

FW 316.33 – 317.21

THE BUGGER'S OPERA

by
orlando mezzabotta

=====

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.

=====

Abstract:

The hungry Norwegian Captain asks impatiently for food and drinks.



Let's try to understand why Joyce wrote 25 lines when just one would have been enough.

316.33: So sell me gundy, sagd

316.34: the now waging cappon, with a warry posthumour's expletion,

We have just seen how the ship's husband has welcomed heartily the Captain in order to calm his aggressiveness, using flattering expressions to ingratiate himself with him, but the Captain is not in the right humour (**posthumour's** → post humourous : his humour has finished, dead → *posthumous*) to listen to the ship's husband's sugary words. “**gundy**” is in fact a candy made with treacle, thus a potpourri (*salmagundi* : **sell me gundy**) of cloying sentences that disgust the Captain instead of giving him satisfaction (Latin *expletio* : **expletion**). “**sell me gundy**” is thus the epithet the Captain gives to the fawning brown-nose, who thought of having neutralized him, of having cut his balls, turning him, the “Captain”, into a castrated cock (capon : **cappon**). But that's no wage (**now waging**) for him, who carries on (**wage**) his battle, with a bellicose (**warry**) expression (**expletion**) followed by a (*posthumous*) mighty explosion (**expletion**).

316.35: shoots ogos shootsle him or where's that slob?

The Captain has been promised champagne (**kumpavin** : 316.32), but no one has come yet to bring it him. So he wants to know where is that obnoxious servant (**slob**): should he go (**ogos** : “*ego*”) hunting (**shoots ogos shootsle**) after him and shoot him? Is that what he is supposed to do? [By the way: in Italian *Alto Adige*, Austrian *South Tyrol*, “*schutzel con spinaci*” is a delicious dish: ravioli with spinach stuffing. But I cannot grant the date of this recipe.]

316.35: A bit bite of

316.36: keesens, he sagd, til Dennis, for this jantar (and let the dobblins

317.1: roast perus,)

So he asks for something edible on the spot, like cheese (**keesens**); since he cannot wait for roasted meat (**roast perus**). But there are indeed many other references. For what concerns “cheese” I can't help thinking of Ben Gunn, the marooned pirate of Stevenson's *The Treasure Island* (Ch. 15):



“You mightn't happen to have a piece of cheese about you, now? No? Well, many's the long night I've dreamed of cheese-toasted, mostly - and woke up again, and here I were.”

But there might be another reference to the idiomatic “*Big Cheese*” (an important person). And something else: the Captain comes from the far East, Norwegian “*øst*”, quite similar to “*ost*” (Norwegian “*cheese*”). As for Portuguese “**perus**” (turkeys) that might hint at a “*thanksgiving food*”, which the Captain doesn't seem to appreciate (to hell with them : **let the dobblins roast perus**) – not for the moment, at least. At any rate one might ask why the Portuguese word? It is possible that its homophony with “*Paris*” hints at the famous fire at *Bazaar the la Charité*, in Paris, 1897.

[A novel attraction at this Bazaar was a room where the new spectacle of the time could be admired, moving images projected by the Lumière brothers' technology. On the afternoon of 4 May, the second of the planned four days of the bazaar, the projectionist's equipment (using a system of ether and oxygen rather than electricity) caught fire. The resulting blaze, and the panic of the crowd, claimed the lives of 126 people, mostly aristocratic women. Over 200 people were additionally injured from the

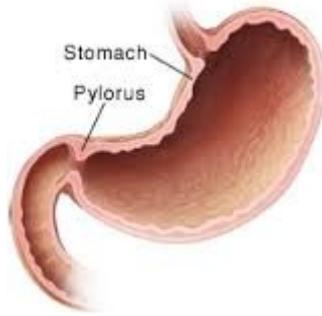
fire. The disaster was reported nationally and internationally.]

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



Joyce being fond of the new technology, it's possible that this tragic event did strike his imagination. And we might even find the Lumière's brothers in “dobblins” (double → the two “evil” brothers, bringers of light “*lumière*”, just like “*Lucifer*”). The reference to the French city are underlined by “Dennis”, namely Saint Denis, patron saint of Paris – often confused with *Dyonisus the Aeropagite*, “burned alive” (roasted) in Athens.

But another question concerns “**jantar**” (dinner). Again one might ask why Portuguese? It's possible that the Captain, in his quite approximate English, meant “*gent / gentleman*”. But the word may hint as well at “*janitor*”, that is not only “*porter*” (and we are in Porter's inn, aren't we?), but also the anatomical “*pylorus*”, the region of the stomach that connects to the duodenum – thus something dealing with food and digestion.



317.1: or a stinger, he sagd, t. d., on a doroughbread ken-
317.2: nedy's for Patriki San Saki

But, if there's no cheese at hand, a slice of native, pure (**doroughbread**: thoroughbred) Kennedy's bread and a drink, no matter how “*stingy*” would do for a nobleman (Patrician : **Patriki**), come to Ireland like St Patrick, who is thirsty indeed, without (French “*sans*”) beverage (*sakè*). McHugh tells us that “**stinger**” is “*whiskey and soda*”; but, as far as I know it is a cocktail, mix of brandy and white “*creme de menthe*” liqueur, particularly appreciated during prohibition.



Of course “**stinger**” could be a *stinging* liquor. As for “**saki**” one might ask why not a simple “*saké*”. That may hint at a far-fetched English writer *Saki*, in fact *Hector Hugh Munro* – and if we read Hugh Munro as “*humour*” we may connect it to the above met “**posthumour**”, underlining the fact that the Captain is not in a good mood (without humour), being *sans saké*. The McHugh's suggested “*stingray*”



is somewhat dubious, since that kind of fish on a slice of bread would hardly be fit, but it's possible that it anticipate another amusing fish we are going to meet within a few lines.

317.2: on svo fro or my old relogion's out

317.3: of tiempor

And the Captain asks that his food and drinks be served on the spot (*one-two-three : on svo fro*). Again approximate language. I would not consider the Icelandic or Norwegian words, although Google translates Icelandic “*og svo fro*” into Italian as “*avanti e indietro*” (forwards and backwards), thus English “*to and fro*”, which would fit the context, underscoring the Captain's wish that the waiter move his ass. He has in fact no time to waste (**my old relogion's out of tiempor**), his old watch (*relogio*) doesn't tell the exact time, it is not tuned with the present time, out of tune and out of temper, in a world in which, as we say in Italy, “*non c'è più religione*” (there is no more religion), an idiomatic form to say, citing the Danish Hamlet, that “*the time is out of joint*”.

317.3: and when I'm soured to the tippie you can sink me

317.4: lead, he sagd,

And he asks to be filled with food and drinks (**to the tippie**) until he gets nauseated (**soured**) by it; and only then they can throw him (**sink**) in the

sea, like a lead plummet and declare him dead (**lead**); but that would hardly happen, since he is like Tim Finnegan, whose resurrection lines he implicitly cites: “*Souls to the devil, did ye think I'm dead?*”

317.4: and, if I get can, sagd he, a pusspull of tomtar-

317.5: tarum. Thirst because homing hand give.

But there is another wish he'd like to fulfil: a good draught (**pusspull**) of a puzzling “**tomtartarum**”. “**pusspull**” seems relatively easy to make out: it's the “*pussful*” we find in Ulysses (*Scylla and Charybdis*):

“...the way we to have our tongues out a yard long like the drouthy clerics do be fainting for a pussful.”

It is the mouth (Gaelic “**pus**”) sucking (**pull**) the liquor. But what about “**tomtartarum**”? It is obviously a compound “**tom**” + “**tartarum**”. Now **tartarum** is Hades, the infernal region; and “**tom**” is Norwegian “*empty*”. An *empty tartarum* could hint at the energy of the sucking pull. But **Tartarum** is a sort of “*crater*” (pit, hollow); and Greek “*krater*” is a large vase used to mix drinks



thus we get an “*empty krater*”. All this, though, does not explain the nature of the drink. So let's suppose that “**tom**” is “*tommy*” (soldier). Let's mix that word with the “**rum**” of the “*krater*” (rum being the most common drink of sailors) and “**tomtartarum**” equals “*a vast infernal (Hades) vase of*

rum beverage for soldier-sailors". He needs that "**pusspull**", because he is thirsty. But his sentence "**Thirst because homing hand give**" has a two-way *pidginesque* structure. A left-right direction: he is **thirsty** because he has made a long voyage for **coming home**, so, please, give him a hand, help him. A right-left direction (since he is coming from the far East) : **give hand** (help) the **homecoming** one because he is **thirsty**.

317.5 :Allkey dallkey, sayd

317.6: the shop's housebound, for he was as deep as the north star (and

317.7: could tolk sealer's solder into tankar's tolder) as might have sayd

317.8: every man to his beast,

The ship's husband, who is a sedentary (**housebound**) member of the inn (**shop**), and a knowledgeable man, a man profound (**deep**) and enlightening like the most brilliant star of the Dipper (**north star**), that directs the sailors' routes; and who is in a position to understand what the Captain has just asked: the sailor-soldier's (**sealer's solder**) beverage and the **tankard** it should be poured into; as an interpreter (Norwegian **tolk**), he can translate the Captain's wish and let it pass into the head (Norwegian "*tanker*": thoughts) of the publican (Norwegian "**tolder**"), no matter how "bumpkin" (Italian "*tanghero*") he is. So he tells the Captain everything is going to be OK (**Allkey dallkey** : okey dokey). In fact he has the *master key* (**Allkey**) for every solution. As for "**dallkey**" we know that *Dalkey* is a suburb of Dublin founded by the Vikings. And Old Norse "*dall/dallr*" means "*luminous, shining*": thus **dallkey** is a sort of "*O luminous Viking!*". The ship's husband addresses the Captain with the same affability a man has towards his pet (**his beast**), or the same servility an inferior has in front of a superior (*his best*), asking no questions and making no rash judgements (*every man to his taste*).

317.8: and a treat for the trading scow, my cater

317.9: million falls to you and crop feed a stall ! Afram.

Here we meet a "**scow**" sailing on troubled waters. Probably "**a treat for the trading scow**" is just an invitation to the negligent publican to offer some delight (**treat**) to the captain of the merchant ship (**trading scow**: a glorious vessel turned into a flat-bottomed merchant boat); and he thanks the publican not with the usual "hundred thousand welcomes" (Irish *céad míle fáilte*), but with no less than *four* millions (**cater million**) of them, which seems indeed quite a reward (**crop feed**) for a stableman (**stall**).

[A side hint: “*The Four Million*” is a collection of short stories by O. Henry, pen name of William Sydney PORTER! Isn't that quite a coincidence?]

So the publican (Norwegian “**tolder**” - macaronic English “*who has been told*”) would better move (Icelandic **áfram**: onwards).

317.9 : And he got and

317.10: gave the ekspedient for Hombreyhambrey wilcomer what's the

317.11: good word. He made the sign on the feaster. Cloth be laid ! And

317.12: a disk of osturs for the swanker!

Who is “**he**”? The ship's husband or the publican (not Porter, of course, but the one in his tale)? Apparently these lines could refer to either one or the other. The crux is “**he got**”. If the previous lines had been addressed by the ship's husband to the servant, this one seems to have “**got**” the message and “*gets*” ready to serve (Landsmaal *ekspedere*) *speedily* the hungry (Spanish “**hambre**” : hunger) man (Spanish “**hombre**”) who is **willing** to eat (Spanish “**comer**”), giving him, as welcome (**wilcomer** : German “*willkommen*”), his friendly greeting (**what's the good word**). But I am not convinced, since that would give the servant too much an importance in the economy of the scene: he is in fact a minor character. The dramatic confrontation (within Porter's tale) is the one between the ship's husband and the Captain. So I'd hypothesize that “**he**” is the ship's husband. The problem is that “**he got**” does not make much sense. He got “*what*”? There's something missing. Unless we intend “get” as the informal intransitive “to leave”: in our case “**he got going**”. But I'd say that's too weak an hypothesis. “*He got up*” would be more to the point; but one legitimately asks: “Where's *up*?”. The implicit goliardic reply being: “*Up yours!*” I don't know whether Joyce would use such mean “*expedients*”: but that would fit the context, with a (next to come, just wait) tangible clue. So, let's suppose “**he**” is the ship's husband. He starts moving (**he got** [up]) and shows the Captain what means (*expedient* : **ekspedient**) he must use to be served (Landsmaal *ekspedere*) *speedily*, since he is a hungry (Spanish “**hambre**” : hunger) man (Spanish “**hombre**”) who is **willing** to eat (Spanish “**comer**”); and how to be welcomed (**wilcomer** : German “*willkommen*”) in a friendly manner (**what's the good word**). Now the means to that end is a “password” (**the good word**), which seems to be “**the sign on the feaster**”, with a lot (O dear, O dear!) of multiple meanings. It is a menacing “*fist*” :



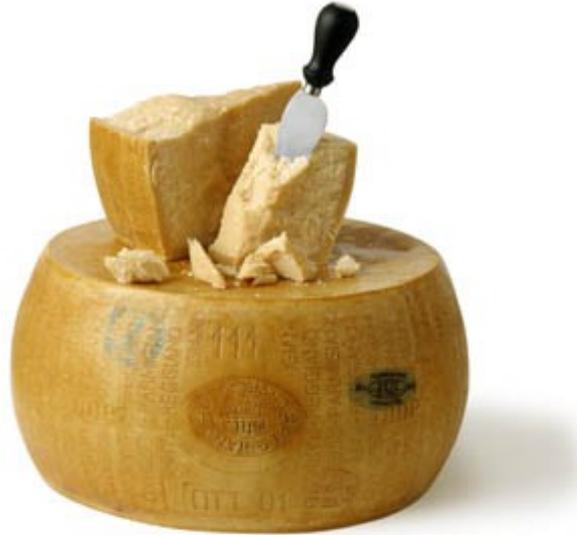
“*Either you serve me or I'll punch you!*” (And a possible pun with a “*punch*” : may be a “*tarta-rum punch*”). But in fact it is a “**feaster**”, a festive, peaceful (*Easter*) welcome to the festive “eastern” guest. We should mark, though, that it is not a “*sign of*”, but “**a sign on**”. Could that sign be “*the finger*” (on the fist) we have been just talking about?



At any rate the ship's husband commands that the table be set and that food be served to the hungry one (**swanker** : Icelandic “*svangur*”) until his belly becomes like that of a pregnant woman (Norwegian “*svanger*” : German “*schwanger*” : pregnant). With a sarcastic hint at the Captain's “*swanky*” attitude.

The food itself is ambiguous. It is the “*cheese*” (**osturs**: Icelandic “*ostur*” :

cheese) the Captain asked, in its “round form” (**disk**)



but it is also a dish (**disk**) of oysters. It's possible that the ship's husband is again misunderstanding (or feigns misunderstanding) and commands to serve him the wrong dish. That's an echo of the first “misunderstanding”, when the ship's husband interpreted the Captain's “suit” (courting) as a “garment”.

317.12: Allahballah!

He invites the servant to speed up. “*To the Ball!*” But this is a different “*ball*” from the one we met in 306.21 (**Allapalla**). If that was a necromantic dance in the moonlight, this one is a *heavenly ball*, the dance of **Allah**. “*balla*” is Italian for “*s/he dances*”, thus “*Allah is dancing!*”. (By the way: “*balla*” is also Italian slang for “*lie / false statement*”.)

317.12: He was the care-

317.13: lessest man I ever see but he sure had the most sand.

This is interesting because it seems to be a comment from the narrator, Porter, who, we are entitled to believe, did know the ship's husband. Was he himself a spectator of the scene? That would justify his role of narrator. So Porter says that the ship's husband, no matter how professionally inaccurate or shallow (**carelessest**), was a very determined and untiring fellow (**he sure had the most sand**). But perhaps the matter is even subtler. Now Porter/HCE is an avatar of the Norwegian Captain (that in fact seems

to be the firm belief of the clients who keep going with their provocations all the chapter long); thus Porter's comment is a sort of auto-ironical acknowledgement of the shrewdness of the ship's husband; that son of a gun who, feigning servility, did in fact bugger him. Probably because, being Norwegian, he did not fully understand the other's language.

317. 13: One fish-

317.14: ball with fixings!

The ship's husband orders “**One fish- ball with fixings**”. To have an idea of what that is it wouldn't be bad to watch this short movie

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=li0qPwn4U8Y>

which is a modernized version (*meat-ball* instead of *fish-ball*) of George Martin Lane's “*The Lone Fish Ball*” (with possible connections to the Kennedy's bread of 317.2). That would abase the Captain to the role of the penniless “*little man*” of Lane's song. But fish-ball hints also at an amusing 19th-century American pasticcio opera “*Il pesceballo*” (Italian “Fish Ball” or “The Ball of the Fish”)

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

[Now, this is indeed far-fetched, but I can't help it! The “pasticcio” opera hints at Italian “*pasticcio*” (pie), which is also an idiomatic form of “*a kettle of fish*” (the one we found in 316.20 “**cattle of fish**”). But a synonym of gastronomic “pasticcio” is Italian “*timballo*” (pie, hash, patty). Now in “timballo” we find “tim + ballo”; and since “ballo” is “dance” we get “*Tim's dance*”. Isn't that another funny coincidence?]

317.14: For a dan of a ven of a fin of a son of a gun of

317.15: a gambolier.

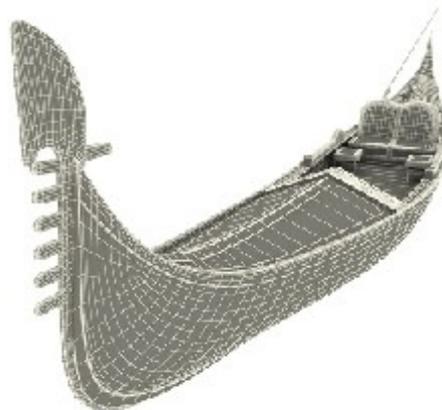
Here the ship's husband jocularly reaches its climax. And here we must engage in a long excursus. This expression points to Charles Ive's song “*A son of a gambolier*”.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ow1dznt-RrU>

Gambolier being “a worthless individual given to carousing, gambling, and general moral depravity”. But “**gombolier**” hints also at “*gondolier*”, thus the wild, unrestrained “Viking” turned into a modest “rower”,



the fearful “*long ship*” into a gentle “*gondola*”.



But this is an anticipation. Let's try to parse each component. “**dan**” could hint at “*Danish*” (aka Scandinavian), Dan being “*the name of one or more legendary kings of the Danes in medieval Scandinavian texts – WP*”. And of course a “*damn*” wouldn't be so off track. “**ven**” is both Norwegian (*venn*) and Danish (*ven*) as well for “*friend*”. Thus “*a damn Danish friend*”. “**fin**” hints at “Finn”, meaning “*white, fair-headed*”, thus a blond Irishman, or perhaps a “not yet full” (last “n” missing) Irishman. Now his “whiteness” or his blond hair is the opposite, or the complement, of “**dan of a ven**”, in which we detect “*Donovan*” (Gaelic: dark, brown-haired

chieftain). Thus we get: “*A damn, dark (evil), brown-haired Danish warrior, friend of a candid (white), fair-headed Irishman*”. (An evident misplacement of colours!). But “fin” is also the “*membranous appendage extending from the body of a fish*”; and, in nautical terminology: “*a blade projecting under water from the hull of a vessel to give it stability*”. Now our “**fin**” is linked to our “**son of a gun**”, pointing thus to the “genealogical” aspect. But whereas a genealogical tree has “*branches*”, since we are dealing with a sailor, the *family tree* becomes a *family fish* with “*fins*” instead of “branches”. In fact “**son of a gun**” is a further hint at the pirate *Ben Gunn* (the cheese-eater : was this idiomatic word already in use in Joyce's times?), since Hebrew “*ben*” means “*son of*”. For what concerns the “**gambolier**” - we have already touched upon him. In conclusion: “*A damn (dan), dark (evil), brown-haired Danish (dan) warrior (donovan), friend (ven) of a candid (white), fair-headed Irishman (fin), descendant of (son of) a wild, depraved pirate (gun-n), turned into a worthless cheese-eater, the old galley slave who ended his career in rowing harmless gondolas (gambolier)*”. The apposition of the opposites black and white, brown and fair, is a possible description of the morphing “*Irishization*” of the Norwegian Captain.

317.15: Ekspedient, sayd he, sonnur mine, Shackleton Sul-

317.16: ten! Opvarts and at ham, or this ogry Osler will oxmaul us all,

317.17: sayd he, like one familiar to the house,

And the ship's husband speeds up (**Ekspedient**) the publican (**Ekspedient**), calling him “my son” (**sonnur mine** : Icelandic “*sonur minn*”), being a virtual member of the publican's family (**like one familiar to the house**). But “**sonnur**” hints at Italian “*sonno*” (sleep); so he speeds up his “*sleepy, negligent son*”. “**Shackleton Sulten**” seems in fact a sarcastic reference to Sackerson, the well known servant, who is acting coldly, like the Antarctic explorer *Ernst Henry Shackleton*; who moves slowly like a convict fettered by *shackles*; who, instead of serving, would he himself be waited upon, like a Muslim “*sultan*”. But I am of the opinion that “**Shackleton Sulten**” refers also to the Captain, who, like Ernst Henry Shackleton, has sailed the freezing seas

312.06 that seven sailend sonnenrounders was he breastbare to the brina-

312.07 bath, where bottoms out has fathoms full, fram Franz José

312.08 Land til Cabo Thormendoso

A sailor who is, sarcastically, a hungry (Norwegian and Danish “*sulten*”) sultan. So the ship's husband commands the servant (Danish “*opvarte*” : lackey) to get up (upwards : **Opvarts**) and do his job (Danish “*opvarte*” : to serve). He should wait on *him*, the Captain; in fact “**ham**”: probably because of his buttocks, his “*wide arse*”, but also with a possible allusion to “*Ham*”, the youngest son of Noah, the son who saw his father's nakedness and, because of that, was cursed : “*And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren - (Genesis, 9:25)*”. A possible side hint: Ham → Canaan → Cana : the wedding banquet and water turned into wine! Thus the servant is commanded to wait promptly upon the cursed man, that angry ogre (**ogry**), coming from Norway (**Osler** → Oslo) who would make a pulp of them all (**oxmaul** → a hecatomb: a sacrifice of 100 oxen), should he not be served as he expects.

317.17: while Waldemar was

317.18: heeling it and Maldemaer was toeing it, soe syg he was walking

317.19: from the bowl at his food and the meer crank he was waiting for

317.20: the tow of his turn.

The Captain is indeed very impatient. He is referred to as “**Waldemar**”, who hints at “*Valdemar*”, the name of many Scandinavian kings, its meaning being “*renowned ruler*”, just like the “*Roall*” we found in **315.01**, the “**butcheler artsed out of Cullege Trainity**”. But Valdemar is also the main character of E. A. Poe's short story “*The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar*”, in which that same Valdemar, doomed to die of tuberculosis, asks a friend of his, a mesmerizer, to put him in a suspended hypnotic state at the moment of death, and insists that he hurry, since he “*deferred it for too long*” (like the negligent waiter). The Captain is impatient as a “*wild mare*”; and “*mare*” being Italian “*sea*” he looks like a tempestuous, roaring ocean. And he is nauseated (**Maldemaer** : French “*mal de mer*” → seasickness) indeed. His impatience is manifested by the rhythmic stamping of his foot, **heeling it** and **toeing it**. That is a burlesque allusion to a “*polka piquée*” or “*cake polka*”:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7H1tLJi8rQ>

“*cake*” fitting indeed the eating context! So we see the nauseous (**soe syg** → Danish søsyg: seasick) Captain, who, like a football player, hits the floor first with his “*toe*” (the ball of his foot : **the bowl at his food**);



perhaps also kicking away a possible spitting **bowl**; and then, in his German aspect (**meer crank** → *sea sick*), with his “heel”: namely the round sphere on which one may spin (**the tow of his turn**),



waiting for **his turn** to lead (**tow**) the dance. *Danemark* and *Germany* being of course the “**toe**” (North) and the “**heel**” (South).



Just a curio: there is a “*Waldemar polka*” for pianoforte, composed by a certain *Miss A. Eliot*, active 1830-40. Did Joyce know it?

317.20: Till they plied him behaste on the fare. Say

317.21: wehrn!

But it seems that at the end the Captain has his insistent requests (**behaste** : *behest*) fulfilled: perhaps too generously! **They** (ship's husband and publican) provide him (**plied**) a **fare** more ample than the eater's needs. And so quickly (*in haste*) that he can hardly gulp down a dish before the

next one arrives and has to hasten like hell. He struggles (**wehrn** : German “*wehren*”), trying to defend (*wehren*) himself, while they pour down his throat a river of food (**Say wehrn** → *Severn river* : the longest one of the United Kingdom) and ask sarcastically that he say when it's enough! It brings back to memory the horrible death of Marcus Licinius Crassus: the Parthians, whom he had tried to subdue, according to the legend, killed him pouring molten gold (a symbol of his greed) into his throat.



Do we remember what the Captain said in 317.3-4?

“and when I'm soured to the tipple you can sink me lead.”

Lead instead of *gold*!

O, what a fall was there, my countrymen!
Then I, and you, and all of us fell down.

