

## [I.1 ] 619.20-29

619.20: Soft morning, city! Lsp! I am leafy speafing. Lpf! Foly and  
619.21: folty all the nights have falled on to long my hair. Not a sound,  
619.22: falling. Lispn! No wind no word. Only a leaf, just a leaf and  
619.23: then leaves. The woods are fond always. As were we their babes  
619.24: in. And robins in crews so. It is for me goolden wending.  
619.25: Unless? Away!

The most common reading is that of the Liffey quietly flowing along Dublin's (**city**) riverbanks in the soft atmosphere of a dawning day, cradled by a rhythmic poetic cadence. There is the reminiscence of the “forty days and nights” (**Foly and folty all the nights**) long journey, a metaphor for the course of life (“**leaves**” being the many lives she, the symbolic Mother, carries along, recorded in the leaves of the Book of the Dad) as in Noah's ark tossed up by the flood, a flood of faults (**folty**), a flood of happy faults, secret (**Not a sound, falling**), unnamed (**No wind no word**). First the original sin (**Only a leaf** → Eve's fig leaf) and then the rest (**then leaves**), since the way of perdition, the alluring (**fond**) Dantesque “*selva oscura*” (**woods**) is always found (**fond always**) attracting candid souls (**As were we their babes**) with lovely bird-calls (**robins in crews**); those that are singing now for the imminent precious embrace (**me goolden wending**) in the arms of her father, the sea.

But what if (**Unless?**) under this softly flowing water there be a “still one” running deep? Why not imagine the “*libertina parvula*” trying to wake up her “*cubans edilis*”? “**City**” is not only Dublin, but its **city-zen** par excellence, the “*Hircus Civis Eblanensis*”: the “hirsutus” (hairy → bushy → Italian “folti” → **folty**) HCE. The whole would then take quite a different meaning. It's a dialogue between a no more young (**goolden** → go olden) wife and a “faulty” listless husband. At her moaning (**morning**) remark that he is “**soft**” he numbly replies that she let him sleep (**Lsp!** → slp → sleep). So she mimics him, lisping how spiffy (**speafing**) she is, how bushy (“folti” → **folty**) and flowing her hair; and how lovingly ready (**leafy** → lief) she is. He drawls back something (**Lpf!**) which picks up the “l” of “**Leafy**” and the “p” and “f” of “**sPeaFing**”, ending with an annoyed “**pfui!**” (German: phooey!). So she points out how heavy has been the forced “quarantine” -- as a matter of fact “double” (**Foly and folty**) -- fallen on her; his “**folty and folty all the nights**” felled fallen phallus (**falled**), a “default” that “felled all delights” (**all the nights**) and made her stretch her hair (**to long my hair**) out of despair. And he saying nothing about that (**Not a sound**). HCE mumbles a confused “listen now, stop lisping, sleep on” (**Lispn**). But she continues, stressing that he didn't even deem talking. He made love to her just once (**Only a leaf** → a way to say: so rarely) and then he left (**leaves**). But if one is willing he can always find words (**woods are fond always**) of tender consolation (**As were we their babes**). Nothing at all. She feels lonely as Robinson Crusoe (**robins in crews so**); and she knows why. It is because she is turning (German: wenden) old (**for me go-olden wending**); fifty years, her golden wedding, having gone by. Then a sudden suspicion assaults her (**Unless?**). Are there other reasons? Should she give them a thought? She does prefer not to (**Away!**). At least, not for the moment.