

ANALYSIS

Carpenter's Gothic (1985)

William Gaddis

(1922-1998)

"*Carpenter's Gothic* offers, once again, Gaddis' vision of human corruption and lovelessness, but it incorporates a new dimension of humor. The plot is bizarre and difficult. Paul Booth, an immoral and scheming veteran, acts as a public relations consultant for Fundamental clergyman Elton Ude. Booth aims to transform any events--however unethical--into positive public images. Any means justify his ends, which are money and power. All the events of the book take place in a local house rented by a mad geologist-novelist, Mister McCandless. McCandless sets into motion several immoral events, and ultimately he utters Gaddis' prophecies of doom. Indeed, the character of McCandless summarizes the failure of modern faith--in personal, political, and religious terms. He is an intractable, disturbing incarnation of modern decadence.

In these three novels--each filled with echoes from classic works of literature--Gaddis depicts a corrupt America, driven by big business and technology. If his characters search for redemption through individual control, love, and art, it is uncertain that their efforts are equal to the grim environs in which their battles are waged."

Lois Gordon
Cyclopedia of World Authors II
ed. Frank N. Magill
(Salem, 1989) 568