

HIS STACK OF PALIMPSESTS: on reviewing William Gaddis's *The Recognitions*¹ by Tyler Flynn Dorholt

"Of course I like music, but not just to listen to." *The Recognitions* (940)

There is, it seems to us,
At best, only a limited value
In the knowledge derived from experience.
The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies,
For the pattern is new in every moment
And every moment is a new and shocking
Valuation of all we have been.

T.S. Eliot, "Four Quartets"

"On the surface! But how much deeper do people go?" *The Recognitions* (464)

The occasion for this review of *The Recognitions*, a classic American novel first printed in 1955, is its recent reissue from Dalkey Archive, with an introduction by William Gass. If I were to write a brief synopsis of the plot and major themes of the novel it would be as follows.² Now that we have synopsis in hand, let me speak of how that only begins to explain the more substantial elements of *The Recognitions*, the ones that stick: that it is concerned with originality, reality, and perfection and that these things are often interchangeable; that its characters are all involved in some type of forgery;³ that we are just layers and accumulations and fragments within the whole, tottering in the field between familiarity and recognition; that art and religion have similar strands and weights of guilt, combatant with truth; and so on. Because of the novel's size—956 pages—I will stick with the aforementioned elements, with the belief that they get us

¹ Throughout this review I will be using quotes from the novel in footnotes to support notes I make.

² *The Recognitions* is, from its opening line—"Even Camilla had enjoyed masquerades, of the safe sort where the mask may be dropped at that critical moment it presumes itself as reality"—to its last (which I won't ruin for you here), a novel clawing at the presence and absence of reality in the sweeping simulacra of modern culture, a novel about where and how art, and very often religion, stand inside and outside the dueling concords of reality and absurdity and, as it shares through its engaging characters—themselves active components and embodiments of the struggle toward some element of creative purity—an investigation into what is behind the masks of creation, the presumptions of reality, the breath of the pulchritude we cherish and desire but cannot speak wholly of, the turning and obsessing of something insignificant into something of near- or, life willing, absolute perfection. It follows the lives of forgers, composers, critics, collectors, advertisers, writers, agents, businessmen, city village party voices, and copious others, all of whom pass through conversation in the most engrossing of ways—by Gaddis's use of no quotation, the kind of way you hear a party all at once or from the middle of a stranger's sentence while walking up the street—and in doing so releases potholes and air pockets in the palimpsests from which we must repair and push out from in making sense of what is real, stepping forth as if it's possible that, within all the disjunctive modes of what is being created, we ourselves are real and capable of originality (or content with the reverse, that there is no originality), even perfection. It is a temple-thumping novel, a novel which has a timelessness so well fleshed in the characters, a musicality so well stressed in the language, that it gloriously loses itself *in itself* in order to come out and flourish, and in doing so has slung us a model for perfection, real gold.

³ This includes every imaginable type, most specifically financial and artistic, both under the overarching theft of idea, as in relation to having an original thought to begin with.

readers thinking and moving the most; additionally, I will leave Gaddis out of this review—there are enough ways to explore that realm of criticism,⁴ if you prefer it, though you will likely arrive back at the text, not caring about anything but the text, where everything we need is already alive and well—a dismantled pinball machine we get to witness being put back together again, lights and clanks and ourselves, immersed, for the better—and I will also be doing little by way of explaining the narrative of the text (its size, for one, does not permit it); and, as Gass⁵ so eloquently notes in the intro to this new and fetching printing, “guidebooks are useful but only to what has passed;” and I’d like to bring *The Recognitions* more fully into the now, to get some more hands on its bulky bliss, and perhaps nudge it more noticeably into the future, beyond just a blurb.⁶ There’s a scene near the end of the novel that further elucidates what was then and is still now the sad case with most reviewing:

—You reading that? both asked at once, withdrawing in surprise.
—No, just reviewing it, said the taller one, hunching back in his green woolen shirt. —A lousy twenty-five bucks. It’ll take me the whole evening tonight. You didn’t buy it, did you? Christ, at that price? Who the hell do they think’s going to pay that much just for a novel. Christ, I could have given it to you, all I need is the jacket blurb to write the review. (936)

So let’s go beyond the blurb, under the jacket. If you’ve never had that moment in reading something where you stop, set the text down, and say, *yes*, and then nearly wet yourself, even though there’s a bathroom ten feet away, because you’re so engrossed in attending to it in that moment that all other senses abscond, then let *The Recognitions* be the one to let you have it. Because it will. And if you have undergone such a moment, come forward and have it again. To abuse an often overused phrase—“this is a _____ that teaches you how to read it”—⁷ I’d like to stress that *The Recognitions* also teaches you how to realize yourself within your surroundings (mind and matter) and that we have

⁴ Including, but not limited to, a fantastic interview in *The Paris Review* (<http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/2577/the-art-of-fiction-no-101-william-gaddis>); a handful of old but still relevant essays on JSTOR—some only accessible via university databases; a video interview conducted by Malcolm Bradbury alongside many other links (<http://biblioklept.org/tag/william-gaddis/>); Jonathan Franzen’s piece in *The New Yorker*, “Mr. Difficult” (http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2002/09/30/020930fa_fact_franzen); , and a surplus of other avenues to convene, etc. This but names a few of the ways: there ought to be more.)

⁵ The first time I met William Gass I told him how my three-year search for a used copy of *The Recognitions* (I refused to buy one online) made me also end up, by alphabetic proximity, purchasing all of *his* work, to which I feel as drawn as I do to that of Gaddis.

⁶ It is widely known that *The Recognitions* received such indifferent, if not largely disrespectful and indolent reviews upon its first publication, it disappeared from the shelves. An early advocate of the novel, writing under the pseudonym Jack Green, took it upon himself to publish, in a newspaper he called *newspaper*, a tireless and investigative rant calling out, one by one, each fault and at times fault-ridden “boner” each critic made in reviewing *The Recognitions*, the “boners” so vast they seemed to comically copy the metered thematic of forgery Gaddis employed in the novel itself. Green’s text was then published as *Fire the Bastards!* (http://www.dalkeyarchive.com/book/?GCOI=15647100067470&fa=author&person_id=1583) and reissued by Dalkey Archive at the same time Gaddis’s *The Recognitions* and *JR* were released earlier this year, 2012. It is a raucous and highly entertaining read and in line with the release of both William Gaddis’s masterpieces is a moment well worth marking joyously in literary time.

⁷ This is where it could become easy to say Gaddis, instead of *The Recognitions*, teaches us, but allowing this allows us to treat the whole novel as written self-reflectively, though no great writer, vanity as applicant put aside, writes fully about or as themselves. We don’t open a book to find an author has also given us their fingernail.

time to do so: the characters collectively say⁸ and do⁹ (or think about wanting to do) the things we ourselves might be thinking or doing but in their doing provide examples and language¹⁰ for us to examine our very own existence with; for example, one of the main characters,¹¹ Wyatt Gwyon—whose journey we follow the most closely throughout the novel and whose expertise as a painter working (as perfectionist) in the forgeries¹² of early Flemish paintings¹³ indistinctly (though ostensibly for readers) conjures up the bulk of this novel's cast—is so ensconced in his own original counterfeits that it becomes easy to wonder whether everything or nothing is original; additionally, Wyatt's actions are compulsory stretches toward an ultimate transformation into reality¹⁴—which itself might be perfection, or vice versa: he has a bizarre but noteworthy relationship with mirrors, seeing through himself in them and using them to perfect his forgeries, alluding to their power of losing one's memories; he smokes all the time, including after an intimate moment where, upon his wife Esther asking him why he must do so each time, says, "reality;"¹⁵ he loses himself (in metaphorical ways, but also in a very direct manner, as roughly one-ninth of the way through the novel he is no longer called by name; until, toward the end, he is given the name Stephen¹⁶ Asche, by Frank Sinisterra, a con man who, posing in the opening passage of the book as a doctor on the same ship Wyatt's father, Reverend Gwyon,¹⁷ is traveling on, inadvertently kills Wyatt's mother, Camilla); and throughout the rest of *The Recognitions* Wyatt pauses at great length to contemplate when/how/why a painting is finished, or whether or not it can be/should be finished, another theme remarkably enmeshed in the text, born and borrowed from Nietzsche's *Beyond Good & Evil*—we see it first on page 69, in a description of Wyatt's surroundings,¹⁸ and then via the religious organ-music composer Stanley's words some 500 pages later: "a melancholia of things completed." That Wyatt is a painter, at heart and somewhat by trade, opens the novel up to more direct observations of how art and culture create and are created, and what it is that is complete within each. This exploration to me is the most pivotal in understanding, or at the least beginning to talk about, the matters at play in the novel. Since the very first drop of paint and stroke of brush is completely independent of the other drops and strokes past, how can a

⁸ "... everybody suffers, the crime is in this world you suffer and it doesn't mean a God-damned thing, it doesn't fit anywhere." (530)

⁹ "The distinguished novelist attacked the fish on the plate before him. It stared up with one round insolent eye, and he severed the head at one blow. The world of art settled, that of religion reared intrepidly." (883)

¹⁰ From Gass's introduction: "... because we must always listen to the language; it is our first sign of the presence of a master's hand"

¹¹ Yes, for those of you who have read *The Recognitions*, I emphasize "one of the main," as everyone is supporting in this cast, and I believe that Stanley, whom I will comment on soon, is equally main.

¹² This description belittles his role, as Wyatt is every bit a magical presence, making new perfections from the action of perfecting old ones and while doing so leaving pieces of himself, damaged and glowing, in the ethers surrounding the paintings he (re)creates.

¹³ More specifically, work by artists like Hugo van der Goes, Hieronymus Bosch, and Hans Memling.

¹⁴ "The most difficult challenge to the ideal is its transformation into reality ..." (156)

¹⁵ This is from a scene on page 119, which also includes an early and recurring mode of the artist's struggle—"There's always the sense, he went on, --the sense of recalling something, of almost reaching it, and holding it ... and then it's escaped again."

¹⁶ Strangely enough, this is the name his mother intended for him prior to his great aunt choosing "Wyatt."

¹⁷ One of the wonders of *The Recognitions*, or I should say brilliant components, is that, aside from its size, characters like Reverend Gwyon are followed in detail but so within the delicately woven fragmentations of the text that we almost forget about them, despite how fully they do exist for us to examine.

¹⁸ "There was a pall on every face, a gathering of remnants in suspicion of the end, a melancholia of things completed." (69)

counterfeit be counterfeit? It is what Wyatt battles and in turn what the characters around him struggle with throughout, first his wife Esther, who finds him distant, even absent; and then Esme, who models for Wyatt but who fails to get through to him in a human manner and thus plays a strikingly moving and unforgettable form of muse, who at one point writes Wyatt a letter that can serve as a sort of key to the entire novel. In it she speaks of our interventions as humans and the recognitions that images provide for us in determining a larger whole. That even the creator cannot stand in for the perfect creation, a painting, for instance, is a sound implication of the themes rattling just below the ground of the novel. At the end of Esme's letter she expresses what I'd argue is the composite conundrum each character in the novel confronts, and if we substitute "painting" with whatever pursuit one has we place a probing finger on the very pulse behind pursuit:

"Paintings are metaphors for reality, but instead of being an aid to realization obscure the reality which is far more profound." (473)

It is reality, obscured again and again, by things that are often not real themselves. We see it clearly in another moment early in the novel, where the character of Basil Valentine is speaking to Wyatt as the two of them sit in Reckfall Brown's parlor together. The scene is encircled with humorous and sincere discussions on originality and copies:

"Because, my dear fellow, no one knows what you're thinking. And that is why people read novels, to identify projections of their own unconscious. The hero has to be fearfully real, to convince them of their own reality, which they rather doubt." (247)

There are recurring themes in *The Recognitions* so sly in their unsnarling that they sneak up on the reader, assembling not unlike pristinely pillowed gnocchi chefs pluck from the top of a boiling pot before bedding onto your plate; in doing so these themes also point outside themselves toward something I believe we all, at times, feel is "better," or "bigger," or which is so enticing and bedecked in addicting disguise that we have nothing to do but game for the unraveling of its undergarments.¹⁹ For instance: reality. The stress of the "complete" theme is also one of the most prevailing features of the novel—characters strive to finish books, paintings, plays, religious confirmations, business transactions, etc. Completeness emphasizes the practice and passage of the/a creator, and also the/a character in a world where realities and absurdities intermingle, though more often than not unintentionally, and where, ultimately, the work is there to exist on its own but will not unless completed; moreover, that the artist and those who by proxy might be removed in the creative process, sometimes absentmindedly, sometimes fatally, is proof that the work itself always remains, even as the piano sits alone at night, the paint brush stilled in a holster or drawer—but what can be completed when artists

¹⁹ "It isn't for love of the thing itself than an artist works, but so that through it he's expressing love for something higher, because that's the only place art is really free, serving something higher than itself ..." (*The Recognitions*, 632) and again on 616—"And now it's impossible to accomplish a body of work without a continuous sense of time, so instead you try to get all the arts together into one work that will stand by itself and serve the same thing a lifetime of separate work does, something higher than itself ..."

take their tools through a medium, into the feverish focus—what is left done?—are the questions we undertake in advancing behind and beyond recognition.

The fact that this Nietzschean dictum is repeated is emblematic of the novel's focus on both recycled and palimpsestic obsessions, that the strive here is for something higher and during the reach all that we have are accumulations and recognitions (a much heartier and more poignant way of saying "time and coincidence," the latter purposefully avoided, the former, time, itself a character, sometimes a character that fails—"where time had not gone by but been amassed." (15)) Just as importantly, "the melancholy of the finished" is used once *near* Wyatt and then again *from* Stanley, and we must thus note their equality in the main dome of characters, as they complement one another in their diverse frustrations of the (in)complete. Yes, they are also challenged, in the occupying of novel space, by Otto, the playwright who takes up with Wyatt's wife Esther and who receives the comical misfortune of a broken arm after all novel long pretending to have a broken arm.²⁰ But somehow Otto's progression and actions slither into a support system for the more pointed and puncturing realities both Stanley and Wyatt personify and grapple with;²¹ they share equal screen time suffering in sympathetic if not empathetic ways—we begin with Wyatt much earlier in the novel but he also leaves 70 pages before the novel leaves us, and when it leaves us it leaves with Stanley, thus leaving just the work. Both Wyatt and Stanley are consistently questioned and bedraggled with the progress of their work. At parties the versions of the question "how's your work coming along" replace a kind hello. Both artists, entirely embedded in their own religious upbringings—Wyatt had once prepared for the ministry and his father's own lifetime adornment of religious inebriations haunts him; Stanley is himself a devout and preaching Catholic—swaddle the ends of each pole in their own alchemic enactments, changing not only their work but the people around them into some greater perceived whole. They tussle inside of religion and art: "My dear fellow, the priest is the guardian of mysteries. The artist is driven to expose them." (261)

The key question, of whether an artist is anything but his work, is repeated throughout *The Recognitions*, more than once but most recognizably first with the oft-quoted line, "What's any artist, but the dregs of his work?" (95-96) and then again with, "An artist does not exist, except as a vehicle for his work." (262) We must take this kind of repetition and dig into it. Different characters mutter the variations. The discoveries and statements are repeated for purpose, and if we must make one biographical note about Gaddis, in connection with *The Recognitions* and his reclusive lifestyle, it's that he holds true to the belief that the work must and does stand on its own; but it is *The Recognitions*, not Gaddis, that further elucidates how this stance is not just a choice but

²⁰ This is one of those magical nods that takes place, of which there are many, where absurdity is reversed into reality, where wanting something bad enough, or forging something, may bring you a version of that something: see all other characters within this context, specifically Esme, Wyatt, Stephen, Anselm, Agnes, etc. The question then is, "What is a real version?"

²¹ Although, it can easily be noted that Otto is a more youthful version of Wyatt but more tarnished by the modern world's modes. He aspires to create and is called out constantly for plagiarizing the words of those he's acquainted with; he takes up with Esther and has near-identical arguments to those Wyatt has with her; and he shows signs of counterfeiting his own work by actually living it out. One of the most revealing "near-identical" moments comes from right after an earlier passage that I quoted above, on page 119, where, following Wyatt's reality moment with a cigarette the scene changes to Otto—"Reality? Otto repeated.—Well I always think of it as meaning the things you can't do anything about."

a response from perfection itself, from the attainment of it. *The Recognitions* is thus wisely littered with the unfinished—just as I’m certain any reader of this review could poll their own projects and those around them and find oodles of amazing things in the works, all unfinished, and that the modern world of artists and critics is so vehemently attached to the creator that it obscures not only the greatness of some work but also reality as a whole. Here enters the challenge of recognizing and then questioning oneself while inside seeing and feeling, as opposed to searching for exterior solutions.

As much as I’d like to avoid taking a numerological approach²² toward *The Recognitions* I also must note that there is a very powerful triad of events that I didn’t recognize until I started randomly opening pages after reading the whole, a succession that harnesses the themes we began speaking about: 1/3 of the way into the book there is a scene where Stanley is watching his ceiling slowly crack,²³ wondering when it will collapse, at the same time looking at a print of a cathedral in Fenstrula where he envisions performing his completed organ masterpiece. Two-thirds of the way though the text we are with Stanley as he attempts to help his friend Anselm get off the ground after being punched at a party for calling out a critic for his love of masturbation; however, Stanley is armed away by Agnes Deigh, who leads him out of the party and, after he fails to get her to pray with him (one of a few moments where Stanley tries to return Agnes to Catholicism) then leads him into a bar where he is arrested for using, unbeknownst to him, a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill; simultaneously, Anselm sees his birth mother in a subway station down the street then avoids her and castrates himself in the subway bathroom.²⁴ To complete the triad, at the end of the novel Stanley is in the same cathedral in Fenestrula he stared at long ago, performing in it as it collapses. Despite the seemingly overt connections these three scenes draw, I don’t think they come near enough one another to pound anyone, even close readers, over the head, as there seems no such thing here as coincidence, only variances of recognition, and these particular recognitions signify only one set of what are many palimpsests throughout the novel, and that you can continue to pick it up and start again is testimony to its brilliance and immortal march toward understanding that something higher. These occurrences also quietly mark one of *The Recognitions*’ most alluring and admirable traits, which is to demonstrate recognition by use of accumulation and simultaneity, to iterate how the strive for perfection bumbles and heaves and hunkers down in and around the breakages and bandages that come as part of being an arch for the whole. This arch is where characters within *The Recognitions* most actively stitch their words and wonders:

“ ... sometimes you get used to living among palimpsests. Somehow that’s what happens, double and triple palimpsests pile up and you keep erasing, and

²² I originally started counting all of the occurrences of the word “recognition,” only to find out that I’d noted 79 and someone had posted all 81 online. Needless to say, it’s easy to get caught up in what any of that means but when you do you know that a novel is doing its job of making you ask more, of making you active.

²³ “How long could it go on? before that ceiling, with the sudden impatience of inanimate things, would yawn open over him, and fall with the astonished introduction of the lives above into his own.” (319)

²⁴ “With his other hand he undid his clothes, and opened the razor ... --In nomine ... though his lips continued to move, without a tremor, as his hands worked quickly, with deft certainty, unseen.” (645). The last part of this quote parallels Wyatt’s actions while painting; there is certainty and hidden evolution. It has been noted that the razor Anselm uses here is the razor Wyatt himself acquired from his father, Reverend Gwyon, and it further secures the physicality of reality, the cutting of faces and images.

altering, and adding, always trying to account for this accumulation, to order it, to locate every particle in its place in one whole ..." (599)

Accumulation and simultaneity are what hold *The Recognitions* together and allow it to progress without having to fall back on typical and streamlined narrative. Characters interrupt one another in the same way large rooms of people having just met one another do after a few drinks at a party. And the narrative does not ask forgiveness for this as each unfinished sentence, each leak into the ongoing stream of language, settles into the whole, by dot and splotch, often resulting in these half-acquaintances flowing out of a room and into the world together, at times even into other countries. Consider the repetition of palimpsests, as spoken by Stanley in one of the most cutting and precise speeches of the novel, itself a head-on challenge toward the modern world:

"Because we get time given to us in fragments, that's the only way we know it. Finally we can't even conceive of a continuum of time. Every fragment exists by itself, and that's why we live among palimpsests, because finally all the work should fit into one whole, and express an entire perfect action, as Aristotle says" (615-616)

The reference to Aristotle leads back to chapter seven of his *Poetics* which speaks to the proximity of actions represented in the whole and the whole's reliance on all smaller actions, all accumulations. Is perfection then the containment of all fragmentations? This question is repeated under the roofs of many mouths in *The Recognitions* and results in the desire to make copies, to forge, to get at the gold again. Alchemy has been spoken of as a tailbone guide in better understanding the motives of the characters within the novel. And it's not the simple turning of base materials into gold either but the magical acts that allow this to happen, that we even have something we consider gold to begin with, to model after, to make strides toward our whole lives. The true magician can weave it, the true artist can leave it just at that, complete.

For a text as steeped in the grizzly peculiarities of history and its hold (and thus release) over the characters within, *The Recognitions* is at once a musically²⁵ muscular composition that often demands, though delicately, to be cherished sentence by sentence, even in all its levity and at times lopsided languor,²⁶ so that we hear *into* it. Yet this does not mean that it will always give us an immediate solo in, or an easy-to-remember chorus, but at times will expect us as readers to feel and react to the accumulations, many of which are hints at how to be in the novel and thus how to be in the world around us. Because of the stress given to accumulation many readers might shy away from staying with *The Recognitions*; it's also easy to find yourself in these pages, challenged and criticized and called out, but this is because Gaddis has left nothing out and in reading the novel you cannot leave any of yourself out either.

²⁵ "...and the names which ring with refuge to the fugitive mount with finality to him traveling relentlessly unpursued, setting destinations one after another whose reasons for being so cease upon arrival, and he must move on, to provide that interim of purpose with which each new destination endows the journey however short, and search each pause with reasons anxiously mistaken drawing nearer, with each destination, to the last." (769)

²⁶ "...inserting grace notes which broke the admirably stern transitions..." (827)

With a text as large as *The Recognitions* I find myself experiencing the melancholy of finishing a “review” of it—there is much more to say, so much more, and because of this I will return to *The Recognitions* again and again, to hear ideas and say *yes* and *yes* under the light of its musicality. I also believe the best service you can give a novel you love is that of speech, of speaking about it,²⁷ knowing that there’s no one way to review something and also very few ways to ruin a novel of this scope just by talking about its plot, which seems secondary anyway. The main concerns in this novel are still the main concerns in art and culture today and I’m sure will remain that way forever.

To close I wanted to give back to the text, to tease with some of its most enrapturing bravura. Early on, in underlining my favorite moments of *The Recognitions*, I began to understand that I was underlining and highlighting sentences and moments that explained exactly what the novel is doing and what it is reaching for. Then, I noted that I’d been underlining these moments in a fragmented way, much like the speech we see in the text and the collage of actions we experience in the margins. To illustrate how guiding this process became and how we’re not just having an experience but learning how to deal with it, I’ve simply taken, at random, thirty-something of these fragments I’ve underlined and placed them together into one block, using ellipses to separate each quote, to reveal how the entire novel teaches you and itself the whole, opting in and out of breath and construct. I leave you with the text, where readers ought to be anyway:

... after the whole day you can sort of take everything that’s happened and go over it alone ... and the darkness came in like a substance driven on the wind which filled every crevice with it, and still did not relent where it failed in destruction ... a break in the pattern quickly obliterated by the calcimine of silence ... that this want of precision pervaded the source itself ... he found there suggestion of the lines he needed, forms which he knew but could not discover in the work without this allusion to completed reality before him ... this terror of emptiness, this absolute terror of space ... where the alchemist waited with a lifetime’s patience ... he stood alone in his room and looked at the work, which was all that was left ... fear of leaving any space for transition, for forms to ... to share each other ... but in reading it, the hand had defeated its own purpose: for those lines written in frantic haste took time to interpret ... would lose all that illusion was making possible ...the separate multiple consciousnesses ... not following as life does but co-existing with itself ... tell them, as the composer predicted, there’s nothing left but knowledge and evidence, and art’s become a sort of tailbone surviving in us from that good prehensile tail we held on with then ... pouring water into the clean glass on the night table, beside the flowers ... now as though embarrassed by its size ... you become the victim of your own observations ... and moving with perfect timing slipped off one after another garment to reveal exquisite limbs ... and measurement, designed to predicate finalities, refusing the truth which shelters in possibility ... Yes, I told you, how fragile situations are! Every moment reshaping the past ... Time weighed out unconscious of exposure ... every work of art is a work of perfect necessity ... when you said that ideas in these pages are not only dead but embalmed with care ... the music

²⁷ I am going to continue writing this review for the rest of my life and welcome conversations about it any time.

was right where it had abandoned her: repeating? Or had she been lost to it for no more than a transition of chords, as is the most alert consciousness ... as though without that weight it might disintegrate, to wander off and be lost ... he has to learn that it isn't just having the experience that counts, it's knowing how to handle the experience ...you stop when you can and expose things, and leave them within reach... sometimes the accumulation is too much to bear ... and want to know what's coming next, and get angry at surprises ... the work will know its own reason, Stephen said farther away, and farther, —Hear ... ? Yes, we'll simplify. Hear? ...