

FW 290 Footnotes

cursory annotations
by
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In these cursory (and corsairy) annotations I attempt to give a coherent unity to the footnotes of page 290. That was not my intention. It all started with Footnote 5

Pomeroy Roche of Portobello, or the Wreck of the Ragamuffin

which seemed – and seems - to me kind of intriguing. I have the impression that it hides a subtle trick meant to put the reader on a false track. To be honest I can't see a justification of the allusions to Pomeroy and Portobello, which should mirror the other cryptic allusion to Ragamuffin. The two topographical terms remind me of the same ones mentioned in **FW 27.26 "swamped enough since Portobello to float the Pomeroy"**. But, in that case, they do fit the context, since they are meant to express the degree and expanse of Demetrius O' Flanagan's drunkenness. In our case, though, they seem out of tune. So I'll try to follow Polonius's indications to Reynaldo (Hamlet II.1) and *"by indirections find directions out"*.

[Of course one could see in "Pomeroy" a descendant of the "Roches" who joined Strongbow in the Anglo-Norman invasion of Ireland in the 12th century; and in Ragamuffin - the shabbily clothed, dirty child – his debased, "ragged" result. Or, since Pomeroy County is in northern Ireland, its connection to the Dublinese Portobello might indicate a suspicious and anti-patriotic blend. But I find this somewhat too vague an allusion.]

So, let us start from Portobello. That's Italian. It means "beautiful (bello) haven (porto)". From "haven" to "heaven" the step is short, so that we are entitled to see in the "beautiful heaven" an image of Eden, which, by the way, is itself a "beautiful haven" as well. Let us now consider "Pomeroy". It hints at French "*Pommeraye* (orchard of apple-trees)": thus one further hint at the garden of Eden; which brings us directly to the "fall", or the "wreck" against a rock (French "roche"). The "wreck" that we find connected to Ragamuffin. "Ragamuffin" is not only a "shabbily clothed, dirty child", but recalls the Ragamuffin War

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ragamuffin_War

that is, a Republican uprising against Imperial power; in a sort of way the war of the son against the father. The Ragamuffins, though, lost the war; thus we can interpret the "Wreck of the Ragamuffin" as a metaphor that expresses the ruinous fall resulting from the *original sin*. Original sin hints at the "forbidden fruit", that is: sexual transgression. And that certainly fits our context, which is characterized by Issy's sexual reactions to Shaun/Tristan's cold behaviour - here manifested in two contradictory perspectives, both pointing to Issy's delusion. First we see Issy, who laments of having been seduced and then abandoned. "**uncrowned, decepered**" (FW 289.30-290.01) allude to her "defloration", hinted at by Footnote1:

"Muckross Abbey with the creepers taken off"

Muckross Abbey is a monastery, a sacred place.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muckross_Abbey

"creepers" are not only snakes, or worms; but "climbing plants and flowers" as well, thus the "taken off creepers" may be an image of

"deflowering" and Footnote 1 may be read as "the deflowering of a sacred place". Let us not forget that this footnote is linked to **FW 290.01 "niche of time"**. If we read "niche" as German "nicht" we go back to the moment (a time almost "null/nicht") of the penetration of the "niche" (Latin "penetrare"). Another image of "defloration" may be detected "**when the lovenext breaks out" (290.15)** (lovenest / pussy); after which the lover deserts the girl "**doubling back, in nowtime (290.17)**" – again "niche/nicht of time": in which case the "ragamuffin" is indeed a "wretched" figure.

It's true, though, that those images could in fact be looked at from a different vantage point, that shows us (hélas!, for the girl) no defloration, since the youth on whom Issy has cast her desiring glances ("**her semicupiose eyes (290.04)**", imagining him stark naked (**limbs-to-lave**), acts very coldly towards her. This brings us directly to Footnote 2:

"Joke and Jilt will have their tilt."

"tilt" hints of course at their "sexual encounter", but the sentence points to the nursery rhyme "Jack and Jill went up the hill" (fweet)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_and_Jill_\(nursery_rhyme\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jack_and_Jill_(nursery_rhyme))

The meaning of this rhyme is open to debate, but I think that in our case we may detect open allusions pointing to the sexual inadequacy of the immature and clumsy youth.

*"Then Jill came in, and she did grin,
To see Jack's paper plaster;
Her mother whipt her, across her knee,
For laughing at Jack's disaster"*

In Jack we see Shaun as the obedient follower of the decrepit four

Old Men, mentioned in Footnote 3:

"Old Mamalujorum and Rawrogerum"

The four dolts (Italian "mammalucco") with their ass, **Rawrogerum**, that is: a simpleton (raw man – Roman [catholic]) carried (or carrying) [Latin gerere] old men (Greek : geron). There is also a possible hint at *Roy Rogers*, the famous movie cowboy, who, in our case, becomes an *ass*. The actor's name was in fact Leonard Slye, but he was rechristened "Roy Rogers" in 1938, so it's possible that Joyce knew him (Slye was already known as a singer). Genetic studies may be of help here.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roy_Rogers

Issy's delusion gets stronger when she remembers how naive she has been in listening to her would-be lover's sweet words, as reported in Footnote 4:

Why have these puerile blonds those large flexible ears?

(I wonder whether there is a possible hint at "*Gentlemen prefer blondes*", by Anita Loos.) Seductive words that convinced her to show herself to him in her nudity (not only psychological, but physical as well!)

**290.12 gave him then that vantage of a Blinken-
290.13 sope's cuddlebath at her proper mitts**

But, in this new perspective, Shaun/Tristan behaves very coldly, refusing to commit the original sin; he acts like a friar, enveloped by his chastity belt (*chemise de fer* - 290.19), a "single professed **claire's**" (the "clare nuns"), faithful to his "white cheek/chick" (Iseult Blanchemains); which unleashes her (Issy's) sorrow (Footnote 6):

"No wonder Miss Dotsh took to veils and she descended from that obloquy."

Issy's "**cuddlebath**" morphs into a "douche", a rain (Russian "dozhd") of tears; the poor girl (Russian "dotch", daughter), is forced, unwillingly, to remain a "virgin", to become a nun (**took to veils**); but she is indeed kind of upset and lets fall a hail (Russian "oblako" : cloud) of insults (Latin obloquor) at Shaun's ignominy (obloquy). Which is exactly what is meant by Issy in her last Footnote 7, amply discussed in a previous mail.

"The bookley with the rusin's hat is Patomkin but I'm blowed if I knowed who the slave is doing behind the curtain"

Interesting to note that the Russian words of Footnote 6 do in fact announce the entrance of Patomkin. Issy watches the apparent grand entrance of Shaun/Tristan. She expects him to be a sort of Prince Potemkin, the lover of Catherine the Great, the Russian Empress; thus a passionate, romantic and refined (well read, "book-ley") noble youth. With the virility of a powerful battleship (Eisenstein's Battleship Potemkin). He raises a hat (rusin's hat) which should be a sort of trophy, the head of the hunted animal, like the trophy of Buckely's who shot the Russian General when engaged in his shitting manoeuvres. Thus Shaun seems to be at first the descendant and substitute (patòm kin) of the Father/King (Russian "potom / patòm" : after); but Issy suspects that he is only devising a stratagem (rusing's hat), acting like an obedient servant (Uncle Tom : Pa Tom kin [Karl Reisman's suggestion]), a "slavonic" slave plotting secretly behind the scenes. Like Polonius, hidden behind a "curtain" to spy Hamlet's moves and stabbed to death by the prince – thus probably reflecting Issy's wishful revenge against his treacherous and cunning false lover.

All this brings us back to the "**niche of time**" of Footnote 1. The

“uncrowned, decepted (FW 289.30-290.01)” Issy is now the girl of a former time (niche of time), a "*remembrance of things past*"; forced to enter a monastery (Muckross Abbey), after having been divested (deflowered) of her "evil passions" (**creepers**). And it is possible that **“Muckross”** has been chosen for possible blasphemous allusions (*my cross, muck cross*) to Issy's built-in transgressive attitudes towards sexuality.