

Track 58: Section 6, lines 525 to end

525 A lone discoverer in these menacing realms
Guarded like termite cities from the sun,
Oppressed mid crowd and tramp and noise and flare,
Passing from dusk to deeper dangerous dusk,
He wrestled with powers that snatched from mind its light
530 And smote from him their clinging influences.
Soon he emerged in a dim wall-less space.
For now the peopled tracts were left behind;
He walked between wide banks of failing eve.
Around him grew a gaunt spiritual blank,
535 A threatening waste, a sinister loneliness
That left mind bare to an unseen assault,
An empty page on which all that willed could write
Stark monstrous messages without control.
A travelling dot on downward roads of Dusk
540 Mid barren fields and barns and straggling huts
And a few crooked and phantasmal trees,
He faced a sense of death and conscious void.
But still a hostile Life unseen was there
Whose deathlike poise resisting light and truth
545 Made living a bleak gap in nullity.
He heard the grisly voices that deny;
Assailed by thoughts that swarmed like spectral hordes,
A prey to the staring phantoms of the gloom
And terror approaching with its lethal mouth,
550 Driven by a strange will down ever down,
The sky above a communiqué of Doom,
He strove to shield his spirit from despair,
But felt the horror of the growing Night
And the Abyss rising to claim his soul.
555 Then ceased the abodes of creatures and their forms
And solitude wrapped him in its voiceless folds.
All vanished suddenly like a thought expunged;
His spirit became an empty listening gulf
Void of the dead illusion of a world:
560 Nothing was left, not even an evil face.
He was alone with the grey python Night.
A dense and nameless Nothing conscious, mute,
Which seemed alive but without body or mind,
Lusted all beings to annihilate
565 That it might be for ever nude and sole.
As in a shapeless beast's intangible jaws,
Gripped, strangled by that lusting viscous blot,
Attracted to some black and giant mouth
And swallowing throat and a huge belly of doom,
570 His being from its own vision disappeared
Drawn towards depths that hungered for its fall.
A formless void oppressed his struggling brain,
A darkness grim and cold benumbed his flesh,
A whispered grey suggestion chilled his heart;
575 Haled by a serpent-force from its warm home
And dragged to extinction in bleak vacancy
Life clung to its seat with cords of gasping breath;

Lapped was his body by a tenebrous tongue.
Existence smothered travailed to survive;
580 Hope strangled perished in his empty soul,
Belief and memory abolished died
And all that helps the spirit in its course.
There crawled through every tense and aching nerve
Leaving behind its poignant quaking trail
585 A nameless and unutterable fear.
As a sea nears a victim bound and still,
The approach alarmed his mind for ever dumb
Of an implacable eternity
Of pain inhuman and intolerable.
590 This he must bear, his hope of heaven estranged;
He must ever exist without extinction's peace
In a slow suffering Time and tortured Space,
An anguished nothingness his endless state.
A lifeless vacancy was now his breast,
595 And in the place where once was luminous thought,
Only remained like a pale motionless ghost
An incapacity for faith and hope
And the dread conviction of a vanquished soul
Immortal still but with its godhead lost,
600 Self lost and God and touch of happier worlds.
But he endured, stilled the vain terror, bore
The smothering coils of agony and affright;
Then peace returned and the soul's sovereign gaze.
To the blank horror a calm Light replied:
605 Immutable, undying and unborn,
Mighty and mute the Godhead in him woke
And faced the pain and danger of the world.
He mastered the tides of Nature with a look:
He met with his bare spirit naked Hell.

End of Canto Seven