

FW 325.13 – 26

SCAT STORY 1

by
orlando mezzabotta

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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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The general meaning of this passage does not pose interpretive problems. It describes the ship's husband's effort to sign a peace treaty between the Captain and the tailor and to arrange the wedding of the sailor with the tailor's daughter. That's the savoury dish. But what about its components? Let's try to reconstruct the recipe.

325.13: -- Comither, ahorace, thou mighty man of valour, elderman

325.14: adaptive of Capel Ysnod, and tsay-fong tsei-foun a laun bricks-

325.15: number till I've fined you a faultler-in-law, to become your son-

325.16: to-be,

The ship's husband starts addressing the Captain, whom he calls “**Comither**”. That's an Irish term meaning “*love spell*”, so the Captain is a “*seducer*”. “**ahorace**” has a lot of cross references, but in our case I think that the most important ones are Spanish “*ahora*” (now) and “*Horace*”, the Latin author of “*Ars Poetica*” (The art of Poetry). The Spanish term points to “*Don Juan*”, so we get a romantic seducer using poetic “love spells” in order to satisfy his “*amorous hunger*”: in “**Comither**” we may in fact detect also a Spanish “*comida*” (food, meal, dinner).

“**thou mighty man of valour**” which, at face value, hints at the Biblical “*Gideon*” is probably an allusion to the Captain's “*hesitancy*”. Gideon in fact, before going into action, asks God – three times – to give him a “*sign*”. It is the same hesitancy which we find in “**Ysnod**”, where we pick a “*yes*”, a “*no*” and an ambiguous “*nod*”. And if we read “**Capel**” as “*horse*” we find a restive animal. And we detect a further “*oscillation*” in “**tsay-fong tsei-foun**”, in which, leaving aside the Chinese puns, out of my reach (of course if the first is “*tailor*” and the second “*robbers*” that would underline the conflict between those two who should instead be appeased), we may single out a German “*Von*” hinting at the nobility of the “**elderman**” who can be “*adopted*” by the Irish land (**Capel Ysnod** → Chapelizod), once he “*adapts*” himself to its rules: those of the natives (**tsay-fong tsei-foun a laun** → *Sinn Féin*, *Sinn Féin Amhain* → Ourselves, Ourselves alone). Although the Irish motto may be an ironic allusion to the Captain's “*independence*” (*Sinn Féin*) : he wants to live by himself (**a laun** → alone). But that would be a somewhat “*lunatic*” (German “*Laune*” : mood, humour, caprice) attitude. He would be just “*one single lonely brick*”, separated from the others (**bricks-number**) that can build a solid wall, or a house; he would “*break*” their “*unity*”. And if we read “**laun brick**” as Italian “*lombrico*” (earthworm) we get a repulsive “*verme solitario*” (lit. “*lone worm*” : tapeworm). That would be a big mistake (**faulter-in-law**) which he would eventually pay the price for (**fined**); but the ship's husband is going

to change his (the sailor's) mind and convince him to get married, finding for him a father-in-law (**till I've fined you a fault-in-law**). In the meantime the ship's husband addresses the tailor showing him his “**son-to-be**”; in which I wouldn't exclude a reference to the Biblical “*Tobias / Saint Toby*” (the blind man who recovers his sight : symbolically, a “*new vision*”).

325.16: gentlemens tealer, generalman seelord, gosse and bosse,

325.17: hunguest and horasa, jonjemsums both, in sailsmanship, szed the

325.18: head marines talebearer,

So the two parties are fronting each other, the “*tailor*” (**tealer**) and the “*lord of the sea*” (**seelord**); but in fact “**tealer**” is just a salesman who “*deals*” (**tealer** → **dealer**) with “**gentlemens**”, not a “*gentleman*” himself; and the Captain is not a “*general*” but just an ordinary (**generalman**) sailor; one who “*sees*” himself as a “*lord*”. Which is a sarcastic way to invite the two “*gentlemen*” to be less self-conceited.

In “**gosse and bosse**” we have a clear reference to the hunchback (French “*bosse*” : hump) who acts like a “*boss*” and a less clear one to a “**gosse**”, which, if read as French “*kid*” doesn't make much sense, since the tailor is not a child; but Québécois “**gosse**” is “*testicle*”, and that might certainly apply to the tailor, who is also a “*father*”: a reference to *Edmund Gosse's* book “*Father and Son*”: (*father-in-law* vs. *son-to-be*). A curious coincidence: Edmund Gosse's mother was *Emily Bowes* (**bosse**).

“**hunguest and horasa**” , with its allusion to “*Hengist and Horsa*” the Germanic brothers who conquered Britain, is an invitation to the two adversaries to “*fraternize*”, which has been already hinted at by the allusion to Morton's play “*Box and Cox*”. What's interesting is the fact that “**gosse and bosse**” refers to a “*reversed*” title (*Cox and Box*). And that is probably a hint at the brothers' “*polarity*”. The reversed title explains also “**hunguest**” (*hun guest*

→ the German guest → the Captain), welcomed with a “*hooray, sir*” (**horasa**).

But there is also another funny, though far-fetched allusion, which justifies the reversed title. Since, in the mentioned play, Cox is “*night*” and Box is “*day*”, we have a possible allusion to *Cole Porter's* (Porter: is that a coincidence?) “*Night and Day*”, with its fitting line “*Night and day / you are the one*”. So they are virtual allies against English rule, like the brothers “*Hengist and Horsa*”; and they should celebrate that alliance, their “*joined forces/sums*” (**jonjemsums**), drinking Irish whiskey (John Jameson and Sons). Which would be indeed a profitable deal (**sailsmanship**) for them both: the “*salesman*” (the tailor) and the “**sailsman**” (the sailor).

At this point we have to stop a moment in order to explain a quizzical “**szed**” which seems to be a fourth variant of “*said*”, together with “*sayd*” (ship's husband), “*sagd*” (Captain) and “*sazd*” (Kersse). We already met it in 322.35, where it seemed to be a variant of “*sazd*” (probably due to excitement or drunkenness; an “*altered state of mind*” that causes him to twist his words in view of the imminent curses against the Captain). If that is true even this “**szed**” should be assigned to Kersse, who would then be described as “**head marines talebearer**”. That would make sense, since the tailor is indeed “*one who spreads malicious stories*” (**talebearer**) about the Captain, who is the “**head**” of those who attack from the sea (**marines**). Now it's pretty obvious that the speech starting from **325.13** is to be assigned to the ship's husband in his effort to appease the two adversaries; so the question is: “*What did exactly say (szed) Kersse? Where does his speech begin?*”

I venture to suggest that he is the one who, though acting against his feelings, takes the first step towards appeasement, accepting the ship's husband invitation. So he says (or he repeats the ship's husband wish) to the Captain: “**jonjemsums both, in sailsmanship**”. In

other words: “We are (Latin: *sumus* → **sums**) like Shaun (**jon**) and Shem (**jem**), let's become brothers and “join” (**jonjem**) together, convinced of our mutual profit (**in sailsmanship**)”.

There's a sarcastic allusion, though. We might see in this the tailor who “*pulls down his own trousers*” in front of the Captain. In fact there might be a possible reading of “**talebearer**” as “*tail bearer*”, corresponding to the Italian idiomatic “*reggere la coda*” (to hold up/bear sb's tail), meaning “*to be a toady, to fawn on sb*”. And that could be an allusion to Kersses's “*bad conscience*” scolding him for his “*supine*” acceptance of peace.

325.18: then sayd the ships gospfather in the scat

325.19: story to the husband's capture and either you does or he musts

Having obtained the tailor's consent the ship's husband, who is described here as “**gospfather**”, namely the “*godfather*”, since he will sponsor the Captain at baptism, transforming “*gossip*” (**gosp**) into “*gospel*”; the ship's husband, who plays the leading role in the shitty (**scat** → scatology) story, confused as a vocal jazz “*scat song*” (vocal improvisation with wordless vocables, nonsense syllables or without words at all – WP), about the “**capture**” of the Captain, turned into a “**husband**”; the ship's husband addresses the Captain informing him that if he does not give his consent as well the other will fly into a rage like a furious elephant. In fact we shouldn't read “**musts**” as an erroneous rendering of the verb “*must*” (to be obliged), but as a pseudo verbal construction derived from the term “*must*” (*a periodic condition in bull (male) elephants, characterized by highly aggressive behaviour and accompanied by a large rise in reproductive hormones -WP*).

“**either you does**” poses some problems since it appears as grammatically incorrect. But if we pick up a female deer (**doe**), to balance the elephant's “*must*”, we might pronounce “**does**” as Spanish “*dos*” (two). Thus there is an explicit command to the

Captain to become “*two*”, namely to marry the deer female.

325.20: and this moment same, sayd he

This poses too a little problem. Since “*sayd*” is applied to the ship's husband, the sentence might be an explicit invitation to the Captain to accept, at that very moment (**this moment same**), the peace Kersse has just offered. The Penguin Books variant shows, though, a “*sagd he*”, which would point to the Captain giving his consent. I am of the opinion that either version is plausible enough and complementary.

325.20: so let laid pacts be being betving

325.21: ye, he sayd, by my main makeshift, he sayd, one fisk and one flesk,

325.22: as flat as, Aestmand Addmundson you, you're iron slides and so

325.23: hompety domp as Paddley Mac Namara here he's a hardy canooter,

325.24: for the two breasts of Banba are her soilers and her toilers, if thou

325.25: wilt serve Idyall as thou hast sayld. Brothers Boathes, brothers

325.26: Coathes, ye have swallen blooders' oathes.

At this point the ship's husband proceeds with his “*coniunctio*” ritual. “**laid pacts**” might be a ribald hint at “*pacts for getting laid*”, thus at “*sponsal carnal intercourse*”, prepared by peaceful pacts between the two opponents. “**betving**” in fact hints at Norwegian “*betvinge*” (to subdue); thus an agreement to put aside aggressive intentions. “**main**” is French “hand” and we may see the celebrant blessing their “*handshake*” and uniting symbolically the hands of the man and the woman (via her father) in accord with the Bible citation “*they shall be one flesh – Genesis 2:24*” (**one fisk and one flesk**). Although a somewhat weird, chimaerical union between a “*fish*” (Norwegian “*fisk*”) and a “*pork*” (Norwegian “*flesk*”). We can smell here a “*debasement*” attitude which the ship's husband expresses before the two contractors, the same one we found in 325.16 (**gentlemens tealer, generalman seelord**). In fact the Captain is addressed as “**Aestmand Addmundson**”, hinting at the famous Norwegian (Aestmand → East man) explorer “*Amundsen*” and at “*Edmund II*”, king of England from 23 April to 18 October 1016,

nicknamed “*Ironside*”, because of his valour. But in fact he is only a “*big mouth*”, since “*mund*” is German for “*mouth*” and “*Add*” can certainly hint at “*bigness*”. And his “*sides*” are “*slides*”, a not so hidden allusion to one “*who pulls down (slides) his breeches*”.

But there's more. He is “*hompety domp*”, like Humpty Dumpty who fell from the wall; and a “*homme petit*” (French “*little man*”) worthy to be “*dumped*” (*domp* → Québécois “*domper*” : dump, get rid of). The same applies to Kersse, called “*Paddley Mac Namara*”. Here we pick a “*paddy*”, an Irish native, who becomes the son (Mac) of a “*hound of the sea*” (Conmara → Irish: cú “*hound*” + muir “*sea*”). Nonetheless he is “*hardly*” a valorous king as “*Hardicanute*” (*hardy canooter*), 11th century king of Denmark and England. “*Hardicanute*” is related to the above mentioned “*Edmund Ironside*”, since he was the son of “*Canute the Great*”, whom Edmund fought against when he (Canute) tried to conquer England. But “*hardy canooter*” has a further possible allusion. “*canooter*” may hint at Italian “*canottiere*” (rower, canoeist); and in “*Paddley*” we can detect an evident “*paddle*”. Thus we get an incompetent (*hardy*) Irish “*paddler*” who is in fact a clownish (*hardy* → Oliver Hardy) “*peddler*”. With an amusing resonance: Oliver Hardy → Oliver Cromwell → Ironsides.

They both shall be nourished by the Irish land, fed by *Banba's* (Irish goddess → Ireland) two breasts, like the “*Paps of Anu*” in County Kerry.



One for the sailor (**soilers**), one for the tailor (**toilers**), although they shall “*soil her*” with their continuous struggles (*toil her*). With a possible reference to the Edenic fall: “*Cursed is the ground (soil) because of you; through painful “toil” you will eat food from it – Genesis 3:17)*”.

“if thou wilt serve **Idyall** as thou hast sayld” is obviously addressed to the Captain who is asked to be the servant of God (**Idyall** → Italian “*Iddio*”), who is the “*ideal*” god of “*all*”; just like, in his former life-style, in his sailing, he has been a servant of a heathen (**Idyall** → idol) sea lord (**sayld**). So he should keep the promise he made (**as thou hast sayld**) when he signed the peace treaty.

And that is the symbolic, bombastic (swollen) “*blood oath*” (**blooders' oathes**) sworn (**swallen**) by the Captain (**Boathes** → **Box**) and the tailor (**Coathes** → **Cox**). With an ironic reference to “**hunguest and horasa**” of 325.17. They are in fact “*Hengist and Horsa*”, namely Old English “*stallion*” (the Captain) and “*horse*” (the tailor): eating their “*oat*” (**oathes**) in an apparent brotherly (**blooders**) way.



THE SCAT STORY - 1
(to be continued)