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The Oxford Marston and *The Dutch Courtesan*

This paper situates the play in the context of the ongoing Complete Works of John Marston, under preparation for Oxford University Press, the first such collected critical edition ever to have been created. It discusses the edition's aims and working practices as well as the new picture of Marston we expect to emerge from it. Scholars now often encounter The Dutch Courtesan in isolation, as Marston's single best-known and most-read play. This paper approaches the play in the context of Marston's career and publication history as a whole, in addition to the textual and theatrical relationships which work on the edition is gradually coming to disclose.

This essay addresses *The Dutch Courtesan* (ca 1603–5) in the context of the new *Complete Works of John Marston*, currently under development for Oxford University Press. The Oxford Marston aims to generate a critical text of the complete canon — Marston's six comedies, three tragedies, and two tragicomedies, his Ovidian epyllion and two volumes of satires, two aristocratic and civic entertainments — and is being produced by a team of seventeen scholars, led by Matthew Steggle and Martin Butler as general editors. Work on the Oxford Marston has been under way for four years and is already well advanced. The Oxford Marston team will issue the edition in two parallel formats: a modern spelling print text in four volumes with full introductions and commentaries, and an old spelling version, text and collation only, for digital publication. Helen Ostovich and Erin Julian serve as editors for the Oxford Marston's print version of *The Dutch Courtesan*; the editor of the old spelling text is José A. Perez Diez, who has overall responsibility for the whole project's digital component. In this essay, I offer some preliminary remarks about *The Dutch Courtesan* in relation to the encompassing project of retrieving Marston's works for a modern readership.

In embarking on this enterprise, we are doing something that runs up against what Marston himself wanted. In 1633 an early attempt was made to produce a

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volume of his works, just a year before his death at the age of 57. Publisher William Sheares assembled the collection, which was far from complete: it comprised only six plays, including *The Dutch Courtesan*, and notably omitting *The Malcontent*. Nonetheless, Sheares titled it *The Works of Mr. John Marston, being Tragedies and Comedies, Collected into One Volume*. In his preface, Sheares praised Marston's plays and added that 'were it not that he is so far distant from this place' he would probably have revised them before they were reprinted.¹ Marston, of course, had no such plans. He had been residing in Hampshire, where he held a living as a minister, and had long cut himself off from the London theatres. It appears that when he became aware that copies of the volume had been issued, he demanded that Sheares supply a new title page calling it simply *Tragedies and Comedies* and suppressing mention of the author's name. This is a characteristic gesture from a writer who put on his tombstone the inscription '*Oblivioni Sacrum*' — not sacred to the memory, but sacred to the forgetting of John Marston.

After 1633, Marston drops almost completely from view, and it's not until 1856 that James Orchard Halliwell (subsequently Halliwell-Phillipps) attempted to bring together a collected works. This small three-volume set is interesting as a landmark but is of limited value textually, being a largely unemended reprint of Sheares's work with *The Malcontent* and some other texts added. This collection makes a few attempts at editorial correction but essentially reproduces the quartos without change. The preface states that the plays 'are reprinted absolutely from the early editions, which were placed in the hands of our printers, who thus had the advantage of following them without the intervention of a transcriber'.² We have to wait until 1887 and Arthur H. Bullen's *Works of John Marston* in three volumes to get a properly edited collection, but Bullen (who edited in modern spelling) did not know about Marston's authorship of *Histriomastix* and *Jack Drum's Entertainment*; conversely, he includes *The Mountebank's Masque*, which we now know to be spurious. In 1934–9 H. Harvey Wood produced an old spelling edition of just the plays, and Arnold Davenport edited the poems and entertainments in 1961, but since 1887 no one, astonishingly, has thought it worth producing a complete text.

Marston has long been thought of as a difficult writer, and despite a resurgence of critical interest in the twentieth century, he has tended to languish on the margins of readers' attention.³ One suspects this neglect is bound up with the absence of a reliable edition. Recent decades have seen major editions of Jonson, Webster, Ford, Middleton, Chapman, Massinger, Dekker, Brome, and Beaumont and Fletcher, but Marston is the obvious missing figure. Not only is he less available in print, but also he has not had the focused, systematic editorial work directed to

him as have his fellow dramatists. Unsolved problems remain in his chronology, and scholars disagree over Marston's authorship of several texts. Fine editions of individual plays exist, most recently Karen Britland's splendid *Dutch Courtesan* for the Arden series (2018), but there is no complete consolidated collection that reflects the state of knowledge or offers an up-to-date overview of his writing. These things have to be pieced together from multiple sources. Indeed, some of the plays that were only attributed to him in modern times, such as *Histriomastix* and *Jack Drum's Entertainment*, have never been properly edited at all.

But sadly the situation is still more problematic. By default, Harvey Wood's edition of the plays from the 1930s has become the standard text, but it falls a long way short of what we need. Wood's lasting claim to fame is that he was a brilliant arts administrator: he founded the Edinburgh International Festival, Britain's premier arts event. As an editor, however, he lacked experience, and his three volumes do not come up to the levels of a definitive text. His textual work is tentative: he is often unsure about how to handle problems, inconsistent in his principles, and, despite many sensible choices, spotty over details. Wood seems rather embarrassed to be editing Marston at all, his introductions voicing a prudishly Victorian view of his author as neurotic and obsessed with sex. Discouragingly, he says that Marston's plays 'have probably disappointed more readers than those of any other Elizabethan dramatist'.⁴ He is also disarmingly frank about his own sense of falling short, informing the reader that although he recognizes that the texts frequently need correcting, he is reluctant to do it, and refrains from tinkering out of a consciousness of his own uncertainty. 'I have preferred the corruptions of 1602', he says, 'to original corruptions of my own'.⁵ When his first volume came out, W.W. Greg gave it a coruscating review, adding that the work is so defective it should not 'interfere with the production of the serious edition which is rather urgently needed'.⁶ But Wood completed the other two volumes and Greg's 'serious edition' has never materialized. This means there is no central point of reference for how Marston's writings fit together or what his most tricky details signify.

So the hope is that the Oxford edition will help to make Marston more available for modern scholarship. The edition will appear on two levels, in print and online. The print volumes aim at students and ordinary readers. They will set out the works in chronological order and modern spelling, with full introductions and notes; general introductions will describe Marston's life and career, discuss his history in print and in the theatre, and collect references to him during his lifetime and afterwards. The aim is to allow the texts and the shape of his career to be seen on their own terms. The Oxford Marston's second level of online texts

will present the works in unmodernized form, preserving the original spellings and giving a detailed account of printing house and editorial changes. These texts will have collations but no introductions or notes; they will form a reference edition that documents the texts as first printed and allows readers to inspect the data from which modern spelling editors have made their choices. This two-level format aims to accommodate the needs of different kinds of users: to create an accessible but serious reading edition and a digital text in which semantics, punctuation, orthography, and textual history are all visible. At the same time, the digital edition will not be an unemended reprint of the copy-texts but will include some regularization and correction to enable the texts to be readable in old spelling form. For instance, the editors will standardize speech-headings, introduce minimal but necessary regularization of punctuation, and add sufficient stage directions, in square brackets, to allow the action to be understood without the reader having to refer constantly to the print text.

Of all Marston's plays, *The Dutch Courtesan* probably needs least editorial rethinking as it has already had several serious modern editions. *Dutch Courtesan* is a relatively straightforward text since there is only one witness, the 1605 quarto, and there is no doubt about its authorship or about when and where it was first performed. Nonetheless, resituating it in the context of the works as a whole does provoke questions about how this play sits in the overall dynamic of Marston's career, questions we can usefully pursue through comparative bibliographical analysis. The following comments are not intended to anticipate Ostovich and Julian's account of the play, but are merely my personal reflections independent of any perspective that the editors are developing in their more detailed work.

Because Marston is one of those writers who attended to the circulation of his texts in print as well as the theatre, we may usefully think about whether he presents himself consciously as a literary writer or not. This question has been ventilated a lot recently, particularly following the influential work of Lukas Erne, who has made the case for seeing Shakespeare not just as a working playwright but as a literary writer alert about being read.⁷ The issue applies powerfully to Ben Jonson who, as Marston's great rival, used print publication as a means of shaping a literary identity for himself. The landmark book here is Jonson's *Every Man Out of His Humour*, printed in 1600 in a quarto bristling with prologues, inductions, character descriptions, a printer's note, and other paratextual devices designed to underline that it was written for readers as much as for the stage. Jonson went on to do something similar in the 1601 quarto of *Cynthia's Revels*, the 1602 quarto of *Poetaster*, and the 1607 quarto of *Volpone*, with its famous prefatory essay and its dedication of the volume to the 'two universities'.⁸ Notably on the title page

of *Every Man Out*, Jonson calls himself ‘the Author’ — an unusual word in the printed drama of this period, which more normally refers to play ‘makers’ or eventually ‘playwrights’. (The term ‘dramatist’ doesn’t crop up until the 1640s.⁹) Jonson signals his literary ambitions through this designation of himself as Author; he uses the term even more prominently the next year in *Poetaster*. Conversely, Jonson is the first person to use the word ‘playwright’ as a pejorative term for a stage writer — in the opposition between authors and playwrights, playwrights have lower status, and ‘playwright’ is a demeaning term against which authors measure their legitimacy. A good case exists for supposing that Jonson actually invented this word. Its earliest appearance in print is in three epigrams poking fun at someone called ‘Playwright’, poems which are thought to be satirical attacks on Marston.¹⁰ So simply in the semantics of authorship, it is Marston whom Jonson sees as his principal rival.

By contrast, Marston’s attitude towards authorship seems more casual. In the Induction to *Jack Drum’s Entertainment*, the stage tireman comes onstage and refers neutrally to the writer as ‘he that composed the book’.¹¹ In the preface to his satirical comedy *The Fawn*, Marston writes, ‘Comedies are writ to be spoken, not read: remember the life of these things consists in action’.¹² And in the preface to *The Malcontent* he says he is afflicted ‘to think that scenes invented merely to be spoken should be inforcively published to be read’ and hopes that ‘the unhand-some shape which this trifle in reading presents may be pardoned for the pleasure it once afforded you when it was presented with the soul of lively action’.¹³ Here, then, we find an affectation of nonchalance towards stage writing, a pose of casualness concerning whether plays should be printed. They belong in the playhouse not the study. But this attitude is at odds with the way that elsewhere Marston does pick up on the term ‘author’. The induction to *What You Will* opens with two gentlemen seated on the stage discussing the performance, and they refer more than once to their ‘friend, the author’.¹⁴ Other than Jonson, no other stage writer is using the term at this time. Marston is (I think, though would be happy to be corrected) only the second playwright to call himself an author.

Moreover, Marston was quick to imitate Jonson’s habit of conducting dialogues with his readers. In 1601, *Antonio and Mellida* begins with a mock dedication to ‘Nobody’.¹⁵ *The Malcontent* has an address to the reader and a dedication to Ben Jonson. *The Dutch Courtesan* has its brief *fabulae argumentum* prefixed to the whole play. *The Fawn* has a long address to the reader, as does the tragedy *Sophonisba*, the last text Marston completed before he retired from the stage. In the first decade of the century, paratextual material quickly becomes common in printed plays. By 1607 it had been taken up by Dekker, Day, Field, Chapman,

Sharpham, and others, but five years earlier this was a novel gesture. Marston and Jonson together pioneer the habit of setting out plays with addresses to the reader as part of the process of articulating their models of authorial self-presentation. Remarkably, if we set aside closet drama that was written only to be read, then Marston's epistle to Jonson at the head of *The Malcontent* was the first time that any play intended for professional performance appeared with a dedication to a named individual.

Marston, then, oscillates between being a writer who effaces himself, removing his name from the title page, and one who plays the game of authorial identities going on during his brief writing career. When editing his works, it thus becomes a special point of interest to pin down what happened in the print shop as his texts came onto the market. Was the author actually overseeing his works as they were printed and shaping their appearance, or was he just providing the copy (either directly or via an intermediary)? How far can we be sure whether he was actively involved in fashioning the printed texts, and what does this mean for how we go about editing them?

We can approach this question by thinking about the sequence in which Marston's plays were printed. Broadly speaking, his texts fall into two groups. On the one hand are those five plays which have no sign of any authorial involvement in their printing. Three are collaborations (*Histriomastix* [ca 1599–1602], *Eastward Ho!* [1605], and *The Insatiate Countess* [ca 1608–13]) — and two are single-authored plays printed in a chaotic style which suggests the copy had not been fully finalized (*Jack Drum's Entertainment* [1600] and *What You Will* [1601]). Interestingly, in several copies of the first quarto of *The Insatiate Countess* someone cut Marston's name from the title page, leaving only a hole, and one copy has a cancel title page with his name omitted; something similar happened in Q3 (1631; STC: 17478), which also has a cancel omitting his name. We might think of these variations as further acts of authorial disavowal, or anti-authorship.

This leaves seven volumes that are much better printed. These fall into two groups, those appearing down to 1602 (roughly the time of his involvement with the Children of Paul's) and those printed after 1604 (his years at the Blackfriars). The earlier group are two volumes of poems (*The Metamorphosis of Pygmalion's Image* and *The Scourge of Villainy*, both 1598) and the two *Antonio* plays (*Antonio and Mellida* [ca 1599] and *Antonio's Revenge* [ca 1600]), issued as a pair. The poems are Marston's best presented works, carefully laid out with paratextual material and, in the second edition, clearly revised by the author. The second quarto of *The Scourge of Villainy* shows Marston actively reshaping his text. He not only adds new poems and a dedication, but also tinkers with the language, refines the metre

and edits out repetitions. He moves passages out of roman type and into italics, particularly sententious lines and phrases. And he even alters some orthography, for example changing the spelling of the Roman satirist from Persius to Perseus. Spelling variants usually reflect compositorial preferences, but this change seems more deliberate and a sign of Marston policing textual minutiae.¹⁶

The *Antonio* plays are also typographically very intelligent, though this probably reflects the preferences of the printer Richard Bradock (who produced the first quarto of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1600) rather than the author. These plays show much careful thought in layout, choice of type, and mise-en-page, as well as some unusual features, notably the use of pilcrows to signal stage directions — a striking and rare device. We may find it tempting to speculate that this attentiveness originates with the author, were it not that we find pilcrows in three other plays from the same printing house around these months.¹⁷ Moreover, it appears doubtful that Marston proofed the text, for there are very few variants, and several places where the text makes no sense, which one would have expected an author to put right were he closely involved. So the situation seems to show not Marston's own hand but the playwright benefitting from an experienced printer who set out the play in a manner that does justice to it as a reading text.

The Dutch Courtesan belongs to the second group of four texts, alongside *The Malcontent* (ca 1602–4), *The Fawn* (ca 1604), and *Sophonisba* (1605), printed in close proximity. Each of the other playtexts shows signs of an author engaged on some level with printing house production. *The Malcontent* is one of the period's most heavily revised plays. There are three separate quartos from 1604, each of which is quite different. The second quarto is printed from standing type that had been used for the first, but has revisions that must have originated with the author; and the third is expanded for performance by the King's Men to include new passages supplied by Marston and a collaborator (John Webster). *Sophonisba* is unusual by virtue of its stage directions: it has by far the most elaborate music cues of any play in the period, reflecting what must have been a carefully prepared manuscript. There are numerous proof-changes and, while these are not always reliable, some may have been Marston's, for an authorial note at the end, apologizing for surviving errors, indicates that he inspected some sheets during the printing (although the evidence is ambiguous). Meanwhile *The Fawn* has a remarkable story since there are two quartos issued in 1606, and these were not produced in clear sequence but passed through the print shop virtually simultaneously — an almost unique situation that seems to have been an attempt by the printer, expecting big sales, to produce a large edition without having to obey the rules that set limits on the number of copies that could be printed in a single issue. And

since there are numerous verbal differences between the two *Fawn* quartos, Marston must have been on hand, making his own revisions for the second quarto as the sheets for the first came off the press.

There are various factors that suggest close links between the printing of these four plays, notably an intricate web of connections between the printers and publishers of *The Fawn*, *Sophonisba*, and *The Dutch Courtesan*. The only publisher named for *The Dutch Courtesan* was John Hodgets, but Eleazar Edgar, who was the publisher of *Sophonisba* must also have had some interest in it. A Stationers' Register entry on 19 April 1613 transferred Edgar's residual interest to Hodgets, who also took over Edgar's publication rights to *Sophonisba*, and other evidence suggests there was a long-standing business relationship between the two.¹⁸ Moreover, Edgar had no shop of his own, so there is a puzzle as to where *Sophonisba* was marketed. The title page says copies 'are to be sold near Ludgate', and Martin Wiggins has plausibly suggested that this may have been the shop owned by William Cotton, who was the publisher for *The Fawn*.¹⁹ If Wiggins is correct, then *The Fawn* and *Sophonisba* were being sold side by side, and this is indeed what is suggested by the preface to the second quarto of *The Fawn*, which Marston uses to advertise the impending publication of *Sophonisba*.

The Dutch Courtesan further links to *The Fawn* since both plays were printed by the same man, Thomas Purfoot. These two quartos interestingly share a small typographic oddity in that each makes use of the 'caudated e' (that is, an 'e' with a small tail or cedilla below, which is used as an abbreviation in medieval Latin to signal 'ae').²⁰ (See Figure 1.) This piece of type is normally restricted to learned publications and is extremely rare — perhaps almost unknown — in books in English, and there is no obvious printing house rationale, such as shortage of

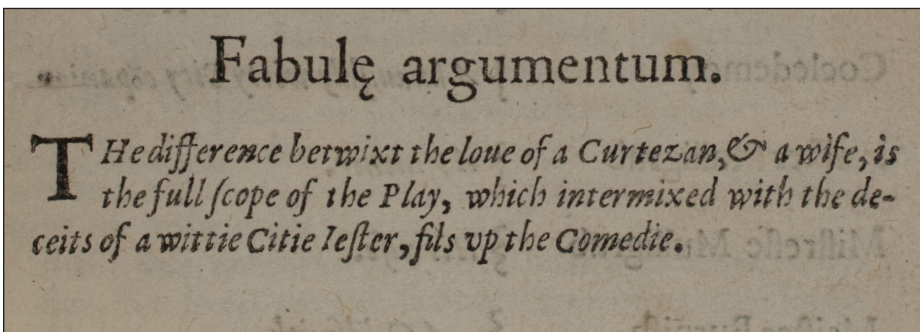


Figure 1. *The Dutch Courtesan* (London, 1605; src: 17475), A2. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

space, for its appearance here. Caution would require us to see this usage as essentially an unusual compositorial preference, though given its visual prominence in *The Dutch Courtesan*, where the type appears as part of a header in the paratext, we could think of it as a Marstonian thumbprint, one which suggests the author's ambitions to make his play visible as a serious, learned piece of work.

The Malcontent has no explicit links to the other three titles in terms of printer or publisher, but the unusual textual situation — with the extensive and irregular use of standing type — is very similar to the printing house tactics adopted for *The Fawn*, suggesting that both plays were expected to reach an uncommonly large readership. These four plays were all very fresh: each was printed within just a few months of its original appearance on stage. It was often the case that companies held onto their texts while they were performing them and resisted their being published as books, but this looks like an impactful marketing strategy for the works of a single author associated with one of London's leading playhouses. The care with which Marston's earliest texts got printed seems of a piece with his literary ambitions at that stage of his career, but the concatenation among these four later texts is no less striking. Marston has been called a 'chastened author' at this point in his life, no longer writing plays with the experimental flair and ambition for novelty that was so apparent earlier on.²¹ Yet these four are arguably his most substantial and weighty works, and suggest how, with his move to the Blackfriars, his style changed and deepened into something more weighty and demanding. The attention to layout and printing house detail, and the impression of a distinct strategy for their publication, suggests that this seriousness was matched by the care that went into the presentation of these four plays as they came before a readership.

So how does this state of affairs bear onto *The Dutch Courtesan*? Unlike the other three plays, *The Dutch Courtesan* has no preface or dedication, but it does have a brief summary of the theme, a reliable list of characters, and a Latin epigraph tucked strangely into the right-hand margin of the first page of dialogue. Although these features need not have originated with Marston, they are paralleled in the other three texts, sometimes closely. *The Malcontent* and *The Fawn* both have Latin epigraphs similar to *The Dutch Courtesan* and in the same unusual marginal position at the head of the first scene. (See Figures 2a, 2b, and 2c.) *Sophonisba* has a preface offering a short argument summarizing the play's theme, albeit in verse rather than prose. All three plays feature lists of persons with layouts very close to that used in *The Dutch Courtesan*, *The Malcontent's* layout being especially similar with its parallel columns, curly brackets and descriptive character explanations. (See Figures 3a, 3b, and 3c.) These are Marston's only plays

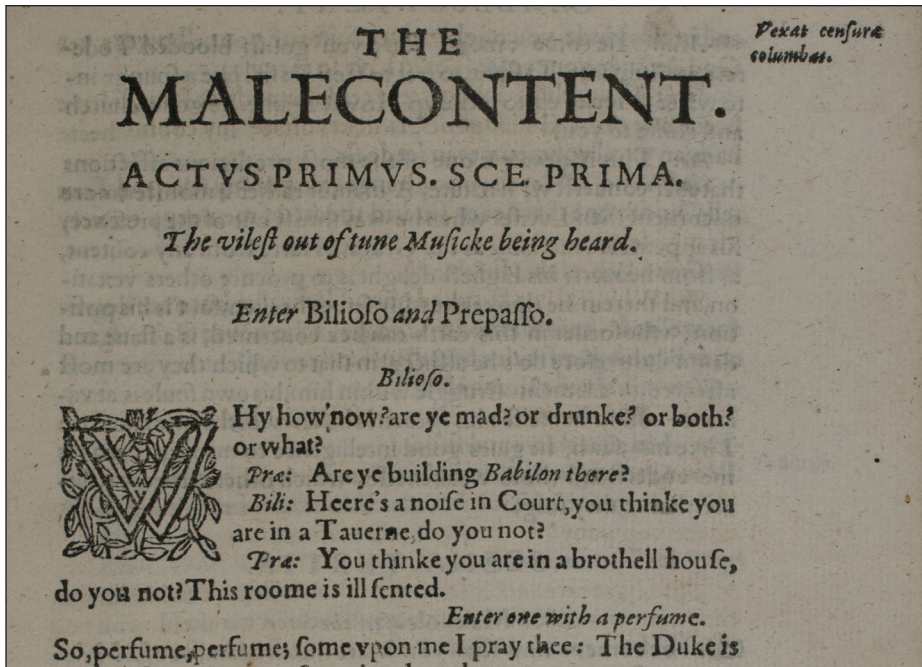


Figure 2a. *The Malcontent* (London, 1604; stc: 17481), B1. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

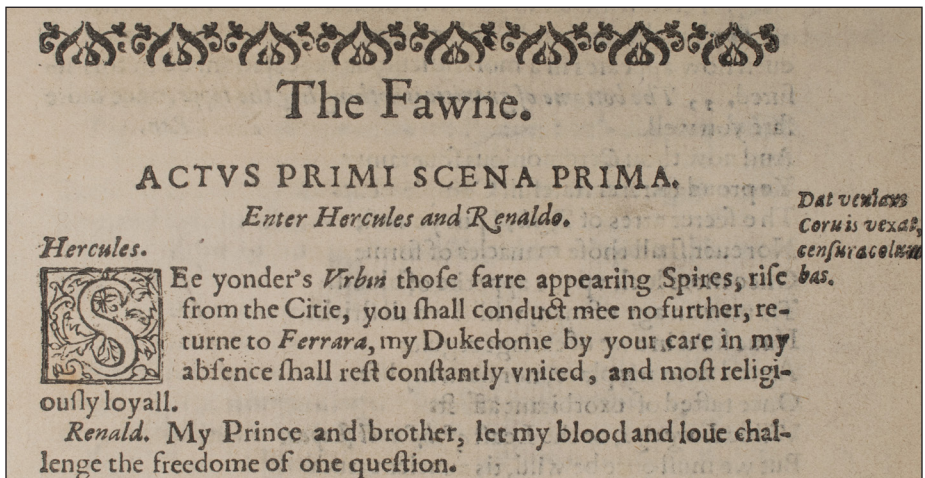


Figure 2b. *The Malcontent* (London, 1604; stc: 17481), B1. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

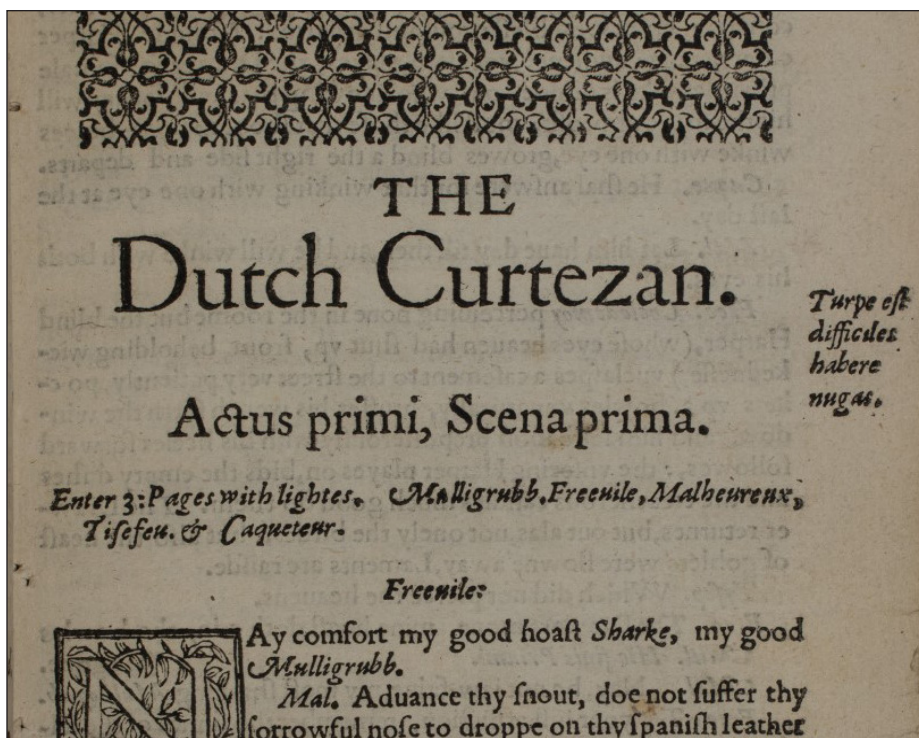


Figure 2c. *The Dutch Courtezan* (London, 1605; stc: 17475), A3. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

printed with lists of characters. All four use Latin scene headings, along the lines of Actus Primi, Scena Prima, etc. These similarities are all the more remarkable in that three different printers were involved in their production, so the resemblances of layout derive not from one print shop but either from a common scribe or ultimately from Marston himself. There is a plausible case, then, for seeing a single template or intelligence at work behind their presentation.

What can we say about the text that the printer reproduces in the quarto? Here I defer to Helen Ostovich and Erin Julian but offer the following comments as tentative reflections from my own perspective as interested party. The text frequently received corrections as it went through the press. Collation reveals that almost three-quarters of the book (eleven out of sixteen formes) survives in multiple states, giving us more than forty variant readings across the whole play. It is difficult to be confident whether Marston himself was responsible for any of these as many are simple corrections of a kind that any printer's reader

<i>Dramatis personæ.</i>	
Giouanni Altofronto	} Disguised Maleuole sometime Duke of Genoa.
Pietro Iacomo	} Duke of Genoa.
Mendozo	} A Minion to the Dutchesse of Pietro Iacomo.
Celfo	} A friend to Altofront.
Biliofo	} An olde cholerike Marshall.
Prepasso	} A Gentleman Vsher.
Ferneze	} A yong Courtier, and inamored on the Dutchesse.
Ferrardo	} A Minion to Duke Pietro Iacomo.
Equato Guerrino	} Two Courtiers.
Aurelia	} Dutches to Duke Pietro Iacomo.
Maria	} Dutches to Duke Altofront.
Emilia Beancha	} Two Ladies attending the Dut- chesse.
Maquerelle	} An olde Pandresse.
Pasarello	} Foole to Biliofo.

Figure 3a. Cast list for *The Malcontent* (London, 1604; stc: 17481), A2v. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

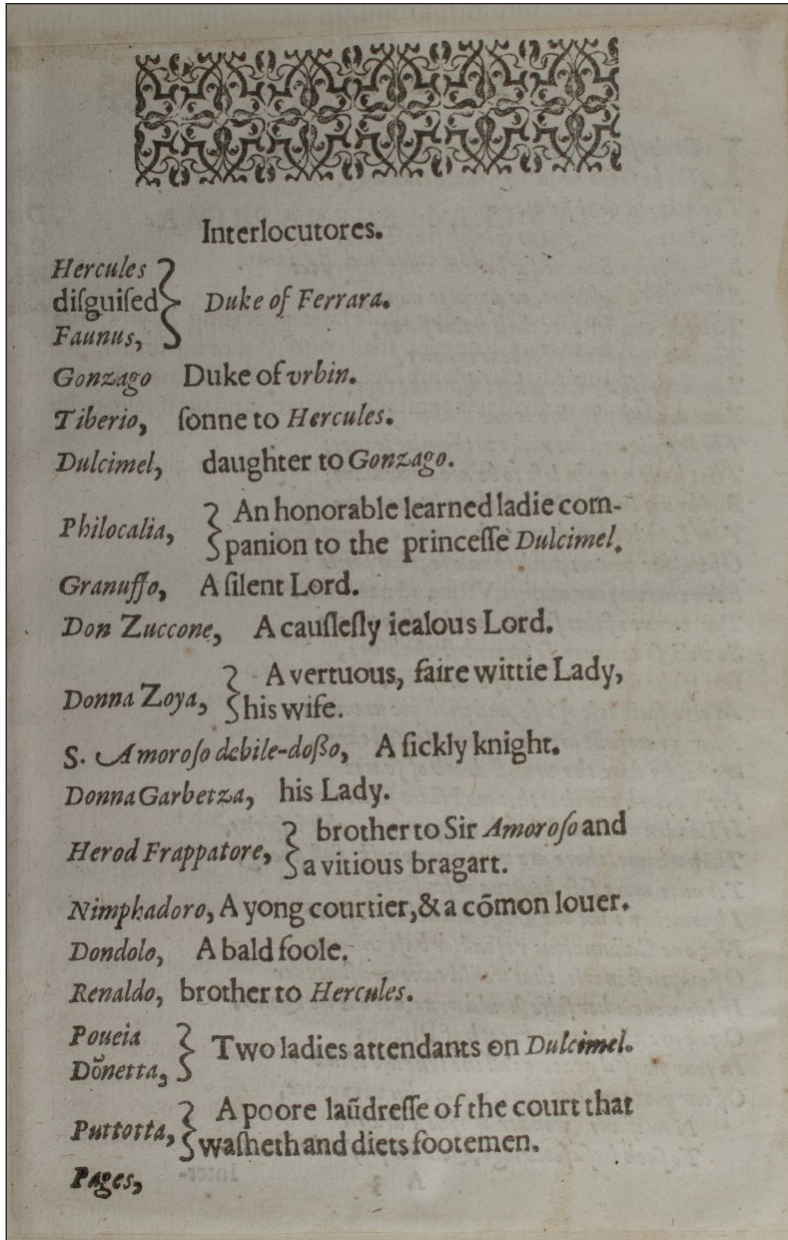


Figure 3b. Cast list for *Parasitaster, or The Fawne* (London, 1606; src: 17484), A3v. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

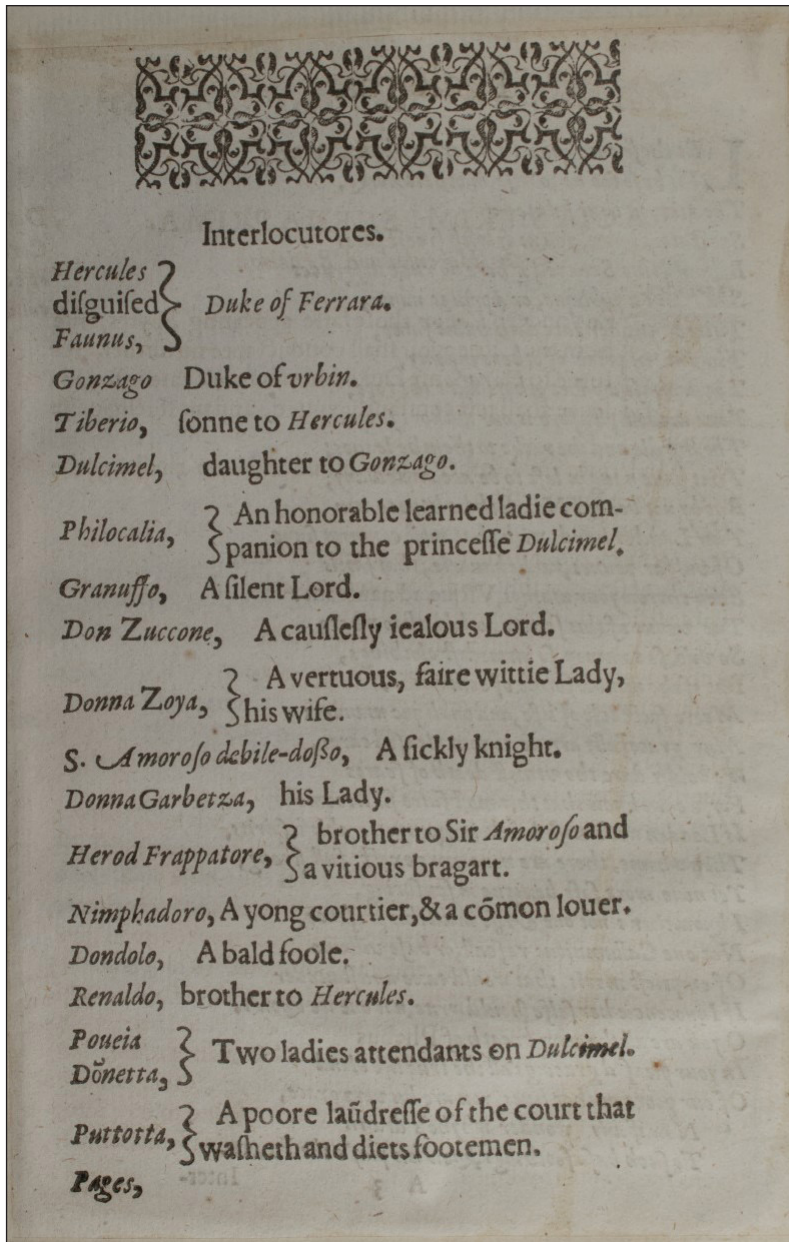


Figure 3c. Cast list for *The Dutch Courtezan* (London, 1605; STC: 17475), A2v. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

might have made. The most Marstonian thumbprints appear where passages in roman type shift into italic since this detail is something with which printers might not bother but is a habit we do find elsewhere in Marston. For example, as Karen Britland points out, on G4 in some copies the word ‘Cataracks’ and the name ‘Don Dubon’ change from roman to italic.²² More striking, though, is the printer’s failure to correct some obvious errors, which remain in all copies. So the Latin tag in Malheureux’ speech on B4v (2.1.80)²³ is flawed: the fourth word is ‘*gaudia*’, but a full stop is sitting in place of the letter i. Similarly, the stage direction ‘*Cantat Gallice*’, meaning ‘she sings in the French style’, crops up incorrectly on C3 in the middle of a speech by Franceschina (2.2.62). It not only interrupts the speech, but also appears in the wrong place altogether, for it relates to a passage five lines below, where Franceschina sings ‘Mine Mettre sing non oder song’. Probably the direction was written in the margin of the manuscript but has been inserted randomly into the text. (See Figure 4.) And again, on B2 the stage direction ‘*Enter Cocledemoy*’ is quite wrong, for Cocledemoy is already present on the stage from earlier in the scene. Remarkably, collation shows that the printer added this direction when the page was proofed, so it constitutes an incorrect change made during the process of correction. This mistake suggests that at this point in the process the proofing happened without reference to the author.²⁴

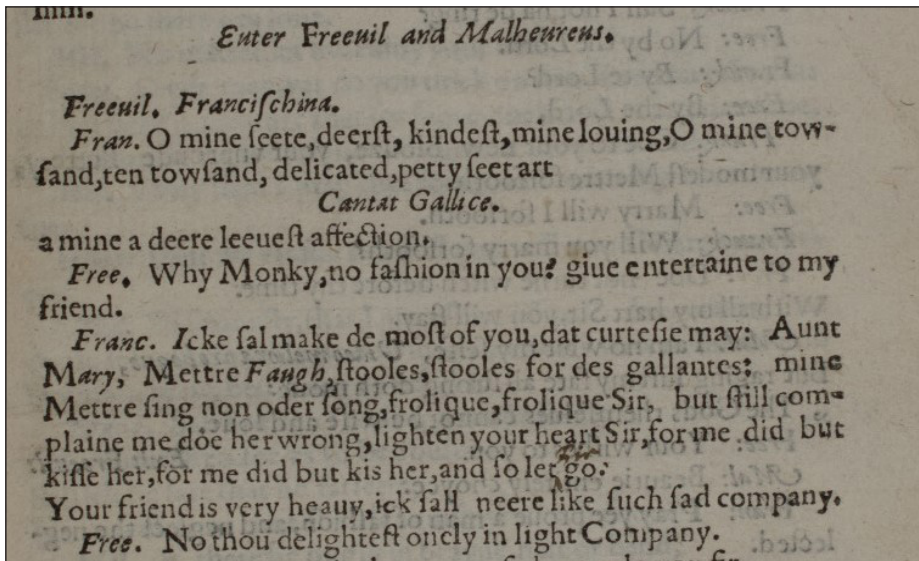


Figure 4. *The Dutch Courtesan* (London, 1605; stc: 17475), C3. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

Another question to consider is what we can deduce about the manuscript lying behind the printed text, and its possible features. One aspect of *The Dutch Courtesan* quarto that looks distinctively Marstonian is the large number of typographical marks used to highlight sententiae or aphoristic speech. Something like 30% of the pages have marks that serve this purpose. To take some random examples, at the end of act 1 scene 2, two sententious lines get marked with double commas as a strong finish to the act (B3v; 1.2.184–5). In the next scene, two individual aphorisms a few lines apart are marked in the dialogue between Freevill and Beatrice: ‘He that is wise, pants, on a priuate brest’; ‘But not to be extreame, nothing in loue’s extreame’ (B4, 2.1.36, 48). Shortly after that we have an aphorism that begins in mid-line — ‘O accursed reason ...’ (B4v, 2.1.87) — so that the typographic marks intrude directly into the line rather than being placed at the beginning. Even more striking on C1 is a whole passage set off typographically: ‘InContinence will force a Continence ...’. (See Figure 5.) These lines are in fact a paraphrase of an idea from Montaigne, framed by lines which foreground its generality — ‘take this as firmest sence ... This is something too waighty for thy [st]oore’ — hence the typography is literally and pointedly enclosing a quotation (2.1.123–8). These examples suggest the variety and range of citational typography adopted in the quarto, a factor which points towards a text designed for reading as much as performance. In the theatre actors might acknowledge such marks by adopting a heightened dramatic style, but really these devices are

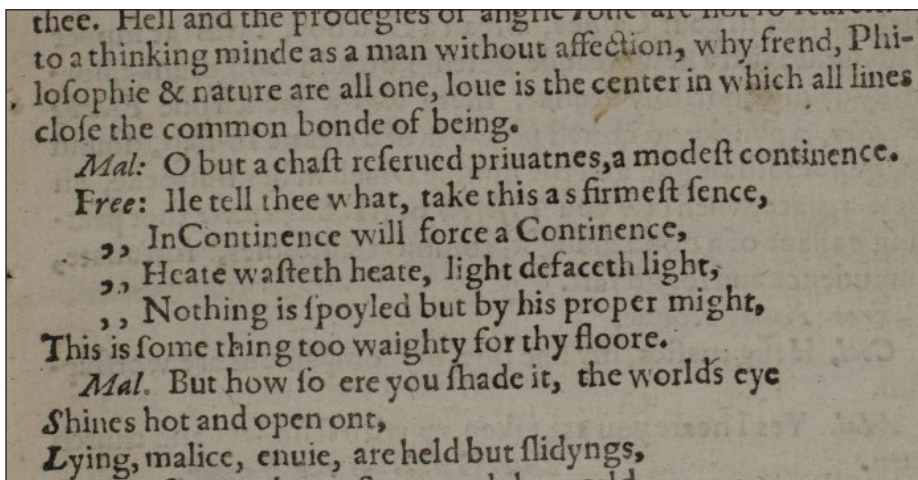


Figure 5. *The Dutch Courtesan* (London, 1605; strc: 17475), C1. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

directed at the eye and invite the reader to recognize the intellectual habits of quotation or commonplacings that lie beneath the writing. And this device appears frequently elsewhere in Marston, who in many quartos uses double commas, or italics, or symbolic typography to highlight passages. Such marks are so regular in Marston's quartos that in the Oxford edition we are considering retaining them rather than relegating them to the collation, as most previous editions have done (if they acknowledge them at all). This punctuation signals an authorial aspect of the texts that contributes functionally to their meaning.

So there is evidence of careful literary preparation in the underlying manuscript. On the other hand, some loose ends suggest that the manuscript was less than completely tied off. One is some inconsistency in the plotting which, arguably, does not always seem fully thought through. A possible example is the dialogue among the young gentlemen in the first scene, which has a passage discussing jewellery that sets up the plot point later on where Caquetteur shows off to Crispinella a ring that he pretends is his own but that he has borrowed from a friend. In the middle of the play, the ring is on loan from Tisefew, but at first mention in this early scene it is being worn by Freevill. To resolve this discrepancy, editors alter the speech headings so that the remarks attributed to Freevill in the quarto get transferred to Tisefew. Q's speech heading could just be a compositorial slip, but another possibility is that in writing this dialogue Marston had not yet worked out how this plot strand was to develop and only later discovered that he needed to engage Tisefew in it rather than Freevill. If so, then the underlying copy here reflects a state of the play before it came into production in the theatre. (A further discrepancy is the confusion over the name of the character Garnish, mentioned below.)

The other large inconsistency in the quarto is its muddle over how to spell the characters' names. The names are complex, of course, and the quarto does present a firm list at the outset, but what follows is a chaos of competing spellings. Malheureux appears spelled five ways, Freevill six ways, and Tisefew in no less than eight different forms. Particularly notable is the fact that Malheureux is spelled more often with an s than an x, and Freevill is more often Freevile than Freevill. Tisefew is completely irregular, with no one form of the name dominant, but Caquetteur more often appears as Caquetteure, and Mary Faugh with an a appears less frequently than Mary Fough with an o. Some of these variations are clearly misprints, and it may well be the compositors had trouble with the copy and were doing their best with unfamiliar names. A reader might easily confuse a secretary hand terminal s with an x, and spellings of words that are essentially expletives, like 'faugh', are notoriously difficult to pin down, so that in such circumstances

composers resort to personal preference. Nominal confusion is common in early playtexts, in which spellings are often inconsistent or appear different from what we are used to (Gertrad in *Hamlet* Q2, for example), but the range of variation in *The Dutch Courtesan* does make it an extreme case. Most modern spelling editors assume that the forms in the prefatory list are authorial and standardize based on those. This interpretation is probably right, but the list is not definitive. The minor character that the play commonly calls Garnish is listed in the *Dramatis Personae* as Burnish, so clearly there is some confusion, with maybe Marston himself being inconsistent. Ultimately in a modern spelling text these things will not matter because standardization will render them invisible, but they remain a problem in our old spelling text where the Oxford Marston will preserve the different forms, except for speech-headings, which are being standardized according to whichever spelling the text uses most frequently. If so, the Oxford *Courtesan* could end up with Freevill and Malheureux being named differently in the speech-headings of the online text than in the print edition — an inevitable consequence of the division between the edition's two levels of text.

In adjusting the text to the collected edition, then, the Oxford team must take a series of issues into account. The decisions that the editors make must reflect their sense of what's at stake in the quarto as well as what duties the Oxford Marston project has towards conveying Marston's self-construction as an author and his relations with printers and stationers, plus an awareness that different constituencies of modern readers want slightly different kinds of texts. Finally, is there anything to be said about what happened to the text after it left the printer? Here I shall finish with two matters that illustrate the play's post-publication history. One small but striking feature of its afterlife is the dialogue that must have happened on the bookstalls between *The Dutch Courtesan* and Dekker and Middleton's comedy *The Honest Whore*.²⁵ *The Honest Whore* was staged by the Prince's Men at the Fortune in 1604, then printed later that year. Two more editions quickly followed, and all of these were sold by John Hodgets, the same person who in 1605 published *The Dutch Courtesan* and acquired the rights to *Sophonisba* in 1613. Interestingly, one of the two reprints of *The Honest Whore* was given a new title, *The Converted Courtesan*. This volume survives today in only two copies; sadly, for neither of them do we have the title page or any documentation as to what form it took, but the new name is clearly present in the head title and running titles. Apparently, then, *The Dutch Courtesan* and *The Converted Courtesan* were being marketed side by side on the same bookstalls belonging to Hodgets in St Paul's churchyard. *The Dutch Courtesan* has often been seen as a satirical riposte to Dekker and Middleton's sentimental depiction

of Bellafront, the penitent harlot who converts to a better life, this sort of response being symptomatic of the competition over repertoires and audiences between the adult companies and their Blackfriars rivals. But considered from the bookseller's point of view, it looks less like rivalry and more like a good marketing strategy. Commercially speaking, rivalry between the companies is good for selling the printed texts.

Additionally, one useful result of collating multiple copies of the same text is that sometimes annotations turn up telling us what readers noticed or thought about. With *The Dutch Courtesan* we are fortunate in having one such copy, today owned by the Harry Ransom Center in Austin, Texas.²⁶ This copy is remarkable for a series of annotations probably left by two different readers. The names of these readers do not survive, but one put pencil crosses in the margin against passages they were interested in, mostly picking out the satire against the Scots. These marginal notes suggest someone reading the play fairly early in its life, when anti-Scottish sentiment was still a hot topic (as it was when Marston ran into trouble over *Eastward Ho!*). The other reader, who worked in ink, leaves more elaborate comments. He or she makes two dozen interventions, some being corrections to the text, others being additions or changes. Some of these marks are worth exploring since they give us insight into how the reader responded to the play's plot and language.

Our early reader's corrections to some errors in the quarto provides useful confirmation for modern editions that have to make the same or equivalent corrections. Thus the reader spotted that in Mary Faugh's conversation with Franceschina in C2v the beginnings of two lines had dropped out, and added in letters to change 'Ireand' to 'Ireland' and 'atte-caps' to 'flatte-caps' (2.2.34–5). On H1v, they spotted that a long speech supposedly by Beatrice only made sense if one realized that a speech prefix for Freevill had gone missing (5.2.65). These are simple corrections which editors now make as a matter of course, but it is reassuring to have them confirmed by a contemporary. Rather more interesting are places where the annotator spots something that may have dropped invisibly from the text, as in C3, in Franceschina's song in the French style, where the reader has added the word 'hir' into the final line: 'for me did but kisse her, for me did but kis her, and so let [^]hir go' (2.2.67–9). The reader may have been comparing the play with other books that they knew, and recognized the lyric, which was first printed in 1600 in Robert Jones's *First Book of Songs and Aires* (Song 19: 'My mistress sings no other song'). In Jones's volume the final line does indeed read 'and let her go'. In Marston's version ('and so let go'), the grammar is opaque, which may be meant to reflect Franceschina's slightly off-key idiom, but the reader's

correction suggests that they, at least, understood it not as alien speech but simply as a dropped word.²⁷

An even more interesting situation arises when the annotator suggests a potentially worthwhile correction to a crux. In the final scene, Cocledemoy picks Malheureux's pocket on the scaffold, and Malheureux offers the rather baffling comment 'You are a Welyman' (H2v; 5.3.23). Most editors emend this to read 'wily man', which makes sense but still sounds odd, but the early reader has corrected this to 'Welchman'. (See figure 6.) This emendation is a possibility that David Crane speculates about in the Mermaids edition, where he notes that later in the scene Cocledemoy uses various words from Welsh dialect.²⁸ Crane's suggestion has not been accepted into Britland's text, but it gains contemporary support from the annotator. Did the reader change the word on a whim, or did they have some inside information? Had they seen the play performed and knew that in his final disguise Cocledemoy affected a Welsh accent? If so, this is an emendation that tells us something about the possibilities of performance.

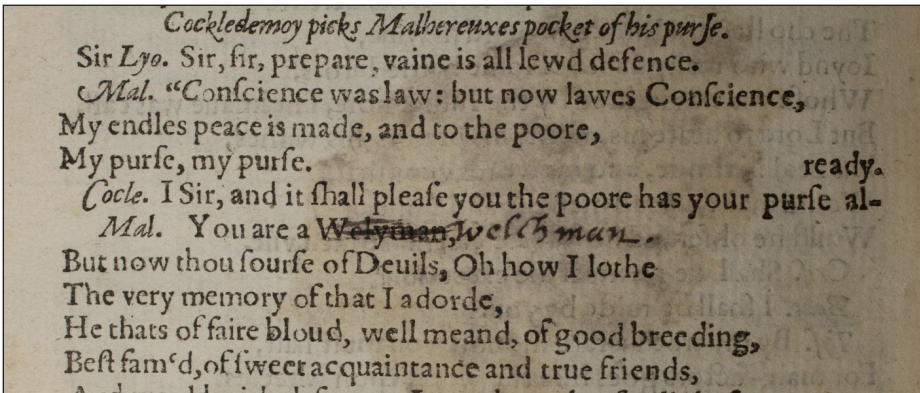


Figure 6. *The Dutch Courtezian* (London, 1605; strc: 17475), H2v. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

No less striking are moments where this annotator attempts to improve the text. Thus when Freevill sends Malheureux off for his fatal assignation with Franceschina, he says 'I will lurke / Where none shall know or thinke, close Ile withdraw, / and leaue thee with two friendes: a whore and knaue' (F3, 4.2.36–8). (See Figure 7.) Some modern editors have speculated that this final phrase should be reversed, so that the two lines rhyme: 'and leave thee with two friends, a knave and whore'. The early reader felt something similar, but instead of reversing the terms they deleted the last word, replacing it with 'lawe': hence 'a whore and

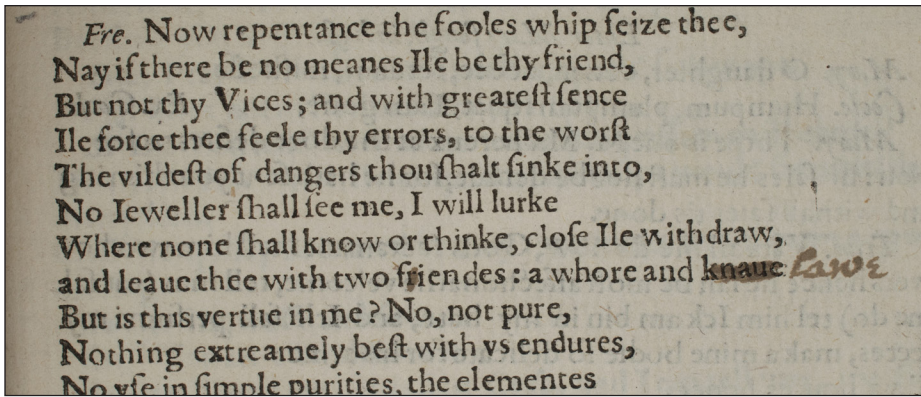


Figure 7. *The Dutch Courtesan* (London, 1605; stc: 17475), F3. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

law'. This emendation is remarkable, though it has no textual merit as such. The reader, however, also makes a smaller alteration earlier in the line, from 'friendes' to 'fiendes': 'and leave thee with two fiends'. No editor has proposed this change, though it seems worth recording since it makes as much sense to call the whore and knave fiends instead of friends.

Finally, on the very last leaf (H4) we have three changes crowded together. (See figure 8.) The nonce-word 'Castrophomicall' is emended to 'catastrophonicall', a change which is clearly correct, for this same word appears earlier in the play. (It is otherwise unknown.) Lower down the page, the phrase 'I can tell you' is added into a speech by Cocledemoy, which is slightly puzzling as it seems to offer nothing extra in this context. And near the top, where Cocledemoy pleads with Mulligrub to forgive him from his heart and midriff and entrails, the annotator adds in the nonce word 'and malagutlins'. This suggested correction is also perplexing, since the noun 'malagutlins' is otherwise unknown. (I have not found it anywhere else in the early modern lexicon.) But of course, as we know, Marston is notorious for his peculiar and often invented vocabulary. Is the annotator again reporting something they remembered from performance? Could this strange word be another of those fanciful Marstonian neologisms, like glibbery, gargalize, or paraphonalian? The hypothesis is a long shot, of course, and there is nothing to support it, but to find someone writing in an invented word, even one perhaps not originating with Marston, confirms our general sense that he had a reputation for linguistic daring, and that at least one reader felt that such an imaginative embellishment could be a suitable response to his play. Delightfully, in performance at Toronto in 2019, the actor playing Cocledemoy added the

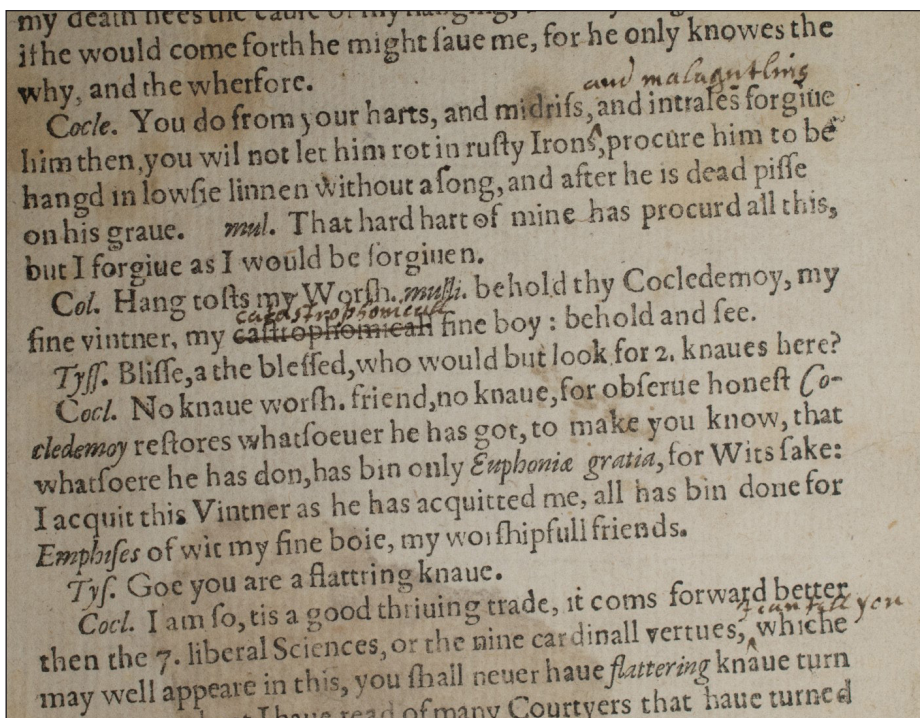


Figure 8. *The Dutch Courtezan* (London, 1605; strc: 17475), H4. Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

word ‘malagutlins’ into his dialogue. It seemed an entirely appropriate moment of Marstonian extravagance.

Amongst these annotations, only ‘Welchman’ offers a substantive alteration to the received text. But what they do show is the text in the process of reception as well as one early reader’s response to the experience of a Marston play. Because Marston abandoned his literary career so suddenly, we have relatively little evidence of his afterlife. His early satirical exchanges with Joseph Hall are well known, as are his arguments with Jonson in the War of the Theatres, but much less is known about the kind of attention and appreciation that he received in the later part of his career and immediately afterwards. Since there are around three hundred copies of his quartos, plus upwards of sixty copies of Sheares’s ‘collected’ Marston, one hopes that a much better profile for Marston’s readers might emerge from any annotations that are found. This account could enable us to document more fully what we might call the Marston effect, the trail that remained once

he had withdrawn from writing. In the long term, Marston declined to curate his own memory and preferred to fall into oblivion, but we hope that the Oxford edition will have the consequence of enabling a rethinking that, against the author's own wishes, will retrieve him from at least some of this obscurity.

Notes

I am very grateful to José A. Perez Diez for his many helpful comments on this essay.

- 1 *The Works of Mr. John Marston* (London, 1633; stc: 17471), A4.
- 2 *The Works of John Marston*, ed. J. O. Halliwell, 3 vols (London, 1856), 1.xxii. The Folger copy of *What You Will* has printer's marks indicating breaks between gatherings, showing that this was the individual copy of the play that Halliwell gave to the printer. John Marston, *What You Will* (London, 1607; stc: 17487), stc 17487.
- 3 The best account of Marston's afterlife is T.F. Wharton's *The Critical Fall and Rise of John Marston* (Columbia SC, 1994).
- 4 *The Plays of John Marston*, ed. H. Harvey Wood, 3 vols (Edinburgh, 1934–9), 1.xxxi.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 1.xli.
- 6 W.W. Greg, 'The Plays of John Marston by H. Harvey Wood, John Marston', *The Modern Language Review* 30.1 (1935), 94, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3715658>.
- 7 Lukas Erne, *Shakespeare as Literary Dramatist* (Cambridge, 2003), <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781139342445>; *Shakespeare and the Book Trade* (Cambridge, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511803406>. See also Zachary Lesser, *Renaissance Drama and the Politics of Publication: Readings in the English Book Trade* (Cambridge, 2004).
- 8 Jonson, *Volpone* (London, 1607; stc: 14783).
- 9 James Howell, 'Upon Master Fletcher's dramatical works', in *Comedies and Tragedies Written by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, Gentlemen* (London, 1647; Wing: B15181), b4.
- 10 *Epigrams* 49, 68, and 100: 'To Playwright' and 'On Playwright', in *The Works of Benjamin Jonson* (London, 1616; stc: 14751), 3V1, 3V4, 3X4. Although not printed until 1616, these were probably part of the earlier debate with Marston, hence ca 1598–1601. The earliest occurrence of the word in print also comes in a Jonsonian context, the commendatory verses by 'Cygnus' (probably Jonson's school friend Hugh Holland) in the 1605 quarto of *Sejanus*.
- 11 *Jack Drum's Entertainment* (London, 1601; stc: 7243), A2.
- 12 *Parasitaster, or The Fawn* (Q2, London, 1606; stc: 17484), A2v.
- 13 *The Malcontent* (Q3, London, 1604; stc: 17481), A4.
- 14 *What You Will* (London, 1607; stc: 17487), A3, A4.

- 15 *Antonio and Mellida* (London, 1602; STC: 17473), A2.
- 16 I am grateful to Colin Burrow, who is editing the poems for the Oxford Marston, for informing me about these details. The spelling Perseus also appears in the epistle to *The Fawn*.
- 17 Ben Jonson, *Poetaster* (London, 1602; STC: 14781); Anthony Munday and Henry Chettle, *The Downfall of Robert Earl of Huntingdon* (London, 1601; STC: 18271), and *The Death of Robert Earl of Huntingdon* (London, 1601; STC: 18269).
- 18 Hodgets was the bookseller for four titles owned by Edgar: *A True Report of the Great Overthrow* (London, 1605; STC: 1900); *The Double PP* (London, 1606; STC: 6498); Francis Beaumont, *The Woman Hater* (London, 1607; STC: 1692); and Anthony Nixon, *The Three English Brothers* (London, 1607; STC: 18592). He later took over Edgar's rights to a tranche of books by the cleric and satirist Joseph Hall.
- 19 Martin Wiggins, *British Drama*, 10 vols (Oxford, 2015), 5.1434.
- 20 *The Dutch Courtesan* (London, 1605; STC: 17475), A2 (Fabule); *The Fawn*, Q2, H4v (Aquaitę). I am grateful to Henry Woudhuysen for advice on this unusual type. I would be very happy to be corrected, should any reader have better evidence concerning its use.
- 21 Wharton, *The Critical Fall and Rise of John Marston*, 16.
- 22 John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. Karen Britland (London, 2018), 85; also see 5.1.80, 90.
- 23 Line references to Britland's edition are added here and subsequently for the reader's convenience. Inevitably they do not correspond exactly to the 1605 text.
- 24 One other peculiarity that has not been discussed by previous editors is the handling of sheet H, and the printer's decision to end the text on H4 and leave H4v blank. While this blank could be a measure designed to protect the unbound sheets on the bookstall, it has the consequence of causing excessively cramped layouts in this sheet, including obvious signs of space-saving on H4. Additionally, the speech-headings for the Mulligrubs on H3v-4 are incorrectly standardized, appearing as 'mull.' and 'mist. mull.' instead of 'Mull.' and 'Mrs.' as elsewhere. It seems an odd choice by the printer not to take the end of the text over to H4v.
- 25 This relationship is discussed by *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. Britland, 78. See also Taylor and Lavagnino, 508.
- 26 John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan* (London, 1605; STC: 17475), PFORZ 654 PFZ.
- 27 Robert Jones, *The First Book of Songes or Ayres* (London, 1600; STC: 14732), F4.
- 28 John Marston, *The Dutch Courtesan*, ed. D. Crane (London, 1997), 5.3.23. José A. Perez Diez suggests that the 'y' could be a transcription error from a secretary hand 'ch', since 'c' would look like 'r', followed by a long descender on the 'h'. Combined, they may have looked like a 'y'.