

FW 317.22 – 318.01

## PONTIFICATORS

by  
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### Disclaimer

These are tentative annotations, liable to be adjusted, modified or discarded. Many of them are highly questionable, definitely far-fetched and a few on the verge of insanity. So use them at your own risk.

My aim is trying to put together controversial data in order to build a possible system. The results may not be satisfactory, but I am convinced that the strategy is the right one. McHugh's Annotations and Fweet should be always at hand.

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At this point the narrator's (Porter's) tale is interrupted by the saucy comments of the three clients, who are called “**breachesmakers**”.

Apparently that points to “*breeches makers*”, namely “*tailors*”; but that is definitely a false track, unless we look at it through an idiomatic filter. I don't know whether there is a corresponding English expression, but in Italy “*cucire/tagliare i panni addosso a qualcuno*” (to sew/cut clothes upon somebody” means “*to speak badly of / to criticize somebody*”. In fact that would mean to compel somebody to wear a not suitable suit, and then adjust it “*in corpore vili*” (on a worthless body). Now, since the three clients do criticize and provoke Porter (through his HCE-like ancestors) they are certainly entitled to be called “tailors”. But “**breachesmaker**” hides a subtler meaning. It hints at “*bridge maker*”, Latin “*pontifex*”, root of “*pontificate*” (to express opinions or judgements in a dogmatic way). And since that is what the three clients do, that word would point to their

scornful, hoity-toity, self-conceited attitude.

Now let's try to make out what the three "*pontifices*" say.

**317.22:** -- **Nohow did he kersse or hoot alike the suit and solder skins,**

**317.23:** **minded first breachesmaker with considerable way on**

The sentence is built according to the famous and reiterated Prankquean's sentence: "*Why do I am alook alike a poss of porterpease?*"; but here it is not a question, but a statement, filled with a lot of its own cross references. Now (**Nohow**) here it seems that the first "*tailor/pontifex*" (**breachesmaker**) lets us know (**Nohow**) what kind of "curses" (**kersse**) against Kersse, what kind of (*h*)owling cries (**hoot**) the Captain uttered against Kersse's **suit**, not worth a dime. This needs an explanation, may be far-fetched, but not to be excluded. If we read "**solder**" as "*soldier*", his "**skin**" may be his uniform, but of such thin a consistence (skinny) that it is indeed unworthy of that name. We may read "**solder**", though, as Danish "*sold*" (pay), French "*solde*" or Italian "*soldo*" (soldier's pay). And "**skins**" may hint at Triestine "*schèi*" (pronounced "skeh-ee / skay" : coins): thus a minor form (soldier's coins) of the "soldier's pay", which is itself a poor wage. And if in "**solder skins**" we are so bold as to perceive a resonance with the "**keesens**" (cheese) we met in 316.36, in "*solder keesens*" we get a "*cheese coin*" pointing to the idiomatic Italian "*soldo di cacio*", literally "*little, short in stature*", Italian "*basso*", which is also English "*base, mean*". The "**considerable way**" of the first pontifex points to his above marked self-conceit.

**317.24:** -- **Humpsea dumpsea, the munchantman, secondsnipped cutter**

**317.25:** **the curter.**

The second pontificator is one who cuts (**secondsnipped**) a long story short (**cutter the curter**), somewhat shorter than the just alluded to "*soldo di cacio*". The Captain is just a "humpback sailor" (**Humpsea**) fallen in a sea of shit (**dumpsea**), a fate even worse than the one of Humpty Dumpty. He is just a disgusting glutton (**munch**) and a greedy merchant (**munchantman**).

**317.26:** -- **A ninth for a ninth. Take my worth from it.**

The third pontiff is even "**curter**" and more conclusive than the previous one. We know that, according to the common saying, "*it takes nine tailors*

to make a man”; thus a tailor is “a ninth” of a man. In our case, fronting the tailor there is another “ninth”, obviously the sailor. In conclusion the third client asserts that the conflict between the tailor and the sailor is a pathetic quarrel between two inferior beings, two “dwarves” if “ninth” hints at French “nain”, Latin “nanus”, Italian “nano” (dwarf). In fact the allusion to the Biblical “eye for eye” (Leviticus, 24:20) points not only to “the same point of vantage” (the two contenders are on the same level) but also to “two small I’s” (an I for an I), each “I” being just “a ninth”. Last, and in our case definitely “least”, the “lex talionis”, the “law of talion” (“an eye for an eye” : retaliation), coming from Latin “talio / taliare” (to cut) shows evident further allusions to “tailoring”. All this to point out the worthlessness of that event (**Take my worth from it**) and of its characters. The pontifex does not want “his **worth**” mixed up with that story ( **from it**).

**317.26: And no mistaenk,**

**317.27: they thricetold the taler and they knew the whyed for too. The**

**317.28: because of his sosuch. Uglymand fit himshemp but throats fill us**

**317.29: all! And three's here's for repeat of the unium!**

Now the three pontificators address Porter, the narrator (Norwegian “**taler**”), forming a sort of chorus, a vocal trio (**thricetold**) and they tell him that they know for sure (**no mistaenk** : no mistakes) the reason of his attitude, why he acts “**so**” and in “**such**” a way (**the because of his sosuch**), taking basically the sailor's side. “**sosuch**” hints in fact at “*sausage*”, from Vulgar Latin “*salsicus*” (seasoned with salt), the salt of the sea. Obviously because he is a descendant of the Captain. They reaffirm their hostility to the publican, whom they call a “*garroter*” (Ugly man : **Uglymand**), probably because, being the one who serves them beverages, which they plausibly drink on credit, he has them by the balls, he scraggs them, like the hangman he is (**himshemp**: “hemp”” being figuratively in reference to the hangman's noose). Of course he may stand on the hunchback's side (**hemp** → *hump*), that insignificant person (**shemp** hinting at Italian “*scempio*” [shem-pyoh] : fool, simpleton; but also “slaughter” – figuratively also “*dog's breakfast*”, which would fit the context!); he can do what he likes (every man for himself : **Uglymand fit himshemp**), but they are three against one (**three's here's for repeat of the unium**), three members of the *Repeal Association* (an Irish mass membership political movement set up by Daniel O'Connell in 1840) who refuse to get mixed up and to unite themselves (**unium**) with foreigners. And they ask Porter to do his job, namely to serve them drinks, filling their throats, so that each one of them

(repeat of the **unium** : repetition of “one”) may propose a toast, the same for all, against a possible alliance (**unium** : union).

317.29: Place the scaurs

317.30: wore on your groot big bailey bill, he apullajibed, the O'Colonel

317.31: Power, latterly distented from the O'Conner Dan, so promonitory

317.32: himself that he was obliiffious of the headth of hosth that rosed

317.33: before him,

This passage is definitely ambiguous. At first I thought it was Porter's sarcastic (**he apullajibed** → feigned apologies) reply to the bellicose bigmouth, whose alleged “*scars of war*” (**scaurs wore**) are in fact “*scores*”, debts (amount on an innkeeper's bill) which the publican keeps taking note of in his “great big and secured book of debts” - “*bailey*” is a fortified wall. With “Bill Bailey” that would be a reference to the bigmouth, described as a sluggard, impish rogue. But “**O'Conner Dan**” would hardly fit Porter, since it is definitely Irish: “*The Ó Conchubhair Donn is the senior head of a lineage which provided about one hundred Kings of Connacht – WP*”; so I think that this passage should be assigned to the “native” pontificator. He is the thoroughbred Irish descended directly from the glorious “*O' Connor Don*”, but morally so distant (**distented**) from him that he is no more a “High King” (Ard Ri), but only a “colonel” (**O'Colonel**); so distant from the journalist and Parnellite T.P. O' Connor (the “*barrister*” turned into a “*bar rester*”); so distant from Daniel O'Connell, the Liberator, but so near O'Connell's Ale. And it is this individual, this ridiculous (Norwegian “*latterlig*” : **latterly**) descendant who, sarcastically “*apologising*”, all of a sudden changes his course, “*pulling a jibe*” (**he apullajibed**). In nautical terms “*to jibe*” or “*gybe*” is “*to shift suddenly and forcibly from one side to the other —used of a fore-and-aft sail*”.

[I'm wondering whether Joyce thought of the hidden Italian pun. I have serious doubts. At any rate: “to jibe” is “*strambare*”, recalling “*strambo*” (odd, eccentric, oblique). That would be an oblique apology.]

And, in a peremptory (**promonitory**) manner, premonitory of possible ill-fated consequences, he commands Porter to put his “scores” (**scaurs**) in the bill which Porter guards so jealously in his “**groot big bailey**”. Where “bailey” may hint at “*Old Baily*”, England's Central Criminal Court; thus the “*book of bills*” in which the publican takes note of his clients' *offences*.

And bigmouth becomes so full of himself that he takes the stance of a promontory (**promonitory himself**), imagining himself (**promonitory** → premonition) as the “new head → Howth), so that he is not even aware (oblivious : **obliffious**), although he faces the Liffey (Latin “*ob*” : facing), of the real Howth, of which the “*head of the host* (innkeeper)” is a portrait, “bailey” being Howth's lighthouse, his piercing look. In “**headth of hosth**” we should note “*th*”, which is an abstract nominal suffix: the “abstraction” pointing to a “basic structure”, a “model”, an “archetype” (HCE) which manifests concretely in Porter's features.

**317.33: before him, from Sheeroskouro, under its zemblance of mardal**

**317.34: mansk, like a dun darting dullemitter, with his moultain haares**

**317.35: stuck in plostrures upon it, (do you kend yon peak with its coast so**

**317.36: green?)**

We are in fact spectators of a morphing. “**Sheeroskouro**” has a lots of references. The image emerges from a total (**Sheer**) darkness (**oskouro** : Italian “*oscuro*” : dark, obscure), which gradually dissolves into a “*chiaroscuro*” (Italian “*chiaro*” : fair, clear; and “*scuro*” : dark, obscure). Since “*kouros*” is Greek for “youth”, we have here the image of a “*fair and dark youth*”, the “Donovan and Finn” we met in 317.14. A youth coming from Japan, since “*shiro*” is Japanese for “white”; thus a youth resembling “Patriki San” of 317.02. The verb used is “**rosed**”, hinting at a “rosy” dawn emerging from the night. But it is a lifeless “sun/son → *kouros*”. In fact he has a deadly aspect: he looks like (**under its zemblance** → has the semblance of) a skull (**mardal mansk** : mortal mask). A “glacial” skull, since “**zemblance**” hints at the Canadian “*Nova Zembla Island*” and at the Russian “*Novaya Zemlya*”, both of them Arctic lands. An unhealthy grey-brownish (**dun**) and dirty (**darting**) complexion. An impressive shape, like a Dolomite mountain, but out of which come only dull groans (*dull emitter* : who emits dull sounds). Shrouded by a cold sea mist (**haares**); with dishevelled and uncombed hair, glued to his skull (**stuck in plostrures**); hairs like that of a ram (**moultain haares**): Triestine “*moltòn*” (male sheep). Hairs like bushes plastered on a coarse rocky mountain (**moultain**). With a secret – between round brackets – wish to reach another mountain, this one, though, bedecked with green. The musical reference to “*D'ye ken John Peel*” serves as a sort of announcement of his imminent coming “*For the sound of his horn brought me from my bed*”.

**317.36: still trystfully acape for her his gragh knew well in pre-**

318.1: cious memory and that proud grace to her, in gait a movely water,  
318.2: of smile a coolsome cup, with that rarefied air of a Montmalency  
318.3: and her quick little breaths and her climbing colour.

He has a sad countenance (**trystfully**), that of a lover (**acape** : Greek *agape* → love) who is once again (Italian “*a capo*” → “new paragraph”: this is in fact his second “suit”) in search of his beloved (**his gragh** : Irish “*gràdh*” → “love”), a lady with distinct Irish traits, like the legendary “*Granuaile*” (**gragh knew well**), whose remembrance is impressed in his brain (**in precious memory**), so graceful (*Granuale* → Grace O' Malley) and dignified (**that proud grace to her**); she is not like “still waters that run deep”, but open and frank, like a flowing river (**movely water**).

[Here another far-fetched Italian allusion. “*L'acqua cheta rompe i ponti*” (still waters run deep), literally “*quiet water breaks bridges*”. That could be an ironic reference to the three “*bridge makers*”. In other words the lady will shut them up.]

A lady whose smile is refreshing (**coolsome cup**); with the unique air (**rarefied air**) of one noble born (“**Montmalency**” → Montmorency,; one of the oldest and most distinguished noble families in France). But “**Montmalency**” hides an ironic pun. In “*malency*” we find a Russian “*malyi*” (little) and an Italian “*melenso*” (silly, insipid). Thus “a little, silly mount”: a “hill”, perhaps, like Howth. And definitely a lady urged by erotic drives (**quick little breaths**) that “*heat her up*” (**her climbing colour**).

