saint for the village (17), "the dark, withered, and childish-figured contents" (792) ([7], [12], [16], [17], [291-292], [429], [791],	(7)

Saint Maria Goretti	(792)). Also cp. note 16.12 here: http://www.williamgaddis.org/recognitions/I1anno1.shtml based on the life of Saint Maria Goretti.	
Mr. Crotcher	someone Buster Brown thinks Esther must meet, a writer, having translated his own book on ant life into nineteen languages already, later on a quizz show (582-583, 596, 604, 608, 613, 624, 640, 641, 743)	
D		
Dalner	Owner of Dalner Gallery (231)	(231)
Darling, Morgie	Advertisement man, from Yale (Skull and Bones) (734-738, 750, 751-753)	(734)
daughter	Daughter of Pastora and Wyatt ([897-898])	(897)
Deigh, Agnes	Literary agent, back from Puerto Rico, "old bag with the Mickey Mouse watch," mother to every fairy in the city (580), attempts suicide (100, 176, 181, 185, 187, 188, 191-193, 195, 196, 197, 199, 293-298, 307, [311, 312, 313], 314, 315, 316, 323, 325-328, 329, 554-556, 571, 577, , 580, 581-582, 597-600, 604, 608, 610-611, 615, 617-618, 628-629, 631, 632, 636-638, 643-644, [645], [657], 695, 739, [745], 754, 755, 763-764, [903], [915], [928]) see also note 176.43: http://williamgaddis.inwriting.org/recognitions/I5anno1.shtml	(100)
Deigh, Harry	Agnes's husband, Mr Six-Sixty Six, dies falling off a bar stool in Hollywood (177, 178, 293, 294, 295, [763])	(177)
Mrs. Deigh	Agnes' mother, she has the same name as her daughter, stout woman, lives in Rome on the via Flaminia ([315], [695], [754], 901-904, 905-906, 907-909, 914-916, 925-928, [950])	(315)
Mr. Deigh	Agnes's brother, a writer (177), missed in WWII, killed (177, 294, 297)	(177)
Dick	Young minister replacing Reverend Gwyon (707-711, 714-720)	(707)
Dickens, Charles	At Max's party, called Charley, guilt feelings from dropping an atomic bomb, silver plate in his head, looking for razor blades at Esther's party, moving like a shadow there (181, 195, 307, [455], [478], [531-532], 572, 578, 629, 630, 937, [940])	(181)
Mrs. Dickens	Charles's mother, "that old bag", a Christian Scientist ([455], [478], [531-32])	(455)
Mrs. Dorman	„dumpy deep-chested boarding-house keeper, singing in the church of Rev. Gwyon (21)	(21)
Drunkard	Talking to John in the bar, talking to Valentine at the corner of Gansevoort Street (268, 269, [284?], 331-332, 342, 388)	(268)
Duchess of Ohio	At Esther's party (576, 583, 584, 604, 626, 641)	(576)
E		
editor	Editing Esther's book, married to tall woman ([553, 554], [568], 569, 570, [597], [604], 607, [613], grey flanell sleeve?, 618-619, [628], 655, [657], 765, 805, 815, 825, 864-865, 879-881, 886)	(568)

Edna Mims	Girl friend of Otto with a magazine, Otto used to go out with her in College (Radcliffe), Max‘s girl friend, working for Brown, “dumb Radcliffe girl,” blond (577), also having worked for the nameless critic (577) (207, 308, 317, 351, 577, 633)	(207)
Ellery	Advertising man, Esther‘s lover (151, 366-372, 568, 571, 572-573, [578], [580], 582, 594-595, 603, 604, 605-607, 609, 627, 639, 640, 733-738, 750-753)	(151)
Elsie	Daughter of Adeline, Fuller‘s acquaintance, died at age of three (343)	(343)
Ernie 	Big unshaven man, looks like Ernest Hemingway (306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 525, 632, 748) {Photograph of Ernest Hemingway by Yousuf Karsh, 1957}	(306)
Esme  Sheri Martinelli, a model for Esme  Noyeé de la Seine (cp. R, 177)	Skinny little girl (173), girl on the couch (177), noyeé de la Seine (177), Praxiteles statue of Phryne (185), “friggin madonna” (189), “die Frau nach der man sich sehnt, das Ewig Weibliche” (189), she writes poems (196), manic depressive schizoid tendencies (197), has a four year old child (197), she looks like she thinks she is a painting (198 also 306), whore (199), "your girl" (Anselm to Stanley, 200), Baganda woman (209), a kid I got for him (241), she‘s a niece little piece (259), Max claims she is pregnant (459), “the serenity of a woman in a painting” (306), tries to kill herself with gas (478), Solveig, Senta (550), that skinny girl (746), priestess of Delphos (754), going to become a nun (912), a regular eye-tye madonna (913) (173, 177, 183, 185, 189, 193, 194, 196-201, 202-112, 216-221, 241, 259, 269-277, 298-302, 303, 304-307, 308, 309, 310, 311, [314, 315], 321, 323, 328, 354, 361, 446-452, [455], [459], 467-473, [478], 478-485, [526], [549?], [550-551], [624?], [699], [746], 754-755, 765-768, 824, 826, [827-828], 830-835, 838-844, 845, [849], [851-853], 909, [911-13], 921-924, [927], [952])	(173)
Esther	Wyatt’s wife, Otto‘s lover, Ellery’s lover (78-100, 104-136, 172, 213, 219, [310], 328, 337, 364, 366-372, 374, [507], [508], [558], 568-569, 570, 571-572, 573-574, [576], 577-580, [581], 582-596, 603, 606, 607, 608, 609, 611-612, 613, 616, 618-622, [623], 627, 628, 637, 639-642, [750])	(78)
Eulalio, Fr.	1. Monk at the Real Monasterio de Nuestra Senora de la Otra Vez in former times, “a thriving lunatic of eighty-six (10), Fr. Eulalio Epiclantos, ‘weeping so much’ (10, 11) 2. Monk at the Real Monasterio de Nuestra Senora de la Otra Vez when Wyatt Gwyon stays there, in his twenties (859-860, 864, [868], 879-880, 884-886)	(10) (859)
F		
Frau Fahrtmesser	German woman who wants her daughter to be canonized by Dom Sucio ([914]) (FahrtENmesser is the German for ‘sheath	(914)

	knife')	
Mr Farisy	Patient at the asylum Reverend Gwyon also stays (712-714)	(712)
Feasley, Ed	Studied with Otto at Harvard, Max in Otto‘s play, a drunken boy in Mr Pivner‘s words, recognizable by his ‘Chr-ahst’ (287) (121-22, 189, 190, 194, 195, 197, 287, 308-312, [314], 315, 316-318, 324-325, 571, 581, 583-584, 597, 604, 609, 613, 614-615, 631?, 637, 639, 640, 641, 745-750, [[930]], 932-933)	(121)
Mr Feasley	Ed Feasley's father, „my old man," owner of battleships, in the *Times* ([326], [596], [597] [615], [747], 932	(326)
Mrs Feasley	Ed Feasley's mother ([615])	(615)
Feddle	"Poet" to be published soon, always inscribing books (190, 195, 308, 310, 524, 533, 537, 574, 581, 594, 597, 604, 605, 606, 620, 622, 627, 638, 640, 935-936, 938)	(190)
Feddle, Mrs	Mr Feddle‘s wife (191, [533])	(191)
Dr. Fell	Doctor mistreating Wyatt, also treating Otto later (42, 730-732, 930-932, 950)	
Flower-Cart Man	Selling Lilies to Wyatt (266)	(266)
Frank	Friend of Rudy (925, 941, 944-945)	(925)
Franks, Jesse	Man Otto knows in Central America, tattooed (154-158, [189], 731)	(154)
Frenchman	At Brown's party, "offensive little Frenchman" (659) from Lyon (672) (657, 659, 672, 673, [675])	(657)
Friend of Benny	He went to school with Benny, has written a history of the player piano (579) (578-580)	(578)
Fuller	Recktall Brown‘s servant from the Barbados, a posession of some sorts (235) (225), a set of gold teeth (222), scared of the dark (226), "that black Ganymede" (657), (222-226, 235, 237, 258, 259, 260, 303, 328, 343-349, 357, 358, 361, 362, 444-445, 654-655, 656-657, 668, [669]; 670, 678-679, 682-683, 692-694, 726, 949-950)	(222)
G		
George	Acquaintance of Max, reading Otto‘s play, round-headed, salesman (307, 524-525)	(307)
Giono	Italian boy the Swede wants to adopt for his own pleasure (314)	(314)
Girl, bandaged	Both wrists bandaged, talking to tall woman, her husband a writer, she Catholic (568, 578, 581, 583, 595, 614, 617)	(568)
Girl, dark	Dark girl at Bella Vista hotel serving lunch to Otto (729)	(729)
Girl, flat	At Max's party, "the profane girl" (193) (192, 193)	(192)
Girl, green tongue	At Esther's party, playing with baby (584, 595, 624, 629)	(584)
Girl, little colored	At costume party, in purple dress, she is a man (315, 940?)	(315)
Girl, little	Seven year old girl from the apartment below Esther's, fetching sleeping pills for her mother, who later dies (750) (572, 582-583, 593, 597, 614, 629, 642, 750)	(572)
Little girl at	Girl in front of polar bear cage, complaining (542)	(542)

the zoo		
Girl, pale	Seen by Stanley in Rome reading Forster (906, 910)	(906)
Girl, small	Smallest of three girls at the zoo, gets and loses a balloon (546, 552)	(546)
Gordon	Character in Otto‘s novel, „resembled Otto at his better moments“ (121), more and more after Wyatt (156), „hero of the play“ (121, 122, 123, 130, 151, 156, 351, 530, 732)	(121)
Guest of honor	Writer at Esther’s party, Ludy (588)? ([574], [601], 612, 616, 620)	(574)
Gwyon boy	Had made an end to his life when nine years old by tying “a string round his neck with a brick to the other end, and jumped from a footbridge into two feet of water,” drowning ([13])	(13)
Gwyon, Camilla  The White Goddess "For Wyatt Camilla […] is the idealized figure Graves calls the White Goddess," (St. Moore, 1989, 27)	Rev. Gwyon‘s wife, marriage (14), Wyatt‘s mother, dying of appendicitis on voyage to Spain, seems to have been quite beautiful , Wyatt‘s portrait of her stays unfinished, “the still woman” (4), “one more piece of luggage […] “Importación ilegal de carnes dañadas […] cadaver […] cumbrous bundle” (6), “heretic guest” (7), “like that remontant goddess” (14), "his virgin mother" (19), Wyatt sees her ghost, "dressed in white sheets looking for something" (20), photograph of her on the living-room mantel (57), Rev. Gwyon gives Wyatt two of Camilla’s ear rings, “large studded Byzantine hoops of gold” (60), in the painting “ a woman looking just beyond you, her hands folded across in front of her shutting you out” (128), “the lady in the painting” (272), Esme sits for the painting, “Your blessed Queen of Heaven,” “sainted mother" (549) ((3), (4-5), (6-7), [8], (11), (12), [14-15], [17-18], [19], (20), [22], [23], [26], [27], [32], [39], [52], [57], [60], [61], [83], [84], [88], [128], [138], [272], [429], [434], [492], [549], [706], [780], [791], [793], [814]) Also cp. note 3.1. here: http://www.williamgaddis.org/recognitions/I1anno1.shtml	(3)
Gwyon, John H.	18th century ancestor of the Gwyon family, “butchered by disaffectionate Indians” (22)	(22)
Rev. Gwyon	Rev. Gwyon‘s father, dies the year before his son‘s and Camilla‘s marriage, Aunt May’s brother, has his birthday in May (37) (3, 14, 37)	(3)
Gwyon, Reverend  Valerian, with whom Wyatt associates his father	Camilla‘s husband, Wyatt‘s father, 44 years old when Camilla dies (7), “there is some of Christ in him” (11), a big man, minister at the First Congregational Church, to Wyatt as a boy “somehow his father and the Lord were the same person” (20) Wyatt compares him to Valerian in a painting by Memling (421), death (717) (3-4, 6-62, 67, 90, 267, 268, 269, 394-400, 413-415, 418-421, 424-433, 436-437, 440-441, [701-702], 703-705, 711-714, 717, [892]). Also cp. note 3.9 here: http://www.williamgaddis.org/recognitions/I1anno1.shtml	(3)
Gwyon, Wyatt 	Son of Camilla and Rev. Gwyon (14), four years old when father returns home (18), sand-colored hair, hazel eyes which burnt into green on angry occasions (18), “this fragment of hi[s father]” (29), meant to be called Stephen (27), goes to Munich	(14)

Jan Hus, like Wyatt the pale thin man  Walker Evans, whom Gaddis had in mind as a modell for Wyatt Gwyon.	(68) and Paris (67ff.), last appearance of his name (118), he (220, 221, 227, 235), a protégé with no animal self (229) in his thirties, a possession of some kind? (235), is he happy doing this work? (236), my boy (236), his face a shock (236), impassive figure (344), "you remind me of a boy […] Martin (383), some one [480], “You’re a romantic” (Valentine, 551), “funny sort of chap,” “madman” (660), “odd sort of fellow […] bit of a lunatic” (671), “diverting visitor” (677), named Stephan (Asche) by Sinisterra/Yák, “unsteady figure” (863) (785) (14, 18-21, 26-62, 67-72, 74, 77, 78-100, 104-119, 136-146, 164, 177, 220, 221, 227, 229, 235, 236-259, 260-264, 266-269, 270-275, 332-339, 344-349, 354, 357-365, 367-371, 374-385, 387-389, 390-400, 404-414, 420-421, 424-435, 438, [441], 443-445, [480], [482], 542-554, 585-593, [594, 595], [621], [652-3], [654], [660], 662-663, [671], 676-677, 680, 681-682, 683, 684-694, 699, [706-707], 776-818, [840], 863, 866-879, 887, 891, 892-900, [922])	
H		
Hadrian	Mrs. Deigh’s aging bull terrier (906, 907, 928)	(906)
Haggard boy	At Viareggio‘s, “haggard face” (536) (476-478, 529, 536)	(476)
Hall, Albert	Friend(?) of tall Swede, Victoria and Albert Hall, wrote a play (192, 314, 522, 836-837, 925)	(192)
Hall, Victoria	On the boat with the tall Swede, together with Albert, wrote a play (192, 314, 522, 925)	(192)
Han  Han van Megeren	Boy Wyatt knew from Munich, killed in self defense by Wyatt in Africa ([93], [95], [877]). Name possibly refering to the Dutch forger Han van Megeren's first name [see Tom Sawyer's 1982 essay on *R* and van Megeren in bibliography: http://www.williamgaddis.org/bibliography.shtml#sec-b (http://www.mystudios.com/gallery/han/exhibit.html)	(93)
Hannah	Village artist, plainly unattractive girl of the Village, amateur psychologist, "that nomadic laundress" (560), referred to in newspaper as Stalinist or Trotskyite (747) (179-187, 195, 196, 197, 201, 208, 216, 310, 323, 325, 341, [448], 476, [477], [478], 524-525, [527], 530-534, 560, 745-749, 932, 940-941, 944)	(179)
Heavy-necked person	Having lunch with Esme, having nude photos of Esme, “gentleman from the movies by Esme (448), pornographer, selling photos to Otto (446-447, 448, 538)	(446)
Hebble, Bertha	Cleaning woman at the zoo (540)	(540)
senor Hermoso	Language teacher in Spain, runs a drugstore in San Zwingli (17, 790), his face round, of limb flappy quality, exquisite mustache and penetrating eyes (17), “some spic,” his picture as rapist in newspaper (292), "has this real holy attitude about everything" (790), suing newspaper for four million lire for mistakingly printing his picture as rapist (846) (16-17, [739-740], [790-791], [798], [799], [846])	(16)
Heracles	Tailless barbary ape from Gibraltar (18), destroys hawthorn	(18)

	tree (40), later killed by Gwyon (50) (18, 26, 31, 32, 39, 40, 50)	
Herschel	Friend of the Munks, good looking man from Ohio, turns movie star (747), marries Adeline Thing (170-175, 176-181, 191, 195, 197, 198, 201, 208, 314, 316, 328, 557-558, 570, 610, 619, 626, 639, [747], 911)	(170)
Huki-Lau	Hawaiian poodle dog (Huki-Lau means 'fish picnic' in Hawaiian), wears a chastity belt against the naughty Spanish doggies (825, 846, 880, 921, 922)	(825)
I		
Immaculate boy	Presumably a writer (295, 296)	(295)
Miss Inch	Nurse at asylum where Revernd Gwyon stays (712, 714)	(712)
Mister Inononu	Hungarian secret agent, calling Basil Valentine from Castel Gandolfo, later appearing under the name of Dr. Kuvetli, senor Kuvetli, sharp-bearded man, "oriental sort of chap" (658-659), "calls himself Kuvetli, an Egyptian" (662), is concerned with the mummy Ink-naton (662), speaker (665), identified by Valentine (666), sharply bearded, sharp-eyed man (672), (383, 385, 647-653, 658-659, 662, 665, 666-668, 672, 673?, 682?, [774], [821, 822], 918-921, 948-949)	(383)
Italian boy	From Sicily, Chinless, on Max's party, cousin of dark tall girl at Viareggio's (194, 310)	(194)
J		
Janet	A girl with a tic, born a few minutes after her mother's death (24), her father a surgical belt salesman from New York (24), kitchen girl in the household of Rev. Gwyon (24, 25, 29, 30, 44-45, 47, 49, 59, 401-407, 412-413, 420-421, 425-426, 428, 433, 437-438, 440, 441, 442, 709. Also cp. note 24.25 here: http://www.williamgaddis.org/recognitions/I1anno2.shtml	(24)
Jacqueson, Deedee	Wife of critic in green wool shirt [576, 604, 609]	(576)
Jean	Blonde at the hotel bar where Otto wants to meet his father (506-507, 509-511, [515], 516, 521)	(506)
Mr. Jenner	Patient in Bellevue hospital (764)	(764)
Jerry	News-vendor near Mr. Pivner's apartment (284, 741)	(284)
John	Priest, studied with Wyatt for the priesthood (115, 266-269, 387-388)	(115)
Jones, R.L.	SUN STYLE FILMS, on the phone: "We have nothing to discuss." (474) (214-216, 303, 474)	(214)
K		
Herr Koppel	Wyatt's teacher in Munich, (70, 95)	(70)
L		
Leak, James	At Esther's party, has published a book (584)	(584)
Ludy	A distinguished novelist, staying at the Real Monasterio de	

	Nuestra Senora de la Otra Vez, “a comfortable man of middle age,” the distinguished guest at Esther’s party with Glen Urquhart plaid suit (588)? (588, 857-864, 866-879, 879-883, 886, 887-900)	
M		
Man, with baby	At Esther’s party, the husband of the girl with bandaged wrists, a tight-rope walker (578, 583)	(578)
Burly man	Man in the Depot Tavern, commander of the local American Legion post (703, [707])	(703)
Man, on bus	talking to Mr Pivner on the bus (503-505)	(503)
Man, checked suit	Man waiting for Frank Sinisterra to get money, the pusher (520, 521-522, 524, 539-540)	(520)
Man, fat	Husband of woman with ring, in yellow and brown necktie, at the zoo, at the monastry in Saint Zwingli, always carrying a camera (542, 879-887)	(542)
Man, green silk necktie	Publicity man, offering Esme a role for the lead in a film on B.V.M. (913-914)	(913)
Man, grey flannel suit	Man at the bar in the hotel, where Otto wants to meet his father, later in bed with Jean, friend of Benny? Went to school together (579), writes book on player piano (509, 511, 517, 520, 578-579	(509)
Man, kewpie doll tattoo on forearm	Man Otto knows in Central America and talks to in the communal lavatory (160-161, 164-165)	(161)
Man, on the ledge	a man Mr Pivner sees on his way home (283, 284, 287)	(283)
Man, tan suit	At Esther’s party, writer of “The Trees of Home” (356) (593, 604, 608)	(593)
Man, woman tattoo on left arm	in the Depot Tavern, there are other men, called “strangler” (strangling the woman tattoo, 417) (415-418, 421-424, 443)	(415)
Man, young	Lantern-jawed at Brown’s party, movie star, called ‘moronic’ by Mr Schmuck’s assistant, low forehead, (Crémer goes off with his camel’s hair coat? (681) (657, 658, 661)	(657)
Manomuerto, Fr.	organist at Real Monasterio de Nuestra Senora (11, 12, 862	(11)
Marga	Guest in the hotel Frank Sinisterra stays in Madrid, Wyatt’s lover for a few nights (775, [796], 797, 798, 799)	(775)
Father Martin	Priest, someone Valentine went to school with, compares him to Wyatt (383), on the ship to Europe, killed by Inononu (765) (383, 650, 765, 767-768, 824, [828], 836, 838, 839, 845, [851-852], [906], [907], 910, [948-949], 951-921)	(383)
Mary	silent cousin of Town Carpenter, his dead wife‘s sister, raising Camilla (22)	(22)
Maurice	a policeman, trying to carry Santa Claus (?) (559-560)	(559)
Max	painter, poet, wearing his coat too long and his trousers too short, “always looked the same” (525) (182, 189, 193, 194, 196, 197, 199, 201, 214, 216, 299, 306, 308, 309, 350, 447-	(182)

Anatole Broyard, model for Max	448, 452-466, 476, [477], 524-529, 533-537, [577], [618], [620], [622-623], [745], [746], [[930]], [932], [937], [940], 941, 944)	
Mess boy	Honduran mess boy on the ship *Island Trader* (725-726)	(725)
Professional Mexican	Sitting at a table with Hannah in Paris (940)	(940)
Miss Mims	One of Recktall Brown's secretaries (351)	(351)
Monseigneur Fé	Someone Agnes knows in Rome, has his own chapel beside the Vatican (315)	(315)
mortician	"a dear friend" of Fuller, lives six blocks of Central park, a little man ([222], [223], 224-225)	(222)
Munk, Arny	Husband of Maude, finally comes out of the closet, dies in hotel in Paris (169-171, 179, 556-558, 571, 594, 604, [624], 627, 754, 755, 764, 942)	(169)
Munk, Maude	Wife of Arny, childless, due to an accident, wants to adopt child, takes the baby brought the Esther's party with her (169-171, 179, 214, 313, 556-558, , 571, 574-575, 581, [583], 604, 616, 624, 626, 631, 636, 638, 755-757, [764], [942])	(169)
N		
Navy veteran	Wrote a short story, hands manila envelope to Otto (195, 198, 207, [308?])	(195)
Negative positivist	Positive negativist, at Viareggio's and at other places (178, 185, 194, 306)	(178)
Tall negro	Seen by Bertha Hebble at the zoo, freeing the birds (540), read about by Mr. Pivner	(540)
newsman	On the ship to Spain, talking to newspaper editor (846-848, 850-853 [?])	(846)
Newspaper editor	Sued by senor Hermoso, going to Spain to check on that (739-741, 846-849)	(739)
Nurse	In Bellevue hospital (763-764)	(763)
Nurse on ship	Treating Stanley, blonde, "that squarehead" (849-854)	(849)
O		
officer	Army PR man, at Esther's party, stocky, talking to Maude (574, 581, 608, 624, 631)	(574)
Orlando	Mrs. Deigh's chauffeur, mute (908, [915], [916])	(908)
P		
Passenger	Riding outside on the airplane?? (727-728)	(727)
Pastora	Girl in Madrid who wants to marry Wyatt/Stephan, they have a daughter (802-804-805, [808], 822)	(802)
person	15th-century-looking person at Brown's party (665)	(665)
Pivner, Mr	Otto's father, ‚Dad', depends on insulin, almost hit by the cab Wyatt and Basil Valentine are driving in, meeting with his son fails to take place, befriends Eddie Zefnic instead (303), [in his son's imagination associated with Albert, King of Belgians, 507] (189, 263, 281-293, 303, 309, 329, [481], 497-506, 521,	(189)

	540-541, 561-567, 696-698, 741-744, [933])	
Pivner, Otto	Writer, in Central America, returning to New York with arm in sling, Esther‘s lover, briefly Esme‘s lover, some silly boy (271) „a wild-eyed youth with one arm in a sling“ (349), "a haggard face drawn over a sharp profile" (566), “haggard red-eyed rash-looking young man” (609), “draggled figure in gray flannel” (728), calls himself Gordon in Barbados (930, frecuently associated with homosexaulity (106, 517, 521 and other places) (101, 104, [106], 119-136, 147-148, 150-152, 154-168, 173, 174, 175, 176, 176, 177-201, 202-221, 271, 287, 295-296, 299, 302-311, 313-314, 315, 316-318, 324-325, 329, 349-351, 446-452, 455-467, 473, [497, 498], 506-521, 524-539, 566-567, 609, 611, 612-613, 614-616, 618-622, 623-624, 625, [634], 694-695, 698-699, 724-725, 727-729, 730-732, [747], [748], [749], [768], 930-932, 949-950)	(101)
Poet, stubby	companion of critic, seen at every vernissage, “stubby youth” at Esther’s party (569), calls himself a poet, (575, 576-577, 603, 608, 609?, 622, 936-937)	(575)
Policemen	At Max’s party (176, 194, 195, 198, 199)	(176)
Polly	A doll Rev. Gwyon had owned when he was four years old (12)	(12)
Poodle 	Recktall Brown‘s female dog, killed by Fuller after Brown’s death (692) (136-140, 222-225, 228, 233, 235, 253, 258, 259, 303, 344, 345, 349, 357, 365, 657, 683, 692)	(136)
Popeye	Woman at costume party who hasn‘t spoken to a man in 16 years (312), see SM 312.31 & 187.6 (http://www.williamgaddis.org/recognitions/21anno2.shtml)	(312)
porter	Old man, janitor (791, 875) at the Real Monasterio, on a peseta note created by Sinisterra, “kind of a penitent” (rapist of little girl in long white stockings Mr. Pivner reads about in the newspaper, 292, he had done so in the belief that he could cure a disease, 16), “He’s like all the old men I’ve ever known” (Wyatt, 876, 896) ([292], [791], 857, 875-876, 891, [894, 896, 900])	(16)
Mr. Pott	At Esther’s party (617)	(617)
Priscilla	Character from Otto‘s play (155, 304, 530)	(155)
Hotel proprietor	proprietor of hotel Bella Vista in Guatemala (727, 728)	(727)
R		
Rose	Esther‘s mad sister, dumpy woman (474), plays random Händel records at Esther’s party (147, 172, 214, 310, 328, 337, 366-372, 375, 473-475, 569, 592, 623-624, 637, [639], [“750”])	(147)
Rudy	Designer (e.g. sports clothes for nuns), marries Frank in Paris, also his "very dear friend" is Basil Valentine ('Val') (192, 312, 313, 316, 558, [570], [580], 604, 640, [764], 911-912, 925, 941-942, 944-945)	(192)

S		
sacristán	At the graveyard in San Zwingli talking to Wyatt (776-778, 792-793, [799])	(776)
sailor	Sailor from the Purdue Victory hauled out of the ocean, Esme mistakes him for Wyatt (832-833, 838-839, 845)	(832)
Santa Claus	Found by children at the zoo lying on the pavement 100, 101, 103, 474, 485, 486, 518-520, (553), (554), (645), other references …?)	(100)
Mr. Schmuck	Businessman, of Twentieth Century-Schmuck at Brown's party (653, 654, 655, 665, [673], 751, 752) (Schmuck, German for 'decoration,' also 'jewlery.')	(653)
Mr. Schmuck's assistant	Also at Brown's party (654, 656, 661, 673, 751, 752)	(654)
Mr. Schmuck's musical director	At a bar with other movie people (751, 752)	(751)
secretary	Mr. Wipe's personal secretary, at Esther's party (610, 638)	(610)
Seraphina	Name Harry Deigh uses for his wife in his book (295)	(295)
sexton	New sexton after town carpernter's death, former station master (718)	(718)
Sinisterra, Mrs.	Wife of Frank Sinisterra, seems to suffer from cancer (490), though Frank believes it's indigestion (487-497, 753, 934-935	(487)
Sinisterra, Chaby	Son of Frank Sinistera, Esme's lover, a junk-peddlar, an addict, (208) (5, 209-212, 219, 302, 304, 305, 446, [450], 478-480, [483], [491-494], [527], [[930]]	(5)
Sinisterra, Frank	Counterfeiter, first appearance as ship's surgeon (4), "spotty unshaven man," takes on identity of Mr. Yàk, is killied by Inononu (772) (4-6, 487-497, 513-520, 521-522, 524, 539-540, 772-804, 805-823, [919], [934])	(4)
Mr. Sonnenschein	Businessman, on Brown's party (653, 665, 751) (German for 'sunshine')	(653)
Cardinal Spermelli	Cardinal Mrs. Deigh wants to consult on behalf of Stanley's wish to play his composition at Fenestrula (probably only existing in her mind as her letter to him turns out to be a grocery list (951) ([907], [908], [926])	(907)
Cardinal Spermelli	Cardinal Mrs. Deigh wants to consult on behalf of Stanley's wish to play his composition at Fenestrula ([907], [908], [926])	(907)
Stanley	Composer, Catholic, "a sort of prisoner" (524), "funny boy with a mustache," dies in the old church of Fenestrula, which collapses when he play the organ (571) (182.187, 193, 196, 197, 207, 211, 212, 217, 310, 317, 318-324, 325-328, 329, 339-342, 447-448, 452-467, 476-478, 523-537, {555-556}, [560], [571], 581-582, 597-600, 604, 608, 610-611, 615, 616, 617-619), 628-629, 631, 632-638, 643-646, 698-699, 744-750, 754-755, 757, [764?], 765-768, 824, 826-846, 849-855, 901-919, (920), 921-930, 950-956)	(182)

Stanley‘s mother	At the hospital, commits suicide (310, 318, 321) [448], [453], [532], [556], 560-561, [744], [905]	(310)
Miss Stein	A young woman, with Mr. Sonneschein at Brown’s party, (673) (653, 656, 657, 665, 672, 673)	(653)
Dom Sucio	Dominican Mrs. Deigh’s knows, old senile man (902, 904, 907-908, [914], 925, [927])	(902)
Sullivan, Gilbert	Reverend, Mr. Pivner reads about him in the newspaper, priest whose meetings Fuller attends occasionally, Wyatt is mistaken for him (343) (348, 357, 374, 376, [434-5], 742)	(348)
Swede	Known as Big Anna (326) (554) (195, 199, 201, 312, 313 314, 328, 554-555, 556, 557-558 (on the phone), [565], 569, [570], 616, 640, 825, 925, [941-942])	(195)
T		
Thing, Adeline	A blond girl, accompanying Herschel, “blond number” (627), Hollywood, sleeping with Ellery at Esther’s party (171-175, 185, 191, 194, 195, 198, [306?], [308?], 310, 311, 313, 314, 315, 328, 568, 571-572, 582, 594-595, 609, 614, [627], 639, [910])	(171)
Town Carpenter  King Wenceslaus, whom the town carpenter according to Wyatt resembles	Camilla‘s father (his “one accomplishment to date had been fathering Camilla”, 22), said to have Indian blood, made sexton at church (53), “that dirty old man” (22), to Wyatt he bears a striking resemblance to King Wenceslaus (37), said to be deaf (doubted, 417), found dead in his bed (709) (14, 22, 25, 29, 37, 47, 51, 53, 400-404, 407-411, 415, 416-418, 422-424, 434, 440, 441, 442, [700], [709])	(14)
Town Carpenter’s mother	Has had a habit of squating at the foot of the granite Civil War monument in the center of town in any weather under a blanket when the house oppressed her, retrieved from there by her son (22).	(22)
Treasury agent	Arresting Mr. Pivner for counterfeiting (743-744)	(743)
U		
Use-Me Ladies	(19, 433, [710], 711, 718-719)	(19)

V		
Valentine, Basil  Basil Valentine, the alchemist	Art critic, flowing face, young and old (see 226, 545, 552), sharp and smooth, Hungarian origins, elitist, author of book about art (233, 351), writing a novel (262), Jesuit background (236), "tall man, gold glittered at his cuff" (226, 340), "Val," "a very dear friend of Rudy" (313), "tall man in grey pin-stripe" (351), "Basil Valentine, the alchemist who watched pigs grow fat on food containing stibium" (384), stabbed by Wyatt (692), called “the Cold Man” by Esme (768), dies in Budapest (226-258, 260-265, [313], 329-339, 340-341, 345, 351-356, 359, 360, 361, 363, 365, 372-387, 542-554, 647-653, 654-656, 662-665, 666-671, 672-678, 679-680, 683-692, 767-768, [826], 836, 853, 917, 918-924, 948-949)	(226)
Vesendorf, Minna	At Esther’s party, calls herself Izarra (name from a liquor bottle), her name reminds me of Minna Wesendonk of Richard Wagner (584)	(584)
W		
waiter	Waiter on ship to Spain, saves Stanley from jumping overboard (844, 849)	(844)
Dr. Weisgall	Dentist opposite Agnes Deigh‘s office, she falsly reports him to the police for sadism and brutality, treating Stanley (294, 295, 297 555, [597, 598, 644], 757-763)	(294)
Willie 	William Gaddis, who makes a few cameo appearances in the novel [see note 372.41: http://williamgaddis.inwriting.org/recognitions/22anno1.shtml] (372, 373, 478, 734) Picture: William Gaddis photography by Martin S. Dworkin	(372)
Mr. Wipe	Mentioned at Esther’s party ([610], [638])	
Woman, fat	Learning Italian, irritating Stanley on the ship, also at the zoo (546, 552, 828 [?], 831-832, 833, 841, [851], [901], [906], 910, [916])	(546)
Woman, hysterical	Woman Mr. Pivner sees on the train (283, 287) Same Stanley sees?	(283)
Woman, maternity dress	At Esther’s party, in a collapsed maternity dress (596, 614, 616, 624, 629)	(596)
Woman, orchid	At Esther’s party, with orchid upside-down (616, 617)	(616)
Woman, with ring	At the real Monasterio, earlier at the zoo, sharp-nosed with too much make-up, wife of fat man, called Mamie by her husband (548, 550, 879-887)	(548)
Woman, on the subway	Screaming, exposing herself and horrifying Stanley, (339-341)	(339)
Woman, tall	Wife of editor of Esther’s book, can’t bear children, but might be pregnant, at Esther’s party, also later at Brown’s party, goes to Europe (100, 553-554, 568, 570, 571, 573-574, 581, 583,	(100)

	585, 593, 594, 595, 597, 604, 607, 608?, 613, 614, 618-619, 623, 624, 626, 628, 638, 653, [654], 655, 657, 678, 680, 739, 765, 802, 805, 814-815, 825, 837, 864-865, 879-885, [889], 909, 918, 921)	
Woman, at zoo	Dark blond woman, at the zoo with her child (549, 551-552), Somehow reminiscent of Amy Joubert.	(549)
Y		
Yák	Rumanian, looked for by Mr. Inononu, scholar specialized in ancient Egypt, elderly man (805?) (649, 658-659??, [773], 805?)	(649)
Bearded youth	At Brown's party, young art critic, speaking a French noone understands, "carries art to the masses" (662) (657, 662, 665-666, 672, 680)	(657)
Z		
Zefnic, Eddie	Office boy at Mr. Pivner's office, befriends Mr. Pivner, like a son to him (281, 696-698, [741], 742-744, 933-934)	(281)