

FW 322.35-323.24

COUNTER-OFFENSIVE

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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This section doesn't pose problems for what concerns the general idea. It is an inventory of insults directed to the Captain by Kersse gone berserk, mirroring the sailor's tirade against him. An "I" for an "I".

322.35: -- And so culp me goose, he sazd, szed the ham muncipated of
322.36: the first course, recouring, all cholers and coughs with his beauw
323.1: on the bummell,

This is the preparation, the prologue to the invectives Kersse is going to heap on the Captain. McHugh's suggestion that "culp me goose" is the idiomatic "cook my goose" is legitimate. It is the damage the Captain intended to inflict on Kersse. In fact a sort of "kenning" addressed to the threatening adversary. And "culp" is

also Latin “*culpa*” (fault, sin), so the Captain's accusation against the tailor's lack of skill. “goose” is a little bit more complex. Leaving aside the misleading bird, in our case it is the legitimate “*tailor's smoothing iron*” with a goose-neck handle.



Now, if we morph the goose into a “*duck*” (they are both of the *Anatidae* family) and the duck into a “*duke*” we have the “*Iron Duke*”, Wellington (the Captain's alias), whose “*overgrown milestone*” we have just met in 322.33. And since “goose” is also “*a poke between the buttocks*” and “*culp*” may hint at Italian “*colpire*” (to hit) we get the image of the Wellington's “*phallic*” monument ready to bugger the unfortunate tailor. But Kersse scorns him, with a defiant “*Hit my ass (if you can)!*”; and a more insolent “*Kiss my ass!*”. This needs an elucidation. The context allows us to morph “goose” into a German “*kuss*” (kiss); and to find a French “*cul*” (ass) in “*culp*”. That would give us a questionable “*Ass my Kiss*”. But, since the phrase is “*mirroring*” the sailor's menace, we are entitled to read it backwards; thus a specular “*Kiss my Ass!*”

And the anal allusions trigger the “*ham*” (buttock) which has been “*emancipated*” (liberated) by the already met “**Domnial**” (Daniel O' Connell, the Great Emancipator). But, as we know, “*ham*” is also an “*overacting performer*”, which fits perfectly the image of Kersse (course) in his re-cursing (recoursing); he in fact has been “*enslaved*” (municipated) by the insults he has uttered in his first volley (the first course) and cannot restrain himself from a second more tremendous “*bombast*” against his enemy, “*his beauw on the*

bummell". The ironic reference to the famous dandy "*Beau Brummel*", with his "*collars and cuffs*" (**cholers and coughs**) is quite explicit (and recalls the "*butcheler artsed out of Cullege Trainity*" of **315.01**) The same "*collars and cuffs*" which was the nickname of Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence and Avondale, "*heir presumptive*" to the throne of England; whom, rumours said, was the infamous Jack the Ripper. Quite a revolting figure, an infectious disease, like "*cholera*" (**cholers**), provoking Kersse's disgusted "**coughs**". And he starts calling his adversary every name he can under the sun (Italian "*dirne di tutti i colori*" : tell all the colours → **cholers**). Ready to hit (French "*coup*" → **cou** - thanks Dominique!) that pain in the "*neck*" (French "*cou*" → **cou** - thanks Dominique!) with "*gooses*" on the "*bum*" (**on the bummell**) and "*kicking him around*" (German "*bummel*" : stroll). With a further hint at Italian "*portare in giro*" (lit. to take someone around → to pull someone's leg).

After the prologue begin the real invectives: so ingenious and amusing metaphors that would be a pity not to lend them our ears.

323.1: the bugganeering wanderducken, he sazd, (that

323.2: his pumps may ship awhoyle shandymound of the dussard),

The Captain is a "*buggering buccaneer*", a "vagabond (wander) wild goose (**ducken** → duck → goose)", like "*Van Der Decken*" (**wanderducken**), the captain of the Flying Dutchman. Then a quite contorted curse. There's an apparent nautical image: the pumps of a doomed-to-wrecking ship that draw sand instead of water. But the "**pumps**" may also be the Captain's urinating apparatus, which expels a whole mound of sand, thus huge "*bladder stones*". Then nasty allusions to the Captain's hunch, like that of a camel (the *ship of the desert*); and Italian "*dosso* → *duss-ard*" (bump, hump). There is also a far-fetched invitation to a better sentimental behaviour. From "**dussard**" we may pick "*Dussardier*", a character of Flaubert's "*Sentimental Education*"; and from "**shandymound**"

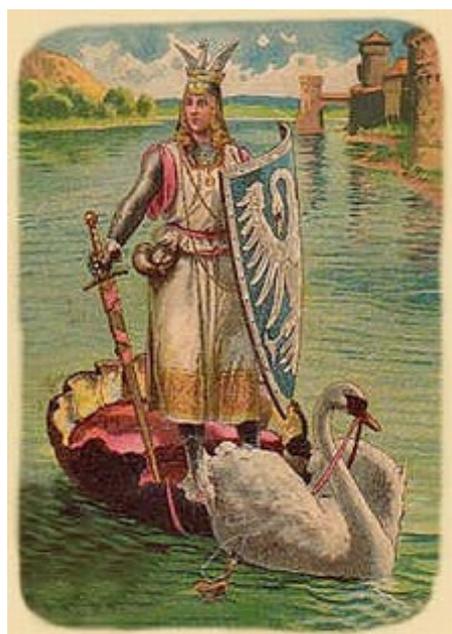
Tristram Shandy by Lawrence Sterne, who was also the author of “*A sentimental Journey*”.

323.2: the

323.3: coarsehair highsaidighsayman, there's nice tugs he looks, (how

323.4: you was, Ship Alouset?) he sazd,

The Captain is nothing but a vulgar (coarse) pirate (coarsehair → corsair), an obscene goat (*coarse hair* → hircus), a tricky (dighsay → dicey) sailor (sayman → sea man) of the high seas, unwilling of making a decision (Italian “*in alto mare*” : on high sea → up in the air), namely to get married; his only aim is to “board” young girls, capture them with his “tugging eyes” (nice tugs he looks) and win them in a “tug-of-war”. “Alouset” is in fact the name of the “Ship” the corsair boards. Besides the obvious reference to “Chapelizod”, with its allusions to the “chapel” (pussy) of Issy (*Izod*), we find also a possible “Alouette” (French “lark”), which gives the name to a popular song “*Alouette, gentille alouette*” (Little skylark, lovely little skylark) that sings about plucking the feathers from a lark: more sexual allusions. But in “Alouset” we can also find an Irish “eala” (swan). Now, a swan “set” as a ship points not so obliquely to Lohengrin



the mysterious rescuer who comes in a swan-drawn boat to defend a damsel; although here the shining knight looks like a “*louse*”, in fact “*a louse T*”, and since “T” is Tristram, a “*lousy*” not “*leise*” (German “*gentle*”) Tristram. Underlined by the lower-case “t”, instead of the upper-case “T”.

But in “*Alouset*” we may also find a biographical allusion, since it is very similar to Venetian and Triestine “*Lucietta/Lucetta*” (pr. *loo-see-eh-tah / loo-seh-tah*), so “*little Lucia*”. A possible side reference to “*the lappel of his size*” of 314.33 (the tailor's daughter).

323.4: the **bloedaxe bloodooth baltxe-**
323.5: **bec,**

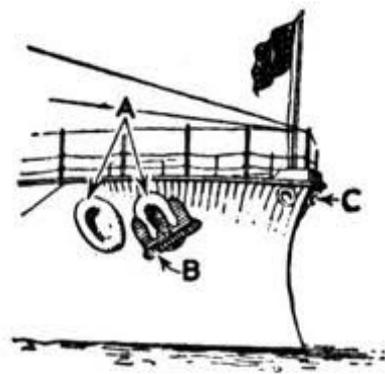
The Captain is a double damn (**bloedaxe bloodooth** → bloody) Norwegian (**bloedaxe** → *Erik Blodöks*: Norwegian king, “Bloodaxe”), a Viking (**bloodooth** → *Harald Bluetooth*, Viking) devil (**baltxe-bec** → Belzebub), sailing boldly in a Baltic “*xebec*” (**baltxe-bec**): small three-masted Mediterranean ship.



323.5: that is crupping into our raw language navel through the
323.6: lumbsmall of his hawsehole, he sazd,

But what he is trying to do is not only to impose his power on a foreign land, or to seduce a maid, but to achieve a social promotion, to elevate himself from a barbarian to a civilized state, though a “*shitty barbarian*” he shall remain. This seems a little hard to explain, but let me try.

We find here three intertwined semantic levels: the “*nautical*”, the “*anal*” and the “*linguistic*” one. Regarding the first we have a “*navel* → Navy, Italian “*nave*” : ship”, we have a “*hawsehole*” (the hole through which a ship's anchor rope is passed)



A, hawse holes; B, anchor in place at one of the hawse holes; C, hawse holes.

and a relative “*hawser*” (a large heavy rope). From the “*anal*” perspective we pick up “*crap*” (*crupping*), a Latin “*lumbus*” (back); “*a small of the back*” (*lumbsmall*); and an explicit “*asshole*” (*hawsehole*). The linguistic view is offered by “*lenguage*”, which we may read as “*English language*”; and by “*lumbsmall*”, in which we find the New Norwegian language: “*Landsmaal*: based on rural dialects”, different from “*Bokmaal*” (Book Language), the other Norwegian tongue. I am of the opinion that the linguistic level constitutes, in our case, the dominant semantic horizon; the other two being just ancillary. It seems that the Norwegian Captain is

trying to elevate his base, shitty language (*lumbsmall* → *Landsmaal* → small of his back → anus → shit) to the level of a raw, basic “*English*” (raw language). The “*elevating process*” is described by the idiomatic “*going through the hawsehole*”:

In the (British) Royal Navy, an officer who had served as a seaman before being promoted was said to have “come in through the hawsehole”

The base, heavy anchor raised up to the bow, through the “*hawsehole*”. Now this triggers an amusing image related to the Gospel parable of the “*camel through the eye of a needle*”. With its sartorial side hint. “*crupping*” points to “*croup*” (hunch). “*navel*” is a sort of an “*eye*”. And if “*hawser*” is the “*umbilical cord*” we get the image of a shitty language trying to get base nourishment by the English one; or, by converse, the higher language being soiled and contaminated by the rural shitty language of the Captain.

The funny thing is that here we find an elucidation of linguistic “*polysemy*” quite appropriate to Wakeese. It seems in fact that the already mentioned parable of the “*camel*”, so surrealistic in its visual manifestation, should be interpreted differently. Please, pardon me if I am telling known things; at any rate the Aramaic **גמלא** is both “*camel*” (*gamal*) and “*rope*” (*gamil*). Thus it is the “*rope*” that cannot pass through the “*eye of the needle*”. In our case, no matter how he tries, according to the parable, the Captain won't be able to speak a noble language; and he will remain a “*barbarian*”; which, as we know, is someone who does not speak “*Greek*”, but an unintelligible language.

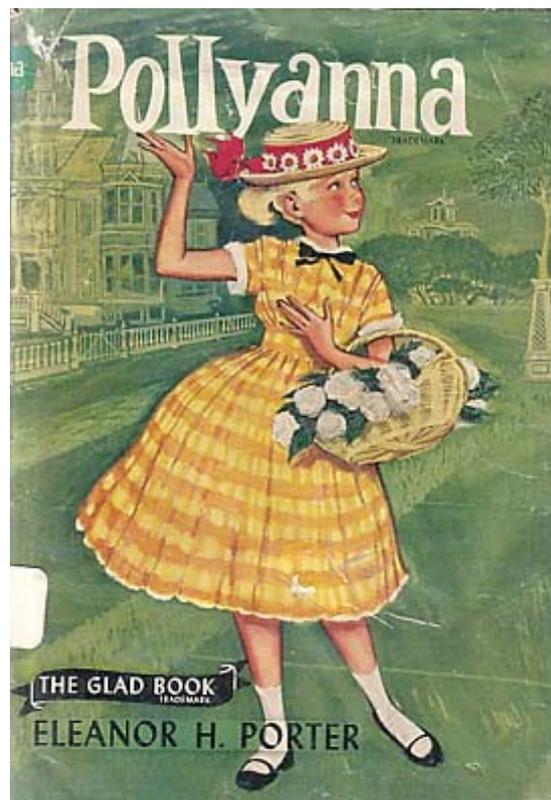
323.6: donconfounder him, voyag-

323.7: ing after maidens, belly jonah hunting the polly joans,

In “*donconfounder*” we may hear a “*God confound him*”, although “*don*” may suggest “*dog*”, in our case a reversed “*god*”, thus the

“*devil*”; which adds a further curse “*The devil confound him!*”. But I wouldn't exclude a possible “*Don't confound him*”, which might warn not to confuse him with “someone else”, so not to get cheated by his hypocrisy, by that “*damn confounder*”; and also “*not to get mixed up*” with him.

That would seem a warning to girls, since the Captain is a seducer who constantly runs after maidens, his aim in “*deflowering*” them, “*maiden voyage*” being “*the first journey made by the craft after shakedown*” (voyag-ing after maidens). He is in fact a “*belly jonah*”, apparently a handsome youth (Italian “*bello*”: handsome; and “*giovane*” : young); but in reality is a Don Juan (Spanish “*bello*” : handsome; → *jonah* → John → Juan; and “*joven*” : young) chasing candid maidens, like the “*Pollyanna*” (*polly joans*) of Eleanor H. Porter's novel. (Is “Porter” a coincidence?).



A candid girl who is indeed a “chick”, a “*pullet*” (*polly*) (Italian “*pollastra*” : attractive young woman). But the truth behind “*belly jonah*” is a fat man (*belly*) who brings only bad luck to others. A to-

be-avoided “*jinx*”.

323.7: and the

323.8: hurss of all portnoysers befuddle him, he sazd, till I split in his flags,

323.9: he sazd, one to one, the landslewder, after Donnerbruch fire.

In “portnoysers” we find a typical example of Joyce's morphing technique. “*Portnoy*” is Russian for “*tailor*”. Reading “hurss” as “*curse*” we get the curse of all tailors falling (befuddle) on the Captain, a “toy” Captain (befuddle → be-fuddle → fiddle-fuddle → foolish → nonsense), making him stupid and confused (*befuddle*). Why Russian tailors? It could allude to a “*proletarian*” revolt against the aristocratic Captain, but I am not much convinced. The fact is that in “portnoysers” we may find also the “*noisy nosy ones*” who hang around “*ports*”, in our case “*whores*” (hurss): so a wish (or the certainty) that “*the curse of whores*” (venereal disease) fall (or has already fallen) on the Captain. But in “hurss” we pick up “URSS”; and that justifies the Russian term for tailor.

“I split in his flags” points certainly to a “*spit in his face*”; but there is also a nautical perspective. The “flags” are those that form the Captain's “*bunting*”; both of his ship and of his uniform, like medals appointed on his breast, each one marking a won “*amorous battle*”. And Kersse is determined to tear (split) those flags off, one by one (one to one) and make the sailor “march” (one-two, one...). Flags that will fall down as a landslide (landslewder) from that obscene individual (lewder), that “*failure*” (a possible hint at Italian “*frana*”: landslide : a totally inept fellow – but I am not sure that at Joyce's time that idiomatic expression was already in use). The “*split flags*” being of course the result of his thundering (German “*Donner*”) verbal broadsides (Donnerbruch fire), like the “broadside ballad” called “*The Humours of Donnybrook Fair*”.

323.10: Reefer was a wenchman. One can smell off his wetsments how he

323.11: is coming from a beach of promisck.

The ballad continues with an allusion to “*Taffy was a Welshman, Taffy was a thief*”; with Taffy who becomes a “reefer”, thus not an officer, but a cadet, one who “reefs” sails (“reefing” is a sailing manoeuvre intended to reduce the area of a sail on a sailboat or sailing ship). The Welshman becomes a “wenchman”, that triggers many allusions. It is a fish of the “*Perci-formes*” order,



thus, since we are in a ballad context, a possible hint at the ballad of “*Persse O' Reilly*”. But of course a “wenchman” is one who runs after “*wenches*”; and one can smell the scent of “whores”, promiscuous bitches (*beach of promisck*), in his clothes still wet of bodily and bawdy effluvia (*wetsments*). Thus an unreliable fellow, ready to breach any promise of faith (*beach of promisck*), like sailors do.

323.11: Where is that old muttiny,

323.12: shall I ask? Free kicks he will have from me, turncoats, in Bar

323.13: Bartley if I wars a fewd years ago.

“muttiny” is of course the “*mutineer*” who “*breaches promises*”; and the “*muttoner*”, a man addicted to “*wenching*” (Captain Francis Grose : *Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*, 1811) , a whore-monger, “*mutton*” being a slang term for prostitute and the vagina. Just like the Captain was in search of him, it is now Kersse's turn to challenge his adversary.

But “*shall I ask?*” hides a subtle reproach towards the clients, called “*turncoats*”. Apparently, as I said, it seems that the tailor is challenging the Captain, promising him kicks “*ad libitum*” (*Free kicks*); but on second thoughts he slows down since he is aware

that he is too old to do that: he would have done that only if he were “*a few years younger*” (if I wars a fewd years ago). But that is somewhat contradictory. Since he is boasting against an absent adversary he could keep on with his insults without fear. So we must change perspective and interpret the sentence, as I said, as a reprimand against the three clients. He sarcastically asks them: “*Should I be (I, who am so old) the one to challenge the Captain?*” (shall I ask?). He accuses them of “*cowardice*”. In the glorious, patriotic times of old, when he was young (a fewd years ago) and there was a warring feud (wars a fewd) between the natives and the invaders, a person like the Captain, would have been kicked in the ass by each one of them (Free kicks → three kicks) and would have not been allowed, being a “*son of a bitch*”, to enter the inn, profaning thus the sacred temple of John Barleycorn (Bar Bartley).

A few elucidations. “Bartley” hints at Melville's story “*Bartleby the Scrivener*”, with its famous phrase “*I would prefer not to!*”. That should have been the “*refusing*” stance of the three against the Captain, were they not coward “*turncoats*”, weathercocks going with the wind. As for the “*son of a bitch*” we know that “*Bar*” is Hebrew “*son*”; and “*Bartley*” means “*birch tree meadow*” (from Old English “*beorc*” → birch). Thus we have a “*Son of a Birch*”, a tree particularly important in Celtic and Irish mythology. And we should not forget that “*Bar Bartley*” has resonances with “*Bartholomew Vanhomerigh*”, the “*Balla-clay, Barthalamou*” of **314.22** and “*homereek van hohm-rik*” of **314.23**.

323.13: Meistr Capteen Gaascooker, a

323.14: salestrimmer!

The insults continue with no interruptions. The Captain is a minuscule and insignificant “*Capteen*”. And since “*Meistr*” is Welsh for “*master*” he is again the “*Welsher/Welshman/thief*” of the above mentioned ballad. He is a braggart, a “*gascon*” (Gaascooker),

a “goose cooker” whose aim is to cause troubles to others – with a possible allusions to “*Gas from a burner*”, Joyce's caustic satire against the publishers that “*breaching their promise*” did destroy the already printed copies of “*Dubliners*”. “*salestrimmer*” is a further allusion to it.

According to Joyce the 1,000 copies were burned (hence “Gas from a Burner”) though Richards averred that they were merely cut up and pulped.

“*cut up*” : read “*trimmed*”. But of course the word is also referred to the unreliability of the Captain, who being a “*trimmer*” is “*a person who has no firm position, opinion, or policy, adapting to a situation as circumstances may require, especially in politics*”, thus he himself a “*weathercock*”, like the three clients: birds of a feather flock together.

323.14: As he was soampling me ledder, like pulp, and as

323.15: I was trailing his fumbelums, like hulp, he'll fell the fall of me

323.16: faus, he sazd, like yulp!

The “*salestrimmer*”, the one who breaches promises, triggers in Kersse the painful remembrance of the manufacturing process, the try on of the dress, with the Captain who, because of his hunch, did stretch and deform the “*leather*” cloth (*me ledder*) in such a way (*soampling* → *ampling so*) that he made a “*pulp*” of it (again the “*pulped*” *Dubliners*); while he was desperately (*fumbelums* → *fumble*) trying (*trailing*) to adjust it to the Captain's “*lump/hump*” (*fumbe-lums*), doing what he could (*like hulp* → trying to help : “*hulp*” is Dutch “*help*”). And this unchains the tailor's emotive reaction, since he promises the sinister (*fell*) Captain to let him feel the lethal (*fell*) weight of his fist (*he'll fell the fall of me faus* → German: “*Faust*” : fist); which will make him bark and cry (*yulp* → *yelp*) like a “*whelp*”, since “*faus*” may hint at “*fauces*” (**faus, he sazd**) and at a threatening “*face*”, although probably a “*faked*” one (French “*faux/fausse*” : false), underscored by the “*t-less*” fist

of “*Faust*”. He'd like to play the Goethian magician, but it seems he misses “t”.

323.16: The goragorridgorballyed pushkalsson,

323.17: he sazd, with his bellows pockets full of potchtatos and his fox

323.18: in a stomach, a disagrees to his ramskew coddlelechershithers'

323.19: zirkuvs,

I confess that it took me a while to find a plausible justification to the Russian allusions. The question is always the same: why Russian? Let's start saying that this is the last series of insults, which, as in a firework, reaches its climax. At this point Kersse wishes to expose the Captain's deformity, both physical and moral, in all its size. The image he makes use of is the “*Karakoram*” mountain range



with all its protuberances and “*gibbosities*”. The word is homophonous to Russian “*gorà gor*”. “*Gorà*” means “*mountain*” and “*gor*” is the genitive plural of “*gorà*”, thus “*of the mountains*”. In conclusion “*gorà gor*” means “*The mountain of the mountains*”, in other words “*The mountain (hunchback) par excellence*”. A disgusting figure: “*gory*”, “*horrid*”; a “*corpulent*” (gorbellied) hunchback (Russian “*gorb*” : hunch), with enormous eyeballs (ballyed). All within the single “*goragorridgorballyed*”. I am wondering whether George Lucas thought of him in devising Jabba the Hutt.



And he is of course a “*son of a gun*”, since in “*pushkalsson* → *Pukkelsen*” we find the Russian “*pushka* : gun, cannon”.

“*his bellows pockets full of potchtatos*” apparently describes the Captain having “potatoes” (Irish staple food) in his “*visible*” pockets (*bellows pockets*). Perhaps alluding that he comes with gifts; although not real “potatoes”, but “*written*” ones (*potchtatos* → Russian “*pochta*”: postal office, mail); thus “*fake money*”, probably like the “*sylvan coyne, a piece of oak*” of 16.31, in the *Jute/Mutt* scene of Chapter 1. But “*bellows pockets*” may also hint at “*below pockets*”, namely “*testicles*”. Thus a Captain who has “*patched balls*”; in other words “*no guts*”, but just a hungry fox “*his fox in a stomach*”. And since a fox is a furry beast with a long hairy tail, there might be a reference to the idiomatic Italian “*avere il pelo sullo stomaco*” (lit. “*to have hair in the stomach*” : to be ruthless).

Then, if “*disagrees*” does not pose problems, hinting obviously at “*disgrace*” and “*disagreement*”, the rest of the sentence (*his ramskew coddlelechershithers' zirkuvs*) needs some elucidations.

We have again a Russian allusion (“*Rimskaya katolicheskaya cerkov*” : Roman Catholic Church), justified by the already

introduced Russian “gorà gor”. It is the Captain who looks scornfully at the natives, considered as “tamed” animals of a “circus” (zirkuvs). They are afraid of the devil (ram), they take their distance (skew) from him. The devil being of course the horned Viking. They are “coddlelecherskithers” : they lick “lecherously” (lechers) their fingers after having put them on the “coddle”,



as if playing their harps (kither → Greek “kithara”: lyre). All of them “feathers of the same catholic flock” (kith). In conclusion, in this last broadside, Kersse points to the deformed Captain's scornful attitude towards the Irish natives.

323.19: drop down dead and deaf, and there is never a teilwrmans
323.20: in the feof fife of Iseland or in the wholebelongd of Skunkinabory
323.21: from Drumadunderry till the rumnants of Mecckrass, could milk
323.22: a colt in thrushes foran furrow follower width that a hole in his
323.23: tale and that hell of a hull of a hill of a camelump bakk. Fadgest-
323.24: fudgist!

This works as Kersse's own “*grand finale*”, mirroring the Captain's one of the previous pages. He asserts that the truth, and may he drop dead if it's not so (drop down dead and deaf), is that no tailor (teilwrmans) shall be able to fit a cloth for that deformed being. Not a tailor in the four cardinal points of the compass: West (Iseland), East (Skunkinabory → Scandinavia), North (Drumadunderry

→ Londonderry), south (Mecckrass → Muckross, County Kerry). But it's possible that the geographical zone is just Ireland, so that “feof fife” is each domain (feof) of the five (fife) provinces of Ireland before the Norman invasion (Ireland → Iseland), each “*fifth part*” (Irish “*cúige*”). “Skunkinabory” could just be the “*stinking*” (Skunk) possessions “*belonging*” (abelongd) to the Vikings (Scandinavians), the stinking Viking burgs (bory) they founded in Ireland. In “wholeabelongd” we might even detect “*Albalonga*”, the region of Latium, head of the Latin League that was eventually destroyed by the Romans. Thus a parallel with Ireland conquered by foreign invaders, whose plundering marches along the land, from North to South, is accompanied by the music of “*fifes and drums*” (fife of Iseland & Drumadunderry). But neither in fortified towns (Drumadunderry → Drom an Dún Daire: ridge of the fort of the oak wood), nor in devastated (rumnants) country towns, with their meadows where ruminants (rumnants) graze nauseating grass (Mecckrass → muck grass), there's no way to find a tailor capable of giving shape to coat and trousers (colt in thrushes) for such an individual (we'll describe his features in a moment).

The metaphorical term used is “milk a colt in thrushes”. “*Thrush*” is an infectious disease characterized by small whitish eruptions on the mouth, throat, and tongue; and it is also a degenerative condition of a horse's foot. Thus the general idea is that of a degenerate form impossible to give shape to. “*furrow follower*” hints at “*seaman*”, one who follows the waves (furrow → Italian “*solco*” and “*solcare le acque*” : cut through waters). But the “*undulating waves*” point to “*gibbosity*” and to his deformity, underlined by “*that a hole in his tale*”, which is also a sarcastic remark about his “*seamanship*”. The “*hole in the tail*” is in fact a disease typical of fish that live in aquariums. Thus not only a “*landlubber*” (Italian “*marinaio d'acqua dolce*” : freshwater mariner), but also a “*freshwater minnow*” carrying a huge camel-like hump (that hell of a hull of a hill of a camelump bakk). The result being a bundle (fadge) of nonsense (fudge). A real “Fascist” (Fadgest- fudgist!), since

Italian "*fascio*" is a "bundle of wooden rods". But a "*patched up*" (fudged) one; and a coward as well, since he has run away (**fudg**ist → Italian "*fuggire*"), and he'd better run!

