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At that hour when all things have repose,
 O lonely watcher of the skies,
 Do you hear the night wind and the sighs
Of harps playing unto Love to unclothe
 The pale gates of sunrise?

When all things repose, do you alone
 Awake to hear the sweet harps play
 To Love before him on his way,
And the night wind answering in antiphon
 Till night is overgone?

Play on, invisible harps, unto Love,
 Whose way in heaven is aglow
 At that hour when soft lights come and go,
Soft sweet music in the air above
 And in the earth below.

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Notes

This was No. 3 in the 1907 edition.

The nocturnal setting of this lyric continues through Nos. 4, 5 and 6. The Lover's loneliness is established.

Note the direct reference to an image from the famous sonnet, 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer' by John Keats:

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;

The 'night wind' inaugurates a recurring motif (conventional in Romantic poetry) in which the weather relates to the Lover's mood and to the progress of the affair.

The harps in the first stanza recall the sweet music (or 'music sweet' – not necessarily the same thing) of the previous lyric, as do the references in the final stanza to the 'air above' and the 'earth below'.

The 'pale gates of sunrise' link to No. 2's 'pale flowers'. 'Love' is once again personified.

That particular phrase is also interesting inasmuch as it is an example of a kind of usage – 'the adjective noun of noun' – that the critic Northrop Frye (1957: 282) claims to be particularly common in a certain style of twentieth-century lyric poetry. Besides 'The pale gates of sunrise' and 'O lonely watcher of the skies' in this lyric, there are six other examples in *Chamber Music*: two each in Nos. 19 ('flowery bells of morn' and 'wise choirs of faery'), 25 ('soft choiring of delight' and 'grey deserts of the north') and 30 ('clear mirror of your eyes' and 'soft sigh of kiss to kiss'). The doubled usage in each instance is perhaps an indication of Joyce's suggestibility – that having once employed a felicitous syntax, he felt compelled to use it again.

The first two stanzas are questions, implying a conversation of some kind, but with whom? Himself?

What does 'overgone' in the final line mean?

'O' seems an innocuous word, but in Early Modern literary discourse it trails connotations of female genitalia from an even earlier period – both in terms of its shape and its links to the numerical sign – 0 – representing zero (i.e. nothing). (This association is contested.) Those connotations resonate ironically but significantly in Joyce's deliberately archaic diction. 'O' occurs in Nos. 3, 5, 7, 11, 12, 14, 15, 22, 23, 31, 33 and 34.

This is a difficult text to scan, moving between iambic pentameter and something else. It also has an irregular rhyme scheme: ABBAA in the first two stanzas, but ABBAB in the third.