

Issy's Unveiled

by

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A preliminary note: when I refer to FWEET in fact I say McHugh, since most of Fweet's entries are taken from his Annotations. I am too lazy to point out which is which, so, please, bear with me - or check by your own, if you like. And, as usual, pardon, please, my approximate English!

Here is the part of text under examination:

**278.7: Bewise of Fanciulla's heart, the heart of
278.8: Fanciulla! Even the recollection of willow
278.9: fronds is a spellbinder that lets to hear. 3 The
278.10: rushes by the grey nuns' pond: ah eh oh let
278.11: me sigh too. Coalmansbell: behoves you
278.12: handmake of the load. Jenny Wren: pick, peck.
278.13: Johnny Post: pack, puck. 4 All the world's in
278.14: want and is writing a letters. 5 A letters from a
278.15: person to a place about a thing. And all the
278.16: world's on wish to be carrying a letters. A let-
278.17: ters to a king about a treasure from a cat. 6
278.18: When men want to write a letters. Ten men,
278.19: ton men, pen men, pun men, wont to rise a
278.20: ladder. And den men, dun men, fen men, fun
278.21: men, hen men, hun men went to raze a leader.
278.22: Is then any lettersday from many peoples,
278.23: Daganasanavitch? Empire, your outermost. 7
278.24: A posy cord. Plece.**

In its "trobar clus" this tricky passage discloses Issy's heart, her character, her very core. "Core" is poetical Italian for "heart" and heart is Latin "cor, cordis". And I think we are entitled to appeal to Latin, since we find it on the right (Shaunian) margin as "INCIPIIT INTERMISSIO". But, before plunging into the mysteries of this

paragraph, we should take note of what may be considered its prologue, namely **FW 278.06-8**, the two lines that precede our passage.

**278.05 With a pansy for the
278.06 pussy in the corner.**

I think it legitimate to see in the pussy a metaphor of Issy, who has been set aside (in the corner) since the entrance of the twins:

272.16 But, holy Janus, I was forgetting the Blitzen-kopfs!

So now it's time to give Issy a deserving thought (pansy - French pensée) having first homaged her - gentlemanly! - with a flowery present (pansy).

Now we know [**fweet**], that "Puss in the corner" is a card game, in fact a "solitary"; and that seems to anticipate the sexual aurea which envelops the next passage. A sex which, for the time being, is limited to masturbation (solitary) and which points out Issy's sexual frustration.

But "Puss in the corner" is also a children's game for "five" players; and this perhaps throws some light on the quite cryptic Footnote 2, directly related to the "pussy in the corner".

And if they was setting on your stool as hard as my was she could beth her bothom dolours he'd have a culious impressiom on the diminitive that chafes our ends.

Fweet is satisfied in pointing out a sequel of pronouns (*they... your... my... she... her... he... our*), but that is not enough for me. What is the meaning of this footnote and how is it related to

278.05-6?

Let's start by saying that we have indeed "five" characters, like the five players of the game. I am fairly convinced that they are:

- 1) they - people in general, **vox populi**
- 2) your - **Shaun**
- 3) my - **Issy**, who is writing her footnotes
- 4) she/her - **Isolde**, Issy's mirrored reflection
- 5) he - **Shem**

"Our" is just resumptive (your and mine), so it is not taken into account. The basic image of the footnote is that of an "arse". We find "setting, stool, bothom, culious, ends". This seems to be a sort of reprimand, Issy's reproach to a *hesitant* Shaun. We might interpret (roughly) her note like this:

"If they (people, vox populi) kick your ass (reproach you) as they kicked mine (the shame they put on me), the other side of me (she) could bet her ass that the other side of you (he) would be quite impressed looking at the contusions on our (yours and mine) bruised asses. (the shame put on the two of us)"

The "diminitive" being the "small, baser divinity" (sexual instincts) that arouses them and shows them their aim (ends) and their destiny (their fatal fall). Like that suggested by Hamlet V.2.10:

'There's a divinity that shapes our ends' [fweet]

That is in fact an invitation to Shaun to stop playing the respectful gentleman and to give free rein to sex, although that would mean that he will be debased and shown publicly as a "shame". But that would balance - in a sort of *coniunctio oppositorum* - the two opposite pairs: Shaun/Issy – Shem/Isolde. And Shem would be indeed quite impressed by his brother's change.

This said, let us proceed with the unveiling of *our* Isis.

278.7: Bewise of Fanciulla's heart, the heart of

278.8: Fanciulla!

The use of the term "Fanciulla" is an obvious reference to Puccini's "Fanciulla del West" (The Girl of the West) [fweet], where we find a young lady (Minnie) who redeems the bandit Dick Johnson. (Note the "dick", please!) Now "Minnie" is the same one (Miss Minnie) whom we find in Shem's left margin note:

*"Uncle Flabbius Muximus
to Niecia Flappia Minnimiss."*

We'll talk about this later on. For the moment let's stick to Issy. What has happened to her is worth listening to [German phrase

das lässt sich hören - **fweet**] no matter how sad it may sound.

278.8: Even the recollection of willow

278.9: fronds is a spellbinder that lets to hear. 3

The "recollection of willow fronds" is both a reference to the myth of Persephone gathering flowers just before being kidnapped by Hades, her uncle (again an allusion to Uncle Flabbius Muximus), who brings her into the Netherworld and makes her his *infernal* spouse; and a reference to sad memories, like those of Desdemona singing the Song of the Willow, just before being strangled by her jealous (and old) husband.

Sing willow, willow, willow:

The fresh streams ran by her, and murmur'd her moans;

Footnote 3 is kind of interesting.

When I'am Enastella and am taken for Essastessa I'll do that droop on the pohlmann's piano.

It seems obvious that Enastella and Essastessa are the two sides of Issy (Stella and Vanessa). Now "Essastessa" (she herself – **fweet**) is a modification of the Joycean's variant *Essatessa*, which hints at Italian "Esattezza" (exactitude, precision). Thus Issy, who considers herself (essastessa) a star (stella) – read : "a vamp" - would be indeed offended to be exchanged for her other self, who is the symbol of conformism and puritanical precision (Esattezza-Exactitude). The "droop on the piano" would be then her melancholy song played on the Pohlmann and Company **[fweet]** piano and her suicidal wish: she throws herself down from the heights of the "poor man's piano" (vertical one). [*Stieff pianos are commonly referred to as 'the poor man's Steinway', and were often sold as a second line in higher end Steinway dealerships – WP]*

278.9: The

278.10: rushes by the grey nuns' pond: ah eh oh let

278.11: me sigh too.

"The rushes by the grey nuns' pond" may hint too at the drowned Ophelia (she lost her father and her lover), confirming the "suicide" theme:

*"There is a Willow growes aslant a Brooke,
That shewes his hore leaues in the glassie streame:"* [Hamlet IV,7]

"hore" is "hoary" (gray) - thus we have both "willow" and "grey nuns" -- and rushes/streame. As for the "grey nuns" they are "The Sisters of Charity of Montreal":

[The city residents mocked the nuns by calling them "les grises" – a phrase meaning both "the grey women" and "the drunken women" – wp]

So it's a sad song, full of sighs: ah eh oh - but "I" and "U" are lacking (with a possible hint at Love's Labor's Lost 5.1.51-3). There is no mutual relationship, no emotional involvement, no more partnership. The lovers (I & You) are irremediably lost. (By the way, "You" was the agnomen of François-Magdeleine You d'Youville, a notorious bootlegger and (dead) husband of Saint Marguerite d'Youville, the foundress of the above mentioned Sisters of Charity.)

And now the time has come to be a little more explicit about Shem's left margin note.

*"Uncle Flabbius Muximus
to Niecia Flappia Minnimiss.
As this is.
And as this this is."*

Flabbius Muximus refers to Fabius Maximus, the Roman dictator descendant of the gens Fabii; thus : Fabius / Flabbius. And his being "flab" probably refers to his age, to his corpulence and perhaps to his outdated virility; and the opposition Uncle/Niece to the incest theme. Now, "mus" being Latin for "mouse", "muximus" is a "big (maxi) rat", probably of Irish origin "mishe-mishe"; which has an onomatopoeic similarity with Italian "micio-micio", a very common way to address a cat (micio = pussy). And we must remember that

Fabius Maximus was nicknamed "Cunctator" (delayer), a word that hints directly at "cunt", so a guy who is after cunts, after Fallopian tubes, which explains the girl's agnomen "Flappia".

(As for "Niece" I wouldn't exclude a possible hint at the First Council of Nicaea (Italian Nicea) with its establishment of the Canon Law; but that's indeed somewhat too far-fetched and would need further investigation. If I am not wrong I think women were declassified in their hierarchical position. In our case that would hint at the "obedience" motif.)

In conclusion we find an old "womanizer" who is trying to seduce his very young niece, whose name is Minnie (Minnimiss). A girl who seems frightened (flap : panic) by the enormous rat (muxi-mus) that would like to enter (inter-missio / inter micio / inter pussy) her tiny (minimiss) den. (Provided his "flabbiness" allows him to!) And there is no way to disobey. The order has been given: "*As this is.*" There is a possible pun with Italian "dissi" (I said), which is a rude way to pronounce "this/ this is". That would give a further touch of inevitability in the following: "*And as this this is*", which could be interpreted as: "*And - as I said (this/dissi) - this is*" (This is as I said.) Which mirrors exactly the pseudo Annunciation of

278.11-12 "behoves you handmake of the load"

[*Luke 1:38: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord' – fweet*]

This is probably a reference to the Mark/Isolde/Tristan episode. Issy has been assigned to Mark/Uncle Flabbius. The bell has tolled:

278.11: Coalmansbell: behoves you

278.12: handmake of the load. Jenny Wren: pick, peck.

278.13: Johnny Post: pack, puck. 4

"Coalmansbell" together with the gospel reference are direct hints at the maid's virginity (The deadly abstinence of St Colman).

[*Saint Patrick once commanded his disciples not to drink whiskey till after the vesper bell; Saint Colman, his disciple, misunderstood, did not drink at all, though engaged in hard labour in the harvest field and dropped dead when the vesper bell rang – fweet*].

Jenny Wren must peck and pick what is given to her; and his beau,

Johnny Post, must pack and "puck off". The "menial" worker (coal man) must limit himself (behoves) to "manual" jobs (handmake), namely masturbation. But that is not what Issy expects of her "post" (phallic symbol) and the "puck" she hears has definitely a very different sense, as she writes in her footnote 4:

Heavenly twinges, if it's one of his I'll fearly feint as swoon as he enter-rooms.

The celestial pain of her beaus's (one of the twins) penetration (enter-rooms) brings back to memory Benvenuto Cellini's "The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa or Transverberation of Saint Teresa"; although there is a possible opposite meaning if the male figure is referred to the "flabby Uncle"; in which case she would feign a swoon (or a fake orgasm) in order to interrupt (enter-rooms → Italian "interrompere" : to interrupt) the undesired intercourse.

Now, Jenny Wren with her pecking and Johnny Post with his packing bring us directly to the "letter" motif.

**278.13: All the world's in
278.14: want and is writing a letters. 5**

Here we find an apparently erroneous plural: "a letters". But to have a "grammatically correct" expression we could simply consider "a" not as an indefinite article, but as a "qualitative marker", so "A" letters, where "A" can stand for "Anonymous" and for the "A" (Adultery) letter of Hawthornean remembrance. Possibly "anonymous letters about an adulterous affair", which can be the one between Tristan and Isolde, behind King Mark's back. Of course in our case we have Issy dreaming to have an affair with her beau, Shaun. And her Footnote 5 seems to be very explicit:

To be slipped on, to be slept by, to be conned to, to be kept up. And when you're done push the chain.

The adulterous dream (A letters) to be savoured and then hidden; the secret letter read, committed to memory, torn to pieces and then flushed down the toilet. But "push the chain" poses a problem, since we all know that the chain is "pulled". Of course that may be the linguistic mistake of an "upset" Issy, whom passion has

deprived of her sense of orientation. But that may be, instead, a deliberate throwing the reader off the track. “Chain” could refer to the “locked , chained pussy”; in which case “push” is an invitation to “unchain” it, using the male/mail tool that “slips on” it, that “slaps” it, that “cons” (studies) it (French “con”, Latin “cunnus” : cunt), that keeps being erect (kept up) in its “pushing”.

But, hélas, Shaun doesn't seem to be ready to play Puck, the Robin Goodfellow of the Shakespearean *Midsummers Night's Dream*; probably because he fears to be treated like the Robin Readbreast of the nursery rhyme:

*Little Jenny Wren fell sick,
Upon a time;
In came Robin Redbreast
And brought her cake and wine.*

*"Eat well of my cake, Jenny,
Drink well of my wine."
"Thank you, Robin, kindly,
You shall be mine."*

*Jenny she got well,
And stood upon her feet,
And told Robin plainly
She loved him not a bit.*

*Robin being angry,
Hopped upon a twig,
Saying, "Out upon you! Fie upon you!
Bold-faced pig!"*

But anonymous letters (from a person - an undefined one; or, who knows, may be a “parson”) about something (a thing) happening somewhere (a place) are coming whatsoever:

**278.14: A letters from a
278.15: person to a place about a thing.**

Fweet duly points out that “a noun denotes a person, a place, or a

thing". That's what children are taught in primary schools. And in fact here begins Issy's "a-dulterous lesson" to Shaun. The overwhelming emergence of sexual "un-a-voidable" desires.

**278.15: And all the
278.16: world's on wish to be carrying a letters.**

Anonymous letters addressed to "a king" (King Mark), talking about a pussy (a cat) who shows freely her treasure.

**278.16: A let-
278.17: ters to a king about a treasure from a cat. 6**

Footnote 6: *With her modesties office*, hinting both at "Her Majesty's Service" [**fweet**] and at the "office" (sexual) that her (faked) modesty allows her. In other words, offering the treasure of her modesty not to the King, but to someone else. A fact that Shem's left margin note ("*Dear Brotus, land me arrears.*") punctually points out. Brotus being the wished "brutal" brother, summoned to listen to her (lend me your ears) and either to "land on her buttocks (arrears)" or to land her on her buttocks (and cover her). And of course Brutus and the Caesarean quotation hint at the "parricide" motif.

Now, the anonymous letters may come from envy or, in the case of men, from the fact that they can't have a proper hard-on:

**278.18: When men want to write a letters. Ten men,
278.19: ton men, pen men, pun men, wont to rise a
278.20: ladder.**

Flaccid men, like important ones (ton men : men of weight) are.

[There is an Italian proverb: "*Omo di panza, omo d'importanza*" (a man who has a big belly is a man of substance and prestige) and "ton" may hint at Italian "tuono" and French "tonnerre" (thunder): thus the "father" theme.]

And intellectuals (pen men); and tricksters (pun men), who are not able (wont) to raise their "ladder". Here we find an obvious

reference to the song *'Three men, two men, one man and his dog Went to mow a meadow'* [**fweet**], where "meadow" may legitimately be interpreted as a metaphor for "pussy".

But there are other kinds of men, definitely more matter of fact and sexually reliable:

278.20: And den men, dun men, fen men, fun

278.21: men, hen men, hun men went to raze a leader.

cavemen (den men / Danemen), strong (dun, fen) [Irish *dún*: fort (French fort) Cornish fen: strong, eager, strenuous -- **fweet**], phenomenons (fen men), transgressive and insolent ones, who make fun of the rules (fun men); hungry men after chicks (hen men), barbaric ones (hun men / huns) – all those, instead of raising a leader - and being their subjects - "raze" him and take his place. The Freudian "primal horde": the sons usurping their father's hierarchical position.

Shem's left margin note says: "*Rockaby, babel, flatten a wall.*" So a reference to the fall of Humpty-Dumpty, which may be the fall of the deposed father from his Tower of Babel, but the (wished for) Edenic fall as well of the innocent Shaun, following the lyrics of the nursery rhyme:

*Rock-a-bye baby, on the treetop,
When the wind blows, the cradle will rock,
When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall,
And down will come baby, cradle and all.*

And, of course, in the "flattened wall" it is not difficult to see the deflowered young lady, which, by the way, is Issy's wish. And in fact she asks whether there is anyone who has the guts to get her, despite their father's ban.

278.22: Is then any lettersday from many peoples,

278.23: Daganasanavitch?

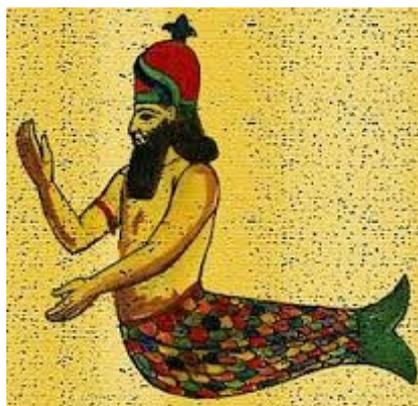
Her appeal may sound somewhat ambiguous: apparently she asks the possible postman Daganasanavitch (about him later) whether there are any letters for her (inviting her to adultery). But

"lettersday" is a little bit tricky. There is in fact a Greek religious feast "The Feast of the Three Hierarchs and Greek Letters Day", the three hierarchs being Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostom. The three Hierarchs hinting at the three soldiers (Tom, Dick and Harry) or the two brothers in their trinitarian siglum.



Shem's left margin note says : *"How he broke the good news to Gent."* It is a direct reference to Robert Browning's "How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix" [**fweet**], in which three knights ride - up to the exhaustion of their horses - to bring good news to the city of Aix; the last horse, Roland, dying as soon as he accomplishes his mission. And here again we can find an explicit reference to a passionate sexual intercourse, about which the "Gentleman" (King Mark, or Charlemagne, if we refer to Aix-la-Chapel) is duly informed.

And now it's Daganasanavitch's (the postman's) turn. The most immediate "Dog-and-son-of-a-bitch" [**fweet**] is both the expression of Issy's malcontent addressed to his clumsy brother; but also her invitation to him to become a "daga" (Italian : dagger), a Dagon [Dagon was originally an East Semitic Mesopotamian (Akkadian, Assyrian, Babylonian) fertility god.



And "sanavitch" is not only "son of a bitch", but also "son of a witch" and, why not, "sandwich" as well. Now, the slavonic "vitch" allows us to read "na" as Russian "on"; thus we have a fertility god, with his dagger, on a sandwich (open vulva): a somewhat scabrous

“hot dog”! But how does Shaun act? Well, he does not seem able to keep up as one would expect, at least according to Issy's remarks:

278.23: Empire, your outermost. 7

She probably would like to see him erect as the Empire State Building, but that does not seem to be the case. He is “outermost”, most distant from the center, he couldn't do worse (French : pire) than that, he has to learn (Italian : impara! - imperative from imparare: to learn). And Issy's Footnote 7 has a lot to teach.

Strutting as proud as a great turquin weggin that cuckhold on his Eddems and Clay's hat

Here again a double perspective and a plethora of criss-crossing references. King Mark as “Le Cocu Magnifique”,

[Le Cocu magnifique is a Belgian play by Fernand Crommelynck. It was first published in 1921. WP

Hear, hear!

Bruno, the village scribe, is married to a beautiful and utterly devoted young woman named **Stella**.]

displaying openly – strutting and wagging - his infamy in the cockade (cuckhold) on his hat, his “corrupt bargain” (Eddem and Clay):

*[In the 1824 United States presidential election no outright majority was attained and the process required resolution in the House of Representatives, whose Speaker and candidate in his own right, **Henry Clay**, gave his support to **John Quincy Adams**, and was then selected to be his Secretary of State. -WP]*

A would be rapist like “Tarquin the Proud, last king of Rome”. But from the opposite perspective we see Issy telling Shaun to walk proudly, like a Great (and terrible) Turkey and march against (wegen) the old cuckold in order to shut the “edemic” Adam in a closet (Clay's hat) and get the locked virgin for himself.

278.24: A posy cord. Plece.

If “posy” is “pussy” and “cord” is “heart” we end the passage with the same “heart of the Fanciulla” which we found in the beginning. If “a posy cord” is a “harpsicord”, our passage ends with a musical “virginal” (of the family of harpsicords). If “posy cord” is a “postcard” [**fweet**] it may be as well a “pass card” that allows the entrance, please!, into the “licit” and pleasing (Italian “piace”) and consented (Latin “placet”: a vote of assent) place. For, who knows, maybe Shaun will finally learn the lesson, raise himself like the Empire State Building, will give indeed his "uttermost", until she will ask for a truce (a posy cord: a pause accord : accord a pause, please!).

[A curio: it seems that "lece" means "three" - (<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Lece>) - which would be indeed quite interesting, pointing to the tripartite "sons", or, in our case, a "triple" intercourse!]

But, hélas!, that is definitely a wishful thinking (the recollection of willow fronds seems to be the proof of her failure), since the next paragraph shows the sturdy and inflexible "foe tris prince": foe tris - fortress – fortitude : the prince of fortitude, the "chaste" Tris without his "cauda"! A sad (triste) prince who has no guts. "Foe", French "foie" (liver). In Italian "non hai fegato" (fegato: liver) is the same as "You have no guts!"

Pace Virgil and his (Eclogue X, 69):

Omnia vincit amor et nos cedamus amori!

That does not seem, a-lass!, to be Issy's case!