



‘Strange Habits’

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

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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.