

FW III.2

The Second Watch of Shaun

(a holy Mess)

by

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“No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man.” Heraclitus

Essays about Shaun's second watch usually underline two major themes: Jaun's sermon on chastity addressed especially to Issy, who is the representative of the Maggies; and the appearance of Dave the Dancekerl, appointed by Shaun as his substitute during his temporary absence. E.L. Epstein suggests that the basic structure of the episode is Shaun's attempt to let emerge his "lower" character, that is his sexuality, of which Shem/Dave is the most obvious manifestation. An attempt which is doomed to fail because of Shaun's yet immature sexual "progress". His insistence on sexual descriptions, if apparently should point out sins not to be committed are in fact manifestations of his hidden desires. Personally, although not disagreeing with this view, I am more inclined to situate the episode within a more ample contextual perspective, namely the totality of the third book; which, in my opinion, describes Shaun's progress into *HCEness*. In **III.1** he basically settles the question with Shem, showing how superior he is to his brother and how people should look at him as the fully qualified replacement of the fatherly figure - after the stations of his personal Via Crucis; in fact, his answers to the 14 questions of his interrogators.

In **III.2** Shaun/Jaun wishes to settle the question with Issy, over whom he claims his power. He is going to become the alpha male. The female, no matter how strong her sexual urges, must preserve her "treasure" for him. She must wait for his triumphal return after his "holy" mission, namely the meeting with the High King; in other words the integration of the king's [HCE's] qualities which Shaun/Yawn will acquire in **III.3** and that will take place on the Hill of Tara, the seat of the *Ard Rí na hÉireann*.

From this perspective the introduction of Dave the Dancekerl (*the "kerl" he leaves behind him*) assumes a sense quite different from the one suggested by E.L. Epstein (and in fact by many other critics). Appointing Shem to take his "material" place would be indeed a contradiction from the part of Shaun, since the "malicious" character of the lower twin is widely known and Shaun would never let his brother take the lead. The fact is that the Dave who is "offered" is just a puppet, with which Issy can play as she likes, since he/it is totally harmless. The whole presentation has an evident sarcastic touch, especially the part beginning at page 465, where Dave is openly invited to give a show to Pipetta/Pepette of his sexual prowess and dexterity - which, evidently, he is not in a position to accomplish, being just a puppet (Pipetto) [and a jerk: let's not forget that "pippa" is vulgar Italian for "masturbation"].

But what I think has not been duly pointed out is the relevance of Dave's grotesque introduction, which, in my interpretation, has a hidden blasphemous meaning. In fact, as **III.1** has evident - although somewhat oblique - references to Christ's Via Crucis; **III.2** seems built on the model of the *Catholic Mass*. (It's not a coincidence that Shaun talks about his "**mission**" --> **missio** --> **missa**). W.Y.Tindall makes only brief and cursory allusions to that; but I'll try to show how the whole episode, in its paragraphs (please note that there are 29 paragraphs, the number of the girls of St Brigid's School), follows the sequence of the holy rite. This needs of course a detailed analysis since I am sure that few readers (Catholic ones included) have a precise knowledge of the ritual sequence. I myself made some researches on the argument and it's possible that I didn't get all the points in their correct form. In that case, please, be free to emend it!

The Mass is basically divided into two sections: 1) the *liturgy of the word*; 2) the *liturgy of the Eucharist*. The first one is preceded by the *introductory rites*; the last one is followed by the *concluding rites*.

[INTRODUCTORY RITES]

- 1) *Introitus* (introit: entrance)
- 2) *Antiphon* (a responsory by a choir)
- 3) *Kyrie* (Act of Penitence)
- 4) *Gloria*
- 5) *Collect prayer* (Latin: *collecta* "the gathering of the people together")

In our text we may find:

- 1) **429.01-24** : The entrance of Jaun.
- 2) **430.01-16** : The choir of the 29 school girls.
- 3) **430.17-431.20** : Jaun scolds some of the girls for their improper behaviour, which triggers the *act of penitence*.
- 4) **431.21-432.03**: Jaun announces to Issy his imminent departure and praises her pious teachings (**431.30**: *anun* --> a nun). The "gloria", which should be addressed to God the Father, is in fact addressed to her, who taught her brothers how to conform to the "fatherly" laws.
- 5) **432.04-433.09**: Jaun is preparing himself for the imminent sermon and invites the girls of the "fair assemblage" (*collecta*) to lend him their ears.

[LITURGY OF THE WORD]

At this point starts the liturgy of the word, with two (or three) *readings* from the Holy Scriptures, followed by the proclamation of the *Gospel*; then by a *homily* (a sermon that draws upon some aspect of the readings) and finally by the profession of Faith, the *Creed*. In our text this section starts at **433.10** and ends at **455.29**. Of course the correspondence between the parts of the Mass and our paragraphs is not so straightforward (isn't it the same with Ulysses and the Odyssey?), nonetheless it's possible to point out their basic analogies, at least from an "architectural" point of vantage.

[READINGS]

6) **433.10-439.14**: What must not be done.

7) **439.15-441.23**: Books which must be avoided and books which should be read.

8) **441.24-444.05**: Punishments against those who make attempts on Issy's chastity.

9) **444.06-445.25**: Punishments against Issy, should she commit carnal sins.

These four paragraphs may indeed correspond to the two readings of the Mass, where 6 and 7 point to the rules to follow (reading 1: the "*shall not*" attitude of the Old Testament); and 8 and 9 to the chastisement of potential misdeeds. (Please, note the "*parallelismus membrorum*"!)

[GOSPEL]

Now it's time for the Gospel, that is: the "*good news*".

10) **445.26-446.26**: Jaun promises Issy that he shall come back to live with her and love her.

11) **446.27-448.33**: Jaun assures Issy that, working together, they shall put order in their chaotic, waste land.

[HOMILY]

Then comes the homily, during which:

12) **448.34-452.07**: Jaun says that, no matter how unwillingly, he must leave and explains the reasons why;

13) **452.08-33**: Jaun underscores the importance of his meeting with the High King;

14) **452.34-454.07**: Jaun gives his final greetings before his departure.

After the homily, in the Mass, there is a moment of silence, so that the "word" of the Gospel may reach the depths of the hearts. But in our case it's just the opposite: a big laugh!

15) **454.08-25**: There is first Jaun's "*stenoriosis laugh*", a sort of "Alleluja!", at the thought of the Maggies celebrating his departure; then, suddenly, he assumes a grave and stern attitude in front of the girls. That might hint at the proverb: "*When the cat's away, the mice will play*". In other words it seems that Jaun is not so sure

his sermon will be taken into due consideration. Quite the "*contrary*"! This is indeed a distortion of the corresponding passage of the Mass, but, considering the parodistic trait of the episode, it's possible that the opposition "*shout vs silence*" be a deliberate choice. That is, the "*contrary*" of the expected "*silence*".

[CREED]

At this point we have reached the last phase of the liturgy of the word, which ends with the Creed.

16) **454.26-455.29**: Jaun describes what he "*believes*" (Credo) are the joys and the happiness of the "other world", be it just another one or the "hereafter": what will come next.

[LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST]

In the second phase of the Mass we are introduced into the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*. There are three main sections:

1) the **Offertory** (when bread and wine for use in the service are ceremonially placed on the altar);

2) the **Eucharistic Prayer**, which is basically divided into:

a) *preface*;

b) *canon* (secret prayers after the Sanctus);

c) *anamnesis* (remembrance of Jesus' words and deeds);

d) *epiclesis* (by which the priest invokes the Holy Spirit - or the power of His blessing - upon the Eucharistic bread and wine);

3) the **Communion** (The priest presents the transubstantiated elements to the congregation).

In our text:

[OFFERTORY]

17) **455.30-457.04**: Jaun describes the components of a meal.

18) **457.05-24**: In announcing his departure Jaun presents himself as the one who **offers** his own self as the sacrificial victim (he who has to accomplish his mission).

[EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER]

19) **457.25 - 461.32**: Issy declares her love and her faith to Shaun [*Preface*].

It is an invitation to raise one's heart to God. The eternal present during which the innocent victim is sentenced to death (in our case: to leave, to depart).

20) **461.33-462.14**: Jaun's toast: consecration [*Canon*].

The most solemn moment of the Holy Mass is the consecration. Up to that moment what is on the altar is bread and wine. From the moment when the priest pronounces the words of the consecration "This is my body"; "This is the cup of my blood" what is in the altar is the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Of the bread and wine nothing remains except the appearances.

21) **462.15-468.19**: Jaun announces the arrival of the body of Dave the Dancekerl, remembering his deeds (*anamnesis*) and invoking his concrete manifestation in the midst of the Maggies (*epiclesis*). In our case that is indeed a blasphemous "*Transubstantiation*".

[COMMUNION]

The part beginning at **465.01** seems to correspond to the Communion. This is not of course the place to proceed with a close reading of it. Suffice it to say that **465.01-468.19** look like a parodistic description of a "hieros gamos":

<< *Hieros gamos* or *Hierogamy* (Greek *ἱερός γάμος, ἱερογαμία* "holy marriage" refers to a sexual ritual that plays out a marriage between a god and a goddess, especially when enacted in a symbolic ritual where human participants represent the deities.>> [WP]

Its implicit blasphemous colour may also be connected with a hint at a "black mass", the night school of the Maggies (the "**poor twelve o'clock scholars**" of **427.34** -- Italian "scolaro" is "student, pupil") "**learning... their antemeridian lesson of life**" (**430.2-4**). A sort of sabbath around a magic tree.

[CONCLUDING RITES]

The ritual has now reached the phase of the concluding rites, which are composed of: a) the *greeting*; b) the *blessing*.

22) **468.20-22**: Jaun says that the hour of departure has come and he takes his leave from the girls.

23) **468.23-469.28**: After his final greeting Jaun gives his blessing to the girls.

[RECESSIONAL HYMN]

At this point the correspondences between the text and the Mass come to an end, although the text keeps running for a few more pages. Paragraphs 24-25-26 are centred around the Maggies, giving their homage to the departing Jaun. That is a sort of "*recessional hymn*", namely a hymn or other piece of music played at the end of a service while the congregation is filing out. But -- and it's not a coincidence -- the recessional "*is not part of the Mass*".

24) **469.29 - 470.12**: The Maggies cheer and acclaim the departing Jaun.

25) **470.13-14**: The Maggies manifest their "Creed".

26) **470.14-21**: The Maggies sing a litany to Osiris.

This section runs on the edge of blasphemy, since the holy "resurrection" morphs into a material colossal "erection" (***the hermetic prod or kick to sit up and take notice : 470.2-3***), manifested by the various huge "trees" mentioned in the Osirian litany. One must remember that Isis, fluttering, as a bird, over the corpse of the lying Osiris, has gotten pregnant by her brother's "wooden" phallus (the real one having been eaten by a fish of the Nile).

The three remaining paragraphs, which might also be considered as the continuation of the *recessional*, deal with:

27) **470.22-471.34**: the description of Jaun's disappearance;

28) **471.35-473.11**: an eulogy in praise of Jaun, morphed into Haun;

29) **473.12-25**: the faithful hope of Haun's return.

Now I think that this interpretation of mine may help us to get rid of what I consider a Joycean commonplace: the famous "*barrel rolling down the river Liffey*", mentioned by Joyce himself in his letter to H.S. Weaver. That image is generally used in order to link together the first two episodes. **III.1** ends with Shaun, fallen down in the Liffey in a barrel; which, rolling down (or up) the river, bumps into the log (the sleeping Sackerson : ***comestabulish Sigurdson***) found at the beginning of **III.2**

(429.19). There it stops, in front of the 29 Maggies; and Shaun/Jaun does begin his sermon. The two episodes would then be chronologically linked. It goes without saying that I disagree, totally, with this interpretation. In my opinion all the four watches are qualitatively different. Now, leaving aside the fourth one, which can hardly be seen as a Shaunian watch, at least taking it at face value (but we'll talk about that in due time), the first three watches may be interpreted from a Christological perspective: **III.1** = *Crucifixion*; **III.2** = *Holy Mass* (the ritual re-enacting of Christ's mission -> Mass); **III.3** = the *Harrowing of Hell* (Descensus Christi ad Inferos). The river of the first episode is not the river of the second one (*No man ever steps in the same river twice*), which is situated in a theological context (whereas the first one seems definitely more "earthly"). And over it, Shaun/Jaun, at the moment of his departure (to Tara), is going to "take the plunge" (**470.22-24: *Backscuttling for the hop off with the odds altogether in favour of his tumbling into the river***) in order to pass into a third, qualitatively different dimension (his psychic descent into Hell, the hypnotic seance of **III.3** - please, remark the sacred number!).

As for the barrel, if one wants to stick to it, I'd rather suggest the magnified container of a manuscript ("**Ms found in a bottle**" : Poe -> Po [Italian *river*]). And, from a mythological perspective, the coffin which contained the body of the dead Osiris. In our more trivial case: *barrel* --> *beer* --> *bier*!

