



‘Strange Habits’

Clothes, Climes, and the Environment in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries

International Conference / 3-5 December 2020 / Clermont-Ferrand, Moulins

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Women’s Work: Embroidery as a Vehicle for Shaping Identity and Environment

In conversation with the conference’s theme, I examine the role of embroidery in Elizabethan England as it relates to class and the policing of women’s sexuality, free time, and economic participation. Although society promoted embroidery as a way to occupy women’s free time and stave off potentially eroticized idleness, the possibility of artistic expression, personal profit, and even social notoriety allowed women to subvert the dominant social order, lending them agency. For context, I investigate Shakespearean insults like “flax wench” and what the phrase reveals about women’s work and sexuality; spinning flax, spinning thread, and embroidery were fraught with messages about women’s virtue and social roles. Drawing upon the work of Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, I argue that the act of decorating cloth with embroidery instead of spinning thread destabilized traditional gender roles. Where men were expected to actively participate in the public sphere, women were supposed to tend to the home. When women embroidered fabric instead of spinning thread, they were engaging in a creative practice, and by participating in markets and artistic self-display were beginning to interact with the public in a way that was viewed as potentially dangerous. Decorating cloth with needlework and putting this work on display came to be considered unladylike, immodest, and contrary to society’s insistence that women should focus on practicing piety and humility. But how did Elizabethan women themselves experience embroidery? I examine Karen Lyon’s work about women’s roles in creating cultural memory through working with fabric, and look at recurring motifs in embroidery samplers circulating among women, elaborating upon Maura Taurinoff’s insights about how specific stitches and ubiquitous fertile vine patterns had associations with the natural world and fertility. To conclude, I examine how women continually shaped environments that expressed their identities and challenged dominant social order through embroidery.



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The Victors’ Secret: Silk Versus Wool in *Henry VI 2*

Two economies clash in *Henry VI*: the local economy of small producers take up arms against the wealthy and privileged Lords of the Realm. The “handicraft” men, as they name themselves, are proud of producing material goods not only with their own hands, but on their own lands. Above all, this local production and economic self-sufficiency determines what may be called the couture of the patriotic. Wool and linen could be produced in England, carded or spun in England, and tailored into blouses, vests, and coats.

This home-grown economy, could, however, suffer damage from the elite class who crave far more elegant and sensuous apparel abroad. When the Lords of England enter the stage of Henry VI, they are denounced in part for choosing a global economy of clothing.

As Jack Cade, working class rebel who claims royal lineage exclaims, the Lords who oppose him are “silken-coated slaves,” who turn against warm, practical clothing made by the local economy. But Cade is missing out on the secret pleasures of silk, which consists of signalling economic privilege, to be sure, but carries the hidden eroticism of a new species, the angelic.

Those who can afford imported clothes send money out of England and into the coffers of large-scale holding companies. Orders for silk would be placed with an importer who buys the precious and sensuous material from warm-weather climates. This makes silk the fashion or even the flag of class warfare. But there is another desire driving the turn from home-made garments to the silk imported from foreign lands, one that the farmers and agricultural workers of England depicted in *Henry VI* leave unspoken, Silk is by its very silkiness a material that generates pleasure, being a sexualized rendition of cloth. This sexualization of cloth occurs when the exotic smoothness of the silk manages to deliver an ideal version of sexuality: Ordinary humans, hairy and clad in the sheared coats of sheep, are the epitome of mammals. The mammal with higher order skills—the humans—must rely on the protective covering of another mammal, a form of couture that satirizes the Barthian concept of couture. By contrast, Silk embodies the erotic semantics of “la peau douce”—the soft skin that, devoid of hair or fur or calloused texture, combines the sensuality of a higher order figure. One who wears silk gains the illusion of post-mammalian transcendence, perhaps belonging to the angelic orders of seraphim and cherubim and their perfected beauty.

When Jack Cade brands the lords silken-coated slaves, Shakespeare offers a startling proleptic hint of what the post-modern world now sees: the epochal transformation of local economies into global economies: For the wealthy, money can bring the exotic and angelic fabric of warm climates into cold England. Although Shakespeare depicts the working class as bumbling reformers who deserve to be laughed at, the collapse of local economy and working-class pride is tragically forecast in Cade’s deployment of *gilets-jaune* epithets against ruling elite classes and a fashion economy based on erotic thrill.



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Clad in Rags: Ecopsychology and Transtextuality

In several of his play-texts, whatever their genres, Shakespeare physically and symbolically undresses characters to ‘dress them up better’ with rags. The dramatic and theatrical linguistic and semiotic signs audiences are thus provided with are laden with meanings necessarily related to a reflection on anthropocentrism, biocentrism and/or ecocentrism, exploring the place of Man, whether king or beggar, either in his own environment, or in a new strange locus, or more generally, on this earth.

Tragedy exploits situations in which human beings discover darker climes and experience reversals, by staging contexts when and where ‘habits’ turn ‘habits’ inside out or upside down and conversely. Man’s reaction to such un/natural changes transcends simple psychological responses. Comedy and (pastoral) romance also use ‘rags’ for hide-and-seek games and revelations, as in *The Tempest* or *The Winter’s Tale*.

Like any other piece of stage/drama-costume, tattered and torn clothes designed for a play help portray the characters’ general contextual situations, including historical and geographical ones (the fable) and the diegetic intimate ones they are involved in, indicating their social classes and personalities (madness, folly and decline are obvious instances). ‘Habits’ also reflect the characters’ inner feelings and idiosyncrasies although appearances are often deceitful. The inadequacy of surroundings and clothing (weather and insufficient winter clothing for instance) emphasizes the discrepancy between what is a sign of normality and what is not. Changing ‘habits’ informs about contextual events—whether historical or diegetic—and can amplify characters’ aspects. As a dramatic device, a tattered or ragged costume helps hide someone’s person/a and personality allowing dramatic irony to emerge from it, while mimicking History as in the Suffolk episode in *2 Henry 6*.

Our study aims at analysing the topic of ‘clad in rags: ecopsychology and transtextuality’ in different versions of the story of King Lear (that is in *King Lear*, *Leir and his Three Daughters*, and various chronicles and histories that might have been sources for Shakespeare’s play-text) to emphasize the philosophical and political choices made by chroniclers and dramatists in their treatments of ‘habits’ and ‘climes’. The last years of the life of King Lear and his daughter Cordelia vary depending on these options, and so do correlated interpretations.



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‘Garnished and Decked:’ Fashioning Shakespearean Accessories

There is a great deal of decking, dressing, garnishing, ornamenting, and embellishing in Shakespeare. This is presented sometimes as overblown artifice and at other times as a rhetorical or literal accent to natural beauty. In both cases, I will argue, this process of “accessorizing” is linked with the vernal equinox and thus with the ancient lyrical tradition that celebrates the arrival of spring and of the earth clothed in flowers and greenery, as well as with the literally changing habits required by the season.



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‘Her clothes spread wide / And mermaid-like awhile they bore her up’: water-infused climes and clothes on the early modern stage.

Vulnerable to wind and rain, sixteenth-century clothes often protected the wealthy and exposed the needy. Water could make colours fade and could rapidly penetrate the skin, the last frail barrier between the human and the environment. The sartorial-stripping metaphor which informs *King Lear* famously literalises the washing away of sins and stains that takes place in the storm. No wonder if, onstage, clothing allowed the audience to identify the atmospheric conditions promoted by the play they attended, and to detect situations of weakness and imbalance. Early modern England was fascinated by the agency of moisture, which partly helps explain why early modern drama so frequently highlights bodies impressed by water, directly or indirectly, metaphorically or visually.

Gertrude’s powerful description of Ophelia’s ‘clothes spread wide’, making the wretched girl mermaid-like, illustrates the commingling of body and water as ‘garments, heavy with their drink’ lead her ‘[t]o muddy death’ (*Hamlet*, 4.7). In this case, the watery weightiness of Ophelia’s clothes can only be imagined, as hers is an offstage, ob-scene death. Other instances of visible watery scenes are numerous, though. Like his contemporaries, Shakespeare often produced wet clothes onstage, as in *The Tempest* where, in the opening act of the play, ‘Mariners [enter], wet’. Water must have made stage costumes particularly heavy and slowed down the actors’ movements. *The Tempest*’s stage direction, conventionally associated with a shipwreck, provides spectators with a freeze frame of sorts: it both marks a decisive shift from the ordinary to the extraordinary and designates the beginning of a rebirth process. Water could of course also symbolize chaos and finitude. While *Lear*’s ramblings under a stormy sky testify to the association of rain, tears and folly in the cultural imagination of the period, Feste’s rain song, in *Twelfth Night*, alludes to the liquefying world of the denouement. The Fool’s damp garments must have done as much to draw the audience’s attention as his depressing rhetoric.

A garment made wet had a rubbed and irregular look that necessarily produced new levels of significance. This paper will thus explore water in connection with stage-dress as an agency of meaning. It will analyse the emotional and visual power of rain-soaked clothes on the Shakespearean stage, and, beyond that, it will try to understand how water interacted with performance in the early modern period.



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Changing Habits in the Quarto and Folio Versions of *Every Man in his Humour* by Ben Jonson

Critical consensus generally posits that, in the comedy of humours, the clothes, shoes, accessories, fabrics and colours worn by the gallant or malcontent character types are signs of affectation in these “fantastical” characters pointing at “the perennial problem of sartorial folly [which] provoked official disapproval and sumptuary legislation.”¹ This paper will shift away from this socio-cultural perspective to investigate the potential consequences of the presence (or absence) of references to climes in relation to clothing in this dramatic genre that became very fashionable in the late 1590s. The preliminary investigations will address these issues with a specific focus on *Every Man in his Humour* by Ben Jonson: it is a particularly interesting case study because of the emendation of the location from Florence to London between the quarto edition (1601) and the folio edition (1616). It is usually assumed that ancient or foreign cities represent London with a distorting, anamorphic perspective in early-modern drama but this paper will address this dramaturgical choice of relocation in terms of clothing vocabulary and rhetoric in the economy and ecology of the play. Since a quarto edition is not necessarily a bad version of a later folio edition of the same play, this paper will reconsider the relationship between the two texts: each version will be read in its own context and the quarto play will be reassessed as source material for the folio edition, in a form of “recycling” process. The conclusions drawn will aim at defining to what varying degrees both versions of the play highlight a shifting English point of view on, as well as their knowledge and representation of, Italian fashion and fashioning of clothes in relation to climes. Then, these elements will be used to shed fresh light on other plays belonging to the Jonsonian canon, with a specific emphasis on *Every Man out of his Humour*.

¹ Ben Jonson, *Every Man in his Humour*, ed. Robert S. Miola, Manchester & New York, Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 19.



‘Strange Habits’

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The Other Mary? The significance of Mary Fitzallard’s disguises against the masculinity of Moll Cutpurse

The infamous Moll Cutpurse of *The Roaring Girl* represents the power of a violent woman in men’s clothing; however her boldness overshadows the remarkable use of gender representation and disguise by Mary Fitzallard. Mary uses clothing to gain agency in a society attempting to ignore her. This paper examines Mary Fitzallard, the crossdressing counterpart to the infamous Moll Cutpurse in Middleton and Dekker’s *The Roaring Girl*. Overshadowed by the abrasively masculine Moll, Mary Fitzallard’s relationship with crossdressing, her body, and her engagement with masculinity and disguise has been largely overlooked. While drawing on work that touches on Mary by Lloyd Edward Kermode and Alicia Tomasian, this paper searches for deeper engagement with her motives and position in an iconic play. A more traditionally disguised crossdresser, Mary uses her disguise to reassert her agency through the appropriation of masculine identity and uniquely moves in and out of multiple disguises in order to manipulate her surroundings. By considering her lover, Sebastian, his attraction to her male form, the replacement of Mary with Moll, and Mary’s place among a larger cohort of comedic crossdressed heroines in disguise, this work re-focuses the significance of Mary’s impact on the role of masculinity and the feminine body in *The Roaring Girl*.



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De Heere's Theatre of Costumes: Staging New Ecologies

"In the costume book, you are what you wear, a logic that opens up the world to a new kind of order based on descriptive taxonomy"². Following Michael Gaudio's discussion of "how closely the English preoccupation with costume was related to concerns about the stage"³, I would like to discuss the development of a visual formula(tion) which accompanied the rising popularity of the costume book as a genre.

In order to do so, I will be focusing on Lucas de Heere's "Théâtre de tous les peuples et nations de la terre avec leurs habits et ornemens divers, tant anciens que modernes, diligemment dépeints au naturel", dated around the 1570s.⁴ Besides the "theatricality" transpiring through the very title of this book, I would like to engage into a material analysis of De Heere's *production* – meaning the way in which his costumes are *staged*. I will be looking at and into two aspects of De Heere's *Théâtre*. First, this growing interest in costumes interestingly coincides with the rise of a visual pattern which tends to represent the costume-wearing subject against an increasingly empty white background, so that these figures seem deprived of "a local habitation".⁵ I will then turn to the use of watercolour as another defining characteristic of costume books and studies in early modern England, whose development contributed to this ethnographic impulse.

² Michael Gaudio, "The Truth in Clothing: the Costume Studies of John White and Lucas De Heere", in Kim Sloan (ed.), *European Visions: American Voices*, British Museum Research Publication, n° 172, 2009, p. 24-32, p. 24. See also *Engraving the Savage. The New World and Techniques of Civilization*, Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2008,

³ Michael Gaudio, "The Truth in Clothing", *op. cit.*, p. 27.

⁴ De Heere's *Théâtre* can be seen at the Library University in Ghent, and is also available online at the following address: https://lib.ugent.be/fulltxt/RUG01/000/794/288/BHSL-HS-2466_2009_0001_AC.pdf

⁵ William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Harold F. Brooks (1979), 5.1.17



‘Strange Habits’

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Fashioning Falstaff: Dress and Disguise in Shakespeare’s *Henry IV* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

When it comes to identity formation in the early modern period, fashion and self-fashioning are inevitably intertwined. In times of sumptuary laws, the apparel tends to proclaim the person beneath. Simultaneously, the humanist focus on individuality heightens an individual’s desire to express interiority through visual markers like garments. Dressing oneself is always an addressing of an external audience. On the Shakespearean stage, the characters impersonated by the actors are known by what they wear. In the play texts, sartorial metaphors have an effect upon how they are represented and perceived. With the figure of Falstaff as a connecting link, my paper examines the role of dress and disguise for the fashioning of dramatic selves in Shakespeare’s two-part history *Henry IV* and in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

Clothes in these dramas function as social and psychological signifiers. With a counterfeiting knight and a role-playing prince among their protagonists, they exemplify the interplay of inwardness and outer appearance that is characteristic in the constitution of vestimentary identities. In *Henry IV*, prince Hal’s identity crisis manifests itself as a cross-class self-exploration between throne and tavern shaped by an understanding of the powerful symbolism of crown and stockings alike. In *Merry Wives*, masculinity is threatened through the intimacy of female laundry and the transvestite performance of boy actors causing confusion in fairy dresses.

This paper argues that in Shakespeare the alteration of appearance by means of attire is charged with transformative powers. Dressing and cross-dressing are central to these plots just like processes of persistent (self)-fashioning are the essence of the theatre itself. In my final analysis, then, Falstaff is identified as the epitome of a player’s fragmented identity, with the cloth he orders to cover his off-stage dying body with as this clothes-obsessed character’s final costume change.



‘Strange Habits’

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Fabrics, Fashion and the Environment: Representing Venice in Early Modern England

This paper investigates the way Venetian clothes and attires are represented in early modern literature and to what extent they shed light on the geographical and cultural environment of the city. At the end of the 16th century, Cesare Vecellio’s illustrated book (*Habiti antichi*) associated parts of the world with costumes as well as material signifiers and provided a well-documented section on Venice. The link between dress and regional specificity was however already hinted at in Andrew Boorde’s *First Book of The Introduction of Knowledge* in the 1540’s with Venice being characterized by the wealthy apparel of its inhabitants. While the magnifico’s gowns with long wide sleeves were suggestive of the political environment and the stability of the Commonwealth, the courtesans were associated with the high platform shoes known as chopines, whose first function was to be protected from the damp climate of the city. In *Othello*, the Venetian milieu is both represented as “a fertile climate” and as a place where Bianca the courtesan is defined through her ability to “buy herself bread and clothes”. Interestingly, the linguistic shift of the word “venetian” from an adjective to a noun category testifies to the City’s influence as regards fashion. The vogue for “venetians”, referring to a specific style of breeches became highly popular in the 1580’s in England. Focusing on links between cultural and literary material, I’ll look at the way Venetian strange habits were made familiar by early modern authors, how they serve an anthropological and sociological purpose, an encomiastic function or rather a satirical discourse.



‘Strange Habits’

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Flowers and Needles: Emilia’s Skirt

In *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the heroine Emilia asks her waiting-woman to make her a skirt embroidered with narcissi, because she is walking in a garden where they grow. This is part of the play’s general interest in flowers: its first word is ‘Roses’, the first two stanzas are descriptions of flowers, and Emilia says ‘Of all flowers / Methinks a rose is best’ (2.2.135-6) because ‘It is the very emblem of a maid’ (2.2.137); at the end of the play it does indeed become the emblem of Emilia herself when she reads the fall of a single rose as a sign that she will be married, and Palamon, the lover who finally wins her, tells Venus he is ‘thy vowed soldier, who do bear thy yoke / As ’twere a wreath of roses’ (5.1.95-6). However the roses are real, while Emilia is interested not just in narcissi in general but specifically *stitched* narcissi. Flowers and needlework are connected again in the figure of the Jailer’s Daughter: once she goes mad, she sings about flowers and the Doctor advises the Wooer to court her with flowers, but before then she too thinks about sewing as she looks at ‘The little stars and all, that look like aglets’ (3.4.2), that is decorative fastenings, and vows, ‘For I’ll cut my green coat, a foot above my knee’ (3.4.19). Both Emilia and the Jailer’s Daughter see a relationship between what they wear and where they are: Emilia wants a skirt that echoes what she sees in the garden, the Jailer’s Daughter thinks of the stars as parts of a garment. This paper will explore some of the ways in which the apparently everyday act of a woman stitching a flower can serve to link to her environment.



‘Strange Habits’

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‘Handy dandy’, which is the Hand, which is the Glove? Love and Gloves in Shakespeare

As Peter Stallybrass and Ann Jones put it, “[i]n the Renaissance as today there were many practical functions for gloves, whether to protect hands from heat and cold or from the rigors of labor. [...] But the gloves of aristocrats and gentry—male and female alike—usually operated to display hands to which such labor was alien. The function of these gloves—for both men and women—was to occupy the hands in the manufacture of the immaterial.”⁶

This paper will examine the functions of the glove in Shakespeare, generally seen as a token or metonym of love and desire, rather than as a protection against severe climatic conditions. The glove in Shakespeare is presented as a ghostly hand, as an extension of one’s own self (“O that I were a glove...”, Romeo imagines when Juliet appears above him at her window, *Romeo and Juliet*, 2.2.24), as a symbolic object or item of clothing which connotes both presence and absence. But the glove is also for him a personal signature referring to his own origins and identity: the importance taken by the glove in his work (there are some 56 occurrences of the word in the canon) indeed testifies to the handicraft filiation from father to son as the latter moved from the glove to the Globe, from the local Warwickshire manufacturing shop to the London entertainment industry.

⁶ Peter Stallybrass and Ann Rosalind Jones, “Fetishizing the Glove in Renaissance Europe”, *Critical Inquiry*, The University of Chicago Press, Vol. 28, No. 1, “Things” (Autumn, 2001), pp. 114-132, p. 118.



‘Strange Habits’ Clothes, Climes, and the Environment in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries

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‘Diana’s Shrouds’ and ‘Black Tempests’: Pre-Roman Rite of Passage in Marlowe’s *Dido Queen of Carthage*

“These Lybian deserts” (1.1.228), i.e. Carthage, is a decisive stage in Aeneas’s journey as a surviving Trojan and future founder of Rome. During this brief stay, Aeneas’s identity as a foreigner is submitted to clothing rituals and meteorological influences. Indeed, Scarcely know[ing] within what clime [he is]” (1.2.44), the once Trojan prince now dressed in “base weeds” is soon invested by Dido “king of Carthage” with “wealthy robes” (2.1.65) she brought from Tyre, herself a “wanderer” (the meaning of her name) made Queen in Carthage. Aeneas’s liminal status in Carthage is further stressed by the sylvan surroundings inhabited by mortals and anthropomorphic deities dressed in hunting gears, dyed in Tyrian “purple” (1.1.206), the future colour of the Roman Empire and of the English royalty. Lastly, the elements and the atmospheric changes authored by whimsical gods and culminating in the exceptional “hurly burly in the heavens” (4.1.10), interfere to reroute the trajectory of Aeneas’s destination/destiny towards Rome.

This paper addresses Marlowe’s representation of English nation’s Roman genealogy through the episode of its ancestor, “exiled forth Europe and wide Asia both” (1.1.229) – Aeneas being the great-grand father of Brutus, the first British king according to the medieval legends. The superstitious constructions of the climate in Early Modern England as well as the Renaissance travel narratives intersect to enhance the primitive and devilish dimensions of the outlandish climes named Punic, Lybian, Carthaginian and Afric. The ritualized transition through Carthage appears, from an anthropological perspective, like a rite of passage that looks to the establishment of “a statelier Troy”, “clad [...] in a crystal livery” (5.1.2,6), not in Carthage as first planned, but in Italy.



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Changing Habits: The Politics and Theatricality of Clothing in Early Modern Voyages to the Arctic

When twelve Dutchmen, out of the seventeen who had set out on a voyage in search of the North-East passage a year and a half before, reappeared in Amsterdam on November 1. 1597, they offered a striking sight: not only because their fellow citizens thought they had been 'long before [...] dead and rotten' but also because of their strange accoutrement, clad as they were in "the same clothes that [they] wore in Nova Zembla with [their] caps furred with white foxes skin" (Phillip, 1609 sig. X3v). They were immediately introduced to Prince Maurice and the Ambassador of Denmark in their Russian outfits. The scene, which provides a fit finale to the exciting tale of the Dutchmen's adventures in the Arctic (De Veer, 1598) highlights the political and dramatic function of dress and attire in the travels that Europeans undertook in what has been called the 'age of exploration'. Clothing, and the need to find new markets, is often the economic rationale behind overseas exploration but it also plays a crucial role in the organization and circumstances of the voyages themselves, whether it be the local (and often ill-suited) garb of the travellers, or the foreign and often exotic outfits of the country people they encountered. Rather than turn our attention to the "naked savages" that John Smith and others described in Virginia or Florida, we will turn to the Northern climes and examine European encounters with 'people of Cathay' (Frobisher, Davis, Hakluyt) - Inuit and also 'frozen Muscovites' (*Love's Labours' Lost*, V.2). Scenes of travellers and strangers changing habits (European travellers going native or conversely country people, often forcibly, dressed up in a European fashion) changed the early modern visual culture. A closer look at the theatricality of such moments shows that beyond the generic conventions of travel writing, clothing in this case questioned technology and redefined the winter landscape, as well as a general sense of place.



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‘...bear your body more seeming, Audrey’ : Costume and Shakespeare’s Bodies

The theatrical history of Shakespeare can be written through stage costumes. Directors, designers and actors have claimed Shakespeare plays as flexible spaces in which to exercise their own ideas about the work. In all productions, costume choices can be read, in varying degrees, as signifiers of the Protean nature of Shakespeare interpretations. During four hundred years of comparatively uninterrupted staging of his plays, costume traditions have been created, challenged, subverted, transformed, rejected, rediscovered, recycled, mashed together, stripped down, deconstructed and reconstructed. Theatrical records suggest a result that is best described as ‘not too far and not too near’. For the modern, not quite here and for the historic past, not quite there also apply. Today costumes have ranged from those with futuristic LED lights and computer-generated designs to those with meticulous detail to historical accuracy in in the ‘original practice’ movement. However, even the most authentically reconstructed Elizabethan garment must, of necessity, be tweaked to accommodate a twentieth-century body. These shifts are a part of the story. Even when previous centuries favoured contemporary clothes as costumes for the historic past, theatricality triumphed. ‘Strange Habits’ is a phrase that perfectly describes the long and intricate costume practices in Shakespeare productions – a record of conceptual fluidity partnered with economic pragmatism.



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Subverting the Strange Habit of Saint George in Shakespeare

If only metaphorically, Shakespeare’s use of the habit of Saint George, the patron soldier saint of England, was a way in which emblems were used to highlight the condition of the soldier in early modern England: the habit as leitmotif in the History Plays reveals socio-economic instability and exposes a transition from feudal combat to early modern soldiers being bought and sold, or even plying their own trade, in mass warfare. The red cross of Saint George on a white background had essentially been adopted for the uniform of English soldiers to rally troops and glorify the king. When, for instance, the character of Henry V commands “Cry ‘God for Harry! England and Saint George!’” (*Henry V* 3.1.34) at Harfleur, T.W. Craik notes how he is invoking, “God for Harry’s cause! Saint George for England’s victory!”⁷. Within this framework, the public spectacle constructed through speech and costume ostensibly stresses both a supporting “England”, a persona created thanks to the services of the easily recognisable costumed soldier, and the individuality of the monarch. The king is emphasised in both cases since God and the military are to support his private and public bodies (“Harry”, “England”) whereas his army is considered as an anonymous mass. The costume thus primarily symbolised a patriotic and military figure “suited to reception by kings” and Saint George pageants welcomed Edward VI upon his coronation or Edward IV, after his defeat of Henry VI in 1461, the former’s victory seemingly echoing the saint’s triumph⁸. At court, the habit of Saint George was a symbol through which power was manifested through a seemingly spiritual patronage of kingly cause. In Shakespeare, however, the use of Saint George’s habit also remained open to more subversive interpretive possibilities and thus shaped different social identities for both the soldier and the sovereign.

⁷ Shakespeare, William. *Henry V*. Ed. T.W. Craik, The Arden Shakespeare. London: Routledge, 1995, p. 204.

⁸ Lamb, Mary Ellen. *The Popular Culture of Shakespeare, Spenser and Jonson*. New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2006, p. 69.



‘Strange Habits’

Clothes, Climes, and the Environment in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries

International Conference / 3-5 December 2020 / Clermont-Ferrand, Moulins

MILLER-BLAISE, ANNE-MARIE (Paris 3-Sorbonne Nouvelle, IUF)
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John Webster and the Materials of Satire



‘Strange Habits’

Clothes, Climes, and the Environment in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries

International Conference / 3-5 December 2020 / Clermont-Ferrand, Moulins

MILLS, PERRY (Stage Director, King Edward VI School, Stratford-upon-Avon)

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List of plays discussed during the interview:

John Lyly, *The Woman in the Moon*

Christopher Marlowe, *Dido, Queen of Carthage*

John Marston, *The Malcontent*

Thomas Middleton, *A Mad World, My Masters* and *A Trick to Catch the Old One*

Thomas Nashe, *Summer's Last Will and Testament*

William Shakespeare, *Henry V*



‘Strange Habits’

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International Conference / 3-5 December 2020 / Clermont-Ferrand, Moulins

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Investing/Disinvesting Islam on the Early Modern Stage

As demonstrated by the various sumptuary laws and regulations on clothing, clothes were complex and rather problematic markers of identity in early modern England, with ramifications plunging deep into the spheres of the social, the political, and even the religious. This complexity shows most prominently on the public stage, where characters’ identities and allegiances were accessed upon entry by the outward means of specific costumes and props marking national, racial, and religious belongings.

Taking my cue from the works of Peter Stallybrass and Denis Britton on costume and the performance of transcultural identities on the early modern stage, I will focus in this presentation on some of the key costumes and props associated with Islam in the plays of the period, such as the Turkish crown, robe, and scimitar snatched from the Great Turk in *John of Bordeaux* (c. 1592), the turban decorated with a half-moon, the robe, and the sword donned by the converting English pirate in *A Christian Turned Turk* (1612), or the veil cast by the Ottoman sultan Soliman on the Christian heroine Perseda in *Soliman and Perseda* (c. 1589) as he tries to subject her to his power. Exploring the Islamic symbolism of these identity markers, I will also address the implications of their circulation and reappearance on the public stage in non-Islamic contexts, which at times complicates the cultural and religious statuses of some classically inherited oriental figures, such as the pre-Islamic heroines studied by Chloë Houston.



‘Strange Habits’

Clothes, Climes, and the Environment in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries

International Conference / 3-5 December 2020 / Clermont-Ferrand, Moulins

PITMAN, SOPHIE JANE (Aalto University, Finland) (Keynote Speaker)

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Apparel for Rain: Keeping Dry, Warm, Clean and Healthy in Early Modern London

Anyone who has visited London will have experienced the importance of a raincoat and waterproof boots, but what did early modern men and women do to keep clean, dry, warm, and healthy in an era when bad weather threatened fabric, body, and soul? This paper will explore what Londoners and visitors to the city wrote about their experiences with city mud, dirt, and rain, and how they tried to overcome environmental challenges while staying fashionable. It will also chart how experimenters and craftspeople like the London gentleman Sir Hugh Plat attempted to create waterproof clothing that would withstand the urban environment while appealing to a city that craved fine fabrics, vivid colours, and sparkling accessories.



‘Strange Habits’

Clothes, Climes, and the Environment in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries

International Conference / 3-5 December 2020 / Clermont-Ferrand, Moulins

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“Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off, / And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark”: Meteorological Climate, Political Atmosphere, and Clothing in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*

This paper addresses a neglected area of research in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, and aims at providing fresh insights into this play text which promotes a cold atmosphere and a dark climate. Even though scholars have produced varied and insightful analyses of the play, they have largely overlooked the role of clothing. Yet the twin notions of atmosphere and habitat both permeate the tragedy, and Shakespeare gives us a number of important clues on the way Elsinore’s inhabitants are dressed.

Through an analysis of the different meanings (i.e. literal and figurative) of the word “atmosphere”, this paper will explore the relationship between climate, mental and political environment, and clothing in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. Francisco sets the tone early on in the text: “’Tis bitter cold, / And I am sick at heart” (*Hamlet*, 1.1.6-7), connecting Denmark’s prevailing weather with his own emotions. Moreover, a closer look at specific scenes from the play (for example, act 1, scene 2 or act 1, scenes 4 and 5) reveals that clothes not only reflect Elsinore’s meteorological conditions but also offer new perspectives on the characters’ feelings.

Therefore, after focusing on the atmosphere’s impact on the way the characters are dressed, this paper will show how, in *Hamlet*, clothes sometimes serve to disclose the characters’ feelings, and sometimes conceal or even disguise them. Finally, I will see how Shakespeare’s dramatization of Denmark’s atmosphere, combined with his ambivalent use of clothing, helps to position Hamlet’s self in relation to those surrounding him. The Prince’s self-fashioning proves crucial, indeed, to the development of the tragedy as a whole and to the characters’ deadly fates.



‘Strange Habits’

Clothes, Climes, and the Environment in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries

International Conference / 3-5 December 2020 / Clermont-Ferrand, Moulins

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The Triumph of Fashion: A Global History

This presentation not only argues for the rise of fashion as a multicentric history, but also uses English material and, in its second part, it focuses on ecologies.



‘Strange Habits’

Clothes, Climes, and the Environment in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries

International Conference / 3-5 December 2020 / Clermont-Ferrand, Moulins

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Discoloured Taffeta and Variable Colours: Materialising Iris’ Rainbow Stage Costume in Jacobean Drama

Discoloured taffeta and variable colours – these are but a few indications given in Francis Beaumont’s *The Masque of the Inner Temple*, staged in February 1613, to recapture the colours and materials that were used to design the stage costume worn by the masker impersonating Iris, the goddess of the rainbow, in this Jacobean court masque. This mythological character, appearing two years before in William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (1611), was depicted as the “many-coloured messenger” (4.1.76) who came along with Juno and her colourful peacocks. Starting with these two examples representing a rainbow on stage, this paper aims at studying how this ephemeral climatic phenomenon could be materialised with stage costumes used in Jacobean court masques and drama in a pre-Newtonian world. Prior to Isaac Newton’s scientific revolution, which still shapes our perception of colours today, rainbows could be paradoxically depicted either as a transparent arch, as in the well-known *Rainbow Portrait* of Queen Elizabeth (1600) or as multi-coloured circles, as can be seen, for example, in medieval illuminated manuscripts. Despite the existence of two sketches representing the character of Iris, as featured in a 1613 pageant staged for Princess Elizabeth at Heidelberg and in Ben Jonson’s masque *Chloridia* (1631), the colours and the material used for the stage costumes shown in different Elizabethan and Jacobean entertainments and plays have raised controversy among critics. By taking into account the mythological, biblical and literary representations of this climatic element, this paper will rely on the material history of pigments, dyes and textile in early modern England to investigate the techniques that could have been used to design both the transparency and the polychromy of the rainbow on Iris’ stage costume which symbolises an ephemeral, immaterial natural phenomenon.



‘Strange Habits’

Clothes, Climes, and the Environment in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries

International Conference / 3-5 December 2020 / Clermont-Ferrand, Moulins

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**‘We’re all male to th’middle, mankind from the beaver to th’bum’:
Ambivalent Fashions and the Fashioning of Gender in Middleton's City Comedies**

Beyond the well-studied character of Moll Frith, the female who dresses as a man and whose gender ambivalence is central to *The Roaring Girl*, Middleton frequently addresses cross-dressing in his comedies, both within the convention of boys playing female parts, and through the recourse to tricks whereby a male character passes himself off as a woman. While both of these devices are shared with Shakespeare (*Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It* etc) and other playwrights (see for instance Ben Jonson’s *Epicæne*), Middleton’s approach differentiates itself through its precise reliance on the vocabulary of fashion and the materiality of clothing, underlining with surprising precision the ways in which the shape of a doublet can make a male costume appropriate for a woman and vice-versa.

This paper will study the ways in which Middleton generates and cultivates gender ambivalence through the materiality of fashion in several city comedies, including *A Mad World, my Masters*, *Your Five Gallants*, *The Roaring Girl*, but also in his satirical texts such as *Microcynicon* or *The Black Book*.



‘Strange Habits’

Clothes, Climes, and the Environment in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries

International Conference / 3-5 December 2020 / Clermont-Ferrand, Moulins

TREILHOU-BALAUDÉ, CATHERINE (Paris 3 – Sorbonne Nouvelle)

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Presentation and interpretation of a few costumes from the CNCS



‘Strange Habits’

Clothes, Climes, and the Environment in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries

International Conference / 3-5 December 2020 / Clermont-Ferrand, Moulins

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Without a National Dress but a Climate of their Own: The Invention of the ‘Temperate’ English Climate, Character and Constitution

The focus of this paper is the origin and ideological implications of the enduring, if scientifically indefensible idea of a specifically ‘English climate’, which appears to be unique insofar as no other European nation lays claim to a climate coincident with its territorial boundaries. This is in striking contrast with the (possibly again unique) lack of national dress. Beginning with the first (mid sixteenth century) visual portraits of an Englishman as virtually naked and the attacks on the attendant tendency to imitate other cultures (metonymically signalled by the wearing of foreign fashions), I will show how the myth of an (idealised) national climate emerged with the centripetal drive of more and less radical protestants to a bounded national language and identity. In contrast to representations such as Shakespeare’s one reference to the national climate as ‘foggy, raw and dull’ (*Henry V*, 3.6), the climate is represented as like the language, ‘temperate’, an Aristotelean mean between the extremes of (northern, specifically German) cold and (southern, specifically French) heat. This myth of a temperate national climate was then taken up in post-Restoration England by a clutch of writers, opposed to the commonwealth, who associated it not only with the ‘nature’ of the English but also with their ‘constitution’. This word is used of the human body, but carries obvious political resonances at the moment of the formation of the (unwritten), again unique, ‘constitution’ of the modern English system of governance claimed by Lord Chesterfield in 1750 to be ‘the only monarchy in the world that can properly be said to have a constitution’. This was represented by these writers as, like the climate and language, an Aristotelean mean between extremes. The myth of a national climate thus feeds into and bolsters with the force of a natural condition the construction of ‘the English’ after the crises of the civil war and the ‘revolution’ of 1688-89 as a specific, exceptional, and organically constituted body, to be imitated rather than imitating, and equipped by nature, as Aristotle’s Athenians were, to rule over neighbours as well as peoples ‘naturally’ destined by their climate to be ruled.



‘Strange Habits’

Clothes, Climes, and the Environment in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries

International Conference / 3-5 December 2020 / Clermont-Ferrand, Moulins

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Makers of Text and Makers of Craft

Taking Shakespeare’s familiarity with Boccaccio as a starting point, this paper seeks an interdisciplinary approach by examining the traces of *Trecento* textile production in the literary *corpus* of two of Italy’s literary *tre corone*, Dante and Boccaccio. While luxury textiles may have only been consumed by the wealthy and elite in this period, many marginalized figures, including women and other craftspersons were integral to various stages of their construction. By shifting the focus to the “makers”, I am able to show how both Dante and Boccaccio are deeply invested in social relations and how they deploy textiles in their respective texts in a manner which is specific to both their specific time and geography. Using the theoretical framework of thinkers such as Tim Ingold and Ann-Sophie Lehmann, I examine the concept of craftsmanship in each author’s depictions of similar tools. Dante references textile tools used by the tailor (scissors for example) in an attempt to make complex concepts related to time, eternity, and the body more real and accessible. He scaffolds textiles within a larger architecture of craft production familiar to his reader. Writing in an adjacent moment, just fifty years later, Boccaccio inserts textile tools such as the spinning wheel and the needle prominently and more overtly in the *Decameron* for a different purpose. He strategically evokes the specific material conditions of the textile industry worker (particularly the spinner) in order to make radical narrative choices and disrupt categories, nearly always in service of a poly-vocality.



‘Strange Habits’

Clothes, Climes, and the Environment in Shakespeare and his Contemporaries

International Conference / 3-5 December 2020 / Clermont-Ferrand, Moulins

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Apes, Gulls and Fashion Victims: Dress and Undress in the London Pamphlets of Thomas Dekker

Thomas Dekker is memorably defined as a *peintre de la vie londonienne* by Marie-Thérèse Jones-Davies in her definitive *thèse d’Etat* (1958). Her choice of the term *peintre* (painter) is significant: Dekker is like a roving photo-journalist, recording London itself, the City, as a living organism, with its constant hubbub, its swarming populace, its crowded streets and alleys, its sounds, its smells, and its bizarre characters. Dekker’s verbal photographs are so visual—he was a dramatist and a character-writer, after all—that the reader of his prose works is invited to *see* the scenes he depicts, not just to *imagine* them. In another magisterial thesis, Eliane Cuvelier writes of a contemporary of Dekker’s, another writer, Thomas Lodge, as a *témoin de son temps*, a witness of his time. Dekker is not just a witness, he is a painter, a recorder, of his London in all its ebullience. *Chez Dekker, ça grouille*.

Dekker’s best-known play, *The Shoemaker’s Holiday*, depicts humble but proud and earnest artisans at work in their shop, making shoes—an article of clothing. Whether or not Dekker himself was descended from Flemish cloth merchants and tailors who immigrated from the Low Countries, first into East Anglia in the fifteenth century, his writings, both dramatic and non-dramatic, display some familiarity with the milieu of textiles, cloth-and leather-working, and fashion. Dekker was also a satirist, inviting laughter at the fashion excesses of young would-be gentlemen and ladies-about-town, often newly arrived from the country and hoping to cut a fashionable figure in the big city. In this he, like his contemporary Ben Jonson, anticipated the social comedy of the Restoration, with its fops, dandies and ‘country wives’.

This presentation will focus on some of Dekker’s prose works, in particular *The Gull’s Hornbook* (1609) and *The Seven Deadly Sins of London* (1606). In these pamphlets, he depicts and satirizes the excesses in dress and behaviour of the gulls and gallants who people early Jacobean London.