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***Stafanelo Botarga and Pickelherring: Fishy Italian and English Stage Clowns in Spain and Germany***

Fish represent one of the most significant of several shared themes in the stage names chosen by early modern Italian and English travelling players. The most celebrated fishy stage name of the commedia dell'arte, Stafanelo Botarga, refers to a mediterranean seafood speciality; Pickelherring, the most popular English stage clown in the early modern German-speaking regions, took his name from North Sea pickled herring. The impetus for these stage names clearly came neither directly nor solely from the fish itself. Rather than simply reflecting vague late medieval pan-European links between foolery and carnivalesque foods, early modern fishy stage names complicate culinary connotations with darker and more recent ethnographical and religious associations. Focusing on some of these associations, this paper suggests that the choice of fish featured in stage names reflected regional considerations of the players' home and host nations, and that transnational perspectives are relevant to their understanding at many levels.