

THE SEVENTH QUESTION

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Of the 14 questions the 7th is probably the most tricky and obscure, with a lot of references and allusions not immediately recognizable. As a matter of fact it is a sort of hinge connecting two different sections. Questions 1-7 are focussed mainly on Shaun's credentials; but starting from question 8 we witness the violent attacks of Shaun's against his brother. The intention is that of cutting the virtual axis which connects the two opposing polarities: a *disiunctio oppositorum*. In his march towards *HCEness*, Shaun must get rid of his twin brother, he must come to a definite separation, once and for all.

Getting back to our specific question we note that it is closely linked with the previous one, when Shaun confirmed that he has varnished the town with an extra green paint (my extravert davy. Like glue. - 412.05). Which should obviously point to his patriotism. But his inquisitors suspect that the alleged “little green riding hood” (greenridinghued - 411.24) is just a fake and that his “varnish” is going to “vanish” in no time (furniture would or verdure varnish – 412.11). Meaning that his patriotism is just an exterior varnish, that it does not have the true consistence of a real green tree / wood / furniture. In other words “Ex quovis ligno non fit Mercurius”, as quoted in 484.36: “*Eggs squawfish lean yoe nun feed marecurious*”.

Shaun's reply is definitely pissed off. It's not his fault if the Irish are not firm enough to stick to the colour he glued on them, if their patriotism has not the strength of the French revolutionaries (That's not French pastry. - 412.19) . But in fact Shaun is not so naive as not to understand the inquisitor's subtext. The “verdure/green” they hint at is the colour of money. Thus the “vanished varnish” points in fact to the money he is accused of stealing from the parcels in the postal office. In metaphorical terms he is a politician who takes advantage of the people's naive trust.

Shaun is furious: it's true that stealing was a common practice “under the past purcell's office” (412.22), where any government official felt authorized, out of greed, to take whatever he liked, like a goat grazing the grass (riches) of the green meadows (Ireland). A malpractice complained openly by Miss Enders, the treasurer of a charity institution (Scotic Poor Men's Thousand Gallon Cow Society) which evidently suffered from that financial abuse. But Shaun was the only exception (412.27 - mine's won : minus one). So those who insinuate that he stole money are only trying to make a scapegoat of him (their sindybuck - 412.35), in order to protect themselves. However he is determined to write a “white” paper on the subject (a verdigrease savingsbook) that will show his innocence and the guilt of the hungry goats (Colpa di Becco : goat's fault; “buon apartita!” : Italian “Buon appetito”: enjoy your meal; and “buona partita” : good game – and I wouldn't exclude an allusion to “Bonapartista” : Bonapartist), if he only has the means, he is acid enough (pickled celery) and aptly goaded (there is a peg under me) and can count on psychological support, since one must have a big stomach (the guts) in order to expose such nauseous and revolting facts.

The reference to the “pair of capri sheep boxing gloves” (412.33-34) probably hints at two sheets of parchment, their content bestowing punches right, left and centre.

At this point, almost out of the blue, appears a letter (413.03). One might think that it is the beginning of Shaun's already mentioned “savingsbook”, but that is not the case, since the author of it seems to be Mrs Sanders. She is the one who sends her greetings (salutem dicint) to the addressee (the ordinary Latin salutation comprises <sender-nom>, <recipient-dat>). "dicint" points to "dicit" (singular: she says) and "dicunt" (plural: they say). In fact it's Mrs Sanders who writes, also in behalf of her twin sister, Mrs Shunders (the "shunning" one, who prefers not to be seen – either by cunning or shyness). The identity of the recipient is somewhat obscure, but I am of the opinion that it is Shaun, the one who fell in disgrace (The Memory of Disgrace) because of base slanders against him (the scapegoat); but who was in fact a noble person who offered his services to her (at the Service of the Writer). Thus the document that Shaun exhibits constitutes an evidence for his defence.

The lines that follow elucidate what kind of service Shaun offered and

what was the relation between the old lady (well under ninety) and the young postman. We may infer that Shaun was her gigolò, played the role of romantic lover and initiated her to sex (her begfirst party – 413.16). In fact she addresses him as “Sweepyard” (In Italian “sweep” is “scopare”, which is also vulgar “to fuck”); and the "muttonbrooch" is probably a jewel she gave him as an explicit homage to his sexual (mutton) energy. In exchange of which she appointed him heir (herewitdnessed) of her fortunes (worth twenty thousand quad – 413.23), with the benevolent approval of her sister's, not caring a fig about what Dubliners might say (M.D.D. O.D. May doubling drop of drooght!); and sticking her tongue out to “devouted Mrs Grumby : 413.21” (who typifies the tyranny of social opinion and conventional propriety: Fweets), while getting rid of her clothes and showing her naked self (when her skin was exposed to the air) to him or “any other person what squaton a toffette” (413.19).

Thus the letter Shaun exhibits is Mrs Sanders' “last will and testament” (last will intesticle – 413.17 : a further sexual reference), in which she expresses clearly that the goods should be spent for the improvement of the working classes (honour thy farmer), which are her “dirty (litters) little ones”, her dear dirty children.

Here we have quite a hilarious inversion of the Swift/Esthers affair, in which the old man (Swift/Cadenus) had amorous discourses with two young ladies (Stella and Vanessa: Esther Johnson and Esther Van Homrig). In our case there are two old ladies (Mrs Sanders and Mrs Shunders: in fact two aspects of the same person) and a young man, who is their “pet” (ptpt - pet/pet) and who is nicknamed “Pepette” (the nickname Swift used for Stella). I am of the opinion that the two sisters are the future projection of Issy, in her double aspect: the passionate and the virginal; the passionate being the one who acts (in behalf of the “puritan” sister, as well). But they are also the personification of Ireland as “The Sean-Bhean bhocht” (Shan Van Vocht), Irish for “Poor old woman”. Of course, in our “inverted” context, she is not poor but rich.

For what concerns Shaun's sexual services that “enliven” the old lady, I think we should see in them the metaphorical image of the young patriot who tries to rescue the “poor old woman”, the bereft country. In sacrificing himself (playing romantic and having sex with an unattractive crone) Shaun worked (like the labouring ant) in favour of his fellow citizens, whom he gave all the riches he had been made heir of (was handled over

spondaneously by me – 414.1-2) so that they might improve the quality of their life - but in vain: since they squandered them in frolics, like the grasshopper of Lamartine's fable, as amply described in the next to come episode of “The Ondt and the Gracehoper” (414.16 – 419.10).