

## ***The Eternal Turn (I)***

1.

I dreamt that I was born again  
As Oscar Wilde, exactly as  
I was before, hurrah, alas.  
Some error, made I know not when

Or where, by whom, some cosmic clerical  
Error, assigned a number to  
Itself. I know not what to do,  
Sometimes I feel almost hysterical

Looking into the infinite  
Regress of Oscar Wildes that faces  
Me now, all 'I', all times and places  
The same. Ah, what to make of it?

Should this be news? It cannot be.  
I have already heard it. I  
Am I am I to infinity.  
For I already know, you see,

I have already written this.  
What follows is a prelude, and  
What came before a coda. And  
I have not yet quite written *this*.

2.

I know what I am going to say  
Because I have already said it.  
I have already said this. Edit  
The text? It is too late. The day

Has not yet dawned. To what I say  
There is an echo that precedes  
The sound, and who knows where it leads?  
Perhaps into that future day.

Because I have said what I am about  
To say, it sounds spontaneous.  
My voice is not unanimous,  
Precisely. There is room for doubt.

My double and myself are two  
Distincts, and yet identical.  
Before you even think to call  
I have heard the call. It rings too true,

The extra resonance to my voice  
That makes all things I say sound double.  
Paradise with a hint of trouble.  
I know beforehand every choice

Already made, the one chance lost.  
So there is omen everywhere.  
And when at night I climb the stair  
I see, as one might see a ghost,

Myself, and he is heading down.  
Our crossing paths are a design  
Things follow. All is as a sign.  
The sower is eaten by the sown.

3.  
Because I am the same, always  
A self-divided self, and stand  
At the crossroads, on either hand,  
Of what I am, I can find ways

To be the disparate versions of  
Myself, in an eclectic fashion.  
Sated before I feel the passion,  
I have lost what I am about to love.

On all sides my free will is hemmed  
By the infinity of choices.  
I have no voice. I am the Voices.  
Then am I privileged or condemned?

Lined up like volumes on a shelf  
Are the biographies I live.  
I ask, and the response they give?  
I am all things except myself.

And this apocalyptic Fate  
Is something rather casual,  
So *caused*, so deeply usual,  
My heart is lifted like a weight.

4.

My photographic memory  
Is supernaturally sharp.  
The player in this evening's harp  
Recital will belatedly

Invent the score. All that I see  
I will forget that I have seen  
So that it might be new. The scene  
Has learned itself by memory.

The eternal happens *now* and *then*.  
The colour of the passing rose  
Remains when into dust she goes.  
All things eternal turn again.

*This is a dream you will forget  
Except in flashes of the past  
About to be. The signs come last.  
The sun has risen and is set.*

## ***The Eternal Turn (II)***

*To hold, as 'twere, a  
mirror up to artifice.*



1.  
Again I dreamed that by some error  
I am reborn exactly as  
Myself, the same one that I was.  
I feel a sort of giddy terror

At the implications of eternal  
Return of sameness, and recall  
That those in Hell can't change at all,  
As from his ashes rising vernal

To be the same Fucci, the thief,  
Rises Fucci, so fresh and yet  
So stale—no pauses to forget  
He is eternal as his grief.

But that is not the only way  
To view my strange predicament.  
When memory and presentiment  
Merge on a given re-lived day,

'The same' is what does *not* occur.  
The repetition of a thing  
Is not the *same* thing. Copies wring  
The sameness from it. For the pure

Original in its survival  
Is retrospectively re-defined  
As something one if so inclined  
Can stage again, as a Revival.

Hamlet, or parts of Hamlet, are  
Everywhere re-enacted. We  
Are sad since he was melancholy.  
We have grown too particular.

Hamlet's problem is that he sees  
Too many sides to things, because  
There *are* too many. He never was.  
He always *is*. He cannot cease.

***My Dream of the Myth of Er  
In which I tell my future  
as it actually happened***

Another version of the fate of my soul.



For the Greeks, 'myth' meant simply 'word'  
Or 'speech', or 'story', as in 'true  
Story'. The Er 'myth' is all too  
True. Scarcely can one's voice be heard

Above the traffic of the souls  
Rising to their rewards or falling  
To punishments. It is appalling,  
How hectic are the changing rôles,

The costume-changes. It's too loud  
To hold a decent conversation.  
One might as well be in a train station.  
And no objections are allowed.

In a line they are shuffled right  
Along, until at last they see the  
Oblivion-inducing Lethe,  
A somewhat disappointing sight.

Here Plato told me: *You are aware  
By now of the prescribed procedure.  
If you've forgotten, then re-read your  
Republic, and the Myth of Er.*

*Here is a cup. Dip it into  
The water and drink deep, or taste  
Not the Lethèan spring. In haste  
The others drank amnesia's brew,*

But I, my Dears, had a flask filled  
With absinthe on my person. I  
Mixed it with Lethe, stealthily,  
To fortify it. For I willed

A *conscious* coming-back to life.  
I spared myself, as Er was spared,  
Forgetfulness, and went prepared  
Into the pleasure and the strife

*In Classical Greek, the word  
Lethe literally means  
'oblivion', 'forgetfulness', or  
'concealment'. It is related to  
the Greek word for 'truth',  
aletheia (ἀλήθεια), meaning  
'un-forgetfulness' or 'un-  
concealment'.—[Mr V]*

Of the self-same existence I  
Had left behind me when I died.  
I feel a certain sense of pride  
That I had chosen consciously

*Consciously* thus to live again  
The life and trials of Oscar Wilde,  
Again in glory, again reviled.  
And I reflect still, now and then,

How strange it was that absinthe, which  
In life had been my Lethean drink  
(Not to remember, not to think)  
Was in my afterlife that rich

Reminder and anamnesiac  
That saved me from oblivion  
And made me the sole, valorous one  
Who in full consciousness went back

As my same self to be reborn.  
I took it on myself to live  
Once more as me, to grow, to thrive,  
To shine, and in the end, to mourn.

But this meant there was now a quirk:  
Consciously living is one thing;  
*Knowing* your life's a *second* fling  
Is quite another job of work!

Because I knew I was the same,  
I wasn't. The premiere performance,  
With all its ecstasies and torments,  
Made possible the second, fame

And shame. Conversely, in this story,  
The second life made possible  
The first, no longer original:  
Posterior, rather, *a priori!*

Baptised in absinthe (watered down)  
Somewhat) there I was, born again  
With an *alas* and an *amen*,  
And since then, Dears, how I have grown!

