

4

The twilight turns from amethyst
To deep and deeper blue,
The lamp fills with a pale green glow
The trees of the avenue.

The old piano plays an air,
Sedate and slow and gay;
She bends upon the yellow keys,
Her head inclines this way.

Shy thought and grave wide eyes and hands
That wander as they list –
The twilight turns to darker blue
With lights of amethyst.

*

Notes

This was No. 2 in the 1907 edition.

After a hesitant opening in which he sings three songs to and about himself, this lyric sees the explicit appearance ('She', L. 7) of the woman who is to form the poet's object of love.

This lyric features images drawn from a range of recurring discourses, including time of day, colour (amethyst, blue, green, yellow), nature and music. These colours, each trailing particular associations and values, form a complex and sensitive matrix throughout the suite.

In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus's university chum Vincent Lynch swears 'in yellow': 'Damn your yellow insolence', he says playfully to

his friend. Tindall claims that 'Yellow, like brown, generally serves Joyce as a sign of decay' (183).

The 'pale green glow' echoes images of 'paleness' in Nos. 2 and 3.

'Twilight' suggests a liminal setting between night and day. Compare the poem 'Into the Twilight' in which Yeats invokes 'the mystical brotherhood / Of sun and moon and hollow and wood / And river and stream'.

The inclining head in line 8 reprises the 'head to the music bend' (line 10) of No. 2. It also recalls a passage from *Stephen Hero*: 'One evening he sat (silent) at his piano while the dusk enfolded him ... bending upon the keyboard in silence: and his soul commingled itself with the assailing, inarticulate dusk' (162).

'Avenue' is the first of many road references in the suite.