

25

Thou leanest to the shell of night,

Dear lady, a divining ear.

In that soft choiring of delight

What sound hath made thy heart to fear?

Seemed it of rivers rushing forth

From the grey deserts of the north?

That mood of thine, O timorous,

Is his, if thou but scan it well,

Who a mad tale bequeaths to us

At ghosting hour conjurable –

And all for some strange name he read

In Purchas or in Holinshed.

*

Notes

This was No. 26 in the 1907 edition.

More choiring, rehearsing those of Nos. 19 and 22.

Is this another poem giving substance to Joyce's (or Tindall's) obsession with bodily functions – i.e. the 'shell of night' as a chamber pot?

Rivers and 'grey deserts' – nature is assuming a darker, brooding presence.

The reference to 'scanning' is interesting, especially given the difficulties of scanning a word such as 'conjurable'.

Samuel Purchas (1577? – 1626) was an English cleric who published a range of early travel writing. Raphael Holinshed (1529 – 1580) was an English chronicler whose work was a major source for Shakespeare's history plays.