Helen Galloway McNicoll R.B.A, A.R.C.A "Girl Resting" o/c c. 1912

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ROTUNDA

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Memisabu and His Wife. Painted limestone, (c. 2360 BC), height 62 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1948. Men in ancient Egypt loved their wives with all their heart. To learn what motivated them turn to page 12.
PHOTOGRAPH BY SCHECTER LEE
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MADE IN ENGLAND?

An 18th-century trade embargo of foreign embroidery raises interesting questions about the meaning of "foreign"

EDWARD MAEDER

FOREIGN TRADE IS A HOTTER TOPIC THAN EVER TODAY. ACRONYMS are flourishing, from NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) to WTO (World Trade Organization). As national economies become more global, the standardization of currencies, the equalization of trade, the ending of tariffs and subsidies, and a host of other issues are constantly being discussed and debated.

Political concerns also enter the mix. In the recent past, for example, Canada and other nations banned the importation of many products from South Africa to protest apartheid. The United States still bans products from Cuba and has exerted pressure on its allies to do the same. Protests over human rights violations in China took place on each stop of the President of China's recent visit to the United States and Canada, where he came to discuss trade.

Such economic and political matters are not new. Needless to say, foreign trade was a major issue during the hostilities between England and France in the 18th century.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN BOYLE, ROM

Edward Maeder is former director of the Bata Shoe Museum and was the recipient of a Veronika Gervers Fellowship from the Textiles Section of the Department of Near Eastern and Asian Civilizations, Royal Ontario Museum

English man's coat and breeches made of brocaded velvet with silk embroidery, 1780s. Collection of the Royal Ontario Museum.

Combined with the outburst of nationalism during this period, it led to one of the strangest Acts of Parliament ever passed and implemented in Britain. As a Veronika Gervers Fellow, I decided to research that act and the reasoning behind it, because more than 100 pieces of men's 18th-century embroidered costume in the ROM's collections may have been affected by it.

Passed in 1749, the act served to "prevent the importation and wear of foreign embroidery and brocade, and of gold and silver thread, lace, or other work made of gold or silver wire manufactured in foreign parts." Although this may appear nonsensical to our modern sensibilities, the act was a result of the nationalistic pressures exerted by the Antigallican Society, formed in 1745, by such worthies as Horace Walpole and Mr. Janssen, later Lord Mayor of London. The society was formed "to promote the BRITISH MANUFACTURIES, to extend the commerce of England, and to discourage the introducing of French Modes, and oppose Importation of French Commodities. . . . [It]was always composed of Gentlemen of the best Character and Address, none being admitted but persons of Reputation and Loyalty."

Gentleman's Magazine, sounding board of British sentiment, published a letter in January 1746, which had appeared in Mr. Faulkner's Dublin *Journal*. "Whether all persons who wear French waistcoats, or any French commodities, do not in effect send money to the pretender, or, what is the same thing, to the French king, the pretender's avowed abettor? and whether, if they are to be tryed for so doing by the laws of common sense and right reason, they would not be convicted of high treason?"

The smuggling of foreign goods was passionately discussed on the pages of popular magazines. In a lengthy letter to Mr. Urban of *Gentleman's Magazine* it was stated:

We, whose names are hereunto subscribed, taking into consideration the fatal consequences that do attend the clandestine importation of French goods into these kingdoms. Whereby the farmers, manufacturers, and many other amongst us are reduc'd to great straits—as the same time the power and ambition of our most perfidious enemies promoted—Do resolve, and hereby declare, that we will not (without a real necessity) purchase, for ourselves or families, any French brandies, wines, silks, lace, cambricks, lawns, or any other goods we believe to be the produce or manufactures of our enemies. But on the contrary, it shall be our study to promote (as far as lies in our power) the welfare of Great Britain, Ireland, and our plantations, by wearing and consuming the produce and manufactures thereof, and abstain from the luxurious articles of France and Spain.

What was the state of English embroidery when the act was passed? Mr. R. Campbell described such work in his publication of 1747 entitled *London Tradesman being a* COMPENDIOUS VIEW OF ALL *the Trades, Professions, Arts, both Liberal and Mechanic, now practiced in the Cities of London and Westminster.* CALCULATED *For the Information of* PARENTS, *and Instruction of* YOUTH *in their Choice of Business.*

Embroiderers may be reckoned among the Dependants of the Lace-Man: as in his Shop the greatest Part of their rich Work is vended, and he furnishes them with all Materials for their Business. It is chiefly performed by Women; is an ingenious Art, requires a nice Taste in Drawing, a bold Fancy to invent new Patterns, and a clean Hand to save their Work from tarnishing. . . . Few of the Workers at present can Draw, they have their Patterns from the Pattern-Drawer, who must likewise draw the Work it self, which they only fill up, with Gold and Silver, Silks or Worsteds, according to its Use and Nature. We are far from excelling in this Branch of Business in England: The Nuns in Foreign Countries far exceed any thing we can perform. We make some good Work: but fall short of the bold Fancy in French and Italian Embroidery: This I take to be chiefly owing to the Want of a Taste for Drawing in the Performers; they may go on in a dull beaten Tract, or servilely imitate a Foreign Pattern, but know not how to advance the Beauty of the old or strike out any new Invention worth Notice. An Embroiderer ought to have a Taste for Designing, and a just Notion of the Principles of Light and Shade, to know how to range their Colours in a natural Order, make them reflect upon one another, and the whole to represent the Figure in its proper Shade."

The Lace Man: His chief Talent ought to lie in a nice Taste in Patterns of Lace, &c. He ought to speak fluently, though not elegantly, to entertain the Ladies; and to be Master of a handsome Bow and Cringe; should be able to hand a Lady to and from her Coach Politely, without getting seized with the Palpitation of the Heart at the Thought of a delicate Hand, a well-turned and much exposed Limb, or a handsome Face: But, above all, he must have confidence to

The smuggling of foreign goods was passionately discussed on the pages of popular magazines

English man's coat made of wool with silk embroidery, 1780s. Collection of the Royal Ontario Museum.

refuse his Goods in a handsome Manner to the extravagant Beau who never pays, and Patience as well as Stock to bear the delays of the sharping Peer, who pays but seldom. With these natural Qualifications, five Thousand Pounds in his Pocket, and a Set of good Customers in view, a young Man may commence Lace-Man; If he trusts moderately, and with Discretion, lies with Economy, and minds his Business more than his Mistress, he may live to increase his Stock; but otherwise I know no readier Road to a Jail, and Destruction, than a Lace-Man's Business.

By 1752, the ban on embroidery and lace was being vigorously enforced. In January, *Gentleman's Magazine* announced: "A parcel of waistcoats embroidered with foreign gold & silver (which were lately seized at a taylors house, who must pay the penalty of 100 pursuant to the act of parliament) were publicly burnt in preference of the custom-house officers and others." And in June, another story: "A considerable quantity of foreign gold and silver lace, seized at a taylors who paid the penalty of 100, was publicly burnt."

At year's end the hysteria had reach such proportions that a note in *Gentleman's Magazine* stated: "A law is talk'd of, to be proposed to prevent children from being sent to be educated abroad, and brought up enemies to the religion and laws of their country. And another against gentlemen making the tour of Europe, to carry abroad the wealth and virtue of the nation."

Authors such as Tobias Smollett wrote about the smuggling of embroideries and lace. In his novel *The Adventures of Count Fathom* (1753), one culprit was apprehended "who being stripped of his upper garments, and even of his shirt, appeared like the mummy of an Aegyptian king, most curiously rolled up in bandages of rich figured gold shalloon, [a type of thin wool] that covered the skirts of four embroidered waistcoats."

In 1757 a book was written by Malachy Postlethwayt (1707–1767), which suggested a solution for the "present misfortunes of the nation. So bewitching is our French taste, that the British and Irish money, spent in travel there can hardly be so little one year within another as 200,000 £ Sterling per annum, balance against us in this article; the French spending little here, in comparison to what our gentry do in France."

The standoff with the French had turned into the Seven Years War in 1756. When the war ended, however, the prohibition on the importation of French goods continued. In August 1764 the *London Chronicle* announced: "We hear that a great seizure was lately made at the Custom House, of vast quantities of French embroidery, French silks, French ruffles, and French everything, the property of a certain great Earl. [Surely a petty smuggler, who may plead his necessities for violating the laws, is more excusable than a Peer and Legislator, who infringes them from vanity, or some worse motive: Yet the former is hanged, while the latter, so far from dreading punishment, dares to insult those who have done their duty.]"

The Peer and Legislator, although anonymous in the paper, was well known in the higher social circles. Lady Mary Coke, a prolific letter writer of the day, made reference to this incident when she wrote to Lady Strafford on 14 September 1764, "Since the seizure of Lord and Lady Holderness's baggage, everything that can is taken from everybody." Lady Holland wrote to Lady Kildare, six days earlier that, "the custom-house people are most immensely strict just now on account of the infinite quantity of french goods imported." A month later she wrote, "Lady Holderness has done us all great mischief—indeed the officers are so exceeding strict just now, 'tis a bad time to attempt getting anything from abroad." Through this kind of exposure Lady Holderness became known as the Queen of Smugglers.

Of the more than 200 garments listed in detail in the newspaper, only one was "Said to be her ladyship's own working," which gives the impression that this particular piece was legally imported. The article continued by mentioning "Besides the above, we are told that a complete house of furniture, from the most expensive and magnificent part of it, to the meanest utensil, is hourly expected to arrive for the same great personage." Fifteen years after the act was passed, the prohibition against foreign embroidery was still being flouted.

Lord Holderness, a Peer of the Realm as well as Ambassador to Venice and the holder of several other important posts, seems an unlikely candidate for such exposure. Perhaps he thought, as the paper suggests, that he was above the law. This remains, for the most part, an unopened chapter in the social history of commerce.

How could embroidery be identified as foreign? What were the tell-tale signs that were instantly recognizable? Were the English responsible for slavish symmetry of detail?

English man's coat and waistcoat made of silk with silk embroidery, 1770. Collection of the Royal Ontario Museum.

Unfortunately, it is not possible for us to know the exact appearance of the embroidered garments that once belonged to Lord and Lady Holderness. However, there are today museum collections holding large numbers of garments with the floral decoration fashionable during the second half of the 18th century.

In the course of examining the embroidered garments in the ROM's extensive collection, I was struck by how carefully and accurately the flowers were rendered. Flowers had been a major motif in all of the decorative arts for centuries but with the discovery and cultivation of new plants different kinds of gardens developed in Europe.

As early as the 1540s the Fugger family in Augsburg boasted a garden containing a wide variety of tulips. By the 1580s several royal gardens had been established. Savants such as Nicolas Claude Fabri di Pieresc (1580–1637), whose chateau, Belgentier, near Toulon, contained one of the most important gardens in Europe, collected rare plants from as far afield as the Caucasus and even China. In 1588 the famous golden rose was finally grown in Europe. The Elizabethans, the Valois, the Italians, the Germans, and the Austrians were obsessed with flowers.

As gardens became an integral part of genteel society, so the colours and types of flowers seen on silk brocades, painted silks, and especially embroideries grew in variety and beauty of execution. In 1726 John Lawrence gave his views on the subject of women gardeners in his *New System . . . a complete Body of Husbandry and Gardening*: "I flatter myself the Ladies would soon be thinking that their vacant Hours in the Culture of the *Flower-Garden* would be more innocently spent and with greater Satisfaction than the common Talk over a Tea-Table where Envy and Detraction so commonly preside. Whereas when Opportunity and Weather invite them amongst their Flowers, there they [the Ladies] may dress, and admire and cultivate Beauties like themselves without *envying or being envied*."

As I examined and photographed the floral details on the men's coats in the ROM's collection, a thought kept going through my mind. I remembered my visits to stately homes in England and how the guides were prodigiously proud of their glorious and well-thought-out, "herbaceous borders." According to Mark Laird who published *The Formal Garden: Traditions of Art and Nature* in 1992:

In traditional palace gardens, the influence of England was registered in the increasing use of the parterre à l'anglaise*— Ease of maintenance and natural appearance helped promote the cause of the grass parterre. Paradoxically, an alternative tendency towards elaborate floral borders also arose out of the quest for naturalness; natural herbaceous plants increasingly replaced artificial topiary within the plate-bands of the parterre. . . . the plan of Schwetzinger in 1753 demonstrates these two tendencies combined into one; these were the grass parterres with flower borders. Indeed, during the Rococo period flowers became the preferred decorative element; the flower parterre was sometimes promoted to a central position over the* parterre de broderie.

Was I looking at embroidered "herbaceous borders?" Were some of the border motifs representative of either brickwork or trellises? Did the velvet and the dark wool grounds represent the grass lawn element of the popular parterre?

In the second half of the 18th century, publication of recently discovered plants through the sale of hand-coloured engravings became highly fashionable. As was always the case with embroidered garments, the newer the motif the more prestigious the wearer. Although this was more often the case with waistcoats, which could number in the hundreds for a man of fashion living in Paris in the 1780s, it also applied to the formal, court, and evening wear worn in the last decades of the century.

Returning to the Act of Parliament, the big question is how could embroidery be identified as foreign? What were the telltale signs that were instantly recognizable? Were the English responsible for slavish symmetry of detail? What was English? What was French? For that matter, what was German or Italian? Think of our own times when products from clothing to cars can be manufactured in one place with materials and parts supplied from all over the world.

The Act of Parliament does pose an interesting problem and what I hope to discover is a way to determine the national origins of this astonishingly beautiful art of the needle. Women have always been considered the "flowers" in the Garden of Life, but I think I can safely say that in the second half of the 18th century, men wore the herbaceous borders. ❦

The Egyptian ibis pictured above developed an odd powdery substance on its surface, which can be clearly seen in the detail below.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN BOYLE, ROM

Furry Cats and Other Egyptian Pets

I FREQUENTLY RECEIVE INQUIRIES FROM collectors concerned about valued Egyptian bronze antiquities in their possession that have developed pustules erupting a blue-green powder. This powder sometimes begins to obscure the objects' surface detail or lifts up the surface, a process known as spalling.

Two cases brought to my attention were particularly intriguing. They involved objects purchased decades ago—one in Egypt and the other locally. Both showed a mixed white-and-turquoise blue efflorescence with associated spalling and pitting of the surface. Their apparent deterioration was extremely upsetting to the owners.

One type of destructive corrosion, known as bronze disease (paratacamite), occurs on objects made of bronze (copper and its alloys) when they are subjected to high humidities in the presence of salt (sodium chloride) from handling, burial in the ground, or exposure to windborne salt particles. Bronze disease is indicated by the presence of a furry light green or light green-blue powder.

While the corrosion on the two objects was active and disfiguring, it did not look like typical bronze disease. To identify the problem correctly, the corrosion products had to be analyzed. This is an expensive procedure; however, when I explained the problem to two colleagues in the Mineralogy Section of the Department of Earth Sciences at the ROM, they offered to conduct the analysis, partially to satisfy their own scientific curiosity.

I approached Malcolm Back about the first object, a small cat. He was able to identify its corrosion by X-ray Diffraction(XRD). This is an X-ray method that can be used to identify chemical compounds present in a sample. The white effores-