

Track 59: Canto Eight, Section 1, lines 1 to 79

Then could he see the hidden heart of Night:
The labour of its stark unconsciousness
Revealed the endless terrible Inane.
A spiritless blank Infinity was there;
5 A Nature that denied the eternal Truth
In the vain braggart freedom of its thought
Hoped to abolish God and reign alone.
There was no sovereign Guest, no witness Light;
Unhelped it would create its own bleak world.
10 Its large blind eyes looked out on demon acts,
Its deaf ears heard the untruth its dumb lips spoke;
Its huge misguided fancy took vast shapes,
Its mindless sentience quivered with fierce conceits;
Engendering a brute principle of life
15 Evil and pain begot a monstrous soul.
The Anarchs of the formless depths arose,
Great Titan beings and demoniac powers,
World-egos racked with lust and thought and will,
Vast minds and lives without a spirit within:
20 Impatient architects of error's house,
Leaders of the cosmic ignorance and unrest
And sponsors of sorrow and mortality
Embodied the dark Ideas of the Abyss.
A shadow substance into emptiness came,
25 Dim forms were born in the unthinking Void
And eddies met and made an adverse Space
In whose black folds Being imagined Hell.
His eyes piercing the triple-plated gloom
Identified their sight with its blind stare:
30 Accustomed to the unnatural dark, they saw
Unreality made real and conscious Night.
A violent, fierce and formidable world,
An ancient womb of huge calamitous dreams,
Coiled like a larva in the obscurity
35 That keeps it from the spear-points of Heaven's stars.
It was the gate of a false Infinite,
An eternity of disastrous absolutes,
An immense negation of spiritual things.
All once self-luminous in the spirit's sphere
40 Turned now into their own dark contraries:
Being collapsed into a pointless void
That yet was a zero parent of the worlds;
Inconscience swallowing up the cosmic Mind
Produced a universe from its lethal sleep;
45 Bliss into black coma fallen, insensible,
Coiled back to itself and God's eternal joy
Through a false poignant figure of grief and pain
Still dolorously nailed upon a cross

50 Fixed in the soil of a dumb insentient world
Where birth was a pang and death an agony,
Lest all too soon should change again to bliss.
Thought sat, a priestess of Perversity,
On her black tripod of the triune Snake
Reading by opposite signs the eternal script,
55 A sorceress reversing life's God-frame.
In darkling aisles with evil eyes for lamps
And fatal voices chanting from the apse,
In strange infernal dim basilicas
Intoning the magic of the unholy Word,
60 The ominous profound Initiate
Performed the ritual of her Mysteries.
There suffering was Nature's daily food
Alluring to the anguished heart and flesh,
And torture was the formula of delight,
65 Pain mimicked the celestial ecstasy.
There Good, a faithless gardener of God,
Watered with virtue the world's upas-tree
And, careful of the outward word and act,
Engrafted his hypocrite blooms on native ill.
70 All high things served their nether opposite:
The forms of Gods sustained a demon cult;
Heaven's face became a mask and snare of Hell.
There in the heart of vain phenomenon,
In an enormous action's writhen core
He saw a Shape illimitable and vague
Sitting on Death who swallows all things born.
A chill fixed face with dire and motionless eyes,
Her dreadful trident in her shadowy hand
Outstretched, she pierced all creatures with one fate.