

On the Discovery of a most Excellent Term to use to describe Rapier Combatants, *By Warder Kevin O'Shaughnessy*

One of the delightful discoveries I made in the fall of 2001 was a French government library website that included an Adobe Acrobat scan of John Florio's "A Worlde of Wordes", an Italian to English dictionary published in 1598. This would, I hoped, provide an excellent tool for studying the Italian Rapier manuals.

Paging through "Worlde of Wordes" is a pleasure in itself, in that you find many terms in Renaissance Italian that you recognize the usage of today. That is a fascinating subject on its own, but not what I'm trying to cover here.

Going to page 385 in "Worlde of Wordes", one finds the section beginning with SPA. This is, of course, near and dear to students of the Italian blade, because of the Italian word for sword – spada. In "Worlde of Wordes", the definition of "spada" is: "any kinde of sword, rapier, or blade, or glaive".

My wonderful discovery came 3 words down from "spada". I found the word "spadaccino".

"Spadaccino – a cutter, a fencer, a hackster, a swashbuckler, a ruffian"

Pronounced: spada CHEEN oh.

It is neat to see the usage of a period word describing a fencer, and VERY amusing to see the last definition appended to "Spadaccino": a ruffian. It adds some spice to the definition; like something slightly forbidden. You can picture the confident, swaggering walk of the Spadaccino, sword at their side. And you picture that being you. Neat.

I have since used the term "Spadaccino" and its variants: plural: "Spadaccini" and feminine: "Spadaccina" in my various correspondences with other fencers. Many people have accused me of saying they are some form of pasta. That just exposes their inferior education, which I try to correct.

Incidentally, the term "spadaccino" is still used in modern Italian. It is defined as "a skilled swordsman". Doesn't sound like pasta to me.