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## **‘La bella Franceschina’ and Other Foreign Names in Marston’s *The Dutch Courtesan***

*John Marston’s play, The Dutch Courtesan, presents characters with remarkably polyglot names for action set in England. My essay examines this naming practice, attending in particular to the Italian name and background of the ‘Dutch’ courtesan, Franceschina, familiar to theatre-goers as a traditional character in commedia dell’arte troupes and scenarios. Overall, the essay argues that Marston’s deployment of foreign and polyglot names plays out and extends the ambivalences criticism has identified in the play, and in the genre of city comedy, towards hybridizations springing up in England in response to contemporary mercantile and cross-cultural relations.*

John Marston’s *The Dutch Courtesan* makes its mark in the new genre of ‘city comedy’. Alexander Leggatt and Brian Gibbons treat it as city comedy in their earlier overviews, and more recent critics, such as Pascale Aebischer and Marjorie Rubright, have followed suit, the latter assimilating it to Adam Zucker’s broad definition as a play ‘set in London that relies predominately on comic narrative elements ... to produce and make sense of the complexities of an urban setting’.<sup>1</sup> Although G.K. Hunter preferred to see it as an ‘intrigue comedy’, arguing that it lacked ‘a young gallant struggling for self-realisation against the impersonal requirements of a cash economy’, the play’s comic exploration of the contemporary city follows a different track from the travails of an upwardly mobile hero.<sup>2</sup> Jean Howard distinguishes two basic configurations of the city in the genre. Down one line, ‘London comedies present the city as a synecdoche for the nation’; down the other, ‘the city is pitted against the country’. But a central matter across the genre, she argues, is ‘the fact that commercial energies ... were hybridizing [London] culture’, so that the comedies staged and reacted to a city increasingly displaying ‘a cosmopolitanism at odds with a narrowly conceived nationalism’.<sup>3</sup>

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Such hybridizations can occur in different ways across the landscape of a genre, and may be differently valorized, even at alternative locations in the same play. Howard identifies several versions of hybridity deployed in *The Dutch Courtesan* in registers commercial, sexual, and religious. Most of these versions are roundly rejected by the play, but the comic figure Cocledemoy offers a successful and productive version, a ‘cosmopolitan absorption’ rather than a defensive rebuff. Marjorie Rubright argues in turn that even ‘Dutch’ and ‘English’ as conceptual categories entwine each other throughout the play. The present essay attends to another such area of collaboration and slippage in Marston’s play — the matter of the naming of characters, where, I argue, the genre’s negotiation between Englishness and foreignness plays out linguistically and metatheatrically.

Marston’s naming of characters in *The Dutch Courtesan* differs from that of other city comedies. Most plays broadly included in the genre, being committed at once to nationalist barracking and satiric moralizing, use vigorously English word-names for their dramatis personae, with a strong sprinkling of moral markers that direct audience expectation and evaluation in a straightforward way. Typical of such dramaturgic practice are such figures as Frank Monopoly and Captain Whirlpool in Thomas Dekker and John Webster’s *Westward Ho* (1604), or Richard Easy with the three gallants Rearage, Salewood, and Cockstone in Thomas Middleton’s *Michaelmas Term* (1604). Comparison with *The Dutch Courtesan* reveals a signal difference: though Marston’s play is set in London, most of its characters do not have solidly English names. Though most are English by birth, Marston’s characters, with some exceptions, are notably French and Italian by name. Or rather, they tend towards polyglot names, signalling that the play, for all its interest in resisting contaminations, sees some kinds of cross-over as acceptable. The trio of gallants common in city comedy all have French names in Marston, though Tisefew, which editors regularly gloss as a Frenchism for ‘firebrand’, could as easily be rendered in English as ‘entice few’.<sup>4</sup> Sir Hubert Subboys, an English knight whose name is a French calque for the common English ‘Underwood’, has two daughters with Italianate names — Crispinella and Beatrice. The former name we will discuss later. The latter, although a creditable English name, had recently belonged to an Italian heroine in Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing*, and also points to a well-known Italian source in Dante.<sup>5</sup> Even their maid Putifer has a name which, though demonstrably English, has disreputably Italianate overtones — from ‘putire’, to stink, and ‘putana’, a whore.<sup>6</sup> Marston seems to have deliberately jumbled his character naming across several languages, offering the linguistic equivalent of just the sort of hybridizing and contamination that preoccupies the city comedy genre.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, the two characters in the play who have the most recognizably 'real' names are the diametric antagonists of the main plot: the English gentleman, Freevill, and the Dutch courtesan, Franceschina.<sup>8</sup> Freevill's name is easy to move into moral territory as indicating his applauded ability to choose between his 'frou', as he calls Franceschina, and his fiancée, Beatrice. But his is nonetheless a fully proper English name, listed in *Burke's Peerage* from the reign of Henry III.<sup>9</sup> So likewise Franceschina, a name linked subversively to her lover's by the 'frank and free' chime of their opening syllables. Her name is, of course, decidedly not English.

But neither is it Dutch. If naming conventions in the play are not exactly realist, Franceschina's stands out for its inaptness given her description as 'a pretty, nimble-eyed Dutch Tannakin' (1.1.158–9). Editors noting this oddity have generally glossed it as not a national but a cultural reference: Marston invites his audience to compound their suspicion of Dutch infiltrations into England with their knowledge of contemporary Italian theatrical conventions, since, as M.L.Wine puts it, Franceschina is 'the name of the light-of-love servingmaid in the *commedia dell'arte*'.<sup>10</sup> A 'Franceschina' in the role of Dutch courtesan is thus debased and conflated several ways — not merely a double Dutch-Italian foreigner, but also, courtesy of her theatre ancestry, a promiscuous housemaid masquerading as a high-class *cortigiana*.<sup>11</sup>

Foreign contaminations have been a productive theme of critical discussion of Marston's play. Howard speaks of the play's 'defensive repudiation of foreign impurity' — in commerce, in sex, and in religion — but argues that the play's clown, Cocledemoy, offers an alternative response — an aggressive comic appropriation of 'the mastery of tongues and personae' which was required by an increasingly cosmopolitan economy, an appropriation that 'disrupts the neat ideological closure implied by the main action'.<sup>12</sup> Bruster also pursues the theme of sexual and commercial contamination, noting how the play's 'dual emphasis on (marital) chastity and (commercial) honesty ... conjoins in a dialectic of purity discourse'.<sup>13</sup> In Franceschina, we would seem to have a composite character who is herself in some ways contaminated as well as contaminating. As Ton Hoense-laars has explored in some detail, the overlapping stereotypes and sources brought together in her depiction constitute a figure for the mingle-mangle of foreignness itself, and Scott Oldenburg sees her ultimate fate as promoting 'a national agenda of unjumbling the realm'.<sup>14</sup>

Given the overdeterminations in Marston's naming practice, we must go back to the primary allusive resonance of the choice of the name Franceschina for the Dutch courtesan. Of course, the choice may be a casual or passing allusion. Yet

Marston's thorough acquaintance with contemporary Italian literature and the known if spectral presence of the commedia traditions in Jacobean England suggest the benefit of a more sustained look at what the 'servetta' role of Franceschina evoked for the informed contemporary theatregoer. Franceschina was clearly, at least for Marston, a name to conjure with, but what was he conjuring?

### The Commedia Franceschina

The role of Franceschina in early modern Italian theatre practice is a very early one. Indeed, she may well be the very first established female character in the performance tradition that eventually became the *commedia improvvisata*. The earliest accounts we have of commedia-style performances with named characters date from the later 1560s, though the record of Italian actors in companies goes back to the 1540s, and 'Zanni ... Avec son Magnifique à la venitienne' [Zanni ... with his Magnifico in the Venetian style] are recorded by du Bellay as carnival entertainers in Rome in the 1550s.<sup>15</sup>

That there was an established female character called Franceschina is attested as early as 1574. In that year, Orlando di Lasso, the Flemish composer, was sent to Italy from the court of Bavaria in Munich, where he was employed, to recruit new players for the Duke. Gasparino Venturino, a player in the Duke's service, accompanied him, and entertained them nightly on the journey with improvised skits which Lasso reports in a letter back to the Duke:

Il Venturino ogni sera ... fa lui solo una comedietta di tre persone, il magnifico, Zannj, é Franceschina di tanta bona gratia, che ci fa quasi pisciar de ridere.

[Every night Venturino makes up a solo comic skit with three characters — the Magnifico, Zanni, and Francescina — with such brilliance that he makes us almost piss ourselves laughing.]<sup>16</sup>

This record may in turn point back to revels Lasso organized at the court in 1568, in which he played Pantalone, the Magnifico, in what is only the second account we have of a commedia-style performance.<sup>17</sup> Again, the context suggests that this style and these characters were well-established. The name of the female servant role, played by a man, Ercole Terzo, is not recorded, but it may well have been Franceschina.<sup>18</sup>

Shortly after the 1574 letter, references to Franceschina multiply. In 1575, the Gelosi company were playing at the court of Emperor Maximilian II in Prague

and again in Vienna. The Hofkassackten, or Court Treasury Accounts, for that year record a payment of 100 florins for a performance by 'Franciscina Comedianten und seinen mitgesellen'.<sup>19</sup> When, two years later, the Gelosi appear in France, belatedly answering a summons from Henry III, this same Franceschina is presumably still with them. The actor in question is identified as Battista Amorevole da Treviso in 1578, when he publishes two works in Paris describing himself as 'comico geloso detto la Francischina (actor in the Gelosi known as Francischina)'.<sup>20</sup>

Vito Pandolfi in his *La Commedia dell'arte: storia e testo* claims that Battista Amorevole da Treviso was in fact 'the very first interpreter of this role, under the name of Franceschina'.<sup>21</sup> Whether or not this is so, Amorevole is the first for whom we have a name, and he may indeed have been the first to play the role *under* that name, though 'Franceschina' was used for a slightly different figure in January 1577 in an amateur performance at Comachio by the Duke of Ferrara and courtiers, the Duke playing the buffoon role of Tedesco. In this performance, Franceschina was a *ruffiana*, a type of an older woman, often a bawd, and was played by one of the ladies of the court.<sup>22</sup>

So by the mid-1570s at the very latest, and possibly considerably earlier, the female Zanni role in the commedia in at least one famous troupe was established under the name of Francescina, possibly by Battista Amorevole, who had adopted it as his professional stage name. In fact, however, that name as a young woman involved in a trio with a young man and an older man long predates this, in another medium from which it may have been borrowed by commedia artists. This was the very well-known folk-tune 'La Bella Franceschina', attested from as early as 1520 and often over subsequent decades, in French, German, Flemish, and Spanish as well as Italian sources, so that it may fairly claim to be a European song.<sup>23</sup> Though not originally a commedia song as such, it tells, in its most widespread version, the very Italian and commedia-like story of a young woman who resists her father's choice for her husband — the son of a count — in favour of her beloved, currently in prison.

La bella Franceschina, ninina, bufina, la filibustachina,  
che la vorria mari, nini la filibustacchi.

Lo suo padre a la finestra, ninestra, bufestra, la filibustachestra,  
ascolta quel che la di', nini la filibustacchi.

Tasi, tasi Franceschina, ninina, bufina, la filibustachina,  
che te daro mari, nini la filibustacchi.

Te darogio lo fio del Conte, ninonte, bufonte, la filibustaconte,  
 del Conte Constanti, nini la filibustacchi.  
 E no voglio lo fio del Conte, ninonte, bufonte, la filibustaconte,  
 del Conte Constanti, nini la filibustacchi.  
 Che voglio quel giovinetto, ninetto, bufetto, la filibustachetto,  
 che sta in prigion per mi, nini la filibustacchi.<sup>24</sup>

[Lovely Franceschina, ninina, bufina, la filibustachina,  
 who yearns for a husband, nini ...  
 Her father at the window, ninestra ...,  
 listens to what she says, nini ...  
 ‘Be quiet, Franceschina’, ninina.,  
 ‘I will give you a husband, nini ...  
 ‘I will give you the Count’s son, ninonte ...,  
 Count Constanti’, nini ...  
 ‘I don’t want the Count’s son, ninonte.,  
 Count Constanti, nini ...  
 ‘I want the young man, ninetto ...,  
 who is in prison for me’, nini ...]

This is what Louise George Clubb would call this a powerful theatregram: the old man, the young man, and the young woman in a tussle over whom she will marry.<sup>25</sup> This trio of relations can be and was inflected many ways — it informs all the tales in the *Romeo and Juliet* lineage for instance — and its popularity may have led a commedia actor, possibly even Battista Amorevoli, to adopt ‘Franceschina’ as the name for his *servetta* role. Thereafter the name seems to have become so firmly identified with the stage persona that later composers incorporated the tune into polyphonic pieces featuring *other* commedia characters, fully expecting audiences to get the allusive joke. Published works by Marenzio, Eckard, and Vecchi use this tactic.<sup>26</sup>

A collection of contemporary woodcuts and other images (later brought together and now named the *Recueil Fossard* [Fossard Collection] after its collector) includes several images relevant to the history of both Franceschina and her deployment in Italian theatre at the end of the sixteenth century. The woodcuts clearly show that the comic triad of Pantalone, Zanni, and Franceschina established itself early as one of the central stock situations of commedia.<sup>27</sup> Several images depict Franceschina, though Arlecchino — a character mask developed and made popular by Tristano Martinelli in the 1580s — was by then competing with Zanni for the slot of lead underling. In addition to the images themselves, the captions recording

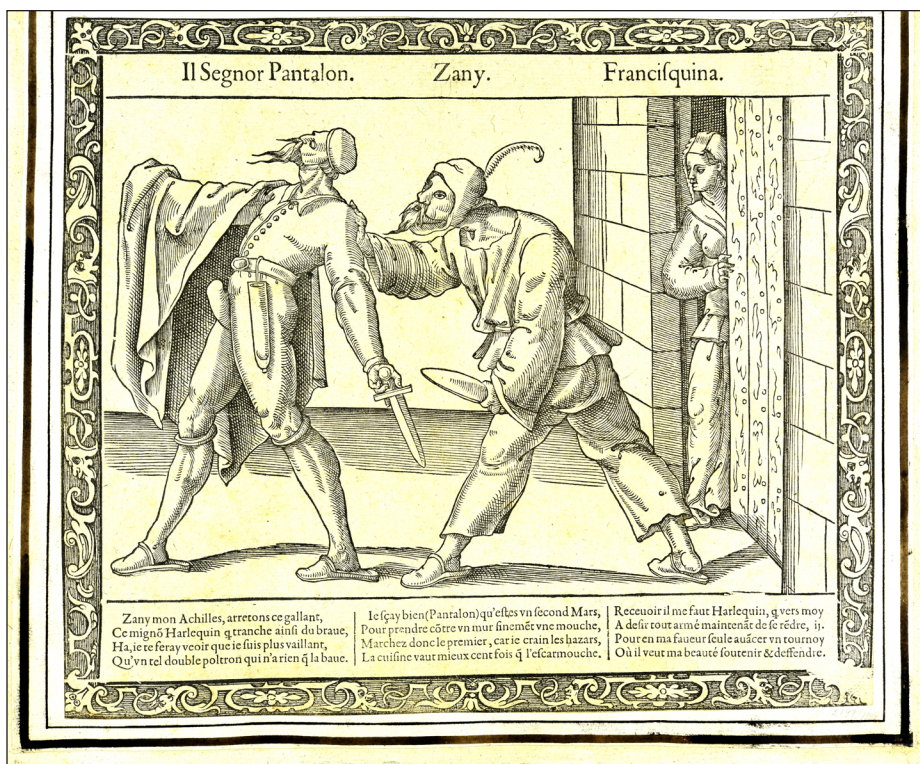


Figure 1. *Recueil Fossard* (G2199–1904, fol. 7b), by permission of the National Museum of Sweden.  
Foto: Nationalmuseum.

what each character is 'saying' in the illustrated scenes are particularly revealing about the personnel and relations depicted. These images may possibly have been known in England, even if commedia troupes are very rarely recorded there in the later sixteenth century. Franceschina commonly appears in the *Recueil*. In one image (Figure 1), Pantalone recruits a reluctant Zanni to support him in fighting 'Harlequin' for her love. In a parody of courtly love-romance, Pantalone vaunts, and Zanni responds, using the bravado idiom more frequently associated with the braggart Spanish Captain. Franceschina watches from the doorway and comments on how Harlequin will 'en ma faveur seule avancer un tournoi / Où il veut ma beauté soutenir et deffendre' [for my favour alone propose a tournament where he will affirm and defend my beauty].

In another Fossard image (Figure 2), Arlecchino surprises Franceschina in the arms of Pantalone and, wielding a phallic knife that matches Pantalone's codpiece



Figure 2. *Recueil Fossard* (G2207–1904, fol. 11b), by permission of the National Museum of Sweden. Foto: Nationalmuseum.

(as does that of Zanni in the previous image), vows his revenge on both the ‘putain de haulte gresse’ [high-class whore] and the ‘vieux radoteur’ [old dotard]. In a third image (Figure 3), however, the coupling is reversed, with Pantalone in his most notorious pose behind a curtain, spying on the pair of servant lovers.<sup>28</sup> This scenic layout was so familiar it could be referred to offhand in Heywood’s 1605 play *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody*, Part 2: ‘Now they peepe like Italian pantelownes / Behind an Arras.’<sup>29</sup> And a version of this regular trio had already appeared in Nashe’s 1592 dismissal of Italian companies as nothing but ‘a Pantaloon, a Whore and a Zany’.<sup>30</sup> A notably direct link between the popular song and the commedia character who may have derived from it is established in the Fossard image (Figure 4) of a Quixote-like Harlequin setting off to assault Hell on his ass, to prove his heroic love for ‘la belle Francischine’.<sup>31</sup>





Figure 3. *Recueil Fossard* (G2202–1904, fol. 9a), by permission of the National Museum of Sweden.  
Foto: Nationalmuseum.

The Fossard images display characters in action in scenarios typical of contemporary commedia narratives. But they do not certainly depict actors who correspond to those genders. Although Franceschina was played in some troupes by a woman, she also continued to be played by male actors well into the seventeenth century, in a performance tradition likely sustained, if not established, by the long career of Battista Amorevoli. The latter may have left the *Gelosi*, where Sylvia Roncagli replaced him, around 1578, along with Isabella Andreini's principal rival, Vittoria Piisimi. At any rate, Amorevole was with the *Uniti-Confidenti* company in 1584 and seems to have become their *capocomico* by 1587.<sup>32</sup> A final record from 1594 places him still with the *Confidenti*, in Milan for an aristocratic celebration.<sup>33</sup> He had a career of at least twenty years, and likely considerably longer, as the 1575 imperial account already lists him as a leader of the troupe, and the convention of male performance seems to have outlasted him. In 1614, a



Figure 4. *Recueil Fossard* (G2204–1904, fol 10a), by permission of the National Museum of Sweden. Foto: Nationalmuseum.

later list of Uniti actors at Genoa records one Ottavio Bernardino, a Roman, in the Franceschina role.<sup>34</sup>

Meanwhile, a separate splinter Confidenti company under the Martinelli brothers seems also to have had a male Franceschina, including in their touring visit to Spain in 1587. The latter is especially interesting, since in order to license the actresses in the troupe to perform on stage, a special dispensation was issued at Madrid on November 18:

Dase licencia para que pueda representar Angela Salomona y Angela Martineli las quales consta por certificacion del Sr. Alcalde Brauo ser mugeres casadas y traer consigo sus maridos con que ansimesmo no puedan representar sino en abito he vestido (?) 28 de muger y no de hombre y con que de aquí adelante tanpoco pueda representar

ningun muchacho bestido como muger. En Madrid a 18 de nobienbre 1587. Esta asimismo rubricado.

[Give permission by which Angela Salomona and Angela Martinelli can perform, since they declare for the certification of Lord Mayor Bravo that they are married women and accompanied by their husbands, provided that they cannot perform except dressed as women and not as men, and in the same way no young man may perform dressed as a woman. At Madrid the 18<sup>th</sup> November, 1587. So likewise let it be initialed.]<sup>35</sup>

Some theatre historians have taken this record to indicate that a third woman in the company may have played Franceschina. Hugo Rennert's 1907 *Spanish Stage in the Time of Lope de Vega* claimed it was Silvia Roncagli, and though Falconiere in his later 'Historia de la Commedia dell'Arte en España' had his doubts about Roncagli, who was then with the Gelosi, he still spoke of an 'otra mujer que representaba el papel de La Franceschina' [another woman who played the role of Franceschina].<sup>36</sup> A full reading of the licence, however, confirms that 'La Franceschina' was in fact an adult man and neither a woman nor a boy. With carefully poised parsing of the rules about the gender, age, and marital status of permitted players, the licence adds a further stipulation after those just quoted: 'Si la Francisquina es la que yo vi en la posada del Sr Cardenal no la tengo por muchacho y ansi podra representar' [If the Franceschina is the one I saw in the Inn of the Lord Cardinal, I don't hold her for a boy and therefore she can perform].<sup>37</sup> This Italian non-boy Franceschina may have been the Carlo or Carletto recorded again with the company in letters concerning internal disputes in both 1591 and 1598.<sup>38</sup>

### Marston's Italians

The history of 'Franceschina' establishes both that the name was, as Marston's editors have noted, associated with a particular type of role in the commedia repertory, and also that in the Italian troupes the role had often been performed by a man, and was still being so performed well past the date of Marston's play in at least one troupe, the Uniti. In the recent entirely laudable attention to the emergence of the woman actor on continental stages in the later sixteenth century, the latter piece of theatrical history has tended to be forgotten. Yet it provides a link between continental practice and English staging, which continued for many more years to, in Stephen Orgel's phrase 'take boys for women'.<sup>39</sup>

Marston's Franceschina also combines with her *servetta* persona another female commedia role directly germane to her status as 'courtesan'. In many ways, indeed, she behaves less like the *servetta* and more like the *primadonna innamorata*, a character role made famous, though not originated, by Isabella Andreini — so much so that leading female roles were often named Isabella after her in later years. Ton Hoenselaars notes the Italianate resonance of her vengefulness and Howard makes a general connection with Franceschina's tirades, particularly the irate quasi-incoherent speeches of act 2, scene 2, 'like an avenging fury from an Italian revenge drama'.<sup>40</sup> In her wilder moments, Franceschina may even recall the *pazzia* or madness scenes that Andreini was famous for, in which:

Come pazza se n'andava scorrendo per la Cittade, fermando hor questo, & hora quello, e parlando hora in Spagnuolo, hora in Greco, hora in Italiano, & molti altri linguaggi, ma tutti fuor di proposito.

[Like a madwoman she went running through the city, stopping now this one, now that one, and speaking now in Spanish, now in Greek, now in Italian, and many other languages, but all without reason.]<sup>41</sup>

Though Marston's Franceschina does not run mad quite like this, he gives her her own ranting moment, provoked by erotic betrayal just as was Isabella. She enters the scene with the classic '*pazza*' demeanour of the mad woman '*with her hair loose, chafing*' (2.2.0 sd). Provoked by news of Freevill's defection, she rounds on Mary Faugh:

FRANCESCHINA It is, it is, vile woman, reprobate woman, naughty woman, it is! Vat sal become of mine poor flesh now? Mine body must turn Turk for twopence. Oh divila, life o'mine 'art! Ik sall be revenged! Do ten thousand hell damn me, ik sall have the rogue troat cut, and his love, and his friend, and all his affinity sall smart, sall die, sall hang! Now legion of divil seize him. De gran' pest, St Antony's fire, and de hot Neapolitan poc rot him!

(45–53)

As if to underline a connection with commedia nomenclature, the very next line *after* this speech is the first time Marston's courtesan is called 'Franceschina' in the play, one of only two times she is directly named. And immediately, in a theatrical volte-face designed both to earn a laugh of incongruity and to showcase the actor's facility, Franceschina turns on her flirtatious charm ('Ah mine alderlievest

affection!' [57]) and 'sings in the French style' (62.1 sd), recalling again rather the talents of the *prima donna innamorata* than the *servetta*.<sup>42</sup>

There seem therefore to be significant commedia resonances in the design of Marston's *Franceschina*, so that her 'jumbled' foreignness in the play offers not only the contamination of honest English sexuality, but also a compound figure of Italianate theatrical femininity. That *Franceschina* was so often played by a male actor may be relevant, for her history of cross-dressing figures just the sort of *kinship* between continental and insular performance that Nashe and others had vigorously refused using precisely the differentium of English transgendered performance. A male *Franceschina* is a plausible import, equally legal on an English and an Italian stage.

Marston is, moreover, the playwright of the early Jacobean moment least entitled to float chauvinist claims, having positioned himself throughout his career as an Italian-oriented writer. Half-Italian on his mother's side, he was thoroughly acquainted with contemporary Italian literature, as Jason Lawrence documents.<sup>43</sup> His plays were the most consistently set in Italy of any of his contemporaries, his *Antonio and Mellida* contains an original section of dialogue in Italian verse (4.1), and he was the first playwright we know of to call one of his works by the cutting-edge Italian term 'Tragicomedia'. Indeed, *The Dutch Courtesan*, with its English setting, is a distinct outlier in his work. Importation of foreign literary goods was clearly a business in which Marston was heavily invested. If 'the difference between the love of a courtesan and a wife'<sup>44</sup> maps onto the difference between flirting with Italian theatregrams and remaining loyal to the honest kerseys of English practice, Marston was clearly an unreformed 'jumbler'.

The deployment of Italianate names does not stop there in Marston's play though. We additionally have to reckon with the odd fact that Sir Hubert's loyal English daughters also have Italian-sounding names: Beatrice and Crispinella. And even if we reclaim Beatrice from Dante as instead an English name of medieval antiquity (as in Beatrice of England, the daughter of Henry III), there remains the intriguing puzzle of her sister.

Crispinella's name turns out to be Marston's most complex in the play, just as her character wittily mediates several kinds of oppositions. The name is in fact a fascinating index to the sleight of hand by which Marston capitalizes on Italianate resonances, even while disavowing them in the 'Dutch' plot of the play. Unpacking the name suggests how Marston's play walks a fine line between the excitement of foreign entanglement and the sobriety of domestic discipline — just that balancing act which is the thematic and ideological preoccupation of the play.

Crispinella is an entirely made-up name — there is no earlier record of it traceable in *any* language. Certainly, it sounds Italian. Indeed, alongside Pulchinella, Brighella, Isabella, Conella, and Pimpinella it evokes specifically the Italian commedia. Editors have variously glossed it. Wine has no specific discussion, but refers to the ‘crisp colloquial dialogue’ in which she is involved, which is a sort of embedded gloss. MacDonald P. Jackson and Michael Neill suggest a ‘pseudo-diminutive from the Latin *crispus*: 1) curled, crisped, crimped; 2) in tremulous motion, quivering’ adding that ‘the obsolete sense of “crisp” (bright, shining, clear) may also be relevant’. David Crane digests this etymology as ‘from *crispus* (Lat. = curly-haired), but with a glance at the brisk, decisive quality of “crisp”’.<sup>45</sup> Britland gives a longer gloss:

a diminutive, derived from the Latin ‘*crispus*’, ‘curled’ or ‘quivering’. St Crispin, the patron saint of shoe-sellers, is an appropriate namesake for a woman who wears ‘high cork shoes’ (3.1.116).<sup>46</sup>

This is clearly quite a nest of references, but we can add some additional notes that complicate the matter further. The ‘crisp colloquial dialogue’ in Wine, picked up by Crane as ‘the brisk, decisive quality of “crisp”’, is in fact a resonance specifically *not* available to Marston, since this meaning of crisp, as a certain sharpness of manner, dates only from the nineteenth century. Jackson and Neill, followed by Britland, delve further into the Latin root, ‘*crispus*’, that lies behind the diminutive, noting that it designates both a specific hairstyle and, perhaps more importantly, a wavy, wavering or ‘tremulous motion, quivering’.<sup>47</sup> This seems a good description of Marston’s dialogue for Crispinella as a rapidly moving intellectual back-and-forth that recalls at once Shakespeare’s Beatrice and the *contrasti scenici* for which the Italian *innamorate*, and especially Isabella Andreini, were well known.<sup>48</sup> A different sort of ‘back-and-forth’ motion however, is suggested by a specifically erotic meaning of Latin *crispus* that occurs in both Juvenal’s Sixth Satire and in Virgil’s short poem ‘Copa’.

In Juvenal, the poet is describing, with heavily eroticized irony, the typical behaviour of wives who love music. Regarding plucked instruments he notes how:

crispo numerantur pectine chordae,  
quo tener Hedymeles operas dedit: hunc tenet, hoc se  
solatur, gratoque indulget basia plectro. (380–2)

[the strings are worked through with the quivering quill that tender Hedymeles used to perform with; she holds it, she consoles herself with it, she lavishes kisses on the loved plectrum.]<sup>49</sup>

Juvenal makes it perfectly clear what sort of quivering the plectrum of Hedymeles (Greek for 'sweet-singer') has been doing. Similarly, the opening of Virgil's short poem has the barmaid undulating erotically as she dances and sings, and her waggling motion is specifically '*crispus*':

Copa Syrisca, caput Graeca redimita mitella,  
 crispum sub crotalo docta movere latus,  
 ebria fumosa saltat lasciva taberna  
 ad cubitum raucos excutiens calamos. (1–4)

[The Syrian barmaid, hair bound up in a Greek bandana, adept at moving her shaking flank to the castanet, dances drunk and sexy in the smoky tavern, clashing the loud tambourine on her elbow.]<sup>50</sup>

A humanist-educated satirist like Marston would likely be aware of this additional type of 'crisp' motion — and we may easily picture him enjoying the chance to incorporate it into a character who is as fluent, quick-witted, and provocative as Crispinella.

Meanwhile, along an English thread, 'crisp' was a crepey kind of textile, and a 'crisp' specifically a headscarf or veil worn by English women in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, this usage is the oldest recorded in English for the noun. The *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (*OED*)'s entries begin in 1397, and include one usage close in time to Marston's play: a line in Thomas Hudson's 1584 translation of Du Bartas's *Judith* poem ('Upon her head a silver crisp she pinned / Loose waving on her shoulders with the wind').<sup>52</sup>

So in 'Crispinella' we would seem to have one derivation pointing to an Englishwoman's modesty in dress and manners and another Latinate one evoking an erotically and intellectually exciting motion, the two brought together in a diminutive form that evokes commedia dell'arte naming practices. Crispinella's name can therefore be taken as a perfectly Janus-facing emblem of Marston's own relation to Italian theatre, absorbing and aligning it with, or concealing it within, an English plain-spokenness that owes much of its theatrical force to the very Italian models it elsewhere seeks to restrict. Crispinella corresponds on the female and theatrical side of the character ledger to Cocledemoy, similarly 'disrupt[ing]

the neat ideological closure' through her theatrical cosmopolitanism.<sup>53</sup> She is a vehicle through which Marston absorbs the energies of contemporary theatrical traditions that included the powerfully popular but, in England, largely inaccessible Italian commedia troupes. That Crispinella's name may thus be a fleeting and half-amused emblem of his own dramaturgical practice suggests that Marston knew exactly what he was doing with her.

Reporting on the critical evaluation of relations between English and Italian theatre some twenty years ago, Frances Barasch distinguished two lines of approach: an older one that argued the interchange had been minimal, and a more recent one that saw their relations as much more extensive and cordial.<sup>54</sup> The latter line has since had additional adherents with more developed arguments, including Barasch herself and Louise Clubb, but also Pamela Allen Brown, Robert Henke, and Eric Nicholson, among others.<sup>55</sup> In Marston's *Dutch Courtesan* it may be that we have a contemporary instance of an English playwright finessing the same question, in effect adopting the latter attitude but pretending to the former, using Crispinella and 'la bella Franceschina' as his cover.



## Notes

I wish in particular to thank Helen Ostovich, Deanne Williams, Pamela Brown, and the anonymous readers of *Early Theatre* for their helpful comments in developing this essay.

- 1 Alexander Leggatt, *Citizen Comedy in the Age of Shakespeare* (Toronto, 1972), 120, <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781487585938>; Brian Gibbons, *Jacobean City Comedy*, 2nd edn (New York, 1980), 118–20, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315270517>; Pascale Aebischer, *Jacobean Drama* (New York, 2010), 84; Marjorie Rubright, 'Going Dutch in London City Comedy: Economies of Sexual and Sacred Exchange in John Marston *The Dutch Courtesan* (1605)', *English Literary Renaissance* 40.1 (2010), 88–112, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6757.2009.01062.x>; Adam Zucker, 'The Social Logic of Ben Jonson's *Epicene*', *Renaissance Drama* 33 (2004), 60, <https://doi.org/10.1086/rd.33.41917386>.
- 2 G.K. Hunter, *English Drama 1586–162: The Age of Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1997), 320.
- 3 Jean E. Howard, 'Mastering Difference in *The Dutch Courtesan*', *Shakespeare Studies* 24 (1996), 105–17, 107.
- 4 See John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. Karen Britland (London, 2018), 101. All further references to the play are to this edition unless otherwise indicated. For the alternative reading of "tise", see *Oxford English Dictionary (OED) Online* s.v. tise.
- 5 Marston's naming practice in his play has, in effect, pasted the name of Beatrice over the top of the role function that, in Shakespeare's play, is taken by Hero, and provided a new name, Crispinella, for Shakespeare's witty satirist of male vanity and resister of marriage.
- 6 The English surname occurs repeatedly, for instance, in a court record for 1386 from Ramsey, Huntingdonshire (*BL Add. Roll 39626r*). See the transcript available at: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/r/ramsey/5811550.0001.001/1:73?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>. Britland (101) cites Florio's dictionary to show the contemporary currency of the Italian words in England. MacDonald P. Jackson and Michael Neill in their *Selected Plays* (Cambridge, 1986) give the note 'from Italian *putiferio*: stench' (295), but this etymology appears to be incorrect. Modern Italian *putiferio* 'a rumpus' dates from the nineteenth century. M.L. Wine's edition of *The Dutch Courtesan* (Neb-raska, 1965) does not gloss the name. The Latin verb *putāre* has a range of meanings including 'cleanse' and 'prune'. Helen Ostovich points out that the latter may relate to the character's status as a nurse (greenhouses are still known as nurseries) in 'Dramatis Personae', *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. E. Julian and H. Ostovich, *Oxford Works of John Marston*, ed. Matthew Steggle and Martin Butler (forthcoming), 10

- n. Marston presumably had access to both Latin *putus* [clean] and *puter* [rotten]. It would be characteristic of him to leave the ambiguity in full play.
- 7 Marston's may indeed be altogether the most polyglot of early modern English plays. Wiggins and Richardson note a total of seven languages making an appearance in it, plus two in gibberish or nonsense languages, Cocledemoy's 'Greek' and Franceschina's cod-Dutch dialect. See Martin Wiggins and Catherine Richardson, *British Drama 1533–1642: A Catalogue*, 9 vols (Oxford, 2015), 5.123.
  - 8 Mary Faugh's name is a nominalized expletive of some kind, obscene or scatological.
  - 9 John Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary of the Peerages of England, Ireland and Scotland*, 3rd edn (London, 1846), 214–15. Properly, the name was De Freville. Though the title was extinct by 1500, the family continued and the name is still especially marked around Cambridge, where a street and a farm bear it (as did a former pub, now a furniture store).
  - 10 *Dutch Courtesan*, ed. Wine, xviii–xix.
  - 11 In the 1605 quarto text, the courtesan's name is spelled 'Francischina', a variant somewhere between the Italian 'Franceschina' and the spelling 'Francisquina/Francoisquine' given in contemporary woodcuts (see below). The importance of the title character to the play is underlined by the highly unusual placement of her name at the top of the opening list of *Dramatis personae* in the 1605 quarto (A2v).
  - 12 Howard, 'Mastering Difference', 115–17, 109.
  - 13 Douglas A. Bruster, *Drama and the Market in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge, 1992), 90, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511553080>.
  - 14 A.J. Hoenselaars, *Images of Englishmen and Foreigners in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (London, 1992), 117–20; Scott Oldenburg, *Alien Albion: Literature and Immigration in Early Modern England* (Toronto, 2014), 121–7, <https://doi.org/10.3138/9781442667495>.
  - 15 See the overview of this material in M.A. Katritzky, 'How did the *Commedia dell'arte* cross the Alps to Bavaria?', *Theatre Research International* 16.3 (1991), 201–15, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s030788330001498x>. The du Bellay reference occurs in Sonnet 120 of *Les Regrets*, written during the poet's time in Rome in the mid-1550s and published in 1558. See *Les Regrets: choix de poèmes*, ed. Yvonne Wendel-Bellenger (Paris: 1969), 130.
  - 16 See Horst Leuchtman, *Orlando di Lasso*, 2 vols (Wiesbaden, 1977), 2.70.
  - 17 Katritzky, 'How Did the *Commedia dell'arte*', discusses passim a set of diary entries by Prince Ferdinand of Bavaria travelling in Italy in 1565–6 that offer the first record of a commedia-style play performance.

- 18 Massimo Troiano's account of these 1568 revels for the Bavarian royal wedding is well known. See Katritzky, 'How did the *Commedia dell'arte*', 201–2 and the relevant footnotes.
- 19 See Karl Trautmann, 'Italienische Schauspieler am bayerischen Hofe', *Jahrbuch für Münchener Geschichte* 1 (1887), 193–310. The entry is discussed on p 229 and transcribed on p 292.
- 20 'Amorevole, Battista', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol 3 (1961), [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/battista-amorevoli\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/battista-amorevoli_(Dizionario-Biografico)/); this article gives the titles of the Parisian works.
- 21 'Primissimo interprete di questo ruolo, con il nome di Franceschina, è Battista Amorevole da Treviso'. Vito Pandolfi, *La Commedia dell'arte: storia e testo*, 6 vols (Florence, 1957; rpt 1988), 1.163, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0307883300008981>.
- 22 See *Ferrara e la corte estense: del secolo decimosesto: i discorsi di Annibale Romei*, ed. Angelo Solerti (Città di Castello, 1891), 121–3. Tasso provided a prologue for the play.
- 23 See the full account of the song and the art-music derived from it by Warren Kirkendale, 'Franceschina, Girometta, and Their Companions in a Madrigal "a diversi linguaggi" by Luca Marenzio and Orazio Vecchi', *Acta Musicologica* 44.2 (1972), 181–235, <https://doi.org/10.2307/932169>.
- 24 Text as given in Kirkendale, 'Franceschina', 191. There are variants. This version, the fullest, dates from 1576, about contemporaneous with the Lasso text quoted above. An earlier version appears in the second part of a villotta (a polyphonic piece incorporating dialect songs) published in 1549 by Matthias Werrecore, the choirmaster of Milan cathedral, quoting the tune clearly, with similar words also elsewhere recorded: 'la bella Franceschina che la piange'et la sospira che la vorre mari' (Venice, 1549), 10. See the facsimile edited by Martine Sanders (*Musica Alamira*, 1987). The song was also known as 'La Bustachina' after its nonsense words and continued to be cited in drama and elsewhere. In Camillo Sbrozzi's *Liceo, favola pastorale* (Venice, 1606), for instance, Liceo sings fragments of it when he goes mad ('impazzisce') in act 3, scene 2: 'Ton, ton, teri, ton, ton, la bustachina, / Ninina la buffina, / La bella franceschina' (C4r–v).
- 25 Clubb proposes the very useful concept of the 'theatregram' as a way of pointing to borrowings and flows of influence not tied to particular texts, but focusing on flexible situations and practices moving through a decentralized theatre industry and across national borders and cultures. See Louise George Clubb, *Italian Drama in Shakespeare's Time* (New Haven, 1989), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt211qz0b>.
- 26 For Marenzio and Eckard see Kirkendale, 'Franceschina', *passim*. Orazio Vecchi (who added four voices to Marenzio's work) also referred to Franceschina as the wife

- of Zanni in an obscene dialogue song featuring Zanni and his master (“Tich-toch”), published in 1590. See Paul Schleuse, “‘Balla la mona e salt ail bubuino’: performing obscenity in a musical dialogue’, in *Sexualities, Textualities, Art and Music in Early Modern Italy*, ed. Melanie M. Marshall, Linda L. Carroll, and Katherine A. McIver (London, 2016), 41–72. Lasso, Eckard’s teacher, has a similar dialogue song (‘Zanni’), but it does not mention Franceschina.
- 27 On this collection, see Katritsky, ‘The *Recueil Fossard*, 1928–88: a review and three reconstructions’, in *The Commedia dell’arte from the Renaissance to Dario Fo*, ed. Christopher Cairns (Lampeter, 1989), 99–117. Franceschina in the Fossard collection is generally spelled ‘Francisquina’; in Marston she is consistently ‘Francischina’ in full, but variously in speech prefixes (even ‘Frank’).
- 28 This image is discussed as a pretext for two scenes in *Hamlet* by Frances Barasch, “He’s for a Iigge or a tale of Baudry”: Sixteenth Century Images of the Stage Jig’, *Shakespeare Bulletin* 13.1 (1995), 24–8.
- 29 Thomas Heywood, *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody*, pt 2 (London, 1605; STC: 13336), *Early English Books Online (eebo)*.
- 30 Thomas Nashe, *Pierce Penniless*, in *Thomas Nashe: Selected Works*, ed. Stanley Wells (1964; repr. 2015), 66. Ben Jonson refers to a similar triad when he has Corvino ask Scoto of Mantua angrily ‘What, is my wife your Francischina, sir?’ and expresses his fear of finding himself ‘new christened’ as ‘the Pantalone’ (Jonson, *Volpone*, ed. Brian Parker and David Bevington (Manchester, 1999), 2.3.4.7–8). A “Francischina” also appears in Chapman’s *May Day*, also set in Venice (London, 1611; STC: 4980; performed before 1608). Such references indicate that the stock characters were well-known in England as Marston was writing. We do not know to what extent such familiarity was from direct contact or from the circulation in England of accounts or images such as those collected by Fossard.
- 31 A further *Recueil Fossard* image (National Museum of Sweden G2213–1904, fol 14b) shows Arlecchino and ‘Zany Cornetto’ in a comic ‘combat amoureux’ of gymnastic feats for ‘Francisque’.
- 32 Alessandro D’Ancona, *Origini del Teatro in Italia*, 2 vols (Florence, 1877), 2.486 (for 1584) and 2.492 (for 1587). If Battista Amorevoli was with the Uniti-Confidenti troupe in 1584, as seems likely, then he was also in Paris later that year with Fabrizio dei Fornaris, who played as ‘Captain Cocodrillo’. Since this character appears in the images in the *Recueil Fossard*, it seems therefore also possible that the *Recueil* images featuring Franceschina may be based on actions and scenarios in which Amorevoli was the Franceschina.
- 33 ‘Amorevoli, Battista’, [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/battista-amorevoli\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/battista-amorevoli_(Dizionario-Biografico)).

- 34 Pierre Louis DuChartre, *The Italian Comedy* (London, 1929), 93.
- 35 Reproduced in *Los Corrales de Comedias y los Hospitales de Madrid: 1574–1615 Estudio y documentos*, ed. Charles Davis and J.E. Varey (Madrid, 1997), 128.
- 36 John V. Falconiere, 'Historia de la Commedia dell'Arte en España (conclusión)', *Revista de literatura* 12.23 (July 1957), 69–90, 74–5, including n 25. Oliver Crick and John Rudlin in their *Commedia dell'arte: A Handbook for Troupes* (Routledge, 2001), 34, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203181737>, misidentify this Franceschina again as Sylvia Roncagli.
- 37 Davis and Varey, *Los Corrales de Comedias y los Hospitales de Madrid* (1997), 128.
- 38 D'Ancona, *Origini*, 2.505 (1591) and 525 (1598). This Martinelli company seems to have shared significant personnel with the one that toured to England in 1578, including probably with women players. Whether that company had a male actor to play Franceschina is unknown. See E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols (Oxford, 1923), 2.261–3. More light is thrown on the Martinelli company in Flanders at this time in Willem Shrickx, 'Italian Actors in Antwerp in 1576: Drusiano Martinelli and Vincenzo Beladno', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 50.3 (1972), 796–806, <https://doi.org/10.3406/rbph.1972.2925>.
- 39 Stephen Orgel, "Nobody's perfect; or, Why did the English stage take boys for women?" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88.1 (1989), 7–29.
- 40 Howard, 'Mastering Difference', 110; Hoenselaars, *Images*, 117.
- 41 See the account printed and discussed in Anne Macneil, 'The Divine Madness of Isabella Andreini', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 120.2 (1995), 195–215, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrma/120.2.195>. The performance described took place in 1589, but by then Isabella was famous in such parts. 'The Demented Princess', a scenario printed in Flaminio Scala's collection of 1611 but possibly played by Andreini earlier, calls for such a performance for Alvira, princess of Portugal. See Richard Andrews, *The Commedia dell'Arte of Flaminio Scala* (Plymouth, 2008), 264–73.
- 42 The English stage also had its tradition of mad women, of course, but these may themselves have been linked to Italian precedents. For the complexity of relations between continental and insular traditions of feminine-gendered performance, see Pamela Allen Brown, "'Cattle of this colour": Boying the Diva in *As You Like It*', *Early Theatre* 15.1 (2012), 145–66.
- 43 See Jason Lawrence, 'Who the Devil taught thee so much Italian?': *Italian Language Learning and Literary Imitation in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2011), 129–51, <https://doi.org/10.7228/manchester/9780719069147.001.0001>.
- 44 'Fabulae argumentum', *Dutch Courtesan*, ed. Britland, 96.
- 45 *Dutch Courtesan*, ed. Wine, xx; Jackson and Neill, *Selected Plays*, 295; John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. David Crane (New York, 1997), 4.

- 46 *Dutch Courtesan*, ed. Britland, 101. Britland also refers to her earlier discussion (27–33) of the name as alluding to the character ‘Crispinus’ in Jonson’s *Poetaster*, taken to be a satiric portrait of Marston himself. Crispinella, under this view, would be a diminutive comic female image of Marston though ‘in no way intended as a sustained self-portrait’ (33).
- 47 Jackson and Neill, *Selected Plays*, 295; *Dutch Courtesan*, ed. Britland, 101.
- 48 See the discussion in Clubb, *Italian Drama*, 268–9 in relation to Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing*.
- 49 Juvenal, ‘Satura VI’, ed. G.G. Ramsay (New York, 1918); rpt in *Perseus Digital Library*, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2007.01.0093%3Abook%3D2%3Apoem%3D6>. Translation mine.
- 50 Virgil, ‘Copa’, in *Virgil*, ed. Jeffrey Henderson, 2 vols (Cambridge MA, 2001), 2.438. Translation mine.
- 51 *OED*, s.v. ‘crisp’, 1.
- 52 Thomas Hudson, *The Historie of Judith in Forme of a Poeme* (Edinburgh, 1584), 4.51–2, ed. James Craigie (Edinburgh, 1941), 58.
- 53 Howard, ‘Mastering Difference’, 109.
- 54 Frances K. Barasch, ‘Shakespeare and the Italians’, *The Shakespearean International Yearbook* 1 (1999), 240–54.
- 55 See, for example, Robert Henke, ‘Back to the Future: A Review of Comparative Studies in Shakespeare and the Commedia dell’Arte’, *Early Theatre* 11.2 (2008), 227–40; Eric Nicholson, ‘Ophelia Sings like a Prima Donna Innamorata: Ophelia’s Mad Scene and the Italian Female Performer’, in *Transnational Exchange in Early Modern Drama*, ed. Robert Henke and Eric Nicholson (Aldershot, 2008), 81–98; Pamela Allen Brown, *The Diva’s Gift to the Shakespearean Stage* (forthcoming); Brown, ‘Cattle of this Colour’.