Canto Four

The Dream Twilight of the Earthly Real

There came a slope that slowly downward sank;
It slipped towards a stumbling grey descent.
The dim-heart marvel of the ideal was lost;
Its crowding wonder of bright delicate dreams
And vague half-limned sublimities she had left:
Thought fell towards lower levels; hard and tense
It passioned for some crude reality.
The twilight floated still but changed its hues
And heavily swathed a less delightful dream;
It settled in tired masses on the air;
Its symbol colours tuned with duller Reds
And almost seemed a lurid mist of day.
A straining taut and dire besieged her heart;
Heavy her sense grew with a dangerous load,
And sadder, greater sounds were in her ears,
And through stern breakings of the lambent glare
Her vision caught a hurry of driving plains
And cloudy mountains and wide tawny streams,
And cities climbed in minarets and towers
Towards an unavailing changeless sky:
Long quays and ghauts and harbours white with sails
Challenged her sight awhile and then were gone.
Amidst them travailed toiling multitudes
In ever shifting perishable groups,
A foiled cinema of lit shadowy shapes
Enveloped in the grey mantle of a dream.
Imagining meanings in life's heavy drift,
They trusted in the uncertain environment
And waited for death to change their spirit's scene.
A savage din of labour and a tramp
Of armoured life and the monotonous hum
Of thoughts and acts that ever were the same,
As if the dull reitered drone
Of a great brute machine, beset her soul,—
A grey dissatisfied rumour like a ghost
Of the moaning of a loud unquiet sea.
A huge inhuman cyclopean voice,
A Babel-builders’ song towering to heaven,
A throb of engines and the clang of tools
Brought the deep undertone of labour’s pain.
As when pale lightnings tear a tortured sky,
High overhead a cloud-rimmed series flared
Chasing like smoke from a red funnel driven,
The forced creations of an ignorant Mind:
Drifting she saw like pictured fragments flee
Phantoms of human thought and baffled hopes,
The shapes of Nature and the arts of man,
Philosophies and disciplines and laws,
And the dead spirit of old societies,
Constructions of the Titan and the worm.
As if lost remnants of forgotten light,
Before her mind there fled with trailing wings
Dimmed revelations and delivering words,
Emptied of their mission and their strength to save,
The messages of the evangelist gods,
Voices of prophets, scripts of vanishing creeds.
Each in its hour eternal claimed went by:
Ideals, systems, sciences, poems, crafts
Tireless there perished and again recurred,
Sought restlessly by some creative Power;
But all were dreams crossing an empty vast.
Ascetic voices called of lonely seers
On mountain summits or by river banks
Or from the desolate heart of forest glades
Seeking heaven’s rest or the spirit’s worldless peace,
Or in bodies motionless like statues, fixed
In tranced cessations of their sleepless thought
Sat sleeping souls, and this too was a dream.
All things the past has made and slain were there,
Its lost forgotten forms that once had lived,
And all the present loves as new-revealed
And all the hopes the future brings had failed
Already, caught and spent in efforts vain,
Repeated fruitlessly age after age.
Unwearied all returned insisting still
Because of joy in the anguish of pursuit
And joy to labour and to win and lose
And joy to create and keep and joy to kill.
The rolling cycles passed and came again,
Brought the same toils and the same barren end,
Forms ever new and ever old, the long
Appalling revolutions of the world.

Once more arose the great destroying Voice:
Across the fruitless labour of the worlds
His huge denial’s all-defeating might
Pursued the ignorant march of dolorous Time.
“Behold the figures of this symbol realm,
Its solid outlines of creative dream
Inspiring the great concrete tasks of earth.
In its motion-parable of human life
Here thou canst trace the outcome Nature gives
To the sin of being and the error in things
And the desire that compels to live
And man’s incurable malady of hope.
In an immutable order’s hierarchy
Where Nature changes not, man cannot change:
Ever he obeys her fixed mutation’s law;
In a new version of her oft-told tale
In ever-wheeling cycles turns the race.
His mind is pent in circling boundaries:
For mind is man, beyond thought he cannot soar.
If he could leave his limits he would be safe:
He sees but cannot mount to his greater heavens;  
Even winged, he sinks back to his native soil.  
He is a captive in his net of mind  
And beats soul-wings against the walls of life.  
In vain his heart lifts up its yearning prayer,  
Peopling with brilliant Gods the formless Void;  
Then disappointed to the Void he turns  
And in its happy nothingness asks release,  
The calm Nirvana of his dream of self:  
The Word in silence ends, in Nought the name.  
Apart amid the mortal multitudes,  
He calls the Godhead incommunicable  
To be the lover of his lonely soul  
Or casts his spirit into its void embrace.  
Or he finds his copy in the impartial All;  
He imparts to the Immobile his own will,  
Attributes to the Eternal wrath and love  
And to the Ineffable lends a thousand names.  
Hope not to call God down into his life.  
How shalt thou bring the Everlasting here?  
There is no house for him in hurrying Time.  
Vainly thou seekst in Matter’s world an aim;  
No aim is there, only a will to be.  
All walk by Nature bound for ever the same.  
Look on these forms that stay awhile and pass,  
These lives that long and strive, then are no more,  
These structures that have no abiding truth,  
The saviour creeds that cannot save themselves,  
But perish in the strangling hands of the years,  
Discarded from man’s thought, proved false by Time,  
Philosophies that strip all problems bare  
But nothing ever have solved since earth began,  
And sciences omnipotent in vain  
By which men learn of what the suns are made,  
Transform all forms to serve their outward needs,  
Ride through the sky and sail beneath the sea,
But learn not what they are or why they came;
These polities, architectures of man’s brain,
That, bricked with evil and good, wall in man’s spirit
And, fissured houses, palace at once and jail,
Rot while they reign and crumble before they crash;
These revolutions, demon or drunken god,
Convulsing the wounded body of mankind
Only to paint in new colours an old face;
These wars, carnage triumphant, ruin gone mad,
The work of centuries vanishing in an hour,
The blood of the vanquished and the victor’s crown
Which men to be born must pay for with their pain,
The hero’s face divine on satyr’s limbs,
The demon’s grandeur mixed with the demigod’s,
The glory and the beasthood and the shame;
Why is it all, the labour and the din,
The transient joys, the timeless sea of tears,
The longing and the hoping and the cry,
The battle and the victory and the fall,
The aimless journey that can never pause,
The waking toil, the incoherent sleep,
Song, shouts and weeping, wisdom and idle words,
The laughter of men, the irony of the gods?
Where leads the march, whither the pilgrimage?
Who keeps the map of the route or planned each stage?
Or else self-moved the world walks its own way,
Or nothing is there but only a Mind that dreams:
The world is a myth that happened to come true,
A legend told to itself by conscious Mind,
Imaged and played on a feigned Matter’s ground
On which it stands in an unsubstantial Vast.
Mind is the author, spectator, actor, stage:
Mind only is and what it thinks is seen.
If Mind is all, renounce the hope of bliss;
If Mind is all, renounce the hope of Truth.
For Mind can never touch the body of Truth
And Mind can never see the soul of God;  
Only his shadow it grasps nor hears his laugh  
As it turns from him to the vain seeming of things.  
Mind is a tissue woven of light and shade  
Where right and wrong have sewn their mingled parts;  
Or Mind is Nature’s marriage of convenance  
Between truth and falsehood, between joy and pain:  
This struggling pair no court can separate.  
Each thought is a gold coin with bright alloy  
And error and truth are its obverse and reverse:  
This is the imperial mintage of the brain  
And of this kind is all its currency.  
Think not to plant on earth the living Truth  
Or make of Matter’s world the home of God;  
Truth comes not there but only the thought of Truth,  
God is not there but only the name of God.  
If Self there is it is bodiless and unborn;  
It is no one and it is possessed by none.  
On what shalt thou then build thy happy world?  
Cast off thy life and mind, then art thou Self,  
An all-seeing omnipresence stark, alone.  
If God there is he cares not for the world;  
All things he sees with calm indifferent gaze,  
He has doomed all hearts to sorrow and desire,  
He has bound all life with his implacable laws;  
He answers not the ignorant voice of prayer.  
Eternal while the ages toil beneath,  
Unmoved, untouched by aught that he has made,  
He sees as minute details mid the stars  
The animal’s agony and the fate of man:  
Immeasurably wise, he exceeds thy thought;  
His solitary joy needs not thy love.  
His truth in human thinking cannot dwell:  
If thou desirest Truth, then still thy mind  
For ever, slain by the dumb unseen Light.  
Immortal bliss lives not in human air:
How shall the mighty Mother her calm delight
Keep fragrant in this narrow fragile vase,
Or lodge her sweet unbroken ecstasy
In hearts which earthly sorrow can assail
And bodies careless Death can slay at will?
Dream not to change the world that God has planned,
Strive not to alter his eternal law.
If heavens there are whose gates are shut to grief,
There seek the joy thou couldst not find on earth;
Or in the imperishable hemisphere
Where Light is native and Delight is king
And Spirit is the deathless ground of things,
Choose thy high station, child of Eternity.
If thou art Spirit and Nature is thy robe,
Cast off thy garb and be thy naked self
Immutable in its undying truth,
Alone for ever in the mute Alone.
Turn then to God, for him leave all behind;
Forgetting love, forgetting Satyavan,
Annul thyself in his immobile peace.
O soul, drown in his still beatitude.
For thou must die to thyself to reach God's height:
I, Death, am the gate of immortality.”
But Savitri answered to the sophist God:
“Once more wilt thou call Light to blind Truth’s eyes,
Make Knowledge a catch of the snare of Ignorance
And the Word a dart to slay my living soul?
Offer, O King, thy boons to tired spirits
And hearts that could not bear the wounds of Time,
Let those who were tied to body and to mind,
Tear off those bonds and flee into white calm
Crying for a refuge from the play of God.
Surely thy boons are great since thou art He!
But how shall I seek rest in endless peace
Who house the mighty Mother's violent force,
Her vision turned to read the enigmaed world,
Her will tempered in the blaze of Wisdom’s sun
And the flaming silence of her heart of love?
The world is a spiritual paradox
Invented by a need in the Unseen,
A poor translation to the creature’s sense
Of That which for ever exceeds idea and speech,
A symbol of what can never be symbolised,
A language mispronounced, misspelt, yet true.
Its powers have come from the eternal heights
And plunged into the inconscient dim Abyss
And risen from it to do their marvellous work.
The soul is a figure of the Unmanifest,
The mind labours to think the Unthinkable,
The life to call the Immortal into birth,
The body to enshrine the Illimitable.
The world is not cut off from Truth and God.
In vain thou hast dug the dark unbridgeable gulf,
In vain thou hast built the blind and doorless wall:
Man’s soul crosses through thee to Paradise,
Heaven’s sun forces its way through death and night;
Its light is seen upon our being’s verge.
My mind is a torch lit from the eternal sun,
My life a breath drawn by the immortal Guest,
My mortal body is the Eternal’s house.
Already the torch becomes the undying ray,
Already the life is the Immortal’s force,
The house grows of the householder part and one.
How sayst thou Truth can never light the human mind
And Bliss can never invade the mortal’s heart
Or God descend into the world he made?
If in the meaningless Void creation rose,
If from a bodiless Force Matter was born,
If Life could climb in the unconscious tree,
Its green delight break into emerald leaves
And its laughter of beauty blossom in the flower,
If sense could wake in tissue, nerve and cell
And Thought seize the grey matter of the brain,
And soul peep from its secrecy through the flesh,
How shall the nameless Light not leap on men,
And unknown powers emerge from Nature’s sleep?
Even now hints of a luminous Truth like stars
Arise in the mind-mooned splendour of Ignorance;
Even now the deathless Lover’s touch we feel:
If the chamber’s door is even a little ajar,
What then can hinder God from stealing in
Or who forbid his kiss on the sleeping soul?
Already God is near, the Truth is close:
Because the dark atheist body knows him not,
Must the sage deny the Light, the seer his soul?
I am not bound by thought or sense or shape;
I live in the glory of the Infinite,
I am near to the Nameless and Unknowable,
The Ineffable is now my household mate.
But standing on Eternity’s luminous brink
I have discovered that the world was He;
I have met Spirit with spirit, Self with self,
But I have loved too the body of my God.
I have pursued him in his earthly form.
A lonely freedom cannot satisfy
A heart that has grown one with every heart:
I am a deputy of the aspiring world,
My spirit’s liberty I ask for all.”

Then rang again a deeper cry of Death.
As if beneath its weight of sterile law
Oppressed by its own obstinate meaningless will,
Disdainful, weary and compassionate,
It kept no more its old intolerant sound,
But seemed like life’s in her unnumbered paths
Toiling for ever and achieving nought
Because of birth and change, her mortal powers
By which she lasts, around the term-posts fixed
Turning of a wide circling aimless race
Whose course for ever speeds and is the same.
In its long play with Fate and Chance and Time
Assured of the game’s vanity lost or won,
Crushed by its load of ignorance and doubt
Which knowledge seems to increase and growth to enlarge,
The earth-mind sinks and it despairs and looks
Old, weary and discouraged on its work.
Yet was all nothing then or vainly achieved?
Some great thing has been done, some light, some power
Delivered from the huge Inconscient’s grasp:
It has emerged from night; it sees its dawns
Circling for ever though no dawn can stay.
This change was in the godhead’s far-flung voice;
His form of dread was altered and admitted
Our transient effort at eternity,
Yet flung vast doubts of what might else have been
On grandiose hints of an impossible day.
The great voice surging cried to Savitri:
“Because thou knowst the wisdom that transcends
Both veil of forms and the contempt of forms,
Arise delivered by the seeing gods.
If free thou hadst kept thy mind from life’s fierce stress,
Thou mightst have been like them omniscient, calm.
But the violent and passionate heart forbids.
It is the storm bird of an anarch Power
That would upheave the world and tear from it
The indecipherable scroll of Fate,
Death’s rule and Law and the unknowable Will.
Hasteners to action, violators of God
Are these great spirits who have too much love,
And they who formed like thee, for both art thou,
Have come into the narrow bounds of life
With too large natures overleaping time.
Worshippers of force who know not her recoil,
Their giant wills compel the troubled years.
The wise are tranquil; silent the great hills
Rise ceaselessly towards their unreached sky,
Seated on their unchanging base, their heads
Dreamless in heaven’s immutable domain.
On their aspiring tops, sublime and still,
Lifting half-way to heaven the climbing soul
The mighty mediators stand content
To watch the revolutions of the stars:
Motionlessly moving with the might of earth,
They see the ages pass and are the same.
The wise think with the cycles, they hear the tread
Of far-off things; patient, unmoved they keep
Their dangerous wisdom in their depths restrained,
Lest man’s frail days into the unknown should sink
Dragged like a ship by bound leviathan
Into the abyss of his stupendous seas.
Lo, how all shakes when the gods tread too near!
All moves, is in peril, anguished, torn, upheaved.
The hurrying aeons would stumble on too swift
If strength from heaven surprised the imperfect earth
And veilless knowledge smote these unfit souls.
The deities have screened their dreadful power:
God hides his thought and, even, he seems to err.
Be still and tardy in the slow wise world.
Mighty art thou with the dread goddess filled,
To whom thou criedst at dawn in the dim woods.
Use not thy strength like the wild Titan souls!
Touch not the seated lines, the ancient laws,
Respect the calm of great established things.”
But Savitri replied to the huge god:
“What is the calm thou vauntst, O Law, O Death?
Is it not the dull-visioned tread inert
Of monstrous energies chained in a stark round
Soulless and stone-eyed with mechanic dreams?
Vain the soul’s hope if changeless Law is all:
Ever to the new and the unknown press on
The speeding aeons justifying God. 
What were earth’s ages if the grey restraint
Were never broken and glories sprang not forth
Bursting their obscure seed, while man’s slow life
Leaped hurried into sudden splendid paths
By divine words and human gods revealed?
Impose not upon sentient minds and hearts
The dull fixity that binds inanimate things.
Well is the unconscious rule for the animal breeds
Content to live beneath the immutable yoke;
Man turns to a nobler walk, a master path.
I trample on thy law with living feet;
For to arise in freedom I was born.
If I am mighty let my force be unveiled
Equal companion of the dateless powers,
Or else let my frustrated soul sink down
Unworthy of Godhead in the original sleep.
I claim from Time my will’s eternity,
God from his moments.” Death replied to her,
“Why should the noble and immortal will
Stoop to the petty works of transient earth,
Freedom forgotten and the Eternal’s path?
Or is this the high use of strength and thought,
To struggle with the bonds of death and time
And spend the labour that might earn the gods
And battle and bear agony of wounds
To grasp the trivial joys that earth can guard
In her small treasure-chest of passing things?
Child, hast thou trodden the gods beneath thy feet
Only to win poor shreds of earthly life
For him thou lov’st cancelling the grand release,
Keeping from early rapture of the heavens
His soul the lenient deities have called?
Are thy arms sweeter than the courts of God?”
She answered, “Straight I trample on the road
The strong hand hewed for me which planned our paths.
I run where his sweet dreadful voice commands
And I am driven by the reins of God.
Why drew he wide his scheme of mighty worlds
Or filled infinity with his passionate breath?
Or wherefore did he build my mortal form
And sow in me his bright and proud desires,
If not to achieve, to flower in me, to love,
Carving his human image richly shaped
In thoughts and largenesses and golden powers?
Far Heaven can wait our coming in its calm.
Easy the heavens were to build for God.
Earth was his difficult matter, earth the glory
Gave of the problem and the race and strife.
There are the ominous masks, the terrible powers;
There it is greatness to create the gods.
Is not the spirit immortal and absolved
Always, delivered from the grasp of Time?
Why came it down into the mortal’s Space?
A charge he gave to his high spirit in man
And wrote a hidden decree on Nature’s tops.
Freedom is this with ever seated soul,
Large in life’s limits, strong in Matter’s knots,
Building great stuff of action from the worlds
To make fine wisdom from coarse, scattered strands
And love and beauty out of war and night,
The wager wonderful, the game divine.
What liberty has the soul which feels not free
Unless stripped bare and cannot kiss the bonds
The Lover winds around his playmate’s limbs,
Choosing his tyranny, crushed in his embrace?
To seize him better with her boundless heart
She accepts the limiting circle of his arms,
Bows full of bliss beneath his mastering hands
And laughs in his rich constraints, most bound, most free.
This is my answer to thy lures, O Death.”
Immutable, Death’s denial met her cry:
“However mighty, whatever thy secret name
Uttered in hidden conclaves of the gods,
Thy heart’s ephemeral passion cannot break
The iron rampart of accomplished things
With which the great Gods fence their camp in Space.
Whoever thou art behind thy human mask,
Even if thou art the Mother of the worlds
And pegst thy claim upon the realms of Chance,
The cosmic Law is greater than thy will.
Even God himself obeys the Laws he made:
The Law abides and never can it change,
The Person is a bubble on Time’s sea.
A forerunner of a greater Truth to come,
Thy soul creator of its freer Law,
Vaunting a Force behind on which it leans,
A Light above which none but thou hast seen,
Thou claimst the first fruits of Truth’s victory.
But what is Truth and who can find her form
Amid the specious images of sense,
Amid the crowding guesses of the mind
And the dark ambiguities of a world
Peopled with the incertitudes of Thought?
For where is Truth and when was her footfall heard
Amid the endless clamour of Time’s mart
And which is her voice amid the thousand cries
That cross the listening brain and cheat the soul?
Or is Truth aught but a high starry name
Or a vague and splendid word by which man’s thought
Sanctions and consecrates his nature’s choice,
The heart’s wish donning knowledge as its robe,
The cherished idea elect among the elect,
Thought’s favourite mid the children of half-light
Who high-voiced crowd the playgrounds of the mind
Or people its dormitories in infant sleep?
All things hang here between God’s yes and no,
Two Powers real but to each other untrue,
Two consort stars in the mooned night of mind
That towards two opposite horizons gaze,
The white head and black tail of the mystic drake,
The swift and the lame foot, wing strong, wing broken
Sustaining the body of the uncertain world,
A great surreal dragon in the skies.
Too dangerously thy high proud truth must live
Entangled in Matter’s mortal littleness.
All in this world is true, yet all is false:
Its thoughts into an eternal cipher run,
Its deeds swell to Time’s rounded zero sum.
Thus man at once is animal and god,
A disparate enigma of God’s make
Unable to free the Godhead’s form within,
A being less than himself, yet something more,
The aspiring animal, the frustrate god
Yet neither beast nor deity but man,
But man tied to the kind earth’s labour strives to exceed
Climbing the stairs of God to higher things.
Objects are seemings and none knows their truth,
Ideas are guesses of an ignorant god.
Truth has no home in earth’s irrational breast:
Yet without reason life is a tangle of dreams,
But reason is poised above a dim abyss
And stands at last upon a plank of doubt.
Eternal truth lives not with mortal men.
Or if she dwells within thy mortal heart,
Show me the body of the living Truth
Or draw for me the outline of her face
That I too may obey and worship her.
Then will I give thee back thy Satyavan.
But here are only facts and steel-bound Law.
This truth I know that Satyavan is dead
And even thy sweetness cannot lure him back.
No magic Truth can bring the dead to life,
No power of earth cancel the thing once done,  
No joy of the heart can last surviving death,  
No bliss persuade the past to live again.  
But Life alone can solace the mute Void  
And fill with thought the emptiness of Time.  
Leave then thy dead, O Savitri, and live.”  
The Woman answered to the mighty Shade,  
And as she spoke, mortality disappeared;  
Her Goddess self grew visible in her eyes,  
Light came, a dream of heaven, into her face.  
“O Death, thou too art God and yet not He,  
But only his own black shadow on his path  
As leaving the Night he takes the upward Way  
And drags with him its clinging inconscient Force.  
Of God unconscious thou art the dark head,  
Of his Ignorance thou art the impenitent sign,  
Of its vast tenebrous womb the natural child,  
On his immortality the sinister bar.  
All contraries are aspects of God’s face.  
The Many are the innumerable One,  
The One carries the multitude in his breast;  
He is the Impersonal, inscrutable, sole,  
He is the one infinite Person seeing his world;  
The Silence bears the Eternal’s great dumb seal,  
His light inspires the eternal Word;  
He is the Immobile’s deep and deathless hush,  
Its white and signless blank negating calm,  
Yet stands the creator Self, the almighty Lord  
And watches his will done by the forms of Gods  
And the desire that goads half-conscious man  
And the reluctant and unseeing Night.  
These wide divine extremes, these inverse powers  
Are the right and left side of the body of God;  
Existence balanced twixt two mighty arms  
Confronts the mind with unsolved abysms of Thought.  
Darkness below, a fathomless Light above,
In Light are joined, but sundered by severing Mind
Stand face to face, opposite, inseparable,
Two contraries needed for his great World-task,
Two poles whose currents wake the immense World-Force.
In the stupendous secrecy of his Self,
Above the world brooding with equal wings,
He is both in one, beginningless, without end:
Transcending both, he enters the Absolute.
His being is a mystery beyond mind,
His ways bewilder mortal ignorance;
The finite in its little sections parked,
Amazed, credits not God’s audacity
Who dares to be the unimagined All
And see and act as might one Infinite.
Against human reason this is his offence,
Being known to be for ever unknowable,
To be all and yet transcend the mystic whole,
Absolute, to lodge in a relative world of Time,
Eternal and all-knowing, to suffer birth,
Omnipotent, to sport with Chance and Fate,
Spirit, yet to be Matter and the Void,
Ilimitable, beyond form or name,
To dwell within a body, one and supreme
To be animal and human and divine:
A still deep sea, he laughs in rolling waves;
Universal, he is all,—transcendent, none.
To man’s righteousness this is his cosmic crime,
Almighty beyond good and evil to dwell
Leaving the good to their fate in a wicked world
And evil to reign in this enormous scene.
All opposition seems and strife and chance,
An aimless labour with but scanty sense,
To eyes that see a part and miss the whole;
The surface men scan, the depths refuse their search:
A hybrid mystery challenges the view,
Or a discouraging sordid miracle.
Yet in the exact Inconscient’s stark conceive,
In the casual error of the world’s ignorance
A plan, a hidden Intelligence is glimpsed.
There is a purpose in each stumble and fall;
Nature’s most careless lolling is a pose
Preparing some forward step, some deep result.
Ingenious notes plugged into a motived score,
These million discords dot the harmonious theme
Of the evolution’s huge orchestral dance.
A Truth supreme has forced the world to be;
It has wrapped itself in Matter as in a shroud,
A shroud of Death, a shroud of Ignorance.
It compelled the suns to burn through silent Space,
Flame-signs of its uncomprehended Thought
In a wide brooding ether’s formless muse:
It made of Knowledge a veiled and struggling light,
Of Being a substance nescient, dense and dumb,
Of Bliss the beauty of an insentient world.
In finite things the conscious Infinite dwells:
Involved it sleeps in Matter’s helpless trance,
It rules the world from its sleeping senseless Void;
Dreaming it throws out mind and heart and soul
To labour crippled, bound, on the hard earth;
A broken whole it works through scattered points;
Its gleaming shards are Wisdom’s diamond thoughts,
Its shadowy reflex our ignorance.
It starts from the mute mass in countless jets,
It fashions a being out of brain and nerve,
A sentient creature from its pleasures and pangs.
A pack of feelings obscure, a dot of sense
Survives awhile answering the shocks of life,
Then, crushed or its force spent, leaves the dead form,
Leaves the huge universe in which it lived
An insignificant unconsidered guest.
But the soul grows concealed within its house;
It gives to the body its strength and magnificence;
CANTO IV: *The Dream Twilight of the Earthly Real*

It follows aims in an ignorant aimless world,
It lends significance to earth’s meaningless life.
A demigod animal, came thinking man;
He wallows in mud, yet heavenward soars in thought;
He plays and ponders, laughs and weeps and dreams,
Satisfies his little longings like the beast;
He pores upon life’s book with student eyes.
Out of this tangle of intellect and sense,
Out of the narrow scope of finite thought
At last he wakes into spiritual mind;
A high liberty begins and luminous room:
He glimpses eternity, touches the infinite,
He meets the gods in great and sudden hours,
He feels the universe as his larger self,
Makes Space and Time his opportunity
To join the heights and depths of being in light,
In the heart’s cave speaks secretly with God.
But these are touches and high moments lived;
Fragments of Truth supreme have lit his soul,
Reflections of the sun in waters still.
A few have dared the last supreme ascent
And break through borders of blinding light above,
And feel a breath around of mightier air,
Receive a vaster being’s messages
And bathe in its immense intuitive Ray.
On summit Mind are radiant altitudes
Exposed to the lustre of Infinity,
Outskirts and dependencies of the house of Truth,
Upraised estates of Mind and measureless.
There man can visit but there he cannot live.
A cosmic Thought spreads out its vastitudes;
Its smallest parts are here philosophies
Challenging with their detailed immensity,
Each figuring an omniscient scheme of things.
But higher still can climb the ascending light;
There are vasts of vision and eternal suns,
Oceans of an immortal luminousness,
Flame-hills assaulting heaven with their peaks,
There dwelling all becomes a blaze of sight;
A burning head of vision leads the mind,
Thought trails behind it its long comet tail;
The heart glows, an illuminate and seer,
And sense is kindled into identity.
A highest flight climbs to a deepest view:
In a wide opening of its native sky
Intuition’s lightnings range in a bright pack
Hunting all hidden truths out of their lairs,
Its fiery edge of seeing absolute
Cleaves into locked unknown retreats of self,
Rummages the sky-recesses of the brain,
Lights up the occult chambers of the heart;
Its spear-point ictus of discovery
Pressed on the cover of name, the screen of form,
Strips bare the secret soul of all that is.
Thought there has revelation’s sun-bright eyes;
The Word, a mighty and inspiring Voice,
Enter Truth’s inmost cabin of privacy
And tears away the veil from God and life.
Then stretches the boundless finite’s last expanse,
The cosmic empire of the Overmind,
Time’s buffer state bordering Eternity,
Too vast for the experience of man’s soul:
All here gathers beneath one golden sky:
The Powers that build the cosmos station take
In its house of infinite possibility;
Each god from there builds his own nature’s world;
Ideas are phalanxed like a group of suns,
Each marshalling his company of rays.
Thought crowds in masses seized by one regard;
All Time is one body, Space a single look:
There is the Godhead’s universal gaze
And there the boundaries of immortal Mind:
The line that parts and joins the hemispheres
Closes in on the labour of the Gods
Fencing eternity from the toil of Time.
In her glorious kingdom of eternal light
All-ruler, ruled by none, the Truth supreme,
Omnipotent, omniscient and alone,
In a golden country keeps her measureless house;
In its corridor she hears the tread that comes
Out of the Unmanifest never to return
Till the Unknown is known and seen by men.
Above the stretch and blaze of cosmic Sight,
Above the silence of the wordless Thought,
Formless creator of immortal forms,
Nameless, investiture with the name divine,
Transcending Time’s hours, transcending Timelessness,
The Mighty Mother sits in lucent calm
And holds the eternal Child upon her knees
Attending the day when he shall speak to Fate.
There is the image of our future’s hope;
There is the sun for which all darkness waits,
There is the imperishable harmony;
The world’s contradictions climb to her and are one:
There is the Truth of which the world’s truths are shreds,
The Light of which the world’s ignorance is the shade
Till Truth draws back the shade that it has cast,
The Love our hearts call down to heal all strife,
The Bliss for which the world’s derelict sorrows yearn:
Thence comes the glory sometimes seen on earth,
The visits of Godhead to the human soul,
The Beauty and the dream on Nature’s face.
There the perfection born from eternity
Calls to it the perfection born in Time,
The truth of God surprising human life,
The image of God overtaking finite shapes.
There in a world of everlasting Light,
In the realms of the immortal Supermind
Truth who hides here her head in mystery,
Her riddle deemed by reason impossible
In the stark structure of material form,
Unenigmaed lives, unmasked her face and there
Is Nature and the common law of things.
There in a body made of spirit stuff,
The hearth-stone of the everliving Fire,
Action translates the movements of the soul,
Thought steps infallible and absolute
And life is a continual worship’s rite,
A sacrifice of rapture to the One.
A cosmic vision, a spiritual sense
Feels all the Infinite lodged in finite form
And seen through a quivering ecstasy of light
Discovers the bright face of the Bodiless,
In the truth of a moment, in the moment’s soul
Can sip the honey-wine of Eternity.
A Spirit who is no one and innumerable,
The one mystic infinite Person of his world
Multiplies his myriad personality,
On all his bodies seals his divinity’s stamp
And sits in each immortal and unique.
The Immobile stands behind each daily act,
A background of the movement and the scene,
Upholding creation on its might and calm
And change on the Immutable’s deathless poise.
The Timeless looks out from the travelling hours;
The Ineffable puts on a robe of speech
Where all its words are woven like magic threads
Moving with beauty, inspiring with their gleam,
And every thought takes up its destined place
Recorded in the memory of the world.
The Truth supreme, vast and impersonal
Fits faultlessly the hour and circumstance,
Its substance a pure gold ever the same
But shaped into vessels for the spirit’s use,
Its gold becomes the wine jar and the vase.
All there is a supreme epiphany:
The All-Wonderful makes a marvel of each event,
The All-Beautiful is a miracle in each shape;
The All-Blissful smites with rapture the heart’s throbs,
A pure celestial joy is the use of sense.
Each being there is a member of the Self,
A portion of the million-thoughted All,
A claimant to the timeless Unity,
The many’s sweetness, the joy of difference
Edged with the intimacy of the One.

“But who can show to thee Truth’s glorious face?
Our human words can only shadow her.
To thought she is an unthinkable rapture of light,
To speech a marvel inexpressible.
O Death, if thou couldst touch the Truth supreme
Thou wouldst grow suddenly wise and cease to be.
If our souls could see and love and clasp God’s Truth,
Its infinite radiance would seize our hearts,
Our being in God’s image be remade
And earthly life become the life divine.”
Then Death the last time answered Savitri:
“If Truth supreme transcends her shadow here
Severed by Knowledge and the climbing vasts,
What bridge can cross the gulf that she has left
Between her and the dream-world she has made?
Or who could hope to bring her down to men
And persuade to tread the harsh globe with wounded feet
Leaving her unapproachable glory and bliss,
Wasting her splendour on pale earthly air?
Is thine that strength, O beauty of mortal limbs,
O soul who flutterest to escape my net?
Who then art thou hiding in human guise?
Thy voice carries the sound of infinity,
Knowledge is with thee, Truth speaks through thy words;
The light of things beyond shines in thy eyes.
But where is thy strength to conquer Time and Death?
Hast thou God’s force to build heaven’s values here?
For truth and knowledge are an idle gleam
If Knowledge brings not power to change the world,
If Might comes not to give to Truth her right.
A blind Force, not Truth has made this ignorant world,
A blind Force, not Truth orders the lives of men:
By Power, not Light, the great Gods rule the world;
Power is the arm of God, the seal of Fate.
O human claimant to immortality,
Reveal thy power, lay bare thy spirit’s force,
Then will I give back to thee Satyavan.
Or if the Mighty Mother is with thee,
Show me her face that I may worship her;
Let deathless eyes look into the eyes of Death,
An imperishable Force touching brute things
Transform earth’s death into immortal life.
Then can thy dead return to thee and live.
The prostrate earth perhaps shall lift her gaze
And feel near her the secret body of God
And love and joy overtake fleeing Time.”

And Savitri looked on Death and answered not.
Almost it seemed as if in his symbol shape
The world’s darkness had consented to Heaven-light
And God needed no more the Inconscient’s screen.
A mighty transformation came on her.
A halo of the indwelling Deity,
The Immortal’s lustre that had lit her face
And tented its radiance in her body’s house,
Overflowing made the air a luminous sea.
In a flaming moment of apocalypse
The Incarnation thrust aside its veil.
A little figure in infinity
Yet stood and seemed the Eternal’s very house,
As if the world’s centre was her very soul
CANTO IV: The Dream Twilight of the Earthly Real

And all wide space was but its outer robe.

A curve of the calm hauteur of far heaven
Descending into earth’s humility,

Her forehead’s span vaulted the Omniscient’s gaze,
Her eyes were two stars that watched the universe.
The Power that from her being’s summit reigned,
The Presence chambered in lotus secrecy,

Came down and held the centre in her brow
Where the mind’s Lord in his control-room sits;
There throned on concentration’s native seat
He opens that third mysterious eye in man,
The Unseen’s eye that looks at the unseen,
When Light with a golden ecstasy fills his brain
And the Eternal’s wisdom drives his choice
And eternal Will seizes the mortal’s will.

It stirred in the lotus of her throat of song,
And in her speech throbbed the immortal Word,
Her life sounded with the steps of the world-soul
Moving in harmony with the cosmic Thought.
As glides God’s sun into the mystic cave
Where hides his light from the pursuing gods,
It glided into the lotus of her heart
And woke in it the Force that alters Fate.

It poured into her navel’s lotus depth,
Lodged in the little life-nature’s narrow home,
On the body’s longings grew heaven-rapture’s flower
And made desire a pure celestial flame,
Broke into the cave where coiled World-Energy sleeps
And smote the thousand-hooded serpent Force
That blazing towered and clasped the World-Self above,
Joined Matter’s dumbness to the Spirit’s hush
And filled earth’s acts with the Spirit’s silent power.
Thus changed she waited for the Word to speak.
Eternity looked into the eyes of Death
And Darkness saw God’s living Reality.
Then a Voice was heard that seemed the stillness’ self.
Or the low calm utterance of infinity
When it speaks to the silence in the heart of sleep.
“I hail thee, almighty and victorious Death,
Thou grandiose Darkness of the Infinite.
O Void that makest room for all to be,
Hunger that gnawest at the universe
Consuming the cold remnants of the suns
And eatst the whole world with thy jaws of fire,
Waster of the energy that has made the stars,
Inconscience, carrier of the seeds of thought,
Nescience in which All-Knowledge sleeps entombed
And slowly emerges in its hollow breast
Wearing the mind’s mask of bright Ignorance.
Thou art my shadow and my instrument.
I have given thee thy awful shape of dread
And thy sharp sword of terror and grief and pain
To force the soul of man to struggle for light
On the brevity of his half-conscious days.
Thou art his spur to greatness in his works,
The whip to his yearning for eternal bliss,
His poignant need of immortality.
Live, Death, awhile, be still my instrument.
One day man too shall know thy fathomless heart
Of silence and the brooding peace of Night
And grave obedience to eternal Law
And the calm inflexible pity in thy gaze.
But now, O timeless Mightiness, stand aside
And leave the path of my incarnate Force.
Relieve the radiant God from thy black mask:
Release the soul of the world called Satyavan
Freed from thy clutch of pain and ignorance
That he may stand master of life and fate,
Man’s representative in the house of God,
The mate of Wisdom and the spouse of Light,
The eternal bridegroom of the eternal bride.”
She spoke; Death unconvinced resisted still,
Although he knew refusing still to know,
Although he saw refusing still to see.
Unshakable he stood claiming his right.
His spirit bowed; his will obeyed the law
Of its own nature binding even on Gods.
The Two opposed each other face to face.
His being like a huge fort of darkness towered;
Around it her light grew, an ocean’s siege.
Awhile the Shade survived defying heaven:
Assailing in front, oppressing from above,
A concrete mass of conscious power, he bore
The tyranny of her divine desire.
A pressure of intolerable force
Weighed on his unbowed head and stubborn breast;
Light like a burning tongue licked up his thoughts,
Light was a luminous torture in his heart,
Light coursed, a splendid agony, through his nerves;
His darkness muttered perishing in her blaze.
Her mastering Word commanded every limb
And left no room for his enormous will
That seemed pushed out into some helpless space
And could no more re-enter but left him void.
He called to Night but she fell shuddering back,
He called to Hell but sullenly it retired:
He turned to the Inconscient for support,
From which he was born, his vast sustaining self;
It drew him back towards boundless vacancy
As if by himself to swallow up himself:
He called to his strength, but it refused his call.
His body was eaten by light, his spirit devoured.
At last he knew defeat inevitable
And left crumbling the shape that he had worn,
Abandoning hope to make man’s soul his prey
And force to be mortal the immortal spirit.
Afar he fled shunning her dreaded touch
And refuge took in the retreating Night.
In the dream twilight of that symbol world
The dire universal Shadow disappeared
Vanishing into the Void from which it came.
As if deprived of its original cause,
The twilight realm passed fading from their souls,
And Satyavan and Savitri were alone.
But neither stirred: between those figures rose
A mute invisible and translucent wall.
In the long blank moment’s pause nothing could move:
All waited on the unknown inscrutable Will.