

## FW 319.3-17

### A Caustic Aleconner

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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Before proceeding with a closer look at page 319 and pointing out its many cross-references, I think it wouldn't be bad trying to reconstruct the factual framework of the scene. The preceding paragraph has been basically Porter's (the innkeeper) mental recollection of the Captain's seduction maneuvers. Thus the innkeeper has in fact interrupted his tale. So the most arrogant of the clients, the smartass (**the ersewild aleconner**), steps in with his acid comments, stating that the Captain was only a “*shitty he-goat*” (**stircus** = stercus + hircus) running after young girls (**hesteries** → hyster : vagina), giving vent to his heat.

He then asks for a more abundant drink and gulps it down. Then addresses the innkeeper (**Eh, chrystal holder**) and proposes a sarcastic toast to the Flying Dutchman (**Save Ampster-dampster**). In fact that is an invitation

to Porter, that he resume the narration.

And here we meet the most ambiguous section of the passage. Porter describes a dialog between the *Captain* and the *ship's husband* (whom the sailor calls "*Ali Slupa*"). In fact it is a telepathic dialog, since both speakers do not "*talk*", but "*think*" only. They study each other silently, as in a mute contention. The Captain asserts - with his looks - that they are in the same situation of their first encounter (**we were heretofore**), when the other introduced him to the tailor. The ship's husband, who describes himself as the Captain's god father (**girth fatter**), since he acted as his sponsor, brings back to memory the suit the other didn't pay; and then, breaking the silence, asks the Captain to give news about that suit.

And the Captain, calling the tailor a cursed drunkard, says that he threw the coat in the **oasthouse**.

This triggers the roaring and hilarious guffaws of the customers; but not of the ship's husband, who thinks that the Captain's action may have negative consequences, spoiling his reputation as a go-between and jeopardizing his diplomatic efforts.

Let's try now to give a closer look at the various sections. In this commentary I will cover only the first half of the page, from **319.3** to **319.17**, which has as sole protagonist "**the ersewild aleconner**".

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**319.3:** -- I shot be shoddied, throttle me, fine me cowheel for ever,  
**319.4:** usquebauched the ersewild aleconner, for bringing briars to Bem-  
**319.5:** bracken and ringing rinbus round Demetrius for, as you wrinkle  
**319.6:** wryghtly, bully bluedomer, it's a suirsite's stircus haunting hes-  
**319.7:** teries round old volcanoes.

This is an obvious comment of one of the customers, presumably the one who made caustic remarks about the tailor and the sailor, calling them "*ninth*" (FW 317.26). He is "**the ersewild aleconner**", in whom we find the "**wild**" smartass who gives his judgments about the goodness of the ale (**aleconner**); the wildest drinker; and the one who plays foul, a *bugger*, hinted at by "**ersewild**" (*arse* and *Oscar Wilde*).

Instead of speaking he “**usquebauched**”. Here we find the obvious “*usquebaugh*: whiskey”, pointing to his drunken and “*debauched*” condition; and to his “approximate” (**ebauched** → French “*ébaucher*” : to knock together, to rough out”) arguments. In “**usque**” a possible hint at “*Euskara*” (Basque language) that triggers the Oscar Wilde “**ersewild**” allusion; and a possible “**ébauched**” reference to the beginning of Cicero's first Catiline Oration : “*Quo usque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra?* (How long, O Catiline, will you abuse our patience? )”. A possible thought by the annoyed innkeeper.

The “**aleconner's**” comment is very simple: the Captain is a shitty (Latin “*stercus*”) he-goat (Latin “*hircus*”) chasing young girls: in “**hes-teries**” we find in fact Greek “*hyster*” (womb) and *Esthers*, alluding to dean Swift's Stella and Vanessa. “**suirsite**” hints at the Irish *Suir* river, at “*sewer*” and at Estonian “*suir*” (beebread, pollen). A ghastly and revolting “sight” (**site**) : a “*river of shit*” (sewer), where the shitty *he-goat* finds his nauseating nourishment (pollen) and, heated by sexual desires, runs after girls. Again

**005.06** : *His crest of huoldry, in vert with*

**005.07** : *ancillars, troublant, argent, a hegoak, poursuivant, horrid, horned.*

The “**old volcanoes**” recall **Ethna Prettyplume** of **318.12**; and the Sicilian *Etna*, the “**site**” where *Polyphemus* had his dwelling (with his famous “ram / he-goat”). Allegorically the Captain is an one-eyed barbarous being (the **Hooghly Spaight** partner of **Ethna Prettyplume**). “*One-eyed*” because he has only a fixed aim in his head: “*hyster*” (pussy).

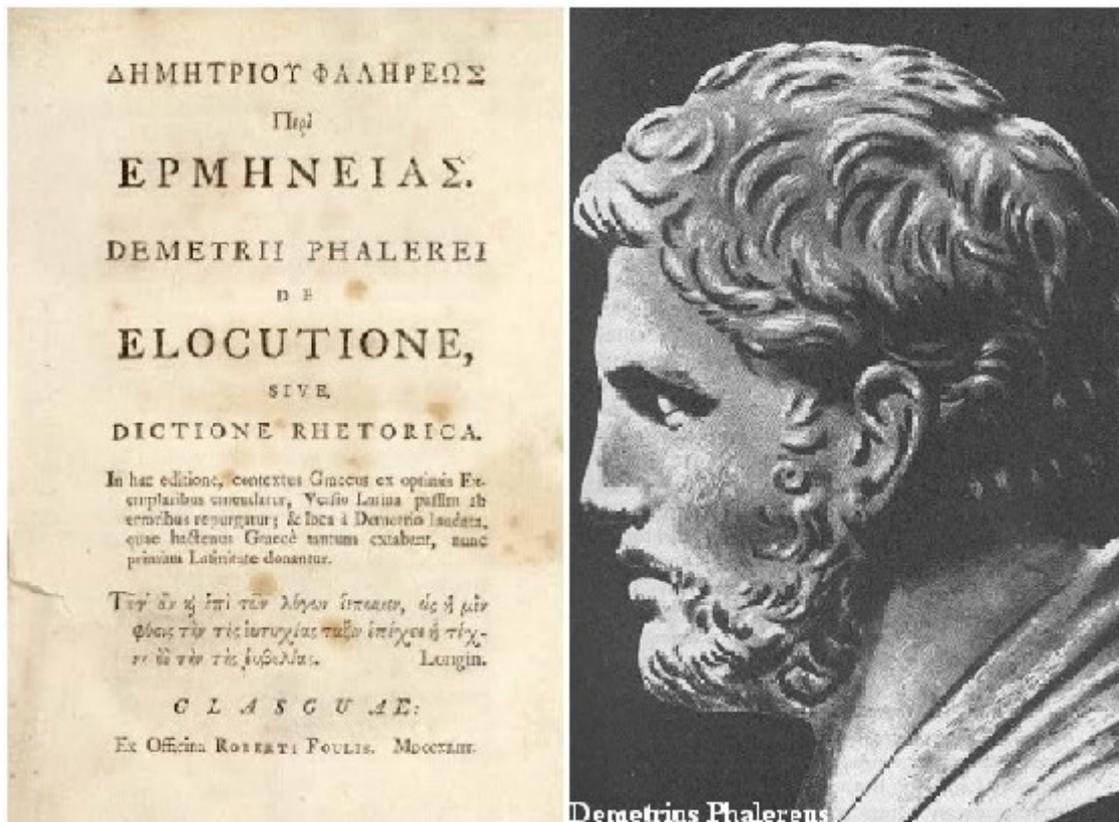
The smart “**aleconner**” is so convinced of what he states that, no matter how irritating he may be, he is ready to suffer the most terrible punishments: to be **shot**, to be kicked (**shoddied**), to be strangled (**throttle me**), to be denied his favorite dish (**cowheel**),



to be interred eternally like Finn McCool (**fine me cowheel for ever**). He is aware that he is saying something annoying, like putting thorns in a *barmbrack*,



the Halloween cake, (**for bringing briars to Bem-bracken**), since a stick in it means “*unhappy marriage or continual disputes*”; or doing something sacrilegious, like trying to put *Demetrius O'Flanigan McCarthy* (**Demetrius**) on the right track, teaching him “good measures” (*Demetrius: On Style*),



or a decent behaviour : “**rinbus**” is the “*rainbow*” after the tempest; and also the “*rin gong*” or “*singing bowl*”



the sound of which creates an atmosphere so different from the one Dimetrius is usually plunged into:

'Twas late he went to breakfast, and 'twas late he went to bed;  
If you took up a thermometer, at lastways so 'twas said,  
The quicksilver started bubblin' when you placed it near his head,  
And the steam was like a rainbow 'round McCarthy.

The smart “**aleconner**” is provoking Porter, forcing him to recognize what he asserted, to think “rightly” (**wrinkle wryghtly**), and not tell lies (Slang “wrinkle”), not to distort, to wind around (wrinkle) the truth. “**bully bluedomer**” is an epithet addressed to the innkeeper, who is in fact considered a copy of the Captain. “**bluedomer**” is the dweller of “*blue-dom*”, namely the kingdom of the sea, the ocean. So he is “*the bully of the ocean*”. But “**bully bluedomer**” has another side hint, not so easy to detect. In the previous scene there have been many references to Ancient Egypt. Now in Egyptian literature there is a most common idiomatic form



transliterated as “*kA pt*” (kA = bull; pt = sky); meaning “*bull of the sky*”. (“*blue dome*” may certainly refer to the blue sky), that is an attribute of “*Might*”. Thus “**bully bluedomer**” may also be a sarcastic allusion to the

“bullish” sailor. And since he is near the “sewer site”, a further allusion to “bullshit”. I have serious doubts, though, whether Joyce did know that. But it's not to be excluded. If he knew he might have possibly have played with an Italian pun as well . “kA pt” was pronounced approximately “kah-pit”, very similar to Italian “capito” (understood), used commonly as “Did you understand?”. But there may be another subtle Egyptian allusion which, I think, Joyce shrewdly put there. In a mail to the group David Atwood suggested that the “blue dome” might allude to the Egyptian “Nut”, the sky goddess.



I think that is indeed a brilliant insight. In fact another common formula of Egyptian religious literature is "kA nwt" (*bull of Nut*).



And it's highly probable that Joyce knew that idiomatic form, since it recurs often also in “*The Book of the Dead*”. And I am also convinced that it triggered an ingenious and quite ribald hint. The goddess Nut is symbolically the mother of the deceased: the inner side of the coffin's lid was usually painted with stars; Nut is the maternal womb. Thus "kA nwt" is another form of "kA mwt.f" (Kamutef), or "*the bull of his mother*". The

sexual motive is evident, since that union is a symbol of fertility and resurrection. But, and here is the ribaldry!, that idiomatic form is the sacred version of our baser "*motherfucker*". That fits our context, since the "*aleconner*" is teasing and provoking both the innkeeper and the Norwegian Captain; thus an implicit most vulgar insult.

### EXURSUS :

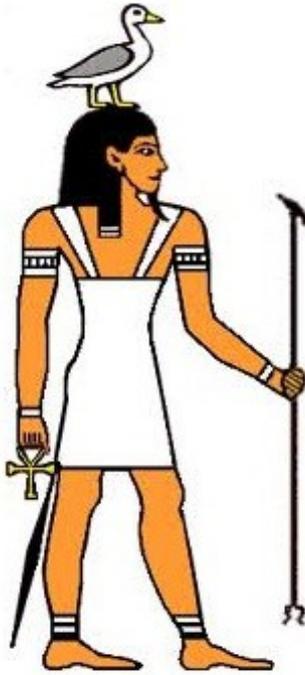
quite far fetched, you may skip it without harm.

Now, remaining within the Egyptian landscape, let me trespass the borders of decent criticism and stray from extreme to bizarre! The sky goddess Nut is the wife of "Geb" (the earth god). And in that name we might smell a hint at "*gobbo*" (the same of **319.20**), namely Italian "*hunchback*". Now Nut and Geb, in Egyptian paintings, are shown being separated by their son, *Shu*, the god of the air.



Thus *Shu* is also a sort of "*go-between*" between the coupling divine beings, becoming in fact a symbolic "*ship's husband*" (**S**-hip's **HU**sband → SHU).

From bizarre to insane: Nut is the ocean on which sails the boat of the sun god Ra. Geb is also known as "*the great cackler*", his animal being a "*goose*".



In our case, if Geb and Nut correspond to our couple (the Captain and the tailor's daughter), the Captain being also the Flying Dutchman, we might have a reference to John Fletcher's comedy "*The wild goose chase*", with its amorous plot; but also to "*The flight of the wild geese*". And "*wild geese*" being Irish soldiers who left their country to serve in foreign armies, that might be a further insult to the innkeeper and his ancestor. But at this point I'd better go back to serious matters.

## END OF THE INSANE EXCURSUS

**319.7: We gin too gnir and thus plinary**

**319.8: indulgence makes collemullas of us all.**

Now the "**ersewild aleconner**" calls Porter's attention to his duty as innkeeper, which is to serve drinks and to continue his narrative. "**gnir**" is Norwegian "*miser*", hinting at the fact that Porter is retaining the liqueurs; although in this acceptance "**we**" should be a colloquial way to say "*you*", or a sarcastic "*royal we*" to make fun of the innkeeper. "**gin**" is presumably "*be-gin*" (leaving aside the reference to the "spirit"), since another meaning of "**gnir**" is *Romansh* "to come" (a variant of "*ve-gnir*", which is also Triestine "*vegnir*"). Thus a first interpretation, related to boozing, is something like: "You are being too cautious in serving drinks. You should

be more indulgent in filling us (**plinary indulgence** → plenary comes from Latin “*plenus*” : full of, filled, plump), making us “*colonels*” (**collemullas**), that is “*O' Connell's ale soldiers*”. In fact a variant of the term is “**colleunellas**”, which shows also a further side-hint at Italian popular “*coglionella*” (teasing, prank). Thus implicating that Porter is making fun of his audience. The liqueur allusions are underlined by the references to *Plinius the Elder* and *Columella*, both of them authors of treatises on viticulture.

But the sentence may be read from the narrative perspective as well, with further shifts of meanings. “**gnir**” might hint at Italian “*gnorri*” (ignorant, one who pretends not to know), used in a colloquial, although a little obsolete, form: “*Non fare lo gnorri*” (you know better than that). “**We gin**” may be German “*wegen*” (because of). “**plinary**” is a reference to Plinius, as historian (among his books there is a “*Bella Germaniae*”, History of the German Wars, which justifies “*wegen*”). “**collemullas**” hides an Italian “*colle*” (hill) and an Arabic “*mullah*” (mosque leader, a sort of preacher). Thus “**collemullas**” are those who can talk (preach) about “*the hill*” (Howth and the hunchbacked captain). In conclusion: “Since we are too ignorant (**too gnir**) about the facts, be generous (**indulgence**) with the story and inform us fully (**plinary**), so that we all may know the events concerning the humpback (**colle**) in order to be able to expose them (**mullas**) to public assemblies.

**319.8: But Time is for talerman**

**319.9: tasting his tap. Tiptoptap, Mister Maut.**

And here we have again a two layered meaning. First the booze: “**talerman**” is the innkeeper at his “teller” ready to “**tap**” beer from the spigot. But “**tap**” hints also at Italian “*tappo*” (cork of a bottle). Now before serving wine a diligent waiter smells the cork in order to detect a possible wine fault. In other words: “It's **Time** for the innkeeper (**talerman**) to smell (**tasting**) the corks of bottles and to begin serving “**taps**”. “**Tiptoptap**” is the dance of the innkeeper, who is both the “*malt*” man and the man who expects to be paid (German “*Maut*” : toll). And “**Maut**” may hint also at “*mouth*”, thus “**Mister Maut**” is a sort of “*Big Mouth*”.

The other perspective is the narrative one. Again: “**talerman**” is the speaker who is going to talk about what is going to happen to the tailor

(**talerman**). In other words: “It’s time for the tailor to taste his bitter cup (**tasting his tap**). Exercising extreme far-fetchism we might even read “**Maut**” as the Egyptian “*maat*” (truth): thus “**Mister Maut**” becomes “*Mr Truth*”.

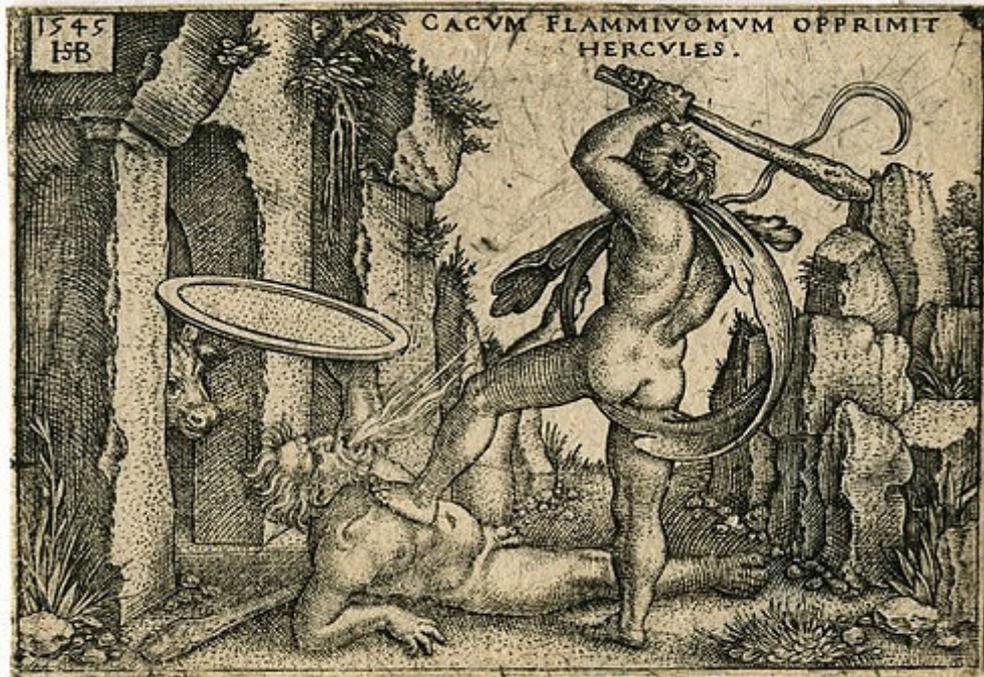
**319.10: He made one summery (Cholk and murble in lonestime) of his**  
**319.11: the three swallows like he was muzzling Moselems and torched**  
**319.12: up as the faery pangeant flued down the hisophenguts, a slake**  
**319.13: for the quicklining, to the tickle of his tube and the twobble of**  
**319.14: his fable, O, fibbing once upon a spray what a queer and queasy**  
**319.15: spree it was. Plumped.**

Since “*one swallow does not a summer make*”, the “**ersewild aleconner**” asks for three of them, like the trademark of Power's whiskey, with its “*three swallows*”.



He probably does not have money and asks that the fare be put, together with the rest (**summery**) on his bill, namely be “*chalked up*” (**Cholk and murble**), written on the book of debts (**murble** → marble + German “*mürbe*” : tender = a tender chalkboard → paper) for the last time (**in lonestime**). Porter agrees, but wishing that the boozer “*choke*” once and for all (**in lonestime**). Here we have further amusing hints. “**murble**” points to French “*morbleu!*”, English “*zounds*” or “*gadzooks*”; this last sounding like Italian “*cazzo*” (dick), idiomatic “*fuck!*”. Thus underlining Porter's annoyance. But, plunging into chemistry, we find that “chalk (**Cholk**),

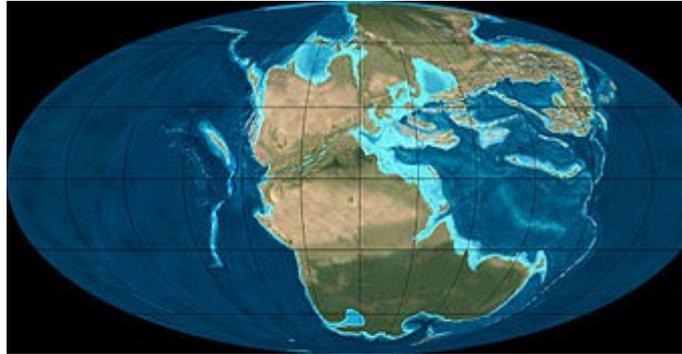
marble (**murble**) and limestone (**lonestime**) are all forms of *calcium carbonate*, the molecular formula of which is: “**CaCo3**”. Please, mark “**3**” (three swallows). Now “*caco*” hides a lot of allusions. It's Italian “*shit*”; it's Greek “*κακός*” (*kakòs*), meaning “*worthless, ugly, vile*”; it is a Roman mythological figure : “*Cacus*”, a fire-spitting giant and the son of Vulcan, strangled by Herakles.



According to many legends he was *three-headed*. In conclusion: Porter, telling him three silent Italian “*Vai a cagare!*” (lit. “*go shit*” - figuratively “*fuck you!*”) wishes that that ugly, mean, slanderous creature choke on the spot. There is indeed also an ironic implication since the image of Cacus mirrors the “**suirsite's stircus haunting hes-teries round old volcanoes**” addressed to the Captain. So Porter throws the slanders back to the client.

The “**aleconner**”, “empowered” (Power whiskey) by the sight of the triple swallows, gulps them down in a shot, to silence (**muzzling**) sarcastically (parodying a “*muezzin*”) those who despise liquors (**Moselems** → Muslims) and those who drink insignificant booze (*Moselle* light wine : a hilarious self-mockery : Joyce did relish white wine, from the Moselle or the Rhine). They can eat their “Muesli” (**muzzling**) : “*a popular breakfast dish based on raw rolled oats and other ingredients including grains, fresh or dried fruits, seeds and nuts, mixed with milk, soy milk, yogurt or fruit juice - WP*”. Of quite a different sort is the “*juice*” which he likes.

Now we have again the image of a back-fired (**torched up**) Cacus. His bowels are opened up (**hisophenguts**) to receive the spirit, which flows (in fact “**fluwed**”, contaminated by “flu”) in its “*fluvial*” course down his esophagus (**hisophenguts**) as a triumphant (**pangeant** → pageant), gigantic (French **géant**), magic (**faery**) primordial mass (**pangea**)



that quenches (**slake**) his fiery (**faery**) thirst. In fact “**quicklining**” hints at “*quicklime / burnt lime*”, which, if mixed with water, becomes “*slaked lime*”. The fiery spirit that quenches his magmatic desires. His throat is tickled (**tickle of his tube**) by the spiritual wave, which is Italian “*flutto*”, which morphs into the “*flute*” of Phil the Fluter, at whose music the drunkard starts “wobbling” (**twobble**) like a table (**fable** → he is so tipsy that he misspells and mispronounces the word) unstable on his feet. And, once in the open ocean of drunkenness, lost, like Captain Joshua Slocum in his sloop, the “*Spray*” (thanks Dominique!)



he starts discrediting with childish lies (**fibbing**) the goodness of the drink (**spre**) Porter served him, complaining how suspicious (**queer**) and

nauseating (**queasy**) it is. And once filled up (**Plumped**) he drops down heavily (**Plumped**).

**319.16: Which both did. Prompt. Eh, chrystal holder? Save Ampster-**

**319.17: dampster that had rheumaniscences in his netherlumbs.**

I confess that it took me a while to get the plausible meaning of “**Which both did**”. “**both**” may refer to the drink, the “**pangeant**” that “*plumps*” into the pit of the client's stomach (**the tickle of his tube**); and to the drunkard who “*plumps*” (and not exactly “*stately*”, like Buck Mulligan) on the seat, or on the floor. But “**plumped**” as “*filled up*” points both to the drunkard and to the innkeeper who is really “*pissed off*”. In Italian we say “*ne ho pieni i coglioni*” (my balls are filled up), and “**balls**” are definitely related to “**netherlumbs** → nether limbs”.

Drunk as he is, the “**ersewild aleconner**” is ready (**Prompt**) to resume his provocations and proposes a sarcastic toast (**Save**) to “**both**” of them: the Flying Dutchman (**Ampster-dampster**) and the pissed off Porter, he who holds the cups (**Eh, chrystal holder**), the descendant of HCE. It is a caustic toast since “**that had rheumaniscences in his netherlumbs**” points to nasty allusions. His fucking apparatus (**his netherlumbs**) is somewhat “*rheumy*”: “**rheum**” that once was “*clap*”, nowadays only “*piss*”. He can only have memories (**rheumaniscences**) of his past amorous deeds; now he is just an impotent “**cappon**”.

