

# THE CONTEXTS AND CONTOURS OF BRITISH ECONOMIC LITERATURE, 1660–1760\*

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ABSTRACT. *This article explores some of the main bibliographical dimensions of economic literature at a time when there was much interest in economic matters but no discipline of economics. By looking at what was published in the round much economic literature is shown to be short, ephemeral, unacknowledged, polemical, and legislatively orientated. This fluidity is underscored by the uncertainties about what constituted key works of economic literature and by the failure of attempts to make sense of that literature through dictionaries and histories. Economic literature in the period was, consequently, more unstable and uncertain than has often been acknowledged. It cannot, therefore, be simply characterized as either ‘mercantilist’ or nascent ‘political economy’.*

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In the century after the Restoration of Charles II there was a remarkable outpouring of thinking about economic issues in Britain, of exploring the ways and means to prosperity and plenty. Economic historians, historians of economic thought, and many others have long explored aspects of that flood, but only aspects. Selectivity has been the order of the day – to make the task manageable, to focus upon the more important writings, and, more questionably, to address somewhat ahistorical and teleological concerns.<sup>1</sup> Of particular concern is the influence of Adam Smith upon perceptions of the economic literature of the period. For somewhat polemical reasons, *The wealth of nations*, first published in 1776, characterized much of the earlier literature as mercantilist, an inaccurate and limiting label that has proved impossible to eradicate.<sup>2</sup> Second, and partly in reaction to this anachronism, surveys of pre-Smithian British economic

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\* Joanna Innes, Ted McCormick, Renaud Morieux, and David Ormrod kindly commented on a draft of this article. Audiences at Cambridge, London, and Paris also helped considerably. I am grateful to the British Academy and the Huntington Library for awarding me small grants to undertake some of the research. Publication of pre-1800 works is in London unless otherwise stated.

<sup>1</sup> For a recent overview of the development of the history of economic thought see R. E. Backhouse, ‘History of economics, economics and economic history in Britain, 1824–2000’, *European Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 11 (2004), pp. 107–27.

<sup>2</sup> D. C. Coleman, ‘Eli Heckscher and the idea of mercantilism’, in idem, ed., *Revisions in mercantilism* (London, 1969), pp. 92–4; idem, ‘Mercantilism revisited’, *Historical Journal*, 23 (1980), 774–7.

literature have, teleologically, often scoured the period for the origins of ‘political economy’, even though that term did not enter common use in England until 1767.<sup>3</sup> But whether surveys depict this literature as mercantilist or political economy both usually privilege more analytical, theoretical, and substantial works.<sup>4</sup> Often the method is to analyse the works of a common group of authors who are usually arranged chronologically, so tending to depict economic thought as developing progressively. If such Whiggishness has been addressed by a number of authors, not least by those who explore the relationship between economic thought and jurisprudence, moral philosophy, and political thought, British economic literature in the century after 1660 continues to be perceived by many in anachronistic and decontextualized terms, often in relation to a particular narrative, especially as either ‘mercantilist’ or as nascent ‘political economy’.<sup>5</sup>

A fundamental limitation hitherto has been uncertainty about the scale and scope of the economic literature of the period. This article adopts an historical and inclusive approach by mapping some of the bibliographical features of the landscape of economic literature at the time, mainly by concentrating on published works.<sup>6</sup> By looking in the round at several key features – what was published (when, subject matter, and length), some issues of authorship, library holdings, and contemporary attempts to provide an overview – it raises important questions about how that literature has previously been interpreted. It must be emphasized that the concern is with the numbers and forms of works rather than their content. Taking its lead from developments in the ‘history of the book’, a fundamental premise is that the bibliographical contours and contexts of economic literature must be established more clearly than before if the ways in which streams of economic ideas were formed, flowed, and faltered are to be better understood.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, to do so requires a re-evaluation of many general

<sup>3</sup> For example, W. Letwin, *The origins of scientific economics: English economic thought, 1660–1776* (London, 1963), or T. Asprougourgos, *On the origins of classical economics: distribution and value from William Petty to Adam Smith* (London, 1996). Sir James Steuart, *An enquiry into the principles of political economy*, ed. A. S. Skinner (2 vols., Edinburgh and London, 1966).

<sup>4</sup> That is, economic thought is often identified as the sub-set of more analytical works from the total population of works of economic literature. See J. A. Schumpeter, *History of economic analysis* (London, 1986), pp. 3, 38.

<sup>5</sup> T. Hutchison, *Before Adam Smith: the emergence of political economy, 1662–1776* (Oxford, 1988), is alert to the lure of Whiggishness, but its title and central argument continue to tend in that direction. Important recent contributions that largely avoid such pitfalls are A. Finkelstein, *Harmony and balance: an intellectual history of seventeenth-century English economic thought* (Anne Arbor, 2000), and L. Magnusson, *Mercantilism: the shaping of an economic language* (London, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> I do not consider serial publications or oral communication and education. On the former, some relevant issues are raised in N. Glaisyer, ‘Readers, correspondents and communities: John Houghton’s A collection for improvement of husbandry and trade (1692–1703)’, in A. Shepard and P. Withington, eds., *Communities in early modern England: networks, place, rhetoric* (Manchester, 2000), pp. 235–51.

<sup>7</sup> Such approaches are more common in France than in Britain. Most directly relevant is J.-C. Perrot, *Une histoire intellectuelle de l’économie politique (xvii<sup>e</sup>–xviii<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Paris, 1992), and C. Théré, ‘Economic publishing and authors, 1566–1789’, in G. Faccarello, ed., *Studies in the history of French political economy: from Bodin to Walras* (London and New York, 1998), pp. 1–56. Comparable concerns to

characterizations of the development of British economic literature in the period. By looking up to but not beyond 1760 the role of a 'great tradition' is diluted by more emphasis being placed on the slight, the ephemeral, the unacknowledged, the polemical, and the political. Not just that, economic literature in the period was also often doubtful and confused, lacking the coherence and fixity often ascribed to it.

## I

Though the initial task is to attempt to sketch the bibliographical dimensions involved, the simple-minded question 'what was economic literature in Britain between 1660 and 1760?' is anachronistic because, before the end of the eighteenth century, 'oeconomicks' was most usually the 'management of household affairs' and an 'oeconomist' practised frugality.<sup>8</sup> Nor had the concept of 'the economy' or any synonyms been developed and the language of 'political economy' only became established in Britain after 1760. At one stage the 'commonwealth' or 'commonweal' had promised to play such a role, but it had fallen out of favour after 1660 for obvious political reasons. Similarly, in the late seventeenth century some championed 'political arithmetic' as a means of exploring the totality of economic relations, but after 1700 it was usually employed in a more limited state-orientated way.<sup>9</sup> A range of imperfect alternatives were consequently resorted to, principally commerce, trade, and exchange. This posed two problems: that the heart of economic matters was limited to contacts between buyers and sellers; and that the scale and significance of overseas trade was significantly heightened, encouraging later studies to resort to the anachronism of 'mercantilism'.

The problems were not merely semantic. Contemporary attempts to map the intellectual world, which flourished from the late seventeenth century, failed to specify a particular place for economics or economic topics.<sup>10</sup> For example, though Blome rejected the ancient dichotomy between the liberal and the servile arts in favour of a five-fold division between the moral, prudential, mathematical, liberal, and mechanical arts and listed twenty-five general subject headings, economic matters were split between 'geography', 'navigation', 'chronology',

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those in this article inform the much fuller study of works of history by D. R. Woolf, *Reading history in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> S. Johnson, *A dictionary of the English language*, 1st and 4th editions on CD (Cambridge, 1996). For the use of 'oeconomist' see Anon., *Seasonable observations on the present fatal declension of the general commerce of England* (1737), p. 37. Sir William Petty briefly employed more modern terminology, but put more weight behind 'political arithmetic'. See T. Asproumorgos, 'The mind of the oeconomist: an overview of the "Petty papers" archive', *History of Economic Ideas*, 9 (2001), p. 50.

<sup>9</sup> S. Matsukawa, 'Origin and significance of political arithmetic', *Annals of the Hitotsubashi Academy*, 6 (1955), pp. 53–79; A. M. Endres, 'The functions of numerical data in the writings of Graunt, Petty, and Davenant', *History of Political Economy*, 17 (1985), pp. 245–64; J. Hoppit, 'Political arithmetic in eighteenth-century England', *Economic History Review*, 49 (1996), pp. 516–40.

<sup>10</sup> R. Yeo, *Encyclopaedic visions: scientific dictionaries and enlightenment culture* (Cambridge, 2001), is an excellent account.

and ‘history’.<sup>11</sup> In 1702 Harris set out the twenty-six subject headings he intended to employ in his forthcoming dictionary. Here again economic topics appear to have been dispersed across ‘law’, ‘history’, and ‘agriculture’.<sup>12</sup> The most elaborate ‘View of Knowledge’ was provided by Chambers (see Fig. 1). He made a fundamental division between natural and scientific knowledge on the one hand and artificial and technical knowledge on the other. In his more detailed list of contents, he placed two economic topics, political arithmetic and public revenues, under the general heading of ‘Policy’.<sup>13</sup> In the artificial and technical part he had the headings ‘Trades and Manufactures’, ‘Navigation’, ‘Commerce’, ‘Agriculture’, but from the detailed list of contents, the form of work involved determined the content of each.<sup>14</sup> They related to things rather than to concepts and the content of each was viewed descriptively not analytically.

This absence of economics from and the scattering of economic topics across schemes of knowledge can be found in other ways in which knowledge and literature were arranged. It had no place in the curricula of Oxford and Cambridge and though the Royal Society frequently engaged with economic questions in its early decades – Sir William Petty, the great advocate of political arithmetic, was an early leading light and the Society was initially concerned to produce a history of trades – a summary of its *Transactions* in the early eighteenth century provided room for them only under the headings ‘Chronology, history, antiquities’, ‘Voyages and travels’ and ‘Miscellaneous’ (twenty-eight headings were used in total).<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the *Gentleman’s Magazine* in its index of the register of books it had noted through 1735 used ten labels, none of which provided an obvious home for economic literature: agriculture; arts and sciences; biography, history & law; mathematics; miscellaneous; physics and philosophy; poetry and plays; political; theological and moral. Early library catalogues provide another way of approaching this issue. For example, Bristol library between 1773 and 1784 held 900 books under 9 general headings. Only 10 titles were clearly works of ‘economics’: 5 under ‘History, antiquities and geography’; 3 under ‘Philosophy’ (including Steuart and Smith’s great works); and 1 under ‘Natural history and chemistry’.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *The gentleman’s recreation. In two parts. The first being an encyclopedy of the arts and sciences ... the second part, treats of horsemanship, hawking, fowling, fishing, and agriculture* (1686), from the unpaginated preface.

<sup>12</sup> J. Harris, *Lexicon technicum; or an universal English dictionary of arts and sciences* (1704) – a second, supplementary, volume was published in 1710.

<sup>13</sup> E. Chambers, *Cyclopaedia: or, an universal dictionary of arts and sciences*, (2 vols., 1728), I, p. iii.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, I, pp. iii–vi.

<sup>15</sup> J. Lowthrop and H. Jones, *The Philosophical Transactions and collections to the end of the year 1720. Abridged and disposed under general heads* (5 vols., 4th edn, 1732). A quantitative survey of economic articles in the Royal Society’s *Transactions* is provided in E. A. J. Johnson, *Predecessors of Adam Smith: the growth of British economic thought* (London, 1937), pp. 387–401. On the curricula at Oxford see L. S. Sutherland and L. G. Mitchell, eds., *The history of the University of Oxford*, v: *The eighteenth century* (Oxford, 1986).

<sup>16</sup> P. Kaufman, *Borrowings from the Bristol library, 1773–1784: a unique record of reading vogues* (Charlottesville, 1960).

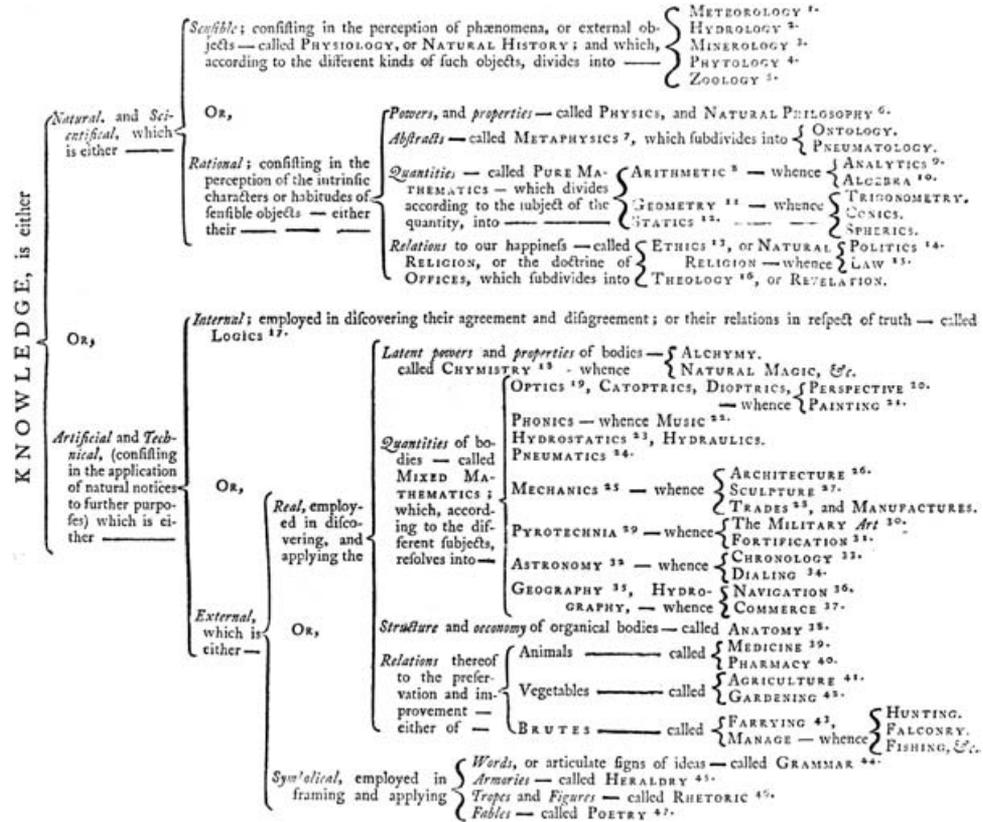


Fig. 1. The scheme of knowledge in E. Chambers, *Cyclopaedia: or, an universal dictionary of arts and sciences* (2 vols., 1728), 1, p. iii. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

## II

If neither intellectually nor institutionally did 'economics' have a clear and agreed area to call its own in Britain in this period, there clearly were in modern terminology many works dealing with economic issues. Fortunately, no one appreciated this more than Joseph Massie. Historians best know him as the author of a 'social table' in 1759–60, an attempt to enumerate the social composition of England at the onset of the industrial revolution.<sup>17</sup> But around 1748 he began very actively to collect works relating to what he called 'commercial knowledge', what we would call economic literature.<sup>18</sup> Quite why is unclear, not least because virtually nothing is known of his personal circumstances. Some of his writings suggest that he was involved in overseas trade, which would have given him an interest in many economic issues of the day.<sup>19</sup> What is clear is that in due course he hoped the collection could benefit both the public and himself. Certainly, that he chose to collect in the field implies that it was considerable and valuable, in need of conservation and arrangement. Indeed, he did see the genre as intellectually discrete, with himself a bibliographical pioneer, implicitly comparing his interest in commercial knowledge with the emphasis earlier collectors had put upon the classics.<sup>20</sup>

Massie collected for about twelve years. A pamphlet of 1754 most likely authored by him proposed a scheme for a public mercantile library in London, suggesting six main types of works. This library was to include statutes, histories, legal judgements, official reports, and the guides to the revenue services, along with 'A Collection of whatever has been written in any Language, on Navigation, Commerce, Manufactures, Plantations, Fisheries, Mines, Metals, Minerals, Gems, Fossils, Drugs, Agriculture, Gardening, Mannual-Arts & c.'<sup>21</sup> Though Massie's collection was not so wide-ranging, by 1760 he reckoned that he had amassed a library of some 1,500 titles, putting him in the position to write a work on the '*Elements of Commerce, and an historical Account of the British Manufacturies and Trade*', providing someone paid him for his trouble.<sup>22</sup> In fact, he seriously underestimated the scale of his collection, as the surviving catalogue at the British Library lists 2,418 titles.<sup>23</sup> This catalogue provides, indeed, a valuable means of assessing how one informed contemporary viewed the field of what he called

<sup>17</sup> P. Mathias, 'The social structure in the eighteenth century: a calculation by Joseph Massie', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 10 (1957–8), pp. 30–45.

<sup>18</sup> J. Massie, *A representation concerning the knowledge of commerce as a national concern; pointing out the proper means of promoting such knowledge in this kingdom* (1760).

<sup>19</sup> R. D. Sheldon, 'Joseph Massie', in *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18303.

<sup>20</sup> S. de Ricci, *English collectors of books and manuscripts (1530–1930) and their marks of ownership* (Cambridge, 1930).

<sup>21</sup> [J. Massie], *An essay on the many advantages accruing to the community from the superior neatness, conveniences, decorations and embellishments of great and capital cities* (1754), pp. 19–20.

<sup>22</sup> Massie, *A representation*, p. 25.

<sup>23</sup> The catalogue to Massie's collection is in the British Library (BL), Lansdowne MS 1049. A printed edition, omitting Massie's subject scheme, is W. A. Shaw, ed., *Bibliography of the collection of books and tracts*

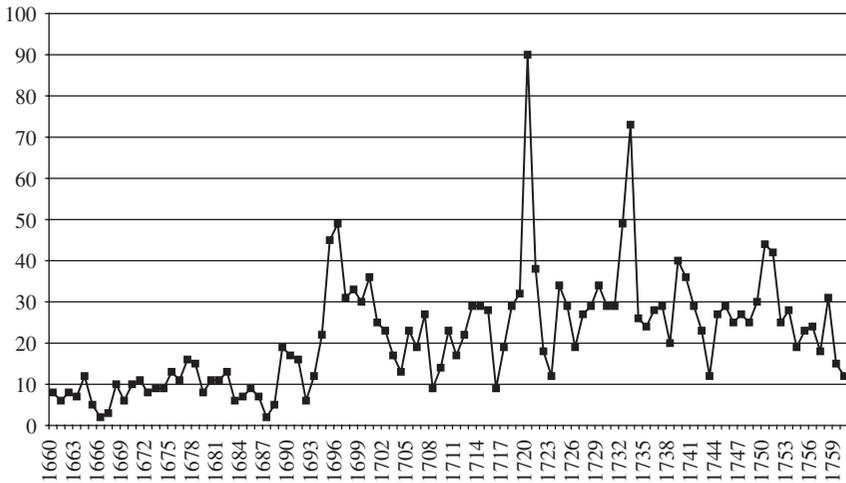


Fig. 2. Annual numbers of titles in Massie's collection, 1660–1760.

'commercial knowledge' and what we would call 'economic literature'. Fortunately, it arranges titles by date of publication and also provides information about page dimensions and numbers, authorship, printers, edition, and subject, allowing several different features to be analysed.

An obvious starting point is with date of publication. Massie provides this information for all but 192 of the titles, but using the ESTC (the English Short Title Catalogue) it is possible to provide a publication date for all but 22 of the 2,418 in total.<sup>24</sup> The earliest work is 1557, the latest 1763, but less than 200 works are from before 1660 and Massie effectively gave up collecting in 1760 – in fact he sold most of his collection then.<sup>25</sup> A little over 90 per cent of the titles are, therefore, from the century 1660–1760. Their annual incidence is shown in Figure 2.

Nothing is known about how Massie collected or how developed the second-hand market for books and pamphlets in this field was. Whether he drew up a bibliography or simply browsed in shops is unknown. How much money he had to spend and what prices he paid, important questions though they are, cannot be answered. It was, though, presumably easier to acquire titles published

*on commerce, currency, and poor law (1557 to 1763) formed by Joseph Massie* (London, 1937). Shaw's edition misses one title, number 2024, Anon., *Account of nature, & c. of oil from beech-tree* (1714), 32pp.

<sup>24</sup> The ESTC is a union catalogue of works published in English, or the English-speaking world, before 1800, largely excluding serial publications. It is based upon the holdings of most major and many minor libraries in Britain, Ireland and North America. The online edition has been used for this article. For an introduction see [www.bl.uk/collections/early/holdingenglish.html](http://www.bl.uk/collections/early/holdingenglish.html).

<sup>25</sup> 'Nov' 1760 Sold the whole Collection Excepting those under Five Heads – viz – Duplicates – Tables – Abstract of Laws – Single Acts – Treaties'. BL, Lansdowne MS 1049, note stuck inside front cover of the catalogue.

more recently than distantly in time. Such annual counts, moreover, take no account of multiple editions of the same or similar works or of the length of works.<sup>26</sup> But some points can be made. It is interesting to note that the freeing of the press in England in 1695, when concerted attempts to regulate the press ended with the failure in that year to renew the Licensing Act, marks a divide in Massie's collection between a period when annual levels were invariably between 5 and 15 works and the next when they were invariably between 15 and 30.<sup>27</sup>

From Figure 2 there is no obvious trend upwards or downwards after 1695 – the decline in the 1750s might be guessed to be due to Massie concentrating upon non-current publications rather than a real fall. This is roughly in line with what is known about overall levels of publishing. Numbers of titles in the ESTC rose by just 3.8 per cent between the 1700s and the 1740s, and in Massie's collection by 8.4 per cent.<sup>28</sup> But a very clear feature is that in Massie's catalogues some years saw very large numbers of works. Most of these peaks are associated with well-known controversies: the recoinage of 1695–6; Union of England and Scotland in 1707; peace with France in 1713; the South Sea Bubble of 1720; the Excise scheme of 1732–3; and Anglo-Spanish commercial rivalry in 1739–40. Only the last peak, that of 1750–1, cannot be ascribed to a clear politico-economic controversy – it may be linked to developing post-war concerns about the level of the national debt and the extent of luxury, but it may also be a peak because Massie began to collect works around then and was fired by initial enthusiasm. Either way, as a rule these peaks suggest just how many works on economic matters were connected to policy, prompted by the significantly heightened legislative role of parliament after the Glorious Revolution.<sup>29</sup>

The second way Massie's catalogue can be analysed is by reference to the length of works. An exacting quantitative historian would want to count words, but the following analysis is based simply on the number of pages, taking no account even of page size. Massie provides this evidence for 2,367 works on his list, and the ESTC can provide it for another 40, or all but 11 of the whole list. Table 1 sets out their distribution by page length.

About 80 per cent of the works collected by Massie were under 100 pages long, but few of these were less than 10 pages (under 5 per cent of the total) and he lists only one single-side work. His was, therefore, a collection mainly of pamphlets and short books, but not of the broadsheets, handbills, and flyers that were produced in great numbers in the period. It is possible that the one or two page works were treated as disposable ephemera at the time, not making their way on to the second hand market that Massie must have depended upon. What is clear is that his was a collection of more substantial works, but where pamphlets

<sup>26</sup> He did collect different editions of the same works so the total number of separate titles in his collection is somewhat less than the total number of titles.

<sup>27</sup> R. Astbury, 'The renewal of the Licensing Act in 1693 and its lapse in 1695', *The Library*, 5th series, 33 (1978), pp. 296–322. <sup>28</sup> Counts from the ESTC were undertaken on 6 Oct. 2003.

<sup>29</sup> J. Hoppit, 'Patterns of parliamentary legislation, 1660–1800', *Historical Journal*, 39 (1996), pp. 109–31.

Table 1 *Page length distribution of works in Massie's catalogue*

	Number of titles	Per cent of total
1 to 25 pages	666	28
26 to 50	763	32
51 to 100	531	22
101 to 250	309	13
251 to 500	112	5
501 to 1,000	24	1
More than 1,000	2	0
Unknown	11	0
Total	2,418	101

*Source:* BL, Lansdowne MS 1049.

outnumbered books, perhaps because they were cheaper, but probably because they were actually produced in greater numbers. Indeed, the importance of pamphlets in the collection gives further weight to the role of particular practical issues as a major stimulus behind the production of economic works in the period.<sup>30</sup>

It is, briefly, also possible to merge these analyses of date of publication and length. This might be done in various ways, but here the focus is upon the number of pages published annually. Of course, such counts are liable to be heavily influenced by the somewhat chance appearance of large works in a given year, but Figure 3 does reinforce some of the conclusions drawn from Figure 2, most obviously of the effects of the lapsing of the Licensing Act in 1695. In the twenty-five years before 1695 Massie's library comprised a total of 21,690 pages but in the twenty-five years after 1695 47,987 pages, a rise of 155 per cent. There was, though, a fall in the average length of work between those periods of nearly 11 per cent, from 79.5 pages to 71.0 pages. Second, if Figure 3 confirms the significance of annual variations in the amount of economic literature in Massie's collection, it also shows more such variations, particularly those after 1720 associated with diplomatic and commercial tensions between Britain and France or Spain – though the importance of the peaks in Figure 2 is generally also borne out.

The third analysis of Massie's catalogue that can be undertaken is of the subject scheme *he* applied to the collection. He put each work under both 'general heads' and 'particular heads'. Though he nowhere set out this scheme, and Shaw's edition does not reproduce the information, it is possible to recreate

<sup>30</sup> 'Between the mid-sixteenth century and the end of the seventeenth, pamphlets became part of the everyday practice of politics, the primary means of creating and influencing public opinion.' J. Raymond, *Pamphlets and pamphleteering in early modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 26. See also K. Sharpe, *Reading revolutions: the politics of reading in early modern England* (New Haven and London, 2000).

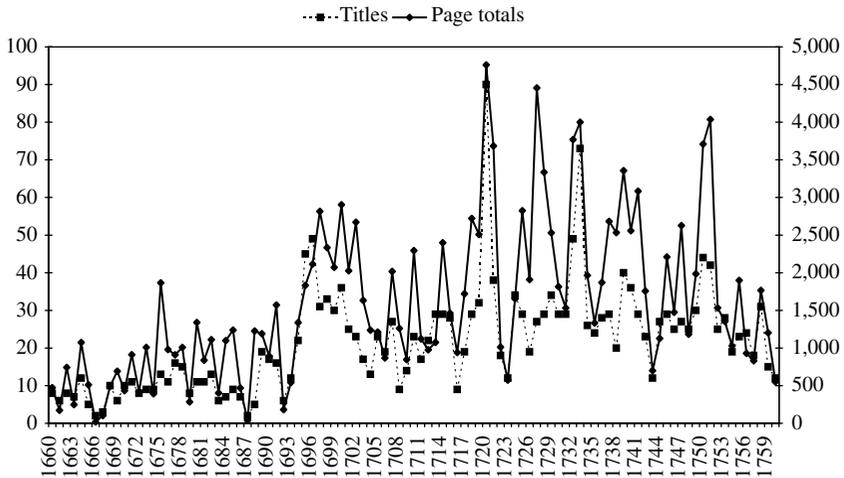


Fig. 3. Annual numbers of pages and titles in Massie's collection, 1660–1760.

Table 2 *Subject distribution of works in Massie's catalogue using a revised version of his 'general heads'*

	Number	Per cent
Classes [of people]	37	2
Colonies	227	9
Commodities	76	3
Companies	105	4
Fisheries	65	3
Husbandry	62	3
Manufactures	138	6
Policy	546	23
Public finance	339	14
Trade	645	27
Miscellaneous	178	7
Total	2,418	101

Source: BL, Lansdowne MS 1049.

it by looking at how Massie categorized the titles in the original manuscript. He used 29 'general heads' and 179 'particular heads'. There is considerable overlap amongst the 'general heads', making it possible to produce a consolidated list of 11 major subject headings (see Appendix 1). The distribution of titles amongst these is shown in Table 2.

Massie's subject scheme is not straightforward as, for example, 'Trade' includes inland as well as overseas trade. But by using his 'particular heads' it is

Table 3 *Proportion of anonymous works in Massie's catalogue, by decade*

	Per cent
1660-9	36
1670-9	45
1680-9	38
1690-9	51
1700-9	67
1710-9	67
1720-9	61
1730-9	73
1740-9	68
1750-9	57

*Source:* BL, Lansdowne MS 1049.

possible to say that a little over 40 per cent of the works in Massie's list addressed issues associated with overseas trade and nearly 18 per cent with public finance questions. These two main categories dominate his collection and 77 per cent of the collection dealt with the tertiary sector. The significance of mercantile matters compared to works on agriculture or industry is striking – even with fisheries included they together account for just 12 per cent of the whole. Another absence is worth noting, the lack of a 'general' category. Massie, like those compilers of schemes of knowledge, invented no such type, nor did he employ terms of art such as 'political arithmetic' or 'mercantilism'.

The final way in which Massie's catalogue is analysed here is by considering the question of the authorship of the listed works. For the period 1660-1759 he listed 2,180 works, of which only 665, 31 per cent, were published under an author's name, and even then, in keeping with the times, sometimes clearly fictitious names.<sup>31</sup> Another 126, 6 per cent, were published under an author's initials only. But a very clear majority, some 61 per cent, were anonymous, though the proportions changed significantly over time, as Table 3 shows.

After the Restoration, just one-third of works were anonymous, but by the 1730s it was nearly three-quarters, a substantial and counter-intuitive change. Of course, it might be that Table 3 reflects the nature of Massie's purchases, that for older works he was more inclined to seek out those of a particular author, but probably it reflects real changes, that anonymity became more frequent from the late seventeenth century. The reasons for this are likely to be several and complex.<sup>32</sup> Amongst them might be 'an aristocratic or gendered reticence,

<sup>31</sup> 'In the whole history of literature there is not a more fantastical group of whimsicalities than that of English pseudonyms which abounded between 1688 and 1800.' Quoted in S. Halkett and J. Laing, *A dictionary of anonymous and pseudonymous literature of Great Britain* (4 vols., Edinburgh, 1882-8), 1, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> I am grateful for the advice of John Mullan on this.

religious self-effacement, anxiety over public exposure, fear of prosecution, hope of an unprejudiced reception, and the desire to deceive'.<sup>33</sup> Dudley North's main contribution to the field of economic literature was published anonymously allegedly 'to avoid the Fatigue of digesting and polishing his Sentiments into such accurate Method, and Clean Style, as the World commonly expects from Authors'.<sup>34</sup> Anonymity certainly changed the perceived personality of the work, a change authors might positively seek for some or all of their works to lend it particular credibility and authority via a certain depersonalization.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps also the rise of anonymity was related to the lapsing of the Licensing Act in 1695 as licensing had in part been about ensuring that authors and publishers were known and accountable for their works. Certainly anonymity could irritate some and there were attempts to legislate against it.<sup>36</sup> As one author, himself anonymous, put it: 'Authors without Names are like *Vagrants*, who strole up and down the Country without a Pass, and ought to be employed, not in writing, but in working for the Good of their Country.'<sup>37</sup> It is notable in this regard that a peak in the rate of anonymity was reached in the 1730s when Sir Robert Walpole often oppressed the press, though if anonymity was tied to oppositional politics it arguably heightened the risks of being tarred with the brush of sedition.<sup>38</sup> Whichever, it suggests another way in which much writing on economic matters in this period needs to be located politically.

If many authors of economic literature of the period were unknown, indeed often a clear majority, usually historians of that literature survey only known authors. Such selectivity involves some important historical decontextualization and distortion but there are limits to correcting this. As Griffin has wondered, 'Since many authors are no longer anonymous, how can we recover the original context of their anonymity.' But some effort does need making and the recovery of the importance of anonymity significantly changes the ways in

<sup>33</sup> R. J. Griffin, 'Introduction', to idem, ed., *The faces of anonymity: anonymous and pseudonymous publication from the sixteenth to the twentieth century* (Basingstoke, 2003), p. 7.

<sup>34</sup> [D. North], *Discourses upon trade: principally directed to the cases of interest, coyage, clipping, increase of money* (1691), Preface, unpaginated. This work was actually published posthumously in 1692, edited by his brother Roger. R. Grassby, 'Sir Dudley North', in *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20297?docPos=3.

<sup>35</sup> Literary scholars have done most in this area. For example, both Swift and Pope sometimes adopted anonymity, sometimes not. See M. J. Conlon, 'Anonymity and authority in the poetry of Jonathan Swift', in H. D. Weinbrot, P. J. Schakel, and S. E. Karian, eds., *Eighteenth-century contexts: historical inquiries in honor of Phillip Hart* (Madison, 2001), pp. 133–46; P. Rogers, 'Nameless names: Pope, Curll, and the uses of anonymity', *New Literary History*, 33 (2002), pp. 233–45.

<sup>36</sup> See Conlon, 'Anonymity', p. 136, which appears to relate to failed bill 49.005 in J. Hopbit, ed., *Failed legislation, 1660–1800: extracted from the Commons and Lords journals* (1997), pp. 278–9.

<sup>37</sup> [W. Webster], *The draper confuted; or, a candid and impartial, but full answer to the consequences of trade: humbly offer'd to the consideration of both houses of parliament* (1740), p. 1.

<sup>38</sup> 'Under arbitrary governments the circulation of an anonymous pamphlets, secretly printed, involves serious risk to the writers if they are discovered.' J. Kennedy, W. A. Smith, and A. F. Johnson, eds., *Dictionary of anonymous and pseudonymous English literature* (9 vols., Edinburgh and London, 1926–62), 1, p. xi. On Walpole and the press see M. Harris, 'Print and politics in the age of Walpole' in J. Black, ed., *Britain in the age of Walpole* (Basingstoke, 1984), especially pp. 196–203.

authorial authority and forms of discourse in the economic literature of the period need to be discussed.<sup>39</sup>

Despite the prevalence of anonymity and pseudonymity, Massie was concerned with the issue of authorship, compiling an alphabetical index by names or initials of authors, including ‘the names of the Authors of such anonymous Books or Pamphlets as I have been able to find out’.<sup>40</sup> Some 957 works are so indexed, or nearly 40 per cent of the total, under 685 ‘authors’. Most of these authors, 536 or nearly 80 per cent, were represented by just one work, with 102 having two works listed and just 47 authors having three or more works listed. Few of these are well known. Looking at only those with five or more works (and excluding those entered under the names of monarchs) 15 names can be listed: John Asgill, Charles Davenant, Charles Foreman, Richard Haines, Richard Hayes, Thomas Houghton, Archibald Hutcheson, Sir Humphry Mackworth, Gerrard Malynes, Corbyn Morris, Sir William Petty, Malachy Postlethwayt, Richard Steele, Josiah Tucker, and Thomas Violet. Of these only Davenant, Malynes, Petty, and Tucker usually make it into histories of economic thought of the period.

There is one final feature of Massie’s collection that is worth noting. Only 10 of the 2,418 titles were in French, and there were no other foreign-language works – though there were a few works translated from other languages. Linguistic incompetence may explain this, but Massie was courting the good opinion of potential patrons, men of high status and some education, who may well have been on the grand tour and probably knew French. Moreover, it was at just this time that French economic progress was being held up as a challenge and a model to Britons.<sup>41</sup> Crucially, French authors were addressing economic questions in particularly concerted and intellectually imaginative ways at just this time.<sup>42</sup> That, therefore, Massie aspired to build a collection with virtually no engagement with non-English literature is striking. In this context it is telling that translations of works of economic thought did not become numerous in the major European countries until after 1750 and that until around then national insularity was well developed.<sup>43</sup> Bearing this in mind, Massie’s collection was not unusual.

<sup>39</sup> Griffin, ‘Introduction’, p. 12. See M. Foucault, ‘What is an author?’, in idem, *Language, counter-memory, practice: selected essays and interviews*, ed. D. F. Bouchard (Oxford, 1977), pp. 113–38, and E. J. Clery, C. Franklin, and P. Garside, ‘Introduction’ to idem, eds., *Authorship, commerce and the public: scenes of writing, 1750–1850* (Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 1–26. <sup>40</sup> BL, Lansdowne MS 1049, fo. 2r.

<sup>41</sup> B. Harris, *Politics and the nation: Britain in the mid-eighteenth century* (Oxford, 2002), ch. 6.

<sup>42</sup> Perrot, *Une histoire intellectuelle de l’économie politique*; A. Murphy, ‘Le développement des idées économiques en France (1750–1756)’, *Revue d’histoire moderne et contemporaine*, 33 (1986), pp. 521–41; J. A. Miller, ‘Economic ideologies, 1750–1800: the creation of the modern political economy?’, *French Historical Studies*, 23 (2000), pp. 497–511.

<sup>43</sup> K. E. Carpenter, *Dialogue in political economy: translations from and into German in the eighteenth century* (Boston, MA, 1977), p. 6. The significance of the erosion of such insularity after 1760 could be considerable. In Britain it appears to be directly linked to the adoption of ‘political economy’, a phrase first used by Sir James Steuart in Britain.

## III

Looking at Massie's collection sheds a good deal of light on the contours of economic literature produced in Britain before 1760. But there are limits to how far this analysis can go, not least because we know so little about Massie, about the resources he had, or about how he built up his collection. A fundamental issue is how representative his collection was. One way forward is to compare his collection to a modern bibliography and a useful comparison is with L. W. Hanson's *Contemporary printed sources for British and Irish economic history, 1701–1751* (Cambridge, 1963). This guide was based on the two great libraries collected by Foxwell in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – which form the heart of the Goldsmiths's Library in the University of London Library and the Kress Library at Harvard – but much enlarged by reference to other major collections. Doubtless if Hanson were working today he would find in the ESTC additional titles, but his list, which totals nearly 6,500 titles, probably includes an overwhelming majority of relevant titles and is reasonably representative. Other peculiarities of Hanson should be noted: his list covers both Britain and Ireland, though the great majority of them relate to England; it is not a bibliography of works of economic literature, but of works relevant to the economic and social historian – 'The aim of the book is to include every new English work on economic affairs published in the period' (p. xi); and related, it includes many titles that were official in nature, notably bills, acts, and proclamations – though these often include important statements of economic thought, especially in their preambles, even if much of their content is concerned with practicalities.

Allowing for these, Hanson nonetheless provides a good point of comparison with Massie. The first point is that Hanson lists 6,492 titles, whereas Massie's catalogue included only 1,391 titles for the same period (21.4 per cent).<sup>44</sup> Given that Hanson listed so many very short works that Massie had not attempted to collect, it is likely that Massie's library of pamphlets and books represented a sizeable fraction of relevant works. This comparability is emphasized by exploring the chronological incidence of works in the two collections (see Fig. 4). As Figure 4 shows, after about 1715 there is a good deal of correspondence between the two collections. Both the trend and many of the peaks and troughs in the series are the same from that date.<sup>45</sup> So the importance of the South Sea Bubble of 1720, the Excise scheme of 1733, and Anglo-Spanish commercial rivalry around 1739 are all confirmed. Looking at the Hanson list, it is clear that for the pre-1715 period he included many works which were much more political

<sup>44</sup> Output in France appears to have been much less. For the same period Perrot, *Une histoire intellectuelle de l'économie politique*, pp. 74–5, identified 382 French works of economic thought, though perhaps this is only a count of books. C. Théré cast her net widely but counted only 418 works for 1700–49: 'Economic publishing', p. 11. I hope to compare this apparent difference between Britain and France in due course.

<sup>45</sup> For 1715–50 the correlation coefficient is 0.81; for the period 1701–50 it is 0.56.

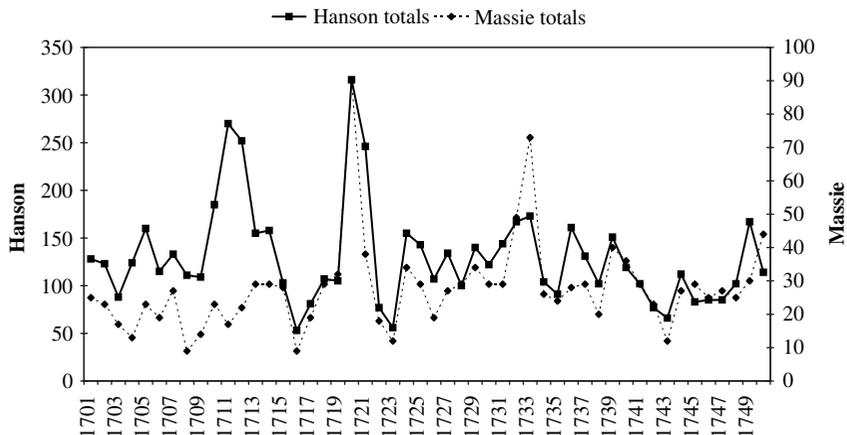


Fig. 4. Annual numbers of titles in Hanson and Massie, 1701-50.

in scope than economic or social. In particular, the peak of 1711 and 1712 is largely related to Britain's desperate attempts to bring war with France to an end, the commercial dimension to which, the proposed Anglo-French commercial treaty of 1713, became highly controversial. Hanson believed, indeed, that 'Much of the material included in this work was undoubtedly aimed at Members of Parliament.'<sup>46</sup> All in all, chronologically speaking Hanson gives considerable support to Massie.

The subject matter of the titles in Hanson can also be explored a little, for Hanson put each title into one of eight categories. Table 4 provides counts on this basis.

Like Massie's scheme, such figures depend completely on how Hanson conceived of his categories and on the extent to which works can be pigeonholed. One important point to note, for example, is that Hanson unfortunately included both domestic and overseas trade under 'Commerce'. Less seriously, but still a little regrettably, because Hanson's category 'Colonies' was restricted to their internal affairs titles relating to the trade of colonies were put under 'Commerce'. Nonetheless, some points can be made. First, it is interesting how few titles Hanson judged to be 'General' in scope; 95 per cent of titles were to him somewhat specific. Second, the number of titles relating to 'Finance' is striking and exceeds that in Massie's collection. Works here were largely concerned with public finance – customs, excise, taxation, the national debt, and public credit. Third is the number of commerce titles – though the proportion is less than in Massie's collection. Finally the relatively low proportion of titles relating to agriculture and manufactures is notable and similar to Massie. Generally, Hanson, like Massie, is dominated by titles relating to the tertiary sector.

<sup>46</sup> Hanson, *Contemporary printed sources*, p. xvii.

Table 4 *Total of titles in Hanson by subject*

	Number	Per cent
General	338	5
Agriculture	722	11
Manufactures	564	9
Commerce	1,373	21
Colonies (internal)	261	4
Finance	1,955	30
Transport	482	7
Social conditions	797	12
Total	6,492	99

*Source:* L. W. Hanson, *Contemporary printed sources for British and Irish economic history, 1701–1751* (Cambridge, 1963).

Hanson's bibliography bears out many though not all of the findings from Massie's collection. Though other comparisons might be made, there are limits to what might be done because of clear differences in the bases of the two lists. However, it is clear from both that short-term political debates were absolutely crucial in prompting the publication of much work relating to economic matters. The peak around the South Sea Bubble is especially striking in this regard and worth exploring. Happily, some further simple counting can be produced by calling on Sperling's bibliography, which though concerned with the South Sea Company took a broad view of the subject for the key years around the blowing and bursting of the Bubble in 1720.<sup>47</sup> Sperling listed 692 works in total, with 361 or 52 per cent relating to the years 1719 to 1722. Two quantitative dimensions of those 361 works can be provided. First, their length. Using page lengths as a measure of wordage is meaningful for 345 of the titles – the other 16 are mainly acts of parliament. Table 5 compares the length of works in Massie's collection with Sperling's bibliography.

As has been noted, Massie collected very few works under 10 pages long, but they were clearly issued in great numbers during the South Sea affair and Keirn has noted their prevalence in the debate over the Royal African Company around the same time.<sup>48</sup> The almost complete absence of such works from

<sup>47</sup> *The South Sea Company: an historical essay and bibliographical finding list* (Boston, MA, 1962). A good brief introduction to the Bubble is H. Roseveare, *The financial revolution, 1660–1760* (Harlow, 1991). Doubts about how the Bubble has been handled by commentators and historians are explored in J. Hoppit, 'The myths of the South Sea Bubble', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 12 (2002), pp. 141–65.

<sup>48</sup> About 80 per cent of 198 tracts on the African trade published between 1689 and 1714 were one or two pages long. T. Keirn, 'Monopoly, economic thought, and the Royal African Company', in J. Brewer and S. Staves, eds., *Early modern conceptions of property* (London, 1995), p. 437.

Table 5 *Comparison of the length of works in Massie and Sperling (excludes works of unknown length)*

Pages	Massie % all years	Massie % 1719–22	Sperling % 1719–22
1–9	5	5	43
10–99	76	81	55
100–499	18	14	3
500 or more	1	1	0
Total	100	101	101

Source: BL, Lansdowne MS 1049; J. G. Sperling, *The South Sea Company: an historical essay and bibliographical finding list* (Boston, MA, 1962).

Massie – which are also common in Hanson’s bibliography – is a major feature. Much economic literature produced in the period was very brief, addressing highly specific and immediate policy questions.

In Massie’s collection only 31 per cent of works from 1660 to 1759 were published under an author’s name, but in the literature of the South Sea Bubble it was just 23 per cent, with another 2 per cent being published using initials only. This difference is most likely related to the issue of Sperling’s inclusion of many very short works – works of one or two pages were rarely accredited – but the major point is to heighten the significance of authorial anonymity of works of economic literature in this period. Most works, an overwhelming majority indeed, sought to avoid authorial responsibility.<sup>49</sup>

#### IV

The foregoing quantitative analysis has established several important general points about the contours of economic literature in the period. First, it is likely that there was clear growth in the number of works, especially after the Glorious Revolution – the lapsing of the Licensing Act in 1695 and the growth of legislative politics made marked differences. In particular, the number of works published was liable to significant short-term variations because so many addressed current policy options under consideration in parliament. The growth of legislation after 1688 prompted the growth of works on economic matters. Second, many works were short, often a side or two, and pamphlets of up to a few dozen pages significantly outnumbered books. Third, few authors owned up to their work. Most writings could not easily be put at the door of particular individuals

<sup>49</sup> This was apparently not just a British phenomenon. R. S. Howey, *A bibliography of general histories of economics, 1692–1975* (Lawrence, KA, 1982), p. 7, claims that in the middle of the eighteenth century ‘anonymity in political economy was still the rule’.

and their success depended not upon authorial reputation but upon the force of the printed words alone. Finally, the subject matter of works relating to economic issues was dominated by the service sector, especially commerce and finance, areas where the executive and the legislature could make a significant impact on economic practices. Agriculture and industry were surprisingly little attended to, though the whole body of the literature cannot be characterized as ‘mercantilist’ or mercantile in its concerns.

Quantitatively, economic literature at the time was overwhelmingly short, ephemeral, anonymous, and politically orientated. It was a world of shifting problems, transitory arguments, and contested outcomes. Above all, if we can be certain both as to its volume and polemical intent, it is much less obvious what its effect was.<sup>50</sup> Striking though these findings are, there are clear limits to such a quantitative approach. Most obviously, contemporaries may have valued works very differently. But judging issues of readership and reception is very difficult for this genre in this period.<sup>51</sup> Very little information has survived of the print runs of works of economic literature, how they were distributed, who acquired them, or how they were used. But some lines can be pursued.

It is important to recognize that many titles were not directly commercial ventures. Many of the ‘cases’, ‘petitions’, ‘reasons’, and ‘answers’, the one or two page works defending or attacking a proposed or actual bill, would have had runs of just a few hundred, and were often handed out gratis to parliamentarians. This is an important point. They were not commercial undertakings, aiming for sales income to exceed production costs, rather investments made by interested parties involved in legislation. In immediate terms, the return sought was political. Many works of economic literature at the time were so produced, and this could take place on a grand scale. There is evidence among Walpole’s papers of longer runs for pamphlets justifying the policies of his ministries – around 10,000 copies of works such as *Some considerations concerning the publick funds* (1735) – which were distributed among MPs, peers, the clergy, collectors of customs and excise, and other government supporters.<sup>52</sup> But these were unusual, both in terms of the print run and distribution.

Judging the wider reception of such works, as well as those of more commercially orientated titles is very difficult. Three routes can be explored briefly. The first is subscription publication, works that were underwritten by subscribers whose number and social composition might be expected to shed some light on

<sup>50</sup> In part because of the need to study the particular circumstances of production and reception. For an example see K. Kwarteng, ‘The political thought of the recoinage crisis of 1695–7’ (Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 2000).

<sup>51</sup> For an introduction to the methodological and historiographical issues see J. Raven, ‘New reading histories, print culture and the identification of change: the case of eighteenth-century England’, *Social History*, 23 (1998), pp. 268–87.

<sup>52</sup> Hanson, *Contemporary printed sources*, p. xviii. Charles King’s *British merchant; or commerce preserv’d* (3 vols., 1721), was distributed to all parliamentary boroughs, the costs being met by the Exchequer. See Johnson, *Predecessors of Adam Smith*, pp. 146–7.

contemporary evaluations of particular works. However, subscription publication was very much the exception and was most common amongst substantial works of reference. Looking only at the 1750s, for example, probably no more than ten works of economic literature, broadly defined, were published by this means, most notably W. Bewes, *Lex mercatoria rediviva: or, the merchant's directory* (1752), J. Dalrymple, *An essay towards a general history of feudal property in Great Britain* ([Dublin], 1759), and J. Postlethwayt, *The history of the public revenue, from the revolution of 1688 ... to Christmas 1758* (1759).<sup>53</sup> Whether it is meaningful that these three works had 297, 98, and 385 subscribers respectively is very questionable. More striking is that so few works in the field were published by this route.

A second way of exploring contemporary responses to particular works is to identify those that had a long publishing history, going through multiple editions over the years. Carpenter has attempted this, but only four works first published before 1750 stand out.<sup>54</sup> In fact, as Carpenter is at pains to stress, this is methodologically very hazardous, for editions had varied print runs, works might have their titles changed from one edition to the next, anonymity might give way to pseudonymity, plagiarism and editorial interventions might corrupt a work so considerably that later editions bore little relation to what the original author had written, some editions may not have survived, and pirated editions, especially through Dublin, were common. Despite developments in copyright law, therefore, authors struggled to maintain control over the form of publication of their work and texts were less fixed than is usually appreciated.<sup>55</sup> Thus, for example, Josiah Child's best known work began life as the anonymous *Brief observations concerning trade* in 1668, became, under his own name, *A discourse about trade* in 1690 and *A new discourse of trade* in 1693 and, in all, existed in nine textually and seventeen bibliographically distinct versions before 1804.<sup>56</sup>

An alternative route is to consider whether particular works of economic literature were recognized by contemporaries as especially significant. This might be done by exploring the references made by authors to other authorities and the place of 'economic literature' in library collections. Today scholars are used to acknowledging fully the ideas and information of other authors, past and present. In the eighteenth century no such expectation routinely existed. Though explicit debate between authors was common, and though reasonable referencing was sometimes undertaken, authors also frequently failed to refer to prior or present

<sup>53</sup> P. J. Wallis, *The social index: a new technique for measuring social trends* (Newcastle, 1978); R. C. Alston and F. J. G. Robinson, *A checklist of eighteenth-century books containing lists of subscribers, incorporating exploitation of the eighteenth-century short title catalogue on Blaise* (Newcastle, 1983); P. J. Wallis and R. Wallis, *Book subscription lists: extended supplement to the revised guide* (Newcastle, 1996).

<sup>54</sup> K. E. Carpenter, *The economic bestsellers before 1850* (Cambridge, MA, 1975). The four are: T. Culpeper, *A tract against usury* (1621); T. Mun, *England's treasure by forraign trade* (1664); [J. Law], *Money and trade considered* (Edinburgh, 1705); and J. Gee, *The trade and navigation of Great Britain consider'd* (1729). These had, respectively, 19, 14, 13, and 15 editions published before 1850.

<sup>55</sup> J. Feather, *Publishing, piracy and politics: an historical study of copyright in Britain* (London, 1994), ch. 3.

<sup>56</sup> T. H. Bowyer, 'The published forms of Sir Josiah Child's *A new discourse of trade*', *The Library*, 5th series, 11 (1956), pp. 95–102.

authorities. For example, Philip Cantillon's *The analysis of trade, commerce, coin, bullion, banks, and foreign exchanges* (1759) included large extracts from Child, Locke, Davenant, Hume, and Postlethwayt, none explicitly acknowledged.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, plagiarism was rife. The charge has, for example, been levelled at both Malachy Postlethwayt, compiler of the most important English-language commercial dictionary of the eighteenth century, and Adam Smith.<sup>58</sup>

Given these limitations, one approach is to analyse a work which appears to have engaged explicitly, widely, and with due reference to the existing literature. One such is John Smith's 1747 compilation of extracts from key sources on the woollen industry, the major industry of its day.<sup>59</sup> In a scheme proximate to Massie's plan for a mercantile library, Smith stated that

The Materials which compose the Text of these Memoirs, are, Books of Records and Antiquity, the Statute Books, (English, Scottish, and Irish) Rymer's Foedera, State Papers, Debates, and Votes in Parliament; History, ancient and modern; Dictionaries, Atlases: All the best Books of Trade, general and particular; Foreign as well as English

and many 'lesser Tracts'.<sup>60</sup> The breadth of this is striking; economic issues were addressed across a wide range of sources. That said, concerted works of economic analysis were clearly central to Smith's venture, for though he thought that many of these would be little known many of his authorities are now well known, including Misselden, Malynes, Fortrey, Mun, Josiah Child, Petty, Temple, Yarranton, *Britannia languens* (Petyt), Davenant, Tryon, Defoe, the *British merchant* (edited by Charles King), Cary, Gee, Dobbs, and Savary (the sole foreign authority).<sup>61</sup>

If most of these names are well known to historians of economic thought (Tryon is the obvious exception), others usually listed as their peers are absent, perhaps because they did not write tellingly about the woollen industry, were unknown to Smith, or for reasons of space: Barbon, Fleetwood, Gervaise, Graunt, Grew, Houghton, Gregory King, Law, Locke, Lowndes, Martin (Martyn), North, Temple, and Vanderlint all come to mind. Whether Smith was unusual in his choice of sources can be explored by looking at which works of economic literature were held in libraries at the time, though with the caveat that surviving catalogues may be incomplete and inaccurate. Given the uncertain place of 'economics' at the time, it is unsurprising that guides to building a library during the period gave little weight to such works, but, as has been shown,

<sup>57</sup> *Critical Review*, 7 (1759), pp. 241–9.

<sup>58</sup> E. Fraser, 'Some sources of Postlethwayt's dictionary', *Economic History*, 3 (1938), pp. 25–32; S. Rashid, 'The intellectual standards of Adam Smith's day', *Journal of Libertarian Studies*, 11 (1994), pp. 107–16; idem, S. Rashid, 'Adam Smith's acknowledgments: neo-plagiarism and *The wealth of nations*', *Journal of Libertarian Studies*, 9 (1990), pp. 1–24. For an introduction to the wider issues see P. Kewes, 'Historicizing plagiarism', in idem, ed., *Plagiarism in early modern England* (Basingstoke, 2003), pp. 1–18.

<sup>59</sup> *Chronicon rusticum-commerciale; or, memoirs of wool* (2 vols., 1747).

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, p. ix.

<sup>61</sup> He explains his method a little further in J. Smith, *Proposals for printing by subscription, in two volumes octavo, chronicon rusticum-commerciale; or, memoirs of wool* (1745), p. 4.

Table 6 *Works of economic literature sold by John Wilkes in 1764 – short titles, with dates of the edition held*

<i>Report of the [Commons's] committee of weights and measures</i>	1758
J. Law, <i>Money and trade</i>	1750
J. Child, <i>Discourse on trade</i>	1693
J. Gee, <i>Trade and navigation</i>	1738
D. Hume, <i>Essays</i>	1748
[T. Mortimer], <i>Every man his own broker</i>	1761
M. Postlethwayt, <i>Great Britain's commercial interest</i>	1757
idem, <i>Great Britain's true system</i>	1757
idem, <i>Universal dictionary</i>	1757
J. Dalrymple, <i>History of feudal property</i>	1757
[G. Gordon?], <i>History of our national debts and taxes</i> , 4 parts	1761
M. Folkes, <i>Tables of English gold and silver coins</i>	1745
J. Postlethwayt, <i>History of the public revenue</i>	1759
W. Fleetwood, <i>Chronicon preciosum</i>	1745
S. Leake, <i>Account of English money</i>	1745
<i>Consideration for a register of the poor</i>	1763
A. Smith, <i>Theory of moral sentiments</i>	1759

*Note:* The penultimate work has not been found in the ESTC.

*Source:* A. N. L. Munby, ed., *Sale catalogues of libraries of eminent persons* (12 vols., London, 1971–5), VIII: *Politicians*, ed. S. Deane.

Massie had collected in the area in a meaningful way and it might be expected that certain others would have sought out key works.<sup>62</sup> Two approaches might be tried: to see which works of economic literature certain libraries held and to see whether particular works of economic literature are to be found in a number of libraries. For the first approach the library of John Wilkes provides an interesting introduction to some of the key issues. Early in his career he had serious aspirations to the life of the virtuoso and high office, showing some interest in scholarship and being elected an MP in 1759. As is well known, he fell foul of the authorities and creditors in the early 1760s and in 1764 he sold 944 works, what was probably his whole library then (he was thirty-seven).<sup>63</sup> Only seventeen, or 1.8 per cent, of these were works of economic literature.<sup>64</sup> Table 6 lists these, with the date of the edition held.

<sup>62</sup> On library building see, for example: G. Naudé, *Instructions concerning erecting of a library*, trans. J. Evelyn (1661); Anon., *Directions for the proper choice of authors to form a library, which may both improve and entertain the mind, and be of real use in the conduct of life* (1766).

<sup>63</sup> P. D. G. Thomas, *John Wilkes: a friend to liberty* (Oxford, 1996), p. 58.

<sup>64</sup> A. N. L. Munby, ed., *Sale catalogues of libraries of eminent persons* (12 vols., London, 1971–5), VIII: *Politicians*, ed. S. Deane.

As far as is known, Wilkes wrote no work of economic literature, either serious or scurrilous. He bought these works because they had some value to him as a gentleman and as an active MP seeking to impress potential patrons. Moreover, the sale was made during his lifetime when his library was, in a sense, a work in progress. However, the presence of only one work published in the seventeenth century and only four further works (Law, Folkes, Fleetwood, and Leake) that had originally been published before he was born (1727) demonstrates the up-to-date nature of his holdings – as with any such list the absences are arguably more important than the presences. In so far as he was interested in economic literature it was in what was then current (what might be called fashionable), especially, given their political significance, in the fields of trade, coinage, and public finances. But perhaps it also lends some support to the argument that in the eighteenth century gentlemen increasingly accumulated libraries as much for reasons of show as for intellectual hunger, especially given the place of seven major works of reference.<sup>65</sup> This might be compared with the library of John Locke, a founder member of the Board of Trade and a contributor to the debate over recoinage in 1695–6. He owned 3,641 titles in his life, of which 127 (3.5 per cent) have been judged to be works of economics, but few of these were what would now be judged very important works.<sup>66</sup> Isaac Newton, Master of the Mint for many years, owned 31 economic titles in a library of 1,752 works (1.8 per cent) and lacked, for example, standard works by Graunt, Houghton, Misselden, Mun, and Petty.<sup>67</sup>

Building on this, it is possible to explore whether works by particular authors were commonly held in a range of libraries at the time. Deciding upon a list of such authors is far from straightforward, but from the main secondary works in the field an initial list of twenty-eight names was compiled, with ten of these being held to be particularly significant. These are names, in other words, which have tended to be accorded particular significance in many histories of economic thought. The catalogues of eleven libraries of major figures at the time were then searched for works by these authors.<sup>68</sup> (See Appendix 2 for a list of the authors and libraries.) Though account has been taken of the fact that some leading authors only became active after the death of some collectors, there are clear doubts or questions about using library catalogues, most obviously that they may be inaccurate and that if they are not they only prove ownership at

<sup>65</sup> The case is polemically put in T. A. Birrell, 'Reading as pastime: the place of light literature in some gentlemen's libraries of the seventeenth century', in R. Myers and M. Harris, eds., *Property of a gentleman: the formation, organization and dispersal of the private library, 1620–1920* (Winchester, 1991), pp. 113–31. <sup>66</sup> J. Harrison and P. Laslett, *The library of John Locke* (2nd edn, Oxford, 1971), pp. 18, 25.

<sup>67</sup> J. Harrison, *The library of Isaac Newton* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 59 and passim.

<sup>68</sup> All but two of these twenty-eight are in the original *Dictionary of national biography*, all but one in the *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, and all but five in R. H. I. Palgrave, ed., *Dictionary of political economy* (3 vols., London, 1894–9). All twenty-eight are in one of these three sources. The authors and the libraries searched are listed in Appendix 2. It is not claimed that the eleven libraries are representative, just illustrative.

a particular point in time, not readership or influence. That said, works by only two authors, Josiah Child and Charles Davenant, were in a clear majority of libraries (73 per cent), though half the libraries held works by John Graunt, John Law, John Locke, William Lowndes, Thomas Mun, and William Temple. But the other twenty authors were not represented in most libraries. On average, only a little over one third of the full list, 37 per cent, were held in the eleven libraries and using the smaller list of ten particularly significant authors the proportion rises to only 45 per cent. Some authors were barely present at all: Gervaise and Gregory King by none at all, Barbon and Charles King by only one (Massie in both cases) and Malynes, Martin, Misselden, Vanderlint, and Yarranton by only two. Works by William Petty, held up by many as the father of political economy, were in only five of the eleven libraries.<sup>69</sup>

The two complete absences are worth reflecting on briefly. Today the importance of both Gervaise and King is firmly established. Gregory King is now seen as a central figure in the development of political arithmetic, with his writings being much used by historians.<sup>70</sup> However, though he wrote much, he published nothing. To search for him in the libraries is absurd. Though the range and quantity of his output is well attested, the simple fact is that his contributions to economic literature circulated exclusively via scribal not printed publication. His natural intellectual habitat was not the republic of letters, but his private study and the corridors of power. However, he was not alone in this. Some of Petty's most important works circulated in manuscript before being published posthumously and Nehemiah Grew, secretary of the Royal Society, wrote in 1707 a wide-ranging analysis of England's economic prospects designed not 'for Publick view' but for the monarch to disseminate as she saw fit.<sup>71</sup> Later still Cantillon and Tucker circulated ideas to a restricted rather than general public.<sup>72</sup> North was surely right to note that 'the Press ... is the only means whereby the University of Mankind is to be inform'd', but much work now judged to be

<sup>69</sup> It is also possible to comment on the extent of holdings in particular libraries. Using the list of twenty-eight authors, Massie's was the most comprehensive, including 92 per cent of authors, followed by Locke, 69 per cent, then Pepys with 53 per cent.

<sup>70</sup> G. S. Holmes, 'Gregory King and the social structure of pre-industrial England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 27 (1977), pp. 41–68; D. V. Glass, 'Two papers on Gregory King', in D. V. Glass and D. E. C. Eversley, eds., *Population in history: essays in historical demography* (London, 1965), pp. 159–220.

<sup>71</sup> 'The meanes of a most ample encrease of the wealth and strength of England in a few years. Humbly represented to her majestie in the 5th year of her reign.' There are probably only two extant copies: Huntington Library, HM1264; BL, Lansdowne MS 691. I hope to produce an edition of this work. For context see H. Love, *Scribal publication in seventeenth-century England* (Oxford, 1993), and D. McKitterick, *Print, manuscript and the search for order, 1450–1830* (Cambridge, 2003). Grew's work is discussed in Johnson, *Predecessors of Adam Smith*, ch. 7.

<sup>72</sup> Cantillon's case is well known, Tucker's less so. His *The elements of commerce, and theory of taxes* (1755) and *Instructions for travellers* (1757) were parts of a larger unfinished general analysis, circulated for comment privately in printed page proofs. See G. Shelton, *Dean Tucker and eighteenth-century economic and political thought* (London, 1981), ch. 6.

significant was not published at the time, complicating the mapping of the intellectual world.<sup>73</sup>

Gervaise's absence from the eleven libraries examined is also not due to the poor quality of his ideas. 'The work of Isaac Gervaise consists of a single pamphlet ... But packed into this tract is a powerful and remarkably formal analysis of international exchange and payments which concludes with a comprehensive plea for universal free trade.'<sup>74</sup> That his pamphlet made little impact at the time is clear, but this can hardly have been because of its intellectual worth: it addressed major questions of the period (trade and credit) concisely, cogently, and originally. Most likely, therefore, material reasons played a significant part, such as too short a print run, too many distribution problems, and lack of active 'patronage' or support at the time. Given that his pamphlet was published in 1720 it is possible that because of such factors it was lost in the chaos of the South Sea Bubble and its aftermath. That said, in some measure Gervaise is absent from the eleven libraries explored because he authored only a single brief pamphlet. Yet Gervaise's fate was not so unusual. Dudley North's *Discourse*, reckoned by many as a key work in early British economic literature, 'seems to have disappeared from view almost completely very soon after its publication'.<sup>75</sup>

Analysis of material such as Smith's compendium and library holdings suggests a number of important points about the contours of economic literature at the time. Most obviously, if there was a developing perception in the eighteenth century of the more important works of economic literature it may have certainly included only Child and Davenant. If it was wider it was weighted more towards seventeenth- than eighteenth-century texts and included writers whose contribution was particular rather than general, such as Graunt (demography), Lowndes (finance), and Temple (international competitiveness). Absences from libraries were, however, as striking, if not more so. Moreover, important works might circulate more quietly in manuscript and even telling pamphlets might quickly sink into obscurity, only to be rediscovered later. In short, what was more important to contemporaries were not necessarily what historians of economic thought have come most to value. If the latter have tended to identify a reasonably common canon, the former did not, not least because they did not identify 'economics' as a discrete field. Indeed, the evidence of subscription publication suggests that works that were more general and influential were as likely to be compilations of information, often 'histories', than works of economic analysis.

## V

By the late 1740s the scale and variety of economic literature in Britain was considerable, probably prompting Massie to begin his collection. But collecting

<sup>73</sup> [North], *Discourses upon trade*, from unpaginated preface.

<sup>74</sup> Hutchison, *Before Adam Smith*, p. 126. I. Gervaise, *The system or theory of the trade of the world (1720)*, ed. J. M. Letiche (Baltimore, 1954).

<sup>75</sup> Hutchison, *Before Adam Smith*, p. 79.

was one thing, making sense of it quite another. The urge for synthesis and systematization certainly existed, but made limited headway until the emergence of 'political economy' after 1760. Though there were attempts to write wide-ranging works of economic analysis, contemporaries attempting an overview tended to emphasize narrative more than analysis and fact more than concept. Indeed, two numerically significant approaches in British economic literature at the time were to construct 'histories' and, more especially, dictionaries.

Smith's *Chronicon* was in a sense, historical, though decidedly more chronicle and abstract than interpretation. That was indeed the most common approach to history in this field. James Postlethwayt's invaluable survey of public finances since 1688, for example, did little more than provide an annual list of supply and of ways and means. It was a compendium, a tool, not an explanation. History in this sense was limited, providing no conceptual framework and being limited to particular parts of what is now called 'economics'. This recalls Thomas Kuhn's pre-paradigmatic situation:

In the absence of a paradigm ... all of the facts that could possibly pertain to the development of a given science are likely to seem equally relevant. As a result, early fact-gathering is a far more nearly random activity than the one that subsequent scientific development makes familiar. Furthermore, in the absence of a reason for seeking some particular form of more recondite information, early fact-gathering is usually restricted to the wealth of data that lie ready to hand ... this sort of fact-collecting has been essential to the origin of many significant sciences [but] it produces a morass.<sup>76</sup>

Dictionaries, on the other hand, could be more ambitious, with Malachy Postlethwayt's *Universal dictionary of trade and commerce*, published in two large volumes in 1751 and 1755, standing out in this regard.

Postlethwayt announced the plan for his *Dictionary* in 1749. It was, it is important to stress, avowedly based on a French model, published in 1723, but was also inspired by Chambers's *Cyclopaedia*.<sup>77</sup> National economic rivalry with the French was an important stimulus to Postlethwayt's venture. Like many, he was sure that commerce was the means for a nation to become ever more prosperous, such that 'Tis a thorough knowledge of trade that gives us just ideas of the ebbs and flows of the national treasure, and consequently of the national power.'<sup>78</sup> He naturally, however, stressed the 'boundless chaos of matter, relating to commerce' which needed sifting and sorting by him.<sup>79</sup> At one level, the *Dictionary* was a hugely impressive achievement and was 'candidly received by the public, as a national advantage'.<sup>80</sup> As a distillation of current commercial knowledge it was both wide-ranging and generally cogent. However, 'Alphabetical order, as the plan not merely of the index but of the whole work,

<sup>76</sup> T. Kuhn, *The structure of scientific revolutions* (3rd edn, Chicago, 1996), pp. 15–16.

<sup>77</sup> See Perrot, *Une histoire intellectuelle de l'économie politique*, pp. 97–125.

<sup>78</sup> [M. Postlethwayt], *A dissertation on the plan, use, and importance, of the universal dictionary of trade and commerce; translated from the French of the late celebrated Mons. Savary* (1749), p. 1.

<sup>79</sup> [Postlethwayt], *Dissertation*, p. 3.

<sup>80</sup> *Critical Review*, 2 (1756), p. 433.

means that, while the attempt at comprehensiveness is still made, the systematic correlation is relegated to a subordinate place.<sup>81</sup> Postlethwayt was conscious of this and so aimed to make his work less a dictionary than an encyclopaedia, with its scope being rooted in a scheme of commercial knowledge. Yet the twelve 'chapters' Postlethwayt invoked to do so are neither comprehensive nor cohesive. The first was 'of mercantile and trading knowledge', followed by chapters on the landed and monied interests, commercial politics, the American and African trades, the great fisheries, national trade policy across Europe, the poor, commercial treaties, the maps in the *Dictionary*, and, finally, 'Of miscellaneous matters, having an affinity with commerce'. As this makes clear, if Postlethwayt had a sense of order, his scheme also retained major disjunctions and disconnections and certainly did not unfold seamlessly and fluidly.<sup>82</sup> This is hinted at by looking at the terms defined in the body of the *Dictionary*. For example, under the letter 'L' were forty-seven terms. Very few of these were obviously conceptual in character: 'labour', 'landed interest', and 'law' stand out. Most of the rest were of places (e.g. 'Lancashire', 'Liege'), commodities (e.g. 'laquered ware', 'logwood'), jobs (e.g. 'land-waiter'), or things (e.g. 'letter of credit', 'light-houses'). As Johnson has noted, Postlethwayt's *Dictionary* 'was a premature synthesis ... [but] typified a widespread longing for system'.<sup>83</sup>

Richard Rolt, who published in 1756 a dictionary directly competing with Postlethwayt's, struggled unsuccessfully with the self-same issue. The preface, written by Samuel Johnson, worried that the rage for alphabetically arranged dictionaries 'of every kind of literature ... has perhaps been carried too far', for 'Sciences, in themselves systematical and coherent, are not very properly broken into such fortuitous distributions.' But if 'A dictionary of Arithmetick or Geometry can serve only to confound ... commerce, considered in its whole extent, seems to refuse any other method of arrangement'.<sup>84</sup> Rolt's dictionary, despite being written in the wake of Postlethwayt's, was in fact even less conceptual, being concerned only with materials, places and means of exchange. There was no place in his dictionary for 'labour', 'landed interest', or 'law', despite defining 230 terms under the letter 'L' compared to Postlethwayt's 47. Little wonder then that McCulloch, writing from the comfort of an era when 'political economy' had developed an elaborate and confident intellectual architecture, judged Rolt's work to be 'A wretched compilation, without learning or talent of any kind'.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>81</sup> G. N. Clark, *Science and social welfare in the age of Newton* (Oxford, 1937), p. 143.

<sup>82</sup> Postlethwayt, *Dictionary*, 1, p. vii.

<sup>83</sup> Johnson, *Predecessors of Adam Smith*, p. 13.

<sup>84</sup> R. Rolt, *A new dictionary of trade and commerce, compiled from the information of the most eminent merchants, and from the works of the best writers on commercial subjects, in all languages* (1756), preface, no pagination. On Johnson's contribution see J. Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. R. W. Chapman, revised J. D. Fleeman (Oxford, 1980), p. 254.

<sup>85</sup> J. R. McCulloch, *The literature of political economy: a classified catalogue of select publications in the different departments of that science, with historical, critical, and biographical notices* (1845), p. 52.

McCulloch's strictures, though based on a wide appreciation of the historical literature on economic matters, cannot detract from the fact that Rolt's difficulties were rather the norm than the exception. In the 1750s contemporaries could see economic issues as complex and interrelated but they lacked the concepts or analytical techniques to develop intellectual frameworks that embraced the totality of economic life. Their resort to similes of circulation or balance helped, but were somewhat limiting.<sup>86</sup> Consequently, looking at the subject from the vantage of his great collection, Massie rightly lamented that

In other Branches of scientific Knowledge, the great Care hath been, to establish them upon self-evident Principles, and to arrange the several Parts of each Branch in such Order as best shews their Connection, and leads the Mind from Truth to Truth; but this Method of Procedure hath been very much neglected in the elementary Part of commercial Knowledge.<sup>87</sup>

The great mass of economic literature by 1760 was, to this peculiarly well-informed onlooker, in a sense also a great mess.

## VI

The history of British economic literature between 1660 and 1760 often utilizes a reasonably common range of authors and locates them within a clear discourse, most usually 'mercantilist' or an emerging 'political economy'. By focusing upon more explicitly analytical works, works of economic thought, the approach is to detail an evolving, mutating tradition, of which an emerging canon is a part. This has helped to give a sense of order and fixity to the field. But if 'The history of ideas usually credits the discourse that it analyses with coherence', that coherence should not be assumed, and the costs involved in identifying it need also to be remembered.<sup>88</sup> This article has produced considerable evidence about the varied, splintered, and uncertain nature of early British economic literature.

Writing on economic matters in Britain between 1660 and 1760 was voluminous and, if often concerned with the service sector, lacked an agreed intellectual core. It was, as Blaug noted, not the product of an academic discipline 'carried forward, as academic disciplines are, by the momentum of professionals striving to improve each other's work'.<sup>89</sup> Nor did it occupy a clear intellectual space, separated from other fields of study. What carried forward much early writing on economic matters in Britain was legislative politics.<sup>90</sup> Because the British state

<sup>86</sup> Finkelstein, *Harmony and the balance*, makes telling points on these approaches.

<sup>87</sup> Massie, *A representation*, p. 2.

<sup>88</sup> M. Foucault, *The archaeology of knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London, 1986), p. 149.

<sup>89</sup> M. Blaug, 'Economic theory and economic history in Britain, 1650-1776', *Past and Present*, 28 (1964), pp. 115-16.

<sup>90</sup> A key argument made in relation to the 1620s by B. E. Supple, *Commercial crisis and change in England, 1600-1642* (Cambridge, 1959).

was markedly different from many of its European neighbours, this gave British economic literature a particular complexion:

most English output was to a greater extent than French, openly polemical. In addition, the controversies which brought forth the pamphlets were not on topics which agitated the Continent, or else were from a different angle ... English differences from the Continent, political and religious as well as economic, all seem to have inhibited translation from English.<sup>91</sup>

The character of British economic literature before 1760 was determined by four crucial factors. First, the audience for such works were often courtiers and parliamentarians, then the wider political nation and more rarely 'intellectuals'.<sup>92</sup> What the first group in particular wanted were brief cases and short pamphlets, not long, intricately argued books. Those weighty tomes to which they did turn were more likely to be reference works, 'histories', dictionaries, and encyclopaedias, than sophisticated works of analysis. Second, the lack of disciplinarity made it easier for anyone to write in the field, such that language and concepts were employed erratically and making it difficult to establish standards for judging arguments.<sup>93</sup> Massie lamented that 'the Generality of commercial Writers ... have not considered Commerce either as a *Science*, or as a Branch of *History*, but have mixed *personal* with *national* Affairs, and blended *Principles*, *History*, and *Practice* together'.<sup>94</sup> This meant, as Coats argued, that it was 'virtually impossible to distinguish between: logical and empirical statements; basic pre-suppositions, preconceptions and premises; supposedly obvious and unquestionable commonsense maxims or aphorisms; and expressions of vested interest, prejudice and ideological bias'.<sup>95</sup> What mattered was whether any particular idea would work at a particular moment in a particular political context. More universal ideas might be invoked, but the focal point was invariably more

<sup>91</sup> Carpenter, *Dialogue in political economy*, p. 11. English economic literature did have some influence in France from at least the middle of the eighteenth century. In the 'Catalogue d'une bibliothèque d'économie politique', appended to L'Abbé A. Morellet, *Prospectus d'un nouveau dictionnaire de commerce. En cinq volumes in-folio proposés par souscription* (Paris, 1769), over one third of the titles listed are in English. More practically orientated English economic literature also had an impact. See A. J. Bourde, *The influence of England on the French agronomes, 1750–1789* (Cambridge, 1953). Some related issues are raised in J. G. A. Pocock, 'The political limits to premodern economics', in J. Dunn, ed., *The economic limits to premodern politics* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 121–41.

<sup>92</sup> It is interesting to note that in English book clubs 'the dominant concern is with contemporary political conditions and issues'. P. Kaufman, *Libraries and their users: collected papers in library history* (London, 1969), p. 57.

<sup>93</sup> This was a general issue. Work is most advanced on this important question in the history of science. See, for example: S. Shapin, *A social history of truth: civility and science in seventeenth-century England* (Chicago, 1994); M. Poovey, *A history of the modern fact: problems in knowledge in the sciences of wealth and society* (Chicago, 1998); P. Dear, *Discipline and experience: the mathematical way in the scientific revolution* (Chicago, 1995); B. J. Shapiro, *A culture of fact: England, 1550–1720* (Ithaca, 2000). On the problems with available language see Magnusson, *Mercantilism*, especially p. 156.

<sup>94</sup> Massie, *A representation*, dedication, no pagination.

<sup>95</sup> A. W. B. Coats, *On the history of economic thought: British and American economic essays*, 1 (London, 1992), p. 49.

specific. Importantly, the producers and consumers of economic literature were not ‘economists’, but might consciously belong to the republic of letters, a tribe with little interest in questions of disciplinarity. Their disavowal of specialization had, indeed, important implications for how this area of knowledge developed, of its need to be readily accessible to a polite and commercial people.<sup>96</sup> Third, if the intellectual location of much economic literature was uncertain, many of the texts were also less fixed than is often now remembered: corrupted editions were commonplace; works circulated frequently in manuscript as well as print; plagiarism was rife. Finally, and intimately connected to the first two points, much economic literature was anonymous. This was not a literature that unproblematically developed by building upon known, named, foundations. Linked to this, ephemera were everywhere, establishing intellectual traditions highly uncertain, and the emergence of central intellectual concepts and categories a prolonged and uncertain process.<sup>97</sup>

Approaching early British economic literature from the perspective of context and contours rather than content produces, therefore, a somewhat different look to the field. But that look is not exclusively a result of concentrating upon bibliographical considerations. For this article has also eschewed hindsight, rarely looking beyond 1760. Historians always struggle with hindsight, because if it gives meaning and direction to their efforts, it often makes those efforts more difficult by encouraging anachronism, determinism and teleology. It is, therefore, sometimes instructive to study a problem by ignoring as far as possible what came next. This article has sought to detail economic literature in the terms its authors used by looking up to but not beyond 1760. What it has shown is that though some contemporaries thought that the field was a science by then, they struggled hard to determine its limits, concepts, and methodology. If, for example, Josiah Tucker argued that the ‘principles of trade’ formed a ‘noble and interesting science’, it is notable that he was unable to give that science a name or to complete his own general work in the field.<sup>98</sup> Massie, Postlethwayt, and Rolt were all similarly frustrated at much the same time.

British economic literature before 1760 was, in conclusion, not ‘mercantilist’ or ‘political economy’, not only because they are anachronisms, but also because the literature was large and wide ranging, often anonymous and pseudonymous, and frequently particular, political, and polemical. The lack of discipline and coherence was striking; economic literature was more fluid and unstable than is often recognized. Nor was this, therefore, a literature leading inexorably towards Adam Smith. Rather it was very often nameless, halting, and somewhat confused. Most authors in the field were unconcerned with system, and those who were tended to fail. Their failure was more important than has usually been allowed.

<sup>96</sup> A. Goldgar, *Impolite learning: conduct and community in the republic of letters, 1680–1750* (New Haven and London, 1995), p. 53.

<sup>97</sup> This echoes parts of Adrian Johns’s analysis of seventeenth-century science in *The nature of the book: print and knowledge in the making* (Chicago, 1998).

<sup>98</sup> Shelton, *Dean Tucker*, p. 49.

In 1760 the prospects for British economic thought did not appear propitious which, of course, makes all the more remarkable the developments that then took place over the next twenty years.<sup>99</sup>

## APPENDIX 1

*Massie's 'general heads' scheme and the revised scheme used in Table 2*

<i>Massie's 'general heads'</i>	<i>Revised scheme</i>
Classes of men	Classes [of people]
Colonies	Colonies
Colonies corn	Colonies
Colonies fish	Colonies
Colonies fur	Colonies
Colonies rice	Colonies
Colonies sugar	Colonies
Colonies tobac[co]	Colonies
Colonies var[ious] prod[ucts]	Colonies
Commodities	Commodities
Companies trading	Companies
Fisheries	Fisheries
Fisheries in general	Fisheries
Fisheries lesser	Fisheries
Husbandry	Husbandry
Manufactures	Manufactures
Nonclass art[icle?]	Miscellaneous
Policy civil	Policy
Policy commercial	Policy
Policy military	Policy
Policy misc[ellaneous]	Policy
Taxes	Taxes
Taxes nation	Taxes
Trade	Trade
Trade contraband	Trade
Trade inland	Trade
Trade maritime	Trade
Trade with	Trade

<sup>99</sup> T. Hutchison, *On revolutions and progress in economic knowledge* (Cambridge, 1978), ch. 1.

## APPENDIX 2

*List of 28 leading writers of economic literature active before 1750 – 10 pre-eminent writers are italicized*

Barbon, Nicholas, floriat 1698  
*Cary, John*, 1649–1719/22  
*Child, Josiah*, 1631–99  
*Davenant, Charles*, 1656–1714  
 Fleetwood, William, 1656–1723  
*Gee, Joshua*, floriat 1713–48  
 Gervaise, Isaac, floriat 1720  
 Graunt, John, 1620–74  
 Grew, Nehemiah, 1641–1712  
 Houghton, John, 1645–1705  
 King, Charles, floriat 1713–21  
*King, Gregory*, 1648–1712  
*Law, John*, 1671–1729  
 Locke, John, 1632–1704  
 Lowndes, William, 1652–1724  
*Malynes, Gerard*, 1586?–1641?  
 Mandeville, Bernard, 1670?–1733  
 Martin/Martyn, Henry, floriat 1721  
*Misselden, Edward*, 1608–54  
*Mun, Thomas*, 1571–1641  
 North, Dudley, 1641–91  
*Petty, William*, 1623–87  
 Petyt, William, 1636–1707  
 Smith, John, floriat c. 1700–53  
 Temple, William, 1628–99  
 Tucker, Josiah, 1712–99  
 Vanderlint, Jacob, died 1740  
 Yarranton, Andrew, 1616–84

Eleven library catalogues consulted, by date of death of the collector, with a brief reason for their inclusion.

1. Samuel Pepys, 1633–1703, a major bibliophile and naval administrator. N. A. Smith, *Catalogue of the Pepys library at Magdalene College Cambridge*, 1: *Printed books* (Cambridge, 1978).
2. Thomas Plume, 1630–1704, archdeacon of Rochester and major bibliophile. S. G. Deed, *Catalogue of the Plume library at Maldon, Essex* (Maldon, 1959).
3. John Locke, 1642–1704, leading scholar, founding member of the Board of Trade and author of works of economic thought. J. Harrison and P. Laslett, *The library of John Locke* (2nd edn, Oxford, 1971).

4. Isaac Newton, 1632–1727, President of the Royal Society and Master of the Mint for many years. J. Harrison, *The library of Isaac Newton* (Cambridge, 1978).
5. James Logan, 1674–1751, born Ireland, merchant first in Bristol, but mainly Philadelphia, major bibliophile. E. Woolf the 2nd, *The library of James Logan of Philadelphia, 1674–1751* (Philadelphia, 1974).
6. Henry Fielding, 1707–54, author and justice of the peace in London. F. G. Ribble and A. G. Ribble, *Fielding's library* (Charlottesville, 1996).
7. David Hume, 1711–76, leading scholar and writer of economic thought. D. F. Norton and M. J. Norton, *The David Hume library* (Edinburgh, 1996).
8. Samuel Johnson, 1709–84, leading author. D. D. Eddy, *Sale catalogues of the libraries of Samuel Johnson, Hester Litch Thrall (Mrs Piozzi) and James Boswell* (New Castle, DE, 1993).
9. Joseph Massie, d. 1784, probably a merchant, certainly a leading collector of works of economic literature. British Library, Lansdowne MS 1049.
10. Adam Smith, 1723–90, leading scholar and writer of pivotal work of political economy. H. Mizuta, *Adam Smith's library: a catalogue* (Oxford, 2000).
11. John Wilkes, 1727–97, politician. Note that it is the collection sold in 1764 which has been used. A. N. L. Munby, ed., *Sale catalogue of libraries of eminent persons* (12 vols., London, 1971–5), VIII: *Politicians*, ed. S. Deane.