

FW 311.21 – 312.12

The Norwegian Captain's first landing

by
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The episode of Kersse and the Norwegian Captain has been treated so extensively by FW scholarship that to spend more words on it could be seen as totally useless and presumptuous. Nonetheless there is an aspect which I don't know whether it has been taken into due account.

The pun “suit” (cloth) / “suit” (courtship) has already been pointed out, [311.22: *where can I get... a suit? (suit of clothes, marriage suit, legal suit, suit of sails) – Fweet*], but, unless I got it wrong, it seems that the two interpretations are discontinuous. I mean, it is taken for granted that the Captain in his first coming asks for a suit (pair of trousers); and in his second coming is after a sweetheart. I think instead (perhaps reinventing the wheel) that all the story results from a primary linguistic misunderstanding. As soon as he enters the pub the Captain asks the ship's husband (from now on SH):

311.22: Hwere can a ketch or hook alive a suit and

311.23: sowterkins?

Leaving aside the Prankquean reference, “catch”, “hook alive” and “sooterkin: sweetheart, mistress (Fweet)” seem to be quite explicit. It is SH who, “knowing the language”, misunderstands the Captain and takes his “suit” for “clothes”. This may shed some light on the peculiar style of the garment:

311.27: Manning to

311.28: sayle of clothse for his lady her master whose to be precised of a

311.29: peer of trouders under the pattern of a cassack.

“his lady her master” is probably the SH's faulty translation of what the Captain is asking for, the result of the mixing of suit/suit and **sowterkins**. He probably thinks that the “lady-garment” he assumes the Captain wants,

can only be a pair of trousers “Cossack-style or Zouave -style”,



like a woman's gown, Italian “sottana”, thus a “*soutanish*” suit.

The spurious linguistic atmosphere is enhanced by SH's use of both Pidgin and “Cant/Shelta” (Karl's courtesy!)

311.25: Ahorror, he sayd, canting around to that beddest his friend, the

311.26: tayler, for finixed coulpure, chunk pulley muchy chink topside

311.27: numpa one sellafella, fake an capstan make and shoot!

It is a sort of “*lingua franca*” to allow communication between the **norjankeltian** Captain and the Irish (**Ahorror** : O' Hara) Kersse. And it is not to be excluded that the **canting around** in Shelta has the aim of targeting a foreign dupe whom to take advantage of. Kersse is not named yet, he is just an anonymous **Mengarment**, who tries mellifluosly to “hook” the Captain (**Let me prove, I pray thee, but this once**). So:

1) he makes a deal [**He spit in his faist (beggin)**]

2) he starts sewing [**he tape the raw baste (paddin)**]

3) he finishes the job and asks for payment [**he planked his pledge (as dib is a dab)**]

4) but the Captain is not a dupe and goes his way, calling the tailor “shop boy” (boutique lad) – with a possible homosexual allusion (buttock) - and saying a sarcastic “good-buy” [**and he tog his fringe sleeve (buthock lad, fur whale).**]

The tailor protests: the Captain must keep his commitment and pay - to the last cent.

311.33: Alloy for allay and

311.34: this toolth for that soolth. Lick it and like it. A barter, a parter.

311.35: And plenty good enough, neighbour Norreys, every bit and

311.36: grain.

But the Captain does not seem to lend the tailor his ear. So SH runs after him, cursing, calling him “thief” and ordering him to put money in his purse (**bag**) and pay the tailor.

311.36: And the ship's husband brokecurst after him to hail the

312.1: lugger. Stolp, tief, stolp, come bag to Moy Eireann!

The Captain's answer is a sarcastic retort.

312.3: All lykkehud! Below taiyor he ikan heavin sets.

If “**All lykkehud!**” (likely!) is pretty clear, the following sentence is indeed enigmatic (to me, of course). In Fweet we find interesting elucidations: “*taiyo*” (Japanese: sun, ocean), “*ikan*” (Malay: fish), “*heave in sight*” (Nautical: to show up, make oneself visible). But how do we put them together and how does the sentence fit the context?

This is for the time being my tentative solution.

CAPTAIN (*at the top of his voice, grinding his teeth*)

That tailor down there (below), who hides behind you (SH) (below : Nautical → beneath deck), who believes he is a radiant (taiyo) tailor, but who in fact is at the bottom (below) of his craft and would better drown himself in the ocean (taiyo), like the Malay fish (ikan) he is; let's see whether he has the guts (he can) to show up and make himself visible. And if he has retching urges (heaves), that's his business!

It goes without saying that the Captain is polemically using *his* pidgin, *his* own “Shelta” and my rendering, controversial as it is, is a tentative translation of *Capstanese*.

312.3: But they broken

312.4: waters and they made whole waters at they surfered bark to the

312.5: lots of his vauce.

That hardly comprehensible answer, its mysterious language and especially the Captain's thundering voice (**the lots of his vauce**) frighten the tailor and SH (they); and the result of their “expectancy” (water breaking) is that they piss in their pants (**made whole waters**) and their sterile reaction is the rushing sound (**surf**) of their **bark** (woof) to the Captain's vanishing (loss) voice. Their bark being worse than their bite.

I wonder whether “vauce” may hint at the famous Werner Voss, the German World War I “flying” ace – in Norwegian it is pronounced “voss”, not “foss” as in German. But more probably “vauce” hints at Italian “voce” (voice) and “fauce” (jaw), stressing the “barking” touch.

The rest of the tale does not pose particular problems.

312.5: And aweigh he yankered on the Norgean run so

312.6: that seven sailend sonnenrounders was he breastbare to the brina-

312.7: bath, where bottoms out has fathoms full, fram Franz Josè

312.8: Land til Cabo Thormendoso, evenstarde and risingsoon. Up the

312.9: Rivor Tanneiry and down the Golfe Desombres. Farety days and

312.10: fearty nights. Enjoy yourself, O maremen! And the tides made,

312.11: veer and haul, and the times marred, rear and fall, and, holey

312.12: bucket, dinned he raigh!

We see the Captain in his seven years voyage (like the Flying Dutchman) in a frozen ocean. In “**brinabath**” we have not only “brine” (salt water), but Italian “brina” (frost). A voyage through the world's “ass hole” (bottom, fat – German Fett: fat ham, fathom), from northern **Franz Josè Land** to southern Cape of Good Hope (its original name being *Cabo das Tormentas* (“**Cape of Storms**”). Where “**mendoso**” is both Italian “defective, flawed” and Spanish “false, mendacious”; thus a “mendacious Thor” (**Thormendoso**). And we have also Spanish “**tarde**” (evening) and Italian “rivo” (river) or Spanish “rio” which is so (Spanish “**tan**”) black (Italian “nero” : **neiry**), balancing the Fweetean “French des ombres: of the shadows”. A dreadful “quarantine” , like the forty days and night of the Flood, with the deafening noise of its thunders (**din**). While the Captain's weaves his web (**raigh**: Italian “ragno” : spider).