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When the shy star goes forth in heaven

All maidenly, disconsolate,

Hear you amid the drowsy even

One who is singing by your gate.

His song is softer than the dew

And he is come to visit you.

O bend no more in revery

When he at eventide is calling

Nor muse: Who may this singer be

Whose song about my heart is falling?

Know you by this, the lover's chant,

'Tis I that am your visitant.

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Notes

This was No. 4 in the 1907 edition.

Written (according to Ellmann) during Joyce's second sojourn in Paris in January / February 1903.

The Lover visits his shy Beloved. Music and singing begin to assume a central role within the courtship and within the cycle.

In what sense can a 'song' be 'softer than the dew'?

'Bending' has already been signalled as a significant bodily action. The image of a woman bent in revery recalls the medieval portraits of Mary the Mother of Christ.

'Eventide' re-invokes the dusky atmosphere of Nos. 3 and 4.

'Visitant' is archaic; one definition refers to migratory birds (a common symbol throughout the cycle) temporarily in a particular location.

Compare the 'shy star' here with the 'stars ... beginning to blink and peep' in Yeats's 'The Song of the Old Mother'. The 'shy star' also returns to the 'shy thoughts' of No. 4.

This lyric also sees the first mention of the word 'heart' which will recur eleven times (fourteen if one counts 'sweetheart') throughout the suite.