In that absolute stillness bare and formidable
There was glimpsed an all-negating Void Supreme
That claimed its mystic Nihil’s sovereign right
To cancel Nature and deny the soul.

Even the nude sense of self grew pale and thin:
Impersonal, signless, featureless, void of forms
A blank pure consciousness had replaced the mind.
Her spirit seemed the substance of a name,
The world a pictured symbol drawn on self,
A dream of images, a dream of sounds
Built up the semblance of a universe
Or lent to spirit the appearance of a world.
This was self-seeing; in that intolerant hush
No notion and no concept could take shape,

There was no sense to frame the figure of things,
A sheer self-sight was there, no thought arose.
Emotion slept deep down in the still heart
Or lay buried in a cemetery of peace:
All feelings seemed quiescent, calm or dead,

As if the heart-strings rent could work no more
And joy and grief could never rise again.
The heart beat on with an unconscious rhythm
But no response came from it and no cry.
Vain was the provocation of events;
Nothing within answered an outside touch,
No nerve was stirred and no reaction rose.
Yet still her body saw and moved and spoke;
It understood without the aid of thought,
It said whatever needed to be said,

There was no person there behind the act,
No mind that chose or passed the fitting word:
All wrought like an unerring apt machine.
As if continuing old habitual turns,

And pushed by an old unexhausted force
The engine did the work for which it was made:
Her consciousness looked on and took no part;
All it upheld, in nothing had a share.
There was no strong initiator will;

An incoherence crossing a firm void
Slipped into an order of related chance.
A pure perception was the only power
That stood behind her action and her sight.
If that retired, all objects would be extinct,

Her private universe would cease to be,
The house she had built with bricks of thought and sense
In the beginning after the birth of Space.
This seeing was identical with the seen;
It knew without knowledge all that could be known.

But in the same supine unmoving glance
Saw too its abysmal unreality.
It watched the figure of the cosmic game,  
But the thought and inner life in forms seemed dead,  
Abolished by her own collapse of thought:  
A hollow physical shell persisted still.  
All seemed a brilliant shadow of itself,  
A cosmic film of scenes and images:  
The enduring mass and outline of the hills  
Was a design sketched on a silent mind  
And held to a tremulous false solidity  
By constant beats of visionary sight.  
The forest with its emerald multitudes  
Clothed with its show of hues vague empty Space,  
A painting’s colours hiding a surface void  
That flickered upon dissolution’s edge;  
The blue heavens, an illusion of the eyes,  
Roofed in the mind’s illusion of a world.  
The men who walked beneath an unreal sky  
Seemed mobile puppets out of cardboard cut  
And pushed by unseen hands across the soil  
Or moving pictures upon Fancy’s film:  
There was no soul within, no power of life.  
The brain’s vibrations that appear like thought,  
The nerve’s brief answer to each contact’s knock,  
The heart’s quiverings felt as joy and grief and love  
Were twitchings of the body, their seeming self,  
That body forged from atoms and from gas  
A manufactured lie of Maya’s make,  
Its life a dream seen by the sleeping Void.  
The animals lone or trooping through the glades  
Fled like a passing vision of beauty and grace  
Imagined by some all-creating Eye.  
Yet something was there behind the fading scene;  
Wherever she turned, at whatsoever she looked,  
It was perceived, yet hid from mind and sight.  
The One only real shut itself from Space  
And stood aloof from the idea of Time.  
Its truth escaped from shape and line and hue.  
All else grew unsubstantial, self-annulled,  
This only everlasting seemed and true,  
Yet nowhere dwelt, it was outside the hours.  
This only could justify the labour of sight,  
But sight could not define for it a form;  
This only could appease the unsatisfied ear  
But hearing listened in vain for a missing sound;  
This answered not the sense, called not to Mind.  
It met her as the uncaught inaudible Voice  
That speaks for ever from the Unknowable.  
It met her like an omnipresent point  
Pure of dimensions, unfixed, invisible,  
The single oneness of its multiplied beat  
Accentuating its sole eternity.  
It faced her as some vast Nought’s immensity,  
An endless No to all that seems to be,  
An endless Yes to things ever unconceived.
And all that is unimagined and unthought,
An eternal zero or untotalled Aught,
A spaceless and a placeless Infinite.

Yet eternity and infinity seemed but words
Vainly affixed by mind’s incompetence
To its stupendous lone reality.

The world is but a spark-burst from its light,
All moments flashes from its Timelessness,

All objects glimmerings of the Bodiless
That disappear from Mind when That is seen.

It held, as if a shield before its face,
A consciousness that saw without a seer,
The Truth where knowledge is not nor knower nor known,

The Love enamoured of its own delight
In which the Lover is not nor the Beloved
Bringing their personal passion into the Vast,
The Force omnipotent in quietude,
The Bliss that none can ever hope to taste.

It cancelled the convincing cheat of self;
A truth in nothingness was its mighty clue.

If all existence could renounce to be
And Being take refuge in Non-being’s arms
And Non-being could strike out its ciphered round,

Some lustre of that Reality might appear.

Once sepulchred alive in brain and flesh
She had risen up from body, mind and life;
She was no more a Person in a world,

She had escaped into infinity.

What once had been herself had disappeared;
There was no frame of things, no figure of soul.

A refugee from the domain of sense,
Evading the necessity of thought,

Delivered from Knowledge and from Ignorance
And rescued from the true and the untrue,
She shared the Superconscient’s high retreat
Beyond the self-born Word, the nude Idea,
The first bare solid ground of consciousness;

Beings were not there, existence had no place,
There was no temptation of the joy to be.

Unutterably effaced, no one and null,
A vanishing vestige like a violet trace,
A faint record merely of a self now past,

She was a point in the unknowable.

Only some last annulment now remained,
Annihilation’s vague indefinable step:
A memory of being still was there
And kept her separate from nothingness:

She was in That but still became not That.

This shadow of herself so close to nought
Could be again self’s point d’appui to live,
Return out of the Inconceivable
And be what some mysterious vast might choose.

Even as the Unknowable decreed,
She might be nought or new-become the All,
Or if the omnipotent Nihil took a shape
Emerge as someone and redeem the world.
Even, she might learn what the mystic cipher held,

This seeming exit or closed end of all
Could be a blind tenebrous passage screened from sight,
Her state the eclipsing shell of a darkened sun
On its secret way to the Ineffable.

Even now her splendid being might flame back
Out of the silence and the nullity,
A gleaming portion of the All-Wonderful,
A power of some all-affirming Absolute,
A shining mirror of the eternal Truth
To show to the One-in-all its manifest face,

To the souls of men their deep identity.
Or she might wake into God’s quietude
Beyond the cosmic day and cosmic night
And rest appeased in his white eternity.

But this was now unreal or remote
Or covered in the mystic fathomless blank.
In infinite Nothingness was the ultimate sign
Or else the Real was the Unknowable.
A lonely Absolute negated all:
It effaced the ignorant world from its solitude

And drowned the soul in its everlasting peace.

End of Canto Six