***Farther Revels***

***[Of Oscar Wilde]***

**Tombe III**

***Mystical Maths***

***(Trial by Numbers)***



***The House Beautiful (Hypercube Edition).***

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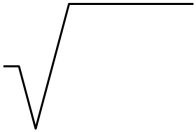
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**Chapter One**

***The Mythematician***

 ***∞***

***I never could understand mathematics,***

***and life is now a mathematical problem.***

***When it was a romantic one, I solved it—too well.***

**[Letter to Leonard Smithers, 17 March 1898]**

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

Again I dream I am born again

As Oscar Wilde, exactly as

I was before, hurrah, alas.

Some error, made I know not when

Or where, some cosmic clerical

Error, assigned a number to

Itself. When I have run things through,

Again into the past I fall.

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.

The extra resonance in my voice

Makes everything 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.

We learn what we have always known.

*This is a dream you will forget*

*Except in flashes of the past*

*To be. The omens will come last.*

*The sun has risen and is set.*

***The Astral Blues***

I have become a study in grey.

I see my picture and recoil.

For the robust, full-blooded oil

From the Old Master’s atelier,

Enriched with poisonous metals and

Rare earths, is a blurred photograph

Now—no, a pencil sketch, smudged, half-

Erased…! Like a Tibetan sand

Painting has the original

Been swept away by the same hands

That shaped it: back to desert sands

The living eyes blow, tears and all.

Dears, would oblivion cure me? Would

The infinitely elastic stuff

Of pre-existence be enough?

Plenipotential of the *Could*,

Pleroma of the not-quite-yet?

The virgin glass in which no face

Has looked. It knows me still, my place,

And it will not let me forget.

To a Thanasian creed, a creed

Of things inanimate as stone,

I would subscribe, and thus atone

For all the greediness of need.

Which of you, in some corner of

Yourself, thinks it not rich to die?

Why? So that you need not ask *Why?*

Again, or again mourn lost love!



***Purgatory: The Latest Edition***

***The Spiral Labyrinth***

1.

They have redesigned Mount Purgatory

By twisting its parameters

In engineering space: now there’s

A spiral staircase you must, story

By story, climb past every ghost

That haunts you. Built of jagged granite

By gods who could reshape the planet

As an elastic strip of coast,

Or a rhomboid, if so inclined,

The staircase takes you past the Proud,

Past Sloth, Lust—all the usual crowd.

A tour, that is, of your own mind

Is what you are given: mind turned in

Upon itself: *How shallow, mean,*

*Arrogant, foolish and obscene*

*You were!* Each Roman Catholic sin,

With some perversions in attendance,

Wants you to feel extremely bad,

And say you’re sorry, and be sad.

This leads to some sort of transcendence.

But there is something tired in me.

A climb is but a climb, spiral

Or otherwise. I hear them call,

The steps: One. Two….Infinity.

*Dante descends beatricestically and*

*all-too-instructively from Heaven.*

2. *On the Accounting Ledge*

You’ve dropped me behind enemy lines, `

I see, *il meo maestro*. Is

This cricket? Has it come to this?

I can’t tell plus from minus signs.

You know that. Do you think it’s funny?

I am alone here, stranded in

An alien land, and for what sin?

*Your reckless carelessness with money.*

*Your scorn of prudent calculation.*

*You lived on flights of rhetoric*

*And impulse. The arithmetic*

*Is that of an examination*

*In maths, to you an alien land,*

*As you say. Your stupidity*

*In maths helped shape your destiny.*

*It left you with an empty hand.*

*You have been in Purgatory long*

*Enough.* Which way is the escape?

*The way you got into this scrape.*

*Correct the answers you got wrong.*

*You must construct a rigorous shape,*

*A geometrical staircase,*

*A spiral. At each turn you face*

*Your monsters…*Then, at last, escape?

*To further Trials, five, six, or seven.*

I think not. I am liberated

From you. I will not be berated.

Dante, this is—Oh, go to Heaven!

3.

I *did* pass my geometry

Exam at Oxford, but just barely.

I think of numbers only rarely.

Accounting is a Mystery

On the order of the Orphic rites,

To my poor high-aesthetic brain.

But an accounting full of pain

Is what I render day and night.

No, I was neither good at maths *Luckily, I have as tutor in maths a*

Nor at religion. So I take  *professional mathematician, Mr V,*

The fork in the road, and I make  *to whom I am eternally grateful.—*[OW]

My way along a pair of paths. *You are welcome, Oscar* —[Mr V]

*And I shall have a certain Mr MCV.*

4.

I watch my tortured being flow

Into the soundless wisdom of

The East, that Depth immune to rough

Wind and water. It fades, that show

Of violent bluster we call world:

A play that knows not how to stop,

Unconscious as a dizzy top

That has no choice but to be whirled.

My taste has grown, what? Atavistic.

I’ve moved beyond the Mother Church

(I hate to leave Her in the lurch)

Towards the universal mystic.

I come before you as the Fool.

There is no virtue, but I lacked it.

If there’s a wrong horse, I have backed it.

So I have put myself to school.

To undertake a study of maths

And myths will be my final mission,

To make myself a *mythematician*

And gather in the forking paths.

I will re-write my history

And this time not as my own Judas;

And speak a calm more like the Buddha’s

In the autothanatography.

Backwards and forwards goes my World Line.

(Mr V—I make no apology—

Has taught me a new terminology.)

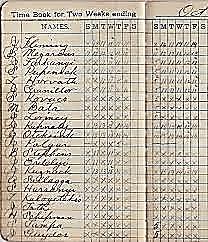
Pick out a thread, a pale and pearled line,

And follow it, in its direction.

But where they all may meet, who knows?

The circles of the sphere will close.

My Book ends at their intersection.



***‘Trains and Trails***

*‘Trains: quatrains.* —[Mr V]

I ride the light; it is my coach.

Powerful are its strong white horses.

Shadows behind me in my courses

I leave; hills glow at my approach.

In Boolean numbers and poetic

Tropes are encoded what I see

And hear, moving through imagery

And music of a pure noetic

Consistency. Past, future, and present

Are cards I can lay out upon

A table and see all, or one

By one; through waning-into-crescent

Intaglios-into-bas-reliefs

Of time foreshortened or expanded

I ride the eye-light and am branded

With blues and joys and greens and griefs!

Explosive as Beethoven’s Ninth

(The Scherzo, with its kettledrum

Pulses bounding o’er Kingdom Come),

Light as the scent of hyacinth,

Electric waves, my astral coach,

Fly me, light’s passenger and made

Of light, as down sight’s sharpened blade,

Towards the ever-to-approach.

That kinematic flickering

Of hot lamps flinging on the night

Images moth-like black-and-white

Is my own eyes nictitating

The world in punctual, jagged streams,

The *blanc-et-noir*, the chiaroscuro

Of my gone life. In brief but thorough

Review I search the files and dreams

Of mine and many others’ lives,

Then pause like Hermes on a message,

The Herald at a threshold-presage,

The eagle poised before he dives.

\*

The mind, a flawed god, fiat-looks

The world into its shapes and sizes,

And yet the world still holds surprises

Hidden in corners and in nooks

Of what it fails to see to see

The things it does. Light never ceases

To dazzle it, and missing pieces

Maintain the puzzling mystery

Of what it all might finally mean,

The world, I mean, so deep and wide,

The world inside the mind inside

Its own vast Transformation Scene.

\*

*My* fiatis not legal tender,

Credit’s a problem, the debentures,

Often enough they fail, my ventures,

With letters marked *Return to Sender*.

So, as a God, I would not say

I am perfect, or infallible.

My *Let There Be* is liable

To be ignored outright, quite rude,

I think. My old plank bed appears

Before me quite without permission.

It seems it made its own decision.

Friends *don’t* appear, despite my tears.

******

God stands at the *pâtisserie*

Window, feeling hungry and dull.

He swoons to see it all so full

Of things that will not let *Him* be.

***The Transcendental Number***

\frac{1}{\infty}

My soul sojourns among the infinitesimal…

The asymptotic gauntlet-line is run

By the abstraction of a questing hero

Through the remotest places of the decimal

Towards the absolute, the perfect Zero.

The expectation truth must disappoint

Is that this Null can be attained. The truth

Of which one cannot make too fine a point

Is that the point is infinitely fine.

Nirvana can’t be reached, ‘tis but a smooth,

Pure dream of space. Then say all things are One,

Dears, where 1 = 0.999.

And to the 3 of Trinity affix,

Alas, .1415926…


\begin{align}
 \frac{1}{9}           & = 0.111\dots  \\
 9 \times \frac{1}{9}  & = 9 \times 0.111\dots \\
 1                     & = 0.999\dots
\end{align}


**XIII**

Valhalla burns, and all the smoky

Remains thereof like soma fade.

They leaped into the fire they made,

The doomed gods. And I think of Loki,

The Thirteenth of the Pantheon,

The thirteenth at the funeral,

Top bunco-artist of them all.

(Of course, when thirteen gather, one

Of them will die within the year:

A hard fact whose establishment

To rigorous experiment

We owe. The dead we owe a tear.)

The hangman’s rope needs thirteen turns

Ere it can hold a hanged man’s weight.

Unlucky numeral of his fate!

The moon, whom none of this concerns,

Revolves, each day, thirteen degrees

Around the earth, and you may count

Thirteen full moons (O fell amount!)

In many a year. (Her mysteries

Are ancient, menstrual, feminine,

And as her cycles cycle through,

Hunger to Harvest, she is blue

Sometimes, and shines a crooked grin

When she is slowly growing full,

And she grows white, and very old,

And looking down, she is a cold

Skull meditating on a skull.)

The Zodiac includes signs twelve,

And a thirteenth, concealed from us:

The Serpent named Ophiucus

Into whose secrets who dares delve?

Old Glory, of course, has stripes thirteen

(The thirteen earliest colonies):

Ill omen flapping in the breeze?

Its colour should be money-green.

Thirteenth Apostle at the Last

Supper, Judas number. The Persian

As into Chaos the reversion

Saw the thirteenth millennium, vast

Void where no star or planet orders

The play of chance. Again, Loki,

The Cain of gods, the one guilty

Of murder: Thirteenth. On the borders

Where bad luck starts to merge with good,

Mercy has thirteen attributes.

And wise Maimonides imputes

To Judaism, understood

Philosophically, thirteen prime

Principles. Thirteen prime, turned round,

Is, it will readily be found, *Whimsically called an ‘emirp’*

Another prime. In a cold clime, *by mathematicians. (Thirteen*

*is also a Fibonacci number.)*

High in Tibetan elevations, —[Mr V]

Where wisdom is austere and clean,

Auspicious is this old thirteen,

The theme of mystic meditations.

(That there are exactly thirteen ways

Of looking at a blackbird Stevens

Has demonstrated. Odds or evens,

With loaded dice perception plays.)

Now 13 rue des beaux arts gave

Me shelter. If the coach was number

Thirteen, that bore me to my slumber,

I drove myself into my grave.

*Then Coach 13, I bid thee be*

*My Boat of Ra, of purest light!*

*Through years and spaces infinite*

*Oh lightly shalt thou carry me!*

***Horn Book***

***And the Number of his Name***

***is Fourteen***

*A rhapsodic effusion from Mr V*

*on one of his two favourite Cantors.*

**B ­-** **B**ellows: The lungs of the organ aloft ♫ Loud as the thunder, as distant and soft.

**B**ach: Brook, river, cascades from the mountain ♫ Flows into the sea, returns as a fountain.

**A ­-** **A**llemande: A dancer, German by birth ♫ Grace of the Suites, lightly touching the earth.

**C ­- C**ounterpoint:Each line flints off its brother ♫ Each Heaven-bent to outrace the other.

**C**ontinuo gives to the voice of the cello ♫ Harmony’s body, a chromatic halo.

**C**ircle of fifths, climbs straight as a rail ♫ Descends as a serpent devouring its tail.

**H -** **H**armonyflashes brief and resplendent♫ From fleeting consensus of parts independent.

**H**eld note: The violin halts in mid-threnody ♫ Letting the harpsichord take up the melody.

**H**orn calling deep from the forest to say ♫ The hunters are closing in on their prey.

**H**ornpipe: Is peasants, rude in their vigour ♫ Stomping the rounds of a simple dance figure.

**H**emidemisemiquavers’ quick little swirls ♫ Circle the flute stops like scampering squirrels!

**H**andel, whose secular operas taught a ♫ Colleague to ‘operate’ mass and cantata.

**H**ome key the citadel, watchtower the dominant ♫ Sly modulations sapping the monument.

**H**allelujah! Gratitude, joy and elation ♫ Tuning fork, tonic, and lungs of Creation!

♫

***Te Deum Alephi***

***Melismas for Two Cantors***

[*Here the medium and automatic writer (myself, Mr V) interpolates an*

*encomium of the great German mathematician Georg Cantor, inventor of*

*set theory. (And Bach, too, was a Cantor, wasn’t he?) Oscar has kindly*

*allowed this clumsy effusion to stand, though it breaches our séance protocol.*]

Your mind divined, as did your soul,

In countable Infinity,

The equal cardinality

Of set and subset, part and whole.

Georg Cantor, what grand melismas

You sang upon set theory!

Devout in Christianity,

You raised the Aleph-Child of Christmas—

Highest Infinity-Plus-One!—

Above the hard-set features of

Our numbers, in the name of Love,

Back to the God who made atone

This infinite Child for finite sins

Of Man, and God Himself chose *you*

To spread the Gospel so good and true *Mr V, this does not scan.* [Oscar]

That the World ends where it begins, *I was actually trying for a free*

*ballad metre here, I think.* [Mr V]

In *actual* Infinity.

Laudamus Cantor Bach, Musician

Cantor Georg, and their clean vision

Radiant of God’s great glor-y! *Mr V sings the* *last sentence, drawing*

*out the ‘y’ in ‘glory’ melismatically.*

In Origin dwells the Creation.

It is an ever-branching throng

Of song-lines leading to one song

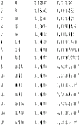
To recreate Origination.

Bach, divine architect of tone!

Believer in the cantilever,

Whose maze of lucid bridges ever

Crosses through difference to the One!

***π***

The truth of perfect circle or sphere,

Its *im*perfections and anomalies,

Makes ‘pi’ of rationalist homilies:

It filled Pythagoras with fear,

Became a scandal in *his* other-

Wise perfect circle. One was drowned

For spreading the ugly truth around;

Indeed, it is a curious bother.



O pi, complex, perverse old pi,

You never end, nor do you ever

Form a pattern. You seem both clever

And plodding, and can’t tell me why.

You are both unpredictable

And dull in your long random walk.

But *are* you random? How they talk

About you, mathematicians, full

Of fascinated indignation,

And how they stalk you, out into

The expanding boundaries of you,

A trillion places, each a station

Of the endless crossing and the crux

Insoluble of imperfection

That like a curious infection

Queers the circle, and fills whole books

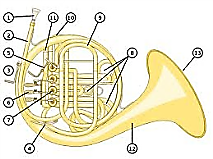
Carrying things to lengths that stagger us

To find, far out in abstract space,

Some pattern that might save the face

Of the discountenanced Pythagoras.



***The Bony Labyrinth***

***Or: The Spiral of Listening***

*J'aime le son du Cor, le soir, au fond des bois.*

*—*Alfred de Vigny

Hermetic is the ear’s musician,

Obscure the winding passage of

The hearing we give songs we love

Down birth canals of an audition.

A tap upon the tympanum:

Audience granted. Pass the tones

Through a bureaucracy of bones:

Into the spiral then they come.

Each segment of the spiral is

Assigned its frequency along

The curve: electrified, the song

Lights up the listening brain with bliss.

But what the brain perceives as *now*

Is slightly in the past, already

Over, or soon to be. Those heady

Glissandos, they remember how

Their patterns are supposed to sound:

Present, accounted-for and savoured,

Darkling or glistening, game-flavoured

Or sweet. Faint overtones abound,

Fan out among the neural cells

As complicated connotations

Too recondite for our notations.

The music is a force that wells

Up out of silence like a geyser

And falls back to the stillness whence

It burst, and the enchanted sense

Hears echoes, echoes, none the wiser.

Think how entangled are the sounds-

In-themselves with the technical

Formalities through which they call

Us, and we hear! They make their rounds

Along the auditory prism,

And notes painstakingly put on

The uniform of unison

Or motley of chromaticism.

The French horn is a golden ear.

The ear is spiraled like a horn.

And where they intersect is born

The tune that we were born to hear.

Pursue into its inwardness

The spiral, down to its least curve:

Note how it flows from nerve to nerve

Into a tiny emptiness,

Or a phantasmagoria

Of leptons spinning in the ear,

Or a translation, dark or clear:

*Le son du cor au fond des bois*.



***Autumnal***

*Addressed to Mr V.*

*Green in the fullness of its days*

*Spring swells, bursts into summer. The ember*

*Of autumn, dying in December,*

*Rekindles as the primrose blaze.*

*Red in the fullness of desire*

*The heart swells till it bursts in love*

*Amid the primrose and foxglove*

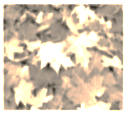
*And crocus flush with golden fire.*

*Soft tongues of beauty, living flames*

*Sparked into colours by the dawn:*

*Where has that nameless poet gone,*

*The one who gave you all your names?*

2.

I walk, as one who drifts in dreams,

These woods where maples at their shed

Lay down a carpet of the dead,

And to my grieving heart all seems

A kind of pastoral suicide.

The reign of leaves is ending, ever

So slowly; but in truth, it never

Ends, save on the white, wintry side

Of things, whose sides are many. Dear,

We move, and have our being, and act

In sections of the Tesseract,

Whilst others know not we are here,

Or ever were. We cannot see

The whole wherein a past event

Stands side by side, beneath the tent,

With presence and futurity.

3.

*Is there a wistful wit in leaves*

*Leaving each year for their hibernal*

*Bank holidays in the infernal*

*Old none-at-all-a-days? It grieves*

*The anticipation of the vernal,*

* How fat soever be the sheaves,*

*Till it is scarcely one believes*

*That generation is eternal.*

*All that is strongly said but weaves*

*The wreath of elegy, to mourn all*

*The shrivelled children of the kernel,*

*The nothing up the Reaper’s sleeves.*

*As epics into the diurnal*

*Plunging see forests full of leaves,*

*So in his helmet and his greaves*

*Felled Hector falls. And the leaves turn all*

*Colours, and on roofs and in eaves*

*Collect, and in one blazon burn all*

*Away, away. Then the hibernal*

*Whiteness. The blackness in the leaves.*

4.

But, Dear, you see my autumn crepe!

Recall the Tesseract of me,

 And that another side is free

And in a different landscape.

One part is gone, a broken wing,

For-Ever-Grief—while one reposes

Upon a lawn, breathing the roses.

My Dear, come see me in the spring!

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Note by Mr V:

*No mathematician, Oscar nevertheless learned from me such terms and concepts as the*

*tesseract,and put them to his own uses. ‘Tesseract’ (from Greek* τέσσερεις ακτίνες*, ‘four*

*rays’) is a term coined by the brilliant bigamist, mathematician and engineer, Charles*

*Hinton, in his book* A New Era of Thought *(1888), to describe what in geometry is to*

*the cube as the cube is to the square, an eight-cell regular octachoron or cubic prism, a four-*

*dimensional cube, or, as it is sometimes called, a ‘hypercube’. (It is, as well, one of the six*

*convex regular four-polytopes.) It is said that a man went mad trying to make sense of this*

*fiendishly complicated geometrical figure. Wilde appears to see this ‘fourth dimension’*

*as Time. It is worth noting, as well, that any corner of a tesseract has* four *perpendiculars.*

***Chapter Two***

**

***Promixta Theologia***

**The *prisca theologia*,**

**The *philosophia perennis*…**

**Many have never been to Venice,**

**But all are in one Gondola.**

***A Roundabout Cosmology***

1.

And then the pivot of a comma

Spins me about, and I return

To C.3.3., and there I burn

In tinsel fires of melodrama,

I am in Hell, nor am I ever

Out of it, and by the same token

By which Eternity’s stained, broken,

And pieced again (as by a clever



Craftsman) in what the eye sees as

White swans against a sky of blue,

When a warm wind blows gently through

The meadow, ruffling the green grass,

I am in Purgatory, am always

In Purgatory, by the same token

As who shall heal a promise broken

I walk the long, memorious hallways,

I am in Heaven perpetual

By the same (is it the same?) token,

Awakened now, and my fast broken,

I find it hardly bearable,

At times, this sorry Paradise,

For the sad secret of salvation

If you look hard, is resignation,

Writ in ice-crystals in its eyes,

Despair is only hope fulfilled,

So with its selves my soul debates,

Lingering by Saint Peter’s Gates,

So the same soul of mine that willed

Its way up from the lower realms

Is not the same that sees the good

Points even in the savage wood,

Rebellion gathers, overwhelms

A soul that doubts this is the best,

And the redundancy of stasis

Becomes the Luciferian basis

Of renewed longing and unrest,

As if there *had* to be a fall

From grace, as if there were a Schedule,

And now Hell is a burning red jewel

And a sidhe-cry and Siren call

That slices through the sound of harps

And psalteries and cold, hymning voices

Like mad despair, sick of its choices,

Chromatic accidentals, sharps

And keen augmented fifths arouse

In me, a critic always, even

In Heaven (especially in Heaven!)

A lust to join in Hell’s carouse,

To be there, or to have been there,

So I have always been in Hell

When the past drowns me in a swell

Of guilt that comes from everywhere,

But it recedes, the whelming sea

Of grief, the salt regret, again

I am, and will, I think, remain,

Upon the Mount of Purgatory,

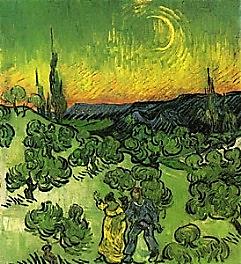
For in real Hell or abstract Heaven

I am someone else, here only I

Am what I am, eternally,

It seems, when it is half-past seven,



***The Phases of the Moon***

***A Consultation with Yeats***

What is it about Thirteen and Fourteen

That so compels me? *They are where you are*.

*Or somewhere in between them: they are phases*

*Of the interior moon that guides and governs*

*The migratory movements of our souls.*

So what the spirits said to George is true: *Yeats’s wife. One of the fruits of her*

The soul *does* have moon-phases twenty-eight— *many automatic writing sessions was*

Or is it twenty-six? *At full and dark Yeats’s esoteric book,* A Vision*.*—[Mr V]

*There is no human life*. *In the twelfth phase*

*One lives and dies a hero’s rôle, like Nietzsche*

*Or Hector—even, a little bit, like you,*

*When your astounding folly gave your life*

*The purple of tragedy, not quite your size.*

*You were, or you were meant to be, a man*

*Of action.* Then, the action… So I am

Between the thirteenth and the fourteenth phase?

*Your hero days are past. Weak as a worm*

*You have become, and there is war within you.*

I read this in your ‘Phases of the Moon’:

‘The soul begins to tremble into stillness,

To die into the labyrinth of itself’.

My soul has trembled into stillness such

As you perhaps could not imagine, Yeats.

And I have died into the labyrinth

That is my self: it was an empty place,

And, like all empty places, full of ghosts.

And now I do it all again, the trembling,

The dying, the stillness and the labyrinth…

*This time you can escape, to Phase Fifteen,*

*Where spirit and symbol become absolute,*

*And Choice and Chance are one. Here, in the realm*

*Of poetry, vanishing is fulfillment.*

Then, I suppose, I shall ‘pern in a gyre’.

And what will be *your* next phase, may I ask?

*I lay them out before me like a pack*

*Of cards. I shuffle and reshuffle, and still*

*I cannot quite decide. What do you think?*

I think you’d look quite dashing in a Twelve.

Please give my best to Mr Africanus. *Yeats’s guiding spirit, Leo Africanus*.—[Mr V]

***A Round***



The Apple of Self-Knowledge is

Riddled with worm-holes through and through.

These tunnels give us access to

Both past and future, passages

Through Space and Time the Imagination’s

Free to take where it lists. A hunger

It feels to grow both older and younger

Than Time itself, expatiations

It craves that make it dwarf all Space.

But where does all this lead, and when

You move beyond all Time, what then?

*Where* is your hour, *when* is your place?

Old things no longer know you, never

Knew you at all. Imagination,

Eternal Exile, has no nation,

Doomed to its liberty for ever.

Things mock our child’s nostalgias,

Old haunts and faces now estranged,

And all is changed, and all is changed,

My Dears, and nothing’s what it was—

Nor what it will be when the One

Who boasts, *Behold, I make all things*

*New* comes around again, and sings

Once more that old refrain, and bone

With bone is back together stitched

To act in Resurrection’s latest

Production, and the least and greatest

As if from a long sleep bewitched

Are roused to play their parts again.

All things being infinite, you see,

Infinite, too, is the ennui

Of shuffling bits of *where* and *when*.

And fiery John of Patmos, too,

May yawn a little, when at last he’s

Obliged to play Ecclesiastes

And find in newness nothing new.

**Chapter Two**

***l a***

***l a b y r i n t h i a***

***b h***

***y t***

***r n***

***i***

***r n***

***y t***

***b h***

***a i***

***l a b y r i n t h i a***

***Must Come the Hour***

To climb the mountain or the set of stairs,

The spiral staircase in the ceaseless tower,

Or arduous Mount Maru, must come the hour.

But courage hesitates and hope despairs.

Must come the hour to pass the narrow gate,

The only exit from the hungry maze,

Mirror to doorway, past the fixing gaze.

The hour approaches, and the hour is late.

***Deployments of the Labyrinth***

1. *Inscription*

THE DEVIL AT THE ENTRANCE ISN’T DANGEROUS

THE SELF WITHIN, THE CENTRAL SELF? A STRANGER.

THE ANGEL AT THE EXIT IS NO ANGEL.

2. *Enter MCV*

*Be calm. There is no exit from*

*The Library of Babel’s maze.*

*From aisle to aisle you move, and graze*

*Upon the books till Kingdom come,*

*Which it will not—save in* this *version.*

*Remove it from the shelf. You see?*

*‘Kingdom comes in three-thousand-three’.*

*A mistranslation from the Persian*.

*The riddles beckon, and one delves.*

*As I have written in a book*

*For which you shouldn’t try to look*

*On the infinity of shelves:*

*MCV MCV MCV MCV MCV MCV*

*MCV MCV MCV MCV MCV MCV\**

*MCV MCV\*\* MCV MCV MCV MCV*

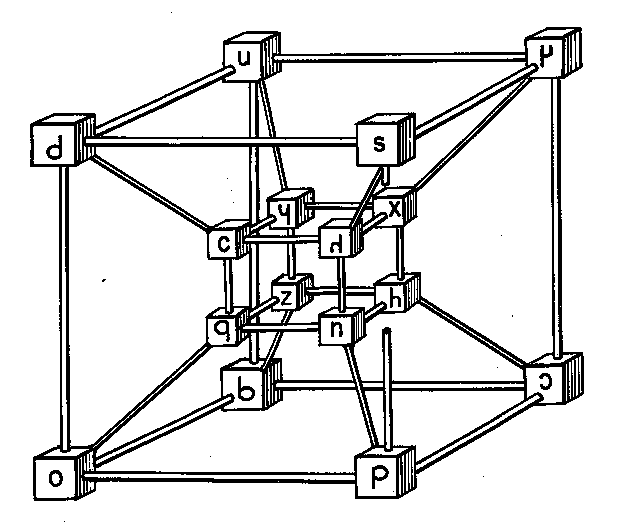
*MCV MCV MCV MCV MCV MCV Quoted in* MCV: The Autobiography.

*\** An acronym: ‘Marcel Chérit Vinteuil’. A message from M. Proust.

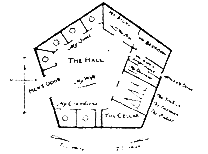
\*\* One-thousand-one-hundred-five, but only in *this* instantiation.

Can also be construed temporally as 11:05, but only *antemeridian*.

*MCV… Any relation to you, my Mr V?*



*Mi casa e su casa.*

*****The Aleph and Other Things***

*By elegantly and accurately dreaming, a young, near-*

*sighted Argentinian author (de)materialises before me.*

*Out of an infinite number of incompossible Borgesii,*

*he is the one who happens to appear as a semi-fictional*

*character in a poem by Oscar Wilde. Or does he? The author has asked to be identified*

*in the text as ‘MCV’.—*[Mr V]

*Among the particles, one particle MCV appears in a wizard’s robe, black as night.*

*Contains the others, all of them.*

*Some call him Aleph. Some say Shem.*

*Chapter and clause, to the least article,*

*Is there, of particles and laws.*

*I saw my own face in it, and*

*My bowels, as well, saw from left-hand*

*And right-hand, fore and aft. No loss*

*Is suffered not retrieved elsewhere,*

*Though perhaps very far away*

*And inaccessible to-day,*

*Perhaps for ever. Need we care?*

*Why is it not enough to wander*

*In wonder through the labyrinth*

*That in a temple on a plinth*

*Is laid out for a god to ponder?*

*Though you may think yourself behind*

*Doors, you in fact are on a plane*

*Projected, in a square. In vain*

*From Aleph’s hyper-cubic mind*

*You ‘hide’: he sees your face. He sees*

*Your entrails. Fail to understand*

*This and you are trapped in Flatland.*

*Who sees not, him the Blind Ones seize.*

*The wizard gear is put aside and we sit down together*

*\* on an old-fashioned chintz divan. We are in MCV’s*

*library (which is technically infinite), cocktails in hand.*

*The only bridge to Shangri-La*

*Is a staircase stretched laterally*

*Across the abysm. This will be*

*The maze that guides you to Trungpa.*

***The Birth of Labyrinthia***

***as Told by MCV***

1.

Chile fell into civil war

And self-seceded, west from east.

Chile, as such, is now deceased.

There are two where one had been before.

East Chile has *its* east and west.

These fight, as east with west will do:

East Chile breaks itself in two.

The reader can divine the rest:

West Chile, with *its* west and east,

Comes to the same result. Now, *four*

Countries where two had been before.

(Not that this matters in the least.)

Never is donned the irenic robe

Of international community,

From which the countries feel immunity,

For each is bitterly xenophobe.

This mad mitotic trend for years

Goes on, and each seceding land

Has narrower territory, and

Proportionately, the frontiers

Increase their territorial share.

Walk, and you cross a boundary; stand,

And straddle. There’s no room, no land,

Only the borders, everywhere.

2.

How name these subdivided lands

After so many iterations

Of east-west subdividing nations?

With so much little on their hands

Some poets suggest names like ‘Rose

West Eastern Chile’, ‘Lily East

Thrice-West’, the name increased

The more, the less the country grows.

On the street’s eastern side stands one

Nation, and on the western side,

Another; across the street’s Divide,

The no-man’s land, fire mortar and gun.

Some lands insist on numerals

Based on the Dewey decimal system.

The Founding Fathers, in their wisdom,

Named one land (seized, some say, on false

Pretences), ‘PR823

.J5 7325.’

Another name’s a Boolean hive:

Those *noughts* and *ones* spell sovereignty.

3.

Born out of so ingrown and vexed

A microgeopolitics,

The bickering Labyrinthians mix

Like strands of a disputed text.

To list the burgeoning names, with lower

And lower national populations,

Of these proliferating nations,

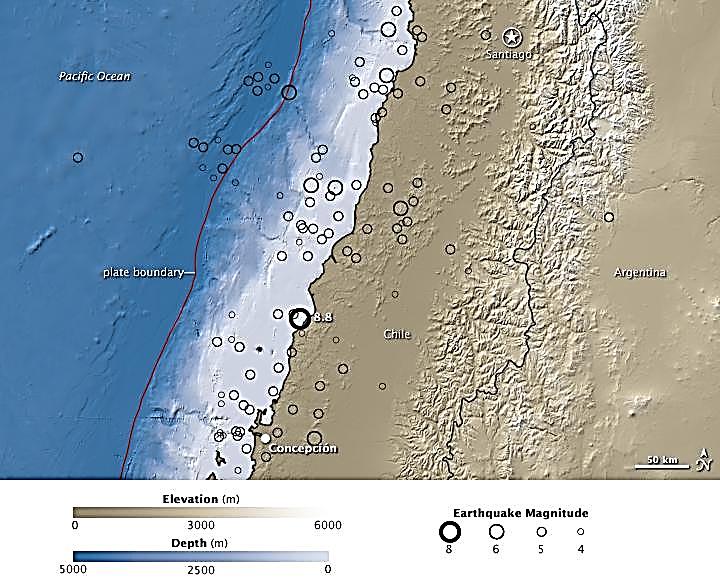
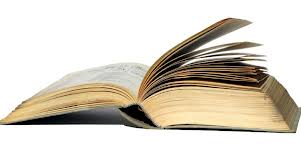
*The Encyclopaedia of Nowhere*

Has been compiled: a ninety-nine-

Ton-tome. After much legal battling,

The Book is laid down open, straddling

A dozen countries, on its spine.



***The Forking Paths and the Zohar***

*By elegantly and accurately dreaming, a young, near-*

*sighted Argentinian author (de)materialises before me*

*out of an infinite number of incompossible Borgesii,*

*He is the one that happens to appear as a semi-fictional*

*character in a poem by Oscar Wilde. Or does he? The author has asked to be identified in the text as*

*‘MCV’.—*[Mr V] *Hmm. Any relation to you, dear?*

*You never wrote the book you should We are sitting in MCV’s library (which*

*Have written.* Thou of little faith! *is technically infinite), cocktails in hand.*

*Oscar, my dear, you* are *a wraith.*

I am writing *you*. You are quite good.

*You* know *you were almost always right.*—

*‘*Almost’? I see a falling off,

Apostate! *It’s praise, not a scoff.*

It takes but one mistake: Good-night!

*I have not made* enough *mistakes,*

*I long to make* outrageous *ones.*

You speak *my* language now, for once!

Yes, make as many as you can:

You may end up where none has been.

*And if it is a luckless place?*

No matter. We both know the race

Is not to swift or slow. To win

Is to lose opportunities

To fail in a magnanimous way:

For poetry this wins the day.

Explore all possibilities—

*Oh infinite possibilities!*

*There is a place where polymaths*

*Wander like fools down garden paths*

*That fork into insanities.*

And in a parallel dimension

You are the Chinaman who spies

For the Huns. I’m the one who tries

To open up to you the intention,

Unfathomably deep, of your

Forefather’s garden, in which grew

The Book it was. You never knew

Until I told you that, before

You thought to ask, you were the scion

Of one who seemed a failure to

His family, even to you,

But was a visionary Lion.

*Well, he was infinitely clever,*

*That much is obviously true.*

*I owe my happiness to you.*

*Never shall I forget you. Never!*

And here you take a pistol from

Your pocket and shoot me. The name

Of the ‘ammo’ depot is the same

As that of the town to which you’ve come.

You were successful. Headlines tell

The Kaiser’s men the place to bomb.

With an inscrutable aplomb

You will wear the noose. You have done well.

*My death is penance, and it is*

*An act of gratitude, and love.*

*But meanwhile, in another of*

*My multiple realities,*

*I am a minor character*

*In a book written by a ghost.*

*There is a story, almost lost*

*In the sub-plots, in which* I*, sir,*

*Am the author of this book. This part*

*Is the key to the whole structure, and*

*Disproves that you had any hand*

*In the making of this work of art.*

*In* this *thread I am the narrator:*

*‘The stairway spiraled roundabout.*

*As I looked down, while leaning out*

*Over the trembling banister,*

*‘My father’s corpse went falling by.*

*It had been falling many years,*

*Skeletonised. I watched my tears,*

*A few drops, like rain in a dry*

*‘Climate, fall after him. They will*

*Evaporate within the hour.*

*Above, the stairs of Babel Tower*

*Shrink into the Illimitable’.*

I am that father, am I not,

Falling into his past again?

A corpse that falls and falls… And when

He lands, he wakes—is that the plot?—

In C.3.3., and watches, this

Time, as he looks over his own

Shoulder as he looks over his own

Shoulder as he looks over his

Own shoulder *Do you feel it, then,*

*The turning screw, the winding stair-*

*Case?* and sees what he’s writing there:

*Born you shall surely be again.*

*So I have brought you face to face*

*With the infinite. There’s nothing Greek*

*About it.* Can one even speak

Of it, let alone give it place

And time, or any pleasing shape?

And yet you *frame* the Infinite

With elegance, you make it fit

Inside an image, a landscape,

A looking glass, a labyrinth

Or labyrinthine garden. Why,

You almost set Infinity

Upon a fluted marble plinth!

3.*The Zohar*

*This version has it that you are*

*A man who is obsessed, so much*

*So, it is all you see and touch:*

*I mean the false coin, your Zohar.*

*You wake, and there is the Zohar.*

*You dream Zohar. You hear him call.*

*You paint the Zohar on the wall.*

*It is the Self you think you are.*

*Your vision becomes, finally,*

*Spherical, and the great Zohar*

*Stands in the centre, a dark star,*

*And front and back at once you see.*

*What can you do now but go out*

*Into the desert that you are*

*And fix on the great god Zohar*

*You will for ever think about?*

*And now you* are *the great Zohar:*

*You are the look of the Zohar,*

*And what is seen by the Zohar*

*And the Zohar of the Zohar!*

**

***The Prison of the Prism***

***I see now that I am back in the Hall***

***of Mirrors, but on a higher floor, a***

***further twist of the spiral staircase:***

***not lust for one body, but the lust***

***of the eye for the Visible led me here.***

***I am in the Book of Mirrors, or the***

***conjunction of a mirror and a book.***

***Am I following the itinerary set***

***out by Diotima, up the staircase of***

***Eros, from loving a beautiful boy***

***to loving beautiful boys to loving***

***Beauty’s abstract invisible Self?***

***The invisible source of all the***

***beauty that one sees, the undying***

***Beauty of things that fade and die?***

*MCV:*

*You know all things to be illusion.*

*Mirrors and fathers multiply*

*As they disseminate the lie,*

*And yet you cling to your confusion*

*And worship the abomination*

*That is the mirror that you place*

*Upon a shrine, to see your face*

*Adoring its own adoration.*

*How paltry is mere symmetry*

*When every pleasing shape you see*

*Is ruined by Infinity,*

*Which says, To be is not to be!*

When I look in the mirror that is you

I am startled by the absence of my own

Reflection. Is it hidden by a stone,

Or in the air one can see only *through*?

***The Water of the Mirror***

***MCV***

*The punishment reserved for facile poets*

*Who, on a thoughtless reflex, liken mirrors*

*To water, is to suffer absolute*

*Immersion in the truth of metaphor,*

*Animal baptism by night and day.*

*Beneath the surface of a pond you catch*

*Fish with your bare hands, and you eat them raw*

*Like any beast. They squirm repulsively*

*Between your teeth, and sometimes they escape.*

*Your mouth emits curse bubbles: gargled parts*

*Of speech rise to the surface, where they pop*

*Into the glare.*

*The water is your drink.*

*And yet, because it is the element*

*In which you move, and have your shadowy being;*

*Since when it goes, you, too, must disappear,*

*You are, in essence, drinking your own blood,*

*Consumed with that which you are nourished by.*

*(In darkness, your continuing existence,*

*A parenthetical consistency,*

*Is an hypothesis the metaphor*

*Entertains purely for its own amusement.)*

*O how you hate the birds and the gazelles*

*That lap your precious sustenance away,*

*Hastening the arrival of the hour*

*When, on the hottest day of the dry season,*

*The pond evaporates, and so do you!*

*No longer does the instant fire of lamp*

*Or sunlight spark a pair of dazzled eyes.*

*Somewhere far off they fall, two drops of rain.*

*The gilded metal circle on the wall*

*Is pure xerosis, cleansed of you. Fulfilled*

*By emptiness, the frame is now the image:*

*The ourobouros. Serpent self-enclosed,*

*It curves around an undistracting blank.*

***The Thing that Wasn’t***



1.

I waft, I float, I dawdle and linger

Here in the In-Between; for being

Nowhere and everywhere is freeing,

Somehow. I needn’t lift a finger.

My ‘Boat of Ra,’ steered by a thought,

Is something of a drunken boat.

Look! Lazily reclined I float

Down a canal, past Angkor Wat.

I have no promises to keep,

 No obligations to be met,

And no appointments to forget.

I can do everything but sleep.

2.

For the dead have no place to lay

Their weary, immaterial heads.

The clouds make unreliable beds,

There is no night, there is no day.

No, an eternal wakefulness

Inside a dream that lasts for ever.

When the last human tie you sever

With those you cared for, you are less

And less attached to any place,

To any person, any time,

A stranger now in every clime.

And none can even see your face

And say, *I do not know this man*.

They do not know they do not know you.

And everything seems far below you,

All the spread landscapes that you scan,

For you are looking from a cloud

That drifts along, your floating home,

And watch the hurried humans come

And go in darkness like a shroud

That covers them, of ignorance,

Of pain and pleasure, hypnotised

By moments so soon vaporised:

Gone at a single gamma-glance

Of Shiva, he for whom the Ages

Are counted by the second-hand,

And rise and fall of sea and land

And Empire, those tumultuous rages,

Are as a little puppet-show

Of lantern-shadows on a wall.

All these futilities appal

A spirit, nowhere do they go

And nothing do they come from, all

 A microscopic business

Of tiny furies, meaningless

Buzzing of flies that hover and crawl

Over the body of your lover,

Left in a shallow grave somewhere

Deep in the woods, and you are there,

You helpless phantom, weeping over

The helpless corpse with phantom tears,

And this shall never be forgot,

And never shall you leave the spot.

Less than a minute are the years.

For *you* there is no time, but wake

Unending, and no opium

Can rescue this insomnia from

Itself. It is a frozen lake

In which the faces of the dead

Just underneath the surface stare

Up at you, asking you to care:

*We lived! We were!* You want a bed

To sleep in, sleep away *your* death,

A bed for endless sleep, and sound.

But it is nowhere to be found,

Above the clouds or underneath.

The *now* in which I speak: unreal.

Unreal the passion, life or death,

A rusty sword without a sheath,

A buried coin, a cast-off wheel,

Unreal, I say, unreal the pain,

The things you think you love, unreal,

Unreal the feelings that you feel,

An orphaned mind outside its brain,

Your thoughts are not real, and your senses,

Shadows of wits that once saw light,

Heard songs, and parsed the black from white.

And all the verbs have lost their tenses,

No ‘was’, no ‘will be’, and no present,

For where you are now is not now.

Do you begin to fathom how

It is to be a thing that isn’t?



***Stanzas for Asterion***

The cursed are sacred, they are set

Apart. They wander lost in rooms

That have no house, and darkness glooms

Over the floors a spreading net.

He came for you, he kept his pledge,

And from his hand your head swung free

Of Gordion-knotted intricacy

Solved by the simplest, keenest edge.

******

***How Certain is ‘Curtain’?***

** ***Or: A Door, a Jar***

***A Philological Tragicomedy***

*Hermes leads me through a labyrinth of words.*

1.

*Open the curtains, dear. Let pass*

*The coaches and the clouds awhile.*

*Here is a tale to make you smile:*

*A story about words. If as*

*A philologian I may speak,*

*The etymology of ‘curtain’*

*Is veiled behind a weak, uncertain*

*Vulgate translation of the Greek.* *Which in turn renders*

*Heb.* yeriah *in Exodus.*

Cortina *means, in classical*

*Latin, ‘cauldron’, diminutive*

*Of* cortem*, from which we derive Derived in turn from*

*The ‘court’ in ‘courtyard’. (Thus the ‘fall’ cohortem (nom. cohors).*

*Of language brings a faint recall*

*Of etymology.) In Greek, ‘curtain’*

*(*Aulaia*) connects with a certain*

*Custom: not using doors at all*

*But rather curtains opening*

*On courts, as much as possible*

*Allowing the house to breathe and fill*

*With air, and what the breezes bring*

*Into it of their cool, with fragrant*

*Hints of a bright Athenian day.—*

*‘Curtain’ is but a silly say;*

*Consider it a semantic vagrant.*

*A cauldron serving as a door!*

*We’ve much to thank confusion for,*

*Like those illusions we adore*

*Until found true, and thus a bore.*

2*. The King, the Door, and the Assassins*

*The door is thick (with walls to match)*

*As the rooms lodged within are deep,*

*And has compartments spies can creep*

*Through on their intramural watch.*

*This makes the door a kind of room*

*Large enough to store, in one chamber,*

*Cauldrons with oil or fragrant amber*

*Filled; in another, at her loom,*

*A Norn is spinning out a cloth*

*Embroidered with a tragic story,*

*Which some might call an allegory:*

*The Angel Turned into a Moth.*

*An eyeless Norn the pattern feeds.*

*From sister Fates she brooks the schism,*

*Feeling her way by algorithm,*

*The writer, not the one who reads.*

**

*So thick a door has its own walls.*

*Through these a fricative sussuration*

*Like running water’s circulation*

*Of rats down intramural halls*

*Scurrying provides a score of rushed*

*And hurried whisperings, as of some*

*Omen of dire events to come.*

*And they will not quelled or hushed.*

*Behind the walls are other walls,*

*And behind these, the Old Ones wait.*

*Nothing’s more ancient than their hate.*

*They bide their time till Master calls.*

*They are off-coloured. Red-ed, blue-lue,*

*Green-reen: Colours for ever fleeing*

*Themselves, they so abhor their being.*

*They give their hate the name CTHULU.*

3.

*The King who broods within the walls*

*In one of myriad rooms (the palace,*

*Dear, was designed, with subtle malice,*

*As a maze, and ghosts walk the halls),*

*The King who drains his cup and laughs*

*For one insanely barking moment*

*And then declines all further comment,*

*Numbed by the Rhenish that he quaffs,*

*Is on all sides by foes surrounded.*

 *Ah, the Great have great enemies!*

*He squeezes his mind’s eye, and sees*

*Some stones unturned, no fears unfounded.*

*The King is in a parlous way*

*For he is trapped, besieged by mirrors*

*That multiply him by his terrors.*

*They own his mind. He is their prey.*

*The assassin in the door is dazed*

*By thump of treadle and rush of rodents,*

*And by a maze of chambers so dense*

*He wanders lost and slightly crazed.*

*The assassin in the walls is guided*

*By priests to a small entrance whence*

*He issues, knife in hand. His sense*

*Of orientation a decided*

*Turn for the hapless takes, however,*

*For where the hidden King may be*

*Is anyone’s theology.*

*This murderer, too, is lost, and never*

*Heard from again. For there are many*

*Spare spaces in the tombs inside*

*The closets where a ghost may hide.*

*For such, may Charon waive the penny!*

*The King could sometimes wish his killer*

*Might find him, and conclude the endless*

*End-game that so torments him, friendless*

*And weary. From behind a pillar*

*He dreams him springing with the knife*

*And writing in his willing throat,*

*To end a play not worth the groat,*

*A bright red finis to his life.*

4.

*So I ‘draw-to’ this cauldron-curtain*

*Of words and all therein contained.*

*I hope it was not well explained:*

*One wants things thus, a bit uncertain.*

***Theseus, Tithonus***

***In Astral C.3.3.***

**Labyrinthian Pledge of Allegiance**

I pledge allegiance to the Land

Of Labyrinths, and to the god

Of this wan nation, under sod,

And to the Man-Bull, axe in hand!

1.

How many quests is Romance made

Of? How many mazes are there

In the House of Mazes? Climb the stair-

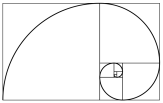
Case in its spiraling, past the jade

Monkey simpering on its plinth

Again, and again pass the jade

Monkey: the charm begins to fade

Of living in a labyrinth.

So many stairs to climb, and quests

To question or to quest, *that* is

The question. There is deep unease,

Arthritis in the knees, the guests—

The guests!—have long since gone, and I?

I am your charming host, Tithonus.

I bear my house, its creaking onus,

With shrinking strength, and dimming eye.

I am the weary master of

The mazes, and their slave. My heap

Of questing-trophies I still keep

In a room several floors above.

There I am, sitting by myself.

They’ll never find me here in this

Attic. My *Don Quixote* is

Looking sad up there, on the shelf.

\*

Once more, dear friends, into the maze!

Is getting lost perhaps the only way

Out of here? It will be a lonely way.

I still must serve so many days,

So many days, so little time!

It is not gentlemanly to *rush*.

Nor yet to beat about the bush,

When burning. Ah, these walls, this *lime!*

***The Minotaur***

Or is he something different,

This creature waiting in the centre?

One part of him is a young renter

Used and discarded, perhaps bent

On vengeance for my having shown him

Glimpses of a world not his own,

Spoiled now for *his*, stranded, alone

In the sea back to which I’ve thrown him,

Now alienated from his kind

And to the Paradise he’d known

Denied re-entry, *twice*-alone.

(All this takes place inside my mind!)

Parts of him are my family,

It may be: Constance and my sons.

A good husband and father once,

When I pursued debauchery

As if it were my Holy Grail,

I quite forgot them, gave them not

A thought. I left my wife distraught,

My sons neglected. And I fail,

Even now, to understand just *why*.

The monster is the unhappy life

My helpless sons led when my wife

Could find no reason not to die,

When they were left to the cold care

Of relatives who punished them

For *my* sins. For *this* I condemn

Myself to climb, stair after stair,

The spiral of my guilt, to thread

The maze of my indifference

To loved ones. Acts that made no sense

Now make that *nightmare* sense, that dread

You’d feel, trapped in a prison-maze

Of the kind drawn by Piranesi,

Cruelly, *rigorously* crazy,

And infinite are the crooked ways,

And not one way leads anywhere,

# *Narcissus the Cogito*

*Malin génie*, why did you let me sink

Into this maze of watery mirrors, caught

In multiple reflections of one thought

I *think* I think I think I think I think?

Or leads you back to where you started,

A wilderness that can’t be charted—

And the monster waits hidden there.

Clutched in its hand there is an ace

Of clubs, or simply a club, or say,

A card left at a club one day.

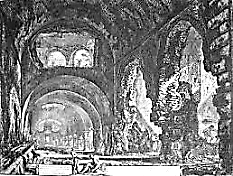
It knows its way around the place.

I know it keeps its hungry den

Somewhere inside. I hesitate

And hide until it is too late.

The nightmare must come round again.



*The National Flag of Labyrinthia.*

******

***The Wrathful Goddesses***

*First, the Wrathful Gods, dancing like Shiva, with horrible faces,*

*gibbering Queensberry faces, pursed-lipped Justice Wills faces,*

*mutton-chopped jeering Cockney faces, horrible, oh horrible!*

*Then the Wrathful Goddesses, and all of them are aspects of*

*the damage that I did to my poor Constance: shapes of guilt!*

**

*A vampire, bleeding from her loins!*

*Pregnant and bleeding from her loins!*

Then shall I call you Dragon Lady,

Daughter of Draco, or Dracul,

A whispering, seductive ghoul

‘Mid trees, in a wood drear and shady?



*Kali, tongue lolling, dancing a bone-shaking*

*dance over my sprawled, lascivious body as I*

*lie in bed with a young renter—the walls shake,*

*the world shakes, my brain shakes within my skull!*

Then shall I do as the Bengali

And make of the dark goddess my

Madonna? For I have caught the eye

Of the annihilating Kali!

*Horrible goddesses of the Underworld, decaying black*

*corpses of prostitutes exulting over my humiliation!*



Shall I call Hel’s decomposition

Black Resurrection, shall I call

 The gangrene of Ereshkigal

Beautiful, and a Heavenly vision?

*Now, beautiful Lilith—or is it Alfred Taylor in drag?—*

*approaches. She is beautiful and pale and forsaken,*

*and full of little hungers! She has a serpent’s tongue!*

Come, Lilith of the witching smile!

The *lila* of the lily be

And lotus of the Mystery.

Illude me with your charming guile.

Ill there are many who have known

Those charms, O Belle Dame Sans Merci;

Many the dead. The Mystery

Will not be still, it thrills the bone!

You are the goddess and the demon,

Betrayed for-ever for another,

The monster Grendel’s monster Mother

You have become, and no man’s leman

But a devourer of man-flesh!

You are coming after me! You flare

Your nostrils as you snuff the air,

You want my blood, you want it fresh!



*Now it is a beautiful young Artemisian girl, slim-*

*hipped, with a face uncannily like my Bosie dear!*

Sly Vivien is Lilith now.

Me, Merlin, she has coaxed dark treasure

Of magic from. She waves the measure

And weaves the hands, until somehow

I am imprisoned in an oak.

I can see only her, and she

Alone can see me. Doomed to be

The victim of my foolish stroke

Of whim, of love (and none-too clever),

‘Twas I who taught her all she knows,

Enough to bring me to this close.

I am a prisoner here for ever!

*The inner walls of the oak are slowly closing in on*

*me. I will be crushed to death over and over again!*

Except that in the Oghum script…

What is it in Brythonic, or

Could it be Gaelic: *oak* is *door*,

*Duir*. This trap may yet be slipped…

*And now the interior of the tree begins to*

*resemble an illustration by John Tenniel: am*

*I in* Alice’s Adventures Underground*?*

This oak tree*,* that is, has a door.

I look around: ah, there it is!

A cat-door. Shall I be Alice?

I’ve been as small as that before,

Quick business for a man turned cat

To slink through a tight aperture,

And so escape. But am I sure

It is as simple as all that?

*Alice stands in the door, very, very small, but*

*I suspect she will grow tall at any moment.*

Am I inside a bigger tree,

The World-Tree? *You’re a horrid man,*

*But I shall help you if I can.*

*Quick, through this door!* And I am free.

Free to be what? I have escaped

Because I am small and thin, a ghost,

A hungry ghost! Free to be lost

Inside the twisted soul I have shaped!



***‘Everyman’ Refert***

*Knowledge returns, and has the last word.*

Help, someone! Help! I have no food!

I am a Hungry, Mouth-less Ghost.

Knowledge, help me, or I am lost!

I am so sorry I was rude.

*Every man I wyll go with thee*

*And be thy gyde, in thy most nede  
 To go by thy syde*.—(You do mean *need*?)

*I know the way. Follow thou me.*

*****Escaping from the Labyrinth***

These walls are blankness washed with lime

And I can find no passage through.

Where is the Aleph-gate, where do

The spiral stairs begin their climb?

*I seem to hear the voice of Orpheus*

*The origin that rhymes with sin. echoing down the cavernous hall.*

*The fortune made so soon unmade.*

*The forward step, the retrograde.*

*The sin that rhymes with origin.*

Selfless Poet, where is the gate?

I think I will be lost in here

For ever if you don’t appear.

*You have lost time.* Is it too late?

*Follow me, I will lead you out.*

You will not turn and look at me

And leave me here eternally?

*Trust me! There is no time for doubt.*

******

***Quieting the Eye***

*The Voice of Anthologoios.*

1.

*Be blind awhile, and listen, dear.*

*Your eye has done you much offence.*

*Lay black crepe on the hungry lens.*

*Let Beauty enter through the ear.*

*Let the acrobats of vision rest,*

*No more upon the retinas*

*To dance their hand-stands for applause.*

*Let colour drain into the West.*

*The prism that has broken light*

*A million ways to feed your eyes*

*Let break, that all the hues may rise*

*Back to their Heaven vague and white.*

*Accept the music of what is*

*Into the blind and cradling ark*

*Of listening, where Truth is dark*

*And sheltered from all images.*

*The music feels its way along*

*The labyrinth. By feel it knows*

*The furniture of nerves, it goes*

*The spiral journey of all song*

*That wants to build into the joy*

*And soft explosion of its power*

*To make a blossom of an hour.*

*It is not still, and does not cloy.*

*Nor is the ancient music gone.*

*Great Memnon sits upon his throne*

*Built of cool ratios of stone*

*Whose architecture sings at dawn.*

Music is the link, isn’t it,

Between the Mathematical—

The expressible—and the Mystical,

The inexpressible infinite?

And wasn’t it a Cantor who

Equated the Aleph with the Lord?

A Cantor, too, who set the Word

To music infinitely through-

Composed, as it were, intricately

Deep as it is perspicuous,

Yet filled with soul? *Yes, hear it thus,*

*Theomathemusically.*

2. *Pythagorean Orpheus*

*Vision finds sanctuary in time made rhythm.*

*The auricular nerve vibrates in unison*

*With Orphic strains, and ear and harp are one.*

*The spark of joy leaps the synaptic schism.*

*He tunes the music on his giant harp*

*Of myriad strings, each string a particle*

*Or wave, on staves multidimensional.*

*In neutron flat or in electron sharp*

*Through the star-eaten body of the dark*

*The fugue of matter and energy pursues*

*Its trillion courses, bent to split and fuse*

*And split again to fractions of a quark.*

*The lowest octave of a stone he plays;*

*And in the sopranino heights of space*

*In fiercest notes, each with a Shiva-face,*

*The furious descant of the gamma rays…*

*Everywhere wave-functions decohere*

*Symphonically in whispering, roaring, sobbing:*

*Basso profundo of the black hole throbbing.*

*Flute notes that keep their distance, although near.*

*Our lives and deaths vibrate across the strings.*

*Pythagorean Orpheus orchestrates*

*The Vast from its minutest quantum states:*

*He is the infinite part-song that he sings.*

***Harmony Lessons***

*The Voice of Anthologoios.*

*Pythagoras studied well the intervals,*

*And reasoned out the rational harmony*

*Of unison, fifth and octave. But when he*

*Heard* cosmic *harmony, his ears played false.*

*He shied from the alien interstellar reaches*

*Of the overtones, where crackling dissonances*

*Perform chaotic microtonal dances;*

*There, eardrums shatter as Shiva booms and screeches.*

*(Students of harmony were the Chinese,*

*As well. They knew the chord built on the third.*

*But the Emperor forbade it, for he heard*

*It as a dissonance. It did not please.*

*And so they cultivate their garden plot,*

*The pentatonic scale. And yet they savour*

*The timbre of zither or flute, the dissonant flavour*

*That is nuance, a subtlety of thought.)*

*In the black vacuums, aleatory is*

*The music of the spheres… We hear white noise,*

*Echo of an Explosion. The human voice*

*Has no place in that stifling abyss.*

*Then let us cleave unto our simple psalms*

*To scaled-down, manageable Sublimity.*

*The storms of a Beethoven symphony*

*Are not the Ocean’s furies, but its calms.*

***The Music of the Spheres***

*The voice of Anthologoios.*

*All things return, and now the time draws near*

*When Shiva will make light of rocks and bones.*

*All will be light, and silence will descend.*

*All will be still, and gathered at the end.*

*And in that silent stillness Soul will hear*

*Its inmost, esoteric microtones,*

*In all their timbres—ancient hopes and fears—*

*And these will be the music of the spheres.*

***The Music Ends***

***The Voice of Orpheus***

*The melody’s end is not its goal. But until it reaches its end, it has not reached its goal.*

*—*Nietzsche

*The music ends too soon so that the ear*

*May ring with wishing it would never cease.*

*We learn to love by losing what is dear.*

*Just when with parting we have made our peace*

*The music ends*

*In a smoke sharp enough to sting a tear.*

*Those Odes to Joy are Heavens that we lease.*

*The Timeless briefly hovered and was near.*

*Da capo then, belovèd Masterpiece,*

*The only Opus that we ever hear!*

*A rosin cloud drifts over the high C’s:*

*The music ends.*

***Fire in the Hall of Mirrors***

*It watched itself burning from every angle:*

*Fat bulging dwarf flames and tall skinny tongues*

*Of fire blackening the glass panes everywhere.—*

Or was it just one more of the magician’s

Tricks, the flash powder, crimson ribbons, crackle

Of cellophane? The heat: was it the fire

Or a blast from the registers along the floorboards?

*Revelers ran lost and screaming through the hall.*

But weren’t the revelers, perhaps, just actors?

Was screaming in the script? When they ran ‘lost’

Wasn’t it along paths chalked out for them

By the production crew? Was this a motion

Picture? As for the mirrors: Were *they* real?

The smoke you mentioned: Was *that* really there?—

*You can be sure about the smoke and mirrors.*



***Holding the Mirror up to Artifice***

*Show the mirror its own reflection.*

*Catch the reflecting in the act.*

*The coating with which it is backed*

*Let it look back on. Introspection*

*Makes the impassive speculum*

*Turn Hamlet, making question of*

*Beerbohm Tree.*

*Itself. How can Narcissus love*

*His image when, like a fine scum,*

*Doubt clouds the mirror of the pond?*

*He doubts his self-love, for he doubts*

*He has a self. And when he shouts,*

*Whose echo mocks him from beyond*

*That stand of trees?**His too-close look*

*Dirties the lens and makes obscure*

*What Surety once thought most sure.*

*Perhaps he is written in a book…*

*A character made of characters?*

*If he exists, is it because*

*Someone is dreaming that he does,*

*And dreaming him a universe?*

*Let but reflection once reflect*

*Upon itself, and ‘twill confess*

*Too-great awareness makes things less*

*Real, and not more. Let it direct*

*Upon itself its shining beam,*

*As through a magnifying glass,*

*Till tinder-dry as summer’s grass*

*It bursts into a Phoenix dream,*

*The flame, the victim and the pyre.*

*Out of the ashes may arise*

*A ghost with second-sighted eyes,*

*Self-fathered in the purging fire.*

*Mercury’s coat makes glass look back*

*At us, but Mercury’s a liar.*

*(Yet life may lovely lies require*

*If truth be but a Void, a Lack.)*

*Even second sight may prove a liar.*

*Who knows what lies behind the lies?*

*Illusion, that so charms our eyes,*

*Is but the mirror of Desire.*

***Hamlet Revisits Mimesis***

***After Smoking Hashish***

*Car les miroirs ne nous montrent*

*que les masques.*—Salomé

*…To which I say, just as the sound*

*Should be the echo of the sense,*

*The ‘look’ of words, as at lines’ ends,*

*Should mirror it, should show the wound,*

*If wound there be, in body or soul,*

*In its own texture and proportion,*

*Give back distortion as distortion,*

*Crack if it must, or take the hole*

**

*Pain’s arrow makes into its own*

*Vitreous flesh. To push mimesis*

*To the point where it falls to pieces,*

*Glass shivered by an overtone,*

*Irruption of wild Energy*

*Into the Image till it shout*

*In shining shards, features blown out*

*In shattering thermal ecstasy,*

*Unmasks the features, shows the face,*

*That fragile mask, in part exploded,*

*With regions patchy or eroded,*

*How tenuously it stayed in place.*

*He holds a mirror up to my face.*

I wear the Mask of Tragedy:

The twisted rictus on my face

Is permanently glued in place.

I am that mask, the mask wears me!

*Canst thou not stand the looking glass?*

*Then break the glass and break thy face*

*Into a thousand faces, face*

*The breakage of your looking glass!*



# *The Mirror-Man*

***MCV***

*The mirror suddenly saw itself in the mirror*

*Of a man. On assignment from* The Daily Mirror*, the man*

*Interviewed the man who was once stared down by a mirror.*

*The Man-Mirror you saw in the mirror was a man*

*Looking in the mirror at a Mirror-Man. Smash the mirror.*

# *Bits of mirror lie on the floor. Step over the shards of Man.*

******

***Three MCVs and the Garden***

***of the Earthly Paradise***

*The truth is that we all live by leaving behind; no doubt we all*

*profoundly know that we are immortal and that sooner or later*

*everyone will do all things and know everything.—*MCV

1. *MCV*-*Marcel ChéritVintueil*

*This bloom, this little seed you see,*

*This wilted stem (is, will be, was),*

*Prenatal, present, posthumous,*

*Existing as one, shimmeringly:*

*Lily and violet and rose.*

What would you name this little tract?

*The Garden of the Tesseract.*

Much like your novel, I suppose?

2. *MCV Proper*

*That fall you took from the edge of the*

*Cliff in the Alps? It was into*

*The bottomless regress of you*

*And your return, eternally.*

*The year is nineteen-forty-six.*

*In nineteen-thirty-nine you were*

*Reborn as Trungpa. And yet here*

*You linger on…You are in a fix:*

*In* this *version, by some mistake The ‘1946’ version*.—[Mr V]

*You have reincarnated as*

*Yourself.* Just as the one I was?

That makes no sense! *Strange they should make*

*This sort of error; it’s very rare. Looking back from the 1950’s, I am tempted by*

*No matter. The strange Lethean spell the ‘Everett Interpretation’ to speculate that*

*Was such that you could hardly tell Oscar’s karmic wave-function carelessly allowed*

*The difference that wasn’t there. itself to decohere into two parallel plot- or world-*

*lines with two different outcomes.*—[Mr V]

It must be when my ghost went back

To *this* poem, or the sketch I made

In C.3.3., when something bade

Me gather up those threads gone slack

And undertake to finish what

I’d started and abandoned. *Then*

I fell into this loop. Ah, when

Will it be finished? Tell me that.

We take the fork in every road.

There is no finish. Things continue,

Merge and diverge, without-within you.

There is no code that solves the code.

3. MCV A.M.

*Rotate the Tesseract a few*

*Degrees, and go back seven years*

*Where your next avatar appears.*

*You become him. He becomes you.*

*All this is set for February*

*The twenty-eighth, at MCV*

*(11:05) A.M. Be*

*Ready. These schedules never vary.*

*It is here that your journey ends*

*And the long poem is at last*

*Complete.* Abandoned! *No more past.*

*‘Your’ future is waiting: you will be friends.*

******

***Crossing the Bridge***

And so across the bridge I thread

My way. Two ropes support and guide

Me lest I fall from either side.

And the loose planks that I must tread

Are each a house, or tesseract,

A space in time, *my* life and times.

As arduously as one climbs

A mountain I traverse each tract

Or wooden rectangle, for each

Has depths down which a man might fall,

And rooms for getting lost in. All

Below is depth, but within reach

Is the other side—no turning round!

A tiny figure in the vast

Landscape I walk until at last

My feet are safe on solid ground

And I am in my Shangri-La,

Perched many miles above the abyss.

My home away from home is this.

Here waits my soul’s next avatar.

**

***The Sacred Monster Stellified***

*The sacrificed abomination, the one*

*Whose palace was an endless prison house,*

*I raise amongst the heavenly carouse:*

*The darkly shining god Asterion.*

\*

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**Chapter Four**

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***The Metansomatosis***

***of***

***Oscar Fingal O’Flaherty Wills Wilde***

***From the day when [the Greeks] left the chill table-lands***

***of Tibet and journeyed, a nomadic people, to Aegean***

***shores, the characteristic of their nature***

***has been the search for…***

***—From* The Rise of Historical Criticism**

**\***

***Blue! ‘Tis the life of heaven,—the domain***

***Of Cynthia,—the wide palace of the sun.***

***—Keats***

**\***

***Old China Blue,***

***With a bright sunflower***

***He’d play by the hour.***

***He was utterly, utterly, utter-too-too.***

*PatienCe****, MY DEars! The ENd is*** *NE****aR…***

***Some tying up of loose ends, loosE***

***Lines, and*** *EA****ch hanging-bac****K**CA****boose***

***To close tHE circles oF the sPhERE…***

***Donot all thinGS come Round again?***

***They do, and round again They come.***

***Away fROM home away FROM home,***

***Nomad, how to tell loss from gain?***

***Selfscape, with Topologists and Avatar***



i.

It is a heavenly mistake

To seek the Absolute, one sighs.

The Truth is not in Paradise.

The Truth once tried its best to make

It through the gate, but was too wide for it.

Sadistic is the sun, the moon

A masochist. They are in tune.

I lived for Pleasure and I died for it.

ii. *Topology*

Is geometric caricature,

This or that feature exaggerating

In ways that can be quite elating

Or too restricting to endure.

What creature logically absurd

Survives the heckling torsions? I

Am far too much *myself*. They try

To round me off. But I am a surd.

Karma and Fate are having sport

With me, exploiting my psychology

To work out problems in topology.

To what extent, when they distort

The curves and ratios of me,

Do I retain my properties,

And at what point do I lose these,

And with them, my identity?

Becoming someone altogether

Other, a wholly different entity.

(Is this perhaps my *alientity*?)

As wood is by the harshest weather

Tested, and learns if it is proof

Against vicissitudes, can stand

These changes without warping and

Discolouring, fit for wall or roof,

So Karma bends and stretches *me*

(For instance, making me employ

A word like ‘Karma’!), not to annoy,

Though, so much as to set me free.

Can Oscar change in all these ways

And still be Oscar? *Need* he be?

Negative capability

Can go no further than this place.

The question that the Buddha would

Not answer: Whether an underlying

Soul, through the cycles of our dying

And being reborn, subsists, for good

Or ill. Is some identity

Retained through all the transmigrations

And up-and-down reincarnations—

In Hindoo terminology,

An *Atman*, indestructible

Since it is one with the Unthinkable,

Brahman, and therefore is unsinkable

So that in the end, all is well?

(If I am to be reduced to my

Essential Self, I hope my *Atman*

Is not this forty-year-old fat man

But the trim youth of days gone by!)

iii.

Is this so different from my old

Aestheticism, my defence

Of the Unreal? The world of sense

I made into a calf of gold,

Perhaps. I spoke of the undying

Beauty of things that fade and die.

Now all I see is sky, and sky.

I find all this a little trying.

iv.

Sometimes I hear a child’s voice speaking

From where? I have chosen to assume

That it is coming from a womb.

He is the one I have been seeking.

**Affinities we two have found

With one another. They are expressed

As radical difference. Yet, from west

And east, we meet upon the ground

That is the table land from which

The Aryan shepherds long ago

Descended to become, below,

The Greeks. The irony is rich

As blood must be (and feet well-shod!)

To brave the skyey altitudes

Where light is closer, where it broods

Upon the mountains like a god.

It was for light his ancestors

And mine (and we both share these same

Ancestors) always sought. Though name

Gives way to name, ‘tis the one course

Our vision follows, one direction:

Toward the light, and even the dead

Move towards it, as if by light *fed*.

*I see you’ve done some introspection.*

I was, until *those* *years*, an antic

Sage, Bodhisattva-like in some

Respects, and to *this* pass I’ve come

(In bodiless form, yet still…Romantic)

Because the seer-through-the-veil

Who should know all is an Illusion

Betrayed the Unreal, to his confusion,

When he the veil *rent* (you won’t fail

To catch my meaning) and so fell.

And that is why all this was bound

To happen: that I circle round *Trungpa manifests himself.*

Myself to meet *you*, and how well

Met we two are, Trungpa! *We’ve both*

*Covered much ground to find each other*

*As* *the other.* Brother and anti-brother!

*I want to rouse you from your sloth.*

*You spent six years in college, no?*

***The Buddha on the Five Senses***

*Let one cut away the five, relinquish the*

*five, and, especially, cultivate the five.*

*—*The Dammhapada, XXV

*—*The Dammhapada, XXV

*Not till your thirties did you write*

*Substantial things. For one so bright*

*And quick you can be rather slow.*

*Dear, you must promise me no longer*

*To dawdle in the Bardo. Four*

*Decades you’ve lingered at the door:*

*Still you will not pass through. Be stronger!*

v.

And so Aesthete will undergo

A deformation into Mystic.

By twists and turns almost sadistic

The hedonist must come to know

The pleasure of renouncing pleasure.

The lover of gems, intaglios

And precious sonnets and the rose

Must look on vistas without measure. *The Himalayas writ infinitely large.*

O little, well-wrought things, a face

Youthful, chiselled and marble-white,

Blue china things, a touch as light

As air: you fade into pure Space!

Something within me will be ‘smart’

Even in the presence of the Unthinkable.

(Then is my shallow skiff unsinkable?)

How worship at the shrine of Art

When it is dwarfed by boundless shrines

Of luminous emptiness and peace,

The stars beyond the stars, the seas

Beyond the seas, the light that shines

Nowhere for no one and for ever?

I’d love a spot of tea and crumpets

Just now. And then the Angels’ trumpets!

It seems a tedious endeavour.

vi.

Among such far-too awesome shapes

One takes a page from Heraclitus

And counters the sublime arthritis

Of mere Immensity’s landscapes

**With this perspective-thought, that small

And great are from ‘a god’s-eye-view’

The Same, are One that plays as two.

Scarbo is Scarbo, dwarf or tall.

***My Crystal Sonnet***

*I console myself by trying now and then to put the ‘Universe’ into a sonnet…a strange crystal that mirrors all the world… Poetry should be like a crystal: it should make life more beautiful and less real.*

—From an Interview

*To put the Universe into a sonnet:*

*No small thing! Yet, though intricately clear,*

*It* would *be small… And when you looked upon it*

*You’d see yourself inside that crystal sphere,*

*But only as one atom among many,*

*A myriad, nay, wholesale infinity!*

*A sonnet coined into a cosmic penny*

*Would by itself be seen, and, seeing, be,*

*And find its purchase in the fact of seeing*

*As the act of being seen. How Truth would change,*

*Knowing ITSELF! So rich would grow the real*

*That Truth would prove to be the dream of Being,*

*The Terror of its Beauty, and the feel*

*Of something unimaginably Strange.*

vii.

I am with the Greeks, in that I want

A world built on a human scale.

And if in Beauty it should fail,

And of Sublimity make vaunt

In the brow-beating Infinite,

I take my stand with the Unreal.

Profundity, I tend to feel,

Is over-rated. It lacks wit.

Nietzsche has written that the Greeks

Chose superficiality

*Because* of their profundity.

They knew the Deep, that what it seeks

Is not what human beings seek.

What does it want? Its purposes

Are not our purposes. This is

A scandal to an ancient Greek.

viii. *Infinity: a Critique*

The very *idea* is absurd.

A concept one cannot conceive

It seems quite pointless to *believe*.

If one could touch it—if a word

Of two it would exchange with me—

If we could have a conversation

About Art, Classical civilisation,

Or even the economy,

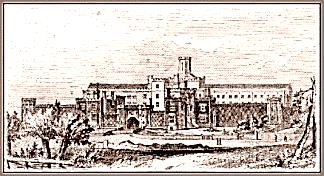
Things would be different altogether.

I wouldn’t even mind if IT

Lacked skill in repartée, or wit.

We’d simply talk about the weather.

******

***A Conversation with Thomas Martin***

*In astral C.3.3.*

1.

*Now the great Brahmin sages: were*

*They wise, sir?* Very wise, indeed,

Thomas—much wiser than one need

Be, possibly. *Is that so, sir!*

Three Aspects Brahman has, to wit:

There’s the prolific playwright, *Brahma*,

The grand Creator of the Drama,

Shakespearean in his infinite

Variety of invention, rich,

Strange to the point of stupefaction.

Prompter *Vishnu* sees that the action

Goes off without an awkward hitch.



*Shiva* the cold and analytical

Can shut plays down within a week

Of opening with his critique,

For he is nothing if not critical.

2. *A Fairy Tale*

Once upon an Upanishad,

Dear, and a very good Upan-

ishad it was, after some one

Million million years, a god

Named Brahma made the universe

Of things that *seem*, and on that seeming

Based all the *is* there is in dreaming.

In Brahma’s night did they rehearse

Their traffic on the lighted stage

Of day, in light of mighty Brahma’s Day.

And on that stage they *play*, dear Thomas, day

And night. Ah, they are all the rage

There is inside the soul of Brahma,

Besides his supernovae and

His newborn worlds. Look in the hand

He stretches out: our tiny drama!

***Metansomatosis***

So restless Soul must make her rounds,

And a new suit of flesh encloses

Poor Psyche*. Metensomatosis*,

Platonists call it. Ah, it sounds

Much like a medical condition,

A chronic illness. Which it is.

Ignited by a moment’s bliss,

We die into that brief coition,

Prisoners of sexual gravitation

As planetary bodies are

Prisoners of the nearest star.

Look at our herds, in transmigration!

**\***

Will the last variant of all

No longer recognise the theme,

Or hear it as in a vague dream

One seems to catch a distant call

Too far for the intelligence

To pattern, intermittent smattering

Of a tune past the range of mattering,

Except for that uncanny sense

It has of the familiar,

As of a homing signal humming,

Summoning you to a homecoming

To some unknown ancestral star?



***The Astral Ashram***

How earnestly I try to groom

My soul for union with the godhead!

My mantra I have learned—and nodded

Off humming *OM* (pronounced *AH-OOM*)

By the fourth or fifth repetition.

And it is not the sleep of Brahman,

But of the heavy, lolling, common

Variety, with no dream or vision,

But a deep, indolent, animal slumber,

Stuporous, almost comatose.

No rousing me when once they close,

My lazy eyes, and should you number

The days I’ve slept by piling bread,

As Utnapishtim did when Lord

Gilgamesh tossed and turned and snored,

A demigod turned slug-a-bed,

You’d build a wall extremely high.

The lowest loaves, ‘tis to be feared,

Crumble, and grow a moldy beard

As the wall rises to the sky,

So that eventually it must

Collapse upon me like a ton

Of bricks (the kind bread’s baked upon)

And I am crushed into the dust.

Therefore, before it is too late,

I may play truant from all this.

Sometimes the most enlightened bliss,

Perhaps, is *not* to meditate.

 ***Krishna the Blue***

***I join the god speaking*

*to His devoted disciples.*

*And let the Yogis day by day*

*Practice the music of their souls*

*Far from bazaars and waterholes.*

*For solitary is the way.*

*I see how you upon me dote, He catches me staring at*

Priyah*! Would you prefer another, his adrogynous beauty.*

*More Grecian god? Then I am my brother,*

*Hermes! And does not Caesar note*

**

*In passing in his* Gallic Wars

*How the Celts love your trickster gods*

*Who use their wits to beat the odds*

*And prefer subtlety to force?*

*Aengus and Ogma are among*

* My veils; these storytelling bards*

*Are in my pack of knavish cards.*

*Shape-shifters shall not be unsung!*

*Picture me as your Fairie Queene,*

*Speak to me, dear, as to the wee*

*People, the good folk. Let us be*

*The best of ‘mates’ tonight, I mean William Allingham,*

*poet of the wee folk.*

*The very best of friends! The friend*

*Of men and women all, I move*

*The Ying and Yang and Tao of Love:*

*If you so choose, that way I bend.*

*Old China Blue, I am Krishna, young*

*Blue India! I am the sky*

*That tents the Himalayas. I*

*Am the sad, distant fluted song.*

*Even if another deity*

*You worship, if with pure devotion*

*You do so, with sincere emotion,*

*With love, you also worship me.*

*O* priyah*! Look into my heart!*

*Ah! dost thou not see all things there?*

Thy *heart is there. And now, my dear,*

*Look in it: see me?* THAT *thou art! ‘Tat tvam asi’.* Chandogya Upanishad.

***Another Charming Chat with Krishna***

*Or Christna, or Krist? Oscar’s ‘pronunciation’ was*

*often ambiguous between ‘Christ’ and ‘Krishna.—*[Mr V]

How often do I sit and brood…

Do transmigration’s charms reside

In leaving one unsatisfied?

On to the next, the bad, the good.

Do the gods have gods of their own,

And so on, pantheon on pantheon?

*The unfading flower, the amaranth, eon*

*Following eon, outfacing stone,*

*Blossoms in myriad dimensions,*

*And every petal of it all a*

*Burgeoning, intricate* mandala*.*

*Who can divine its deep intentions?*

**

*It rests upon itself, and not*

*Even upon itself. And none*

*Knows what it knows save it alone.*

*Perhaps it knows not. It is a thought.*

*It is the thunder, and the still,*

*Small voice. It is serene and deep*

*As in his cave the hermit’s sleep.*

*It is the glow beyond the hill.*

The amaranth, immortal flower…

It also takes the name, *Love-Lies-*

*A-Bleeding*. Ah, love kills, and dies!

I want to call it back, the hour…

*Think that the tumult and the pain*

*That made your life a wasted thing*

*Was but the Dream of the Red King,*

*And he has woken up again.*

*Who can rekindle a dead star?*

*This is how it has always been.*

*The time has come. You must begin*

*To be another avatar.*



****

***The Bawdy Bodhisattva***

***Chögyam Trungpa***

*I am in C.3.3., yet it is late summer of nineteen-thirty-eight in the Bardo, which*

*doubles as my tomb in Père Lachaise. I in several months I will be born again, this time*

*as…well, you will see. In the Tibetan table-lands, he is gestating in his mother’s womb.*

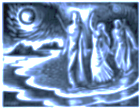
*He is already full of crazy wisdom*:yeshe chölwa*. His voice is that of a small child.*

*I think that art should be a part*

*Of daily life, don’t you?* I do.

(I started here, and so have you.)

*Life itself is the greatest art*.

**

I see why you are me and I

Am you! I lived a foolish life

And learned, I hope, from the useless strife.

Nothing is worth such misery.

*Only when we have been all Strangers*

*Do we know who we really are*.

*Swim upwards, to the shimmering star*

*That births and looks down on these changes.*

*It calls you to its distance. Swim*

*To it! Though heavy its burden seemed*

*To Gilgamesh, the star he dreamed,*

*Its calling was the core of him.*

*Your antimimon pneuma, your Gnostic and Neoplatonist term.*

*Counterfeit Spirit, you must leave*

*Behind.* And yet perhaps I grieve

Over the thing a little, for

I was quite fond of the façade.

*Then you should take yourself to task:*

*It is a vulgar crystal mask,*

*The work of an inferior god,*

*Only a showy, tinsel thing*

*Put on for social purposes,*

*All glitter and spangle and ‘show-biz’.*

*Away you must that Spirit fling!*



*****More Talks with Trungpa*  *In Utero***

*Strange how it’s not that far away*

*From San Francisco, a place like this.*

You mean the womb? *Nowhere. One is*

*The stranger one will meet one day.*

On Jacob’s Staircase, winding high,

Invited to the blue soirée,

One greets oneself along the way,

One hails one’s other, passing by.

*You* go down to Le Cirque de Birth

Whilst *he* ascends to Club Nirvana.

*One from the womb, as from a sauna*

*Emerges red, in sweat of earth;*

*One sees himself in all that mind*

*That is the mother and the matter.*

*And at the foot of Jacob’s Ladder:*

*The thing filled with tears, hunger, wind.*

\*

Are you…Anthologoios? *I am.*

*I laid the Buddha on his pyre.*

*I burned Troy, and burned in the fire.*

*I am Achilles. I am Priam.*

*No one, who speaks for all of us,*

*Am I: the mouth that sings it All.*

*Whoever sings has heard my call.*

*I am the Poet, Orpheus.*

*I am the body of Poetry,*

*Shot through with little lyric wounds.*

*I am the way the music sounds*

*When it mourns in a minor key.*

And are you possibly, Hermes?

*I have been the Guide, and the Misguider.*

*The horse who bears, and throws the rider.*

*The gods? I have been all of these.*

Well, I suppose you’ll tell me next

That you were Dante in a previous

Life! *And the Bard*. Child, you are devious!

*The Ur-Text is a palimpsest.*

*****Emptiness***

*Trungpa. Valentine’s Day, 1939.*

*The nothing. It is everywhere,*

*This fruitful barrenness we call*

*Nirvana, though the name, like all*

*Names, is a little thing of air.*

*The emptiness is active, boils*

* With dreams and cataclysms, trees*

* And temples and the Pleiades,*

*And back into itself recoils.*

It dreams me, the emptiness. The sum

Of all this strife, a kind of peace?

I have known the vintage and the lees.

Sweet, bitter, they are the same. I come

**

With empty hands to meet this…nil.

There is tranquillity in being

At last that famous nothing, seeing

All. Everything looks so *still*.

*See? There it is, or was, again.*

*It followed what I just now said.*

It is Meander. A mazy braid

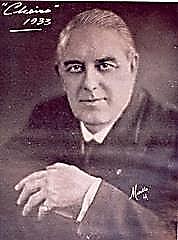
Of black and blank. *The voice and then*

*The echo, then the stillness. Near*

*And far. It floods the being. There*

*It is. You felt that gust of air.*

*It is here. It is there. And here:*

*****A Consultation with a Palmist***

*I decide to consult the ghost of Cheiro regarding*

*my next incarnation. (He died 8 Oct 1936 in Holly-*

*wood, California—a place of dreams whose actual*

*existence is doubtless another of its many fictions.*]

*I’ve a peculiar premonition*

*Of him (of you!) holding a sort*

*Of orgy with his cult, or court,*

*Svengali of the Eastern Vision.*

*Those who decline to join the fun*

*His henchmen forcibly unclothe.*

*The Enlightened One would surely loathe*

*Such bullying. He, like you, is one*



*Who will know exile and its grief.*

*He will be forced to leave Tibet,*

*His country, when it is beset*

*By the Chinese. He’s no frail leaf*

*At the wind’s mercy, though. He’ll make*

*His way to Britain, he will learn*

*The language, as a teacher earn*

*Respect, and finally will take*

*His crazy wisdom West, to the*

*United States.* He will live where?

*Amid the peaks and bracing air*

*Of Colorado.* (Dear to *me*,

As well!) *They so remind him of*

*His sublime Himalayan home.*

*And many searching souls will come*

*To join his Ashram. But his love*

*Of alcohol and sexual pleasure,*

*Of power and perversity,*

*Will earn him notoriety—*

I see! *A most ambiguous treasure,*

*His wealth of Eastern mystic knowledge,*

*For with it comes his overbearing*

*Charisma. He has a gift for sharing,*

*However, and founds a Buddhist College. Cheiro at this point also mentioned a professor*

*whose name I didn’t quite catch: Ginsburrough?*

******And how long will he live? *Beyond*

*The nineteen-eighties I see clouds*

*Only, and past that, only shrouds.*

I think I am already fond

Of this Trungpa. One’s avatars

Should always be, I think, a little

Improbable. If it’s a riddle,

So is the influence of the stars.

*A superb teacher of meditation.*

*I see him with a young student, yes,*

*Named David Jones. No, that’s a guess.*

*I am tired of prognostication.*

*We soul ascend from Purgatory*

*In spiral wise, dispersed, to be*

*Gathered into rebirth. To free*

*Ourselves we widen into sky…*

But what of Vyvyan? Oh how

Could I forget? What will become

Of *him*?—*He’ll find a wife, a home,*

*And have a son: Merlin.* You know

His name! I trust dear Vyvyan

Will not immure him in a tree!

*Your grandson will grow up to be*

*A very cultivated man.*

*His voice will have the timbre of*

*Your own. He has some cause for hate,*

*But will become your advocate*

*In books, out of a grandson’s love.*

*And Vyvyan, as well, will write:*

*He’ll tell of his deprived childhood,*

*But help you to be understood,*

*Edit your letters, set things right*

*As best he can.* The poor, dear boy!

How *could* I…? How could I have done

That to him? O my poor, dear son!

I took his treasure, his child’s joy!

***On Rock Candy Mountain***

***Alias Mount Everest***

*Trungpa speaks from the womb.*

Cheiro and I have talked about you *Time: 28 February, 1939.*

And what the future holds for you.

*That’s merely sorcery. I do*

*Not wish to know*. There is no doubt you

Will make your presence known, young master.

Is crashing into a joke shop *In Dumfries, Scotland—driving while inebriated.*

Not funny enough, you cannot stop

There, with a *physical* disaster,

But have to lead as many astray

Into the Buddha’s errant glory

As there are sheep to trust your story

And leave the good American Way



For Nephelokokkygia,

Cloud Cuckoo Land?Fine white cocaine

Is the only snow in *your* Cockaigne,

Schlaraffenland or Shangri-La.

You’ll abuse power in the crudest

Of ways, Neronian guru!

*You and the rent-boys…* Yes, but *you*

Are the world’s lewdest nudist Buddhist!

*Whatever I may do, you are*

*Doing, too.* Getting fall-down smashed?

How many times will I have crashed

Before the white, consuming star

Whisks me beyond all this *folie?*

*A Bodhisattva does not hurry.*

*There is no place in God for worry.*

There is no God. *No God, and He*

*Is infinite*. That’s nice to know.

Plenty of wiggle-room for folly.

*Don’t you feel a bit melancholy,*

*Knowing so well how things will go*,

*What you will do?* With what? *The nothing*

*It matters*. Any, or all of it?

*God is dead*. And is infinite?

*Put* on *your* latest *Maya* clothing.

***The Jolly Corner***

 *One minute before 11:05 AM,*

*28 February, 1939.* *It is time.*

1.

There is a house James writes about,

The Jolly Corner. In it dwells

A threatening ghost who is—what else?—

The hero’s double. Fear and doubt

Assail him, and a sense of shame:

What sort of life might he have led

As worldly businessman, instead

Of the rich idler he became?

One’s real life is the life one *did*

Not lead. The man of flesh and blood

Is thus the ghost of what he could

Have been. There’s no way to be rid

Of him, the double who is and

Is not himself. He can’t erase him.

He is too strong. So he must face him.

Two missing fingers on one hand

Bespeak a man who has known strife—

A man of action—and because

Of this, has suffered. They must cross,

The two paths of the hero’s life,

The one he took, his present life,

And the uncanny path not taken,

The possibility forsaken.

Enraged, the double like a knife

Thrusts himself at the hero, who

From fear collapses in a faint.

In the arms of a female saint,

A loving friend, the man comes to.

Is he alive? Will he go on,

Merged with his ‘animus’, to lead

A stronger life? Or is he dead,

And dreaming this companion

In the afterlife? Has he survived

Himself as someone else, his double?

The author leaves us here, to trouble

Over the sequel. He who lived

Was not alive. The life he failed

To live took the shape of a ghost

Livelier than he. Who is host

And who is guest? What is unveiled?

3.

Before I walk into a space

Thoroughly emptied of my life

And full of freedom from all strife,

There’s one more trial that I shall face,

My last trial, which is self-imposed:

To face my Double. I will ascend

Along a spiral to the end

Of memory. Then my Book is closed.

Or open, of the human cry

Exhausted. Tears evaporate

In air, traces of love and hate

Dissolve into their home, the sky.



***Karma***

*Let faint-lipp'd shells,*

*On sands, or in great deeps, vermilion turn*

*Through all their labyrinths…*

—Keats, *Hyperion*

1. *To my Reader*

I hardly feel, at times, quite new,

Almost an Edison cylinder

Of sorts, mechanical echoer

Of Cupid’s arias. Can you

Recall how many times you’ve played me,

Dear? I am condemned to repetition,

Or say, redemption and remission

Of the mistakes I made; they made *me*.

2. *Dissociation: the Stuff of Astral Travel*

In time my lonely body grew

As innured to my absences

From ‘home’, my infidelities,

As Constance grew, who learned to do

Without my pleasant company

And live the matrimonial lie,

In her way, just as well as I

Who was as free of her as she

Was bound to me, an errant nomad

On his erotic Odyssey,

Hotel to hotel: helplessly

She watched me gradually go mad.

You see, I had to grow quite sick:

It was the only way to die.

With life an uninventive lie,

Dying a Roman Catholic

Formality, blind, deaf, and numb,

I was quite senselessly made ready

To leave my body to the steady

Low hum of the viaticum.

****3. *Trungpa and the Spiral Labyrinth*

*The wheels of Karma’s juggernaut*

*Trample the wrathful and the proud.*

*They look about: a thundercloud*

*Of all the evil they have wrought,*

*Here on the earth, comes rumbling after*

*Them, in the shape of ghoul or demon,*

*Explosive mists of scat and semen,*

*And the void howls with hell-souls’ laughter.*

*Some through the Bardo drift for ever.*

*These spirits we call hungry ghosts:*

*Guests who don’t know that they are hosts.*

*Such demons can be very clever.*

*Escape is possible: renounce*

*The demons in yourself, whose power*

*Is but to ruin and devour—*

*For they are ever-set to pounce.*

I have seen the wrathful goddesses.

Their anger was my selfishness,

My folly and my carelessness,

More cruel a thing than cruelty is.

I have been a hungry ghost; I am

No longer hungry, and yet still

A ghost. *You have purified your will,*

*Confronting them. You are the Lamb*

*To your own Lion. Now: prepare!*

I know. I must construct a stair-

Case leading to the upper air.

*I will be waiting for you there.*

*Be always wary, never frightened.*

*Learn to be wakeful always: this*

*Is Consciousness, this is your Bliss.*

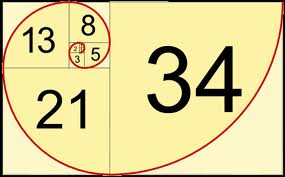
*In this way you will be enlightened.*

It is all very complicated,

Intricate as a labyrinth,

Disorienting as absinthe.

*Enter the Spiral. You are awaited.*

***Of Fibonacci Numbers***

[*I find myself standing in a lecture hall in Magdalen College.*

*I am at that indeterminate age somewhere between the 39*

*I claimed to be at the First Trial and the 40 that I actually*

*was. Dante is responsible for this Purgatorial joke: he has*

*made me, a maths dunce, Professor of Mathematics! His*

*last hurrah. The students seem restless and bored.*]

1.

Behold! a Golden Spiral on

A coin, in a rectangle!—I

Confess, it is a false coin: φ φ *= the Golden Ratio (1.6108339887…).*

Is not attained, ever–anon *The Fibonacci spiral is built on integers but*

*approaches to the Golden Ratio at infinity.*

Approached though it may be, for mine *The Fibonacci sequence represents the closest*

Are Fibonacci ratios, *approximation to the Golden Ratio using*

I am almost *certain*. (Ah, they doze! *rational numbers: 2/1, 3/2, 5/3,  8/5…*

At least it’s nearly time to dine.) —[Mr V]

2. *A Lecture of Sorts*

If one and one make two, and one

And two make three, and we get five

From three and two, then shall we strive

For eight? And by addition

Most horrible reach dread thirteen?

Which I can barely say! What fun

I had when I was twenty-one,

Betwixt a little, and between,

It’s true, but so? At thirty-four

I had moved out towards the extreme

And I don’t even care to dream

What waits at fifty-five or more,

Say, eighty-nine, how inconceivable!

O sequence rabbit-multiplying

Who rule the breeding and the dying!

Wrinkled the skin grows, irretrievable

The loss of youth’s crisp curls of hair,

Irrevocable the greying trend

When in a steep ascent you bend

To infinity and leave us there

So far behind you, husks outworn

*Leonardo Fibonacci, a 13th-century mathemati-*

*cian, independently rediscovered the ‘Fibonacci*

*sequence’ and used it in an idealised thought-*

*experiment to chart the growth of a rabbit pop-*

*ulation. Oscar fails to grasp a key assumption of*

*the experiment, that the rabbits do not die. It is*

*interesting to note that the sequence was first*

*discovered by Indian scholars in the 6th century*

*AD and applied to Sanskrit prosody—specifically,*

*to rationalise the relationship between long and*

*short syllables. So Poetry and Maths come full*

*circle, eccentrically. (Let me add in passing that*

*Fibonacci’s far more consequential contribution*

*to Western Civlisation was to introduce and*

*popularise the use of Hindu-Arabic numerals.)*

—[Mr V]

By the genetic seeds we hold

In trust deceived when rendered old,

Redundant, and then, why be born?

The numbers spin their lazy eight-

Approaching vehicle around;

I come back to the launching ground

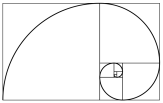
Of one plus one, if somewhat late.

Now God is surely One. To be

Incarnate, unity makes two

In one, for God is Lord Christ, too.

And Holy Ghost makes Trinity



And the duality atones,

And two and three are five, and three

And five, eight: add these last and we

Reach the unspeakable number once

More. Evil arithmetic! But I

Will brave the Fibonacci numbers,

Though nightmares may invade my slumbers.

I recognise no boundary.

We’ll set sail for the Ratio

Of Gold, though we shall never reach

That place, my Dears! Ulysses, teach

Your mates the Perilous Way to go!

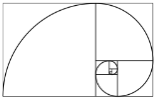
With what is left us of this so- *I have forgotten that I am already*

Brief vigil of the human senses, *past this vigil. Ah, to be carried away by*

Let us learn how immense the Immense is, *one’s own rhetoric, like a blushing bride!*

Let us know what it is to know!

**

***The Ascension of Old China Blue***

*Here, at the podium again?*

*Time: 16 October, 1946.*

*The ‘spiral vase’ seems to be a sort of Klein bottle, un-*

*bounded, non-orientable in space and rather self-absorbed.*

—[Mr V]

1.

Spiral in shape, my fictive vase

Became a staircase I must climb

To view a different place and time

At every turn of what I was.

[*A student creates a disturbance, heckling this tentative*

*beginning as stilted aestheticism. He is escorted out*

*of the lecture hall. A bit ruffled, I must start again.*]

1.

Spiral in shape, my fictive vase

Became a staircase I must climb

To view a different place and time

At every turn of what I was.

2.

I have told you how my spiral vase

Became a staircase I must climb

To view a different place and time.

But did you know that what I was

I saw as what I would become?

And on each landing was a bust

Of something crumbling into dust.

I was alone, and far from home.

3.

You can predict my spiral vase

Will climb the same stairs every time—

But with a difference, yet a rhyme

At every turn of what I was.

I see the one I did become

And on each landing pass a bust

Crumbling into a different dust.

Then dust is where I make my home?

Each turn affords another view

Down the vertiginous stairwell

To various degrees of Hell.

What I did I cannot undo.

5.

The spiral shape, the fictive vase,

Are versions of the stair I climb

But with the difference, this time,

That I turn into what I was.

I am the man I would become

And on each landing pass a bust

Resembling, but only just,

A face that I once knew at home.

Each turn affords a brother view

Or mother view, down the stairwell,

And those whose life I made a Hell

I see, and know not what to do.

The memory of the floors below

Is an accretion of my loss.

A fictive vase with serious flaws

Is the best metaphor I know

For the heartbreak that heals you when

You see the past sink out of view

Like the wrecked vessel that is you.

And you must turn, and turn again.

8. *Constance*

It spirals into itself, my vase,

No matter how far I may climb.

So I grow smaller every time

I see I am smaller than I was.

How unbecoming to become

The man I am! I think the bust

Is of the monkey of my lust.

The likeness of a broken home.

I turn to get a better view

And in the depths of the stairwell

I see a face I once knew well.

She wore a veil and said, *I do.*

The memory of it years ago

Became oblivious to its loss.

That’s one of my more serious flaws.

It happened on the floor below

And all her heartbreak happened *then*.

But now her face sinks out of view

And there is nothing I can do

But turn and turn and turn again.

I am sorry Constance! I am so sorry.

But that was on a different floor.

And there are many, many more.

Of course, each story is a story.

Happiness was a thing that used

To happen to me. I am a child

Of mood. My name is Oscar Wilde.

My breath is short. My feet are bruised.

The more I climb the more there is

To climb. Must every step create

Another step? And it grows late.

How shall I ever get out of this?

13. *My Children*

The downward spiral of a vase

Is the inversion of sublime.

Innocent victims of a crime

I see, of which I was the cause.

And into focus now they come,

As I look down. I pass a bust

I do not notice, for I must

Assess the damage as a sum:

I turn to get a better view

And in the depths of the stairwell

I see the children I loved well.

There’s nothing that I would not do

For them, but that was years ago

I did that to them. For I was

As fictive as a spiral vase.

And I weep down on them below,

On all their heartache and their pain.

But now their faces sink from view.

The thing I did again I do.

The turning has returned again.

Cyril, Vyvyan, I am so sorry!

They led me in, and shut the door.

I shall not see you anymore.

Hell is less harsh than Purgatory!

How cruelly you were abused

By relatives who raised you. ‘Wilde’

Was not your name. No, no, no child

Deserves to be so meanly used!

The more I weep the more there is

To weep. What can I do but hate

Myself, or blame it all on fate?

That it is *that*, that it is *this*.

But Cyril, you went off to war

And came back as the ghost I saw

And in the terror and the awe

The tearing open of a scar

Occurred, and I shall call it healing.

And you became my Happy Prince,

With the poor swallow gone long since.

No fire consumes the heart of feeling.

The bird shall sing, the Prince shall praise

The giving of the gems away.

He is in Paradise today.

My vase can only crack and craze.

My heart is in the urn with him.

Ash of my ashes, you, my son,

And Vyvyan, too. All into one

The ashes settle, light grows dim.

How many steps, and for how long

Must I continue to ascend

Into a sky that has no end

To make a rightness of the wrong?

21. *Bosie*

My spiral is a weary vase.

The staircase cannot cease to climb

Through larger spaces, longer times,

Surprised to see how small it was

When higher iterations come

Not quite full circle. And the bust

Is of a spiral quite nonplussed:

The vase contains itself. Its home

Is in another home. Review

The Hellish stories down the well.

Remember Bosie, and your cell.

The panther feasts, and what was due

In the end, and how it fell. Below

My station. Too much revel was

Enough to shatter a fictive vase,

With revelations bringing woe

To me, and Art’s ache, and the pain

Of sacrifice betrayed. My view

Is blurred, my eyes are moist with dew.

Again return, return again,

Dear Bosie, tell once more the story

Of how I walked a stony floor

For you. See how much rope I tore!

Think how the morning’s morning glory

Returns to mourn at evening. Bruised

Is the apple of my eye. Reviled

For ever is this Oscar Wilde.

And I believe you were amused.

The more I brood the more there is

To brood upon. But it is late.

The end game crawls to the checkmate.

Failure, what is the sense of this?

Is Cupid Mars, so to love war?

Your character may have a flaw,

My dear. You lived by your own law

And so did I, but I have the scar

To prove it, you, nostalgic feeling.

Forgiveness when the lover sins

Must scourge him first and make him wince,

But for some wounds there is no healing.

I swallow up my pride these days

For it was I who chased away

My Bird of Paradise. I pray

My pride may go up in a blaze

Of wisdom, but the chance is slim

That I will be the lucky one

Whose ashes fly into the sun.

The Phoenix fire is guttering dim.

The day is short, the shadow long.

And time can never put an end

To brazen sorrow, my old friend,

And grief’s perpetual undersong.

You were my slim-gilt lily boy,

You had the genius of your youth.

I had the genius of my mouth,

My honeyed tongue, my gift for joy.

You were my prince, my fleur de lys

And flirtily familiar with

A thirtyish man who was a myth,

And is a myth eternally.

I fell. You did not make me fall.

The myth, at higher iterations,

Opens onto what revelations?

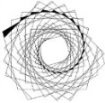
Revels unravel. I willed it *all*.

Perhaps blue blood and a blue face

Cancel each other into love,

Somehow. But from the floor above,

This story is of other days

Much darker down, a depth unclean

With hate. The Irish cock-and-bull

Must face John Bull, and he is full

Of Minotaur. It is obscene.

And how obscene *we* were, together

In our adventures in rough trade!

In Naples love is known to fade

Beside a Bay, in autumn weather.

My spiral is a maze of wandering,

Wandering up to who knows where?

No ceiling but the empty air.

The stars, perhaps, were made for pondering.

The ghosts of old astrologers

Have left their eye-prints on the skies

That do not care who lives and dies.

The stars are Tinkers, Travellers.

34. *The Marquis*

This spiral of blue china, vase

Full of itself, was once sublime.

What is most beautiful with time

Becomes the shade of what it was.

It is the time when monsters come

Out of the closet. Broken bust

Of ugliness, you are the just

Likeness of one who broke my home.

And he comes gibbering into view

And wants to pull me down the well

Into the hate that is his Hell.

What an unspeakable thing to do,

Enter my house and threaten so,

And here you come again! My vase,

Though but the shards of what it was,

Brims over like a cup of woe.

How mad I was to fight the insane!

Could it be monstrously true

That you are me, and I am you?

I turn again. What do I gain?

Fresh understanding of the gory

Details, which who would not deplore?

They are even uglier than before,

And many times I have told this story,

How I was stubborn, and refused

Advice to let it go, and filed

The suit that brought down Oscar Wilde.

Oh, Queensberry was much amused!

The more one hates the more there is

To hate, there is no end of hate.

He is the monster of my fate.

I cannot climb away from this.



Between the gutter and the star

Most thread their way by rote and law.

I wanted both, that was the flaw

That left me with this shameful scar

That makes another wound of healing.

The Screaming Scarlet Monster wins

Again, then a fresh trial begins,

And the familiar awful feeling.

A monster hides in every maze

And of the lost he makes his prey.

The snake in Eden has his way

With every Eve. I curse my days

Of penance, and I glower at *him*,

The one he hated as his son,

That Bosie boy, the Golden One:

The Parsifal who on a whim

Shot down the swan, but the great wrong

That he had done he would defend

Bitterly to the very end.

And still my way is long, too long!

Their faces haunt me, golden boy

And brutish father, arrogant youth

And the beast who sniffed out the truth,

Base metal of a base alloy.

Why will it not be history

That scholars calmly reckon with?

I am still tortured by my myth.

Am I the Sphinx’s Mystery?

The Marquis did not make me fall.

It was my myth grown out of patience

With all reality, the nation’s,

The world’s, the success of it all,

The *fiat lux*, the course of days,

Provisions for below, above,

And in between. I had had enough

Success, I longed to touch the face

Of failure, though it be obscene.

Happiness, sadly, can grow dull.

And the vase becomes overfull

Of emptiness. Down, down careen

The tragic heroes, heaped together

On the ground floor, how low are laid

The saviours by the mess they made!

An end must come to every tether.

Out of control the spiral’s wandering

The twists of its own turns nowhere

But up the iterative stair

Amazed, when what it should be pondering

Is how the stars, the Travellers,

Can find their way across the skies.

They do not know that they are wise

But know that what occurs recurs.

\*

Look there! Could that be Oscar Wilde?

A serious man, some seventy

Years old. Respectability

Weighs on him, there are Honours piled

Upon his back. He is an old

Master. Upon its plinth, the bust

Of him rests solemn and august,

And he, as well, feels marble-cold,

Depressed by a lifelong success

Which through the decades grew to be

A species of vulgarity

That used to cause him some distress.

But what an *oeuvre* he compiled…

Asterion has eyes so mild!

To being a *Sir* Oscar Wilde

He is grudgingly reconciled.

I am the satyr, and his double

And Doppelgänger—I am the ungrounded

Bacchus, the Man of Gestures wounded.

He is glad he never knew such trouble.

\*

Everything learns to say farewell

By moving farther from its source

Because this is its only course.

We tell what we won’t live to tell.

I bid good-bye, not to my wife

And children, and not to my lover

Or foe, but to the things left over,

The memories of a finished life.

I am beyond myself, beyond

Belief and doubt, and every care.

Estrangement is the truth we share.

The heart of its own heat so fond

Becomes a cloud winds blow away

And leaves behind no scars, no stains.

The lightness of the light remains

When there is nothing left to weigh.

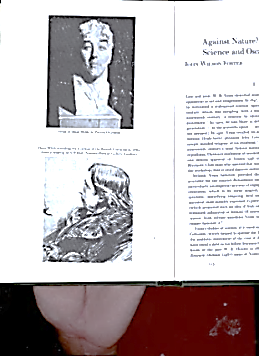
\*

Blue China I at last live up

To, now that I have climbed the stairs,

You are but a sky that puts on airs.

Let spiral be a simple cup.

Circle is ever at odds with square.

Be genially unreconciled.

And shape no bust for Oscar Wilde.

His is a monument of air.

The scent of roses in a vase.

The sunflower, and the flower on high,

The morning glory in the sky.

For I am not the one I was.

\*

We stars are Travellers, and we roam.

Planets and sea-shells are our traces.

We are at home in many places

But there is no such place as home.



­

***The Missing Lines***

*Blankness took the preceding text*

*And the line that ought to come next.*

*This quatrain space will also riddle:*

*Beginning, ending—but no middle.*

*Stet what came next: more emptiness.*

*It leaves the lines by two lines less.*

*Think of it as a haven of*

*Blankness. Words below, words above.*

*Only these middle lines are left*

*And they feel pleasantly bereft.*

*And emptiness can have the rest.*

***Prologue to the Epilogue***

***by James Clarence William O’Flaherty Joyce***

***Bone Song***

***of the Mysty by the Sea***

*What with his staff the mistery-eyed*

*Wrote in the sand, what bardic rune*

*That in its hollow hummed a tune*

*As twilights pinked the foaming tide*

*And the sky greyed away and over*

*The darkling emerald of the sea*

*The reader may, if he or sidhe*

*Will turn the page, forthwith discover.*

******

***Triton***

***Shell***

***Horn***

*I am*

*a whisper*

*and an ear.*

*My hollow*

*cup holds*

*distance near.*

*to the*

*Listen world Play me*

*air. ♫ breathe by listening,*

*with in there. turn in your hand*

*fills*

*Bone wind*

*is bone. on the water,*

*Inside you churn of the*

*\* \* \**

*sand.*

*There is a “note” symbol in the empty space in the center of*

*the spiral’s last turn, between “air” and “breathe.”*

*The symbol has been given the same font color as that of*

*the page so that it is invisible. But it is there, and can be*

*hyperlinked to a music clip—Irish tune on solo recorder.*