

Re: [NASSR-L] Flannel or French?

North American Society for the Study of Romanticism <NASSR-L@listserv.wvu.edu> on behalf of Susan Wolfson <wolfson@PRINCETON.EDU>

Wed 10/23/2013 3:38 PM

To: NASSR-L@listserv.wvu.edu <NASSR-L@listserv.wvu.edu>;

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When in doubt, give a shout, "Wikipedia!"

The origin of the word is uncertain, but a Welsh origin has been suggested as fabric similar to flannel can be traced back to [Wales](#), where it was well known as early as the 16th century. The French term *flanelle* was used in the late 17th century, and the German *Flanell* was used in the early 18th century.^[1]

Flannel has been made since the 17th century, gradually replacing the older Welsh plains, some of which were finished as "cottons" or [friezes](#), which was the local [textile](#) product. In the 19th century, flannel was made particularly in towns such as [Newtown, Montgomeryshire](#),^[2] [Hay on Wye](#),^[3] and [Llanidloes](#).^[4] The expansion of its production is closely associated with the spread of [carding](#) mills, which prepared the wool for spinning, this being the first aspect of the production of woollen cloth to be mechanised (apart from [fulling](#)). The marketing of these Welsh woollen clothes was largely controlled by the [Drapers](#) Company of [Shrewsbury](#).^{[5][6][7]}

This was news to me, because I was thinking cotton, then slave-plantations, and More's abolitionism. But no--the cotton fabrications were much much later.

Yes, More advocated for sympathy for the French emigrants as the duty of a Christian nation. I've got some discussion of her, Burney, and Smith on this in *Romantic Interactions*, with debts to Sarah Zimmerman and Claudia Johnson.

Best, Susan

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Hi, Michael and Andrew,

I think, in the context of the diversity of causes (weavers, bread, cheap rice, new church) all connected by "or" that "flannel" and

"French," despite appearing in the same phrase, are really two causes connected only by alliteration. My guess (strictly a guess, and no more) would be that "flannel" refers to collecting donations for flannel clothing (or flannel to make warm clothes for the poor) and "French" to the French emigres fleeing their home country for England, as recorded in Charlotte Smith's "The Emigrants," of 1793. This is only a surmise—you'd have to find out whether or not donations were being solicited from prosperous British citizens for the support of the fugitives of the French Revolution. I imagine More would have sympathized with them, in any case.

best,

Chuck

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From: "Michael H. Scrivener" <aa1973@WAYNE.EDU>
Reply-To: North American Society for the Study of Romanticism <NASSR-L@listserv.wvu.edu>
Date: Wednesday, October 23, 2013 11:09 AM
To: "NASSR-L@listserv.wvu.edu" <NASSR-L@listserv.wvu.edu>
Subject: Re: [NASSR-L] Flannel or French?

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 Andrew,
 I think your guess about flannel or French is probably right.
 That's great work your class is doing!
 Michael

From: "Andrew Winckles" <awinckles@GMAIL.COM>
To: NASSR-L@listserv.wvu.edu
Sent: Wednesday, October 23, 2013 9:27:02 AM
Subject: [NASSR-L] Flannel or French?

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 Dear all,

One of my classes this semester work on producing a critical digital edition of "The Sunday School" from Hannah More's Cheap Repository Tracts. We are currently working on annotating the text and are trying to figure out some context for the highlighted passage below:

"Oh, farmer! cried Mrs. Jones, you forget whose suns and showers make your crops to grow, but I do not come to preach but to beg. -- Well, madam, what is it now? **Flannel or French? or weavers, or a new church, or large bread, or cheap rice? Or what other new whim-wham for getting the money out of ones**

pocket? – I am going to establish a Sunday school, farmer and I come to you as one of the principal inhabitants of the parish, hoping your example will spur on the rest to give. – Why, then, said the farmer, as one of the principal inhabitants of the parish I will give nothing; hoping it will spur on the rest to refuse. Of all the foolish inventions, and new-fangled devices to ruin the country, that of teaching the poor to read is that very worst."

The context here is that Mrs. Jones (who is a Hannah More stand-in) is trying to establish a Sunday School so she is soliciting subscriptions from wealthy farmers - this one proves to be particularly intractable and is clearly exasperated with being constantly asked for money by the Hannah More's of the world.

I know what "new church, large bread, and cheap rice" refer to as these were pet projects of More, but we are perplexed by the phrase "Flannel or French". My initial thoughts are that this might refer to a campaign to get English people to buy English wool products instead of French silk and cloth, especially since the next phrase mentions "weavers."

Does anyone have any idea what this might refer to specifically or any sources I could point my students to?

Thanks.

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