Short notice

Fortunata, an *Italienne célèbre*:
Identifying the Model in Thérèse Schwartze’s Young Italian Woman with Puck the Dog

• MAAIKE RIKHOF •

In January 1884, two young Dutch artists left Amsterdam and travelled by train to Paris. Thérèse Schwartze (1851-1918) and Wally Moes (1856-1918) were ambitious. The fact that two unmarried women were travelling abroad without chaperones was quite unusual at that time, let alone the fact that they undertook the trip for the benefit of a professional painting career. Their intention was to immerse themselves in the vibrant artistic environment of the French capital for four months and transform their impressions of it into new paintings. In March of that year, as a result of their hard work, they would submit some new artworks to the spring exhibition of the Parisian Salon des Artistes Français, at that time the most important platform for artists to make their names.¹

During their stay, Schwartze and Moes shared a studio at 26 Rue Poncelet in the 17th arrondissement, backing on to the Arc de Triomphe (fig. 1). In her autobiography, Moes describes the interior of this room and specifically mentions the many Italian models who presented themselves there:

We made the studio cosy with the throws and rugs we had brought with us, and were now ready to begin our life of study in Paris. We didn’t waste any time, but immediately took on Italian models, who offered themselves in droves. … we [worked] extremely hard, the walls of our studio were soon covered in our studies, almost exclusively of Italian models.²

Schwartze and Moes made grateful use of their services. In a painting that has been in the Rijksmuseum’s collection since 1897, Schwartze captured ‘a beautiful Italian girl’ (fig. 2).³
In the upper left corner below the signature there are two inscriptions, ‘Paris’ and ‘Amsterdam’, which would suggest that Schwartze started the painting in Paris and completed it in her studio in Amsterdam when she returned home.

Comparison of this work with a painting by Moes (fig. 3) shows that they used the same model. The latter work was likewise created in the spring of 1884 in Paris and can be recognized in the studio photograph. The resemblance between the two canvas-filling young women is striking. Their faces show great similarities, both subtly framed by dark wisps of hair which have been casually teased from their hairdos. In both pictures the women pose in characteristic Italian costume. This consists of a dress with a simple bodice (corsaletto or casacca) over a white tunic with long puffed sleeves (camisa), held together above the wrists by – in Schwartze’s painting, at least – fabric arm bands (manecs) in the same colour as the shoulder straps. This costume is illustrated in a contemporary costume book (fig. 4).  

Although it has already been noted in previously published literature that the two paintings depict the same model, remarkably little attention has been paid to her identity until now. Schwartze herself played an important role in this partial blindness: in April 1885, immediately after its completion, she exhibited her painting under the title Puck. In so doing, she appealed to her public’s affectionate feelings for the dog, and the model was given only a subordinate role. She evidently considered the name of her model to be of secondary importance and the painting was conceived as a genre work, not a portrait. The intriguing appearance and the playful flair of the Italian, however, have long been a source of much admiration, especially since Young Italian Woman with Puck the Dog became part of the Rijksmuseum’s permanent collection display. But who was she? Who was this ‘young woman’ whose name is conspicuous by its absence, whereas the name of the dog on her right is known and mentioned in the title?

Fig. 2
Thérèse Schwartze, Young Italian Woman with Puck the Dog, c. 1884-85. Oil on canvas, 144 x 103 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. sk-A-1703; A.G. van Anrooy Bequest, Kampen.

Fig. 3
Wally Moes, Fortunata, c. 1884. Oil on canvas, 129.5 x 90.5 cm. Laren, Singer Laren, inv. no. 72-12-3; on long-term loan from Laren Town Council.
Fortunata by Schwartze

The inscription ‘Fortunata’ in the upper left corner of Moes’s portrait suggests that this must have been the Italian model’s name (see fig. 3). This assumption is reinforced by another portrait Moes made of her, which we unfortunately only still know of from a black-and-white photograph (fig. 5). She poses on a chair, her characteristic hair style with the bun replaced this time by luxuriant locks. Her right hand rests on a pillar covered with cloth and she holds a tambourine in her left hand. She seems to be wearing the same clothes as in Moes’s first-mentioned portrait, complemented by a knotted shawl like that worn by the figure on the right in the illustration in the costume book (see fig. 4). Titled Fortunata, this painting went under the hammer on 1 December 1959 at the A. Mak auction house in Dordrecht, accompanied by the explanation ‘Dancer with Tambourine Sitting in front of a Red Cloth’.

There are also two drawings by Thérèse Schwartze which confirm that ‘Fortunata’ was the Italian model’s name. In the collection of image documentation of the Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD) there is a reproduction of a drawing with two portrait studies (fig. 6). This drawing figures upper right in the photograph of Schwartze and Moes’s Parisian studio (see fig. 1). Although undated, it has the inscription ‘Fortunata’ upper left. The fact that Schwartze

Fig. 4

Fig. 5
Wally Moes, Fortunata, unknown date [probably 1884]. Oil on canvas, 130 x 89 cm. Whereabouts unknown. Photo: RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History
did mention the woman’s name here indicates that she was not completely indifferent to her model’s identity.

The topmost of the two portrait studies shows great similarities to a drawing in the Rijksmuseum’s collection titled *Fortunati, an Italian Model* (fig. 7). This came from the bequest of Agnieta Cornelia Gijswijt (1873–1962) in 1962. Gijswijt, who was also an artist, was the treasurer of the Fine Arts Committee (Commissie van Beeldende Kunsten) of the much-discussed exhibition *De Vrouw 1813–1913* that was staged in Amsterdam in 1913. Schwartze held the role of president on the same committee. Gijswijt and Schwartze must therefore have met one another, and so it is quite possible that the name *Fortunati* (perhaps from hearsay and therefore spelt incorrectly) comes straight from Schwartze.

Another possibility is that Gijswijt came into possession of the drawing by way of Wally Moes, who could simply have told her the title. Moes and Gijswijt both attended classes taught by the Dutch artist August Allebé (1838–1927) at the Amsterdamse Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, although at different times. In the decades that followed, the two women kept in close touch with their former teacher and it is likely that they also knew one another.

In the Netherlands there is yet another work of art with a probable likeness of Fortunata. This is *Woman with Sunflowers* (fig. 8), likewise by Schwartze, in the collection of the Drents Museum in Assen. Her features are similar and her hairstyle is the same as that in the paintings discussed earlier (see figs. 2 and 3) and Schwartze’s portrait studies (see figs. 6 and 7). In addition, she also wears the characteristic Italian costume. The work is dated 1885 and Schwartze probably only painted it after she had returned to Amsterdam, on the basis of studies made in Paris.
Modelling as a Profession

We cannot say with complete certainty whether Fortunata really was Schwartze’s model’s first or last name. Regrettably, the search for specific details about her life in Paris’s population register proved fruitless. Fortunata is not mentioned in the model books and expenditure registers of art colleges held in the Archives Nationales. 13

Unfortunately, Thérèse Schwartze’s address books and notebooks held by the RKD likewise provided no new information about her identity or career. 14 It is quite possible that ‘Fortunata’ (‘the fortunate one’ in Italian) was a modelling name, a pseudonym as an instrument in the formation of the Italian’s image. But to this day it is also a common Italian girl’s name, referring to the no fewer than nineteen saints with the name Fortunato or Fortunata who are recognized by the Roman Catholic Church. 15

Although disappointing, it is not surprising that no personal information about Fortunata can be found, considering the many hundreds of Italian professional models at that time. There was a large Italian immigrant society in Paris in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Rural poverty and the political instability caused by the Italian struggle for unity (c. 1848–71) forced many Italians to seek refuge beyond the borders of their country. In 1851, the French capital had 8,512 Italian residents. Twenty-five years later, in 1876, this number had risen to 21,577. 16

Dressed in regional costume, Italians of both sexes were extremely popular with Parisian artists. For some of them, posing was a full-time job; around 1888 there were already hundreds of them. 17 Fortunata may have been one of those professional models, who had gone to live in the French capital following the shift of the European artistic centre from Rome to Paris.

Fortunata does seem to have enjoyed more than modest fame, as is apparent from the diary of the successful Ukrainian painter Marie Bashkirtseff (1858–1884), who went to Paris in 1877 to take painting lessons at the Académie Julian. 18 At a time when the conservative and competitive École des Beaux-Arts was not yet accepting female students, this private art academy offered a welcome alternative. 19 On 11 August 1881, Bashkirtseff mentioned a model called Fortunata. She described how she hired her ‘in vain’ for six sessions and then sent her away from her studio in frustration, dissatisfied with the result of her painting. 20

It is quite likely that Fortunata earned ten French francs a day from sitting. This assumption is based on a statement by Wally Moes, who in her autobiography complained about the cost of models in Paris: 5 francs a day for a child and double for an adult model. 21 Other sources speak
of a salary of on average 5 francs per sitting for an adult female model.\textsuperscript{21} As a session lasted just four hours, an eight-hour working day of two sessions would equate to a daily salary of ten francs.\textsuperscript{22} This made modelling a relatively well paid \textit{métier}; at the end of the nineteenth century in the French capital, women earned on average 2 francs 14 centimes per day, while men were paid more than twice that at 4 francs 75 centimes per day.\textsuperscript{24} A contemporary source even noted that sitting was one of the rare occupations in which female Italians earned more money than their male counterparts because it was more difficult to find a suitable female model than a man.\textsuperscript{25} Or as the author Raniero Paulucci di Calboli put it at the time: ‘Venus is rarer than Hercules and Apollo’.\textsuperscript{26} This reference to classical mythology is not surprising, given that at the time Italian models were thought to embody a connection between contemporary Paris and the Rome of the Renaissance and Classical Antiquity. At the same time, in the emerging mass media such as newspapers and magazines from the eighteen-fifties onwards, they were increasingly portrayed as vagabonds or – especially the women – as sexually promiscuous beings, and their large numbers were
regarded as a ‘plague’ or ‘invasion’. Within this xenophobic discourse, which reflected a growing unease about the presence of foreigners in the capital’s streets, Italian models personified complex and contradictory ideas about immigration, cultural differences and modernity. They were seen as interesting and ‘authentic’ because of their alleged ‘primitive’ rural heritage, but once they had migrated to the modern metropolis, their ‘purity’ had an expiry date. In the collective imagination, the Italians were desirable as long as they were supposedly ‘just themselves’ (that is ‘peasants unaffected by modernization’), rather than immigrants who dressed as the farmers who they (or their parents) once were.

Fortunata Portrayed by Other Artists

According to the livrets de Salons, there were five works of art with titles that refer to ‘Fortunata’ exhibited at French salon exhibitions between 1880 and 1895. Her name and face are also featured in a portrait relief by the Flemish sculptor Paul de Vigne (1843-1901). From 1878 to 1882 he lived in Paris, where he immortalized a young woman called Fortunata in bronze (fig. 9). In view of the likeness in profile and hairstyle, it can be assumed that this is the same model as in the paintings by Schwartzte and Moes.

The French academic artist William-Adolphe Bouguereau (1825-1905) also portrayed Fortunata. We see her in an Italianate genre work of a young Italian mother and children, made in 1879 (fig. 10). Although the background features the dome of St Peter’s Basilica, this painting was made in Paris, not Rome. As a preliminary study, Bouguereau made a portrait of the young mother’s face, which he consigned to the Parisian art dealer Goupil et Cie to be sold under the title Fortunata - tête d’Italienne (fig. 11). In comparison with the images made by Schwartzte and Moes, it is striking how Bouguereau idealized and softened her face. This softer portrayal is in line with his ideal female image, which he projected onto the model.

Bouguereau taught at the Académie Julian from 1875, during the time that Marie Bashkirtseff was a student there. The French academic painter Jules-Joseph Lefebvre (1836-1911) also taught at this academy in the eighteen-seventies and -eighties. And fellow academic artist, Jean-Jacques Henner (1829-1905), was a teacher at the Académie Colarossi, a similar institute. During her total of seven visits to Paris between 1878 and 1918, Thérèse Schwartzte maintained close contact with both Lefebvre and Henner, both of whom also frequently worked with Italian models. It is therefore quite possible that Schwartzte and
Moes got to know ‘their’ Italienne through Lefebvre and Henner.\textsuperscript{35}

Based on the dates when the artworks in which she figures were created, it can be established that Fortunata was active in academic artistic circles in Paris in any event from the late eighteen-seventies and mid eighteen-eighties. In addition to word-of-mouth advertising, artists were also able to get in touch with models by way of the several ‘model markets’ in the city, the most important of which was located in the Place Pigalle.\textsuperscript{34} Hordes of Italians also gathered in the squares in the Latin Quarter, where they gave collective ‘performances of Italianicity’ in Italian dress and with musical instruments in order to entice artists.\textsuperscript{35} There was even a monthly magazine, \textit{l’Adresse des Modeles}, which contained a list of suitable Italian models accompanied by their addresses and their physical descriptions.\textsuperscript{36}

\textbf{Stereotyping the Italian Model}

As we have seen, no personal information about Fortunata has come to light. The lack of a paper trail relating to Fortunata fits into a broader pattern of historical blind spots with regard to professional \textit{poseuses}. The first and last names of male models were listed in the registration books of the École des Beaux-Arts and private workshops, whereas the women were usually only referred to by their model names. Sometimes the women chose their names themselves, possibly to guarantee their anonymity in view of the problematic reputation associated with modelling.\textsuperscript{37} But it was often the artists who came up with names for their models and included them in the margins of their study sheets, frequently accompanied by brief notes about their appearance, such as ‘beautiful face’ or ‘admirable thighs’.\textsuperscript{38} Socio-economically, moreover, the majority of Italian immigrants belonged to the lower strata of society. Many models were illiterate, so most of them were unable to chronicle their own careers.\textsuperscript{39} This is unfortunate, as their perspectives could undoubtedly have shed fascinating new light on the history of the creation of countless masterpieces we now admire in museums.

The stereotyping of Italian models in the Parisian popular imagination contributed to their being seen as ‘types’ rather than individuals. In everyday street life, Italienes were exoticized extras, as they were in the paintings they posed for – something they also cultivated themselves and on which their livelihoods depended. Their social labelling as ‘the eternal Other’, however, has meant that to this day they have remained largely anonymized in art history. But no longer: we now know that the ‘young woman’ in \textit{Young Italian Woman with the Dog Puck} was the professional Italian model Fortunata.
NOTES

* With thanks to Jenny Reynaerts for her editorial comments and suggestions.

1 Cora Hollema, Thérèse Schwartze (1851-1918): Haar klant was koning, Zutphen 2010, pp. 38-40.


3 Wilhelmina van Duyl-Schwartze, Thérèse van Duyl-Schwartze 1851-1918: Een gedenkboek, Amsterdam 1920, p. 85. Martin writes that Schwartze referred to the model in this way in a now unknown letter to her mother.

4 The second and fourth figures on the left wear clothes typical of the regions of Ostia and Cervara respectively and display the greatest visual likenesses to those of the Italian model in the paintings by Schwartze and Moes. Cora Hollema traces the typical dress of Italian models to the region of Ciociaria (now Frosinone) to the southeast of Rome. Cora Hollema, Thérèse Schwartz: Painting for a Living, Amsterdam 2021, pp. 102, 188, note 6.

5 Klarenbeek 2020 (note 2), p. 48. In her recently published chapter ‘Thérèse Schwartz and the Italian Models’, Hollema poses the question as to who the Italian models that Schwartz portrayed were. She, however, does not go into the precise identities of these individuals. See Hollema 2021 (note 4), p. 102.

6 The painting was exhibited as number 155 in the ‘Voor-Tentoonstelling van de Internationale Expositie te Antwerpen’, which was staged in April 1885 by the Arti et Amicitiae art society in Amsterdam as a prelude to the Antwerp World Fair that took place that year. See Catalogus van de Tentoonstelling der Kunstwerken van Levende Meesters bestemd voor de Tentoonstelling te Antwerpen, Amsterdam 1885, p. 14. To prevent confusion, the Rijksmuseum later changed the title of the painting (in or before 2001) to Young Woman with Puck the Dog, and recently to Young Italian Woman with Puck the Dog.

7 Catalogus oude en moderne schilderijen, antieciteiten en kunstvoorwerpen, juwelen, goud en zilver, Dordrecht 1959, no. 47, p. 8. The stated dimensions of the canvas (130 x 89 cm) are almost the same as those of Fortunata in the collection of Singer Laren (129.5 x 90.5 cm). Although the first-mentioned painting is undated, this suggests that it was also made during her stay in Paris in the spring of 1884. The Hague, RKD – Netherlands Institutefor Art History, image no. rkd–04496.

8 The Hague, RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History, image no. rkd–05125.


10 Ibid., p. 78.

11 Email exchange between Annemiek Rens, Head Curator and Curator of Art 1885-1935 at the Drents Museum in Assen, and the author on 16 October 2020.

12 Hollema 2021 (note 4), p. 121.


14 The Hague, RKD, Thérèse Schwartz Archives, Lizzy Ansingh and family (accession number 0251), inv. nos. 28, 29.

15 Valter Curzi, Dizionario dei nomi, Rome 2003, p. 62. Art history also records several other popular artists’ models with the same first name. In the eighteen-thirties, the Italian Fortunata Segatori from Subiaco, for example, was extremely popular among German artists in Rome. She was the aunt of Agostina Segatori, the well-known Italian café owner and model who was portrayed by such artists as Édouard Manet and Vincent van Gogh. The German author Wolfgang Menzel describes this ‘most sought-after model, the most famous beauty from Rome’ in his Reis naar Italië, in het voorjaar van 1835, Lagerweij 1838, p. 234.


20 ‘Tous les jours je vais à Passy, mais sitôt que je suis installée je prends en horreur ce que je commence. D’abord Fortunata que je commence à haïr. En général, chez les artistes, on paie la femme en francs. See Getty Provenance Index, https://provenance.getty.edu/holdings/d/22551 (consulted 20 June 2021). The result of Bashkirtseff’s studies into the Italian model is not known.

21 ‘Alleen de modellen kosten in Parijs al zoveel: een volwassen persoon tien, en een kind vijf francs per dag!’ (Only the models already ten and a child five francs a day!) Moes 1961, p. 137 (first edition 1880), via Bouguereau was listed in the inventory of Community Museum of Art) 1999, vol. 1, p. 80.


24 Waller 2021 (note 16), p. 243. Waller refers to the study Histoire et sociologie du travail féminin (Paris 1968, p. 103) by the French sociologist Evelyne Sullerot. In both publications it is not specified on which occupations this average is based.

Juana Romani, who would later become a successful artist in her own right. Email exchange between Marie Vancostenoble, Assistant Curator at the Musée national Jean-Jacques Henner, Paris, and the author on 24 June 2021.

34 Paulucci di Calboli 1901 (note 25), p. 121.
35 Dollfus 1888 (note 22), pp. 45-48. The term ‘Italianicity’ was introduced by Roland Barthes and alludes to everything (‘from spaghetti to painting’) that evokes associations of ‘being Italian’ among non-Italians. See Waller 2021 (note 16), p. 256, note 7.
36 Waller 2021 (note 16), p. 120, note 3. I have not been able to trace these lists, so it cannot be stated with certainty whether Fortunata used this medium. The newspaper had its office in the former 8 Rue des Fourneaux in the 15th arrondissement – the district in which most Italian models lived – but according to the author the publication folded in 1901 due to lack of buyers.
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Th. Schwartz, Paris