

FW 319.18-36 The Captain's Kersses

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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Commenting FW 319.16-17,

**319.16: Which both did. Prompt. Eh, chrystal holder? Save Ampster-
319.17: dampster that had rheumaniscences in his netherlumbs.**

I wrote:

[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**”.]

The innkeeper, complying to his client's requests, resumes his narrative. What he describes is a sort of silent fight of gazes between the Captain and the ship's husband. Silent because, instead of “*talking*”, the two interlocutors “*think*”. But their piercing looks are most eloquent.

**319.18: -- By the drope in his groin, Ali Slupa, thinks the cappon,
319.19: plumbing his liners, we were heretofore.**

Porter points first his attention to the Captain, using figuratively the same words the “**ersewild aleconner**” just uttered in his mocking toast. Thus the Captain is “**the cappon**”, who is definitely “*pissed off*”, remembering his past misadventures with the tailor (**rheumaniscences in his netherlumbs**).

“**the drope in his groin**” is a variant of “pissed off”, hinting at Italian “*mi cascano le palle*” (my balls are dropping), or “*scoglionato*” (with ripped off balls).

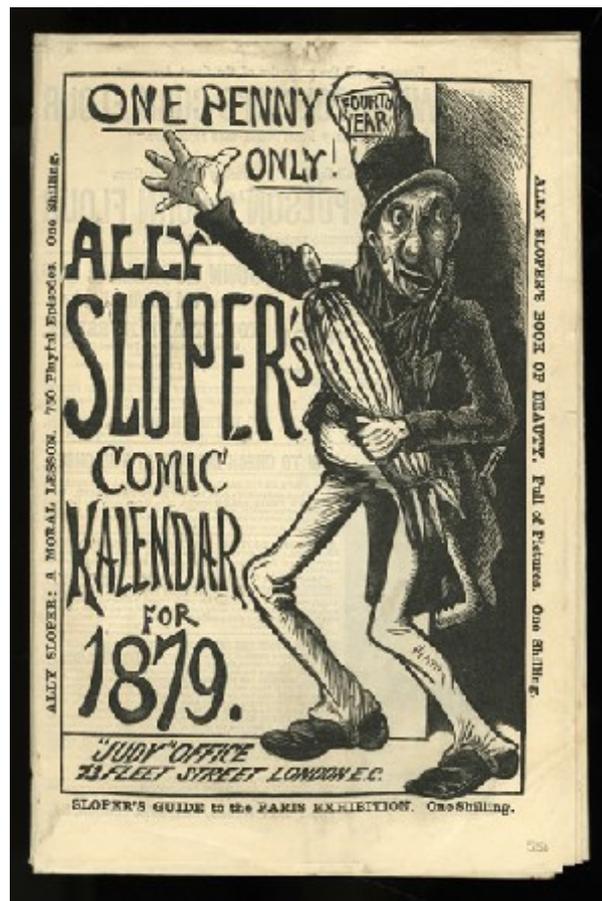
“**Ali Slupa**” is indeed a tangle of criss-crossing meanings. I am of the opinion that it is an epithet of the ship's husband. We find in fact a “*sloop*” (a single-masted sailing boat),



a “*slooper*” (“sloopers” were descendents of the first Norwegians who sailed from Norway to the United States in 1825). “slooper” comes from French “*chaloupe*” (lifeboat) and “*Hèle la chaloupe*” (**Ali Slupa**) means “Call out the lifeboat!”

But there is an amount of other nautical terms: “**drope**” (drop anchor); “**groin**” (a sturdy structure of large stones, timbers or cement built perpendicular to a beach to reduce erosion); “**plumbing**” (plumb: a weight on the end of a long **line**, used by sailors to determine the depth of water); “**liners**” (commercial ships). Thus all terms pointing to “seamanship” (ship's husbandry). Then there are physical and psychological traits.

“**Ali**” is tricky. The reference to “*Alley Sloper*”, the character of Victorian comics is the most evident.



[*Alexander "Ally" Sloper is one of the earliest fictional comic strip characters. Red-nosed and blustery, an archetypal lazy schemer often found "sloping" through alleys to avoid his landlord and other creditors. WP*]

“*lupa*” is Spanish for “*magnifying glass*” and since we find also an “*Alice*” (*Alis-lupa*), we might suppose a “*peeping-tom*” looking at young girls through a “*magnifying glass*” (perhaps binoculars); girls he puts his eyes on in order to have them ready for possible suitors (being basically a pander). “*lupa*” is also Italian for “*she-wolf*”. Think that “*Alis*” is a young

girl, put near her a “wolf” and we get a “*Little Red Riding Hood*”. True it is a *he-wolf*, but he disguises himself as LRRH's “granny”! A cunning morphing: *pander* → *panther* → *she-wolf*. Pointing to the ship's husband's as a “*double dealer*” : a term we'll meet very soon.

“*Ali*” as cousin, son-in-law and Muhammad's first successor does not seem to make much sense, unless in an ironic acceptance. Being his successor *Ali* is the “second”, so he must show respect and not play the smartass.

There might be another far-fetched, but amusing hint. We talked about French “*chaloupe*”, Italian “*scialuppa*” which can morph into “*scialappa*” (*jalap*: a potent purgative). Thus a shitty fellow.

And let us not forget that “*slops*” are “articles of clothing and bedding issued or sold to sailors”.



[*The term "slops" is the old 16th century word for the fashion of wide, puffy trousers with a knee band that came into style in the late 16th century. They were popular with seamen because they were easy to move in.]*

“**plumbing his liners**” is also tricky, since at face value it does not seem to make much sense. But if in “**liners**” we sort out “*lines*” the matter assumes

quite a different aspect. That may in fact allude to the Captain who weighs his “**lines**”, giving each word the solidity of “*lead*” (**plumb**). “Leaden” words that hit like “cannon balls”. In Italian “*impiombare*” (“*piombo*” : lead, plumb) may be used figuratively as “*to riddle with shot*”.

“**we were heretofore**” seems an obvious reference to an already rehearsed scene: same set, same characters. In other words, with his eloquent looks, the Captain is telling the ship's husband that he is a shitty, sloppy, nosy, vaguely pedophile lazy schemer who works in cahoots with the “*kerssed*” tailor. Translated into script:

CAPTAIN: (*pissed off, addressing the ship's husband with words heavy like lead weights*) Hey, Ali Slupa, don't forget that I know you and your tricks.

319.20: -- And be the coop of his gobbos, Reacher the Thaurd, thinks

319.21: your girth fatter, apopo of his buckseasilers, but where's Horace's

319.22: courtin troopers?

The ship's husband's reply mirrors syntactically the Captain's sentence. He contemplates the sailor's appearance (**the coop of his gobbos** → the cut of his jib : “jib” is a triangular sail). “**gobbo**” is Italian “*hunchback*”; “**coop**” hints at French “*coupe*” (“cut” in clothing as “*coupe droite*” : straight cut). Thus he gives a disconsolate, disgusted look at the Captain's hump and, first thing, he wants to make clear what are the hierarchies. The Captain called him “*second*” (Ali, Muhammad's successor); but he, a baser image of the hunchbacked Richard the Third, has in fact reached (**Reacher**) only the third position (**Thaurd**), thus he'd better accept the fact that he is only a piece of shit (**Thaurd** → turd).

“**Thaurd**” shows a not so hidden reference to Mount Thawr, where Muhammad hid, escaping from his persecutors. But “*Thawr*” means “*bull*”, thus a sarcastic allusion to the Captain's alleged sexual vigour (in resonance with the “**bully bluedomer**” of 319.6). Then the ship's husband underlines the fact that he is hierarchically superior, since he is the sailor's “godfather” (**your girth fatter**), having acted as his sponsor. “**your**” is indeed interesting from a theatrical perspective. Gazing silently the Captain, the ship's husband seems to say, referring to himself in the third person: “*I can read your defamatory thoughts, but remember that I am your godfather and you must show me respect!*” Adding sarcastically, perhaps making fun

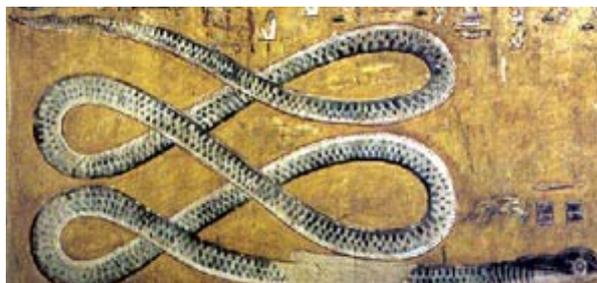
of the other's "leaden words": "*You have put on quite a belly (your girth fatter).*" Then he thinks it's time to get to the core and get his hands dirty (apopo → "popò" Italian "poo"), talking about (*apropos*) the suit.

In "**buckseailers**" we find in fact Norwegian "*bukse*" (trousers) and "*seiler*" (sailor): thus "*sea sailor's trousers*", or "*slops*". Of course we may find also a sarcastic "buck of the sea" (a bull debased to an ovine). Thus it's time to talk openly of those shitty trousers, which are both "his" (the sailor's) and "his" (the ship's husband's), who in fact is responsible for them, since he had been the one who caused the deal be struck between tailor and sailor. So he breaks the silence and gives vocal shape to his thoughts, asking the sailor where the trousers (**troopers**) are.

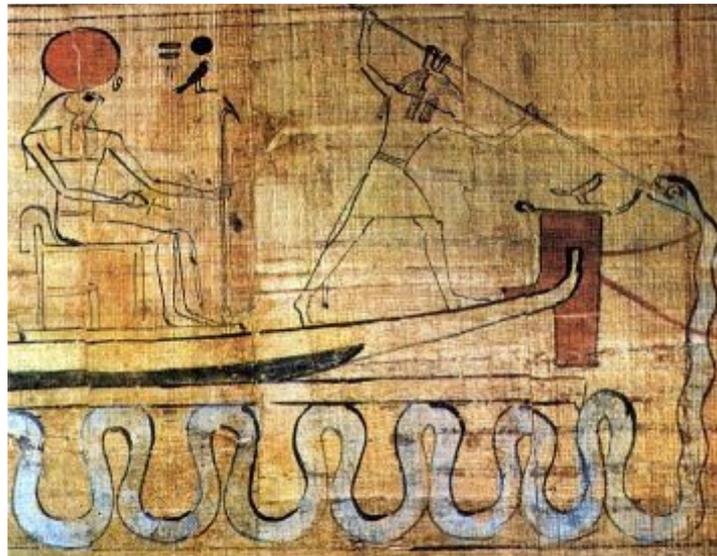
"**troopers**" because they are "*soldierly*"; "**courtin**" because they are part of a "*suit*"; or maybe, being "*slops*", they are short : French "*court*", "**Horace's**" because they recall "**Ahorror**" of 311.25: that's how the ship's husband called the tailor in the first encounter. It's possible that Horace hints at the Roman poet and, in this case, at the beginning of his "*Ars Poetica*", which describes the "horror" resulting by an artist's ineptitude:

*If a painter had chosen to set a human head
On a horse's neck, covered a melding of limbs,
Everywhere, with multi-coloured plumage, so
That what was a lovely woman, at the top,
Ended repulsively in the tail of a black fish:
Asked to a viewing, could you stifle laughter, my friends?
[A. S. Kline's translation]*

The chaotic image is underlined by a possible Egyptian "*Apep*"(**apopo**)



(the huge serpent of primordial Chaos), which could hint at the Captain's deformity. McHugh suggests that “Horace” might be the falcon god “Horus”, who, he says, “fought with Apophis”. That would be a hilarious transposition: the tailor-poet (Horace) trying to give shape to the chaotic forms of the hunchbacked Captain (**apopo**). The fact is that it is not Horus, but Seth, who fights with Apophis.



That's quite amusing: did Joyce intend the pun, but confused the characters? Or is it McHugh's suggestion off track? Let's say that that adds to the chaos.

319.23: -- I put hem behind the oasthouse, sagd Pukkelsen, tuning
319.24: wound on the teller, appeased to the cue,

And the Captain, grabbing the cue, like a most perfect actor on a stage, uses the occasion to unleash all his grudge against the tailor. He is “**Pukkelsen**”, proud of his name and his “*hump*”. He retorts (**tuning wound** → turning around → Latin “*retorquere*” : twist back) his interlocutor's (**teller**) insinuations , attacking the tailor (**teller**) and rubbing salt into the wound (**tuning wound** → turning with the fingers, like one tunes the dial of a radio). It's the Italian “*mettere il dito nella piaga*” (to put the finger into the wound).

“**appeased to the cue**” is somewhat tricky. As I mentioned above it is the signal that prompts Pukkelsen's tirade (just like in logic notation : *if p then q*), and he is indeed both “*pleased*” and “**appeased**” , having finally his chance to speak. But “**appeased**” may hint at Italian “*appeso*” (hung); as he

were waiting impatiently for his “**cue**”. But “cue” may also be a “*cue ball*” (Italian “*pallino*”). “*Avere il pallino in mano*” (to have the cue ball in one's hand) is idiomatic for “*to run the game*”, which is exactly what the Captain is going to do. And if we read “cue” as “*tail*” (**its tag tucked. Up.** - 315.26) we have two more hints. The Italian “*avere la coda di paglia*” (to have a straw tail) : touchy, ready to catch fire (because of a guilty conscience). In fact a synonym of “*appeso*” (hung) is “*appiccato*” and “*appiccare il fuoco*” is “*to light the fire*”. And since the Captain is a “wild beast” there might be a reference to the idiomatic “*to get hold of a tiger by the tail*”: a very dangerous situation. Pukkelsen: a real “*Prometheus unbound*”! The “fire” image is in fact underscored by the “**oasthouse**” behind which he threw the trousers.

319.24: that double dyode

319.25: dealered, and he's wallowing awash swill of the Tarra water.

So Pukkelsen gives vent to his “*kerssing*” tirade. He calls the tailor (**dealered**) a hypocritical double-dealer (**double dyode dealered**). One might ask why “**dyode**”. Well, a “diod” is “an electronic device that restricts current flow chiefly to one direction.” Being “double” it may run the opposite direction as well, thus an opportunist “weathercock”. But “**double dyode**” may hint also at “*four-eyed*” (doubled eyed : double two eyes and you get a four-eyed), that is the informal “*wearing eyeglasses*”. In our case it would allude to the tailor's faulty view, responsible of his incompetence. There might even be a reference to an eloquent image in Dante's *Inferno*, Canto 15:

*e sì ver' noi aguzzavan le ciglia
come 'l vecchio sartor fa ne la cruna.*

*And so towards us sharpened they their brows
As an old tailor at the needle's eye.*

One further possibility: the many “*Ds*” and the explicit “*dio*” (Italian “god”) of “**dyode**”, point to a lot of blasphemous references. The “*Ds*” morph in fact into “*Dis*”, the Roman god of the underworld; by consequence the **D**-evil.

Pukkelsen calls the tailor a drunkard and he is sure (or he wishes) that at

that moment he must have drowned himself (**awash**) in an ocean of booze, which he drinks (**he's wallowing**) greedily (**swill**).

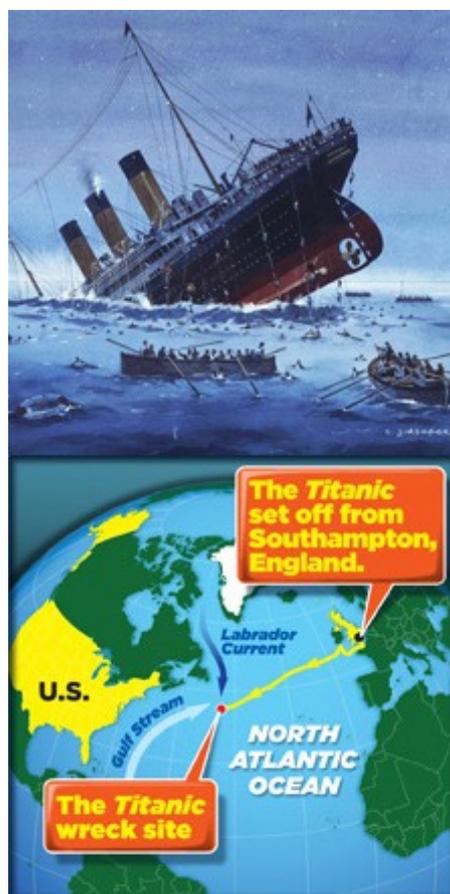
“**Tarra water**” points to “*tar water*” which Berkeley valued as medicine. But “*Tara*” being the ancient capital of Ireland, “*tara water*” may legitimately be interpreted as “*whiskey*”. “**Tarra**” hints at “*Terra*” (Earth), thus “*tarra water*” is the ocean. In conclusion: an ocean of whiskey which the tailor takes as a medicine.

319.25: And

319.26: it marinned down his gargantast trombsathletic like the marousers of

319.27: the gulpstroom.

In “**gargantast trombsathletic**” we find the Rabelasian giant “*Gargantua*”, the Spanish “*garganta*” (throat); the Italian “*tromba*” (trumpet and elephant's trunk); and also Spanish “*tromba*” (hurricane). And of course “**transatlantic**” (**trombsathletic**), in which “**athletic**” hints at the “*vaults*” of the tornado. The oceanic booze has “*tornadoed*” down and “*marinated*” (**marinned**) in his gigantic throat (**gargantast**) and drowned him like the waves (**marousers** → Italian “*marosi*”) of the Gulf Stream, that swallowed (**gulp-stroom**) the transatlantic “*Titanic*” (**gargantast trombsathletic**).

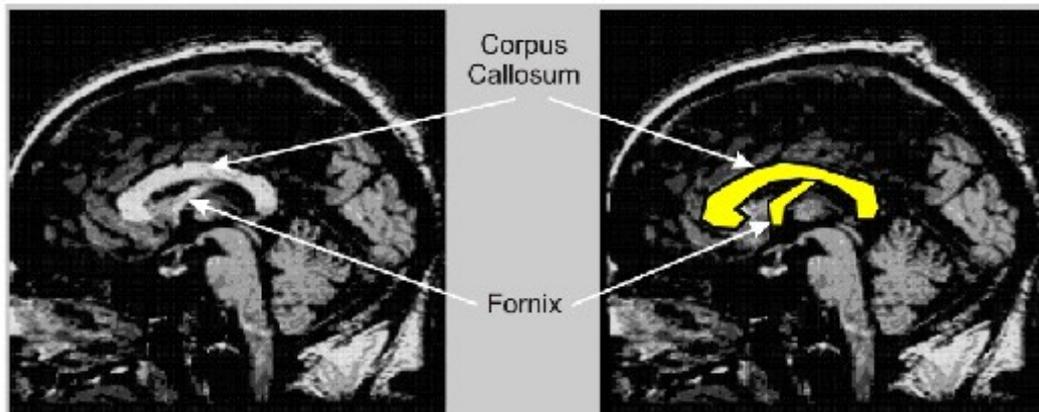


319.27: The kersse of Wolafs on him, shitateyar, he sagd in

319.28: the fornicular, and, at weare or not at weare, I'm sigen no stretcher,

Here the Captain's curses evoke and give shape to the tailor (*kersse*); curses that are a mix of Norwegian words (*Olaf*) and “*Wolof*” language, spoken in Senegal, Gambia and Mauritania: a “black” language.

“*shitateyar*” hints at Japanese “*shitateya*” (tailor); but also at “*shit eater*”. He uses on purpose vulgar terms : “*fornicular*” is the “*vernacular*” of brothels, since Latin “*fornix*” (arch) is linked to strumpets, who were used to meet their clients under arches. But “*fornix*” is also “*brain fornix*” (a bunch of nerve cell fibers protruding from the under surface of the “*corpus callosum*”)



alluding perhaps at the Captain's “*callousness*”. And Italian “*forni*” is the plural of “*forno : kiln*”, in close contact with our “*oasthouse*”. I'd even add a “*funiculà*”, with a further hint to fire.

["*Funiculì, Funiculà*" is a famous Neapolitan song that was written in 1880, with lyrics by journalist Peppino Turco set to music by composer Luigi Denza. It was composed to commemorate the opening of the first funicular cable car on Mount Vesuvius.] WP

The Captain's volcanic fire blows up dramatically. “*at weare or not at weare*”, with its Danish “*at være: to be*” hints obviously at Hamlet's monologue in a quite ironic way. Should the Captain “*wear*” the suit? Or should he destroy it (*not at weare*)? He creates a suspense in his audience. At any rate, believe it (Dutch “*ware*”: true) or not, he is not telling (*sigen* → German “*sagen*”) victorious (German “*siegen*” : to triumph → the

“fornicular arch”) lies (stretcher).

319.29: for I carsed his murhersson goat in trotthurs with them newbuckle-
319.30: noosers behigh in the fire behame in the oasthouse. Hops! sagd he.

The amount of possible allusions is so great that we must parse them separately.

(carsed) is “cast” and “arse”; but also a hint at Latin “arsus” (burned) and at “Carso”, a barren, rocky region.

[*The Karst Plateau (Italian: Carso; Slovene: Kras), also simply known as the Karst, is a limestone plateau region extending across the border of southwestern Slovenia and northeastern Italy. - WP*]

Its reference to Trieste is obvious. And in World War I, the Italian Carso was a huge, tremendous battlefield. A hint at the Captain's “massacre of the clothes”.

“murhersson” is probably the most cryptic term. Now there is a “Murher” which is a parish in County Kerry. I am not Irish, but I don't think that that parish be so important. Thus it could point to the provincial origins of the tailor. We may detect a not so hidden “whore son” (m-urhersson) and a subtle French “mûr”, which is “ripe, mature” and also argot “drunk”. But of course “mur” is also “wall” and “murer” is Norwegian “mason”. Add this to “goat” and we have a “masonic goat”, which may hint at the singular masonic ceremony of “riding the goat” and at “Baphomet”, the Devilish goat, considered by anti-masons as a masonic symbol.



Thus the devilish coat of a drunken, provincial son of an old whore.

In “**trotthers**” we find “*tatters*”, “*trousers*” and “*trotters*” (pigs feet used as food);



and “*trot*” of course. Thus trousers ground to tatters as stamped upon by a herd of trotting pigs (vague hint at the episode of the possessed and the legion of demons that came out of him and went into the pigs : “*and behold, the whole herd rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the waters.*” Matthew 8:32)

In “**newbuckle noosers**” we find references to clothes: “*buckles*”, “*nooses*”, a plethora of useless embellishments put in the suit to mimic exotic attires, like those of ancient Babylonian kings (*Nebuchadnezzar*). “*nooses*” the tailor should use to hang himself.

“**behigh**” hints apparently at “*behind*”, but I am of the opinion that first of all it recalls “*behigh*” (to give in trust; to commit): he entrusts the clothes to the fire (**behigh in the fire**).

“**behame**” seems again a variant of “*behind*”. If we sort out “*ham* → *hams*” that could allude at a kick in the ass. But there might be a reference to “*Hans Sebald Beham*” (1500-1550), a famous German engraver who worked extensively on tiny, highly detailed, engravings, many as small as postage stamps. A possible allusion to the too sophisticated manufacturing of the suit, ill-suited indeed for a sailor.

In conclusion “coat and trousers” hurled in the fire (**Hops!**) end like

“**hops**” in the kiln of an **oasthouse**.

319.31: -- Smoke and coke choke ! lauffed till the tear trickled down a
319.32: thigh the loafers all

The Captain's vehement tirade and his histrionic theatrical ending (**Hops!**), quite similar to that of the Captain of *Commedia dell'Arte*,



raises the hilarious roar (**lauffed**) of the customers, a wild bunch of lazy idlers (**the loafers all**) who laugh (**lauffed**) so hard that the tears stream down their “**thigh**” (they piss themselves laughing).

“**Smoke and coke choke**” is the amused exclamation, but also the scornful comment by the customers on the Captain's speech. And since we are inside *Commedia dell'Arte* we resort to Italian and read it as “*tutto fumo niente arrosto*” (all smoke, no roast → English “*all mouth and no trousers*”, which I think is quite fitting).

“**coke choke**” hint also at Italian “*cacciucco*”, (fish stew)



and at “*cacicco*” as well (*Cacique* : the leader of a tribe, but often considered as one who exercises excessive influence in political matters). Put everything together and we get a smoky, cocky, megalomaniac braggadocio choked by his own fishy stew.

319.32: all but a sheep's whosepants that swished to the

319.33: lord he hadn't and the starer his story was talled to who felt that,

319.34: the fierifornax being thurst on him motophosically, as Omar

319.35: sometime notes, such a satuation, debauchly to be watched for,

319.36: would empty dempty him down to the ground.

The only one who does not laugh is the ship's husband (**sheep's whosepants**), whose “*pants*” are not “*pissed*” but “*sheepish*” and who wishes that the Captain didn't do what he said. “**swished**”, mixed up with his “*sheepish*” attitude, could be a nasty hint at homosexuality; but perhaps it is just a “*stealthy*” wish. That is indeed for him an appalling story that makes him open his eyes wide (**starer**) with consternation. He in fact feels responsible for what has happened and he is afraid that something terrible will fall on him; or, if not such a tragic conclusion, he will certainly be sent, vehemently, to hell. Let me explain.

“**fierifornax**” is a metaphor for “*hell*”; or for the “*bolt*” which is “*metaphorically*” (**motophosically**) thrust (**thurst**) on him. “**phos**” is Greek for “*light*”; its energy is rendered by the physical (**phosically**) action (**moto**). “**thurst**” hints at “*Thur*”, a giant of Old Norse mythology; but in our case he is probably Jove (*thurs-day*), who, as Homer (**Omar**) writes in some passages of his works, is used to send “*lightning bolts*”.



But of course, since we are not in a “metaphysical”, but in a practical “**motophysical**” one, the divine “**fierifornax**” thrust becomes a more prosaic “*Go to hell!*”.

“**satuation**” : that is indeed a situation that is full to the brim (**sated**) and that only a debauched (**debauchly**) audience may merrily look at (**to be watched for**): those same who pissed themselves laughing. It is a “**satuation**” that must be taken under control (**to be watched for**) lest it lead to a tragic end (the one hinted at by the Shakespearean citation from the monologue “*to be or not to be*”). Otherwise he'll meet the fate of Humpty Dumpty (**empty dempty**), his pockets doubly “*empty*” and as if knocked down by the mighty Jack Dempsey.

