Drizzling: A Peculiar Past Time

By Peter Kaellgren

This article describes the research that I pursued with respect to an acquisition of historic silver textile tools made in 2015 by Dr. Alexandra Palmer, The Nora Vaughan Senior Curator in the Department of Textiles at the Royal Ontario Museum. It was originally presented as a lecture to the Silver Society of Canada in Toronto, spring, 2015. Discovering information on the topic has been an enjoyable process and provided a better understanding of several different artifacts.

In past centuries, textiles were particularly important as a sign of wealth and status. Hand-woven and hand-embroidered fabrics as well as unprocessed wool and flax represented up to 40% of the over-all wealth of a household in Europe or Britain prior to the Industrial Revolution. Even unmarried female relatives were valued because they worked as "spinsters," spinning raw wool and flax into thread. We tend to forget the status that fabrics conveyed prior to 1800 when the effects of the Industrial Revolution were beginning to be experienced. Trained artists often created special designs for tapestries, woven materials, embroidery and needlepoint. Fine fabrics and lace were laboriously woven by hand at great expense. Textiles were often colorfully dyed to emphasize the importance of the wearer or occasion and frequently woven or embroidered with gold and silver thread or trimmed with metallic lace. Since lamps and candles provided the only source of light for formal occasions, the metallic threads contributed a shimmering effect to the evening. Costly fabrics were usually re-cycled and salvaged with the metallic thread being an important byproduct, especially in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

At the beginning, several terms need to be defined. The first is "parfilage" a French term referring to the unraveling or unweaving of the threads in cloth or embroidery. It comes from the verb "parfiler" which means to unravel or unweave. The English term popularly used around 1800 for this unraveling of metallic threads was "drizzling". This is derived from the verb to drizzle or fall in fine drops, which is how the silver or gold covering a silk or linen core on a filament of thread would have disintegrated during the process of unraveling.

Cloth with metallic thread is one of those categories in textile history where much new research could be done. We may tend to ignore them partly because our taste in clothes, even for weddings today, tends to be towards earthy and drab colors. Also, present-day consumers want to wear comfortable clothes and use home-furnishing fabrics that are easy to clean and not the high-maintenance "show fabrics" of past centuries which were often bought for staggering prices. The majority of the historic fabrics with metallic threads have

Plate 1 St. Catherine of Alexandria, figure from a fresco in the murals of the Sala dei Santi of the Borgia Apartments in the Vatican. Painted c. 1494 by Pinturicchio (Bernardino di Biagio, 1454-1519) The model for the figure is traditionally considered to be the young Lucretia Borgia. Note the extensive gold in her robes.

been lost or recycled centuries ago. Today, this limits the range of material available to be analyzed.

Cloth that was entirely woven of metallic thread is documented on the headstones of wealthy Roman matrons and in the *Book of Psalms*. It was considered a fabric worthy of royalty and the stuff of legend as in the myth of *Jason and the Golden Fleece.* In the court of Henry VII of England around 1500-1509, cloth with gold threads was reserved for members of the royal family, the most important nobles, and the highest levels of the clergy, where golden robes would have made them the center of attention during religious ceremonies.

Very few examples have survived. The textile collection at the Royal Ontario Museum includes some fragments of early Islamic textiles with details woven in gold threads. The technology was preserved and developed in the Byzantine Empire. By the Middle Ages, it was being continued by Italian weavers in Genoa, Venice and Lucca. Some was woven in China by the 14th century, though metallic thread embroidery is more commonly seen on East Asian textiles. Today, there are producers in India and a few in Europe. By the 20th century, the best known metallic fabric was gold lamé which in western culture is often associated with movies and evening wear.

One of the earliest records of cloth of gold that I encountered in modern history is a description of Lucretia Borgia (1480-1519) (Plate 1) at the time of the negotiations for her fourth marriage to Alfonso d'Este, the Duke of Ferrara. Lucretia was the illegitimate daughter of Pope Alexander VI who reigned 1492-1503. If you saw the historical drama "The Borgias" on television, you will know that the family were conspicuous consumers who have attracted wide public attention for their lifestyle over the centuries.

The lives of Lucretia and her family were meticulously documented by Johann Burchard, a German ecclesiastic who functioned as "Master of Ceremonies" at the Papal Court in Rome. Burchard describes the celebrations of her nuptials as follows:

"About the hour of Vespers on Saturday, September 4th, 1501, news came of the marriage [contract] concluded [between Alfonso and Lucrezia] . . . As a result of these tidings, there was a continual cannonade from the Castel Sant' Angelo from that hour onward into the night. Next day, after dinner, Lucrezia rode from her residence to the Church of Santa Maria del Popolo. She was dressed in a robe of brocaded gold with the veil drawn back, and was escorted by three hundred horsemen [as well as many dignitaries] . . . but she herself proceeded alone; [separate from the rest of the procession] . . .

On the following day, Monday, September 6th, two clowns paraded through all the principal streets and piazzas of the city [of Rome], shouting loudly 'Long live the most Illustrious Duchess of Ferrara, long live Pope Alexander! Viva, viva!' One of these men was on horseback and had been given by Donna Lucrezia the golden brocaded dress and veil which she had worn as new only once on the day before and which was worth three hundred ducats or so. [About £3000 in the money of the time] The other man followed on foot and was similarly the recipient of a dress from the pope's daughter."[1] A present-day observer can only assume that this attention-grabbing performance was intended to show that the Borgia family were so wealthy that they had money to burn. Each of the male performers would have netted a tidy sum if he was really allowed to keep and sell Lucrezia's luxurious dresses.

Going forward a few years to 1520, the young Henry VIII hosted a spectacular jousting tournament and meeting in English territory near Calais between June 7 and 24. The guest of honor was King Francis I of France. Everything was done to impress him at this royal gathering designed to confirm the bonds of friendship and peace between England and France. There were tents made of glittering cloth of gold. (Plate 2)

Plate 2 Field of the Cloth of Gold, oil painting on panel, c. 1545. Collection of Her Majesty the Queen. This painting is based on earlier pictorial records. Copyright The Royal Collection.

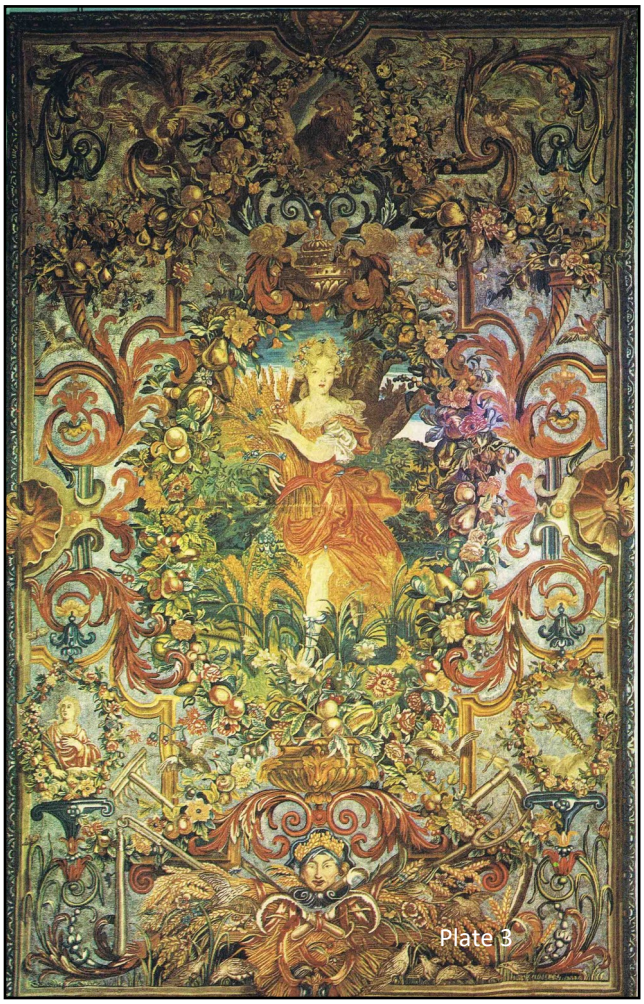

Plate 3 “Summer”, needlework tapestry with metallic threads. French, c. 1685/86. Possibly from a set of the Four Seasons. The design may be based on a woven Gobelins tapestry. Collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1966.

Plate 4 Settee and two matching Armchairs, carved and gilded oak frames holding cushions upholstered with St. Cyr needlework tapestry incorporating silver threads. French, c. 1715-1720. Collection of the Royal Ontario Museum, accession no. 970.185a, b and c. Reproduced courtesy the Royal Ontario Museum. Height of back on both 114 cm. From a set of 11 armchairs and one settee formerly with the dealer Seligmann in Paris.

Plate 5

Plate 5 Court Dress, English, London, c.1752/53. Silk brocade woven with gold metallic thread by Huguenot weavers in Spitalfields. Front view. Displayed in the Museum of London from their collection.

Plate 6

Plate 6 Back view of the dress in Plate 5 showing a close-up of the woven silk brocade. Note the lace created with silver thread along the top. Plates 5 and 6 reproduced courtesy the Museum of London.

By the 18th century, the British commonly referred to this event at the "Field of Cloth of Gold" so celebrated was its historical account and its importance in the history of Europe in the early 1500s.

There are few surviving examples of fabrics with significant areas of metallic threads that date earlier than the 1600s. This needlework tapestry made in France about 1685/86 provides some idea of how such fabrics might have looked. (Plate 3) One can imagine how the silver background, which is in amazingly untarnished condition, would have shimmered by candle light. The Royal Ontario Museum owns a rare set of two armchairs and a settee with similar needlework canvas upholstery made at the St. Cyr school, a court institution established by Louis XIV and Madame de Maintenon for the education of well born daughters of impoverished noble families. (Plate 4) Unfortunately, most of the silver thread in the backgrounds of the needlework designs has tarnished.

As a final striking example of textile with metallic thread, one can study a dress from the collection of the Museum of London where it is on display in their galleries. (Plate 5) The brocade fabric was designed and woven with 14 different colors of silk thread and four different colors of gold thread at Spitalfields in London. The Protestant refugees known as Huguenots who fled from Catholic France in 1685 established the English silk-weaving industry which already by the 1690s was rivaling that in France. This formal dress, which is just as handsome on the back, was made for Ann Fanshawe about 1751/52. Ann's widowed father Crisp Gascoyne became Lord Mayor of London in November 1753, which meant that she was often asked to serve as his hostess on official occasions before her premature death in childbirth. It is possible to create different colors of gold by alloying it with different metals. For example, copper in the right proportions yields a rose-colored gold. Generally, colored gold is described as "quatre coleurs." Gold is very malleable which means that extremely thin sheets of a gold alloy can be wound around a silk or linen core to create a metallic thread. Silver thread was created in a similar manner. Sometimes, fine silver foil was plated with gold to keep costs down. A close-up of the bodice trimmed with silver lace (Plate 6) provides some idea of the high-quality fabrics with metallic threads that were woven and embroidered before the Industrial Revolution. If the late Baroque/ Rococo pattern looks a little different from anything you have seen before, that is a credit to the designers who created the patterns for the weavers of Spitalfields. One of the most famous designers, whose large folio water-color designs still survive today, was Anna Maria Garthwaite (1690-1763). It is worth remembering that certain skilled artists specialized only in textile designs.

By the second quarter of the 19th century, the use of metallic thread was waning in western culture. This may be partly because high quality machine-loomed textiles, printed fabrics and exciting new chemical dyes were being developed and often more affordable. These played a growing role in style and fashion. It is also possible that the cost of metallic thread, skilled hand-weaving and fine embroidery for anything other than military uniforms was rising. The decline of gold in fabrics may be inferred from gold-embroidered hangings in the Throne Room at Buckingham Palace. These date from the reign of William IV, 1830-1837, and have not been replaced by later kings and queens. Rising costs meant that even royals made do with heirlooms.

Plate 7 Portrait of Elizabeth Hardwicke, Countess of Shrewsbury (1520-1608), oil on panel. Preserved at Hardwicke Hall, National Trust. Copyright National Trust.

Plate 8 View of Hardwicke Hall from the Garden. Copyright National Trust.

The history of parfilage or drizzling is only slowly being discovered. Some sources record that occasionally fabrics and tapestries were simply burned and the metallic threads salvaged from the ash. But that was not always the best option. It seems possible that one of the earliest significant re-cyclers of metallic thread was Elizabeth Hardwicke, Countess of Shrewsbury, 1520-1608. (Plate 7) Next to Queen Elizabeth I, she was one of the most important women in England during the late Tudor period. She married four times, was very careful with her possessions and died extremely wealthy. She is often referred to as "Bess of Hardwick", perhaps in deference to Queen Elizabeth who never married.

Bess is important to our understanding of the way in which textiles were valued. She bought up large quantities of new and second-hand tapestries and textiles. Some of them may have been vestments, altar cloths and decorator fabrics that came from the dissolution of the monasteries and the churches following the English Reformation. Having served at the court of Henry VIII near the end of his reign, she would have been familiar with all of Henry's textile splendor which included approximately 5,000 tapestries, one of the largest collections in history. For Bess, textiles signified the importance, status and legitimate history of the family and had to be preserved and handed down at all costs. The inventory of her possessions which appears to be up to 80% textiles was compiled in 1601 and has been published. The textiles (household stuff) included many examples with gold or silver thread or embroidery. Textile furnishings far outnumbered her pieces of silver and gold. As indicated at the beginning of the inventory of each of her houses, she viewed ". . . the Plate and other Furniture of howshold stuff which is ment and apppointed by this my laste will and testament to be, remayne and Contynewe at my house or howses. according to the true content and meaning thereof."[2]

The new Hardwick Hall, the last of three homes that she built and furnished, (Plate 8) was the epitome of a Tudor country chateau with large expanses of the recently-introduced windows. This gave rise to the epithet "Hardwick Hall: more glass than wall". Like many of the owners of large country estates in her period, Bess employed itinerant bands of mainly male needle workers to make towels and sheets out of bolts of linen and to create or repair wall hangings, cushions and other household furnishings. This sometimes upset her fourth husband.

By the early 1800s, the textiles at Hardwick Hall, her country home near Chatsworth in Devonshire, were famous as ancient relics and treated venerably by her family. My quick survey of the 1601 inventories does not seem to indicate any re-cycling of precious metal thread. However, Bess's textiles are among the few well-documented early examples, and a knowledgeable textile scholar might be able to identify evidence of re-cycling from other surviving household accounts. Other prominent families likely would have preserved historic textiles. By the late 1700s, many of these had become worn, tarnished or were sold off due to changing fortunes, war and revolution. Other textiles came from the dissolution of religious orders and the sales of church treasuries. Such outdated or worn textiles would have provided ample material for the practice of parfilage or drizzling.

By the 1770s, parfilage had become a common activity in high society in Europe. Mme de Genlis, who was a prominent musician, author and educator in France criticized the passion for parfilage in her novel *Adèle et Théodore* (1782). Inspired by a real-life incident involving the Duc de Chartres, she tells of a male character being attacked by ten passionate parfileuses who were "tearing away my coat and packing all my fringes and galloons into their work bags." The fad was practiced in Austria where Lady Mary Coke (1727-1811) recorded a winter evening in 1770 spent at the home of Princess Khevenhüller. Coke noted that "All the ladies who do not play at cards pick gold: tis the most general fashion I ever saw: they all carry their bags in their pockets." The pocket used by European women in the 1700s was a small tailored bag worn about the waist and filled with necessities, perhaps including a smaller bag holding drizzling tools and a supply of old textiles to pick over.

During the 1780s, when George, Prince of Wales, and his friends the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, like many young smart members of the British aristocracy, spent time on the Continent, the practice of drizzling may have come back to England with them. Between 1784 and about 1790, Mrs. Maria Fitzherbert (1756-1837), was George's primary mistress. She lived in a house beside his at the seaside resort of Brighton and occupied a London town house near Carlton House, his London residence. It was reported that George and Mrs. Fitzherbert would while away rainy afternoons at Brighton drizzling by the fire. There were likely many old court uniforms and livery costumes to provide material for their activities. By the 1790s, the French Revolution and impoverished nobility fleeing the Continent would have provided more second-hand textiles and costume with gold and silver to re-cycle.

Plate 9 Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfield (1790-1865) and his first wife, Princess Charlotte Augusta of Wales (1796-1817), in a box at the theatre, London. English, hand-coloured engraving, 1817, by William Thomas Fry after a painting by George Dawe. London: National Portrait Gallery, NPG 1530

Another notorious drizzler was Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfield (1790-1865). In 1816, Leopold married Princess Charlotte, the only child of George, Prince of Wales. (Plate 9) When Charlotte and her infant son died from the complications of child birth in 1817, the whole nation went into mourning. Here we see the dashing Leopold and Charlotte about the time of their wedding. After Charlotte's untimely death, Leopold became a prodigious drizzler, using tools from his wife's tortoise-shell drizzling box. He was so addicted to the practice, that his mistress, the well-born German actress Caroline Bauer, complained that the sound of his drizzling made her want to scream. But, it all paid off. From the proceeds of drizzling, Leopold was able to purchase a silver soup tureen for his niece the young Princess Victoria. There was money in those old textiles. Ultimately in 1831, Leopold was officially sworn in as King of Belgium.

Very little physical evidence of drizzling has been noted among surviving textiles. Most scholars, collectors and dealers have largely ignored this historical practice. It has traditionally been regarded as damage to a fabric, even though surviving pieces suggest that the precious metal threads were carefully removed so that the fine woven textile remained intact and retained its value on the second-hand market. Almost uniquely, Dr. Alexandra Palmer began to recognize this practice as an important one through her recent research on the re-cycling of 18th-century fashion and textiles. She has been able to assemble an interesting range of documentary pieces, in many cases acquired for the ROM with the help of the Louise Hawley Stone Charitable Trust. The results of Dr. Palmer's research on these acquisitions will be published in the near future. This paper focuses on the set of drizzling tools that she acquired for the Royal Ontario Museum to document this practice.

June Field in her book *Collecting Georgian and Victorian Crafts* states that the unpicked threads "were returned to the lace man, usually the tradesman who had supplied the original items, who paid handsomely for them, as they in turn sold them back to the goldsmiths and silversmiths who melted them down for the valuable metal of which they were made."[3]

Plate 10 Drizzling Set, silver and steel with enamel decoration. Most likely French, mid 1600s. The tools include a drizzle pin for lifting up and pulling out the metallic threads, a knife for cutting the threads, and a small pair of scissors with high quality steel blades. Image courtesy of Cora Ginsberg, New York.

Plate 11 Back view of the Drizzling Set demonstrating how the scissor case and cover were connected by a chain and the rectangular compartment at the back for holding the drizzle pin and knife. Such a set could have hung from a chain at the waist of its owner or been part of a chatelaine. Image courtesy of Cora Ginsberg, New York.

June Field documented the practice of drizzling or parfilage, even illustrating a drizzling set from the City Museum Sheffield, which is described as "Eighteenth century. French. Case of silver and blue enamel containing drizzle pin, thread knife and scissors."[4] Dr. Palmer wanted to acquire a similar set to help to interpret the rare examples of textiles documenting parfilage that she had acquired for the ROM.

A prominent dealer in antique textiles in New York was asked to find a set as a possible acquisition for the Royal Ontario Museum. In late December 2014, the dealer wrote to say that she had just added two sets to her stock and that the Royal Ontario Museum could have first refusal. Another major museum was interested in purchasing whichever set the ROM did not select. The more expensive set, which resembles the one in the City Museum Sheffield was silver with enamel decoration. (Plate 10) The dealer identified both parfilage sets as being French, late 18th century, but did not note any hallmarks or maker's marks. The popularity of drizzling in the late 1700s likely provided an implied date. This meant that a reliable dating would have to be established using evidence from comparable examples of silver. I was asked for an opinion on which set to acquire and thereby initiated the research for this paper.

The enamel set is very attractive. (Plate 11) I did not believe the 18th century date and seemed to recall a similar shade of blue enamel used on French objets de vertu from the 1600s. You can get some idea of how the various pieces fit into the case by looking at this view of the back. The knife and the pick fit into the raised compartment at the back of the case. The pattern of white enamel

Plate 12 front view

Plate 14 back view

Plate 12 Drizzling Set, silver and steel with original gilding and engraved decoration. Most likely French, mid-1600s. Collection of the Royal Ontario Museum.

This acquisition was made possible with the generous assistance of the Louise Hawley Stone Trust Fund. 2015.36.1.1-1.4 Although the set is in mint condition, it lacks a chain to connect the case and cover. The images in Plates 12, 14, 15, 16 and 17 were all taken by Jennifer Kinnaird, European Department, ROM. Reproduced courtesy the Royal Ontario Museum.

scallops highlighted with drops of black looks a little like lace for edging a costume.

Bottle picture

When I saw the second set, which is engraved silver, I became excited. (Plate 12) The engraving on the case is of exceptional quality. This represents the highest standard of work by the smallworkers who produced small silver and gold tools and luxury objects in the 17th and 18th centuries. The youthful figure would appear to be Cupid with a bow at his back: small silver objects and sewing accessories apparently were often love tokens given by a man to a lady.

Plate 13 Miniature Scent Bottle, engraved silver. English, London, c. 1690, struck with the crowned TT mark of Thomas Tysoe. H. 4.3 cm. (1 5/8 in.) ROM Collection, Gift of Mrs. R. W. Gouinlock, 988.33.71 Reproduced courtesy the Royal Ontario Museum. Note the similar engraved figure of a cupid on the side. The engraved decoration includes a round reserve wreathed in laurel depicting a seated cupid grasping a flaming heart from a group of four hearts with a church with a central steeple in the left background. The engraved lettering "TE LE PREFE" ("You are my chosen one") and the cupid suggest that this is a love token. The shape follows the canteen or pilgrim bottle carried by devout Catholics on pilgrimages.

Based on its style and the motifs, I initially suggested that the set likely could be dated to late in the Baroque period, say about 1680-1720. That was much earlier than the vendor had stated. I also believed that the enameled set had enough similarities that it likely was from the same period. The engraved motifs offer a wonderful potential for researching the print sources that inspired the motifs, a much more exciting prospect than the enamel case! And finally, I argued that the engraved silver set was less expensive and better value for the money. It related to several small pieces of silver already in the ROM collection.

The oval with the village scene below the cupid provided evidence for my suggested dating. In the Margaret Gouinlock Collection of early English silver toys at the Royal Ontario Museum, there is a small scent bottle engraved with a similar scene and a young cupid. (Plate 13) The bottle shape derives from the pilgrim bottle with a cover held by chains, a popular form in the 1600s and early 1700s. A nearly identical bottle is illustrated in the catalogue of the Albert Collection which includes many prime examples of silver and gold made by smallworkers around 1700. Both bottles bear the crowned, uppercase TT mark identified as Thomas Tysoe, a London silversmith who registered as a

smallworker and are dated to circa 1690. It is possible that a specialist engraver or engraving workshop in London that employed a similar repertoire of designs decorated both of the Tysoe scent bottles and a needle book in the Albert Collection. Other similarly decorated specimens of the Tysoe scent bottle have appeared at auction.

The rear view of the silver drizzling set acquired by the Royal Ontario Museum provides a closer view of the tools. (Plate 14) The scissors fit snugly into the front compartment. The small stiletto or drizzling pin for raising threads and the knife for cutting the threads are stored in the oblong compartment at the back. Originally, there would have been a silver chain or a cord that ran through the loops at the back and kept the top and bottom sections of the case together. The chain allowed the drizzling set to be attached to the waistband of the owner in the manner of a chatelaine.

Chatelaines came into use during the Middle Ages. They allowed for one's purse and other necessary items to be conveniently attached to a girdle or cord around the waist. A chatelaine was a collection of the household keys, sewing tools and other small household tools that hung at the waist of the lady of the house or the house-keeper. Valuables and foodstuffs were kept under lock and key. Other components of a chatelaine might include a tiny notebook, a pencil or other writing instrument, a bodkin which is a large flat needle for threading laces which were used more commonly than buttons, a pin-cushion, possibly an ear-cleaning tool, a nutmeg or ginger root grater, and maybe a small corkscrew for removing the cork from a bottle. The wearing of a chatelaine represented authority and status in a household. The finest ones and the utensils were made of silver or gold or the tools had mounts of precious metal. Chatelaines continued to be part of female dress in the 1600s right up to around 1800. In the late Victorian period, when historical styles and dress were often copied, fancy chatelaines began to be produced again for women who wanted them.

The tools in the drizzling set acquired by the ROM are in remarkable condition considering their age. Most sets of small tools like these are damaged, worn and lack pieces. On this set, the parcel gilding or "partial gilding" is intact and survives in its original state. You can clearly see it at the ferrule or molded attachment above the blades of the knife and pick as well as the narrow band below the finials of the tools. Handles were created by a silversmith and mounted onto the sturdy steel blades of the scissors. The scissor blades would have been supplied by a specialist cutler. Based on examples of scissors and a few drizzling sets illustrated in the literature and on line, this pattern of handle can be found on several examples. They are all finished to a fairly standard model and quality, one that is not quite up to the engraving on the case. This suggests that they may have been supplied by another silversmith or workshop that specialized in these items. It was perfectly acceptable within the silver trade in major cities like London for prominent silversmiths to purchase component parts like tea spoons, candlesticks, or candle snuffers from specialist makers to go into sets that were ordered by clients. It was more expedient to have spoon makers or other specialists provide such pieces. Fine work like engraved decoration, engraved coats of arms and crests, and chasing luxury items could also be contracted out to specialists.

Dr. Palmer judged that the bird figures that appear as finials on the handles of the scissors and tools have an iconographic significance because they are found on so many of the sets. Their style resembles the gargoyles on Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. She consulted Canadian art historian Jean Duce Palmer who suggested that the bird figures may be derived from Classical Mythology. This sounds credible because classical mythology and ancient history were an important part of education in France and England during the Renaissance and Baroque periods. Imagery from these sources often figured in art, sculpture and decorative arts.

Jean Duce Palmer identifies the finial as a "stymphalian bird" taken from the Sixth Labor of Hercules as recounted by the Roman historian Pausanias in the second century of the Common Era. In brief, man-eating birds at one time bred on the water of the Stymphalos. Hercules or Herakles is supposed to have killed them all by shooting them down with arrows. Another ancient source, Peisander of Kamira, states that instead Herakles drove them away with the noise of rattles. The Stymphalian birds retreated to the desserts of Arabia where they continued to attack lions, leopards and men. "[These birds] fly against those who come to hunt them, wounding and killing them with their beaks. All armor of bronze or iron that men wear is pierced by the birds; but if they weave a garment of thick cork, the beaks of Stymphalian birds are caught in the cork garment, . . . These birds are of the size of a crane, and are like the ibis, but their beaks are more powerful, and not crooked like that of the ibis."[6] As creatures that could cut through anything, Stymphalian birds would have been appropriate as imagery for drizzling tools.

The blades of the scissors have complex decoration acid-etched into the surface. This may include initials for the cutler or his workshop. A specialist cutler would have provided the blades for these scissors. The inner side of the blades still retains the original shiny blue finish and there is a cutler's mark, a crescent-shaped saw impressed on the inner surface and gilded. This mark has not been traced but ultimately could provide a clue as to where and when drizzling sets like this were made. The back of the blades also retains its gilded finish. There is some kind of a monogram, apparently composed of an overlaid V Y or W Y, etched just below the pin. It is absolutely exceptional to find any set of small tools dating prior to 1800 in such fine original condition. Perhaps the reason why it remained in its original condition was the lack of a chain. This would have held the component parts of the case together and made the set functional.

Anxious to assist Dr. Palmer in making this important acquisition, I searched for other comparable items to put the place it in context. Documenting small items of silver can often pose great problems because international auction houses do not consider them to be valuable enough to feature in sales and most scholars concentrate on table silver and products of prominent silversmiths and the" largeworkers" as they were classified at Goldsmiths Hall in London.

A few months earlier, I had urged a Toronto dealer to acquire a scissor case with similar engraving from an antique show in Ottawa. It retains what appears to be its original chain. It has a single compartment for scissors which currently holds a tiny pair that are 19th or early 20th century. The vendor who sold this scissor case

Plate 15

Plate 16

Plate 17

Plate 15 Three silver cases with similar engraved decoration. Left, scissor case with chain from a private collection. Centre, Drizzling Set Case, ROM Collection, gift of Mrs. Joan Murray, 998.48.1 Right, the Drizzling Set Case acquired by the ROM in 2015. All cases possibly French or produced by silversmiths trained in the French traditions, mid 1600s.

Plate 16 Back views of the three cases shown in Plate 16.

Plate 17 Bottom half of the privately-owned scissor case showing the hallmark for .939 standard silver struck at Soissons, eastern France, c. 1770. Spectroscopic analysis of all three of the cases confirmed that they were made of a similar silver alloy.

dated it to around 1800. I told the dealer who purchased it that I thought it dated c. 1680-1720. The new owner kindly allowed me to bring it in to the Royal Ontario Museum for study.

The privately-owned scissor case provides useful evidence because it is struck twice with a standard mark used at Salins in eastern France about 1775. (Plate 17) This appears most clearly on the lip of the lower section which like all three of the cases is incised with V-form lines, possibly to help the cover to grip more securely. The town of Salins is under the jurisdiction of Besançon. This province did not become part of France until the reign of Louis XIV. From the late 1700s onwards, it was common practice in France, the Austrian Empire, Belgium, and The Netherlands to assay second hand and heirloom silver when it came on the market or was being repaired. A 1775 mark indicating that this heirloom met French standards of purity is perfectly understandable and suggests that it was created by a silversmith who was trained by a French master and followed the established French silver alloy.

I also remembered that I had acquired a scissors case with similar engraving for the European Collection in 1998. It was given by the Canadian art historian Joan Murray (accession no. 998.48.1.1-.4). Joan grew up in New York City where her father often pursued his passion for antique collecting. This scissors case was acquired for the ROM on the basis of the quality of the engraving and its rarity as a small example of Baroque silver. It came with a single silver handle surmounted by a

stymphalian bird, but no scissors. There were two other tools of later date and undetermined use. Bringing the three engraved silver cases together allowed Robert Little, Alexandra Palmer, ROM conservator Susan Stock, and Jennifer Kinnaird our European technician to see how remarkably similar they are. They all appear to come from the same workshop or were possibly decorated by the same engraver. Looking very closely at the middle example one can see there is a young falconer on a horse engraved among the foliage. (Plates 15 and 16) The back views are informative. The central example acquired by the ROM in 1998 can now be correctly identified as a drizzling case because it has an oblong compartment for the pick and knife at the back.

Through my colleague Dr. Karin Blanc in Paris, I was able to contact curators at various French museums. Dr. Blanc is an independent scholar who recently published the definitive study of fine French Art Deco wrought iron. The engraved silver cases elicited considerable interest from French curators at the Louvre and the Musée Des Arts Décoratifs, Paris. I am grateful to Dr. Blanc and to Dr. Michéle Bimbenet-Privat at the Louvre and to Anne Foray-Carlier, Head Curator for the 17th and18th centuries, and her able conservation assistant Sophie Motsch at the Musée Des Arts Décoratifs for their insights and support.

Dr. Bimbenet-Privat, a Curator at the Louvre, was impressed by the similarity of the cases and concurred with the idea that they all three could have come from a similar workshop, though it is not possible yet to determine conclusively if that was in France. In the course of e-mail correspondence, she and other scholars suggested that the three cases could be dated anytime between 1550 and 1650. Based on the style of decoration, a date sometime between 1620 and 1660 seems to be the more likely.

More interesting evidence emerged when all three engraved silver cases were subjected to non-destructive x-ray spectrum analysis by Katherine Dunnell of the Mineralogy Department at the Royal Ontario Museum. She found that all three were comprised of a similar alloy of silver which further suggests that they could have come from the same workshop and were made to French standards which had a higher silver content than English Sterling silver. (Plate 17) The Salins standard mark is just barely visible on the engraved cover of the privately-owned scissor case. Robert Little traced an FR or FP mark that was found struck three times on the incomplete drizzling case owned by the ROM (998.48.1). He identifies this as being struck in Vienna c. 1809-10. The 1806 confiscation of silver proved not to be sufficient to support Austria's war effort during the Napoleonic wars. 1809 a further confiscation of private silver was ordered. The FR mark denotes the object as exempt from confiscation as the owner had either paid the value of silver in silver or coin.[7]

While the drizzling set acquired by Alexandra Palmer for the Royal Ontario Museum may not be struck with any hallmarks, the two other engraved silver cases help to identify it and establish a context. They also allow us to appreciate how exceptional its condition is. This is one of the acquisitions that I have most enjoyed at the ROM. It is especially satisfying when a Canadian institution is able to acquire a fine example of an artifact that is a key document for the history of material culture.

Plate 18 Case for a drizzling set, gilded steel, early 1600s, French, Collection of the Musée des arts décoratifs, Paris. Plates 18, 19, and 20 reproduced courtesy the Musée des arts décoratifs. Photographs kindly supplied by Sophie Motsch.

Plate 19 Case for a drizzling set, pierced and engraved steel mounted over a blued steel background ("acier bleui"). French, early 1600s. Collection of the Musée des arts décoratifs, Paris. The silver dealer A. Aardewerk from The Netherlands offered a silver Drizzling Set with a similar pierced and engraved case for sale at the TEFAF Show in New York, October,2017. He stated that examples with pierced cases seem to have been preferred in The Netherlands.

Plate 20 Case for a drizzling set, engraved steel. French, early 1600s. Collection of the Musée des arts décoratifs, Paris.

Although Anne Foray-Carlier replied that so far as she could determine, the Musée Des Arts Décoratifs did not own any silver drizzling sets, Sophie Motsch generously provided images of their holdings. (Selected examples are illustrated in Plates 18, 19, 20) Their collection includes a range of steel drizzling cases without tools from several old French collections. These appear to be datable between 1600 and 1700. Some functional cases could be incredibly plain. These may have been considered suitable for workers, nuns or French Calvinists. Dr. Palmer noted that several of the scissor cases from the Musée Des Arts Décoratifs have details that indicate that they were love tokens, likely given to a woman by a male admirer. One is engraved "I give you my heart." A steel example has the crowned double hearts and holding hands that are commonly found on traditional Irish "Claidah" and Scottish Luckenbooth rings and brooches. It is likely that these motifs migrated to Britain from France via Catholic sources. Dr. Palmer translated the motto on another as "We are inseparable", perhaps a word play on the difficulty of removing precious metal thread from a fabric. Contemporary French Baroque scissor cases help us to appreciate the quality of the engraved silver examples that were brought together for this research project.

Endnotes:

[1] Johann Burchard, (edited and translated by Geoffrey Parker), *At the Court of the Borgia being and Account of the Reign of Pope Alexander VI written by his Master of Ceremonie Johann Burchard* London: The Folio Society, 1963, page 193.

[2] Santina M. Levey, *Of household stuff: the 1601 inventories of Bess of Hardwick.* London: National Trust, 2001, page 33

[3] June Field, *Collecting Georgian and Victorian Crafts* London: William Heinemann Ltd./ New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973, page 140. Most of the period information on the practice of drizzling found in this paper is taken from Field's account on pages 140 and 141. That includes the anecdotes about Prince Leopold whose character figures so prominently in the new *Victoria* series on PBS. The author contacted Kathryn Jones, Curator of Decorative Arts, who is responsible for silver in the Queen's Collection. She was fascinated to hear about Uncle Leopold's silver tureen but unable to determine its present whereabouts. Because it was a personal gift to Princess Victoria, she suggested that it may not have been included in the official inventories. (Kathryn Jones, e-mail, June 25, 2015)

[4] Field, *Crafts,* page 141, Figure 225. The black and white illustration is not of high enough quality to reproduce for this article.

[5] Robin Butler, *The Albert Collection: five hundred years of British and European Silver.* (London: Broadway Publishing, 2004), page 319, no. 711. This bottle also is struck with only the mark of Thomas Tysoe and no hallmarks. No. 640, described on page 313 of *The Albert Collection* is a small needle case in the form of a book. Its silver covers are engraved in a similar style with the wording in French stating "I burn for you." The pages are pieces of dyed cloth stitched together with silver thread to allow for the needles to be inserted. It is unmarked but of the same period. Small items like this were not always marked by the maker or hallmarked, particularly if they were made for wealthy or titled clients who could have provided silver to create them that was previously assayed and hallmarked.

[6] Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 8. 22 (trans. Jones) Greek travelogue C2nd C. E.

[7] Alfred Rohrwasser, Österreichs Punzen, Edelmetall-Punzierung in Österreich von 1524 bis 1987, 2. Ergänzte Auflage, Verlag Bondi, p. 12

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Dr. Peter Kaellgren served as a curator in the European Department at the Royal Ontario Museum from 1972 until the end of 2009. During his career, he worked on ceramics, glass, furniture, design graphics, metalwork, and increasingly focussed on silver from 1984 onwards. Dr. Kaellgren received his Ph.D. from the University of Delaware in 1987 with a doctoral dissertation on the evolution of the console table in England from the seventeenth century to c. 1800. He has lectured widely and taught courses on the history of European ceramics and glass for the University of Toronto. His articles have appeared in scholarly journals and popular publications. He is a member of the Silver Society (England) and a founding member of the Silver Society of Canada. Upon his retirement in 2009, he was granted Curator Emeritus by the Royal Ontario Museum. Since 2012, he and his partner, the photographer John Alexander, have become increasingly involved in searching for native orchids in Canada and in documenting them.